

intention to foster what appears to be a piece of flagrant quackery; but it is worth their while to reflect whether they may not, again and again, be made the unconscious sponsors of very questionable transactions, simply from meddling with matters they cannot understand.—Ed. L.

THE ANTI-LANCET PLOT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The enemies of THE LANCET, of the enlightened views which it has ever advocated, and of its unflinching efforts in the cause of the great body of the profession, have had ample opportunities of expressing their hatred of a journal whose independence and power they have feared and detested. Far from being surprised at the attacks to which you have been subjected, I, for one, am astonished that up to a late occasion your exertions in the cause of the hard-working members of the profession have not met with opposition from those interested in staying the progress of a powerful and independent journal.

The forcible letters that have lately appeared in your journal from Mr. Owen Fox and two members of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, have induced me to beg permission that the opinions of a humble country surgeon upon the late proceedings should have a place in the columns of THE LANCET. I have no claim to be heard beyond that which one of the hardworking members of the profession may put forth. I am far away from the scene of contention, and have no pretensions to be heard beyond the fact of my being an union surgeon.

If not the representative, then, at all events I am one of a large body of medical practitioners who are deeply indebted to your exertions in their behalf. Practising in a remote district, without sympathy and without assistance from societies or colleges, I have felt that when injured or oppressed, I have had no other defender to look to than yourself, and no hope of redress except from your fearless and ever ready advocacy. A sense of gratitude therefore impels me to assure you, that, whatever may be the opinions of some few gentlemen who are connected with hospitals, I cannot believe that the great majority of the hard-working and "obscure" country surgeons have any sympathy with your enemies. It is impossible in the very nature of things that it should be so. We are not ungrateful. The history of a life gives a contradiction to the statements of your enemies. What has been that history? I would refer to the pages of THE LANCET for more than thirty years for an answer. I would refer to your efforts both in and out of Parliament for a triumphant refutation of the unjust aspersions which have been raised against you. What has THE LANCET advocated? What have you done?

For a period extending over a series of years, which numbers nearly half the allotted time of man upon the stage of life, you have devoted your best energies in the cause of a body of your fellow-citizens to whom you have been bound by the strong ties of early association and the deepest sympathy. Are your enemies prepared to say that during that long period you have ever sacrificed the interest of the profession to your personal advantage? Are they in a condition to show that you have ever shrank from serving them upon any occasion, either in or out of Parliament? If they are, let them show it; if they are not, whence all this most unjust and flagrant injustice towards you? The letter of a correspondent, in the last number of your journal, will give an answer. Such an answer may suit the enemies of a free press, but to the great body of the profession it is far from satisfactory. One word with reference to the case of Mr. Gay, a case which I only mention from the prominence which your enemies have given to it to injure and to traduce you. What are the simple facts?—facts, be it remembered, derived from witnesses leagued in a plot against you. What, then, is the charge against you,—that you have aided in the expulsion of an ungrateful medical officer from his hospital, upon the evidence of interested witnesses, against the clear and positive facts which you have adduced.

Let me repeat the questions put by a correspondent last week. Are you still prepared to refer the question to the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association? Are your enemies ready to meet you before that tribunal? These are questions that must be answered, and I shall judge of your sincerity in this matter by the answer you may give. Do not imagine that your challenge will be forgotten. It may be an idle boast meant to mislead us. If you are sincere, you will insist upon the inquiry. If those who have accused you dare

not bring the matter, calmly and honestly, to the test of impartial inquiry, there is no language which will be deemed sufficiently condemnatory of their conduct by the great mass of the profession. The English character is no less generous than just. We rally to a war-cry in defence of an injured brother; but we are not slow to acknowledge an error when we have committed it. You have been assailed; be sure you will have justice done you in the long run!

So much, then, for the charge that your enemies bring against you. But are we to forget your services in times past, because it suits the purpose of a small section of our body at this time to traduce your journal? Surely not. Men, like myself, dependent upon our own unassisted exertions for a livelihood cannot forget past services—cannot forget what we owe to your advocacy and support—cannot forget the services you have rendered to the ill-paid and ill-treated union surgeons of England—cannot forget, above all, your determined opposition to quackery in all shapes and under all disguises, an opposition which I hesitate not to affirm has been more advantageous to the legitimate practitioners of medicine than all the services which have been rendered to them by colleges and halls, and by the pharisaical upholders of the "honour and dignity" of the profession.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Yorkshire, May, 1854.

AN UNION SURGEON.

