

and Viscount Ebrington, that the Secretary of the Royal Free Hospital would cause their names to be removed from the books of that institution, and in compliance with the desire of the Committee of Management that they might be allowed the opportunity of explaining their recent conduct towards me, before their lordships finally resolved on such a step, a deputation from the Committee, consisting of Messrs. Browne, Nelson, and Pritchard, with the secretary, Mr. Fenn, waited on these noblemen, at the residence of Lord Grosvenor, on Wednesday, the 3rd of May. Mr. Garrard attended with me. The statements of all parties were listened to with the utmost attention and patience. A document, of which the following is a copy, has since been forwarded to the Committee of the Free Hospital.

I may add that I have sent copies to the other medical journals.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
JOHN GAY.

Finsbury, May, 1854.

Park-street, May 6, 1854.

"SIR,—After having paid every attention to the statements which the deputation from the Committee of the Royal Free Hospital were good enough to make to us the day before yesterday, and after having given a careful consideration to all the facts brought to our notice, bearing upon the subject of Mr. Gay's dismissal from the office of surgeon to that institution, we have to inform you that we cannot see any grounds for altering the opinion we had previously formed. We cannot think that the Committee of Management acted towards Mr. Gay with that moderation and fairness which he had a right to expect, and we are at a loss to discover any serious grounds of complaint the Committee can have against that gentleman.

It appears that up to the end of March, 1853, Mr. Gay had for a period of seventeen years held the office of surgeon to the hospital, and had enjoyed the confidence of the Committee and of the Governors, as frequently testified by votes at general meetings.

At that time a memoir of this gentleman was published in the *Medical Circular*. At the request of the editor of that journal, Mr. Gay had (to use his own words) "supplied him with the dry facts connected with the course of his professional studies, together with references to his works and papers on professional subjects, which he had from time to time published." He also consented to sit for a daguerreotype portrait, which was to accompany the memoir. The memoir, when it appeared, contained some observations upon the connexion of Mr. Gay with the hospital, at which the Committee seem to have taken offence. It is no part of our duty to express any opinion here, either as to the probable influence upon the honourable profession to which Mr. Gay belongs, of the modern practice of publishing memoirs of gentlemen while still engaged in professional labours, or as to the soundness of taste or discretion evinced by Mr. Gay in thus, to a certain extent, countenancing that practice. We have only to consider his conduct in its bearing upon the Royal Free Hospital. Now although this memoir gave great praise to Mr. Gay, somewhat individually, and, as Mr. Gay himself told the Editor, unfairly at the expense of his medical colleagues, we cannot discover any observations in it which deserve to be termed "offensive and injurious," much less "libellous aspersions" on the hospital; nor do we find any which seem to us likely "to injure and degrade the hospital in the estimation of the public."

The Committee, however, took a different view of this publication, and in a letter, dated July 15, 1853, asked Mr. Gay certain questions as to the part taken by him in the publication of that memoir. To these questions Mr. Gay replied in a letter of July the 19th. In that letter he stated, "I am not in any way responsible for the personal or general observations which it (the memoir) contains; I did not either supply or suggest them; I did not see them in manuscript or proof, nor was I aware of their nature prior to their publication."

Mr. Gay also explained, that although the proof-sheets had been sent to him, he had returned them unread to the Editor, with whom at that time he had not any personal acquaintance.

With these explanations we think the Committee ought to have been satisfied. Such, however, was not the case, and another request was made to Mr. Gay, that he should state that he did not concur in the views of his biographers—views (be it remembered) for which he was not responsible. We cannot think that such a demand ought to have been made, and we are of opinion that Mr. Gay's conduct was quite justifiable, when he declined to comply with it. He was nevertheless dismissed from his office—the severest rebuke which the Committee could convey to him.

Without in any way imputing discreditable motives to the Committee, our own opinion is, that they erred in the first place in taking offence at the expressions contained in the memoir; secondly, in asking Mr. Gay for an explanation on the subject; and lastly, in not being satisfied with the explanation he gave.

We have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most humble, obedient servants,
(Signed) ROBERT GROSVENOR,
EBRINGTON.

To Mr. Fenn, Secretary of the Royal Free Hospital.

P.S.—We have forwarded a copy of this to Mr. Gay, with an intimation that he is at liberty to make any use of it he thinks proper."

* * In the above note, which has been addressed to us by Mr. Gay, he states that Lord Robert Grosvenor and Lord Ebrington had requested the secretary of the Royal Free Hospital to remove their names from the books of that institution. This statement is correct as regards Lord Robert Grosvenor; but it is wrong with respect to Lord Ebrington, who has not at any time made the request mentioned; and even Lord Robert Grosvenor, within the last week, and consequently since the date of the above communication, has written to the secretary, stating that he does not object to the retention of his name in the lists of the hospital.—ED. L.

