

*"Ne sutor ultra crepidam."*

Before delivering opinion on any question relating to insanity, or to the insane, medical practitioners would do well to acquaint themselves with the subject on which they are to testify. It is a very unpleasant thing, in after time, for one to discover that he has asserted that which was untrue; and it must be peculiarly uncomfortable to have so affirmed under oath. I have no doubt that, in a few years, our books and journals will detail a multitude of cases of similar character. The present is the second which I have met with, and neither of the two would have been known without *post-mortem* examination.

II.

The second autopsy, which I submit, presents no very interesting fact, excepting that of correction of error of diagnosis. From all the symptoms of the case, I had been led to regard it as one of latent pulmonary phthisis, an obscure form of disease, to which, in my last year's report, I drew attention.

The subject of present notice was a woman of 56 to 60 years of age. She was sent to the asylum without any history of herself or her insanity; and was resident thirteen and a half months. She appeared to suffer at times severe pain in her gums and face; and in her paroxysms she was wont to scratch her face deeply. She understood neither English, German nor French. She sank gradually, and died exactly as patients under latent phthisis do. Without a *post-mortem* we should have assigned her case to this disease.

*Post-mortem.*—The brain presented nothing remarkable. The lungs were universally adherent to the ribs, by old fibrous deposits. A few dark hard carbonaceous nodules were found in the upper lobe of the left lung; but otherwise both lungs were undiseased. The heart had undergone fatty degeneration to such an extent that recognition of muscular fibre was very difficult. There was an excessive development of fat throughout the abdomen.

III.

The third case may prove interesting to those who are better informed than myself on the pathology of epilepsy. The subject was a man who had been resident for nine years and a half. His insanity was ascribed to fright, but he had long been afflicted with epilepsy, which was aggravated by masturbation. His paroxysms were attended with danger to those near him; as at those times he became a mere automatic fury; and even in less disturbed periods, he was occasionally an unsafe neighbor, because of a peculiar propensity to scratch other persons' faces; and