

of the blood loses its coagulable power by filtration through an epithelial layer, or else that the production of fibrin is in all cases due to the reaction of blood-serum with elements or substances which exist on the serous but not on the mucous surface. At least, the rule which is susceptible of these explanations is a very general one, and the exceptions to it, real or apparent, seem to require the assumption either of a special cause, such as is the poison of diphtheria, or some possible confusion of things only apparently alike: the latter appears to be the case, I may remark by the way, with the "dysmenorrhœal casts" of the uterus, which no one has described as fibrinous exudation, though they have a perfect superficial resemblance to croupous casts of the trachea. I have no desire to express any opinion as to the general question of croup *versus* diphtheria; but will only point out that all things called false membranes need not be alike, nor, consequently, need all diseases supposed to be connected by producing such structures be alike, or, still less, identical.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
Savile-row, March 2nd, 1875. J. F. PAYNE.

### BIRMINGHAM MEDICAL INSTITUTE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—If I have suggested any doubt as to the honourable intention of the Committee of the Birmingham Medical Institute as a body, I beg your permission to state that the observations I placed on record in your issue of the 20th have been misunderstood. I do not doubt the honour of their intentions, but I do question the mode in which they have endeavoured to escape from a disagreeable position, into which I venture to think they drifted without due consideration of the consequences.

I now proceed to consider the answer to my letter, officially signed by the chairman and hon. secretaries of the Committee, and which appears in your present number.

My remarks divide themselves into two heads:—1. The steps taken by the original Committee of thirteen—those entrusted with the initiative previously to the first public meeting on the 4th February. 2. The steps taken by the primary Committee of Election, thirty-four in number, including the thirteen members of the original Committee, which was the outcome of the "so-called" meeting of the profession of the 4th. I take the headings in order.

During the preliminary deliberations necessary to float the Institute, the Committee became aware that a "professed homœopath" had tendered a donation to one of their members. The Committee seem to have seen their difficulty under these "embarrassing circumstances," but failed, as I think, to take the only course open to them if they really desired that the opinion of the profession on the propriety of accepting such a donation should be ascertained. The Answer says:—"It was agreed that this was a question to be settled by a public meeting." On this a circular was issued to the medical profession for fifty miles round (1400 were summoned) calling a meeting for the 4th February to discuss the plans necessary for carrying out the objects for which the Institute had been incorporated, to receive a list of donors, &c. &c. But in this circular was there any allusion to the "very difficult question," only too well known to the Committee, that amongst the list of names of donors then to be read out would be that of a "professed homœopath," and that the subject of the acceptance of this would be then and there considered? Not one word! This would indeed have been a "report to the profession." Up till the time of the reception of this circular, I, in common with the outside profession, knew nothing of the action of the Committee, although, as I have said, it "leaked out" about the donation in question; but this casual knowledge could not possibly extend to the 1400 members of the profession who had received the circular, and, indeed, was only known as a matter of probability to the few. I attended the meeting to help to inaugurate the "greatest medical institution which was ever projected in Birmingham," and found it, so far as numbers were concerned, a very poor representation of the profession; and I will venture to say a very different meeting would have gathered had it been published in the circular that the "difficult question" would be considered. The real im-

portance seemed that the representatives of the local press were there. Here was the desired public meeting, and yet not one word was uttered by those who arranged its proceedings as to the "question of difficulty," but the name of the "professed homœopath" giving the donation was read out. Now, I cannot think that those who conducted this meeting will venture to say that they were in ignorance of the intention, not only of myself but of others, to test the view there and then on the question. More than one of the members of the Committee expressed the hope in conversation that I would *postpone* the motion (hurriedly written in the room), as I was told a discussion before the press would injure the Institute. I therefore yielded on this ground only, and was thanked for doing so.

Thus we are brought to the formation of the primary Committee of Election and the second head of this statement.

Have you, Sir, the slightest doubt, or will your readers have, of what were my convictions as to the steps which the Committee would take? I was satisfied they would adjourn on their assembling, so as to defer the election of members until a meeting of the profession could really be called to say whether a "professed homœopath" should be elected or no. That which the Committee of thirteen felt incapable of doing, the Committee of thirty-four felt equal to, and so, despite entreaties to await the wishes of a larger constituency, the assembly of thirty-four decided for fourteen hundred. I say at once that I never entertained for a moment the idea that such a committee would undertake to deal with the question of the admission of homœopaths—I am certain the profession never entertained the idea,—neither could I believe that the original Committee would have the temerity to publish the list of donors before the Election Committee met, and I know that the secretary was warned against any publication of contributors until after the meeting of the Committee of Election—but in vain; the list of contributors, including the name of the "professed homœopath," was published in the local papers on the 8th, four days before the Committee met on the 12th to discuss the question, so embarrassing to them, as to whether such donations should be received or not. The publication of the list of donors made the way easy before such a Committee for the resolution, "That it be recommended that all those legally qualified members of the medical profession who have contributed to the Birmingham Medical Institute to this date be and are hereby elected members." Why, Sir, here was the "difficult question" met face to face without an allusion to homœopathy. Here was the resolution of the "independent member" for the second time. I must still regard the resolution of the independent member as the approved resolution of a majority of the original Committee, and hence I must yet regard the Election Committee as being composed in the main of members with a foregone conclusion, and as in no sense entitled to speak for the great body of the profession. I also believe the profession of Birmingham, and the district by which it is surrounded, is "quite strong enough to take care of its own honour and interests." I shall be content to leave to its judgment the subject under discussion, and express my willingness to abide by its decision, whatever that may be.

In conclusion, Mr. Crompton will not, I trust, accuse me of discourtesy if I say that his kindly and amusing letter, to which you also give publicity, fails to my mind to touch the very grave matters at issue; and therefore I have the less regret in leaving its consideration to your readers.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,  
Birmingham, March 1st, 1875. OLIVER PEMBERTON.

### THE ADULTERATION BILL.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In THE LANCET of last Saturday I find a statement to the effect that you believed that no exception had ever been taken to the quality of the analytical work of the Chemical Laboratory of the Inland Revenue Department, and you indicated that body as a suitable one to act as a board of chemical referees in disputed cases of adulteration. You also enumerated the various towns in which branch laboratories have been established in connexion with the Excise. I would, with your permission, point out that,