

THE ALLEGED CONSULTATION WITH A HOMŒOPATHIST AT BEDFORD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The correspondence and editorial comments which have appeared in your journal on the consultations recently held with me by Drs. Burrows and Wharton, leave room, as I conceive, for a few observations by myself on the subject. It certainly did not occur to me that either the eminent metropolitan professor or the provincial physician was risking the slightest damage to his professional character or position by the consultations in question.

In the sessions of 1857-8 and 1858-9, I had the advantage of completing my qualifications for practice (which I had commenced at the Aldersgate-street School of Medicine in 1837), under the teachings of Dr. Burrows and his able colleagues at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. I have subsequently, as Dr. Burrows states in his first letter, been in the habit of taking or sending patients to him for his opinion and treatment, and have had great pleasure and satisfaction, and my patients much benefit, in following his advice; and I have now to assert that Dr. Burrows was perfectly right in assuming, as he did, that I was practising medicine according to his teaching.

Dr. Wharton, the able and respected physician to the County Infirmary and Fever Hospital, knew that for many years his predecessor, Dr. Evans, had met me in consultations with the utmost cordiality, and I presume he also knew that *nearly* all the practitioners of Bedford were in the habit either of meeting me in consultation or of interchanging professional services. He therefore did not hesitate to meet me when requested to do so.

Mr. Sharpin occupies a curious and rather anomalous position in this matter. Fearing, it would appear, that the case against Dr. Wharton might possibly break down, Mr. Sharpin writes a letter for the purpose of asserting that he is in a position to prove certain irregularities of practice occurring *three years ago*, and that he had on that account declined to meet me. I certainly was not aware that Mr. Sharpin had in any case been requested to meet me, and had declined. I do remember that a few years ago I had several cases of typhus in a family residing near to Mr. Sharpin's house, and that, in consequence of my unavoidable absence from home for some twenty-four hours, Mr. Sharpin saw the children—the fever being just at its crisis alarmed the parents—prescribing for them, I believe, bark and wine, I having previously given them quinine and ammonia. On my return I took charge of my patients, but heard of no protest or complaint on the part of Mr. Sharpin. Again, in the month of April last, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Sharpin in the case of a patient whom some time before I had taken to Dr. Burrows for his advice, and under whose treatment he recovered his usual good health. I was not in the town when the summons to see the patient was sent to my house, and Mr. Sharpin was in consequence requested to see him. I reached home, however, in time to be first in attendance on the patient, and immediately opened a vein in the arm. Mr. Sharpin then arrived, and we remained together in attendance nearly an hour. Mustard poultices to the lower extremities, croton oil on the tongue, and opening the temporal artery, were amongst the remedies employed by us for the restoration of our patient, the consultation being carried on throughout with apparent cordiality and good feeling on the part of Mr. Sharpin. I cannot, therefore, understand in what respect the course pursued by Dr. Burrows and Dr. Wharton differs from that taken by Mr. Sharpin. I am not aware that in either case their professional reputation received the faintest stain; and I assure Mr. Sharpin that I shall, in future, have pleasure in meeting him and the other practitioners of the town and neighbourhood.

Trusting that what I have here said will only facilitate a good understanding and pleasant feeling amongst us as fellow-members of the profession,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bedford, Feb. 11th, 1863.

JAMES COOMBS.

* * * Up to the time of our going to press, Dr. Wharton had not "entered an appearance" to the indictments preferred against him by his brother practitioners in the town in which he resides. Are we to assume, then, that he is content to "allow judgment to go by default?" Dr. Burrows shelters himself under the plea of "*non mi ricordo*." Dr. Wharton may regard himself as being in a position either above or below the necessity of standing well with the members of the profes-

sion in Bedford or elsewhere. This is a matter of opinion. Dr. Wharton is entitled to enjoy his own. He must not be surprised if the profession assume the same privilege. In so important a matter it is highly to be regretted that one physician should have so short a memory, and the other so little respect for professional opinion. With one consultant so oblivious, and the other so *insouciant*—with a President of the Association so facile, and a journal so servile—medical interests were like to come poorly off. The remarkable epistle which Mr. Coombs addresses to us, and in which he so courteously holds out the hand of fellowship, is characterized by the important omissions which were made in Dr. Burrows' letters on the same subject. It omits to state that Mr. Coombs stands in the "Medical Directory" as "M.D." of the (Homœopathic) College of Cleveland, Ohio, and still uses that title. Are we to understand that Mr. Coombs does not practise and never has practised homœopathy?—ED. L.

DISPENSARY FOR DISEASES OF THE THROAT AND LOSS OF VOICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your list of appointments in last week's LANCET, is that of Dr. Mackenzie to the Dispensary for Diseases of the Throat and Loss of Voice, which I conjecture beforehand must have accidentally found its way there. Coupling it with the announcement in *The Times* of Friday that the Dispensary was formed, and subscriptions demanded from the public, the very natural inference arose that Dr. Mackenzie was the originator and founder of it.

I remember reading in one of his papers some nine months ago that he hoped the laryngoscope would become the familiar instrument of every well-educated practitioner, instead of its remaining merely the hobby-horse of aspiring specialists. Who could he have referred to? Why, if any one is aspiring to the honour of being a specialist in the most extreme degree, it is himself. And would he endeavour to force down our poor suffering throats that a dispensary is necessary to have them *specially* treated, when such cases are all admirably cared for at every known hospital and dispensary in London? Surely the profession will unite to put down such a scandal. The Hospital for Stone was bad enough, but a Throat Dispensary is worse.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Feb. 1863.

GOSTER.

RUSSELL VERSUS ADAMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Every medical practitioner of experience who has sympathized with the widow or fatherless child (and where is there one of us engaged in large practice who has not done so?) must feel that were this kindness and sympathy perverted, diverted, and construed into evil motives, a ground for action might be sustained. I have most carefully read the evidence in the case alluded to, and therefore request your permission to forward one guinea towards the liquidation of our brother surgeon's expenses.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Bow-road, Feb. 1863.

S. LAWRENCE GILL, M.D.

HEALTH ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having observed in your notices to correspondents the letter signed "Rainy Day," with the contents of which I fully coincide, I beg to inform him and all those interested in the same, that there is in existence a society called "The Norwich Provident Insurance Society," in which insurance can be effected against sickness. It was established in 1860, the working of which therefore cannot be much known at present. I have (with your correspondent) long felt the necessity of some institution in which, by paying an annual subscription of from two to ten pounds, members might be entitled to relief during sickness producing disability, or in old age.

Having myself passed through the ordeal three years since of a fearful illness, confining me to my bed for twelve weeks, and disabling me for nearly twelve months from attending my practice, which I conducted single-handed for nearly thirty years, and also constantly having cases brought under my notice of medical men disabled, or their wives and families left