

the left side of the uterus, which was undisturbed, where he could not fail to find the ganglia and nerves." As far as I can remember, Dr. Lee never attempted an examination at any of his visits to my house but once; and then, standing by the side of the table on which the preparation was placed, and taking hold of the hypogastric plexus with the forceps, he put it on the stretch, and looked at the dissection for about half a minute—a short method of making an examination into a minute anatomical question, and a quick way of arriving at important conclusions.

Dr. Lee is also peculiarly infelicitous in his description of the preparation. He says, "The left side of the uterus was undisturbed." Unfortunately for this statement, it is dissected after Dr. Lee's manner,—by picking out the very loose cellular tissue. "The hypogastric ganglion" is there, not "torn to pieces," but exists as a mass, "about two inches in length," and "the great bloodvessels, with all their accompanying ganglia and nerves," are not "cut away" on that side. When I found that I differed from Dr. Lee in the results of my inquiries, it was my object to test the correctness of my conclusion in various ways. And one of the methods adopted was to dissect the opposite side of the uterus, to see if I could arrive at the same results as Dr. Lee, and then to examine where the difference between the two existed. This dissection was conducted while continuing that of the opposite side, working sometimes at one, sometimes at the other, as a relief to my eyes. Thus, Dr. Lee's ganglia and nerves were known and demonstrated, on the same preparation, from the commencement of the inquiries. In proof of these facts I can again appeal to the preparation.

How Dr. Lee could state the following, I am at a loss to understand:—"This proposal was met with a flat denial that any ganglia existed at the neck, or nervous structures on the body, of the uterus." I am quite certain that I never said it. I could not give a "flat denial" to structures which were every day before my eyes,—which I have described in my paper,—which I carefully watched as the artist drew them, and as carefully watched as the engraver worked who engraved them. Besides, the "proposal," which Dr. Lee speaks of, was, "to examine the left side of the uterus," which, he says, "was undisturbed," but which was already dissected at the time this "proposal" is supposed to have been made.

The following statement requires an explanation:—"This is the only dissection Mr. Beck has made of the nerves of the gravid uterus." It is true that I have only finished one complete dissection, yet that dissection has been verified, in all its leading particulars, on four recent uteri. Following out the plan which I had adopted, in testing the conclusions in various ways, I have verified all the chief points in gravid uteri while in the recent state.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Upper Marylebone-street, Nov. 1846.

T. SNOW BECK.

## PREPARATIONS OF NERVES OF THE UTERUS BY DR. LEE AND MR. BECK.

(REPLY OF PROFESSOR SHARPEY TO DR. LEE.)

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention has been called to a statement in your last number, setting forth Dr. Lee's complaints against me, which, as it professes to come from Dr. Lee himself, I feel called on to notice.

Dr. Lee charges me in substance with having first ignorantly and imprudently committed myself to an opinion adverse to his views; then employed Mr. Beck to make a dissection in order to confute them, or availed myself of Mr. Beck's subserviency for that purpose; and lastly, exerted myself unfairly to procure for Mr. Beck a reward from the Royal Society,—in short, with having striven, *per fas aut nefas*, to show that Dr. Lee was wrong.

Now nothing can be farther from the truth than this scandalous accusation, and I thought I had sufficiently refuted it when it was first publicly advanced; but Dr. Lee, with characteristic vehemence and pertinacity, still insists on fastening it on me, and forces me again most reluctantly to appear in a personal dispute.

Dr. Lee is quite wrong in connecting me so intimately and exclusively with Mr. Beck's dissections. At first, in fact, he was more connected with them himself. He had for several years been on intimate terms with Mr. Beck, whilst I had had very little intercourse with that gentleman from the time he had ceased to be a pupil; and, moreover, Mr. Beck was a zealous supporter of Dr. Lee's views. Mr. Beck offered to

make a preparation, exhibiting Dr. Lee's nerves, for the museum of University College, where he had been a student, and naturally applied to me, as taking rather an active concern in the museum, and as likely to approve of his purpose. This he did with the cognizance and approval of Dr. Lee.

