THE

LATE INQUEST AT PUTNEY.

A COMMENTARY

ON THE

ATTEMPTED VINDICATION

OF

JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D., EDIN.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS AND EDITORIAL ARTICLES RELATING TO THE ABOVE INQUIRY.

BY JOHN FARMER,

CHYMIST, ETC., MEMBER OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY, G.B.

"Be just, and fear not."—*Shakspeare.*

"A submission to insult serves but to authorize a repetition; and forbearance under injuries is frequently construed into an inability to redress them."—*Eaton.*

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INTRODUCTION.

Dr. Cormack has published a Pamphlet on the late Inquest at Putney, in which is reprinted, with sundry additions, exaggerations, and embellishments, the whole of the slanderous attacks that have from time to time been made upon me by himself and others. In a notice of this Pamphlet in one of the medical journals of a recent date, the reviewer has asked the following pointed question :—"What can Dr. Cormack have been doing to require such a costly vindication? Perhaps the following pages will afford some solution to this query, and at the same time show what I also have been doing to call forth all the personal abuse, slander, and vituperation that has been directed against me.

Several of my most esteemed friends have advised me to notice in no way this manifesto of Dr. Cormack; but, since I firmly believe (to adopt the words of my motto), that "submission to insult serves but to authorize a repetition; and that forbearance under injuries is but too frequently construed into an inability to redress them," I cannot persuade myself any one will, upon reflection, seriously advise me, after an eighteen years' standing in this place, with a large family dependent upon my exertions, to quietly rest under a series of attacks upon my character, put forth in such a vindictive spirit.

As the readiest means of putting an end to the slander, I had at one period contemplated submitting the whole case to a medical court of inquiry. This suggestion, which I should even now feel disposed to adopt, in the event of any further attacks being made upon my reputation, was communicated in the following passage, extracted from a letter in the *Medical Times* of August 7th, 1847:—

To the Editor of the Medical Times.

Certain prints, like certain persons, are incapable of slander; and, doubtless, Mr. Farmer will find solace in this fact, for the unmerited contumely *(to my certain knowledge)* that has been heaped upon him; but, should he not be altogether satisfied with this, and will challenge a professional jury, as Dr. Cormack challenged a jury of laymen, I will undertake the duty of his counsel, and guarantee him not only to come out scathless, but, perhaps, in an improved position.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

W. H. BROWN, M.D.

Belgrave House, Park Road,
July 26th.

From a communication subsequently received from the same disinterested source, I also extract the following, as indicating pretty clearly the opinions that must be entertained of this matter by all unprejudiced and right-minded persons, particularly by those of the medical profession, who, as a matter of course, are the most competent to form a correct judgment upon a question of this description.

To Mr. Farmer.

Dear Sir.—I certainly consider you a very ill-used man—very ill-used indeed. From all the particulars of the unfortunate case I have been able to gather, and I have been in the best possible position for gaining them all, I am unacquainted with one fact, which inculpates you, even to the extent of an *irregularity*. It will be scandalous, therefore, if you suffer in the estimation of the people of Putney—with the right-minded you cannot * * * * It was in this spirit, and because I considered that the wrong, *of whatever degree*, was in another quarter; and, further, that there was a gross attempt to victimise private character for the advancement of a public doctrine, that I threw down the gauntlet in your behalf. * *

I am, dear Sir, yours very faithfully,

August 10th, 1847. W. H. BROWN, M.D.*

If the above be not sufficient to plead my excuse for making this appeal, there is still that in Dr. Cormack's conduct towards myself and others, which I am certain every lover of equity and fair dealing will admit fully justifies me in the present attempt to establish the truth regarding this most painful matter.

The verbal alteration of very many passages in the correspondence reprinted in the Doctor's pamphlet, and the suppression of the whole of the medical testimony which speaks of the harmlessness of the medicines purchased of me for the deceased, is uncandid in the extreme—many hesitate not to call it dishonest. But be that as it may, I cannot believe that, with extracts from the Coroner's own notes, and other equally indisputable evidence, to bear me out in my assertions, the public can be any longer led astray by the sophistry of one who has so many good reasons for "making the worst appear the better cause." That truth will in this instance, as it does in all others, eventually triumph over error and prejudice, I cannot have the slightest doubt; and I believe the statement which I shall have the satisfaction of laying before my readers, signed by the surviving relatives of the deceased, will of itself afford a powerful test by which the latter may be disunited from the former, and precipitated to the bottom.

Putney, November 1, 1847. JOHN FARMER.

* I am desirous of expressing my obligations to this gentleman for the very valuable assistance, he has afforded me in the compilation and revision of these pages.

COMMENTARY, &c.

As THIS commentary will doubtless fall into the hands of many persons but very partially informed of the circumstances that led to the inquiry in the Coroner's Court at Putney, and out of which so much controversy has arisen, it will be necessary to give a brief outline of the matter as recorded at the time in one of the principal medical journals. The following succinct account of the proceedings is extracted from the *London Medical Gazette* of July 31st, 1847 :—

CASE OF ALLEGED POISONING AT PUTNEY.

An investigation took place last week at Putney, relative to the death of a young lady who was supposed to have died from the effects of narcotic poisoning. She had been attended by Dr. Cormack, who prescribed for her three pills containing half a grain of opium and half a grain of extract of hyoscyamus. These pills were taken at the interval of an hour between each, on the night before her death. She had also taken a mixture containing twelve drops of solution of muriate of morphia at an interval of two hours. The probability is, however, that the whole quantity of opium taken did not exceed *a grain*. She had, at the same time, employed externally a liniment, containing two drachms of tincture of opium. The deceased, whose age was about fifteen, was found, about eight hours afterwards, in a state of apparent narcotism, insensible to questions, labouring under great prostration of strength, and imperceptible pulse. She died soon afterwards. On inspection, the vessels of the brain were found congested, but there were all the signs of fatal enteritis in the abdomen. Death was ascribed to this cause, and not to the medicine, which was considered to have been in too small a quantity to have produced fatal results ; and a verdict was returned accordingly. The inquest was held at the request of Dr. Cormack."

