

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE STUDENTS OF EDINBURGH AND THE NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Knowing the zeal with which you have always pleaded the cause of the assistant-surgeons of the navy, I trust you will give a place in your journal to the accompanying notice, copies of which are being sent to the chief medical schools of Great Britain and Ireland. When you consider how short a time elapsed between the publication of the proposals of the Admiralty and the meeting, you will see that the feeling on this subject is as general and as decided here as in London.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, March, 1855. HENRY MARSHALL.

NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

On the 8th of March, it was made generally known in Edinburgh, that the Admiralty were desirous of obtaining the services of young men between eighteen and twenty years of age, engaged in the study of medicine, but not legally qualified for its practice, to act as dressers in the navy during the expected Baltic campaign.

The position of the assistant-surgeons in the navy has been for many years felt to be such as to render the appointment not adapted for a gentleman. Any prospect of the reform of this crying abuse appeared likely to be indefinitely postponed, if the proposed dresserships were accepted by medical students; for there could be little doubt that these unqualified persons would in reality be employed as substitutes for the medical men who have left the service.

The students in medicine accordingly held a meeting on the following day, in the largest theatre of the University. It was attended by upwards of 600, and the following resolutions were carried by acclamation:—

- I. That this meeting regards the present position of assistant-surgeons in the Navy as inconsistent with the dignity of the profession, and the efficient performance of its duties.
- II. That a reform of this abuse, which has been long called for during peace, for the sake both of the medical profession and of the navy, has become doubly necessary now that the nation is engaged in war.
- III. That, in the opinion of this meeting, it would be greatly to be lamented if the students of Edinburgh should in any way favour the continuance of this abuse.
- IV. That the acceptance of the appointments proposed to students by the Admiralty must tend to postpone reform, by providing substitutes for the want of qualified men, which has been produced by the evils of the present system.
- V. That this meeting, therefore, strongly deprecates this proposal, and earnestly calls upon the students of Edinburgh to sacrifice, on public grounds, any private advantages which it may seem to offer.

Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh,
March 12th, 1855. HENRY MARSHALL, Chairman.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have perused for years with great pleasure the manner in which you have advocated the cause of the assistant-surgeons in the Royal Navy. The grievances of these gentlemen are but too well known to the press and the public at large. During the past week my feelings have been utterly disgusted with an offer made on the part of Government to second and third-year students, inducing them to enter the service as dressers at the rate of 6s. per diem, with rations. Now, Sir, the pay of an assistant-surgeon is 7s. per diem, with rations, out of which he has to find his uniform, support his mess, and maintain his position as an officer and gentleman. I presume these dressers would have to find no uniform, their term of agreement being only for the space of six or seven months, commencing from April 1st, (I think a most appropriate date,) and terminating in October. I have read with great delight in your journal the meetings of the students of several of your metropolitan schools, and am glad to find that the students of London are not singular in their feelings, as a

meeting of the students of the Edinburgh University (about 600 in number) assembled on Friday afternoon last.

But, to come to the point, Sir, I would at once state that I (and I have reason to believe there are plenty more in the same situation) am ready to enter the service as soon as I shall see those regulations altered by the authorities which are so obnoxious to the feelings of an officer and a gentleman. I did not speak at the meeting held here, as I was determined to appear before the public through the medium of *THE LANCET*. What I would have stated there is, that I saw a letter the other day from a surgeon of a line-of-battle ship, addressed to a Deputy-Inspector of Hospitals and Fleets, stating that there were seventy vacancies in the fleet, and not one candidate presenting himself, and consequently that he (the surgeon) would be glad to accept the services of any one, qualified or unqualified. Is not this most outrageous? The problem readily solves itself. It may be said we are taking advantage of the country being engaged in war. Admitted; but we are only now standing out for that which we have in vain been seeking during the previous long term of peace. Where the assistant-surgeons are to come from I know not—the country knows not—the Admiralty knows not; and it is for this reason that it tries to bribe unqualified students into the service, to be kicked about as powder-monkeys or some other menial servants, to the degradation of their profession and their professional brethren. But I am happy to find that it is not the professional diploma that makes the man a gentleman in his feelings, but that these are implanted in his breast long ere he enters on his medical career.

I could say much more on this most important subject of medical reform, but I forbear, feeling that I have encroached too much already on the space of your valuable journal. I would not have done so but for the interest you have shown towards this ill-used and most useful officer.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, March, 1855.

M.R.C.S. ENG.

