

## THE LATE NEWSPAPER PUFF.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The person who signs himself "Argus," has attacked me undeservedly in THE LANCET of Saturday, the 12th, insinuating that I pay for occasional notices of my skill in the *Weekly Dispatch*. Such is not the fact—and I beg, through your valuable and able journal, to give the most indignant and unqualified contradiction to every word of so unjust an accusation. If "Argus" will refer to that paper, he will find the first physicians and surgeons named there, at various periods, in a similar way; therefore his object in selecting me for remark, amongst the great and the many, I can only attribute to some sinister and selfish view.

The editor of the *Dispatch*, in recommending me, may have done so from the best feelings, as I have attended a part of his family. Finally, if "Argus" wishes for further explanation, he can refer to the *Dispatch*, more especially the last number.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,  
A. B. CHISHOLM.

## EFFECTS OF PRUSSIC ACID.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Dr. Letheby's report of the late cases of poisoning by prussic acid, brings to my recollection a circumstance which, although relating to an animal, bears a very remarkable analogy to one of the points connected with the unfortunate young persons who came under his examination.

A young cat having lost its mistress, (deceased,) became very uneasy, crying about the house and garden in a most piteous manner, refusing its ordinary food, declining to sleep in its accustomed place, and at last becoming so excited that it was an act of mercy, as well as of prudence, to put it out of its misery.

Having with difficulty enticed it with some milk, I poured about a drachm of Scheele's acid on its nose and mouth; I watched the results with some interest, attention having been lately so strongly excited on the subject. The poor thing at first appeared stupefied; in about ten or fifteen seconds it staggered, calmly stretched itself at full length, and expired without a struggle, or noise. What I the more particularly wished to observe was the "expiratory shriek," and I was the more astonished, as I had never before seen death take place in animals from the effects of prussic acid, without violent struggling and one or more screams: I think we may infer that no screams were made by the unfortunate couple in the cases above alluded to, as two violent shrieks, either together, or immediately succeeding each other, would have attracted the attention of the inmates of the house.

It is very ticklish ground to draw any analogy between the mental emotions of a cat and the mental emotions of two human beings; yet, may not the state of mental excitement have tended to produce the results noted? In the case of the cat, it was not mere instinctive regard for kindness, but a positive attachment to its mistress, for it refused the same favours from other hands. Disappointed in its attachment, there resulted the mental condition above described. Disappointment in *their* attachment no doubt produced a state of mental excitement which ended so unfortunately to the young couple. A specious hypothesis might easily be drawn up to account for the result.

I would only offer these ideas as a suggestion. But the collection of facts would tend materially to clear up the present mist that hangs over the action of this fearful poison.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,  
GEO. L. BLYTH.

Maida Hill, Dec. 20, 1844.

## THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—When I have, on various occasions, visited the metropolis, it has been my custom to spend three or four hours in the museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, and until my present visit, I had been invariably accustomed to see a hall porter in attendance.

Is it true, as I have been informed, that his services have been dispensed with, in that capacity, because of the expense of a uniform?

Can this be possible? or is it, that he is elsewhere engaged, in an avocation better suited for a regular practitioner? If so, tell the powers that be, Mr. Editor, that it is a niggardly parsimony, and a very discreditable means of economising the charges of management.

I am, sir, yours very respectfully,  
A COUNTRY PRACTITIONER.

London, Dec. 24, 1844.

## THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL BILL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—When I first perused Sir James Graham's Bill, it scarcely seemed credible, that it should have been proposed to the faculty by any statesman, and after carefully examining every clause, astonishment seemed to absorb all other impressions at Sir James Graham's tendering to the medical profession, for their governance, a "Council of Health and Medical Education," without a vestige of the representative principle. It is not improbable, that it would have been found difficult to have induced any other member of the Commons' house to offer so unconditional an insult to any section of society; yet this Bill, if it were enacted into a law, would place the general practitioner in direct competition with empirics.

What arguments can this statesman propose, for placing the profession of medicine under an arbitrary and irresponsible government, and the "Queen's Privy Council" retaining the power to dismiss any member of the "Council of Health and Medical Education," who might prove refractory, and appoint another of a more docile and obsequious temperament. The ordinary reasons, urged by statesmen of arbitrary and exclusive principles, in opposition to the application of the electoral franchise and other civil rights, have been, the defective state of the education and the absence of general information among the people, and therefore their unfitness to exercise so important a trust; but by what plausible sophistry, or propositions, and subtle deductions, he will apply them to the members who compose the faculty of medicine, in the United Kingdom, time can only develop. Sir James assisted in enfranchising the ten-pound householder in our boroughs, and yet, at one "fell swoop," he intends excluding the whole profession from the exercise of the elective franchise, in the formation of the governing power which is to control its interests; thus, in the scale of society degrading them beneath the municipal elector of a borough town; and this affront will equally apply to the medical and surgical officers of our magnificent provincial hospitals, and other public medical institutions; who, in point of talent, education, and surgical and medical ability, are perfectly equal to the rapacious and unscrupulous advisers of the chief secretary for the home department.

In reference to the general practitioner, a severer and a bitterer doom awaits him.

It always appeared to me a principle co-eternal with truth, that a legislative body should exist for the general good; and that the honours and emoluments possessed by the individuals composing it should be the result of the faithful and honest performance of their functions, as instanced by the prosperity and happiness of the governed; but the "Medical Bill" will arm the legislative body with authority and power, calculated to originate in their breasts pride, tyranny, avarice, and other baleful passions, to which, under certain circumstances, the human heart is but too susceptible; whilst, on the other hand, it will introduce into the profession of medicine, a cringing, obsequious, and temporizing spirit; as a substitute for those of independence and liberty.

Certain resolutions, adopted at a recent "extraordinary meeting" of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, approve the "principles and leading details" of the bill. This might reasonably have been anticipated, because that institution is one of those venerable antiquities which possess all the inherent bad and contaminating influences of the unreformed corporations. The character of our profession is unobtrusive, retiring, and meditative. Yet, upon some future public occasion, Sir James and his party will probably discover there have been at work private influences, which have produced a reaction that has gained for them but little respect or admiration.

It was with sincere pleasure I read Dr. Webster's letter, (President of the British Medical Association,) brought forward at the "special general meeting of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, held at Derby, on November 14th, and I fully concur in the views and opinions so justly and forcibly expressed by that gentleman, and it appears palpable, from the disposition and aims of the colleges of Physicians, Edinburgh, and Surgeons, London, and others, that unless the general practitioners consolidate themselves into a corporation or union, or college of medicine and surgery, they will lose "caste," and be seriously deteriorated in the estimation of society.

There was a day when Sir James Graham could not have been induced to have taken the step he has done. His motives are best known to himself. A few years ago he was amongst the most strenuous advocates for the maintenance of the rights and liberties of her majesty's subjects; his present official life is diametrically opposed to his former one; and his chief solicitude seems to be, a persevering determination to exhibit his penitence and this