

about thirteen years since I tried, in a very bad case, a thin gold plate, covered and edged with caoutchouc; but after a few weeks' wear the action of the saliva on the caoutchouc caused it to become a soft, jelly-like, sticky mass, and I was obliged to remove it, and make another with gold and sponge. I likewise, about the same time, tried it in another case, with the like result.

I have also tried gutta-percha for stopping teeth; but the action of the saliva quickly destroys it; and therefore it would be useless for palates.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Fleet-street, June, 1848.

C. BROWNE.

#### MEETING OF THE SURGEONS OF ESSEX.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Having seen in your last week's number an announce- of a meeting of surgeons, at Colchester, on Friday, the 9th instant—to prevent misconception, permit to inform you and your readers, that the resolutions adopted there do not represent the feelings of many members of the College of Surgeons in the county. As honorary secretary of the Essex Medical and Surgical Association, called into existence especially for the purpose of watching the progress of medical reform, I have a good opportunity of knowing the sentiments of a great majority of my medical brethren. I believe a very great many perfectly coincide with the principles as agreed upon by the joint committees, and would be rejoiced to see them passed into a law. Have the general practitioners fully considered the results that will follow a repeal of the Act of 1815, and their sole representative being the College of Surgeons? Will the college be as anxious to maintain the standard of medical education as the Society of Apothecaries has been? Will it support any penal enactment against unlicensed practice? Will it sanction any legal means for the recovery of professional accounts? I fear not; and many others fear so too. I much regret that the overtures which are now made are not received in a kind spirit of conciliation. I think nearly everything is granted which reason can ask, and shall we now reject what is offered, with an almost certain alternative of obtaining nothing in its place?

I am, Sir, yours truly,

Chelmsford, June 13, 1848.

OSWALD COPLAND.

#### NAVAL ASSISTANT SURGEONS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I humbly request the insertion of a few remarks in your columns relative to the spirited and kind letter of Dr. Healy, on "Assistant-Surgeons in the Royal Navy."

May, 1848.

AN ASSISTANT-SURGEON R.N.

*To Michael Healy, Esq., M.D.*

DEAR SIR,—Your very excellent and clear correspondence in THE LANCET of May 27, 1848, has been read by many of us with heartfelt gratitude. We do as little as we can do when we publicly thank you. In yourself we have enlisted one valuable friend from amongst our civilian brethren. We hope more of our brethren on shore will shake off their apathy, and boldly proclaim their sentiments in public. You have nobly given them an example what really is expected of them at the present crisis. Anything further that I could write in praise of your generous letter would be from me an useless panegyric.

All sections of the medical profession would do well to assist us when our rights are denied us and trampled on. Are naval assistant-surgeons to be domesticated, for the best period of their lives, with crude, uneducated youngsters, because there must be seniors with them? Are we to be silenced by an assertion which needs a confirmation, and which assertion, canvassed in all its bearings, must exhibit a paltry nothingness—that mates are our superior officers? We hear of her Majesty's ships having no room for cabins; perhaps we shall hear a something equally absurd and false, that we are denied servants, because there are no men in existence!

The honourable member for Montrose has called attention in the House to our grievances. You believed he would support us. He has felt the Admiralty pulse, which is unyielding and irritable, though we may hope a little excitement is a happy prelude to a more wholesome condition of things. Mr. Wakley must now perceive the grounds of opposition to naval assistant-surgeons entering the wardroom—viz., the claims of learners!—the want of cabin room in her Majesty's brigs of war!

"Where there's a will, there's a way."

and there might cabins be found for even naval assistant-surgeons. A very interesting document would be, a "Report on the measurement of all classes of her Majesty's ships, especially where officers' cabins usually are, and where the ship's company are accommodated."

Mr. Wakley is well acquainted with the grievances of naval assistant-surgeons, and we sincerely hope ere long the subject in detail will be before the House. Let the honourable members for Finsbury and Montrose conjointly battle this subject in Parliament, and the naval authorities can no more keep us from the lieutenants' table than they can stay the current of the river Thames.

Finally, Sir, we implore your disinterested and valuable efforts to assist us in our present struggle. Many young medical men, of acknowledged ability, and acquirements of a first-rate order, are daily groaning under their humiliating and ruinous position.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN ASSISTANT-SURGEON R.N.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—For the information and guidance of medical aspirants to the naval service, the insertion of the subjoined details may cause them to pause ere they take the fatal step of entering a service where nought awaits them but humiliation and professional degradation.

Assistant-surgeons mess with the subordinate officers, composed of mates, second-masters, master's-assistants, clerks, clerks'-assistants, and naval cadets, of whom the latter form about two-thirds, and the qualifications for whom, by Admiralty order, are—

"Naval cadets must not be under twelve years of age. They must be in good health, fit for service, and able to write English from dictation, and must be acquainted with the four first rules of arithmetic, reduction, and the rule of three."

Assistant-surgeons *do not* mess with first lieutenant of marines, with whom relative rank is assigned them by an order in council; nor with second lieutenant of marines, to whom, by a parity of reasoning, they are of superior rank.

Assistant-surgeons *are denied* cabins, although the above named officers are provided with them, as well as naval instructors.

Assistant-surgeons sleep in hammocks amongst the seamen—sleep amongst the seamen—and in all classes of ships in her Majesty's service, (save in line-of-battle ships, of which seldom more than ten or twelve are in commission at the same time,) they mess in an apartment that resembles a dog-kennel rather than a place befitting gentlemen.

The average period of servitude, as an assistant-surgeon, is from eight to ten or twelve years, as a reference to the Navy List will testify.

By the last Navy List, published by authority, there appears to be on the efficient list of assistant-surgeons, 243, of whom 1 is of 39 years' standing; 1 of 37 ditto; 1 of 35 ditto; 1 of 25 ditto; 2 of 24 ditto; 1 of 21 ditto; 1 of 19 ditto; 1 of 15 ditto; 2 of 13 ditto; 2 of 12 ditto; 3 of 11 ditto; 7 of 10 ditto; 11 of 9 ditto; 14 of 8 ditto; 55 of 7 ditto—total, 103.

Thus, it appears, that nearly half of the present assistant-surgeons in the service, average from seven to *thirty-nine years' servitude*, many of whom will not be promoted for years to come. This gives a fraction above nine years' and a half servitude for the senior half of the assistant-surgeons, who *still remain* unpromoted.

AN ASSISTANT-SURGEON.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—The anomalous position of army and navy medical men in their respective services is too apparent to need more than recital. Can a more striking absurdity (to set the base injustice of the thing, for the present, altogether aside) be apparent than the following:—

The naval assistant-surgeon is a first lieutenant—that is, he holds the relative rank and more than the pay of one. The second lieutenant of marines, I need not say, is a grade inferior to him in military status; yet the above first lieutenant is compelled to live and mess with the "young gentlemen" in the midshipman's berth, is deprived of a private cabin, wherein to advance himself in his profession, is obliged to sleep on the public deck, in a hammock, with the seamen, and (*proh pudor!*) is doomed to walk and to confine himself to the leeward side of the quarterdeck!

Now, how fares it with the second lieutenant of marines In many instances inferior in knowledge and education to his