

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

## THE PROPOSED HOSPITAL AT SMYRNA AND SIR JOHN FORBES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR JOHN FORBES presents his compliments to the Editor, and will be obliged by his stating, in the next number of the journal, that Sir John Forbes resigned, last week, the appointment of Medical Superintendent of the Civil Hospital at Smyrna.

Old Burlington-street, Feb. 21st, 1855.

## THE PROFESSION AND THE WAR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am directed by the committee of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association to send you the enclosed copy of a petition which has just been sent to Mr. Milner Gibson, M.P., for presentation, and to request that you will be so good as to give it insertion in an early number of THE LANCET.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Manchester, Feb. 1855.

GEO. BELLASIS MASFEN.

[COPY.]

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association,

Humbly sheweth,—

That the Army and Navy medical services have proved defective in organization, and numerically inadequate to the exigencies of war.

That the system of routine and general management in the Army Medical Department has led to most disastrous consequences, and that a thorough reorganization of the entire system is imperatively required.

And that the naval assistant-surgeons, who have received a liberal education as their passport to an enlightened and honourable profession, have not obtained the respectful consideration to which such gentlemen are entitled; hence an imperfect supply of competent men when their services are so urgently needed.

Your petitioners therefore earnestly entreat that an inquiry be instituted into the causes which have led to these fearful results, and that the attention of the legislature be directed to their speedy removal.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &amp;c.

(Signed) JAMES L. BARDSLEY, Knt., M.D., President.  
JOHN AIKENHEAD, M.D., } Hon. Secretaries.  
GEO. BELLASIS MASFEN, }

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING AND PRESERVING THE HEALTH OF THE ARMY IN THE CRIMEA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is now almost a month since it was stated officially in Parliament that the medical military system in the East had broken down. It is better to deliberate than to act rashly and imperfectly; but it is not good to loiter while time presses, and the lives of hundreds, possibly of thousands, are at stake. There are rumours of arrangements being made for a large hospital at Smyrna. This is good as far as it goes, but little is heard as yet of more comprehensive plans, and still less of the solid principles which should govern their formation.

The extent of sickness in the army is a sad, undoubted fact, and the excess of deaths in proportion to the number of the sufferers is another still more to be deplored. According to the list published in *The Times*, the deaths at Scutari alone have of late amounted to upwards of *fifty daily*, whilst in London hospitals, the average of deaths in four thousand patients would be at most *twelve a day*, and these would include patients of all ages, who had suffered from all kinds of disease and accident, many of which would have had a fatal tendency from the beginning. In the East, except for special reasons, which ought to be inquired into, even a smaller average of deaths ought to prevail. The men are all young; all have been, up to a certain period, strong in health, and the diseases under which they

succumb are controllable by medical treatment in this country, for here a fatal termination to either dysentery or diarrhoea is comparatively rare, whilst the mortality of fever does not exceed twenty per cent. It is proper, therefore, to inquire why these diseases are so fatal at Scutari; the previous exhaustion, fatigue and unsuitable diet, though sufficient to cause the diseases, are not sufficient to account for their resisting better care and treatment, since the power of young constitutions to recover quickly from the effects of want and exposure is notorious, as well as the capability to repair injuries, even when organic lesion has taken place, in consequence of long-continued neglect in dysentery and diarrhoea. Much as I should regret to cast reproach upon the military medical department, it is to be feared that the answer must be looked for in its inefficiency. I would be the last man to be unjust towards that devoted staff, many of whom have shown as perfect heroism in their unshrinking self-sacrifice, as the bravest soldier in the army, yet it cannot be concealed that want of sufficient skill in treating these diseases must be regarded as the cause of a great portion of the evil. The army medical officers ought not, however, to be reproached for the absence of that knowledge which they have had no opportunity of acquiring. When we read of specifics used for the cure of chronic disease, we may partly account for the ill success, though we dare not censure them for the lack of sounder medical science. They are, in fact, surgeons, not physicians; they have had little opportunity, before entering the service, of *perfecting* a knowledge of disease, small time to watch the experience of others, and while on duty they have but narrow fields of observation, insufficient to enable them to learn while practising. In times of peace this system for the army might work sufficiently, but for seasons of great need like the present, it must prove utterly inadequate.

The skill of men wholly devoted to medicine, with the widest possible experience, could alone be equal to the work of treating these diseases, attacking violently such multitudes of invaluable lives; and whilst treating them, to make such needful investigations as the surgeons, unprepared and overworked, cannot possibly attend to.

Examinations after death can hardly fail to reveal some guiding truths; and who is there, in the anxious, hurried duties of the hospitals at present, who can find time for such a study?

The projected hospital at Smyrna, from its situation, can serve only to assist the convalescents. It is obvious, that in the trying state of a severe disease, an additional voyage to that place should not be thought of. Nothing but a large Civil Medical Department at Constantinople could meet the evil; and that would prosper only if guided by a man both of science and experience—one who is actively engaged in the duties, and understands the working, of an hospital, and one who has tact and judgment to conciliate existing authorities. No staff could be effective, unless composed of *hospital* physicians; and the assistant offices should be filled up from men who, also in *hospitals*, have occupied the less responsible positions. Such a staff would require little organization to fall almost instantly into their course of duty; and it would be a happy arrangement if a great proportion of the sick from disease were withdrawn from the hospital at Scutari, the spacious wards of which will, unhappily, according to all human probability, be soon wanted for the reception of the wounded.

In regard to measures for the preservation of the general health of the army, I am surprised that some few obvious improvements in the diet have not been yet adopted. Lamentations on the effects of such food as is now sent out are clamorous enough, but no advice is given how to change it. Such alterations as the following might be made with ease:—

Cocoa might take the place of coffee. Whilst diarrhoea and dysentery are present, coffee is *unsuitable*, since on most persons it acts as an aperient. Cocoa has not that property, and its oily nature is both healing to the bowels and nutritious. Cocoa is as cheap as coffee, and more portable—more easily prepared for immediate use, and admits of no mistake about the *roasting*. Tea would be better than coffee, but not so good as cocoa. All three contain the same nutritious principle, the oil being added to the cocoa only.

Pork, in any form, is bad, and should be replaced by any other kind of meat. It is most indigestible, and from the unclean habits of swine, is likely to induce bowel attack in those who live upon it.

Whilst the cold weather lasts, a hint might well be taken from the habits of the Russians. "Fas est et ab hoste doceri." Whatever be the latest theory of animal heat, one point is established—viz., that it is engendered by the use of fat in diet. Lard could be sent from this country in any quantity,