century literature. Nor should it be forgotten that, whilst he was remarkable as a critic for his knowledge of details, he was even more remarkable for considerateness towards the authors on whose he passed judgment. Perhaps no critic ever did his full duty to the public with so much tenderness towards writers. "You are not mistaken, my dear fellow, as to your facts," he once remarked in his kindliest way to a young writer, "but don't hurt people needlessly with that strong pen of yours. When you come to be as old as I am, you will be sorry to remember that you have been guilty of needless cruelty to any one." The gentleness of this just speech was very characteristic of the man, and may help to account for the hold he had on the affections of his friends. The last thing penned by this true gentleman was a brief note of courteous apology for an oversight. Just before he was seized with the fatal illness this day fortnight, Doran wrote an assurance of his regret for having, in the *Athenæum* of the 5th ult., assumed that Dr. Stebbing was dead. Having thus made an end of writing, he went to his bed. His illness was not especially painful; and it is questionable whether he ever realized the urgency of his case, though, on the day before his last, he remarked seriously, "Yes, I am nearing the great mystery."

This faint notice of a man whose memory claims the strongest praise may be brought to a close with a short extract from a letter which he wrote from Worthing, on the 5th of last December:—"As for me," he wrote, "with my book,—which was the outcome of fitful writing, now and then, and often forgotten,—having run a connecting thread through the whole, and published it, I have resolved to look at no criticism whatever for three months, and then only just to see what the effect may be when, as Johnson said, 'Eulogy fails to elevate, or censure to depress.'" Before the three months were ended, the writer was dead alike to praise or blame. Would that human words could reach him whither he has gone; for nothing is said of him that is not tender and true.

## ROYAL CHARTERS.

Two somewhat valuable documents have lately been added to the very large collection of Charters in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum.

1. The first, which is designated Addit. Chart. 25927, is a very fine example of the elegant handwriting which was in vogue with the scribes of the period. It is a grant by King Henry the Third to Elyas Cotele of free warren in the demesne lands of his manor of Camelarton, in the county of Somerset, with a fine of ten pounds against trespassers who may enter "ad fugandum vel ad aliquid capiendum quod ad Warrennam pertinet." The charter is dated at Woodstock on the 20th of May, A.D. 1248, with the following interesting list of witnesses who formed the king's court at the time: Silvester de Everdon, Bishop of Carlisle; Robert Passelewe, Archdeacon of Lewes; Roger de Quency, Earl of Winchester; John de Plessetes, the self-styled Earl of Warwick, who married Margery, widow of John Mareschall, the seventh Earl; John de Lessintone, Robert de Muscegros, Geoffrey de Langelee, Rob. Walerand, and Rob. Le Noreis. A very fine but imperfect impression of the great seal of England, in dark green wax, is attached to the document by a closely woven hollow braid or bobbin, plaited in four strands of a kind of red and green taffetas, now faded, but of interest as exhibiting the weaver's fabric upwards of six hundred years old as perfect as when first taken from the simple contrivance by which it was manufactured. In many of the particulars of beautiful handwriting, fineness of seal, and method of attaching the seal by a plaited silk cord of great elegance, we may compare Add. Ch. 24712, in the same collection. This latter is a charter of great historical importance, being the "Charta de Foresta" of the ninth year of Henry the Third, one of the landmarks of the liberties of England. It is difficult to describe the splendid *ensemble* of this magnificent document, the text of which is printed in Cay's edition of the 'Statutes at Large,' vol. i, p. 10.

2. The other is an equally fine document, but of a far later period. It is numbered 25959, and is the text of the treaty between King Henry the Eighth and the Most Serene Prince Christiern, Daciæ, Suesiæ, Norwegiæ, Slavorum Gothorumque Rex, dated on the 30th of June, A.D. 1523. This charter also has the great seal of the king (which he adopted after the death of Henry the Eighth, by the introduction of a lion and a fleur-de-lys into the field of the reverse), in green wax, appended by plaited silk ribbons, which are in some parts as fresh as if they had just been made.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL CURIOSITIES OF CREDULITY.

Dr. Carpenter's letter in your last issue so entirely fails to meet the allegations in my communication to the *Athenæum* of January the 12th, that I should be content to let the matter rest. But Dr. Carpenter now makes fresh statements, which I maintain to be both inaccurate and misleading, and I therefore ask permission to point them out.

In the first place, it is untrue that I have ever "required" Dr. Carpenter "and every one else" to have "a full faith" in the Academic Report of 1830. My sole objection was to Dr. Carpenter's ignoring its very existence. It is also untrue that the French Academy of Medicine "deliberately reversed the judgment" of its first Commission, "as having been obtained by fraud and chicanery." The second and third Commissions were of more limited scope than the first; their conclusions were mostly negative; and neither they nor the Academy itself in any way pronounced judgment on the first Commission, as Dr. Carpenter's words imply that they did. The subject having thus been again brought to the notice of your readers, I beg leave to offer a few remarks on the nature of the investigation by the first Commission of the French Academy of Medicine, and on the value of the evidence it affords.

