CASE

OF

SEVERE AND DANGEROUS SALIVATION,

FROM

ECTROTIC TREATMENT BY MERCURIAL OINTMENT IN SMALL-POX.

By GEORGE PATTERSON, M.D., F.R.C.P., Edin.,
TIVERTON.

[FROM THE MONTHLY JOURNAL OF MEDICAL SCIENCE, DECEMEBER 1852.]

On the 15th October, I was requested to see a young lady in consultation with Mr Mackenzie of this town. An eruption, which proved to be that of small-pox, had been out upon her for two days, and the symptoms of initiatory fever had been severe, and followed by a degree of exhaustion and failure of the vital powers, which, even in this early period of the case, necessitated a free administration of wine and other stimulants. The spots of eruption were numerous, and showed a tendency to coalesce upon the face, so that although she had been vaccinated in infancy, yet the case altogether presented characters of severity which led us to apprehend a confluent form of the disease, and possible pitting of the features after recovery. It appeared to us that the case was one in which it was right to attempt to prevent the disfigurement that, from all the symptoms, seemed likely to follow—and from the statements as to the success and safety of the ectrotic treatment by application of mercurial ointment, which had lately appeared in the medical journals and elsewhere, I recommended Mr Mackenzie to try this plan. Accordingly the ointment, thickened with starch in the proportions recommended by Dr Hughes Bennett, in his clinical lectures published in the "Edinburgh Monthly Journal," was for several successive days smeared over the face, and allowed to remain in contact with the skin. Altogether, the ointment continued to be used from the Friday evening to the following Wednesday, the whole quantity employed amounting to not more than 1½ oz. It

EDINBURGH: SUTHERLAND AND KNOX.

was then discontinued, because the period for the maturative stage having arrived, the eruption instead of advancing began to decline and fade away in horny crusts, proving that notwithstanding the severity of the initiatory symptoms, vaccination had retained its modifying power. In fact, all cause for apprehension ceased, and I took my leave of the case, anticipating no further untoward occurrence. Such portions of the ointment as had dried upon the skin were allowed to remain for two or three days after any more had ceased to be applied, when, the state of the surface permitting it to be done, they were carefully removed by sponge and water. Not a particle of mercury had been given by the mouth for any purpose during the whole progress of the case.

It is necessary to state, that when I first saw the patient at the commencement of the eruptive stage, there was sore throat with spots of eruption on the tongue and fauces, and that the voice was, and continued throughout my attendance on the case, feeble and whispering, indicating, in my opinion, an extension of the variolous eruption to the larynx.

On Wednesday, 27th October, just a week after the ointment had been last used, I was requested again to visit this young lady. Two days previously symptoms of mercurial salivation had begun to show themselves, and now she was suffering from an attack of acute laryngitis. By such prompt and active treatment as the state of the patient admitted of, this attack was happily subdued. But profuse salivation, to an extent that I have seldom witnessed, with ulceration of the gums, and inflammation of the mucous membrane of the mouth and throat, continued for fully a week, most intractable to remedies, and causing much constitutional irritation and suffering to the patient, as well as anxiety to her medical attendants. The patient, though now convalescent and able to be removed to the residence of her parents in an adjacent county, still suffers from alteration of the voice, and extreme susceptibility of the vocal and respiratory mucous membrane to atmospheric changes.

It has long been a desideratum in medical practice to find some means of preventing the inflammation, pitting, and disfigurement of the features which are so apt to follow upon severe cases of small-pox, especially the confluent form of the disease. It is unnecessary here to give the long list of means that have been recommended with this view, but which have successively been abandoned, either from proving utterly inefficient, or from the time and trouble required to treat each individual pustule, or from the pain and inflammation which the treatment itself is apt to cause. Of all these means, the nitrate of silver certainly appears to have been the most effectual, but the two latter objections are found to apply to it, when used to the integuments, in a very considerable degree. I have seen the same as respects the application of nitrate of silver in erysipelas of the head and face. Instead of affording relief, it has, in several cases which I have treated, in the first instance at least,

