

THE Addresses delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Association, by Drs. Burrows, Walshe, Sharpey, and Mr. Paget, have been reprinted in the form of a pamphlet: copies of which, price sixpence each, or by post sevenpence, may be had on application to Mr. Honeyman, at the office of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, 37, Great Queen Street, W.C.

British Medical Journal.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1862.

THE THERAPEUTICAL INQUIRY.

A SUGGESTION made by Dr. Handfield Jones, in his note of last week, invites a few remarks on the best mode of carrying out the important inquiry, to which he has recalled the attention of the British Medical Association. "Is not Dr. Farr's anticipation," he asks, "one which may be realised, of having a Therapeutical Society flourishing side by side with the Pathological?" We confess to a wholesome dread of the multiplication of medical societies. To remedy what had long been felt by many to be a great evil, a strenuous but unsuccessful effort to promote union was made in the course of last year by the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. Whether we shall ever see the great idea, so ably advocated by Mr. Charles Hawkins, of the absorption of existing societies into a "Royal Society of Medicine," successfully carried out, seems, at present, very doubtful; but we may, at least, refrain from still further complicating the situation by setting up one more obstacle to union in the shape of a Therapeutical Society. We have heard it rumoured that the next subject taken up for special investigation by the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society will be this very one of the action of medicines; and who would not hail such a decision as in the highest degree satisfactory? We have repeatedly and earnestly denounced specialism in the practice; let us beware how we unduly encourage it in the study of medicine.

We have long regarded that change in the regulations of our English examining boards, which made the *materia medica* a short summer, instead of a long winter course, as a short-sighted and injudicious one. Its tendency—we had almost said its inevitable consequence—is to divorce the study of drugs from that of the question, how they act on the living body. Thirty years ago, the *modus operandi* of medicines formed, as we suppose it does still north of the Tweed, an essential part of the course. But we cannot conceive how, in thirty lectures, even a master mind can convey to his youthful hearers any adequate knowledge of pharmacy and of the whole *armamentarium medicum*, and bestow

even a passing glance on the most important part of the whole subject, the mode of action of remedies.

How much less, when the lecturer is a novice who is set *bon-gré, mal-gré*, to try his prentice-hand on this most unpopular of topics, and who, regarding the post only as a stepping-stone to something better, listlessly fulfils his dreary task for a few years, until his promotion to the chair of medicine devolves on another novice the unimportant duty of training young recruits in the use of those weapons wherewith they are to combat the inroads of disease! Till the lectureship of *materia medica* shall not only cease to be regarded as a penance and a drudgery, but shall be reckoned a post of honour, worthy of the best and life-long services of such men as Christison, Pereira, Garrod, Neligan, and Fleming, we cannot consider the prospects of therapeutical science in any sense satisfactory.

Still we are happy to think that this department of medical research is now beginning to challenge for itself, in the minds of our profession, the place to which its great importance justly entitles it. In our previous articles on this subject, we have made no allusion to what has been already attempted within the bosom of the Association. In the report of the proceedings at the annual meeting of the Metropolitan Counties' Branch, held on the 14th July, 1857, we find that

"Dr. Stewart, in an able speech, insisted on the investigation of the action of medicines as an important subject to be taken up by the Branch, and proposed the following resolution: 'That the following gentlemen constitute a committee to consider and report on the propriety of instituting a series of observations on the action of medicines; Drs. Risdon Bennett, James Bird, W. Jenner, E. Lankester, E. W. Murphy, W. Ogle, W. Richardson, C. H. F. Routh, E. H. Sieveking, J. Smith, J. Snow, A. P. Stewart, G. Webster, A. Wynter and Alexander Ure, Esq.'"

Having taken some pains to ascertain the cause of failure of this very promising movement, we felt warranted in stating that a great diversity of opinion prevailed among the members of Committee as to the value of bedside observations, and, indeed, of the results obtained otherwise than by the exact experimental method. The difficulty of eliminating fallacies was felt and acknowledged by all; and a conviction was strongly expressed by several of the worthlessness of conclusions drawn from patients subjected to medicinal treatment, without any trustworthy data as to the natural progress of disease wherewith to check them. In answer to a proposal to test the alleged efficacy of the alkaline treatment of acute rheumatism, a chorus of voices exclaimed, "Who is prepared, in the interest of science, to treat his rheumatic patients without drugs? Not one." But a very acute observer and able physician has lately promised soon to fill up this *lacuna* by giving to the world the result of his inquiries into "the natural history of rheumatism". In the recent m

morable discussion in the Medical and Chirurgical Society, Dr. Gull answered that he has for years been treating his rheumatic patients on the expectant method, and with very satisfactory results. When he has set the example, perhaps others may apply the same rule not only to rheumatism, but to other acute disorders, and so furnish on the large scale the standard of comparison so much desired in 1857. We may further state that a subcommittee then appointed drew up several schedules, one of which had reference to the very subject now brought forward by Dr. Handfield Jones; viz., the employment of arsenic, Donovan's solution, ointments, and other external applications, in *psoriasis*; and another to the external uses of chlorate of potash. These schedules were never issued.