It will be observed that no remarks of any kind are made in the above respecting the part which I, as a dispenser of medicines, had taken in the unfortunate affair, and for this obvious reason,—there was nothing whatever in the evidence which could by any possibility inculpate me, even to the extent of an irregularity, and consequently, the coroner and jury dismissed my part of the transaction from all consideration of the question.

The simple fact, however, is, that two days previous to the calling in of medical aid, I was applied to by the friends of deceased for some ordinary mercurial and aperient medicines, for the relief of symptoms which the family supposed to arise from a slight bilious disorder. These medicines, together with a simple saline mixture, I sold on two occasions in the usual way of business over my counter. *I neither visited nor saw the patient whilst taking these remedies ;* and yet for doing that which chemists have been in the habit of doing from time immemorial, and which I certainly would not hesitate to do again in like circumstances, several slanderous and most libellous attacks have been made upon me in a medical journal called the *Lancet*, both from the pen of Dr. Cormack and the editor of that periodical *

* The collusion between the editor of the *Lancet* and Dr. Cormack has been denied ; but my readers are left to draw their own inferences from the fact, that out of seven communications acknowledged by the editor to have been received from Dr. Cormack since the inquest, *only two* have appeared. To what did the other five relate ?

I have been not only accused by these parties with acting illegally, but charged directly with "homicide of the worst kind!" with having "gambled with disease!!" and, by dispensing to order certain draughts of salts and senna, doing that which is "much the same as putting a razor in the hand of a suicide!!!" These are grave charges, but let us see how far the family of the deceased, who were my customers in this instance, agree with these monstrous opinions—opinions, it would seem, put forth for the ostensible purpose of shifting, if possible, upon my shoulders the whole onus of this unfortunate case. The question is, did or did not Dr. Cormack form a correct diagnosis? Few medical men, at any rate, will dispute the following remarks of the reviewer of the Doctor's pamphlet:—

His (Dr. Cormack's) treatment of fever as he *suspected*; of peritonitis as he *dreaded*; cholera as he *half imagined*—was strange enough. At any rate, *legitimate medicine* neither stands nor falls with the deserts of Dr. Cormack. His practice is certainly not that of our London physicians.—*Medical Times*, Oct. 9, 1847.

THE FOLLOWING IS THAT MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT REFERRED TO FROM THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED.

We, the undersigned, members of the family of the late Sophia Dallett, having read several erroneous reports of the late inquest, both in Dr. Cormack's recently issued pamphlet and in other publications, feel imperatively called upon, in justification of Mr. Farmer's conduct, to make the following statements:—

1. That the antibilious pills spoken of in evidence were kept in the house as an ordinary family aperient (having been so used by us for fourteen or fifteen years), and were taken twice by the deceased without Mr. Farmer's recommendation, or even knowledge, at the very commencement of the indisposition which preceded her death.

2. That the so called 'treatment' by Mr. Farmer consisted merely in supplying the deceased with medicines on two occasions only, and cannot therefore be said to have 'occupied some days' as stated in one of Dr. Cormack's letters to the *Morning Post*.

3. That on applying to Mr. Farmer on the second occasion, the medicines were requested by us to be made stronger, on account of those had on the previous day having operated but slightly. Mr. Farmer, however, stated that he thought it advisable the strength of the draught should *not* be increased.

4. That we did not consider the deceased, at the time of either of the applications to Mr. Farmer, to be labouring under anything more than a slight bilious disorder; and we, in fact, asked him to send a blue pill and draught, or what he thought most advisable of that kind of medicine.

5. That the Doctor's second visit at twelve o'clock was at our own request, and not of his own accord, as might be inferred from statements put forth; at this period he neither considered his patient in danger, or anticipated a fatal result.

6. That an aperient mixture was sent the deceased by Dr. Cormack himself. We infer from this that the aperient medicines which we purchased of Mr. Farmer, and administered to the deceased upon our own responsibility, could not have been of that injurious description they have since been represented.

"7. That at Dr. Cormack's visit on the morning of the patient's death, she was not merely taken out of bed and simply roused, as stated in Dr. Cormack's evidence, reported in his pamphlet; but dragged about the passages and rooms, violently shaken, slapped, pinched, loudly spoken to, &c. &c., and this treatment was inces-

santly kept up for three or four hours, until death ensued. We did not of course presume at the time to question the propriety of this treatment, or to decide whether narcotism did or did not exist. If it did not exist, it is a sad reflection to us to know that all this torture was wholly unnecessary.

8. That Dr. Cormack at none of his visits expressed any fear or doubt as to ultimate recovery; on the contrary, he said, two or three hours only before death, that the patient would, if kept thoroughly roused, get over the stupor and do well.

9. That we have all along considered Mr. Farmer, in supplying medicines at the early stage of deceased's indisposition, to have acted in no way inconsistent with his calling as a druggist; and as he did not visit nor even see the patient as a medical man would have done, we sincerely regret that the mere purchase of medicines at his dispensary should have given rise to so many groundless and unjust attacks upon his character; and we equally regret that the character of the medical juror should have been so unjustly assailed for simply defending his professional brethren.

(Signed) JAMES DALLETT,
MARIA ROSE DALLETT,
ELIZABETH DALLETT,
MARY ANN DALLETT.

Comment upon such a statement as the above would be out of place. To dilate upon it would be to dilute it. I therefore leave my readers to form their own estimate of its value as a justification of my conduct, as regards some of the most material points that have been urged against me.

I regret my inability to terminate my commentary at this point. There are other matters relating to the affair under consideration imperatively calling for elucidation at my hands, which, did I now neglect to submit to the test of truth, might at some future time be resuscitated to my annoyance, in a manner which mortified vanity knows so well how to order.