greatly aggravated the pain and swelling. On mucous surfaces it generally agrees better, and I should always recommend the application of a strong solution (as I ought to have mentioned was done in this case) where there is any considerable appearance of the variolous pustules on the tongue and fauces. Such being the objections which have generally deterred practitioners from applying the nitrate of silver to any extent over the cutaneous surface in these cases, it has of late been the custom in certain of the French hospitals to employ mercurial applications. The practice has also been tried in this country and America, and it would appear generally with encouraging results. M. Briquet, as quoted by Dr Copland, says that "if mercurial plaster be applied before the fifth day of the eruption, either the pustules disappear by resolution, or they are changed into vesicles or into tubercles. The mercurial plaster must be kept on from eight to twelve days." More recently the same physician has introduced the particular method of treatment which was adopted in this case, and which as being far cooler, and not calculated to retain offensive discharge, appears to me infinitely preferable to the use of plasters. "He causes," says Dr Copland, "mercurial ointment, rendered more consistent by means of starch, to be spread over the face, and to be renewed once or twice daily. He says that it produces abortion of the pustules, and prevents the swelling attending the confluent form of the variola." Dr Hughes Bennett having been induced to try the same practice in the clinical wards of the Edinburgh Infirmary, gives even more emphatic evidence in its favour. "Its good effects," he says, "in locally modifying the intensity of the inflammation and preventing cicatrices, are unequivocal. The absence of swelling in the eyelids, the freedom from pain in the face throughout the whole course of the disease, and the presence of pit marks only in such situations there as are not covered by the application, show most satisfactorily the advantage of the remedy." So also Dr West, in his lectures on the diseases of children, says, "The weight of evidence appears to me to be in favour of some proceeding of this kind."

It is very singular that not one of these authorities mentions salivation as having occurred in his experience, or as an accident against which we should be upon our guard. Even Dr Gregory, who is adverse to the practice, objects to it rather on the ground of its having failed under his observation, than of any risk of the specific action of mercury being produced upon the system. Speaking of the various forms in which the application has been made, by plasters containing calomel or corrosive sublimate, or covering the whole surface with mercurial ointment, he merely observes,—"I have seen all the plans fairly tried at the Small-Pox Hospital. The ointment and calomel plasters were inefficient. The plaster of corrosive sublimate converted a mass of confluent vesicles into a painful and expensive blister; but I am still to learn what benefit the patient derived from the change." Not one word is here said of salivation;

on the contrary, the utmost evil that is predicated of the application of mercurial ointment, is its total inefficiency. The natural inference is, that salivation is a rare accident, perhaps from the state of the surface during the eruptive period of small-pox not being such as to favour absorption. And it is worthy of notice, as bearing upon this point, that here there had been no fresh application of the ointment for a week before the ptyalism occurred, only it had remained in contact with the skin in a dry and hardened state for two or three days longer, until the condition of the surface consequent upon the fading of the eruption admitted of its removal.

I am not disposed to attribute any efficacy to the mercurial application in this instance in favouring the early absorption of the pustules, for they followed the same course on the body and extremities where the ointment had not been applied. This favourable result I would rather ascribe to the modifying power of vaccination in early life. The itching and irritation were certainly less felt where the ointment was applied, but the same would doubtless have been the case with any other unctuous application.

The jeopardy in which life was placed from the attack of laryngitis after all risk from the original disease had ceased to be apprehended, it would hardly be fair to insist upon as aggravating the danger of this mode of treatment. Laryngitis would be just as likely to follow upon variola, simply from an extension of the eruption into the larynx, as it is upon the action of mercury on the mucous membrane of the gums and throat. Indeed more so, for it is not a common effect of mercurial salivation; while it is far from uncommon to meet with considerable distress and irritation from the throat and air passages partaking of the condition of the external surface in small-pox. That the specific inflammation of variola had at a very early period of this case extended from the tongue and throat, which were covered with numerous pustules, into the larynx, seems evident from the altered state of the voice at our very first visit to the patient, and which never recovered its natural character. There was thus from the beginning a predisposition, connected with the original disease, to inflammatory action in the larynx. But the period at which the laryngitis became developed, after the abortion of the external variolous eruption, and after the influence of mercury had manifested itself on the gums, and in connection with a severe and protracted stomatitis from this cause, renders it improbable that it would have occurred, if at all, at least in so formidable a shape, had the patient not laboured at the time under mercurial salivation.

There are circumstances in which it becomes a duty to relate the opprobria not less than the successes of our practice, and the present appears to me to be a case of the sort. It reveals a risk from a particular mode of treatment, pursued in strict conformity to the instructions of those in whose hands it has proved successful, the possibility of which every one would of course admit, but which appears to have been treated of, even by authorities opposed to the practice, as

scarcely worthy of being taken into their account. I am far from wishing to say that a new practice is to be judged and condemned by the untoward accidents of a single case. But I cannot help looking upon mercurial salivation as so great an evil, when superadded to the already existing local irritation and swelling of the face and mucous membrane, which usually occur in severe cases of small-pox, that the risk of its occurring in even a single instance, may well affect the general question of its safety and expediency. And that more especially, when we find the drug, as in this case, accumulating and lying latent in the system, and its specific effects manifesting themselves suddenly and with unusual severity some days after its use had been given up, and after all cause of apprehension on the patient's account, either from this source or from the original disease, seemed to be at an end.

MURRAY AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

IN REFERENCE TO

AN APPLICATION

RECENTLY MADE TO THE

MAGISTRATES OF TIVERTON,

AND TO CIRCUMSTANCES THEREWITH CONNECTED.

BY ROBERT LEWINS, M.D.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, EDINBURGH, AND

LATE CENSOR, &c. &c.

