

MR. LEESON ON ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the 22nd No. of your Journal, Mr. Wood has undertaken to reply to the report made by me upon the mesmeric experiments as conducted by Dr. Elliotson upon *Jane O'Key*. It may be as well to inform your readers, that this gentleman performed no part in the experiments alluded to, whatever he might have done, as the assistant or pupil of Dr. Elliotson, in former experiments. In this instance, however, he wishes to ripen himself into the form and attitude of a principal in the defence of mesmerism, and begins his escapade by making an attack upon myself, as false as it is malignant, for in his comments upon my report he impeaches the purity of my motives in language discreditable to himself as a critic, and particularly so as a member of our common profession. If I had assailed his character as a gentleman, or his motives as a mesmeriser; if I had insinuated that he was lending himself to the diffusion of mesmeric doctrines at the time when he knew them to be unsound; if I had, in the most remote degree, attacked him in any of these particulars, then would there be some reason for his attack upon myself. As I witnessed the experiments, so have I reported them, and I have yet to be convinced that the impressions then formed by me, were either of a mistaken character, or one tittle less in truth than as they were represented. I now forgive Mr. Wood for his offensive tirade, while I respect him for the enthusiasm he manifests upon the doctrines taught him at the University Hospital, and received by him during his recent pupilage at that institution; and further, I express my regret in being obliged to differ from him upon so abstruse a subject as mesmerism.

While Dr. Elliotson was propagating mesmerism as a science, and urging its reception as a truth, he complained of its condemnation by persons who had not witnessed his experiments, at the same time inviting all persons who took an interest in the subject to come and see for themselves, and when they did so, he honourably allowed them the fullest latitude in the expression of their opinions. As one of the multitude of inquirers, who took advantage of this invitation, I witnessed many of the experiments, and reported upon them, and I do not know whether I can be impeached with any breach of etiquette, or bad faith, in making my opinions public, provided that such opinions were given upon the actual facts, as they appeared in the experiments.

My report of the 27th of July was correct in all its particulars, omitting nothing that was important, and relating only those experiments as they were performed on *Jane*

O'Key. The following one relates to the experiments conducted on the 30th following, by Dr. Elliotson, upon *Elizabeth O'Key*, and which were condemned by me in the last paragraph of my former report, as unworthy of investigation. These are the ones which I am charged with forgetting, because Mr. Wood plumes himself that they are conclusive in favour of his adopted opinions. But we shall see.

Elizabeth O'Key being introduced, in the presence of a few gentlemen, was instructed to draw some water into four wineglasses from the tap; she did so, after which Dr. Elliotson sent her to sleep by holding his fingers before her eyes; in a few minutes she awoke, presenting the ecstatic delirium; she was then desired to drink of the water in the glasses which she had previously drawn, and when she did so no effect was produced; she was now ordered out of the room, and in her absence Dr. Elliotson introduced his fingers into the third part of a wineglass of water; he then withdrew them, and rubbed the glass inside and out with his fingers, and also breathed several times into and about the glass; after which it was put down on the table as being fairly mesmerised. O'Key was now recalled, and desired to drink of all of them; when she did so, no effect was produced either by the one which was mesmerised or those that were not. Here, then, was a complete failure; the gentlemen who were present can speak to the accuracy of this statement.

The next experiment was between one glass of the mesmerised water and three glasses of cold water, mixed with hot. It is true she did not go off upon the warm water which was produced by the mixture of the hot and cold, *nor did she upon the mesmerised one*. It is asserted, that in these experiments there was an equalisation of temperature; this was not so, nor was the equality of temperature attempted to be regulated by the application of a thermometer. O'Key knew too well, for she has had long practice, the difference between the warm water so produced, and the mawkish and insipid taste which belongs to water which is said to be mesmerised. This second experiment, as any one must have seen, terminated in nothing but confusion and failure.

Now for the third and last experiment, the hot iron affair. Mr. Woolridge, I believe, undertook the management of this one. He procured a heated iron, and a very queer way he used it, *for he let it cool first, and warmed one of the sovereigns with it afterwards*. Dr. Elliotson then warned another one, by keeping it in his hand for some time, and then put it down in juxtaposition with the *roasted* one of Mr. Woolridge. It turned out, however, that Dr. Elliotson's happened to be the warmer of the two, for when O'Key seized the latter,

she was so powerfully mesmerised that she did not recover for any further experiments.

