

cardiac end from altered blood; contained a yellowish-brown, thickish fluid, with blood; no ulcers, nor appearance of acute inflammation; coats firm. Duodenum: commencement inflamed about three inches from pylorus; coats firm; no ulceration; slightly injected. Jejunum: Mucous membrane firm; in places minutely injected, the arborescent vessels showing remarkably well; the whole membrane rather more injected than normal. Ileum: The same appearance, except that it increased on approaching the lower part, and at last at about three feet from end; the mucous membrane was greatly altered, there being a deposit therein, and thickening; the membrane being at the same time roughened, and the glands less visible. It is remarkable that this change did not begin in the glands, as in cases of fever and dysentery, but on the whole surface. Cæcum: Upon the mucous membrane were many large spots, blackened by effused and altered blood, and many circular and some ragged ulcerations; the membrane extremely soft, (broken down,) and easily separable from muscular coat. Ascending, and transverse and sigmoid flexure of colon: These appearances continued decreasing throughout these viscera, and about middle of transverse arch the mucous membrane became nearly normally firm, but still had black spots and ulcers; so on to rectum, which had been removed within one inch of aperture; in it were three spots of effused blood, and several ulcers. Spleen: Rather pale-pink, and soft.

Through the wild, imaginary brain of Dr. Julius, I am suspected and charged with having committed the horrid crime of murder—and that upon the life of one on whom my fondest affections were placed, and whose life to me was beyond all consideration: *the grounds alone, that his remedies ought to have arrested, but did not, the running stages of a fatal disease—diarrhoea and vomiting*—arising, no doubt, from long-continued chronic inflammation of the liver and intestines especially, as the autopsy clearly indicates. Our cohabitation was less than five months—11th Dec. 1858, to 3rd May, 1859.

Although so cruelly and seriously charged, and *my life perilled by it*, I will not complain on my own account for the present, under existing circumstances. I do, however, proclaim my *entire innocence* before the whole world; and likewise declare, in the presence of Almighty God, that I am as pure as our Heavenly Father himself in this matter. At the same time, I cannot refrain from noticing and feeling the total neglect of the deceased by Messrs. Julius and Bird, and that for a *fortnight* (the time of their unjust suspicions), in not calling in other professional assistance, rather than *waste so much precious time* in hunting up matter to suit their own false impressions. It is indeed a most serious affair to *feel convinced that I was killing the deceased*, and yet *permit it to continue even until death occurred*, when a request to me to place the deceased entirely out of my charge would have met with a ready compliance at any time.

In conclusion, I am informed it has been stated I was not a legally-qualified member of the medical profession. I need only say I am a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Hall of London of twenty-five years' standing; that I took my surgical education under Lynn, White, Guthrie, &c., at the Westminster Hospital; and am doctor of medicine of the University of Erlangen of some years' standing, having been in the habit of visiting the Continent for many years. I may mention the late Drs. Pereira and Ashwell, and many other eminent men, as having taken these foreign degrees.

I have retired from the profession for the last six years.

June 1st, 1859.

THOMAS SMETHURST,
Prisoner, Horsemonger-lane Gaol.

P.S.—The deceased's father died of a *similar attack of the bowels* in about nine days, although he had several eminent men in attendance. *He never ate anything during his fatal illness.* The deceased often said she was sure she was seized with her poor father's complaint, and would not get over it.

[LETTER FROM DR. JAMES ARTHUR WILSON.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On the trial of Thomas Smethurst, at the Old Bailey, much stress was laid by the counsel for the prosecution on “a peculiar expression of terror” in the face of Isabella Bankes, as indicating the action of a supposed irritant poison on the inner organs of the dying woman.

The importance of this collateral aid by death-bed physiognomy in establishing the prisoner's guilt has been since maintained by a clever essayist in the columns of *The Times*; and consequently “a peculiar expression of terror” is now on its

probation as an axiom in forensic medicine, available for future trials in cases of criminal poisoning in all parts of the civilized world. Having seen many hundreds of my fellow-creatures die, under all circumstances and degrees of suffering, I ask leave, Sir, to express, through you, my earnest hope that this vague symptom of agonized face and feature did not weigh with the jury as a hair in the balance in their estimate of probabilities against the prisoner in the dock. After forty years' observation of disease in all its serious forms, I am as yet unable to recognise any “peculiar expression of terror” as diagnostic of the internal workings of extraneous irritant poison in any of its varieties. Persons, of whatever temperament, dying from fevered or otherwise damaged blood, always betray their state of suffering by their looks; and in many complications of natural disease, a marked persistent expression of distress may be casually aggravated into one of intense and peculiar terror.

Without intending any reference to the trial in question, let me say, that were I summoned to the bedside of a pregnant woman, exhausted by sickness, and sinking under the discharges of dysenteric ulceration of the bowels, it would never occur to me, from any “peculiar expression of terror” observed in her face, by myself or others, to suspect her husband or those about her of administering antimony or arsenic, or any other irritant poison, to the patient in her gruel.

After the most careful and sifting inquiry, we accept, with due reserve, the issue of life or death, in these cases of marital and medical poisoning, from the decisions of *exact science* operating physically on particles of matter that may be seen, handled, weighed, and measured by the operator or (as it always should be) by the *jury* of operators. Let us not prejudice the inductive delicacy and intellectual triumph of this exact physical evidence by admitting on a level with it the imaginings of an individual pathological eye, which imaginings not one in twenty of less gifted observers would undertake to verify.

Will you believe me, Sir, that I am writing to you on this matter with great unwillingness; but this “peculiar expression of terror” has so haunted me for a week past, that I am betrayed out of my usual reserve into a self-imposed publicity. It seems to me that in forbearing to denounce this evidently captivating novelty of the murderer condemned by an involuntary expression on the face of his victim, I should be “leaving undone what I ought to do.” Why, Sir, this “peculiar expression of terror” might easily be counterfeited, and sooner or later would be counterfeited, for contingent interested purposes or from pure malignity of spirit, by cunning or rancorous individuals, sick or shamming sick, were it once admitted as damnable evidence in our courts of criminal justice.

I can assure you, Sir, that I am not what is called a “sentimentalist” in these matters. I demurred to the “not proven” guilt of Madeline Smith; and our Home Government entirely lost favour with me when sentence of life reprieved was passed on Celestina Sommer, who cut the throat of her little half-starved daughter, on a winter's night, in a London coal-cellar, under every aggravation of cruelty and horror, some four or five years ago. Will this mystery of misplaced mercy—this much-vexed problem of extenuated murder—ever be solved? Let us hope, in our reverence for the laws of England, that some time in the twentieth century a ray of lurid light may be thrown on this ghastly caricature of royal pardons, under a heading of the “Grey Papers,” in the columns of the ever-living public press.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES ARTHUR WILSON, M.D.

Dover-street, Berkeley-square, August 27th, 1859.

[LETTER FROM MR. RODGERS, WHICH APPEARED IN “THE TIMES” OF AUGUST 24TH.]

SIR,—In the recent trial of Dr. Smethurst errors of the greatest importance, and more or less apparent, have gained publicity. In consequence of the weight attached to them by the Lord Chief Baron Pollock in his charge to the jury, their correction has become a matter of the utmost necessity.

The most prominent of these errors is the statement given in evidence by Professor Brande, that it is a new fact in chemistry that chlorate of potash (meaning the mixture of hydrochloric acid and chlorate of potash) dissolves copper, and that he should have committed the same blunder as that acknowledged by Professor Taylor. This statement is untrue, and requires correction, the more so as the learned Judge urged this as a strong point on the consideration of the jury; and, again I emphatically repeat, not true, for this mixture has long been