

opinion of the committee that it is "sufficient" and "efficient." We refer in connexion with this statement to Mr. Lawson Tait's letter, bearing date Oct. 22nd, 1894, published in THE LANCET, explaining the reason for the constitution of the staff of which the Medical Society complained. 8. The committee beg to state they have absolute control. 9. The rules which have been made from time to time have been drawn up, and are printed in the last report. Notwithstanding their knowledge of this, the Southampton Medical Society make complaint of it in THE LANCET. 10. This is so. As referring to the 24 operations, it is stated that Mr. Lawson Tait saw 19 of the cases. Of the other 5 cases above referred to, 2 were cases of emergency (Cases 2 and 5); 1 Mr. Lawson Tait was prevented from being present at (Case 4) owing to illness, and the other 2 were cases demanding operation. In each of these cases, as before stated, the most efficient and able assistance was procured, and the committee are satisfied that every care and precaution has been taken, and there is absolutely no cause for complaint. 11. This seems a serious offence in the eyes of the Medical Society, but the committee of the Women's Hospital have been unable to come to the conclusion that the attack made upon them by the Medical Society is of a genuine and public-spirited character, and they therefore took the view—and still strongly maintain it—that they would not listen to the proposal for a committee of inquiry until they, as the responsible body, had been informed *clearly and definitely*, not as mere vague insinuation, what the charges were which they were called upon to answer. The committee think that had they been acquainted with detailed charges and failed to investigate them satisfactorily, then the Southampton Medical Society might have thought they had a ground on which to base their suggestion. The committee offered to investigate any such charges and to fully acquaint the Medical Society with the action they had taken in the matter. The committee did refuse the proposal, and see no reason to alter their opinion; but it must not be thought from this that the committee of the Women's Hospital ever had any desire to avoid publicity. The Southampton Medical Society held out as an inducement to the committee to accede to their request "that further publicity would thus be avoided." To this somewhat extraordinary proposal the committee replied: "And we refuse to join with the Medical Society in any arrangements which would have the effect of concealing anything which, in the public interest or in the interest of medical science, should be known." We trust, however, from the full information that we have afforded, you will readily see that the committee have nothing whatever to conceal, and you are quite at liberty to publish the whole of the correspondence that has passed, and they would be only too ready to consider and accept *bonâ-fide* suggestions for the improvement of their institution. 12. The committee exceedingly regret having publicly to express their views on this point, but it is necessary to do so. They are of opinion that Dr. Playfair has treated them in a most discourteous manner. He listened to the accusations of the Medical Society. He never communicated with the committee or the staff of the hospital to which his name was attached, and the committee of the Women's Hospital received a letter from the *Secretary of the Medical Society*, to whom Dr. Playfair had written, saying he strongly approved of the proposal of the Medical Society as to holding a committee of inquiry. Dr. Playfair, *without being fully informed of the facts*, expressed his opinion, agreeing with the Medical Society, and therefore the committee of the Women's Hospital did not see the necessity of taking Dr. Playfair's advice into consideration. The committee are of opinion that Dr. Playfair should have resigned before throwing in his lot with the party adverse to the interest of the hospital, or declined to have given an opinion until he had received the view of the Hospital Committee. 13. Dr. Playfair has resigned under the circumstances stated above, and under the circumstances the committee see no reason to regret the course he has taken. 14. The committee very much regret that they are called upon to defend the reputation of one of their medical officers. The committee prefer to take the opinion of those gentlemen who know Mr. Eliot and know from actual experience and observation what his capabilities in this particular branch of practice are. And, apart from these opinions, the fact that Mr. Eliot has for some years past worked with Mr. Lawson Tait (witnessing Mr. Tait's operations, and operating himself under Mr. Tait's immediate observation) is quite sufficient to warrant the committee of the hospital in again endorsing the statement referred to in THE LANCET by the

Medical Society, and they are quite conscious of the fact that the success that has attended the work under their control is in a large measure due to the fact that Mr. Eliot has been and is always availing himself of every opportunity to acquire a knowledge of the most modern methods of treatment in this particular branch of practice, and the view the committee hold is fully borne out by the statement contained in Mr. Tait's letter. 15. It is almost incredible that a body of gentlemen could publish such a statement. In no one single instance have the Medical Society asked for information, but seem quite ready to rely on the bare statement of a hospital outpatient. The committee are quite content to leave criticism of this statement in the hands of the public, and especially those of the public who are acquainted with hospital outpatients. They strongly condemn the action of the society in publishing such a paltry accusation without making any effort to verify the statement in one single instance. It savours of the lack of candour and of the prejudice and narrow mind which have characterised the whole of this action.

It now only remains to prominently call attention to a few facts: (a) If the attack of the Medical Society was unprejudiced and promoted in the public interest, it is most extraordinary that every point in favour of the hospital has been deliberately suppressed in the statements sent to THE LANCET. (b) That the Medical Society has avoided and shirked in every possible way every offer from the committee of the Women's Hospital which would have enabled them to have arrived at the real facts of the case. *They would not hear a statement from Mr. Tait and Mr. Eliot on all the operations performed*, still maintaining (or insinuating) that operations were recklessly performed. They would not state any single case in support of these many accusations, although they have been repeatedly urged to do so by the Hospital Committee. (c) That gentlemen who are senior in the profession, and whose opinions are most valuable, have in consequence resigned their membership of the Southampton Medical Society. (d) The committee have only one object in view, and that is in a particular branch of science to bring the highest possible advantages of modern art and surgery within the reach of some of the poorer women in this town. (e) That in no other institution in the neighbourhood could a patient receive the advice of a surgeon of Mr. Tait's special experience.

In conclusion, and reviewing the whole correspondence and actions of the Medical Society, the committee cannot help drawing attention to the opening remarks of Mr. Bullar's first address, in which he carefully defines "professional jealousy" in its "good form" and its "bad form." The committee cannot discover the former—they sincerely hope it is not the latter.

(Signed)

A. F. FORBES, M.A.,

Chairman of the Committee.

H. C. PHILLIPS, Hon. Sec.,

Southampton Women's Hospital.

April 6th, 1895.

* * * We have received with the above letter copies of all the documents referred to therein. We cannot assume the position of arbitrator, but it seems to us that both indictment and answer might well have been shorter and more specific and categorical in character.—ED. L.

"SATISFYING (OR NOT) THE EXAMINERS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I be permitted through your columns to ask the following question? Why is such mystery practised in the results of the examinations of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of England? To illustrate this, a medical student competes for an examination. He fails, and has not the satisfaction of knowing whether his failure is due to the written or oral part of his examination. The information he obtains is, "he has not satisfied the examiners." If such a system as the publication of the marks he had obtained in the several parts of the examination was observed I think the dissatisfaction which now exists would be at an end. Although a candidate is voiceless in the matter, still the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons would, I should imagine, in reason concede to any system which would tend to advance the welfare of medical students.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

University College Hospital, April, 1895.

C. TILBURY FOX.