

terests. Be, then, always on your guard against cunning, and the intrigues which it employs, and hope with us that the 'most important parts of the social order may not be invaded by those persons whose heads have great protuberances dominating the ears, with flatness of the vertex.

Negative examples are to be found in abundance in the heads of executed criminals, which appear to me to do honour to our juries with respect to criminal matters. You are already acquainted with those hideous heads of which the summit is fluted upon the lateral parts, so as to resemble the roof of a house. Look at them again, and you will feel assured that veneration, ideality, and marvellousness, are almost always wanting in them.

REPLY OF MR. BEDINGFIELD TO MR. BREE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR:—Absence from home on business of an imperative nature prevented my noticing Mr. Charles Robert Bree's denial of a breach of engagement which was entered into by the surgeons connected with the Stow Union, at Woolpit Swan. In reply to that denial, I will at present only briefly state, that Mr. Bree, perfectly aware of the views with which that meeting was called, authorized Mr. Spencer Freeman to state that he would abide by any resolutions which might be entered into at that meeting. Such, at least, was the declaration made by Mr. Spencer Freeman, in the presence of the gentlemen assembled. This is a simple fact, directly stated; and the resolutions entered into on this occasion Mr. Bree did violate, deliberately violate, for some weeks elapsed before the parish business was finally settled, during which time he never made the smallest objection to the arrangements to which he had given his sanction, through the medium of Mr. Spencer Freeman. Mr. Bree can have no other *direct* and honourable means of disproving this charge than by producing the evidence of Mr. Spencer Freeman, and that of the other surgeons who attended the Woolpit meeting. And when Mr. Bree calls on Mr. Spencer Freeman to ask him to help him off with this charge, he may, if he pleases, take my account of the honest Stowmarket Butcher in his hand, and ask Mr. Spencer Freeman if he can make a guess for whose head the cap was intended. I was rather tender of a brother practitioner when "I supposed a fact." Let him take the hint, or I will give *real facts*. I remain, Sir, yours, very respectfully,

J. BEDINGFIELD.

Stowmarket, August 22, 1836.

## STATISTICS

OF THE

### LONDON HOSPITAL,

WITH REMARKS ON THE LAW OF SICKNESS.

*By T. R. EDMONDS, Esq., B. A., London,  
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The diminution of the number of deaths and of the quantity of sickness suffered by a given population, may be regarded as the legitimate object of medical science. If there exist any fixed laws, altogether independent of medicine, determining the relation between the living, the sick, and the dying, the knowledge of those laws must precede the power of estimating the effect of any given system of medical treatment. The merit of discovering some peculiarly efficacious treatment of a particular malady, is frequently claimed by different medical men, on the ground of the mortality among their patients being unusually low. All mention of the *ages* of their patients is omitted, and no suspicion appears to be entertained of the fact that, under the same medical treatment, a difference of 23 years in the ages of two classes of patients, will cause a doubling of the mortality. When the ages of the patients are unknown, the diminished duration of sickness, also, is no ground for presuming on any superiority of treatment. There exists satisfactory (though indirect) evidence, that the mean duration of an attack of sickness is equally dependent on the ages of the patients.

Between the ages of 15 and 60 years, I believe it to be a fact sufficiently well established, that for every death two years of sickness (nearly) have been suffered. If, as is commonly the fact, the annual deaths between these ages amount to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., there will be *constantly sick* 3 per cent. of this part of the population. Respecting the number of *cases* of sickness from which the numbers constantly sick have been derived, we have very little direct information. If the mean duration of an attack of sickness be assumed to be  $36\frac{1}{2}$  days, or the tenth part of a year, then 30 per cent. of this population are yearly attacked by sickness. In the *British Medical Almanac* for 1836, Mr. Farr has shown the above number of days to represent very nearly the usual duration of an attack of sickness in the hospitals of England. Out of 30 cases of sickness, there will then be  $1\frac{1}{2}$  deaths, being 5 per cent., or 1 out of 20. In the hospitals of London the deaths to cases commonly amount to 12 per cent. among the in-patients, in the physician's wards 24 per cent., and the surgeon's wards 8 per cent. If the out-patients had been included, the proportion of deaths to the total cases would probably not have materially differed from the above-mentioned proportion of one case in twenty.