fracture of the skull; apoplexy; epilepsy; drunkenness; or poison? Detail the symptoms of each of the above states respectively, and where you think the application of the trephine is necessary, you will give the method of performing that operation; contrasting the practice of the present day, in the treatment of capillary, simple and compound fractures of the skull, with that pursued by Mr. Pott and the best surgeons of his time, with your opinion of the superiority of one over the other.

DR. E. WILLIAMS

ON THE

RESOLUTIONS OF THE COLCHESTER MEDICAL SOCIETY.

—
“Audi alteram partem.”

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was surprised this morning in observing (LANCET, page 421) a report of proceedings under the head “Colchester Medical Society.” Had I been aware that any person was *authorised* by such society to *publish its Transactions*, I should certainly have supplied you, by way of appendix, with a few lines explanatory of the affair. The “charges” were brought forward at an ordinary meeting, and without my receiving the slightest intimation of any such intention; in consequence of my absence a general special meeting was convened.

I deem it but right that you should be possessed of the grounds on which the charges were “*proven*,” leaving open the consideration of their being considered “unprofessional.”

First. For “contracting with patients for annual attendance and payment.”

To substantiate this, a solitary instance was produced whereon to ground so *flagrant a breach* of professional bearing. After nearly seven years’ practice in this town and neighbourhood, an isolated case, an exception to a general rule, is trumpeted forth as an unheard-of departure from professional usage. Were I satisfied that no case can occur in which such arrangement may be desirable, without compromising the character of a physician, I should not adopt even an exception to a general rule. But I have yet to learn that it is a departure from usage! Is it an unheard-of circumstance for a physician to attend households by the year? Does not the law recognise a physician’s contract for medical attendance? Is not the principle of annual attendance established in infirmaries, lunatic asylums, and by the Poor-law Amendment Act?

Secondly. The charge of contracting with a druggist was advanced! On what ground? *Because* I confined my gratuitous prescriptions to be dispensed by one individual. My reasons for so doing will be seen by the in-

closed note from the aforesaid gentleman. From such note I leave it to your editorial sagacity to determine whether such charge was “*proven*.”*

Thirdly. This charge is highly characteristic of the animus evinced in this contemptible proceeding. More than two years ago I wished to try a preparation of iron from a formula in a German Pharmacopœia. I requested the chemist to prepare it. It may have been ordered in some half-dozen prescriptions,—certainly I have not within the last *two years* prescribed it; and this is construed into *making seeret remedies*!

Fourthly. In reply to my having taken a fee from an out-patient, the case stands thus:—I was requested to visit a person residing a mile and a half, nearly, out of Colchester, by the patient’s wife, who came to *my house*. I accordingly visited, and received the usual honorarium, viz., half a sovereign. My visit was not made in the capacity of hospital physician, inasmuch as it is contrary to the usage of the staff to visit out-patients.

Such is a plain statement of the facts connected with the charges.

Now for the resolution. There were present at the “general special meeting” twelve persons, of which four were opposed or neutral (only *one* dissident in the report); one of the remaining eight possesses no qualification to practise; another is but half qualified, not being a licentiate, and yet holding *two union-houses*. If we deduct those *gentlemen* engaged in presenting the charges, the support of the “one dissident” is, after all, not so despicable. On the contrary, Mr. Editor, I esteem the opinion of that dissident, who acted impartially and unbiassed, more than I heed the petty malevolence of a host of such peevish, ill-conditioned gentry. I beg to remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

E. WILLIAMS.

Colchester, Dec. 23, 1843.

* “Church-street, Dec. 2, 1843.

“Dear Sir,—In reply to your note relative to your gratuitous prescriptions, which I was in the habit of dispensing, the following were the reasons you stated at the time I took them for confining your prescriptions to one druggist:—First. With a view of preventing any improper use of them by transfer from one poor person to another. Secondly. In order that they should be dispensed with proper medicines at a uniform and moderate rate. And, thirdly, that you should have full liberty to examine the drugs, and ascertain that the scale of prices agreed upon was adhered to. These conditions being fulfilled on my part, constitute, I conclude, the ‘contract’ you allude to, for beyond this verbal understanding no contract has existed between us. I remain, dear Sir, faithfully yours,
“A. THO. EDWARDS”