

admitted to see the practice of the hospital, more especially the operating part of it. This appears to us a very reasonable request, and, inasmuch as it would tend to the benefit of all parties, we think it should be frankly granted. It is certainly customary to admit practitioners to all the London hospitals, and to some of the principal ones in the large provincial towns, and when it is remembered that many of the cases sent to the hospital have been under the previous care of medical gentlemen not attached to the Institution, it is clear how desirable it is that the final treatment of the cases and especially the post-mortems, when made, should be seen by all who have attended the patients. Not that any man should be allowed to thrust himself upon every case in a meddling and inquisitorial spirit, with a view to find fault with the treatment or diagnosis; but let any respectable practitioner be allowed the courtesy of visiting the wards, the operating theatre, and the post-mortem room of every hospital. We feel convinced the privilege would not be abused, and that any paltry disposition to detract from the professional skill of the staff officers, regardless of the love of our art, and the pursuit of science, would only be despised. Thus the medical attendants would be so kept upon their mettle, that the study and treatment of the cases must be of a high character. A zeal in the practice would be excited, and, we venture to hope, a more complete cordiality and fellow-feeling would spring up amongst the members of our enlightened community.

#### THE MEDALS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

(LETTER FROM DR. SHARPEY.)

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In a leading article in the last number of *THE LANCET*, referring to the recent award of one of the medals of the Royal Society, the writer has thought fit to make animadversions on the part I took, or am supposed to have taken, in the matter, which are not only calculated to represent my conduct and motives in an unfavourable light, but to give a false colouring to the whole proceedings. I have therefore to request the favour of you to give an early insertion to this letter, which, I may state, is communicated solely on my own responsibility, and without the sanction or cognizance of any other member of the physiological committee.

The main charge made, or insinuated, is, that certain parties, of whom I was one, contrived, in furtherance of an unworthy design, to reconstruct a meeting of a committee, after a chairman, (Mr. Lawrence,) supposed adverse to their views, had dissolved it, and that these parties had succeeded in perverting one of the highest rewards in the gift of the Society to gratify feelings of enmity towards one person, or of undue favour to another. To be exposed to such imputations is a hard penalty the committee has to pay, for the fault, at most, of a mere informality, which entirely arose from a misapprehension on the part of a gentleman altogether disinterested in the issue—an informality afterwards corrected, in itself of little moment, and harmless, except for the opportunity it has afforded for cavil and misrepresentation.

But "something more" has now, it seems, been discovered, to darken the complexion of the affair, and to be eagerly thrown in to season the dish of calumny. At page 500 of your last number, the following passage occurs:—"We are also enabled to state something more respecting the Beck medal. It now appears that Mr. Beck's two dissections were made at the instigation of Dr. Sharpey, and that the expenses attending them were defrayed, through Dr. Sharpey's influence, by University College! The dissections were partly executed in Dr. Sharpey's own dissecting-room, and three years ago he had confidently predicted, that about this time Dr. Lee's dissections would be overthrown. The profession already knows the manner in which Dr. Sharpey endeavoured to fulfil his own vaticination; that he and Dr. Todd were the referees of Mr. Beck's paper; and that it was on their report that the council and physiological committee grounded the award. As far as Dr. Sharpey was concerned, seeing the part he had

taken in promoting Mr. Beck's labours, it was little better than passing a medal from his right hand to his left."

Now, as to the real state of the case. I first became acquainted with Mr. Beck, from his attending my lectures as a student ten years ago. I have reason to believe, that subsequently he was on much more intimate terms with Dr. Lee than with myself, and I know that he was an implicit believer in the correctness of Dr. Lee's opinions respecting the uterine nerves. Some three years ago, Mr. Beck called on me, and stated that he had obtained the uterus of a woman who had died shortly after delivery, and that he contemplated making a minute and careful dissection of the nerves, in the hope of contributing to settle the questions then at issue regarding them. He expressed his desire that the preparation, when completed, should be deposited in the museum of University College. Mr. Beck also informed me, that Dr. Lee, with whom he was then in frequent communication, was perfectly aware of his intention, and approved of it. Desirous that the truth should be made out, whatever might be the issue, I heartily concurred in his proposal, and, further, thought myself warranted in recommending that the museum should be at the charge of the necessary spirits and glass. All this was perfectly well known to all who cared to know about it. It will therefore be seen, that although I encouraged Mr. Beck's undertaking, it was not entered upon at my "instigation." Mr. Beck's dissections were made at his own house. I remember that he at first brought the uterus to the college to put it into spirits, but if he really began or proceeded any way with his dissection there, as alleged, it must have been for a very short time indeed, for I have no recollection of it. In the course of his long and laborious pursuit, which was conducted quite independently of me, I occasionally called on him to learn his progress, still, I feel confident, not oftener than ten or a dozen times in two years; and though on such occasions I encouraged him to proceed, I neither directed nor superintended his labours. His researches, which were originally undertaken to clear up particular points then in question, eventually extended much farther, and he communicated the results to the Royal Society.