It should be borne in mind that Dr. Cormack, in his letter to the *Lancet*, insinuated that he considered me, even before the inquest took place, to be "a party deeply interested in the decision to be arrived at." If such was his real opinion, I must now charge him, not only with a gross neglect of duty *at* the inquest, but with a malicious and underhand attempt to traduce me and to injure my reputation *after* that inquest had terminated. If conduct such as he was then guilty of does not denote a *cunning* disposition, it assuredly proves a *cowardly* one; for why—

"Just *hint* a fault, and *hesitate* dislike,
Willing to wound, but yet *afraid* to strike."

Why, if I was the guilty party he has since represented me, did he neglect to prefer his threatened charge against me before the proper tribunal, when being present, I could have defended myself, unless from a consciousness of his utter inability to maintain his position before twelve respectable jurymen, an intelligent coroner, and numerous members of his own profession?

Will this lover of equity condescend to explain to me why he preferred the opinion of the editor of the *Lancet* upon the alleged criminality of my conduct to that of the properly appointed coroner and jury? Or how it was that he was silent upon my supposed mal-practices

at the inquest, but so loud in my condemnation *after* the jury had been dismissed? I presume the public will think, that if Dr. Cormack considered me guilty, and failed to prefer his charge at the proper time, and before the proper tribunal, that he either knew not his duty, or neglected to discharge it: in either case, his judgment of other men's duties ought to be received with considerable caution.

There is a particular paragraph in Dr. Cormack's letter to the *Lancet*, of such a dilemma-involving character, that I must quote it entire:

—"I may add, in passing, that I agree with all that you (the editor of the *Lancet*) have recently so ably and earnestly written regarding quack medicines; and were I to act in reference to them as Mr. Farmer does, I should be doing what—as a teacher of Forensic Medicine, and formerly as the editor of a medical journal—I was in the habit of denouncing in my lectures and writings as *immoral and fraudulent*, and what I never cease, in my intercourse with society, to stigmatize as one of the most *pestilent abominations* of the age—I mean, the traffic in quack or patent nostrums."

This is truly the very climax of effrontery on the part of a rival druggist. Not long since, a highly-respectable lady purchased sundry drugs for domestic use, at the shop of Dr. Cormack. These consisted of—

2 antibilious pills—or "*pestilent abominations*"*	1*d.*
2 Seidlitz powders, 4*d.*, and 1 do. 2*d.*..	6*d.*
Tincture of myrrh, and laudanum	6*d.*
Total	1*s.* 1*d.*

A short time after this purchase, a receipted bill of what had been had was asked for, and the following highly-interesting document was furnished by the assistant. As the same has been kindly placed in my hands, I am enabled to present it to my readers *verbatim et literatim*:

'Paid 1*s.* 1*d.* for Druggs
Augt. 24th, 1847.' "H. Hicks."

Upon the back of this receipt, the lady has appended her signature to the following remarks:

"*When this bill was paid, I asked the assistant to specify the particulars, when he said they could not do so, as they would be levelling themselves with the druggists in the town.*" "E*** S****t."

So, then, according to this logic, it is not the actual selling or retailing of "pestilent abominations," Seidlitz powders, and drugs of all descriptions, but the mere making out of correct accounts, that reduces an M.D. and F.R.S. to the level of a druggist! Upon what trifles does dignity hinge!!

The Doctor's dilemma here is indeed inextricable. Either his assertions as to denouncing these practices in his writings are true—he then stands self-convicted of "fraudulent and immoral" conduct;

* As Dr. Cormack traffics in antibilious pills, I am justified in terming them pestilent abominations,' which according to his own opinion, they undoubtedly are, hether sold in boxes or by the pennyworth.

or they are not true—he then places himself out of the pale of a correct and conscientious man, and I think I have nothing whatever to apprehend from a syllable he utters. He may, if he pleases, elect his alternative.

It will be desirable to inquire next, how far the medical evidence adduced at the inquest accords with the opinion of the editor of the *Lancet*, that "two draughts of senna and salts (furnished by a chemist) are much the same as putting a razor in the hand of a suicide."

It is right I should inform my readers that the following testimony is taken from no *Lancet* or evening newspaper report—from no garbled, one-sided account of the inquiry,—but received direct from the Coroner.

EXTRACT FROM THE EVIDENCE OF DR. WANE.

"*I am quite satisfied, from the whole facts of the case, the death was not resulting in any manner upon the medicines from Mr. Farmer. I did not consider them (Mr. Farmer's medicines) dangerous medicines, and certainly not such as were calculated to hasten the results.*"

EXTRACT FROM MR. SHILLITO'S EVIDENCE.

"A question was put to this gentleman by the Court—in answer thereto he said, '*I do not consider the medicines supplied by Mr. Farmer had any reference whatever to the death.*'"

This evidence, it should be observed, is entirely suppressed in Dr. Cormack's shilling "manifesto." It is a little singular, that the coroner and other parties at the inquest had fully noted the above, but that the Doctor, his friend Mr. Martin, the barrister, and the editor of the *Lancet*, should have all three acted so charitably towards me, as to leave the public to obtain this information for themselves. *This glaring omission (by no means the only one) entirely invalidates the Doctor's pamphlet, and of course renders it utterly worthless.*

But Dr. Cormack terms the gentlemen who tendered this evidence, "competent physicians and surgeons," and I would therefore ask him, whether they must not be quite as competent to form an opinion exonerative of the pharmaceutist, as of the physician? It is perfectly ludicrous to witness the dilemmas into which the Doctor is continually falling in this matter. In reference to the evidence just quoted, he must either admit the gentlemen who gave this testimony to be generally competent,—he then must yield me the full benefit of their deliberately-expressed opinions;—or he must admit them to be wholly incompetent,—he then must acknowledge the information derived from their anatomical inspection of the body, and the opinions they formed as to his skilful and cautious exhibition of opium, &c., to be worthless. In electing his alternative here, I apprehend his professional brethren will scarcely thank him for the compliment, should his choice fall upon the latter.

Apart from the approved practice of medical men generally bearing out the opinion that aperients, and even purgatives, are admissible in fevers of a typhoid character, though complicated with visceral con-

gestions,* &c., I might instance a practice of Dr. Cormack himself, while a physician in Edinburgh, of giving—not simple aperients—not even ordinary purgatives,—but that most drastic of all medicines, *croton oil!* and that, indeed, to patients labouring under fever of a decided typhoid character.

