

"of medical men of every rank to the unfortunate and the "poor who claim their humanity and their skill."

Mr. MILNES is himself the author of some not very celebrated rhymes. He ought to have known, that to artists, poets, and literary men, the medical profession have ever been most generous. Seldom indeed does an eminent writer die in poverty, without our hearing of the constant and unwearied attention of his medical attendant. Of course, in such cases fees are out of the question. Such conduct as that of Sir JAMES CLARK is the rule with medical men; it is the converse which is the exception. We might point to the death-bed of many who have died, having achieved fame, but not riches; but we believe Mr. MILNES knew something of the death-bed of THOMAS HOOD, where a generous humanity on the part of members of our profession was pre-eminent, so that to Mr. MILNES such kindness as that of Sir JAMES CLARK to KEATS is not a solitary instance.

But there is one item in the history of KEATS which has escaped both the biographer and his critic, and which makes the implication of professional illiberality absurd, whoever might have been called to attend the dying poet. JOHN KEATS was a member of our own profession. He was apprenticed to a medical practitioner at Edmonton. Like GOLDSMITH, CRABBE, and AKENSIDE, KEATS went over from Minerva to Apollo; but to medical men his professional career would not be likely to be forgotten. He was more a professional brother, than a poet, in the estimation of Sir JAMES CLARK, and as such would not have needed, in vain, the very best and most generous exertions of him or any other medical man. The usages of the profession in such cases are so well known, that we shall not add another word on the subject.

Whether we consider KEATS as a poet,—and he was confessedly one of the noblest poets of modern times,—or whether we consider him as a medical man, it is impossible that he could have received any other treatment at medical hands than that so kindly accorded by Sir JAMES CLARK, who, if proud of the matter at all, must be proud of the opportunity which occurred for the exercise of his benevolent skill. We trust Mr. MILNES will expurgate the offensive passage from his second edition; but we have our doubts, as he is an incurable mesmerist. Between Quackery and Science there can be no friendly feeling.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

ON OPERATIONS FOR THE RELIEF OF STRANGULATED HERNIA; AND ON THE USE OF ANÆSTHETIC AGENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Observing the remarks made on the time required to complete an operation for the relief of strangulated hernia at the University College Hospital, I regretted that the details of the operation had not been given. Doubtless there must have been difficulties in the way of the operator; and as his skill has been questioned, it is due to him that they should be explained, and probably, at the same time, valuable information afforded to some of your readers.

I was in a large hospital lately, and regretted to learn there, that the surgeons seldom used ether or chloroform, fearing dangerous results. It appears that there is an increasing prejudice against the employment of anæsthetic agents. I therefore considered it both useful and interesting to learn, that in the case of Mr. Marshall the exhibition of

chloroform had been persevered in for an hour without injury to the patient. My experience of anæsthetic agents has been rather limited, but since their discovery I have always used them when performing painful operations, and always shall, unless in particular cases, when there may be circumstances to contra-indicate their exhibition, and I bear grateful testimony to their value, having used them with the happiest results in cases of extremely painful operations, when I believe I could not, in some cases, have completed them successfully, if the patients had not been free from pain, and motionless; and I have never seen the after-results of ether and chloroform anything but beneficial. I believe we country surgeons feel their benefit more than hospital operators, who are more habituated to the sufferings of patients under the knife, and have always the great advantage of being surrounded by able assistants.

Three months since I was called in to operate in a case of inguinal hernia; and when it was done, I was surprised to learn that I had been nearly an hour hard at work. I had not seen the case until I was called in to operate; and finding the taxis had been fruitlessly tried the day previous, and seeing that the scrotum was a mass of erysipelatous inflammation, I said we had nothing to do but to operate immediately; and after unusual difficulty in cutting safely down to the sac, and the annoyance of a great deal of venous and arterial hæmorrhage, on opening the sac, I found a mass of sphacelated omentum in front, which had been down for two years, and a fresh protrusion behind. After relieving the stricture, this latter portion became tolerably healthy in appearance, and was returned. The remainder, being dead, and extensively adherent, I removed; it weighed about ten ounces. Had I known the contents of the sac, I may have cut fearlessly, as in this case a slice of the knife more or less deep could do no harm. The patient was all the time free from pain, being under the influence of ether, and has only a pleasant recollection of the operation. He is now alive and well; and as he had hernia of both sides, and the contrary side to that operated on troubling him occasionally, he seriously asked me "to cut him on that side, and make him both sides alike." The last case I operated on previous to the one I have related was successfully completed, and the patient in bed in a quarter of an hour, notwithstanding there was considerable difficulty in reaching the stricture, and dividing it; but the protrusion was fresh, and inguinal, and the patient had never worn a truss, which I conceive renders it much easier, and more satisfactory to a cautious operator, to cut down to the sac, than when the parts are altered and thickened by long-continued pressure, and the receptacle almost bursting with the mass protruded into it.