But it is to the grounds on which the Metropolitan Counties Branch was solicited to undertake this inquiry, that we are chiefly anxious to direct attention. Dr. Fleming's society being then in a state of suspended animation, the ground was entirely unoccupied. To many distinguished members of the Association residing in London, medical politics were distasteful, and deterred them from joining the Branch. Frequent meetings for scientific purposes would likewise be a grave objection to many. The institution of a new society was universally condemned. Was it not possible to introduce something like unity and system into the observations of the many physicians and surgeons of the London hospitals who were daily making many thousands of random therapeutical experiments, which, for want of concert and cooperation, were actually lost to science? And might not the results of systematic observation be embodied in a half-yearly or quarterly report, which, with more exact experiments by individual members, might be laid before the meetings of the Branch, and impart to them a high scientific interest and value?

The lapse of years has, in our opinion, added to, instead of detracting from, the cogency of the foregoing considerations. The objection to the multiplication of societies has never been so strong. The members of the Association in the metropolis are more numerous and influential than ever; but the great majority of them decline to join the Branch, because it has nothing to do. The question which it proposed five years ago to investigate, but in which few then felt any interest, is now becoming the great question of the day. Were such a work now undertaken in good earnest, we cannot believe that one of the three hundred metropolitan members would grudge his half-crown subscription to the Branch; and many, we feel sure, would gladly double it, if by so doing they could render more available for the advancement of our therapeutical knowledge the unrivalled opportunities which this great metropolis affords.

We have addressed our observations exclusively to the members of the Association resident in London, because the Branch here, though it seems to us an instrument ready made, and peculiarly fitted for carrying out the resolution adopted at the annual meeting of the Association, is the only one which does nothing for the advancement of science. That the provincial Branches will do their part, we are fully persuaded. But we should greatly regret to see the metropolitan members distanced in the race, when, considering the facilities they enjoy, they should lead the van. Honest rivalry in work like this must conduce to the honour and the good of all.

TARTUFFE'S HEROISM.

ON the 1st June, 1861, the *Lancet* told the profession that an insane man was not insane. The *Lancet* did this in face of the facts, that the unfortunate individual was at the very moment a resident in a lunatic asylum; that two physicians had solemnly certified to his lunacy; that he was under the immediate charge of a celebrated alienist, who had also certified to the fact of his being a lunatic; and, above all, in face of the fact that the gentleman had gone voluntarily into confinement, because he felt that, if not restrained, he should destroy some member of his family! If any of our readers be curious enough to ask, "Why this astounding perversion of facts?" we would bid him read the article, and draw his own conclusion.*

Once again the *Lancet*, true to such antecedents, has resorted to a similar unblushing perversion of facts, and on this occasion with the sole object of attempting to throw discredit on the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL. It is no pleasure to us to pursue this muddy business; but we have a duty to perform; and we once for all tell the *Lancet* that, so long as it continues to play off its calumnies upon the Association and its JOURNAL, so long shall we continue to expose and bare them to the profession. The *Lancet*, if it be wise, will not try the patience and long-enduring of the profession beyond what it is able to bear. The time may come when the profession will again call that journal to account for daring thus to trifle with its morality.

The *Lancet* asserts, that the Association at its late meeting attempted to interfere with the liberty of the press; to limit the diffusion of intellectual food; to declare the papers of its members private property; to lay embargo on the addresses, etc., delivered at its meetings; or, to use its own elegant language:

* We give the very words of the *Lancet*, to prevent any doubts as to the correctness of our statement. "Mr. —'s mind at this time showed none of the ordinary symptoms of insanity. He had no delusions or hallucinations; neither was there any reason for supposing that his intellect was in the slightest degree impaired. His condition was that of great nervous dread, having a morbid fear of the possibility of doing mischief to one of his family."