Printed by James Walker,
6. James's Court, Lawnmarket,
Edinburgh.

The following Statement is published for those to whom I am not personally known. My friends and associates, and, I flatter myself, many to whom I am known but by name and reputation, require no evidence of my pacific disposition.

In any other circumstances than those, under which I am, strangely, placed—that is, bound over to keep the peace,—this Statement might have been withheld. I say *strangely* placed; for I had given the most unequivocal proof of not feeling inclined to break the peace, even under very gross provocation; and of that the Magistrates of Tiverton had had ocular and auricular demonstration.

St Peter Street,
Tiverton, June 1844.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

On the 18th June, when my Statement was in the press,—and on the eve of publication, I had a communication from my intended publisher, informing me that he was in a predicament, in consequence of a notice that he had received, admonishing him to be cautious in publishing Dr Lewins' intended pamphlet! a notice that produced the effect for which it was intended. The "predicament" I was thus placed in will be seen by the following letter I immediately wrote to a friend learned in the laws of equity and honour.

My Dear————

———— has just informed me that he must decline the publication of my pamphlet! He has, however, given such explanations, and expressed himself so feelingly and becomingly on the occasion, that I cannot complain. But, verily I must say, the Devonshire Press is just as much the "Palladium" of a reputed Scotchman's "rights," as the Tiverton Bench was his "Ægis" on a late occasion. Favour me with your advice as to what you think I ought to do. My resolution is formed, to have my Statement printed in Edinburgh, where the duties and responsibilities of printers are perfectly understood; but I should like to have it confirmed or corrected by your sound and discriminating judgment.

Yours always, my dear ————

Robt. Lewins.

My Dear Dr Lewins, *Tiverton*, 22*d June* 1844.

I do not only think it right, but highly imperative that you should disprove reports in circulation injurious to your character, and give a clear account of such proceedings as may, from their nature, bear a false interpretation. No man ought to rest unconcerned or inactive when his integrity has been called in question; he owes it to himself, to his family, to his friends, to wipe off the foul stigma. A friend of mine advised to treat the matter with *philosophical indifference*. I begged, however,

to differ with him. Philosophy is all very well, but society is so constituted, that any one has a right to credit statements to the disadvantage of another publicly made, if not publicly contradicted. A friend in the act of exculpating the injured man, is commonly asked, why is not a public denial given to such public reports? Friends, it is true, require it not; but a *numerous* class, who, from want of proper evidence, might form a wrong conclusion, will then have it in their power to do you justice.

I regret that circumstances should have prevented your entering earlier on your defence. The sooner an accusation is succeeded by a refutation the more ready and prepared will it find peoples' minds to go into the merits of the case. My advice is, certainly, to publish your Statement with as little delay as possible. Believe me to remain, my dear Dr LEWINS, yours very truly,

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Before entering on the immediate object of this Statement, it is necessary to advert to an investigation which took place on May 14, at the Union Workhouse, before Mr Tuffnell, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, in which I was concerned. On that occasion, the conduct of Mr Turner, an Attorney from Exeter, and Mr Quick, Apothecary of Tiverton, was so extraordinary, that I could only understand it by imagining that their intention was to provoke me to commit a breach of the peace. It was then, from the expressions of Mr Turner, I was first led to suspect that calumnious reports regarding myself were in circulation; of which more afterwards.

Mr Tuffnell repeatedly endeavoured to prevent the "*outbreaks*," as he styled the turbulent doings which occurred at the Union Workhouse; and in a letter I had the honour to receive from that gentleman, dated May 18, he gives a reason for not interfering more peremptorily, the validity of which it will be my duty to consider, elsewhere. Mr Tuffnell was also pleased, unasked, to communicate to me the following expression of his opinion of *my* deportment on an occasion particularly calculated to try my temper and disposition. "I have," says he, "no hesitation whatever in stating my opinion, that you conducted yourself in every way as became a gentleman throughout the investigation at Tiverton."

After the investigation at the Workhouse was concluded, Mr Hallett (the apprentice of Mr Quick) seated himself by me, and held up a roll of paper before my face, saying he would send it (his report of the proceedings of the day, as I understood) to Edinburgh, and to London, to several medical gentlemen, amongst whom he mentioned the names of Mr LISTON, Professor of Surgery in the London University, Mr MILLER, Professor of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh, Dr ANDREW COMBE, a

Colleague of mine in the College of Physicians, and Dr COLDSTREAM, my Colleague, as Physician in the Leith Dispensary, and added, it would "be nuts for them to crack."

On receipt of Mr Tuffnell's letter, quoted above, I sent a copy of it to Mr Hallett, and requested him to transmit it as an appendix to the Statement he had informed me that he intended to forward to Edinburgh.

