

DR. ELLIOTSON AND HIS
CALUMNIATORS.

LETTER FROM DR. ELLIOTSON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have sent the following letter to the editor of the *Gazette*; but doubting whether he will publish it, I earnestly request the favour of you to give it a place in your widely-circulated print; and if you will allow me to take this opportunity of informing the medical world that I entirely disown any lectures that may henceforth appear in the *Gazette* under my name, and shall feel myself responsible for nothing contained in them, I shall esteem it an additional favour. I shall myself immediately begin to prepare my lectures for publication in a very cheap form, with many corrections and additions.

I have the honour to remain,

Your obedient servant,

37, Conduit-street. JOHN ELLIOTSON.

To the Editor of the London Medical Gazette.

SIR,—Nothing would distress me more than to have made a misrepresentation, especially if to the disadvantage of others.

In your last number you evidently accuse me of misrepresentation in saying that the difference between the mode of instruction in the University of London and in other London medical schools is, that our courses last six months and are delivered almost every day in the week, while in the others two courses are given in the same period and are delivered but three times a week. If I was in error, the account of the prospectuses in *THE LANCET* is incorrect, and all to whom I have spoken on the subject are misinformed.

I request you to acquaint me whether at St. Thomas's, St. Bartholomew's, The London, Guy's, St. George's, King's College, &c., the lectures on the practice of medicine, on chemistry, on *materia medica*, &c., are given more frequently than three times a week; and whether each course lasts six or seven months. I request you to specify the London schools in which the courses on these subjects consist of as many lectures as at the London University, and in which the total number of lectures (not repetitions of lectures) on medical subjects, approaches to the number delivered in the University; and to specify also the nearness of the approach.

You accuse me of error in regard to the surgical course. Now, I did not allude especially to the length of any single course, but to the general plan of our school; and allow me to inform you that Mr. Professor Cooper frequently lectured four and

five times a week, and that his course consisted of above a hundred lectures.

You accuse me of error in stating that another superiority of our plan consists in occasional examinations. I beg to inform you that our examinations are not occasional, but systematic and frequent,—upon the subject of every lecture, and conducted with the same care and regularity as the lectures themselves. I request you to mention the other London school in which there is the same number and systematic regularity of examinations of the students attending every class, and where the inducement to these examinations is made so powerful.

I never once asserted that examinations were instituted solely at the University; but only argued that “the utility of frequent examinations is doubled by a full course of lectures.” There must necessarily be double the number of examinations on the subjects of the course, so that the student is examined on a far larger number of topics, and far more deeply and minutely in each, because the examinations will be commensurate with the lectures.

You misrepresent me when you tell your readers that I state it as a superiority of our school that we illustrate by specimens, &c. My argument was, that, as every lecture is illustrated, there must be more illustration in our extended course than there can be in short courses. If you found the Edinburgh lectures on *materia medica* an infliction, I pity from my heart the sufferings you must have endured for six long dreary months. To me the course of Dr. Home was a daily delight. From no lectures did I derive more solid information and pleasure; from few, so much: and I must say that, were I to deliver lectures on *materia medica*, I should find six months not a day too much for giving my pupils all the information they ought to possess, not merely on the poor list of drugs in the London Pharmacopœia, within which your ideas of a course on *materia medica* must be limited, but upon all other excellent medicines, upon all that relates to the operation of many as poisons, upon diet, upon exercise, upon mineral waters, upon baths, upon climates, and whatever else is employed remedially,—or, in the words of my address, “upon *materia medica* and pharmacy and all remedial means.”

If students have ever requested a short course on anatomy and physiology instead of an extended one, I lament it. The coarse anatomy and physiology that are sufficient for operative surgery, may be taught in three or four months. But I defy any one to teach minute and philosophical anatomy and physiology, such as a man of education and science would desire, in less

than almost daily lectures for six months. How you must lament such a request from students, is proved by what you said in October the 20th, at page 92:—

“There is one step that ought to be taken in time, and the sooner the better for the sake of our anatomical character: the measure we allude to is the necessary one of establishing courses of a fitting length. Nobody will misunderstand us on this head: our protest is directed against the inconceivably absurd regulation of countenancing *three months’* courses!!! Who that has ever handled a scalpel and forceps, has not been at once convinced of its absurdity.”!!!