I have seen one of the most experienced London hospital surgeons forty minutes operating for hernia, although assisted by the surgical staff of the hospital; and not a few cases may be told of unfortunate dips into the bowel or rupture from rough handling. I trust that THE LANCET will recommend a cautious, rather than a slashing, style of operating.

I presume that Mr. Marshall has been wisely elected to the office he fills, from the circumstance of his qualifications being better known and appreciated than "A Third-year's Man" imagines, whose account of the determination "to see what he was cutting and doing" I fancy may as well have been omitted, as it has probably excited the risible muscles of many of your readers. I hope Mr. Marshall will persevere in his labours, and be an ornament to his profession.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

S.

October 24, 1848.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR.—I have been both surprised and ashamed that a person calling himself a third years' man, should have displayed his surgical ignorance by attempting to defend the bungling of one of the recently-elected assistant-surgeons to University College Hospital. The unhopeful assistant-surgeon may well exclaim, "Save me from my friends!" The poor patient having lived in spite of the bungling and fumbling, only proves that in some constitutions it is even difficult to destroy life. Can it be credited by the profession, that in one of our metropolitan hospitals an unfortunate patient was under the knife for the operation of strangulated hernia for upwards of an hour?

Would this, or any other surgeon, who had never performed an important operation, have been elected to such an appointment if any principle but favouritism had been acted upon?

Will not the council of the College now feel to what an extent they have been misled by the obnoxious clique, in its having made them the means of exposing their fellow crea

tures to unnecessary and protracted suffering, and what must necessarily be the consequence in many instances—loss of life? Shame on them if they do not retrace their steps! They must by this time understand that something more than a high order of intelligence is necessary to constitute a good surgeon. Then why have chosen one who had never manifested the other requisite qualities, and which, it is now evident he does not possess, when more gifted rivals were at hand? Proh pudor!—I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

ONE WHO MUCH ADMIRES THE MANY EXCELLENCES
OF THE UNSUCCESSFUL ASSISTANT-SURGEON, AND
NOT A DISAPPOINTED CANDIDATE.

London, Oct. 1848.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In answer to your query at page 491 of last week. As you have given my address, there can be no objection to my name being appended to my letter, signed "S," (*ante*.) My reason for suppressing both name and address was, that I fancy there is sometimes a little egotism or advertisement in the style of, "I did this and that, ably assisted by" &c. &c. I am, however, glad to take this opportunity of mentioning, that since writing to you last week, I have seen the subject of operation I mentioned, and to my surprise I find that there is a fresh protrusion on the operation side; it is bowel, and very easily reduced, and kept in its place. It did not enter the scrotum. Now I shall be very glad, if, through the medium of your pages, gentlemen will favour me with their experience of cases anything like the one I have related, in which I am greatly surprised that the operation was not a radical cure. The large mass of omentum was removed, and a single ligature embracing its neck applied, (I had reasons for using a single ligature instead of applying separate threads to the vessels.) After a considerable amount of sloughing of omentum above the ligature, healing went on rapidly, and the stump of omentum became incorporated with the surrounding parts. However, three months have since elapsed, and notwithstanding this, as I supposed, most efficient plug, the bowel protrudes, and teaches me the lesson that I should have applied a truss for a few months. There was a considerable amount of pressure applied, but the man having hernia on both sides, when he arose from his bed I applied a truss to the opposite side of that of operation; he did not feel the slightest pain or inconvenience in the neighbourhood of the wound any more than as though he had never been the subject of hernia, and, indeed, did not feel any inconvenience from the fresh protrusion. He has a brother with inguinal hernia of both sides, and I understand that another brother died in the same condition. The survivors are broad-shouldered and peculiarly broad-hipped men.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Meriden, October 30, 1848.

ARTHUR SARJEANT.