At the same time I thought it proper to address a letter to Mr Sidney Smith, student of medicine, for whom I entertained a friendly feeling, and have taken every opportunity of evincing it, since my esteemed friend Dr BROMMET, late of the Life Guards, who is interested in his welfare, visited me last summer. The object of my letter to Mr Smith, of which it will be necessary to speak more fully afterwards, was to caution him against joining those who intended to send reports regarding me to Edinburgh. I now proceed to the

CAUSE OF MY APPLICATION TO THE MAGISTRATES.

On Thursday evening, May 23, I was accosted in Fore Street by the young man Hallett, who said he desired to speak to me. I wished to decline all personal communication with him, and said so; but offered to receive any communication he wished to make in writing. He continued, however, to walk by my side, and stated, that he required an explanation of certain expressions in the letter I had written to him; he succeeded in extracting from me satisfactory explanations on all the points he adverted to; but expressed his disbelief of my having received the letter referred to from Mr Tuffnell, alleging that it was not likely he would write such a letter, as he had checked me for prompting my witnesses *. As an additional reason for mistrusting my assertion, Mr Hallett said, I was a Scotchman, and a Scotchman's word he would never believe! His parting words enabled me to comprehend more distinctly the extraordinary language and deportment of the Exeter attorney; and furnished a

* Mr Tuffnell's letter proves how I deported myself throughout the whole of the Investigation adverted to. If I erred in any way, it was in being too lenient in the discharge of a painful duty; an unwilling accuser of a member of the medical profession of neglect of duty, as an officer of the Tiverton Union. With regard to my witnesses, the only advice I ever gave them was, in the words of an oath as administered in Scottish Courts of Justice, "to speak the truth—the whole truth—and nothing but the truth;" and I admonished them to do *that*, with every possible regard to the interest and feelings of the accused, so far as was consistent with truth.

key that undid the lock of a budget, which, to my inexpressible surprise, contained strange and astounding matter for my serious consideration.

Having asked Mr Hallett to quote the letter I had received from Mr Tuffnell, as an appendix to the report that he intended to send to Edinburgh, I felt that he had a right to see the said letter, if he insisted on doing so. I therefore offered to give him ocular demonstration of its existence, at my house, half an hour afterwards. On reflection, however, I thought it more prudent that the interview should take place in presence of a witness. I repaired to the house of Mr Coles, a Magistrate: he was kind enough to read Mr Tuffnell's letter to Mr Hallett, who declared himself satisfied, not only in regard to it, but also as to the explanation he had sought of the expressions in the letter I had addressed to him. Before parting, I explicitly stated, in presence of Mr Radford, our diligent and meritorious constable, that if, upon any future occasion, he (Mr H.) wished to communicate with me, that he must do so in writing, or through the medium of any person that I could, consistently, meet; and that I would decline all personal communication with him. The next day, however, (Friday,) in the forenoon, the youth entered Mr Beedell's laboratory, when I was there, and accosted me in the same strain as on the previous evening, and received the same answer I had then given him. Not wishing to be subjected to a continuance of such molestation, I immediately applied to Mr Coles, a Civil Magistrate, who readily promised to do *his* duty; and on seeing him two hours afterwards, he assured me that I should be subjected to no farther annoyance.

On Saturday morning, when I left my house, I saw Mr Hallett in the street, accompanied by Mr Lamotte, Surgeon Apothecary in this place. The former approached me, quickly, and said he required explanation of certain expressions that I had used in a letter I had written to Mr Sidney Smith; and on my declining to comply with his wish, he used language which I cannot repeat here, but which is recorded in a more proper place, the office of the Clerk of the Justices of the Peace. Mr Hallett followed me to the house of Mr Coles; and persisted in reiterating it in the presence of that gentleman, in spite of his advice and admonitions as a Magistrate!

There remained but one course open to me. I immediately went to the Clerk of the Magistrates of Tiverton, and took the necessary steps to obtain that legal protection which I had previously sought in vain. A meeting of the resident Magistrates was immediately called, and a summons issued for Mr Hallett to attend: the Magistrates met, but the young man did not make his appearance, Mr Quick, Surgeon Apothecary, coming in his stead. A desultory discussion took place as to whether or not the case was of such a nature as to require or authorise the interference of the Magistrates! One of Mr Quick's arguments being, that as I was a Scotch-

