Correspondence.

THYROIDECTOMY AND INSANITY.

THE SHEPPARD AND ENOCH PRATT HOSPITAL,
January 15, 1908.

DR. HENRY J. BERKLEY, Baltimore.

My dear Doctor.—Some seven or eight months ago, I had a conversation with you concerning a surgical procedure you were contemplating in certain cases of dementia præcox, particularly of the catatonic type. Again, on Thursday afternoon, December 19, 1907, we had some further conversation on the subject, and you narrated to me briefly the histories of four or five patients upon whom operations had been done at the City Detention Hospital, Baltimore, the operation being a removal of a part of the thyroid gland.

I was much interested in what you had outlined in our first conversation, and particularly interested in the results which had apparently followed the operations already undertaken. I asked you at our last conversation, as you will recall, for a report of the cases when you were ready to publish your conclusions, and the theory upon which the operations were based, for the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INSANITY.

I understood at the time that you were not ready to make any public announcement, believing that the cases operated upon were too few, and the time which had elapsed since the operation was too short, to warrant such publication. You may, therefore, imagine my surprise to read in the *Baltimore News*, issued on the day of our last conversation, December 19, 1907, what was purported to be an interview with the Resident Physician at the City Detention Hospital, which, without other evidence, would lead one to infer that this physician had, after study and observation at home and abroad, devised and made the operations performed at the Detention Hospital, of which you had told me, and which were all made, you informed me, by Dr. Follis.

The interview in the *Baltimore News* was, in substance, sent out by the agent of the Associated Press, and has appeared in many newspapers, both in this country and abroad. Worded as it was, it was calculated to awaken wide interest among those who had insane relatives, and to attract more or less attention from those interested in the treatment of insanity. I have had several letters from physicians, asking about the "new operation for insanity," and numerous inquiries have been made by anxious friends as to its real value. All of the letters from medical men have shown a degree of skepticism concerning the matter, as the writers doubted the reliability of newspaper articles upon medical topics. The friends of the patients, however, cannot distinguish between the false and the genuine, and when some one cries lo here, lo there is the remedy you seek for your unfortunate relative, are prone, and naturally so, to follow any suggestion, no matter from what source, and especially one which bears the evidence of personally expressed views upon the part of a physician who was presumed to speak with authority, and who has not seen fit since, so far as I can learn, to make any modification of the statements contained in the alleged interview.

I think, therefore, that you owe it to yourself (although I know you are not one who is jealous of his claims to priority), to the surgeon, who, at your request, made the operations, to your professional brethren who wish to know the real status of the case, but are willing to await your own time for detailed information, and to the public, which is anxiously seeking for whatever glimmer of hope there may be, and which should not be misled into expectations which may be doomed to disappointment, to publish a brief statement of what has been done at the City Detention Hospital, with what purpose, and by whom. Such a statement accompanied with the injunction to the profession and to the public, to await further experience and observation, and mature judgment, will serve to prevent rash undertakings, and possibly, bitter disappointment.

In case you agree with my view, I shall be glad to publish this letter and your reply in the *AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INSANITY*.

I am, very sincerely your friend,

EDWARD N. BRUSH.