Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

MR. SYME AND HIS ASSAILANT.

[LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS FROM MR. SYME.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having recommended a plan of treating strictures of the urethra which resist other means of remedy, and believing that this proposal was calculated to afford relief under circumstances the most serious, I felt not only disposed, but in some measure bound, to maintain it against unjust opposition. My treatise on this subject was no sooner announced than the following advertisement appeared in the newspapers:—

"In the press, and immediately will be published, Practical Observations on Stricture of the Urethra, and Fistula in Perineo, with drawings illustrative of these affections, and of the Operation of Catheterism; proving that the treatment of such diseases can only be safely effected by the employment of the Catheter, as pointed out in his System of Practical Surgery, second edition, page 416. By John Lizars, late Professor of Surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons, and Senior Operating Surgeon to the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh."

The work thus promised more than twelve months ago has never appeared, but was lately again announced in the following terms:—

"In the press, and immediately will be published, Practical Observations on Stricture of the Urethra and Fistula in Perineo, with cases and drawings illustrative of these affections, proving that the treatment of such diseases can only be safely effected by the employment of the Silver Catheter, and that all other means resorted to for their removal, not excepting the hazardous operation of Perineal Section, have failed, as clearly established by cases published in the Medical Times of 26th Oct., 1850. By John Lizars, late Professor of Surgery to the Royal College of Surgeons, and Senior Operating Surgeon

to the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh.—38, Charlotte-square, November, 1850.—Edinburgh: W. H. Lizars. London: S. Highley."

The cases here referred to did not mention the names of the patients, or those of the practitioners in whose hands they occurred, nor did they present any features by which they could be recognised by myself as having been under my care; but, as they were said to have been treated by what the author chose to designate "*a pure perineal sectionist*," the inference obviously intended was, that they were specimens of my practice. They contained the most frightful statements of the dreadful effects, immediate and remote, of the operation which I had recommended, and, if accepted as trustworthy, could not fail to impede its adoption. Had this publication been limited to Scotland, where the history, character, and position of Mr. Lizars are sufficiently well known, it could not have done any harm; but to place more distant readers upon an equality with my countrymen in this respect, I wrote the letter which—having been refused insertion where it had a preferable claim—was kindly allowed to appear in your columns.

In reply to this statement Mr. Lizars has alluded to the fact, that twenty years ago, by a majority of one vote, he was appointed Professor of Surgery to the College of Surgeons; but as this transaction affects the credit of the college much more than the present question, I leave the surviving members of that body to explain the circumstances which led to a choice so extraordinary. In regard to the verdict against him for falsehood and calumny, Mr. Lizars says, "The decision of a court of law, where proof of the truth libelled is disallowed, affords no evidence of moral falsehood;" the inference being, of course, that, if allowed to do so, he could have proved the truth of his statement. But surely Mr. Lizars must have forgotten that I have in my possession a letter to me in which he admits that there were no grounds for this statement, and expresses his "sincere regret" for having made it.

It turns out that the first case related by Mr. Lizars is one of those contained in my treatise, and I have to beg that you will allow the two accounts to appear side by side.

Mr. Lizars' Case of E. M.

15th November, 1849.—E. M., aged forty-one, states, that about twenty-years ago he fell from a scaffold eleven feet high, and struck his perinæum on a plank, causing great loss of blood, which flowed freely from the urethra. After this accident he began to experience difficulty in passing his urine, which gradually increased, and ended in stricture. In 1841 he applied to Professor Lizars, who put him in a warm bath, where, after remaining half an hour, he succeeded in inserting No. 2 silver catheter, which was retained for several hours, when No. 3 was inserted. The catheters were increased in size to No. 5, when the patient, considering himself cured, left off his attendance.

In 1848, finding the stricture as bad as ever, the patient consulted a *pure perineal sectionist*, who succeeded in inserting No. 3 catheter, but after several trials to insert a larger catheter, he could never succeed; he therefore resolved upon performing the operation of perineal section. The patient was placed on the table, as in lithotomy, a staff inserted, and an incision made from the most depending portion of the scrotum to the verge of the anus, through the skin, cellular tissue, and urethra. The staff was now withdrawn, and No. 7 catheter inserted. A great quantity of blood was lost during the operation, which lasted upwards of thirteen minutes. Immediately after being placed in bed, hæmorrhage recurred to a fearful extent, and was with difficulty suppressed. In about an hour after, hæmorrhage broke out again, and was stopped. Towards night, bleeding again commenced, and was checked with great difficulty. The patient states, that by these repeated losses of blood he was much weakened.