LUNACY—THE CASE OF MR. GREENWOOD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am sure I need only appeal to your sense of justice for the insertion of the following remarks in one of the earliest numbers of your highly excellent and influential journal. Your first leader in *THE LANCET* of the 24th ultimo, written with great power, in a most telling style, and in a spirit of honest indignation at a supposed flagrant injury inflicted upon a man alleged to be insane, who, in your opinion, is not so, is itself calculated to inflict a most serious injury upon the two medical men, who, in the deliberate and conscientious discharge of their duty, wrote the necessary certificates for Mr. Greenwood's admission into the Billington Asylum in October last. I wish at once to avow myself as one of the medical men who so signed the necessary documents; and I have no desire to shrink from the responsibility which my view of Mr. Greenwood's case has placed upon me.

I feel quite assured, however, that you will see that responsibility to be in itself sufficient, without your heaping upon me any unnecessary terms of obloquy, and so laying yourself open to the charge which has recently been made against the press, as a "ribald press," by repeating the exact language, which in some parts of your article certainly adds neither strength nor beauty to its argument.

Permit me then to state, that the message for me to see Mr. Greenwood in October last reached me in the course of my usual morning round of visits in the town. I was requested to call, at my convenience, at the Bay Horse Hotel. I there saw Mr. Greenwood, in the commercial-room,—not "in the tap-room,"—and I examined him *alone* most carefully. I then withdrew into a private sitting-room to fill up the necessary document. I am almost ashamed while I add, (but your sarcasm compels me,) that to me the hotel was a private house; I drank nothing, and I saw nothing drunk.

At that time Mr. Greenwood was not suffering from the usual symptoms of much gastric irritation. He could not at all tell me how many brothers and sisters he had. He was fully possessed by the conviction that his brother Robert intended to poison him. When asked by me, what means his brother had taken to effect this object, his reply was, "both in my meat and in my bed-clothes." He was, under this conviction, in a state of great exasperation against his brother. His memory was so very seriously impaired, and his mental faculties generally so utterly unequal to any sustained effort, that there could not exist in my mind the least doubt of his entire incapacity for affairs.

The next time I saw Mr. Greenwood, some three months subsequently, was at the Billington Asylum, when the question of his liberation from restraint was about to be raised before the visiting magistrates. You may believe me, that I went to this examination with the utmost possible care and anxiety. I spent, I think, about three quarters of an hour with Mr. Greenwood *alone*, and then sat in company with him and others, in Mr. Pinder's dining-room, for about the same length of time. The conclusion forced upon my understanding was both clear and strong, and I left Mr. Greenwood's company *perfectly satisfied* of his insanity. In my private examination, I found he had still the delusion with respect to his brother Robert; he did not know the nature of the institution in which he was placed; he did not know how long he had been there. He persisted that a gentleman (whose company we afterwards joined) had, a few months ago, knocked out three of his teeth. When asked to point out the empty space previously occupied by these teeth, he pointed to the teeth themselves. I placed before him sixpences, shillings, half-crowns, half-sovereigns, and sovereigns, requesting him to put together the coins of equal value; then to tell me their relative value; and some other things of a similar kind. *He utterly and entirely failed in every one of these operations.*

Now, Sir, I ask you, what conclusion, in all fairness and honesty and singleness of purpose was possible to me but the one I formed? In accordance with this conclusion my evidence before the magistrates on the following day was framed. I owe it to myself to add here, that on this my second examination of Mr. Greenwood, having in the interval succeeding the first learned something of the general history of the case, I *felt a strong wish* to find him so much improved that I could have borne testimony in favour of his liberation. So much for my share of what you have denounced as the "secret testimony of two medical men."

I should be extremely sorry, by one word of mine, to disparage the ability or integrity of those "highly-respectable medical gentlemen in the neighbourhood" who took a very different view of Mr. Greenwood's case from my own; but unless all the evidence of the many witnesses who spoke in proof of that gentleman's insanity be ignored, surely some of those medical gentlemen had acted inconsistently in recommending every weapon to be removed from Mr. Greenwood's reach, and that he should not be left alone one moment.

Still less is it for me to speak in defence of Dr. Sutherland or Mr. M'Cann. These gentlemen can take care of their own reputation. But, when after making a thoroughly *ex parte* statement, excluding, with a most unusual sedulousness, every word which would oppose the truth of that statement, you proceed to ask "will our readers believe us when we say that we have not over-coloured the picture in this melancholy case." I will take leave to say, as one of your readers and admirers of many years' standing, I believe, on my conscience, you have much over-coloured the picture. And I think you ought, at least, to have quoted the evidence of one "highly-respectable gentleman," who could have no selfish motive in the business, which proves, most distinctly, that Mr. Greenwood, during the late autumn, at Harrowgate, at Buxton, at Blackpool,—thirty, forty, and fifty miles away from his brother, Robert,—still exclaimed loudly and repeatedly that Robert was there, and then in the act of poisoning him.

