

Correspondence between Mr. Syme and Mr. Bowman.

Contributors

Syme, James, 1799-1870.
Bowman, William, Sir, 1816-1892.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

[London?] : [publisher not identified], [1863]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/buuwgbr2>

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>





7



WE have been requested to publish the following correspondence between Mr. Syme and Mr. Bowman.

5, Clifford Street, October 24th, 1863.

MY DEAR MR. SYME,—I fear your note in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of this week is calculated to add seriously to the numbers of the blind in this country, unless you modify the expression of your opinion. I hope you will accept my personal assurance as worth something, that iridectomy is the certain and the indispensable method of arresting the glaucomatous state. The facts are *most positive* and most numerous which prove this, and do not admit of doubt. It has, therefore, given me real pain to see your great authority marshalled against it; as it is quite evident from your letter itself, that by "glaucoma", you mean the *last stage to which the disease has run*, when recovery is utterly hopeless, and sight extinct; whereas the operation of iridectomy is performed while it is in progress, and before the eye undergoes the destructive changes. These changes it arrests, and thus saves more or less sight, according to the stage the disease has reached; and according also to the variety or type of the disease, for there are several. All these have been so much elucidated within the last few years, that the indications for iridectomy have become very precise, and the results capable of being anticipated with as much certainty as can be done in any department of our uncertain art.

Pray, therefore, in the interest of those who are becoming blind through glaucomatous disease, relieve this inestimable (and, at present, the sole) remedy of the discredit which your high name must tend to throw upon it.

Always believe me,

Yours most sincerely, W. BOWMAN.

2, Rutland Street, Edinburgh, October 26th, 1863.

MY DEAR MR. BOWMAN,—As my opinion of iridectomy was deliberately formed from a serious consideration of the anatomical, physiological, and pathological conditions in question, I am glad to learn that you agree with me in thinking this operation of no use for the remedy of confirmed glaucoma. But, with regard to its employment as a preventive, or means of arresting the early symptoms, I would beg to suggest that in hands less respectable than your own, such an application might, and in all probability would, lead to the most unwarrantable interference. Indeed, if this were to become the established practice, no elderly dark-eyed lady or gentleman who experienced difficulty in reading small print after dinner, would be secure from the charge of incipient glaucoma, and be able either to deny the imputation, or reject the remedy.

I had no desire to obtrude my opinion on the profession; but, when asked by the Editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL to express my sentiments on a subject of public discussion, did not feel at liberty to decline doing so.

I remain, my dear Mr. Bowman,
Yours truly, JAMES SYME.

5, Clifford Street, October 28th, 1863.

MY DEAR MR. SYME,—I confess I confidently hoped that on learning under how great a misconception of the subject you had written your note on iridectomy in glaucoma, you would yourself have been forward to correct in the same channel the expression of your opinion; but your reply of the 26th shows that I was mistaken. You do not seem to be aware how many persons are constantly losing their sight from the several forms of glaucomatous disease, or to credit my statement as to the accuracy with which these cases may in general now be recognised, or to have a thought of the reality of the remedy in question. So that I have no alternative, in the interest of truth and of those who suffer, but myself to explain in the same medium what I should very much rather have seen modified by yourself.

Of course, I have not a wish to influence your opinion otherwise than by sound reasons; but my letter of the 24th was written under the impression of the pleasure I had always had in our personal intercourse. I hope, and quite believe, that some day you will freely admit yourself to have been in error in this matter. How I wish you could see some of our cases!

Yours very sincerely, W. BOWMAN.

2, Rutland Street, Edinburgh, October 30th, 1863.

MY DEAR MR. BOWMAN,—As you wish the members of our profession to be acquainted with the sentiments which we entertain upon this subject, I have transmitted both your letters and my own to the Editor of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL; and now bid adieu to iridectomy, in the hope that, whatever may be its value for the cure of blindness, it will never interfere with the respect and regard which I entertain for yourself.

Yours very truly, JAMES SYME.

IN the despatch of Admiral Kuper, describing the late naval operations in Japan, praise is bestowed on all branches of the service except the medical. This is all the Admiral has to say under this head.

“Their lordships will observe the testimony borne by Mr. Morgan, surgeon, to the able assistance rendered him by Mr. Charles R. Godfrey, assistant-surgeon to the *Vulcan*, who at the time of the engagement was on board this ship, waiting a passage to Shanghai.”

The following is the part of the report of Mr. Morgan referred to.

“I would beg to bring to the notice of the Commander-in-chief the able assistance rendered me by Mr. Charles R. Godfrey, acting-surgeon of Her Majesty's ship *Vulcan*, who was awaiting passage to that vessel, trusting the Commander-in-chief will be pleased to bring the same before the favourable notice of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. Mr. Edward A. Birch, acting-assistant surgeon, I would beg also to mention, who was untiring in his attention to the wounded.”