A notice of the Doctor's treatise on the Edinbro' Fever of 1843, in the *British and Foreign Medical Review*, enables me to show that when he had no dilemmas to escape from—no rival in shopkeeping to crush—he could afford an admission or two as to the efficacy of purgatives in fevers of the above description.

'Dr. Cormack,' says the reviewer, 'rather inclines to discountenance blood-letting, convinced that the tenderness in the epigastric and hypochondriac regions give way with equal readiness after the diligent use of warm fomentations; and the *headache, and other uneasy feelings in the* EARLY STAGE *of the fever*, after the use of PURGATIVES and cold applications to the head.'—(*British and Foreign Medical Review*, July 1844, page 194.) Again, 'the administration of purgatives was found useful in mitigating the headaches. CROTON OIL *was prized by Dr. Cormack*, because, in spite of its *activity*, he did not find that it produced irritation.'—(*Ibid.* page 195.)

These opinions and practices of the Doctor do not admit of either equivocation or quibble: and since they stand recorded in his own writings, he, by taking exception to my purgatives, places himself in another dilemma. Either he must admit that croton oil is exceedingly beneficial in typhoid fever,—he is then clearly wrong in raising objections to purgatives of a milder character in this disease,—or he must consider it not even admissible,—he then stands convicted of having written that which he did not believe. Which of these two alternatives will he select?

It is not my fault that the Doctor holds opinions at variance with so many of his professional brethren; and if he does covet the concurrence of all to his doctrines, he should not be so vindictive and uneasy under dissent and disagreement, which it is the fate of all novelties to meet with. The right to hold opinions which he claims for himself, he surely ought at once to concede to others. Objections to his views, however, seem to place a very disagreeable impediment, not only in the way of his candour and justice, but of his memory likewise; for he perverts a very great deal which would otherwise have militated against himself, and forgets *all* that has been recorded in evidence in his opponent's favour. His love of truth is obscured in his restless desire of avenging his mortified vanity; and his animosity being provoked by the detection of the weakness of his arguments, he has recourse to personal invective and prevarication, to overwhelm those whom he cannot confute. I doubt not that in reading his letters and his pamphlet, where I (the chymist) only smile and pity, candid and liberal-minded medical men will blush, and feel ashamed of their brother.

* Among the authorities with which I have been furnished as bearing upon this particular point, may be mentioned those of Drs. Mason Good, Hooper, Bright, Hamilton, Armstrong, and many others.

APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

I.—My Reply to Dr. Cormack's First Letter to the Lancet.

II.—Editorial Articles from the Medical and Pharmaceutical Journals.

III.—The Alleged Distribution of Handbills.

IV.—A Few Words on the Correspondence in the Morning Post.

APPENDIX.

MY REPLY TO DR. CORMACK'S FIRST LETTER TO THE LANCET.

The following is a copy of a letter sent by me for insertion in the *Lancet*, in reply to a communication which had appeared in the preceding number of that journal, from the pen of Dr. Cormack. It is almost needless to remark, that this letter was insultingly rejected. Why it was so rejected will perhaps become sufficiently apparent by a perusal of it.

To the Editor of the Lancet.

Sir.—Without condescending to quibble with Dr. Cormack about the slight difference in the exterior appearance of our shops; without venturing an opinion as to the most respectable mode of rendering such shops conspicuous to the public eye; without presuming to say that *my* plan of placing 'glaring transparencies' in the window is in any way more reputable than Dr. Cormack's plan of fixing a 'glaring transparency,' in the shape of a large coloured lamp, over his brass-plated door; I will be bold enough to re-assert, that, like mine, his shop is, to all intents and purposes, a *druggist's shop;* and that there is retailed therein, not only drugs and chemicals, but physic for horses, antibilious pills, and even perfumery, in quantities so small as single pennyworths.

I may surprise your readers by the boldness of my assertions, but since I have proof—proof the most incontrovertible—of this shopkeeping spirit on the part of Dr. Cormack, I would simply ask, how it is, that a 'physician and gentleman,' who thinks he cannot by any possibility be affected by anything proceeding from the '*mouth or pen*' of a chemist, can so far forget himself, as to deliberately take up *his pen* to give currency to one of the most outrageous falsehoods ever concocted, viz.—'that the sole object of this place (his *Pharmacy*) is the preparing and dispensing of the articles of the Materia Medica.'

If scented hair oil be an article of legitimate physic, then, indeed, must the learned doctor possess a materia medica, *sui-generis*,—peculiarly his own.

It will scarcely be believed, that John Rose Cormack, M.D., F.R.S.E., &c. &c., himself, served over his counter, no longer ago than last Sunday, during divine service (as the purchaser is prepared to prove on oath), a pennyworth of a coloured compound of oil and perfume, of the description I have named. Whether the learned Doctor put the penny into his pocket or into his till, I am not able to say,—but that he poured the compound into the purchaser's bottle (being at the time behind his shop counter) is a fact that I shall have much pleasure in convincing any one who will do me the favour to call at my place of business.

But this is not all; in my letter inserted in your journal of the 31st ult., I ventured to assert, that, 'had any one gone to that shop (Dr. Cormack's) before this melancholy occurrence, and asked the assistant to supply medicine for a supposed bilious attack, that drugs of a similar description would have been handed over the counter with as little hesitation, and perhaps in exchange for as few pence.' Upon this I have to observe, that a respectable person, who is ready to be sworn, if necessary, as to the correctness of what transpired, went on Saturday, the 8th inst., to Dr. Cormack's shop, dispensary, pharmacy, or whatever it is *now* to be called, and stated to the assistant (using nearly the same words as did the Misses Dallett in describing their poor sister's ailment to me) that she had a daughter at home who was labouring under a slight bilious attack; and what think you was actually prescribed or suggested in this instance, without any diagnosis whatever? Why, in the first instance, four antibilious pills (!) for which twopence was taken (!) and in the second instance (for the mother returned to inform the assistant that the pills were not ex-

actly to her daughter's liking), one of the antibilious pills before suggested, containing mercury, and a black draught, larger, at any rate, and, to all appearance, infinitely more powerful than either of the draughts—ounce draughts—which were had of me for the late Miss Dallett at the commencement of her indisposition. The charge for this latter medicine, I should mention, was ninepence (!) being, in fact, the same price purchased of the physician as of the pharmaceutist.