THE PRIZE SYSTEM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR—Will you permit me to make a few remarks on the letter of "Res Facta," in your last number, on the prize system. This singularly logical production commences by a complaint that the honorary certificate awarded to the second best in merit, is not given where there are more than two candidates, and then proceeds to a sweeping attack on the system of giving prizes at all. The first statement is, as far as regards the hospital to which I belong, simply untrue, as a certificate is only refused where the merit of the candidates would not justify its award. So long as the acknowledged evils of the present prize system were in the hands of THE LANCET, the matter was sure to be treated with ability and justice, but if every petty scribbler who has been defeated in a prize contest is to be allowed, publicly, to vilify the system under which he would have been glad enough to have signalized himself, I fear the cause of reform, in the matter of prizes, will receive more harm than good.

I can read the history of the disappointment endured by "Res Facta" in his note. He wrote for a prize, on some subject, in which he had abundant practice, and little theory, and some acquaintance with the rules for treatment, but very little understanding of their reasons. He was defeated, probably, by a competitor who, with perhaps but little practice, had taken the trouble to understand the rationale of the case, and so prepared himself to treat with advantage the first case that should present itself to him. But "Res Facta" did not even get the certificate, and so he proceeds quietly to impugn the justice of his examiner. I can suggest a readier explanation of the phenomenon: we have only to suppose that the paper of "Res Facta" was written with the same ability and lucid arrangement which he displayed in his letter to THE LANCET, and we shall easily see why he did not obtain the certificate. I hope, sir, you will again take into your own hands the subject of prize reform.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

May, 1845.

X.

BIRKENHEAD HOSPITAL AND DISPENSARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention has been called to a letter in your paper of Saturday last, in reference to the late election of house-surgeon to the "Birkenhead Hospital and Dispensary," signed by "Such is Life;" and as my name is very prominently introduced, I am compelled to expose the erroneous position which your correspondent has taken in this matter.

It is not necessary for me to enter into all the circumstances connected with that election, which will bear the strictest investigation, but I must question the fairness of the attack of your correspondent.

He quotes from my letter to him, that he was "selected as most eligible to fill the situation," and not as my letter did say, "amongst those selected as most eligible to fill the situation." This alone so completely destroys his argument, that I

might stop here, and leave the public to decide what credit can be given to parties who can so garble statements to suit their own views.

To proceed, however, most of the candidates so selected appeared before the sub-committee (consisting of three members of the committee, the medical board, and the consulting surgeon), and of these candidates three were selected, to recommend to the general committee for the election.

I shortly afterwards received an application from a Dr. Hancox, of Penn, Staffordshire (one of the unsuccessful candidates), for the payment of £3 10s., the amount of his alleged expenses, accompanied by a threat of the County Court! It is possible that my not acceding to that demand has now suggested this attack upon me, and the Birkenhead Hospital, in your valuable paper.

In conclusion, I may add that this appointment of house-surgeon was most assuredly awarded by merit, and *not*, as your correspondent so confidently asserts, "by interest." I defy him to prove his statement in the slightest degree, and I firmly believe that not one member of the committee was personally acquainted with any of the candidates, or that the slightest "interest" was ever used, directly or indirectly, to secure the election.

This much, sir, I think is due in defence of our valuable institution, and I do hope that a little reflection may for the future reconcile such unsuccessful candidates to the disappointment consequent on all elections, where the best man only wins. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Birkenhead, May 4, 1854.

W. W. ST. GEORGE, Hon. Sec.

INQUESTS IN LAMBETH AND SOUTHWARK.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Some few months ago a man was brought from the street to my house, and, notwithstanding my endeavours, died in a few minutes in my surgery, without having uttered a word. An inquest was held, and a verdict of "Natural Death" returned, without any medical testimony, and without even my having been summoned as a witness.

On Monday the 1st of May, when going my round, I was requested to look at the body of a woman who had just been found dead. An hour before she was in good spirits, and talking with her landlady. An inquest was held on Thursday last, and a verdict of died by the "Visitation of God" returned, again, without medical testimony.

How long, Mr. Editor, will these mock inquests continue to be held? It would seem that in order to ingratiate himself with the magistrates by saving the county the expence of a medical witness the requisite testimony is not produced before the jury by the coroner. It would be interesting to know if his disinterestedness makes him refuse his own fee.

I remain, Sir, yours &c.,

Kennington-cross, May, 1854.

H. M. MEADOWS, Surgeon.

* * On many occasions similar to those mentioned by Mr. Meadows the fault may be traced to the neglect or ignorance of the summoning officer.—ED. L.