Fourteen days after the operation, No. 9 catheter was inserted. In three or four months after, No. 8 only could be inserted. Soon after the operation, he was attacked with palpitation of the heart, which incapacitated him following his occupation and earning his livelihood.

He also states, that the stricture is as bad as ever; and, on taking off his trowsers to show the cicatrix in the perinæum, he was seized with palpitation of the heart, and compelled to lie down on a sofa for a few minutes.

In March, 1850, he consulted a physician, who gives the following account:—"E—M— is attacked with palpitation of the heart on any exertion, being seized with violent pain in the region of the heart, shooting to the left shoulder,

Mr. Syme's Case of E. M.

E. M., aged forty-one, a plasterer, was admitted into the Royal Infirmary on the 13th of November last, on account of urinary irritation, and inability to pass his urine, through the natural channel. He stated, that about nineteen years ago he had fallen across a beam of wood, and bruised his perinæum, which injury was accompanied by a slight discharge of blood from the urethra, and, for a few days, by retention of urine, requiring the catheter to be introduced. A small induration gradually formed in the perinæum, behind the scrotum, and about seven years ago he had again retention for several days. Three years since he suffered from a similar attack, and subsequently has experienced more or less difficulty and pain in passing urine, with enlargement and increased uneasiness of the perineal swelling. More recently he was admitted into the hospital under the care of the late senior ordinary surgeon (Dr. Duncan), for relief from stricture of the urethra. Bougies were passed regularly, and under this treatment the hardness in the perinæum nearly disappeared. After a residence of five weeks, he was dismissed almost quite well. Soon after leaving the hospital, he was exposed to cold and wet, and his complaints returned with increased severity. The swelling of the perinæum and scrotum enlarged rapidly. An abscess formed, and a considerable quantity of matter was evacuated by incision; and in a few days the urine began to escape through the opening thus made.

At the period of his final admission, (13th November, 1848,) there was great induration of the perinæum and scrotum, with two fistulous openings about an inch from each other, through one of which the chief part of his urine escaped. The patient, from long suffering and disturbance of sleep, which he was not permitted to enjoy for more than a few minutes at a time, was extremely irritable and desponding, and derived no benefit from the introduction of instruments through the stricture, which was situated about five inches from the orifice of the urethra.

On the 20th, I introduced a grooved staff into the urethra, and cut upon it in the perinæum through the contracted part, making an incision about two inches in length. A full-sized catheter was then introduced, and retained in the bladder. The catheter was withdrawn at the end of forty-eight hours, after which the patient did not make a drop of water through the wound, and was at once completely relieved from all his

and down the left arm to the fingers, all of which he ascribes to the hæmorrhage consequent on the operation. He has had no rheumatism, no inflammation of chest, no difficulty of breathing or cough, and none of his relations have had any heart disease. He has not been able to work since the operation. A distinct endocardial murmur is heard, obscuring both the cardiac sounds. The carotids beat strongly and visibly, and there are no venous pulsations. The pulse is 84, and jarring."

He died in the beginning of August, 1850.

The complete discordance between these two accounts of the same case can be explained only by supposing one or both of them to be inconsistent with the matter of fact. In support of my own, I beg to remark, that the patient was treated in a public ward of the Royal Infirmary, under the eyes of students from every part of the United Kingdom, and that I can substantiate every circumstance mentioned in it by the evidence of respectable witnesses. I may here select the principal allegations of Mr. Lizars, that there was repeated frightful hæmorrhage; that symptoms of diseased heart first appeared after my operation; and that the stricture was as bad as ever subsequently to it.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Dec. 2, 1850.

I WAS nurse in the surgical clinical wards when Edward Monro was operated upon by Mr. Syme, in November, 1849. I distinctly recollect his case, and having almost constant occasion to be in the ward in which he lay, must have known if any bleeding had occurred; but so far as I know, there was none.

(Signed) JANNET PORTER,
Principal Nurse of the Surgical
Clinical Wards.

Edinburgh, Dec. 2, 1850.

EDWARD MONRO applied to me, as medical officer of the Dispensary of the City Parochial Board, on the 12th of June, 1848, labouring under disease of the heart, bronchitis, and disease of the urinary organs. He was sent into the Royal Infirmary in the following November, and placed under the care of Mr. Syme, who performed an operation for the remedy of an obstinate stricture.

On the 15th of May, 1850, I had opportunity of seeing Monro again, as an applicant for parochial relief, on account of general debility with his old complaints, excepting the stricture, to ascertain the state of which, I passed No. 11 without any difficulty into the bladder.