Next, as to the charge brought against me personally as member of the committee of physiology of the Royal Society. When the paper first came before the committee on the question of its being printed, some time last summer, the chairman proposed to refer it to me to report on its merits; this duty I declined, explaining to the meeting the interest I had taken in Mr. Beck's researches. Eventually, the paper was referred to Dr. Todd and myself, I consenting to be named along with that gentleman. But, as it happened, my nomination, as far as regarded the question of printing the paper, proved to be merely a formal one, for at the next meeting of the committee, which took place in October, the paper was recommended for publication on the report of Dr. Todd, I happening not to arrive in time,—I had not prepared any report, and had not communicated with Dr. Todd on the merits of the paper during the whole of the long interval. It was at this same meeting that the recommendation of the award of the royal medal took place. I was present then, and concurred in the recommendation, from the responsibility of which I have no desire to shrink. On its being proposed to recommend the award to Mr. Beck, I felt it my duty to give my opinion on the result of his labours, but I neither made the proposal nor did I suggest to others to make it; in fact, I had never expressed nor hinted anything respecting the royal medal to any member of the committee, nor to any other person; to say the truth I had not been thinking about it. I may add, that on this occasion also, I explained to the meeting the relation in which I had stood to Mr. Beck. The medal was awarded by the council at a meeting which was held a few days after; though a member, I happened not to be present at that meeting.

After this, Dr. Lee waited on the president, complained of the proceedings of the committee and council, and required that they should be rescinded. The matter thus came before the committee for re-consideration; and on being named, along with Dr. Todd, to report the grounds of the recommendation of the committee, I did not shrink from the duty; we had nothing to do with the abstract of the paper to which you refer, which, indeed, I first read in your pages. If in this stage of the proceedings I on any occasion expressed myself warmly, it was from feeling indignant that the conduct and motives of the committee should be aspersed as they had been, and also that a gentleman in the position of Dr. Lee should, as a fellow of the Society, exert himself to arrest a reward adjudged to a young labourer in the same field of science, who had arrived at conclusions different from his own.

I cannot but smile, Sir, at the simplicity of those who would impute to myself and others the notion that error could be made to appear truth by the temporary sanction of a reward. I know full well that such a distinction could only render error more glaring, and the humiliation attending it more signal. But deeply as I should feel such humiliation, were the present decision in the end to be reversed by the unprejudiced opinion of the scientific world, yet the pain would be little in comparison with that inflicted by the successful imputation of unworthy conduct. Unhappily, there are men but too prone, by nature and habit, to put the worst construction on the motives and actions of others, and if what I have stated be insufficient to convince them of the rectitude of my conduct, I know it would be useless to appeal to a character which, whatever may be its faults, has never yet been accused of dishonesty. I must be content to rely with confidence on the good opinion of those whose minds are more happily constituted.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

May, 1846.

W. SHARPEY.

\* \* The leading article in the present number was written before the receipt of Dr. SHARPEY's letter. Dr. SHARPEY is much mistaken if he supposes we intended to accuse him of dishonesty. We believe, on the contrary, that of himself Dr. SHARPEY would always act with honour: no one, we are sure, would more highly and cordially than ourselves eulogize his general conduct and scientific labours and character. Unfortunately, a corporate conscience is proverbially of easy virtue; and it is not the first time that men, otherwise upright, have, when acting in a collective capacity, committed acts which as individuals they would shrink from. In a series of articles carrying an extraordinary number of facts, it is of course easy to impugn some isolated statements; but in the main, we are sure the profession will adjudge that we have been singularly correct. The only point respecting Dr. SHARPEY which we have to retract, is the statement that he in the first instance "instigated" Mr. BECK to commence his dissections. This we do withdraw most cheerfully. Dr. SHARPEY treats the reformation of the Committee, and the recommendation of the Royal medal after the departure of the chairman, Mr. LAWRENCE, as "the main charge;" and this he considers as "harmless," and a "mere informality." We dissent from these opinions—we consider the irregular re-constitution of the Physiological Committee bad in itself, and clearly open to unfavourable construction. This was the *first* censurable procedure. The hasty award of the medal, about which no one seems to have known or thought till the moment it was disposed of, was the *second*. The direct contradiction which now lies between Dr. SHARPEY, Dr. ROGET, and Mr. BELL, is a *third*. The award of a Royal medal to a paper which had not been printed, contrary to the regulations, is a *fourth*. The permitting Mr. BECK's paper to leave the custody of the proper officers of the Society—a permission which has been refused in other instances, and which is also contrary to the regulations—is a *fifth*. The suspicious discrepancy between the accounts of Mr. BECK's paper, published in the "Abstract of the Transactions of the Royal Society;" in the report by Drs. SHARPEY and TODD, referred to in the President's Address; and in a note in Sir B. BRODIE's recently published "Lectures on Pathology and Surgery," is a *sixth*. The uncertainty, the perfect ignorance, in fact, in which the scientific world at present remains, as to what Mr. BECK really received the medal for, is a *seventh*. Not one of these but is of the utmost importance.