THE GRIEVANCES OF UNION SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I trust the exhortation you gave to the union surgeons of this country in the last number of your journal will not prove ineffectual, but will arouse them one and all to make a combined and vigorous effort to awaken Parliament to a sense of their manifold grievances, and the wretched remuneration they receive for their arduous labours.

It is to be hoped that every union surgeon will aid the inquiry, for which Mr. F. Pigott has obtained a parliamentary committee, by drawing up a statement of facts illustrative of his present position. Now is the time to produce such a mass of evidence as will convince the House of Commons that upwards of 3000 union surgeons have been not only grossly treated for a long series of years, but that it has been utterly impossible, by any kind of representation to the present authorities, to obtain redress.

Let it be shown to Parliament that the generosity of the profession has been overtaxed—that, for services rendered to the sick poor by day and by night cheerfully and without hesitation, a pittance has been doled out which would be demurred to by any man who has the slightest respect for the time, skill, and responsibility which must necessarily be demanded from him. Let it be shown that the authorities have had hard hearts, and unwilling ears. A drayman, a policeman, and even a cab-horse have their periods of labour and rest allotted to them, but when is the union medical officer off duty? Days and nights, Sundays and week-days are all the same to him, and his duty compels him to labour incessantly in an atmosphere calculated to undermine the strongest constitution. Surely the forlorn hopes of the profession ought to receive some consideration commensurate with the risks they run. Neglect and contumely ought not to be added to the depressing effects of ill-requited services. Neither should the medical officer have placed over him parties who can neither understand nor appreciate his position. This is not only inconsiderate, but unjust. Are they not worthy of a better fate? Do they not carry scientific knowledge and the varied appliances of medical relief into the dwellings of the "poorest of the poor?" Ought they to be ill-treated and maligned, besides being miserably paid, for stepping where others would be afraid to tread? Do they not sit for hours together in wretched chambers and damp cellars, cheerfully discharging a most painful and dangerous duty? The public know little of this, but let union medical officers say, and let them try to convince Parliament that they have a strong claim on their considerate protection.

Sir, I will not take up more of your space. I have been led into these reflections, opportunely I hope, by the sanction of the House of Commons to an Inquiry into the Medical Relief of the Poor, on the motion of Mr. F. Pigott. To that gentleman I have sent two reports of my labours as a medical officer in the Halifax district of the Halifax union, and copies have also been forwarded to Lord John Russell. In the hope of further

stimulating my brother medical officers to aid in the cause I have penned these few observations, and shall be glad if they prove worthy of a place in your widely-circulated journal.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
FREDERICK SMITH GARLICK.

Cheapside, Halifax, May 15th, 1854.

P.S. The town address of Francis Pigott, Esq., M.P., is 5, Montague-place, Montague-square.

LOCAL MEDICAL REGISTRARS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to submit to you that a very indispensable thing to the establishment of a complete system of Medical Registration would be the existence of *local officers*, by whom the lists should be made and kept corrected, irrespective of the voluntary acts of the medical men themselves. It appears to me that the Registrars of Births and Deaths constitute such a body. They come in daily contact with the surgeons of their respective districts; any fatal cases attended by unqualified persons are at once brought under their notice, and, in every other respect, they appear well qualified to carry out the details, subject to any central supervision that may be contemplated by the act.

I am, Sir, your very faithful servant,
M.R.C.S.

May, 1854.

THE NORFOLK AND NORWICH MUSEUM, AND THE GIFT OF CASTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having read the letter of Mr. Donald Dalrymple, in THE LANCET of this day, in reference to certain casts presented to the Museum of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, by the committee of the Free Hospital for Incurables, in which he has entirely exonerated that committee from the imputation cast upon them—viz. “the palming upon the museum of the former institution casts which were *known to be inaccurate*,” I should, as a member of that committee, have rested perfectly satisfied with what might be implied from the contents of that letter, as regards the inaccuracy of the casts in question, had not Mr. D. D., in his attempt to explain away his own misstatements at the quarterly meeting of the Governors of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital on the 8th ult., endeavoured to shift his ground, shirking altogether the statement promised, as to the reasons which actuated the museum committee in returning the casts, and descending to insinuations incapable of proof, and unworthy of him.