I am anxious that you should remember that I contended for no superiority on the part of our teachers; but merely for the superiority of the *Edinburgh plan* which had been adopted at the University. That this plan is superior, appears proved by the unexampled success of the school,—by the number of new students this year being actually above double the number of new students last year. We, the professors, are conscious of being not a whit superior to other teachers. Our success, therefore, must be ascribed to our plan.

In concluding I trust you will perceive, that any one, whose intellect could draw inferences so erroneous, and whose moral feelings could allow him to make assumptions so unjust, cannot be depended upon for the statements and reasonings of his lectures, and that therefore it cannot conduce to the character of your *Gazette* to continue them, though they have doubled your sale. Neither will it be anything more than you will approve, if one, “to whom the diffidence which ever attaches to true merit (you say) must be familiar, and who no doubt can appreciate the reluctance with which those who are devoted to the pursuits of science obtrude themselves and their pretensions on the notice of the public,” and who, you well know, repeatedly entreated you not to publish his lectures, declines, with becoming modesty, to assist in giving himself further publicity by continuing to correct the copy of his lectures taken by your short-hand writer. I remain, Sir,

JOHN ELLIOTSON.

37, Conduit-street, Nov. 6th, 1832.

LONDON HOSPITAL.

PUNCTURED WOUND OF THE ABDOMEN.

T. M., ætat. seven, was admitted on the morning of the 15th of October, having received a small punctured wound of the abdomen, parallel to, and about three-

quarters of an inch to the left of, the umbilicus, having been stabbed with a pen-knife.

On his admission, a portion of omentum was found protruding, but it did not appear to have received any wound; this was returned into the cavity of the abdomen, a compress of lint applied over the wound, and retained by slips of adhesive plaster. There was very little hemorrhage; the pulse small and quick; skin cold; and great prostration of strength. After being placed in bed, in a short time reaction took place, and on being seen by Mr. Andrews, that gentleman ordered twelve leeches to be applied to the abdomen, with a view of anticipating any inflammatory action that might be set up. To take no medicine, and have *milk diet*.

In the evening the abdomen became painful and distended, giving to the fingers the sensation of a tympanitic state of the intestines; bowels have not been relieved.

16. Passed a very good night; has no pain on pressing over any part of the abdomen; pulse tranquil; skin moderately warm; bowels have not been relieved. To take half an ounce of castor oil.

17. Passed a very good night. Bowels opened by the oil; skin cool; pulse quick; no tenderness over any part of the abdomen. This boy has not had a single bad symptom since, and is now running about the ward. The only time he complained of pain was on the first evening, and which was to be attributed to tympanitis rather than to any inflammatory action.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. W. denies that he attempted to defend the *Journal of Education* in his late letter. He still thinks the remarks on the Edinburgh clinic in Dr. Elliotson's lecture, were not warranted. J. W.'s letter of Oct. 31 breaks no new ground, and therefore we thus compress it.

A *Constant Reader* should make his inquiries at the Army Board itself.

A *late Militia Surgeon*. They are not legally qualified. The one fact mentioned is not sufficient.

J. The examinations at Edinburgh for the degree of M.D. are not now conducted in Latin.

We could not insert the statement of a medical pupil of the Manchester Infirmary without authentication.

Giarrizzio Corragio cannot have an answer this week.

ERRATA.—In Mr. Salmon's letter on contagion in cholera, page 182, the place termed “S. Eura” should have been printed “Doura,” and the letter should have been dated “Irvine” instead of “Frome”—errors which result from the extraordinary mode of forming portions of the alphabet, which correspondents occasionally adopt.

Page 146, line 25, for “Heloetius” read “Helvetius.”