And, now, sir, having established that which in my letter I merely put hypothetically, permit me to point out to your readers the odd contrast these shopkeeping proceedings form with the bold language of the learned Doctor—the gentleman who has so great a dislike to Jedburg justice. 'To the best of my knowledge and belief, no assistant of mine has ever done any thing so monstrous and so criminal. Had such symptoms been reported to my present assistant as were named to Mr. Farmer by the sisters of the deceased, a different course would have been adopted. No attention whatever would have been paid to the diagnosis of the young ladies, that it was a slight bilious attack; no medicine or medical treatment of any kind would have been suggested till the patient had been visited, and then, assuredly, such measures as were deemed good by your correspondent would not have been relied on.'

It is fortunate, perhaps, for the Doctor, that he has decided on noticing no more communications from me, since, I apprehend, he would have had some difficulty in now reconciling his practice with his precepts.

There are many other portions of this singular letter which I might as clearly and as easily refute; but as they contain mere assertions, without proof, and relate to matters, about which not half a dozen persons, beyond the Doctor's own immediate circle of friends, will probably feel the slightest interest, I have thought it best, in order to shorten my communication, to pass them over without a comment.

I cannot, however, conclude, without expressing my regret, that the opinion I had once formed of my maligner, as an erudite and honourable member of the medical profession, should be so completely overturned by the undignified manner in which he, the hater of Jedburgh justice, has gone aside to injure my reputation, and to imply a want of discrimination in the coroner, jury, and medical witnesses, for daring to exonerate a chemist, who was proved to have acted, in this instance, in no way inconsistent with his calling.

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

Putney, August 12, 1847. JOHN FARMER.

EDITORIAL LEADERS UPON THE LATE INQUEST.

The three editorial articles which follow, reprinted from the *Medical Times* and *Pharmaceutical Journal*, speak for themselves. It may be observed, that although Dr. Cormack has carefully set forth in his pamphlet every syllable that has been written in his favour, *and probably to his order*, to save his own reputation, he has not been unmindful of the least circumstance that could tend to damage mine.

[*The following is from the* MEDICAL TIMES *of August* 7, 1847.]

THE INQUEST AT PUTNEY.

THE attention of the members of the profession continues to be directed to the late judicial proceedings in the coroner's court at Putney, touching the death of the young lady, Miss Sophia Dallett. We have received numerous letters from different medical gentlemen, and one from Mr. Farmer, the druggist, who received such a severe castigation from a contemporary, because he prescribed at the outset of the illness "a mild mercurial and aperient" for the patient. It is our duty, as public journalists, to hold the scales of justice with an even hand, and, while careful to maintain professional reputation, not to be unmindful of the interests of society.

There are two parties in this unfortunate case whose conduct has been called in question—the medical gentleman who attended the patient in her illness, and the druggist who was accustomed to furnish the family with certain domestic medicines.

The former has been freed from all blame in the treatment of the case by the coroner's jury, and the professional gentlemen who were called in at the last stage of the illness; the latter, while exonerated by the medical gentlemen, the family, and the jury, has been fiercely assaulted by certain parties, and his conduct held up to public opprobrium, as strongly exemplifying the evils of counter practice.

It seems that, when Dr. Cormack was first called to attend the patient, "she was labouring under severe abdominal pain, and distressing retching;" doubtless with much tenderness over that region where pain was felt. To relieve these distressing symptoms, opium was prescribed, without, however, any beneficial results. The patient afterwards became comatose, which, being mistaken for narcotism, two emetics were used, and the patient shortly afterwards expired. The professional attendants of the deceased can best understand how it was that there had been no local abstraction of blood, &c., usually considered so necessary, though the pulse may indicate great prostration of strength, and why opiates and brandy were ordered when the inflammation was raging in all its intensity. It is to be lamented that the patient should have been subjected to the action of an emetic, to the thrusting of a stomach-pump down her throat,* and to the shaking and slapping which are considered so necessary when opium is exerting its influence on the constitution: for, during these attempts to rouse her from her slumbers, she sunk into a "sleep that knows no waking."

We are fully convinced, from a review of the evidence, that Mr. Farmer, the druggist, is not chargeable with exciting a fatal inflammation by the drugs which he gave when the patient first felt unwell. We are of the number of those who would strongly condemn the tampering with human life by druggists and quacks, and our best efforts shall always be employed to bring about the total annihilation of the latter, and to confine the former to the legitimate exercise of their trade. This is not to be accomplished by falsely charging individuals with crimes of which they are entirely innocent; but by constantly setting before the public "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Mr. Farmer complains that the medical journal referred to has stated things at variance with the truth, in many important particulars, and that the report, as a whole, is garbled, incomplete, and partial. And is this the way by which the profession is to attain a proper standing with the public, and by which druggists' counter practice is to be put down? We think not: for the community has too long entertained an opinion that, when Demetrius and his workmen cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" it is only because their craft is in danger. Mr. Farmer tells us that Dr. Cormack, though a physician, is the proprietor of a chemist's shop, as like his own in appearance and objects as it is possible to render it, and he ventures to assert, that if any one had gone to that shop before the melancholy occurrence, and had asked the assistant to supply medicine for a person labouring under a supposed bilious attack, that drugs of a similar description to those supplied by himself to the deceased would have been handed over the counter with as little hesitation, and, perhaps, in exchange for as few pence. Here, then, we find the physician charged with the vending of drugs and chemicals in the same way, and *upon the same terms*, as the druggist; and the latter asks any one to be good enough to point out to him why a mild mercurial and an equally mild aperient, coming from one shop, should be set down as rank poison, and as "razors placed in the hands of suicides," whilst out of another, only about two or three hundred yards distant, the same drugs should be deemed efficient and proper remedies for disease? Here, then, the physician, or his assistant, is as much to blame in prescribing blindfolded for the disease as the druggist, and quite as likely to fall into error. If medical gentlemen think proper to keep shops, they ought to be especially careful not to "flirt" with sickness in a shopkeeping spirit. It is nothing less than rank quackery to prescribe for disease at a venture; and, if legitimate practitioners do this, who can wonder that the hosts of unprofessionals who dabble in physic should follow so injurious an example? Mr. Farmer takes for his Magnus Apollo his neighbour, Dr. Cormack; and as salts, senna, blue pill, and colocynth, are dispensed at the one shop for the sterling coin of the realm, he does not see why the same exchange of commodities should not take place at the other. Moreover, Mr. Farmer considers that his giving two purges of salts and senna, "as sharp as a razor in the hands of a suicide," when there was impending ulceration of the intes-