man they could not believe any thing I said! I shall only farther mention, here, that the conduct of that man was, throughout, unprecedented, I believe, in a British court of justice. Doubtful whether my case was really to be taken into consideration, judicially, in the true sense of the word; or if the deposition to which I had made oath were even to be read, I did not feel inclined to hear my reputed countrymen and myself abused by Mr Quick, I therefore stated, with due respect to the place where I stood, that *if the law of England did not protect me*, the only alternative I had was, *to prepare myself against future aggression*, and was in the act of leaving the court house, but returned at the urgent request of the Magistrates. It was at length settled that my case was to be taken into consideration, in the way I required. But the principal person himself, who had been legally summoned, was still absent. After more discussion on that subject between Mr Quick and the Magistrates, Hallett was sent for, and appeared, at the bidding of his master, not in obedience to the summons of the Magistrates! Mr Quick maintained that the language his apprentice had used, and the manner in which he had acted, was justified by expressions I had employed in a letter addressed to Mr Sidney Smith *. The question now became, whether or not I, as well as the youth, should be bound over to keep the peace: Mr Quick (not a Magistrate, nor in any way directly concerned in the matter) argued stoutly for that point, and again transgressed all bounds of moderation in his abuse of me. The end of all this, to my great astonishment, was a decision, that I also must be bound over to keep the peace! Mr Quick complimented the Court on the propriety of the decision. The expressions in my letter to Mr Smith were said to be rather sharp by the senior Magistrate; but no remark was made as to the language or deportment of Mr Hallett. He left the Court perfectly satisfied, I presume, with himself, and with the Magistrates. I was not, I confess, but as was the duty of a man bound over to keep the peace, (that he never intended to break, and of which he had given abundant proof not only on that day, but on the two preceding days,) I, as a loyal subject, quietly submitted to the decree of legally constituted authority, having the *mens conscia recti* to solace me for any disappointment I may have experienced in regard to the termination of the affair, so far as it was terminated by the Magistrates of Tiverton.

Deliberate reflection, however, satisfied me that this decision was erroneous. I therefore solicited a meeting with the Magistrates, for the pur-

* The reader will be pleased to note, that Mr Hallett's reason for committing the act of which I complained was different from that assigned by his master, and received by the Magistrates. Mr Hallett's being that I would not give explanations in the particular manner, time, and place, he *demanded*, that was in the public street. I had offered to do so, on application being made to me in writing—or by a friend, personally.

pose of respectfully requesting them to reconsider their judgment, and on Monday, June 3, I had the honour of an interview.

The reasons assigned for binding me over to keep the peace were two in number, viz. certain expressions said to have been employed by me in a letter I addressed to Mr Sidney Smith, Student of Medicine *, and expressions I made use of in court; these *not separately, but taken together*, were considered sufficient to warrant the decision of which I complain. With regard to the letter addressed by me to Mr Smith, on the authority of that individual I state it was never seen either by Mr Quick, or Hallett; and certainly not by the Magistrates. It is true, that what was said to be a copy of it, (and it may have been so,) was read by Mr Hallett in court; but he did not depose as to the accuracy of the said copy; nor did *he* make any application that I should be bound over to keep the peace: and I maintain that there are no expressions in the letter referred to, that called for—or justified, the stringency of the decision, so far as it applied to me.

I think I have stated enough to shew, that one *half* of the assigned reason was not a sufficient half for binding me over to keep the peace. Now as to the *other*, the expression,—*if not protected by the Law of England, that I would be under the necessity of taking steps to protect myself,—that* I did say; and I am mistaken if there be an individual in England, not dead to all feeling, who would not have said the same under the circumstances in which I was placed. But, as I have mentioned before, I spoke with all due respect to the relative position of myself and those I addressed. Moreover, I spoke hypothetically; and, besides, the moment that the expression was alluded to by a member of the Bench, I acknowledged my regret for having said one word, that, by possibility, could be considered in the slightest degree inconsistent with my situation, and I withdrew the expression. But farther, it was employed *before* the Magistrates had actually entered *judicially* on the duties of their office—before my deposition had been read—and whilst they were discussing the point with Mr Quick, whether the affair could be settled "without proceeding to extremities"—that is, without binding the individual summoned over to keep the peace.

I have adverted to the reasons assigned by the Magistrates for doing that of which I complained, but I have not yet alluded to a circumstance which I have reason to suppose weighed (as it might perhaps fairly do)

* As much importance has been attached to this letter, I consider it proper to explain, as before stated, it was a kind and admonitory one that I addressed to Mr Smith, containing, it is true, an indignant, but natural, expression of an attempt, which had avowedly been made to injure me in the estimation of friends at a distance. Mr Smith has assured me that that letter was never shewn by him to any one, but that he read it to Mr Reed, and *his* brother.

with them in deciding against me. A report had been, it appears, circulated for months past, that I had been a duellist—and a story had been told, with circumstances of minute detail as to time and place when and where I wished to engage in mortal combat, not with one, but with two friends! and that, too, without any regard to the ordinary essential preliminaries, when such a lamentable alternative is deemed unavoidable;—that armed with two loaded pistols, I had, in the spirit of a murderer, assailed Mr Liston in the streets of Edinburgh, and wished to force him to accompany me to a place in the vicinity, that we might imbrue our hands in each other's blood! and that when Mr Liston wisely declined such an invitation, that I fixed on Mr Miller, now the eminent Professor of Surgery at Edinburgh, to supply his place!!