From this I conclude that the casts were not rejected because one of them was known to be inaccurate, but because Mr. D. Dalrymple and the members of the museum committee presumed to question the propriety of the operation itself. Now sir, as one of the surgeons present at the operation, and consequently incurring some part of the responsibility, I beg to acquaint those gentlemen that the operator has been fully borne out and justified by the circumstance of the patient having survived nine months. Mr. Paget, a high authority in such matters, fixing, if I remember rightly, from nine to twelve months as the probable period life is generally prolonged in such malignant cases—and is this nothing? Will Mr. Dalrymple presume to tell me there is no merit in snatching a fellow-creature from the jaws of death, and giving him time for making those arrangements of his worldly affairs, which the misery previously endured by him, had perhaps prevented; moreover, I am informed, and I believe Mr. D. is aware of the fact, that the man was, speaking comparatively, as to his former condition, comfortable to the last.

I now claim from you, Mr. Editor, an insertion of the facts of the case.—On August 5th, 1843, Mr. Webber operated on William Forder, at the Free Hospital for Incurables. The tumour was not, as stated by Mr. Donald Dalrymple, of poly-poid growth, but it was a malignant disease, and distinctly stated to be so to Forder, not only by Mr. Webber, but by all the other surgeons present. He was told that it was anything but improbable that he might die on the operating-table; and even should the operation succeed, it was not likely he would enjoy any long immunity from disease, and that it was a question entirely for his consideration whether he would avail himself of the slight chance offered to him, by the only means left. He intimated to all present his desire that the operation should be performed, as he came into the hospital

for that purpose. The tumour was *entirely removed*, including a large portion of the hard palate, and of the upper jaw, from which the disease had originated.

At a meeting of the subscribers to the Norwich Hospital for Incurables, held at the Swan Hotel, on the 17th of September, 1853, William Forder was present, he was not exhibited as a cure, although a large number of persons there, who knew what his condition was prior to the operation, expressed astonishment and delight at the triumph of art and skill over rapidly-destroying disease.

In conclusion I wish to observe, Mr. D. Dalrymple, having discarded the word *inaccurate* from his vocabulary, would have exercised a sound discretion, and secured for himself a more creditable and gentlemanly position, if he had abstained from detraction, and given to the medical public that *truthful* information he is known to possess—but

“Vœ meum
Fervens diffilli bile tumet jecur.”

I am, Sir, a subscriber for thirty years’ standing.

SPENCER FREEMAN, L.A.C., and M.R.C.S., 1827.
Stowmarket, May 13th, 1854.

IMPERFECT CORONERS’ INQUESTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR.—I presume that I am in the same coroner’s district with Mr. Meadows, whose note you published in your last number: at any rate, the “crown’s quest law” is administered here with the same utter disregard and contempt of medical testimony; as the two following cases, one of them occurring only last week, will prove.

A man, aged forty-one, apparently in good health, on returning home from his work on Wednesday evening, the 10th inst., complained of severe pain in the abdomen, and was attacked with vomiting and purging: these symptoms continued throughout the night; and at five A.M. of Thursday I was hastily summoned. On my arrival at a quarter to six, I was informed that the man had been dead about half-an-hour, and was told the history of the case, and shown a quantity of bloody and mucous matter which he had voided. Of course I was unable to give a certificate as to the cause of death, therefore an inquest was held on Saturday, to which I was not summoned, and where a verdict was recorded of “Death from natural causes,” without any medical testimony.

In October, 1851, I was called one morning to see a child reported to have died suddenly in an adjoining park. I found him lying on the path quite dead, with a dark, turgid face, and viscid mucus running from the mouth. I learnt from his playmates that they had been picking up chesnuts, acorns, &c., when he suddenly complained of pain in the stomach, vomited, and fell down: he moaned for a few moments, and when they went to him he was dead. An inquest was held; no medical testimony was considered necessary, and the wise verdict returned—“Died by visitation of God!”

In both instances the summoning officer told me he had no instructions to require my attendance; adding, in the latter case, because I did not see the child before death.

Surely, sir, there is some culpable mismanagement here: what motive can the coroner have in thus opening a door for the escape of possible guilt; certainly of very strong suspicion? The only obvious one is that which Mr. Meadows indicates—the desire to carry favour with the magistrates by producing as light an account as possible to the item of inquests; at the expense, however, of public justice and public morality.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
Oxted, Surrey, May 15th, 1854. CHARLES ROBERT THOMPSON.

THE ARMY AND NAVY MEDICAL SERVICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following has been moved for by Colonel Boldero in the House of Commons:—

“Returns of the actual number of vacancies for assistant-surgeons, whether in ships of war, or in hospitals. And the number of candidates, (qualified), to fill up such vacancies,—together with the number rejected from the 1st of January, 1853, to the 6th day of March, 1854. Of the number of surgeons appointed to hospitals to do the duty of assistant-surgeons; together with the number of druggists’ apprentices recently employed at naval hospitals to compound medicine,—a duty hitherto performed by junior assistant-surgeons. And of the number of vacancies for assistant-surgeons in the army; and the number of candidates, (qualified), to fill up such va-