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* When the stomach-pump was suggested, the patient was sinking, and before it could be got ready for use, she died.—J. F.

tines, is no more open to severe strictures than an aperient mixture, still in the possession of Mr. Dallett, prescribed for, and sent to be taken by, the deceased on the very morning which closed her existence.

Mr. Farmer, in vindication of himself, refers to the medical evidence at the inquest. Dr. Cormack said that he did not convey, nor did he wish to convey, the idea that the disease arose from the improper administration of medicines in the first instance; Dr. Wane declared that he did not consider them dangerous, or in any way hurtful to the deceased, and certainly they were not such as were calculated to hasten the result; while Mr. Charles Shillito added his testimony, that the medicines supplied in the first instance had nothing to do with the death of the patient.

Medical journalists, in advocating the rights of the profession, should be particularly careful not to go beyond the truth. Those who do this are stumbling-blocks in the way of sound medical reform, and little better than enemies in the camp. The public sympathized with Dr. Cronin from this very circumstance, and viewed him as an individual unjustly persecuted. In the present instance, the garbled and one-sided statement in reference to Mr. Farmer will fail to produce in the public mind that disgust with unlawful practitioners which will help the members of the profession most materially in putting them down. Clad in the armour of truth, every arrow shot against us shall fall without injuring, and a victory over every enemy shall eventually be obtained.

[*From the* PHARMACEUTICAL JOURNAL *for* AUGUST, 1847, *Vol. VII., No. II.*]

'UNJUST ATTACK UPON A CHEMIST.

WE should not have felt called upon to offer any comments on the late inquest at Putney, nor even to report it so much in detail, if we had not seen in the *Lancet* of July 24th, some reflections on Mr. Farmer, which we consider to be very unjust. There is obviously nothing in the evidence which reflects any discredit on Mr. Farmer. Application was made to him for a dose of medicine for what was supposed, by all the parties concerned, to be a slight bilious attack, and he gave the most simple and rational remedy—four grains of grey powder, and a mild aperient draught. This not proving sufficiently active, he was applied to for a stronger dose, but prudently sent a draught no stronger than the former one, adding to the powder three grains of Dover's powder, on account of the sickness. Any person having a private medicine-chest might have done the same.

The writer of the article in the *Lancet*, arguing on *ex post facto* information, says, that 'with impending ulceration of the intestine, two purges of senna and salts were much the same as putting a razor in the hand of a suicide,' and designates the transaction as 'on the part of the Druggist, pure gambling with disease, the life of another party hanging on the issue.'

We contend that the information given to Mr. Farmer, furnished no reason whatever for suspecting the existence of any disorder beyond a slight disturbance of the alimentary canal; in fact, it was the kind of information generally given when a mild aperient is required. If, therefore, Mr. Farmer did wrong in furnishing the medicine, it is wrong for a chemist to furnish aperient medicine under any circumstances, and it would follow that the sale of medicine to the public by retail, is 'gambling with disease.'

Ten thousand persons may take a mild aperient, and derive benefit, but if one of these persons happen to be at the time labouring under the early stage of a fatal malady, the blame is attributed to the vendor of the medicine, and a principle is laid down which implies equal blame on the vendors of the 9,999 doses which proved beneficial. If each of these persons had sent for a physician, ten thousand guineas would have been paid to the profession, while only one patient required medical advice.

But how stands the case with the medical* practitioner. On his first† visit he

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* "Dr. Cormack keeps a dispensing establishment in Putney, and undertakes to give medical advice for the sum of One Shilling!" ED. P. J.—Dr. Cormack denies this—J. F.

† This is an error of the press.—It was not at the *first* visit, but at some subsequent one.—J. F.

sent an aperient, although this was not administered or mentioned in evidence. He then administered opium, and subsequently a teaspoonful of brandy, with three or four glasses of wine. His assistant made a mistake in directing the box of pills —we hope he did not make another mistake in the quantity of opium. At all events the patient shortly afterwards became comotose, as if narcotized by opium, and Dr. Cormack, besides administering two emetics, each consisting of a scruple of sulphate of zinc, which produced no effect, 'used every exertion to rouse her by sinapisms, hot water, and mustard to the feet, &c.' The meaning of the word *et cetera* was not explained at the inquest—namely, slapping the bare legs and body of the patient violently, pinching, and dragging her about the room, bawling into her ears. irritating the nose and fauces with feathers for upwards of four hours, until death ensued.

The jury in their verdict pronounced the treatment of Dr. Cormack to be 'skilful, judicious, and proper, and such as a medical gentleman with an adequate knowledge of his profession would have adopted'—(for 'CONGESTION OF THE BRAIN,' with 'impending ULCERATION OF THE INTESTINE,' 'well known to medical men as a dangerous complication of CONTINUED FEVER').

In this verdict the writer in the *Lancet* fully concurs!!!

[*From the* PHARMACEUTICAL JOURNAL *for* SEPT, 1847, *Vol. VII., No. III.*]

THE LATE INQUEST AT PUTNEY.