"Of all the monstrous forms the hideous vice, Protection, ever assumed, it would be difficult to recall one so loathsome as that in which she was reproduced at the recent meeting of the British Medical Association. It was then and there, to the utter astonishment of the learned world, including Fellows of the College of Physicians who had actually received the Association, professing by title to be 'British', as guests, declared that the mental labours of Drs. Burrows, Walshe, Sharpey, Mr. Paget, and others who had consented to speak to the medical world for the furtherance of medical knowledge and the interests and honour of the medical community through the Association, were the actual and exclusive property of this 'British' Association. There must of course be some powerful vested interest at the bottom of a proceeding so repugnant to the practice of modern scientific institutions. It is this—the Association have staked nearly every farthing of their funds in the maintenance of a periodical." [Ever harping on the JOURNAL!]

This is what the *Lancet* states in face of facts which give the directest denial to the statement—in face of the fact that this *private* property was completely at the service of his reporter and every other reporter in the kingdom; that the *Lancet* took, not only without remonstrance, but with the complete concurrence of the Association, the fullest possession it chose of any amount of that *private* property; that the *Lancet* actually published, with their full concurrence, all this *private* property; that copies of all the papers were offered by this JOURNAL to the *Lancet*. In face of all these facts, the *Lancet* actually ventures to accuse the Association of desiring to do what Mr. Abernethy did, who attempted, by an order from the Court of King's Bench, to prevent the publication of his lectures! Two columns of the *Lancet* are actually given up to the solemn elaboration of this trumped up and most untrue accusation, and to the solemn proclamation of its own glorious and successful defence of the liberty of the press! Did the richest bunkum from Yankee-land ever beat the following precious piece of impotent and vain-glorious bravado?

"We beg deliberately to inform the Association that, whether justice and good sense prevail with them to rescind the stupid resolution which now blots their transactions, or no, it is our intention to maintain the rights of free journalism, and to publish their proceedings to the world, be those proceedings creditable to them or the reverse."

Why what does the Association desire better? What does it ask for more than the very widest circulation of its proceedings which the press can give them? We thank the *Lancet* for its promise, in the name of the Association. But why does not the *Lancet*, like other journals, quietly publish the proceedings? Why does it resort to these maudlin tricks—these stage pretences—this weak attempt at covering itself with a patriotic unction and a martyr's skin? *The Lancet knows as well as we do that the Association, in this matter of its papers, acts precisely as all other important societies which publish their own proceedings do—not otherwise.* The papers, when read at its meetings, are handed to the Asso-

ciation, for publication in its JOURNAL. The authors of those papers are still their masters in every other respect. They can, if they think it right, give copies of them to whom they please. The Association says nothing more than what the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, what the Social Science Association, and other important societies have said to authors of papers:—"If your paper is read at our meeting, you of course hand it to us to be dealt with, for publication or not, as we deem fit. Hand it to us—that is all we ask but act otherwise just as you please, on your own responsibility; publish it where and how you please we have no power or right, *other than that which common courtesy and custom demand*, to interfere with your proceedings in the matter." This is all the *private* claim which the Association has ever exercised over this literary property. But here comes this Tartuffe of the medical press, and accuses the Association of exhibiting the "loathsome vice of a hideous protection"! Surely this is the very bravado of insolent injustice! The *Lancet* accuses us of this, he having himself actually, indeed, obtained, and put into print, papers which were to be read, and before they were read, at the British Medical Association! He tries to get a *prior* and *exclusive* possession of these papers; and when we exclaim against the petty larceny, and arrest him in the act, he, to cover his retreat, shouts out, "I'm a martyr; I have sacrificed myself on the altar of the press, by publishing reports" (garbled reports, by the way, Tartuffe!) "which no one attempted to prevent me from publishing. Have I not gloriously sustained the liberty of the press?"

So much for the honour, and the morality, and the truth of the profession, as represented by Tartuffe's great commercial firm! We tell him that his attempt, by slanders of this kind, to injure the JOURNAL, can have but one result; viz., to demonstrate to the profession the absolute necessity for the existence of a JOURNAL which, whatever its failings, can assuredly inscribe on its title-page, *Honour, Honesty, and Truth!*

THE WEEK.

THE following is not a bad practical illustration of the working of the present Lord Chancellor's idea concerning evidence in lunacy. He stated that one man was as good as another at diagnosing the sane or insane state of an individual; that, in fact, Jones the pork-butcher was as capable of giving an opinion on the point as the most advanced alienists. Let him read the following and reflect:—

"The man Roberts, who was tried at the late Gloucester assizes for the murder of one of his children and attempted murder of another, and who was then acquitted by the jury on the ground of insanity, turns out to be perfectly sane. The Secretary of State called upon

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