We may readily assume that the members of this Commission fairly represented the best medical talent of France at that time, for they were chosen by a representative society of doctors, who would carefully select men of exceptional acuteness, caution, and judgment, to investigate a subject about which there was so much dispute as mesmerism, or, as it was then termed, magnetism. That the members of the Commission were quite aware of the chief sources of error, and were not led away by any contagious enthusiasm, is evident from their Report itself. Thus, they declare that many of the effects ascribed to magnetism are produced by "expectation," "ennui," and by "the imagination"; that the effects are "very varied in different individuals"; and that some of the phenomena may be simulated and Cornish charlatanism with the means of deception.* It is interesting to note that the patient first submitted to examination by M. Foissac (on whose proposition the Commission was appointed) turned out a complete failure; and had the Commission been hasty in arriving at conclusions, its report might have been as adverse to mesmerism as those which succeeded it. But the inquiry was continued, and other patients were found who submitted to every possible test. Finally, the members who attended the experiments, nine in number, *unanimously reported, after five years of inquiry*, "that magnetization without the knowledge of the patient; prevision of organic phenomena; knowledge of the internal condition of other persons; and true clairvoyance, had been demonstrated to them." One of the somnambules determined correctly the symptoms of M. Marc, a Commissioner; and also the disease of another person, the accuracy of the diagnosis being confirmed by *post mortem* examination. Clairvoyance was proved by one of the patients repeatedly reading and naming cards, while four of the Commissioners successively held his eyes closed with their fingers,—a test, the absolute conclusiveness of which every one may satisfy himself of. These are mere illustrations from among dozens of similar cases.*

Now are we to believe that nine eminent medical men, investigating this subject at great length, and reporting on it with a full sense of responsibility, could possibly have been the victims of imposture and delusion throughout the whole inquiry, without any one of the nine so much as suspecting its possibility? That they had full confidence in their facts is shown by the following extract from the concluding portion of their Report:—

"Certainly we dare not flatter ourselves that we shall make you share entirely our conviction of the reality of the phenomena which we have observed, and which you have neither seen, nor followed, nor studied with or in opposition to us. We do not, therefore, exact from you a blind belief in all that we have reported. We conceive that a great part of the facts are so extraordinary that you cannot grant it to us; perhaps we ourselves should have refused you such belief, if, changing places, you had come to announce them before this tribunal to us, who, like you at present, had seen nothing, observed nothing, studied nothing, followed nothing of them."

Dr. Carpenter wholly disbelieves the facts and conclusions of the Commission, as well as the whole mass of subsequent confirmatory testimony. This he is quite free to do, without any objection on my part. I only object to his first denying (by implication) the very existence of the Report, and then giving illogical and inadequate reasons for so doing. These so-called reasons are, that the Academy did not formally adopt the Report; that two subsequent Commissions *failed* to obtain confirmatory evidence, and *did* detect some attempts at imposture; and that a woman made a deathbed confession that she had, in some unexplained way, tricked two doctors who were not members of either of the Commissions.

But the first Commission also had "failures"; it also recognized "imposture" or attempts at imposture; but besides these it obtained absolutely conclusive facts, which have subsequently been often confirmed, but have never been satisfactorily explained away. To take the ground that clairvoyance is altogether impossible, and therefore incredible on any evidence, would be an intelligible position; but to admit that it is a question of evidence, and then to reject such direct, positive, and weighty evidence as that of the Commission of 1825-31 on the mere negative grounds above referred to, is utterly unintelligible; for to do so is to place ignorance above knowledge, and to estimate negative as superior to positive results.

Alfred R. Wallace.

* The Report is given at length in the 'Archives Générales de Médecine,' vol. xx., and is well worthy of careful perusal.

## SALE.

The library of Mr. A. G. Dew-Smith was sold by auction on Tuesday last, at the rooms of Messrs. Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge. All the books were in fine condition, mostly uncut, in splendid bindings by Bedford, Clarke, Lewis, Riviere, and other celebrated binders, and, in consequence, sold for very high prices. The collection was rich in first editions of the English poets, and comprised also several Horæ Beatæ Mariæ Virginis, both printed and manuscript. Amongst the books were: Æsop's Fabulæ Latine et Italice cum Allegoriis F. Tuppi, printed in 1485 at Naples, which realized 131*l.* (thrice the sum it has generally sold for); the Aldine Poliphilo of 1499, with the leaf of errata in fac-simile, 50*l.*; Shakspeare's Poems, 1640, with the rare portrait, 62*l.* (Daniel's copy sold for 44*l.*, and Sir W. Tite's for 23*l.* 10*s.*); Milton's Lycidas, 73*l.* (Sir W. Tite's sold for 37*l.*), his Comus, 50*l.* (purchased in G. Daniel's sale for 36*l.*), his Paradise Lost, 34*l.* (Dr. Bliss's sold for 13*l.*), his Poems, 14*l.* 10*s.*; an Italian Biblia Pauperum, a block book, printed *circa* 1510 at Venice, 24*l.* 10*s.*; Blake's Daughters of Albion, 30*l.*, and his America, 16*l.* 5*s.*; Ruskin's Modern Painters, 25*l.* 10*s.*, and

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