That monstrously absurd tale—or at least the part of it appertaining to Mr Liston, Mr Quick had the assurance to assert in court, and to maintain the truth of it, notwithstanding my mild, but firm denial of the atrocious calumny. On the afternoon of the day on which I was bound over to keep the peace, I was asked by *a Magistrate* why I had never previously contradicted the wild rumour above referred to. I had not done so for the very best of all reasons,—having heard of it for the first time on the Thursday night previously, and it was one of the things to which Mr Hallett compelled me to listen. By the first post that left Tiverton afterwards, that was on Friday, May 24, I wrote as follows:

My Dear Liston,

The perusal of this communication will, I doubt not, surprise you, as much as the cause of making it has astonished me.

Did I ever, by any act of my life, do any thing to forfeit, estrange, or diminish that friendship which was formed between us, as students of medicine at the University of Edinburgh, thirty years ago? and as practitioners of the healing art twenty-five years since?

A young man of this place, who has been at Edinburgh, has used such language in reference to you and me, as to render this communication expedient, if not necessary. The lad referred to seems to have been much with Mackenzie, a man as all the world (of Edinburgh that is) know much accustomed to draw on his own imagination—and that not a very correct one—for what he represents as facts.

Pray respond by return of post, and believe me to be yours truly,

Robt. Lewins.

St Peter Street,
Tiverton, May 24. 1844.

The next day's post brought me the following answer:

My Dear Lewins,

I am not at all astonished to hear that malicious and foolish people have been trying to make mischief betwixt old friends. It is the way of the world.

You never, by any act of your life, did *any thing* to forfeit, estrange, or diminish that friendship which was formed betwixt us as students at the University of Edinburgh thirty years ago,—and as practitioners of the healing art twenty-five years since. What are you about? Let me hear from you, or, better, let me see you. Believe me, my dear Lewins, yours, always faithfully,

Robt. Liston.

5. Clifford Street,
London, May 25. 1844.

I also addressed Professor Miller of Edinburgh on the same subject, to which he replied, from Edinburgh College, May 28. 1844. "You never did call on me to fight a duel on any occasion—or in any other open manner make me aware that you entertained a hostile feeling towards me. I may also remark, that I have heard the report to which you allude for the first time through your own communication." The facts stated above I brought prominently before the Magistrates of Tiverton at the interview I had with them on Monday, June 3. I respectfully submitted to their consideration, that morally and judicially I had been harshly treated; and I appealed to them as local judges possessed of great but not irresponsible power,—as men of honour, and as Christians, to do unto me as they would that others should do unto them, and absolve me from the situation in which I had been placed by their decision; but I appealed in vain.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FOREGOING NARRATIVE.

As a resident in this ancient town, and one willing and anxious in his sphere to be useful, during his sojourn there *, I have experienced, in a most extraordinary degree, the enmity of a few individuals, not be-

* Devoted, as I am, to the exercise of my noble profession, to me it is a grateful and a recreative occupation to practise it; I therefore take little credit, for having, during my residence in this quarter, bestowed three or four hours daily to a consideration of the cases of the sick poor,—and for having, in the course of the last fifteen months, seen and prescribed, gratuitously, for 1732 individuals, for whom I have written upwards of 4000 prescriptions.

cause I have failed in any duty, but because I have conscientiously done that which I conceived to be right! and, strange to say, the circumstance of my being supposed, erroneously, however, to be a Scotchman, increased that enmity a hundred fold! That such a feeling should exist in any nook or corner of the United Kingdom, in the 19th century, surprises me exceedingly; that it should be avowed in private over a glass of ale or a jug of cider, in second rate society in a large provincial town, seems to me still more extraordinary; but that such sentiments, as those referred to, should have been pertinaciously urged in a burgh court in Devonshire utterly confounds me.

It is however due to Tiverton to publish that such sentiments find no favour in the sight of the inhabitants generally; for however heartily a solitary few may detest Scotchmen, it is consistent with my certain knowledge, that the merits of Scotland are duly appreciated by the community in general.

I can, and most cheerfully do testify, that more kind and cordial feeling—more generous hospitality—towards a reputed son of Scotland, and one who is proud of the name, never was experienced even in

"Edina, Scotia's darling seat,"

than I, and all connected with me, have received in Tiverton; a grateful recollection of which time will never efface from my memory. *There* it will be fostered, cordially, in the darling land of my adoption, if it be my lot to return thither, as I trust in God it will be.

"Oh! Caledonia, stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child;
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood;
'My mother's' land, what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
That knits me to thy rugged strand."