I now merely remark, that such bunglings I never before witnessed, as were exhibited in the manner in which they were conducted; yet, bad as they were, they were all against the reception of animal magnetism as being founded on anything like an unquestionable basis. Why do not some of our able and scientific experimentalists assist in proving the truth or falsehood of these doctrines, which, if established to be true, would develop new wonders to the mind of the physiologist, and, if found to be false, would disclose the possibility of men of the very highest rank and station for their scientific acquirements being persuaded away from their natural penetration and sagacity, into the belief of doctrines which neither *genuine* experiments, nor the deductions drawn from the simplest precepts of reason, can in any way substantiate? That the O'Keys can be proved to be impostors, I have not a shadow of a doubt, and that the time will come when the curious and inquiring will be righted in their opinions upon this strange and interesting subject.*

In conclusion, I care but little whether my report of the experiments of the second day be acceptable or not; to me, and to every dispassionate mind, it ought to bring convincing evidence that the doctrines of mesmerism have no foundation, and are only calculated to please those whose credulity is greater than mine, and should Mr. Wood be again fierce upon the new cases which I have given, I trust he will select language more becoming his station as a gentleman, if not out of respect to that profession of which I have the honour to be a member. I am, Sir, your obedient servant

JOHN LEESON.

August 29th.

SECONDARY SYPHILIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I beg to transmit you, for insertion in *THE LANCET*, the accompanying history of a patient, who has been under my observation for the last four years. I am your most obedient servant,

JOHN JACKSON, M.D.,
Member of the Faculty of Physicians
and Surgeons, Glasgow, and Lecturer
on Medical Jurisprudence, &c. &c.

25, Maxwell-street, Glasgow,
July, 1838.

The subject of this case is a poor widow, 60 years of age. The whole of the nose, with the lachrymal bones, a considerable portion of the superior maxillary bones, the spongy bones, and the hard and soft palate,

have been removed by ulceration and exfoliation, leaving a large opening capable of admitting the open fingers. The alveolar processes of the upper and lower maxillary bones have been completely removed. Over the centre of the frontal bone there is a large depression, the consequence of repeated exfoliations. The eyes have been deprived of their eyelids and the cornea of both is so opaque, that she can hardly distinguish light from darkness. She speaks with difficulty, but her daughter understands what she says; her hearing is much impaired and her sense of smell is nearly, but not wholly gone. The arms and hands are much emaciated, and their joints very flaccid. Over the right scapula there is a large ulcer, through which several pieces of bone have passed. The whole body is much attenuated.

The commencement of her complaint she dates fourteen years back, when it attacked first the nose, and spread very rapidly to the other parts, large quantities of bone coming away at various intervals. At that time she was salivated by mercury, and took large quantities of sarsaparilla, but without checking the progress of the disease. She says, that she had not taken mercury antecedent to the disease commencing on the face. She blames her husband for improper conduct towards her.

Remarks.—This case shows to what a dreadful extent secondary syphilis will proceed, in spite of mercury, sarsaparilla, &c., in a patient, in whom the primary symptoms have not been treated with mercury. Whether the disease would have advanced so far if mercury had been had recourse to in the first instance, the case of course cannot decide, but it shows that the extensive exfoliations of bone cannot, in this instance, be attributed to mercury, but to the effects of syphilis.

BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

MEETING OF COUNCIL.

Tuesday, August 14th, 1838.

Dr. WEBSTER, President.

THE minutes of the last meeting having been read and confirmed,

G. P. Heyward, Esq., surgeon, of Egham, was elected an ordinary member of the Association:

The President laid before the Council a communication which he had received from the Glasgow Medical Association, of which the following is a copy:—

Glasgow, July 30, 1838.

Sir:—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your interesting letter of the 4th instant, and beg to inform you that I lost no time in laying it before the Glasgow Medical Association.

* This letter was received last week.—ED. L.