The whole subject is full of facts deeply interesting to the scientific world.

#### THE MEDALS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY.

(NOTE FROM MR. BECK.)

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the article upon the Royal Society, which appeared in your journal of the 2nd of May, it is remarked—"It now appears that Mr. Beck's two dissections were made at the instigation of Dr. Sharpey," and that "the dissections were partly executed in Dr. Sharpey's own dissecting-room." As

both these statements are untrue, I beg to forward you an account of the circumstances as they occurred.

In February, 1843, a woman, under the care of a midwife, died from uterine hæmorrhage immediately after delivery at the full period. As this appeared a favourable case for the examination of the uterine nerves, I called upon Dr. Lee, with whom I was then on intimate terms, in order to offer the preparation to him. Dr. Lee was from home, but I left a note, stating the object of my visit. I also added, that if Dr. Lee did not wish for the preparation, I would take it to University College, and endeavour to demonstrate the nerves, as displayed by him to Dr. Sharpey and Mr. Quain. Two days after this, Dr. Lee called upon me in my absence, and wrote on the back of his card, that his engagements were such as to prevent him making use of the preparation, but if I would do as I had expressed in my note, he would feel obliged to me.

Thus, Dr. Sharpey had no knowledge whatever of my intentions until the preparation was sent to University College. Nor was any portion of the dissection made there; for it soon appeared that the inconvenience of spending three or four hours from home in the middle of the day was so great, that it would be impossible to do it. The preparation was consequently removed to my own house, and I commenced the dissection in perfect good faith, and under the firm conviction that I would show Dr. Lee's system of nerves as he thought he had made them out. I continued dissecting until the end of June, during which period Dr. Lee several times called, saw me working at the dissection at my own house, and expressed great interest at the result. But as I removed the cellular tissue from the nerves, and proceeded to clean "the utero-cervical ganglion," I thought I saw a plexus of nerves in its centre; and no sooner was the doubt expressed by me that it was not a ganglion, but a plexus surrounded by dense cellular tissue, than Dr. Lee immediately ceased calling.

Since then, I have continued the investigation, the results of which will be published in the next Part of the *Philosophical Transactions*, having been delayed thus long in consequence of the time required to engrave the drawings.

I remain, yours, &amp;c.,

T. SNOW BECK.

Upper Marylebone-street, May 4th, 1846.

### HOSPITAL REPORTS.

#### ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

SURGICAL CASES TREATED AT THIS HOSPITAL.

(Reported by HOLMES COOTE, Esq., Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, Surgeon to the North London Ophthalmic Institution, and formerly House-Surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.)

DISLOCATION OF BOTH HUMERI FROM A FALL—REDUCTION  
A FORTNIGHT AFTER THE ACCIDENT.

CASE 6.—Richard M—, aged fifty-nine, whilst walking along the Minorities, trod upon a piece of orange-peel, slipped, and, falling heavily upon the left side, was stunned. He remembers stretching out the left elbow, and crossing the right arm to break the force of the fall. He was carried to a chemist's shop, where he soon recovered. The left shoulder, which was bruised, was examined, and pronounced "sprained," and he was directed to apply a liniment.

He came to St. Bartholomew's Hospital a fortnight after the accident, and was admitted under Mr. Lawrence.

Jan. 22nd, 1840.—The left humerus, separated from the side, was dislocated under the pectoral muscle, where the head of the bone could be readily felt; there was a great hollow under the acromion, and he was unable to raise the hand to his head.

Upon examining the right shoulder, of which he made no complaint, and which was stripped for the purpose of comparing the two joints, a hollow was noticed under the acromion; the head of the humerus was found in the axilla, he could bring the elbow close to the side, but was unable to raise the hand to his head. Both forearms were bent, the right supporting the left. The right limb performed its movements so freely that no one conjectured at first that it was injured. The patient, who was evidently still suffering from the blow on the head, answered questions incoherently, and could scarcely give any account of himself.

With a long jack-towel the patient was fixed to the bed; a second towel was attached by the clove-hitch to the left wrist; the heel of the surgeon was then put in the axilla, and continued extension was made by four assistants. In a quarter of an hour the bone slipped into the socket with a snap. Similar extension was then applied to the right wrist; the patient being very faint, the bone was easily replaced in about