My northern acquirements and practices, moral and professional, have, it appears, occasioned feelings towards me, in this southern locality, of a far different kind from those to which I have just alluded, and produced effects, concerning which I have had great provocation to expatiate; but I forbear, and conclude my remarks on this part of my subject, by observing, that it is ludicrous, after all the abuse that has been poured upon me, as a Scotchman, to know that I have not the honour to be so. I am a free-born Englishman,—a son of her Church, as were my forefathers; and, on these grounds, as much entitled to *all* the rights and privileges of an aboriginal English subject, as I was to the patrimonial inheritance I enjoyed from my ancestors,—rights and privileges which, in Scotland, her noble-minded sons freely awarded to me as an Englishman, and readily award to all honest Englishmen, who visit their hospitable land.

In this Statement I have studiously avoided to animadvert on the conduct of those whose proceedings have rendered its publication necessary. With regard to Mr Hallett, whose name has been very inaptly coupled so closely with mine, I would merely remark, that the time will, I doubt not, come, if it have not already, when he will be convinced that he acted a very rash and inconsiderate part—a part which will not, I imagine, be sanctioned by his own matured judgment. But I take this opportunity of stating publicly, what, as my friends know, I have frequently done privately, that in the young man's age, inexperience of life, and in the influence under which he acted, I find an apology for the manner he deported himself towards me. Mr Hallett is not yet too old to learn, that no one can really be lessened in the estimation of the sensible and virtuous part of mankind, but by his own actions.

" Youth, indeed, is the season when every sentiment of liberality, of generosity and of candour, most easily find their way to the heart. If they do not reach it then they never will afterwards. Age may improve the understanding, but, unfortunately, it checks the ardent pursuit of science and truth, and shuts the heart against every manly, enlarged and generous sentiment *."

Quæque ipse miserrima vidi.

And more so in the course of the last few weeks than during the whole of my previous life!

Having explained the extraordinary circumstances under which the Magistrates of Tiverton, in their wisdom, deemed it expedient to bind me over to keep the peace, I now proceed, cursorily, to notice certain assertions that have been made to justify that feeling of hostility towards me, which has shewn itself so unequivocally in certain quarters.

I have been represented as an officious personage, interfering, unwarrantably, with the patients of Tiverton practitioners; and, it has been affirmed, that my propensity to do so, with *pauper patients*, is particularly insatiable: my answer to that charge is a brief and a decided one. It is utterly unfounded.

Attempts have, it appears, been made to confirm the *accusation* of my being " a professional busy body;" by *another*, that I was equally obnoxious to my brethren in other situations where I resided, as I unquestionably am, without fault of mine I flatter myself, to a party at Tiverton.

North Berwick, and Haddington, in East Lothian, and Leith, are the only other places where I ever practised my profession,—in East Lothian

* Gregory's Lectures on the Duties of a Physician, an admirable work, which I would recommend to the attentive consideration of all juvenile members of the medical profession.

for a period of fifteen, and at Leith for that of thirteen years: I am in a condition to prove, and shall do so, forthwith, in another place, that my deportment, moral and professional, in East Lothian and at Leith, was such as to merit and to obtain the unqualified approbation of *all* whose esteem was worth possessing.

With no friendly feeling towards me it has been asked why I left home? and why I remain absent? The first of these questions, which no one can have a good reason for proposing, I have answered in another place, that I left home in consequence of the state of my health. To the second I might appropriately reply, merely by saying, it is my pleasure to remain at Tiverton, where it is, I presume, generally if not universally admitted, that a Scottish doctor is a useful member of society. My learned friend, however, Professor Simpson of the University of Edinburgh, accidentally responds to the invidious interrogatory, in a communication I recently received from him, (dated May 12. 1844,) on a scientific subject. "I hope," says he, "you are feeling stronger in the south. You are well away from our east winds. I trust you do not make your *body* or *mind* overwork your *heart*."

I cannot quit this part of my subject without noticing a direct accusation that has been deliberately preferred against me, *in writing*, and now in my possession, by an apothecary of this place couched in these terms: "Dr Lewins behaves in a manner considered unprofessional in this country, by such acts as bleeding his patients himself." What the other "acts" are the individual sayeth not; but the blood-letting charge comes with a peculiar bad grace from the person who made it, seeing that *he* is the very man, "in this country," who first requested me to perform the operation of phlebotomy, and the second time I did so was to oblige him, to prevent the necessity of his leaving home, or of calling in an apothecary to bleed *his* patient, when he himself was unable to go abroad in consequence of an accident.

I rest not, however, my defence concerning the professional *misdemeanour* of which I am accused on that ground; but fearlessly maintain, that it is the imperative duty of every physician to bleed his patients himself; and it is my deliberately formed opinion, that he who does not or cannot scarcely deserves the honourable name. No physician can properly perform the important and responsible duties of his calling, who is not *always* ready and able to bleed his patients the very moment he finds it necessary. To false notions on this point valuable lives have been sacrificed *. I further aver, that no physician has a right to seek exemption

* No physician, however wise and experienced, can tell what quantity of blood ought to be taken in any given case: even in the most favourable cases, for bleeding, it behoves physicians either to use the lancet themselves, or to see the operation pro-

from the performance of the duty alluded to, until his eye is so dimmed, or his hand so paralysed by age, that he cannot effectually, or safely, perform the operation—one that, as has been remarked by the late illustrious Sir Astley Cooper, is often bungled by those who perform more imposing operations with sufficient adroitness.