Mr. Beck made his dissections at his own house, quite independently of me. I saw him but seldom while he was so engaged, more seldom than Dr. Lee himself, until the real nature of that gentleman's discoveries began to appear, after which, indeed, the doctor withdrew, telling people, then, that the preparation was putrid and good for nothing. While I have every reliance to place on Mr. Beck's accuracy, I am as little responsible for his results as any one of the intelligent anatomists who have seen and approved of his dissections; and it is base to insinuate that he contrived to make his dissections coincide with my prepossessions. Such may, perhaps, be Dr. Lee's view of the relation that ought to subsist between teacher and pupil, but it is not mine.

Will it be believed that Dr. Lee, knowing all this, actually furnished information to THE LANCET, on the faith of which it was charged against me, that Mr. Beck's dissections were made at my instigation for an unworthy end? And yet, on authority which cannot well be doubted, I am assured that he did so. Indeed, in his present communication, he insinuates the same thing, and that is perhaps worse. What reliance can, after this, be placed on Dr. Lee's averments? His imagination seems to warm with his animosity.

I deny that I acted unfairly or unbecomingly as a referee on Mr. Beck's paper at the Royal Society. It is true, that had I thought of the Royal Medal at the time I was named a referee, and of the responsibility that might afterwards fall on me in that capacity, I should probably, under the circumstances, have persisted in declining the duty; but whatever share I had in making what I consider a just award, nothing can be more unfair than to say, in the sense in which Dr. Lee wishes the terms to be understood, that the award was made "on my recommendation," as indeed he might by this time have learnt.

Dr. Lee says,—“After the publication of my second paper in the *Philosophical Transactions*, in 1842, at one of the *soirées* of the Marquis of Northampton, Dr. Sharpey, with whom I have never been intimately acquainted, in a peculiarly abrupt manner, observed to me, that in three years I would give up, or be compelled to forego, all that I had published respecting the nerves of the uterus.”

It seems almost frivolous to advert to such a matter; but as, in order to give consistency to his accusations, Dr. Lee connects it, as a motive, with Mr. Beck's undertaking, it may be as well to explain what the remark really was, and what it meant.

It is quite true that, at one of the evening meetings referred to, Dr. Lee, although, as he correctly says, I had never been honoured with his intimate acquaintance, yet honoured me, as he was in the habit of honouring many others, by entering into conversation with me on the never-failing subject of his nerves, in the course of which conversation (and not "abruptly") I remarked, that "in two years he would not believe in his nerves himself." I am quite confident as to the words, as well as their meaning; and as to the time, according to the best of my recollection of a trivial and unpremeditated remark, it was an older story than Dr. Lee represents. In any case it is ridiculous to connect it with Mr. Beck's dissections; nothing was farther from my mind than Dr. Lee and his nerves when Mr. Beck came to me. Indeed, not having been able to satisfy Dr. Lee by an acquiescence in his views, I had found good reason to concern myself about him and his nerves no more than I could help. The meaning of my remark, which was more than half in joke, was merely that he would before long change his mind. The "prediction," such as it was, seems, after all, to have been justified, although through no agency of mine; for I learn that he admitted to Mr. Kiernan that he had been in error in his first dissections, and expressed his gratitude to that gentleman for saving him from further committing himself to a serious blunder. It is true that, at a later period, both Mr. Kiernan and Mr. Owen, like other recusants, came in for a share of his censure; and what may be his opinions now on the matter it would, perhaps, be difficult precisely to say.

But leaving these personal matters, let us turn for a moment to the scientific points in dispute to which he refers.

Of course it was well known, before Dr. Lee, that the uterus had nerves. The claims Dr. Lee puts forth consist chiefly in having discovered a large ganglion on each side of the neck of the uterus, which he calls the utero-cervical ganglion, and also two large flat "sub-peritonæal ganglia" on

the body of the uterus, one before, the other behind, with numerous nerves connected with the ganglia, forming a plexus under the peritonæum.