THE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.—MIDWIVES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Now that so much is being said about Medical Reform, perhaps the following will not be altogether uninteresting, as it shows the necessity which there is for protecting the legally-qualified medical man in that branch of our profession called midwifery. I am a young beginner, fully qualified, as required by the laws of this country, and having a family to maintain. About twelve months since, I settled down in my present situation; there is no other medical man near me, (the neighbourhood being small,) and who, do you suppose, I find my principal opponents? Why a class of ignorant midwives, who do not hesitate to inform their victims that they *have their diplomas*; and what is worse, there are some medical men around, who are stated to allow these women to assert that they will *follow* them in case of emergency. It is only very recently that a fine child was fairly killed by one of these women; and in my rounds this morning, I was informed that this very woman had sent to inform a lady-patient of mine, with whom she had made an arrangement to "char," that she was very sorry she could not come, as she had been called out to attend a patient in her confinement. Is it an encouragement to young men about to qualify, that they will have to compete with these ignorant persons? There is yet another

case referring to the subject which I may mention; it is this: like all young surgeons commencing a practice, I of course expected competition from the various surgeons around me, and so long as it is done in a fair way, there can be no reasonable objection; but fancy a guardian of the parish, a most wealthy and influential man, brother to one of the surgeons of our largest hospitals, allowing his wife to join with the parish surgeon, in forming a society to oppose me. Surely this is too bad. Certainly societies offer inducements to the working man's wife: to have every requisite provided for themselves and their children, with five shillings towards the payment of the medical man, is not to be sneered at; but I think it is degrading to our profession, to find one of them stooping to injure a brother, although a younger one, by entering into such an engagement, especially one who calls himself respectable, and is reported wealthy. Surely in the Bill before Parliament, we ought to be entirely protected against both of these evils. In the first place, midwives ought to be done away with entirely, and all those who cannot afford to pay a reasonable fee, ought to have the parish surgeon, who should be obliged to contract, in one stated sum, to supply medicine and attendance, act as accoucheur, or attend in any other case. He would not then be anxious to take the midwifery cases of other practitioners, or prefer to attend them for the small fee allowed by the parish, than to let another medical man attend, whom they would and could pay, but for the inducement held out to them that they would, by the means mentioned, have to pay nothing at all.

I am Sir, yours obediently,

Essex, April, 1854.

M.R.C.S.L. &c.

THE WAR.

MEDICAL INTELLIGENCE.

SMALL-POX IN THE BALTIC FLEET.—The small-pox, which was said to have broken out extensively in the Baltic fleet, has proceeded no further than the *James Watt*, which has lost several men. Many of the other ships of war have had their crews re-vaccinated at Elsinore.

THE BALTIC HOSPITAL-SHIP.—The *Belleisle*, Commander Hoskins, fitted out at Plymouth as an hospital-ship for the Baltic, proceeded to the Sound on Saturday afternoon last, to wait for final orders. She is fitted with 160 beds—118 on the lower deck, 38 on the orlop deck, and four in what is to be called the operating-room. Ten cabins will be appropriated to sick officers, who will also be provided with a separate sickness berth. Everything necessary for an hospital-ship has been taken on board by the *Belleisle*—medical stores, wooden limbs, &c. She is a twenty-four gun-ship, but will only carry six guns—thirty-two pounders, placed on the quarter deck and fore-castle.

The *Belleisle* sailed from the Sound on Wednesday. The Admiralty have directed the authorities of the Victualling Yard, Stonehouse, to supply the following articles of provisions, of the very best quality, to the *Belleisle*, for the use of the sick:—Beef, 50,000lbs., bread, 50,000lbs., flour, 50,000lbs., Scotch barley, 7000lbs., essence of beef, 2000 $\frac{1}{4}$ pints, white wine, 87 gallons. She is also to take on board for Sir Charles Napier's fleet in the Baltic—Bread, 1000 bags, salt meat, 250 tierces, spirits, 50 puncheons, and a proportionate quantity of all other species of provisions. One hundred seamen were lent yesterday from the *Impregnable* and *Royal William* to navigate her to the Downs, returning to Plymouth in the *Avon*.

MALTA, MAY 2.—Letters from Malta of this date specify that surgeon Bostock, and assistant-surgeons Robinson and Pilkington had left Malta for Scutari on the 22nd ultimo, with a staff of officers and about 900 of the Scots Fusilier Guards. Surgeon Huthwaite, Assistant-surgeons Wardrope and Blenkins, with the officers and 650 privates of the Grenadier Guards, had also departed on board the *Golden Fleece* for the same destination. Battalion Surgeon Skelton, and Assistant-surgeon Wyatt, with a wing of the Coldstream Guards, for the same place, on board the *Vulcan* steam-vessel. Assistant-surgeon Gilborne, of the Royal Artillery, arrived at Malta on the 26th ult., in the *Edendale* transport, number 10, from Gravesend, with men and horses all well. After watering in Valetta harbour they were all sent forward to Scutari. The *Euxine* from Portsmouth, with Surgeon Jamieson, and a portion of the 19th regiment, arrived on the 28th, and were immediately forwarded to Constantinople. The *Melita*, screw-steamer, from Liverpool, arrived on the afternoon of the same day, with Dr. McDonald, Dr. Hannon, Dr. Tucker, Dr. Han-