The amiable and learned Gregory speaks directly to this point. "It is," says he, "a physician's duty to do every thing in his power, that is not criminal, to save the life of his patient. This, it may be said, is sacrificing the dignity and interests of the Faculty. But I am not here speaking of the private policy of a corporation, or of the little arts of a craft; I am treating of the duties of a liberal profession, whose object is the health and life of mankind—a profession to be exercised by gentlemen of honour and ingenuous manners, the dignity of which can never be supported by means that are inconsistent with its ultimate object, and that tend only to fill the pockets of a few individuals."

I shall not offer any opinion as to the propriety of a physician taking a fee for performing a surgical operation; but, I may say, that "in this country" I never did, and never will receive a fee for bleeding; and have only to add, that as long as I practise medicine at Tiverton, I shall never hesitate, one moment, to perform "such acts" as I conceive essential to my patients' welfare, without regard to the opinion of any individual, or to any other consideration except my own conviction of their propriety or necessity.

Some light may, perhaps, be thrown on transactions to which I have referred by the perusal of the following passage from a communication I received, when I was about to settle at Tiverton, and of my response. I suppress the name of the writer, as allusion is made by him to individuals who may not acquiesce in the sentiments he expressed.

"With regard," said my correspondent, "however, to an observation in your note, that I among others invited you to settle here, I did so in consequence of your assurance to me that you would never practise without an apothecary; an assurance made during one of our drives to Crewys Morchard. Subsequent reflection having altered your intention on this point, I think you cannot wonder at a corresponding alteration in my reception of your announcement, and you will unhesitatingly absolve me from an imputation of caprice which might otherwise lie against me.

"I can only now say that it will give me pleasure to consult with you, when called upon to do so, although you cannot expect me or any other

perly performed. I am persuaded that valuable lives are often lost from neglecting these points. Such is the sound opinion of the late Dr Mackintosh, who was one of our most distinguished and successful Medical Lecturers, as recorded in his excellent work on Pathology. Vol. ii. page 112, published in 1836.

practitioner voluntarily to introduce you to our patients, when we feel that in their next illness we may find you in attendance alone, and ourselves left in the lurch. I am speaking on this occasion without the concurrence of my professional brethren; but from previous conversations with them on the subject, with regard to Dr Kettle, I know that I am expressing their opinions.

"Had you taken the high standing which your age, rank, and attainments entitle you to, we should have done our utmost to introduce you to our patients generally, and secured ourselves the comfort and advantage of your counsel, as an intelligent physician, while, on the other hand, having proposed to yourself a different course, I for one (and probably the only one at present aware of your intentions) can only feel disappointment. It is this sentiment which you have perhaps observed and attributed to what you term misunderstanding. Having tried to express myself simply, and, I hope, inoffensively, I will leave the subject, and only add, that nothing will ever lessen the strong sense of gratitude I entertain of your kindness to me after my accident, and I trust that no selfish feeling on my part will interfere with the pleasure I have received from the formation of an intimacy with you."

That letter was written after nearly six months knowledge of me; and almost daily, intimate, and unreserved intercourse.

My rejoinder was as follows: "In reference to the remark made in your letter as to inviting me to settle here, I think you state the case too strongly against yourself. I merely meant to say that you expressed an opinion, a very decided one, concerning the eligibility of Tiverton as a place of residence for a physician of talent, integrity and experience; and you were pleased to add, that, possessing these requisites, I might with advantage to the public, to the profession, and to myself, become a resident. But you must have mistaken the import of my words, when you imagined I said that I would never act without an apothecary being at the same time in attendance. It is very probable, that I mentioned, at the time to which you allude, and at other times, that I should greatly prefer consultation practice, but the idea of a physician giving an assurance that he was never to perform the duties of his office without an apothecary, as a coadjutor, is utterly preposterous: an arrangement of such a kind would, as it ought to be, indignantly resisted by the public of any town in England, and would only render the practice still more prevalent, that I find exists to an extraordinary extent, of people journeying to Exeter for medical advice.

You will, I trust, pardon me, for remarking, that the principle which you imagine will influence the Tiverton Apothecaries, in calling me in to their patients, is not the one that I supposed would regulate you, or any other man confident of his own powers as a competent practitioner."

I have only farther to add, that neither Robert Baker, John Ware Clark, William Dickenson, nor Carey Knyvett, Esqrs. were present, when the Tiverton Magistrates, in their wisdom, decided that it was expedient to bind me over to keep the peace,—a decision which I am resolved to have set aside, if that be possible, by constitutional means.

Without comment I submit this plain and simple statement of facts to the consideration of the public.