

mouths words we never used, and meanings no distortion of our language could possibly convey. He also deprecates any condemnation of the meetings of the College as "brawls," while his first letter emphatically calls them such by implication as direct as words can express, and in his second letter he still describes our assemblies as "unruly"—an unsubstantiated assertion.

Finally, Mr. Horrocks complains that we have neither answered his first communication nor carefully read it. We assure him that we have read it with all due care and respect, but failed, as we still fail, to find in it any point of general interest to which our letter of the 23rd ult. has not replied. His reiterated reference to a "set of nonentities" we may pass by as scarcely worthy of the spirit of courtesy of debate; and his demand for a reopening of the whole question we can only compare to the request of a schoolboy, admitted to the dining-room for dessert, that he should have submitted to him the *menu* of the already half-digested dinner. We cannot venture to demand your space for the repetition of an oft-told tale, but if Mr. Horrocks wishes to study the subject we would refer him, not to our own letters which you have repeatedly honoured us by publishing, but to the reports presented by the Council to the annual meetings of the College. Doubtless the secretary of the College will furnish the evidently much-needed information, and would at the same time afford Mr. Horrocks impartial evidence of the orderly proceedings of these meetings.

We are, Sirs, your obedient servants,

WARWICK C. STEELE,
WILLIAM ASHTON ELLIS.

April, 1889.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I make a slight addition to the explanatory letter of Mr. Lawson Tait which appeared upon page 653 of your last issue? It is therein stated that in moving the previous question to Mr. Tait's resolution "my plea was a perfectly reasonable one, that the agenda paper was already very full." Quite so, but I also pleaded the inadvisability of entering into a debate upon a subject which did not directly affect either this branch or the British Medical Association, and on both grounds moved my amendment. This was duly seconded, voted upon without discussion, carried by 14 to 10, and the meeting proceeded to the next business.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

F. MARSH, F.R.C.S.

Paradise-street, Birmingham, April 3rd, 1889.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—To be critical, one ought to be accurate. Allow me to say in reply to Mr. Lawson Tait—1. That your correspondent generally understands what he is about, nor on this occasion was he behind the average. He did not leave the meeting before the business was over. 2. Mr. Marsh's amendment was "that this meeting proceed to the next business, that is, the previous question." Whether this was a clear way to put it is not now necessary to discuss, but such were the exact words. Mr. Tait also leaves out the main reason given by Mr. Marsh—namely, that the meeting was not the proper place to enter upon the subject. The readiness with which Mr. Tait succumbed to the amendment at the meeting on the 3rd inst. seems to indicate that he thought his resolution hopeless in spite of the strong whip he had made and the many letters written. He may bear in mind that the monopoly of intelligence does not belong to one side.—Yours faithfully,

April, 1889.

THE BIRMINGHAM CORRESPONDENT.

THE DEFENCE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—If the profession does not speedily take action in the directions indicated by your correspondents, who—like Mr. Pike in THE LANCET to-day—point out the reforms which are unquestionably called for, there can be little doubt that when the time arrives, and come it will, when a public exposure shall be made of the evils at present associated with medical almsgiving and the hospital system in general, a stain will be left on the reputation of the whole profession, who may be not unjustly charged with connivance at scandals and abuses, the prevention or denunciation of which was their manifest duty. Not only is the

present state of things a recognisable factor of increasing potency in pauperisation of the masses, but it promises to become a source of demoralisation to the profession. The bulk of the profession, struggling through honest courses with difficulty for a livelihood, may perceive that the way to affluence lies open to any unscrupulous adventurer endowed only with an inexhaustible stock of impudence, and determined to avail himself of the now well-known methods of advertising at the public expense under the cloak of charity. To drag these abuses, and others equally notorious, into the light of day and to keep them in public view would be to speedily put an end to them. It is hardly questionable that a resolute, organised body of the profession bent on this aim could before long achieve it. There can also be little doubt that they might also obtain legislation against outside quackery—prevention, for instance, of false assumption of medical titles by unqualified practitioners—such as has been gained for themselves in spite of opposition by the dentists, a section of the profession comparatively insignificant in numbers, and proportionally lacking in power and influence.

I remain, Sirs, your obedient servant,

Wimpole-street, March 30th, 1889.

HENRY SEWILL.

THE SCHOOL OF SALERNO.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have no hesitation in yielding to the superior authority of Mr. Tweedy as a historian, more especially as he has had an opportunity of perusing the last work on the subject in question. I will only say that, were it of importance, I could verify my statements from writings; but to show how uncertain is history I will only allude to one point. I said Salerno was taken in 1077 by Robert Guiscard, and that he then founded a school of medicine. Mr. Tweedy from further research finds that this is incorrect, and that the school had already existed for two or three centuries. He is probably right, but I take down from my shelves an encyclopædia and turn to Salerno, where I find "it was celebrated in the middle ages for its school of medicine (the *Schola Salernitana*) founded by Robert Guiscard about the end of the eleventh century." My object in writing was only to call attention to Constantyn of Salerno as being one of the medical authorities mentioned by Chaucer. I thank Mr. Tweedy for his valuable criticism.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

April 2nd, 1889.

SAMUEL WILKS.

EXCISION OF THE ASTRAGALUS IN CLUB-FOOT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of March 16th are notes of two cases of Excision of the Astragalus in Club-foot by Dr. J. Crawford Renton, which, while doubtless reflecting credit on the writer's skill as an operator, will leave in the minds of more conservative surgeons some doubts as to the justifiability of the procedure adopted.

In the first of the two cases, a relapsed one, although Dr. Renton says that it "presented features so severe that," &c., Fig. 1, which illustrates it, shows only a moderate amount of deformity. Of the condition of the second case before operation we have no means of judging for ourselves. The results, as far as the figures show them, would seem to be fairly satisfactory, but Dr. Renton does not tell us what amount of flexibility there was, if any, at the site of the lost ankle-joint.

It must, I venture to think, occur to all surgeons who have had experience of the excellent results obtainable by tenotomy, and the various forms of retaining apparatus when properly and thoroughly used, to ask themselves the question: "Is such a mutilation as removal of the astragalus necessary or justifiable in even the most severe cases?" I maintain that the answer to this question should be a decided negative. To remove the astragalus, thereby destroying the ankle-joint and the arch of the foot, and at the same time exposing the patient to considerable risk—for accidents will happen, even in the most antiseptic operations,—is a proceeding so heroic as to be only advisable in the last resort, if ever. Excision of the cuboid, originally suggested for inveterate cases by Dr. W. J. Little, which interferes with no joint of great mobility, is a very much milder measure than this. As to Phelps' operation, it appears to be the better known operation of Buchanan,