JOHN YOUNG MYRTLE, M.D., F.R.C.P.E. &c.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Dec. 2, 1850.

I WAS dresser in the surgical clinical wards when Mr. Syme operated upon Edward Monro, in November, 1849, and am not aware that there was any bleeding after the operation.

I was also a clerk in the medical clinical wards last summer, when Monro was a patient in these wards, labouring under disease of the heart. He was then perfectly free from any urinary complaint, and frequently expressed his gratitude for the complete relief he had derived from Mr. Syme's operation.

CHARLES MURCHISON,
Resident Clerk, Clinical Surgical Wards.

31, Abercromby-place, Dec. 2, 1850.

MY DEAR SIR,—In reply to your inquiries as to my recollection of the patient Edward Monro, on whom you operated for stricture of the urethra by incision, I regret I cannot give you a correct statement, as regards dates.

Monro, before his admission into the hospital, had been under my treatment for stricture, with an indurated swelling in the perinæum. I had more than once dilated his urethra to the full size by the use of bougies; but the stricture had always returned on discontinuing the treatment. As I found he had been admitted into the hospital, under your care, in order to have the stricture divided by incision, I watched the progress of his case with interest, as I believed it to be a good case to test the value of the operation.

I am not certain whether or not I was present at the operation, but I believe I saw the patient on the same day, after the operation, and I certainly visited him daily for some time afterwards.

I cannot recollect that there was any hæmorrhage after the operation; indeed, I am satisfied, that if there was any, it must have been very trifling, for I saw the patient, and looked at the wound every day, and the absence of either local or constitutional disturbance struck me forcibly, in his case.

previous sufferings. He quickly regained his sleep, appetite, and strength, and was dismissed cured on the 2nd of December.

Some time afterwards (as far as I can recollect, three or four months after the operation) I saw Monro, and questioned him particularly as to the state of the urethra. He assured me, that since the day of the operation he had never had the slightest annoyance; that the hardness in the perinæum was gone; and that he voided his urine as freely as he ever did in his life. His general appearance was much improved, and he had then the look of robust health.

Monro's case was one which satisfied me, more than any other I had seen, of the benefit to be derived from the treatment of confirmed stricture by external incision.

I am, my dear Sir, yours faithfully,
Professor Syme, 2, Rutland-street. R. J. MACKENZIE.

I trust that no one who possesses the feelings of a gentleman will expect me to inquire farther into the cases of Mr. Lizars. The repulsive duty forced upon me has now been discharged sufficiently to render harmless whatever this person has said or written, and in future may say or write; while the readers of a journal, which claims him as one of its contributors, will probably pause before investing any more pence in the purchase of practical information, characterized by the quality which I have had the pain of unfolding.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
Edinburgh, December 4, 1850. JAMES SYME.

* * * In publishing this communication from Mr. Syme, we think it right to ask whether the advertisement dated Nov. 1850, quoted at the commencement of the letter, was published by Mr. Lizars, or with his sanction and authority? The respectable portion of our profession will not be surprised at our asking this question; but we shall make no further remark on the subject until an answer to it is either returned or refused by Mr. Lizars.—Ed. L.

TESTIMONIAL TO MR. J. F. CLARKE.

THE Committee for conducting this testimonial have circulated the following letter to numerous members of the profession:—

SIR,—The Committee take the liberty of acquainting you that Mr. J. F. Clarke has for nearly twenty years reported the proceedings of several Medical Societies for THE LANCET, and was also for many years the only representative of the medical press at these institutions. Mr. J. F. Clarke therefore has thus collected and preserved a great mass of scientific intelligence and information. The satisfactory manner in which Mr. Clarke has discharged his duties is proved by the fact, that for four years he was Honorary Secretary to the Medical Society of London, which appointment he accepted at the request of the Council; besides which, he was for three years Honorary Secretary to the Westminster Medical Society; and at the present time he holds the important office of Vice-President to the amalgamated Societies.

The Committee feel, that by his impartial and valuable reports Mr. Clarke has rendered essential service to the profession generally, and would therefore solicit your name as a subscriber to the above testimonial.

(Signed) CHARLES WING, } Hon. Secs.
G. BORLASE CHILDS, }

Medical News.

THE FELLOWSHIP.—At the meeting of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, on the 12th inst., the following gentlemen, members of the College, were admitted fellows—viz., Messrs. WILLIAM RUTHERFORD ANCRAM, Valparaiso, South America, diploma dated Oct. 11, 1839; JOHN ORSBORN, Bitterne, Southampton, January 10, 1840; and