The utero-cervical ganglion, or "brain of the uterus," as he now also calls it, he describes (*Phil. Trans.*, 1842, p. 175) as nearly two inches in breadth in a uterus at full term, and says "it appears to consist of six or seven smaller ganglia, which are connected together by nervous cords." He complains that Mr. Beck has destroyed this "brain of the uterus" by unwarrantably resolving it into a plexus containing several small ganglia. He also asserts that no ganglia of any kind were ever seen there before the publication of his papers.—(*THE LANCET*, p. 552.) Now, in point of fact, the discovery of ganglia in that situation, "united by nervous cords," (which being matted together by cellular tissue, make up the larger or utero-cervical ganglion,) belongs neither to Dr. Lee nor to Mr. Beck; for these small ganglia had been previously represented by Niedemann in his figures, as they really exist—namely, in the midst of a plexus, which he names "plexus gangliosis;" and Weber is even more explicit, giving them the name of "ganglia hypogastrica." (*Hildebrandt's Anatomie*, vol. iii. p. 544.) Dr. Lee, who professes to be well read in the literature of the subject, either overlooked this fact when he made the above claim, which should teach him to be indulgent as regards the mistakes of others, or he must be conscious of discredibly concealing it—a practice in which, if some accounts are to be believed, he is not altogether a novice.

But the discovery of the "subperitonæal ganglia and plexuses" constitutes the most important of Dr. Lee's claims. These structures are described as of great extent, covering a great part of the anterior and posterior surfaces of the uterus, immediately under the peritonæum. They have hitherto been looked upon as merely the superficial muscular stratum of the uterus; and although no one denies that there may be a few nerves among them, as in other muscular parts, yet Dr. Lee was the first to represent them as great plexuses of nerves with large flat ganglia in the centre. For Dr. Lee's satisfaction I may state, that I had an opportunity this summer of carefully examining the structures in question with the microscope in a perfectly fresh gravid uterus; and I have no hesitation in declaring that the flat body represented in front of the uterus, in plate 27 of *Philosophical Transactions* for 1841, is not a ganglion, and that the cords connected with it, and first described by Dr. Lee as forming a subperitonæal nervous plexus, are not nerves. I am still of opinion that they consist of organic muscular fibres and cellular tissue. I have no wish to set my opinion against that of gentlemen whom Dr. Lee may deem more competent judges; but I would take leave to remark, that none of the numerous authorities whose testimonials are produced state that they have examined the really doubtful structures with the microscope, except Mr. Dalrymple, upon whose judgment on such a point it is but just to say, although differing from him, I should be disposed to place very great reliance. The question is important, for on the fate of these subperitonæal ganglia and plexuses depends Dr. Lee's claim to discovery in the anatomy of the nerves.

As to the charge of inconsistency and gross blundering, I might be content to follow the example of others whom he has assailed, and let it rest on Dr. Lee's authority; but it may be as well to remark, that "to find slender bundles of tendinous fibres" in the broad ligament is not necessarily inconsistent with the belief of muscular fibres on the body of the uterus.

My conversation with Dr. Lee, on the 3rd Sept. 1841, has been recorded only so far as it has appeared to serve his own purpose. The version would have been less one-sided had it, in giving my admissions, also stated, that I did not admit the nervous nature of the sub-peritonæal ganglia and plexuses. But we are favoured with a more choice specimen of the sort, in form of a "Memorandum by Dr. Marshall Hall," which it has been thought right to publish, and which, as my name is mentioned in it, I must here quote at length, in order that its true nature may be appreciated. It is as follows:—

"MEMORANDUM BY DR. MARSHALL HALL.