THE INCORPORATION OF THE GENERAL PRACTITIONERS OF ENGLAND WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your editorial article of the 7th October, when remarking upon the present position of the University of London, you observe "that the graduates, and, we believe, some of the best men in the senate, are diligently striving to make it in reality what it is in name, 'The Metropolitan University.'" I beg to suggest the practicability of making this institution still more decidedly a "Metropolitan University," by an increase of its members, as an act of grace. Let the senate admit, upon application or petition, to an *ad eundem* degree such M.D.'s as have graduated by examination in any British university, and as M.B.'s, such medical practitioners as possess the double qualification, and hold such other position as the senate may reasonably require.

I entirely coincide in the correctness of your opinion, "that all the most able and aspiring students—the youth of talent and genius who enter the profession—naturally direct themselves to the University of London, as the place where the most honourable degree can be obtained." This disposition is as it should be: and it is to be hoped that in any legislative enactment which may be passed in favour of medical reform, the possession of a university degree will be rendered necessary to every man who enters the profession; but should this unfortunately not happen, my conviction still is, that the emulation of many students will prompt them to obtain this position, and thus to some extent render nugatory the error of inefficient legislation.

As "the subject of medical reform is now actively engag-

ing the attention of the senate," may not the question advantageously form one subject of their deliberations. To what extent, or can any proportion of English medical practitioners be put into the possession of the degrees of the University of London, without an objectionable infringement of the rights of those gentlemen who are already members of this institution by virtue of examination? Would there be any impropriety or difficulty, if most who possess the double qualification, and who are of a certain age, were conditionally admissible to the degree of M.B., without further examination? the possessors of the degree of M.D., obtained by examination in other British universities, being also admissible to a similar status upon corresponding terms?

I am aware that the present regulations of the senate admit, with restrictions, persons of mature age to the respective degrees, by undergoing the prescribed examinations. Very few, however, have availed themselves of the opportunity of graduating; and the reason must be clear, if not self-evident. When men have arrived at forty or fifty years of age, whatever be the amount of practical information they possess, or the degree of confidence which they most deservedly may enjoy with the public as trustworthy and talented practitioners, neither their habits nor the usual direction of their thoughts and pursuits can be such as will render the ordeal of examination in scholastic science an easy or perhaps a justifiable requirement. This view ought to have been regarded with great consideration. Is it not hard that those gentlemen should even appear to suffer (admitting that the inconveniences are not real) from the altered or additional institutions of an age of transition and change, and doubtless of great progress also, and that they should be presumed, in public opinion, (but which is not very correctly cognizant of such subjects,) to fail in comparison with much younger men, and of whom themselves probably have been primarily the teachers?

Whilst I utterly disclaim the most remote wish of obtaining that which by some, perhaps, may be considered to be an unfair participation in university honour, (for to myself the adoption or rejection of the proposal is of no consequence,) I cannot but think that the senate would do themselves much credit by making a judicious extension of their institution in this manner; not only would their own hands be strengthened by the proceeding, but a great boon would be granted: a true scientific home would be obtained for the practitioner, one of which he would ever feel proud, and an end be put to the present agitation for the presumed requirement, a new college. Surely this proposal is a strange inconsistency. One of the chief errors of medical politics, of which, as a body, we complain, is admitted to consist in the present plurality of examining corporations; and because nineteen different curricula from which the student may select are objectionable, we most sagaciously propose a remedy by adding a twentieth. Is this wise?

I will not occupy your valuable columns, or the time of your readers, by making any remarks upon the advantages which would result to the profession at large, if an extensive admission to university honour could be made compatible with the future arrangements of the senate. They may, however, be summarily included under—increased respectability of the members of the profession in their present and future relations with the public, and unity of sentiment and feeling towards each other, many of the artificial distinctions, the causes of bickering and quarrel, being destroyed.

I am, Sir, yours most obediently,

October 14, 1848.

X. P.

NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS AND MR. WAKLEY.

Bay of Naples, Sept. 27th, 1848.

THE Assistant-Surgeons of the Royal Navy, serving in the Mediterranean Fleet, beg leave to offer to Thomas Wakley, Esq., M.P., their grateful acknowledgments of his services in their cause.

They cannot be too thankful for the advocacy which their claims have found in the influential pages of THE LANCET, for by the forcible arguments and style of the editorial articles which have appeared from time to time, their grievances and claims have been brought home to the mind of the profession at large, from whose sympathy they expect more than they hope to obtain by their own unaided efforts.

But while they are thankful for this aid within the bounds of the profession, they feel a pride in reflecting that the senate contains members of that profession, whose voices, when raised in the denunciation of abuses, or in the endeavour to obtain redress of grievances, never fail to gain a respectful attention; and whose opinions are re-echoed