We regret the necessity of reverting to this unfortunate occurrence at Putney, but Dr. Cormack having taken umbrage at the observations in our last number (page 54), some explanation appears to be required.

It should be remarked, that we did not presume to offer any opinion respecting the medical treatment resorted to by Dr. Cormack, this not being within our province. Our sole object was to answer the article contained in the *Lancet* of July 24th; for this purpose we gave what we believed to be a plain statement of facts.

Dr. Cormack denies having prescribed an aperient on his first visit; and we find, on further inquiry, that it was not on his first visit, but on the afternoon of the same day. The circumstance was mentioned, not as a reflection on Dr. Cormack, but as a refutation of the assertion in the *Lancet*, that the former aperients furnished by Mr. Farmer were like 'a razor in the hand of a suicide,' for if these had done mischief, a repetition of aperient medicine would surely have been avoided.*

Dr. Cormack considers it unjustifiable to express a hope that his assistant did not make a mistake in the quantity of opium, on the plea that this is an insinuation that he did make a mistake. This we conceive to be jumping at a conclusion: the observation merely implies that such an occurrence was *possible*, which cannot be denied.

In his own evidence, Dr. Cormack states, 'I thought it my duty, under all the circumstances, to hazard the imputation of having used improper and dangerous medicine. The only thing which gave the deceased a chance of life, was to take this view of the case, and act on it.' Assuming this view of the case to be correct, who administered the opiate? Did the doctor use 'improper and dangerous medicine,' or was his assistant responsible? Between the horns of this dilemma, can it be a libel on the doctor to hope that his assistant had not inadvertently mistaken the quantity? Supposing the doctor's 'view of the case' to be erroneous, was his treatment proper?—he states in evidence that he 'treated the symptoms exactly as he would have treated narcotism from opium." We offer no opinion on this point, but appeal to the published report (page 93), and denounce the attempt under such circumstances to throw the blame on the chemist. This attempt having been made, and the *Lancet* containing the unjust attack having been in circulation in the neighbourhood, it was our duty to place all the facts before the public, a duty which we shall never shrink from performing in any similar case, whatever may be the personal responsibility incurred by so doing.

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* "We presume that at the time of prescribing the aperient, Dr. Cormack was aware of the nature of the medicine which had been already taken. To suppose the reverse would imply a censure on the doctor, as Mr. Farmer's shop was 'over the way,' and the information could be obtained in less than five minutes."

Dr. Cormack indignantly denies ever having given advice for a shilling, and declares that he has never been in the habit of 'underselling his professional brethren.' While we insert this statement on his authority, we beg to observe, that giving advice for a shilling is not, in our opinion, underselling his professional brethren, as it is customary for medical men who keep open shops, to furnish medicine, including advice, across the counter for a few pence. We impute no blame to a doctor for embarking in trade. It is optional and may be convenient. But while he is pocketing the pence he can scarcely stand upon the dignity of his 'M.D.' Instead of threatening us with an action for libel, Dr. Cormack ought rather to give us a vote of thanks for advertising his shop.

We think Mr. Farmer need not trouble himself any further; he is under no imputation. We quote the following extract from a letter in the *Morning Post*, by a medical man who was on the jury.

'Your correspondent's insinuation, that *the druggist's treatment of the late Miss Dallett was extended over a period of many* days*, is not only untrue, but most uncandid. The family have this morning assured me that the chemist was applied to but *twice* for medicines for their deceased relative, viz., once on the Sunday, and once on the Monday following. On both these occasions, I must do Mr. Farmer the justice to say, that I think the most rational remedies, all circumstances considered, were sent the deceased; and in this opinion I am borne out by that of my professional brethren who were examined at the inquest. Of two evils, it may be asked, which is the least, amateur practice or chemists' suggesting? Mr. Farmer satisfactorily explains the meaning of the term 'suggesting,' as used by him at the inquest, by stating that he is in the habit of pointing out what he conceives the most efficient pharmaceutical preparations of popular remedies, previously indicated by the applicants. He states that he did this in the case of the late Miss Dallett. A mercurial and an aperient were indicated, and he sent the mildest form of both, making the most minute inquiries (much to his credit), with a view of ascertaining whether there really existed anything more than the slight functional disorder suspected. If a druggist does not go beyond this in his practice of medicine, he is surely rather to be commended than censured, for preventing ignorant parties from purchasing powerful drugs, with the actions of which they may be totally unacquainted.'

THE ALLEGED DISTRIBUTION OF "HANDBILLS, &c."

It should be observed, that the medical juror, in putting a stop to the scandal which was being promulgated to his prejudice, submitted to the editor of the *Lancet* certain letters and documents, fully disproving the several charges preferred against him by Dr. Cormack. Upon the receipt of these letters by the editor, the following appeared in the *Lancet*'s notices to correspondents:—

Mr. Whiteman (Putney) has sent us a letter, the purport of which is to show, that in addressing his first letter to the *Morning Post*, he had the sanction of Messrs. Wane and Shillito, and also to declare that the circulation of his last letter in the *Post*, as a handbill, by Mr. Farmer, was contrary to his (Mr. Whiteman's) wishes. Letters from Mr. Shillito and Dr. Wane, copies of which have been forwarded to us, confirm the first point; and letters from Mr. Farmer, the druggist, and his assistant, declare the truth of the second; but this requires to be reconciled with the fact that the handbills appeared in Putney on the same morning as that in which the letter appeared in the *Morning Post*.

As I was unable to perceive in what way I could be justly charged with the distribution of "*handbills*," any more than Dr. Cormack himself; and as the circulation of the medical juror's letter was *not* 'on the same morning' as its appearance in the *Post*, as stated in the *Lancet*, I addressed the editor the following note, which, however, with his characteristic justice, he refused to insert.

* This is an error of the press. It should be "*some days*."

To the Editor of the Lancet.

SIR,—In your last number, you ask to have a particular circumstance reconciled with a certain alleged fact. In justice to the "medical juror," you will probably do me the favour to insert the following brief explanation.

