first, considerable pain on digital examination, excessive flatulency, and irritative fever, and her health was entirely broken down. From her symptoms, a suspicion arose that abscess might co-exist with the fibrous tumour, and, as she seemed to be fast sinking, Dr. Smith deemed it advisable to pass a *fine exploratory needle, not a sound*, into the tumour, with the hope that, if such existed, her distressing symptoms might possibly be relieved, at least for a time.

This was done at her own residence, as she was too ill to attend at the hospital, and on the withdrawal of the needle, it had in its groove what appeared to be thick pus. The post mortem examination, upon Dr. Lee's own showing, proved the correctness of Dr. Protheroe Smith's diagnosis. It will thus be seen, that the symptoms which Dr. Lee asserted had resulted from the operation, in fact preceded it, and were really the cause of its adoption.

I have no doubt, Sir, that Dr. Robert Lee will rejoice to find that such a serious charge against a professional brother entirely fails, from the inaccuracy of the data upon which it was founded, and that he will be glad to feel himself relieved from the unpleasant feelings, which a belief in the possible truthfulness of such a charge must have created.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

High-street, Camden-town, May 29, 1850.

JOHN SCOTT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have been told by friends who were present at the meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, on Tuesday evening, the 28th ult., that, in a paper read by Dr. Robert Lee, my professional character was attacked. Not having been apprized by Dr. Lee of his intention, and not having been present on the occasion, I wait for an opportunity of knowing the precise terms of the charge, and I feel assured, if they are such as have been represented to me, that I shall be able most satisfactorily to show that the imputation was made on insufficient grounds, and under a misapprehension of the facts which really occurred.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Park-st., Grosvenor-sq., June, 1850.

PROTHEROE SMITH.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

DR. MARSHALL HALL AND DR. MURPHY.

THE SPECULUM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a paper by Dr. Marshall Hall, "On a New and Lamentable Form of Hysteria," published in the last number of THE LANCET, (June 1, 1850,) I find the following passage:—

"There is a case of 'poisoned mind' in the male sex, induced by the quack doings of the day, relative to the existence of impotency, which all of us must have treated and deplored. A similar case of 'mental poisoning' is now being induced, in the other sex, by the frequent, constant, and undue reference, on the part of the profession, (?) to the condition of the 'uterine organs.'"

"These latter patients become reserved, and moody, and perverse, and speak unintelligibly, in broken sentences; the peace and happiness of the family circle is broken up; subjects are discussed on the domestic hearth which ought never to be mentioned, except in a sick-room; words which wound are spoken, and thoughts which are derogatory are expressed by other, perhaps by the male, members of the family."

"One poor miserable patient comes to me weekly, thus afflicted. She had been treated by the speculum and the caustic for months, as an out-patient of University College Hospital. I sent her to Dr. Robert Lee twice. Twice that gentleman examined, and declared that there was no uterine or vaginal disease. Meanwhile the miserable patient's mind is absorbed by this *ideal* malady, and the peace of her husband's home is destroyed."

Having the charge of those patients who, afflicted with uterine diseases, are applicants at University College Hospital, the whole of the above passage makes, by implication, a most serious charge against me—a charge which I learn for the first time from the pages of THE LANCET. It is not my intention, at present, to offer any observations upon the general tenour of Dr. Hall's paper. My only object in addressing you now is to protest, in the strongest terms, against what appears to me to be most unprofessional conduct.

A patient, who, I must assume, had been under my care for uterine disease, applies to Dr. Marshall Hall. He sends her to Dr. Robert Lee, who, after two examinations, declares that there was no uterine or vaginal disease. No reference is made to me; but on the authority of Dr. Lee's opinion alone, given, I presume, long after she had been under my care, the case is published by Dr. Marshall Hall as an example of *ideal* malady,—evidently implying, that at University College Hospital she had been made to believe in the reality of a disease of the womb which had no existence.

The common courtesies of life might have prompted Dr. Hall to forward to me the particulars of the case, if not the patient, with Dr. Lee's opinion, in order that I might at least have the opportunity of making my defence. Those rules of etiquette which should govern an honourable and scientific profession would have obliged Dr. Hall, were they respected, to communicate with me before he pronounced so sweeping a condemnation of my practice in the case alluded to. No such courtesy, however, has been shown to me; the charge has been deliberately made and published, and it only remains for me to give it the most indignant denial.

Fortunately, my hospital practice has always been conducted before witnesses, and I can most conscientiously declare that I never used the speculum, nor applied caustic, to any patient who did not afford clear evidence of disease, not only to myself, but to others who were present. I know not to whom Dr. Hall refers, nor can I recollect any patient of mine exhibiting the symptoms so feelingly described by him; but this much I do know, that if I wished to excite in a patient's mind the most miserable feelings—to make her "reserved," "moody," "perverse, and speak unintelligibly in broken sentences,"—if I would wish "to destroy the peace of her husband's home,"—I would tell her that she had been for months treated for a disease which had no existence until the mental malady had been induced under which she was then suffering.

It is with great reluctance, Sir, that I now trespass on your attention, but an imperative necessity compels me to make this protest; and I trust to your candour and impartiality to give this letter a prompt insertion in your journal.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Henrietta-street, Cavendish-square,
June 3, 1850.

EDWARD WM. MURPHY.

INDIGNITIES TO NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Few things can be more mortifying to a gentleman than to feel that he has been insulted, whilst he has no means of resenting the affront; and it is no small addition to this mortification that he should have his insults paraded amongst his associates, and become the subject of their compassion, if not of their scorn. To this feeling it is owing that so few of the acts of petty tyranny and insult heaped upon the assistant-surgeons of the Navy have come before the profession. Your readers know that the Navy is unpopular with our profession, and that no medical man who can help it will join the service at present. Your readers are also aware that the assistant-surgeons are in a false position, and that the first step to extricate them from it is their removal from the midshipman's mess, where they are treated like boys, into the gunroom mess, where they would have the society and status of men. But beyond this the profession has formed only general impressions of the condition of the naval assistant-surgeon, and if challenged to a proof, would not, until lately, be able to give such examples and instances as would satisfy the uninitiated that their convictions were sound. In THE LANCET for this year I am glad to notice that such particulars are given as will secure the attention of the profession, and I hope that no false shame will prevent the assistant-surgeons from reporting to you every act of tyranny and petty annoyance to which they have been, or may hereafter be, exposed. In this way students will learn what they may expect if they join the service; officers in command of ships will be made to feel that if their authority be nearly absolute, they can only abuse that authority at their peril; that their conduct will come under the notice of a far mightier power than the Admiralty, a power that the loftiest power in the land cannot withstand—the press; and lastly, the Admiralty will be made to feel that the good or bad treatment of the naval assistant-surgeons is not a matter merely affecting these officers, but comes home to the comfort and peace of mind of every man who sends his boy to sea, and wishes to know that in his hour of sickness, when at sea, and