Let me ask your further indulgence for the few remarks which I shall think it necessary to make, in reference to the "official report" of Sir A. Morison and Dr. Forbes Winslow. The two names are great names. But I hold, with one of the greatest writers of this age, that "great names are not arguments; and that the chief use of great names in controversy, is to balance and neutralize one another, that the unawed and unfettered mind may think and judge with a due self-reverence." So, if you will permit me, we will place, in one column, Dr. Sutherland and Mr. M'Cann; in the opposite, Sir A. Morison and Dr. Winslow.

The report itself is exceedingly ingenious and elaborate. I cannot agree with you that it is a truly philosophical analysis of Mr. Greenwood's case. Much stress is laid, in the report, on the fact that "Mr. Greenwood has suffered from derangement of the stomach and liver, accompanied by great gastric irritability; and that to this cause may be traced the delusion which is said to have existed at the time when the certificates were signed."

Now, this gastric irritation, from the statement of the "official reporters," still exists, and must in fact be much more severe than when I first saw Mr. Greenwood; and yet the *delusion* has ceased to exist.

Is it necessary for me to remind you, Sir, that Pinel has stated it to be the result of his inquiries, that the primary seat of mental alienation is generally in the region of the stomach and intestines, and that from that centre it propagates itself and deranges the understanding.

I hope you will pardon my presumption, because of the strength of my conviction, when I challenge your attention to the result of Mr. Greenwood's case during the next ensuing twelve months—if, indeed, a much shorter period do not determine some fearful catastrophe. All I have seen, and all I have read on the subject of insanity, has entirely misled me, if this case is not one of the most hopeless, as to improvement, that can be witnessed.

In conclusion, I wish to express a hope that if, in the extreme hurry of writing, a single expression has escaped me injurious or uncourteous to yourself or to the medical gentlemen opposed to me in this very anxious and trying affair, it will be attributed to inadvertence, and pardoned.

I remain, Sir, very respectfully yours,

Blackburn, March, 1855.

JONATHAN MORLEY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—There are some points in your leading article of the 24th of February, to which I feel I am bound to draw your attention.

In the first place, you say that "Mr. Greenwood was confined in this establishment a whole day and night without being certified to be a lunatic." This is certainly an erroneous statement. Mr. Greenwood was not confined, in any proper sense of the term, one hour, before he was properly and (but for the accidental omission of the name of the street and number in which the patient was examined) legally certified to be insane. You then say that "the day after this iniquitous and illegal detention he was taken to a public-house in the neighbourhood, and two medical men residing some distance from the locality were sent for to examine and certify to his lunacy." This is also erroneous. He was taken to the nearest town where two medical men were to be found, and not to a common public-house, or into the tap-room, but to a respectable commercial hotel, and into the commercial-room, and there examined by the two medical men, who reside within two minutes' walk of the hotel. You next dwell upon "compelling him to herd all his days with raving madmen." This was not the case. Mr. Greenwood was boarded with us, and lived as one of my own family, which was composed of myself, Mrs. Pinder, and three daughters, and occupied the best bed-room in the house, and no restraint whatever was placed on his movements, except that the eye of the keeper was occasionally upon him in his walks. You also say that "the picture is not over-coloured in this melancholy case." I say it is an *ex parte* statement throughout, and that Mr. Greenwood could not have given the answers he is said to have done to some of the questions had not the words been put into his mouth. The fact of supposing that he was poisoned by his brother did not arise from a disordered state of his stomach, or was it confined to his brother alone, but to other persons.

Trusting that you will hear both sides of the question,

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

Billington Retreat, Lancashire, March, 1855.

W. PINDER.

MR. SYME'S CLINICAL LECTURES.—EXCISION OF THE ELBOW-JOINT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have taken great interest in the very excellent Clinical Lectures by Professor Syme now appearing in THE LANCET. In the last number but one, is a Lecture on Excision of the Elbow-joint, in which the Professor takes to himself the credit of the introduction of that operation into this country. I feel that I should not be doing my duty to the hospital to which I have been attached as surgeon for thirty-six years, if I did not again state that that operation had been often performed in the Leeds General Infirmary long before it was attempted by Mr. Syme. Ten years ago the following statement appeared in "Braithwaite's Retrospect," vol. ii. p. 141:—

["In 'Retrospect,' vol. x., p. 134, Mr. Syme says—'Previous to 1829, the operation of cutting out the elbow-joint had not been performed in Great Britain.' Since this paper was published, we have received a note from Mr. Smith, senior surgeon of the Leeds General Infirmary, from which we take the following extract, to show that the operation