"Professor Retzius observed, having just left Dr. Sharpey and Mr. Quain, that they had said, in reference to Dr. R. Lee's recent dissections of the nerves of the uterus, that there was no doubt that they were nerves. The only question was,—Whether the recent dissections displayed the same nerves as his former ones; and with regard to Mr. Beck's dissections, whether they displayed nerves not previously shown by Dr. Lee. Professor Retzius himself had no doubt of Dr. Lee's dissections being the display of nerves.

"Aug. 15th, 1845."

"MARSHALL HALL.

The conversation referred to took place at the dinner-table, in the house of a friend, where Dr. Hall was not present. The subject of Dr. Lee's nerves was introduced by Dr. Retzius himself. The version given is imperfect, and also erroneous, as Dr. Lee at least must have known; for he well knew, that neither Mr. Quain nor I had seen his "recent dissections of the nerves of the uterus," and consequently we could never have said that "there was no doubt that they were nerves."

These examples sufficiently illustrate the tendency of the practice of recording what passes at private conversations, and publishing the writer's or reporter's version of what was said, without communicating with the other party concerned—a practice which, although avowedly habitual with Dr. Lee, and, as it appears, not disdained by Dr. Hall, is happily not common.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Nov. 23rd, 1846.

W. SHARPEY.

THE SURGEON IN GENERAL PRACTICE.—HIS TITLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I propose to offer a few remarks upon the following subject:—By what method of conducting his business may the general practitioner best consult his own interest? And first I may observe, that the injury inflicted by the "chemist and druggist" upon the profession is urgent and severe. Is there a method of remedying the mischief? There is, and most effectually. Every practitioner has the immediate remedy in his own hands, without waiting for any legislation upon the subject. The tables may be no less readily than completely turned in favour of the medical practitioner. To suit the requirements of the community, medical practice will probably be always divided into two classes, consulting and general. Educated, indeed, alike, but subsequently restricting their practice at their own option, and with a different scale of fees, two classes of medical practitioners will probably always exist. While, therefore, the consulting practitioner continues to receive the now customary *honorarium*, let the general practitioner conduct his charge upon the following principle. As general society is naturally divided into three classes, let the following scale be employed:—

First class, (gentry,) for three to five visits, one guinea.

Second class, (trades,) for eight visits, one guinea.

Third class, (artizans,) for twelve visits, one guinea. The medicines to be charged at their true and mere cost, and to be supplied invariably by the practitioner himself.

The advantage which the "chemist and druggist" has over the medical practitioner greatly arises from the impression produced upon the public by the false price which the general practitioner is at present compelled to put upon the doses of medicine which he supplies. But when, on the other hand, the public have become familiarized with the true costs of medicines as charged in the bills of general practitioners under the system proposed, a contrast will be instituted in favour of the medical practitioner, instead of against him, as it now is.

In the conduct of his business, the general practitioner must dismiss the front shop. He must throw open the front door of his residence, and convert his front parlour into an accessible office—that is, into a consulting room and library. His medicines he must keep in his back room. Thus the practitioner will receive with dignity and respectability those who come to consult with him; while the "chemist and druggist," on the other hand, continues to pursue the general retail of drugs and medical sundries, unenvied and unmolested.

It is unnecessary to pursue the details of the individual advantages consequent upon these arrangements; a very little reflection will enable any practitioner to recognise them for himself.

*The general practitioner's title.*—Members of the medical profession are not unfrequently sensible of a difficulty when they have to append a denominative to their signatures. A general practitioner, holding an apothecaries' licence, generally, and very justly, is conscious of an inward compunction at the sight of his name affixed to a public document thus:—"A. B., Apothecary." All English general practitioners are "apothecaries;" yet how few we see exhibiting this honoured and dignified appellation, publicly added to their names, in their letters, for instance, to *THE LANCET*. So, again, the surgeon-apothecary modestly eschews the public exhibition of the dignity of his apothecaryship, and signs himself "surgeon," which is open to the objection that it is not descriptive of his medical province. While "L.A.C." displays a decidedly milk-sop, puling aspect, "M.R.C.S. Lond." is