The printed copies of the medical juror's last letter to the *Morning Post* were purchased by me of the printer of that journal, *unknown to, and unsanctioned by, that gentleman.* These slip copies were not in my possession until late in the *evening* of the day on which the letter itself appeared in the newspaper, and therefore could not have been circulated in Putney, as you state, on the *morning* of that day. Had the fact, however, been as you assert, I do not see, in any way, how it can connect the medical juror with a knowledge of my intention to obtain and to distribute his letter in a separate form; and I think you have done me great injustice to receive the assertions of Dr. Cormack, whilst you throw a doubt upon those of myself and my assistant.

I have yet to learn, that the printed slips alluded to are any more "handbills," than are the articles in the *Lancet*, or in Dr. Cormack's shilling manifesto. These have been circulated by the Doctor to a much greater extent than anything of the kind has been by me; and I do not see why the physician is to be commended, and the chymist censured, for adopting precisely the same steps to defend themselves.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Putney, 6th October, 1847. JNO. FARMER.

A FEW WORDS ON THE CORRESPONDENCE IN THE "MORNING POST."*

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to show *how much* Dr. Cormack has done to stand in need of so costly a vindication as that which he has put forth; and, also, *how little* I have done to merit the contumely which has been so lavishly heaped upon me. There is yet a third party to this controversy, upon whom the most intemperate abuse has been showered, with almost as unsparing a hand as that employed in my disparagement, but happily with a recoil upon one of the abusers, that I sincerely trust has taught him a most useful lesson. "If the wielder of the weapon of detraction be such an unskilful sportsman as to overcharge his piece, he must not be surprised if it explode, and wound no one but himself."

* It is right I should state, that what I have ventured to say upon this part of the transaction I have considered essential to a complete exposition of the depraved and pitiful tactics of my antagonist; and that, if I have, in a measure, revived a subject upon which the parties more immediately concerned have mutually agreed to discuss no more, I have done it entirely upon my own responsibility. I reprint the following note received from Mr. Whiteman, in order that that gentleman may not be again annoyed by groundless accusations, of being a party to any proceedings or publications of mine:—

Mr. Whiteman, in reply to Mr. Farmer's note, received last evening, simply wishes to observe, that while he would rejoice at the complete oblivion of this unseemly controversy, he does not think he has a right to impose restrictions on Mr. Farmer, as to the publication of any matters which he (Mr. F.) may deem essential to his refutation. Mr. Whiteman having rebutted, by the most indisputable evidence, the several charges preferred against him, he really thinks it would be a very unsurgical act on his part to essay to re-open the wound by becoming a party, in any way, to a revival of the correspondence. He (Mr. Whiteman) will rejoice as much as any one, if Mr. Farmer succeeds in disarming prejudice and establishing the truth; for he does think the jury was most grossly insulted by the record of so monstrous a verdict as that of 'homicide' against Mr. Farmer, by self-constituted judges, when the properly-appointed tribunal had returned one of a very different character.

Putney, October 15th, 1847.

In reference to this part of the transaction, if may be asked, what has the medical juror done, to deserve all the obloquy that has been cast upon him? This question has now to be answered; and in answering it, I shall afford my readers a few more examples of that unique system of "revision" which Dr. Cormack has, for reasons best known to himself, adopted in the compilation of his boasted *unabridged and most accurate* pamphlet.

The simple facts are these. On the morning after the close of the inquiry in the coroner's court, there appeared in the *Morning Post* a most incorrect and scandalous report of the proceedings, in which the resident medical practitioners were placed in a position which they were by no means desirous of continuing to occupy. Amongst the unfounded statements in this report was one attributing the "grossest mismanagement of the case" to Dr. Wane and Mr. Shillito, two gentlemen, it should be borne in mind, whose advice had only been sought by Dr. Cormack at a period when the patient appeared to be on the point of death. "Virulent cholera" was also stated to have manifested itself in the person of the deceased young lady, and her death was, from some alleged evidence of Dr. Wane, ascribed solely to that most loathsome and most dreaded of all diseases.

It appeared to be quite convenient, and even pleasing to Dr. Cormack, to have two respectable parties to share the onus of this unfortunate case with him; and so upon being taxed with not having had the generosity to attempt to remove the imputations resting upon his professional brethren, he excuses himself by stating, that he had considered the paragraph in question as far too absurd to require the least notice at his hands! The gentlemen, however, whose characters had been aspersed, thought differently; and it was because Dr. Cormack did not appear to be impressed with a proper sense of his duty towards his medical neighbours, that Mr. Whiteman undertook, with the knowledge and full approval of Dr. Wane and Mr. Shillito, to perform that duty for him. This, then, is the "head and front" of the medical juror's offending—the whole extent, indeed, of his alleged delinquency! The following is the incorrect report alluded to from the *Morning Post*, July 15th, 1847:—

SUSPECTED CASE OF CHOLERA AT PUTNEY.

Yesterday, Mr. William Carter held an inquest at the Queen's Head Inn, Putney, on view of the body of a young lady, named Sophia Dallett, whose death had taken place a few days previously.

The excitement in Putney and its neighbourhood had been very great, rumours of a very unpleasant character having for some days past been circulated, both with reference to the medical gentlemen engaged, and the deceased, whose parents hold a highly respectable position in the town. Amongst the accusations broadly made both in the inquest-room and out of doors, was one that the grossest mismanagement had been exhibited by the medical gentlemen who attended the deceased lady, and another rumour prevailed that the young lady had died from the effects of a virulent attack of cholera. The inquiry excited much interest, the interest being promoted by the resident surgeons of the neighbourhood, who, it appeared, had determined to use their best influence to make it 'a great medical case.'

Dr. Willis, Dr Shillito, Dr. Wane, Dr. Freeman, and other eminent physicians, were present. Dr. Bushell applied to watch the case on behalf of the relatives of the deceased. Mr. Martin, barrister-at-law, was foreman of the jury.

Dr. Wane, who had made a *post mortem* examination of the body, was examined.—When he first saw the deceased, he found she was labouring under the effects of narcotism. In order to relieve her, he prescribed an emetic, composed of 20 ounces of sulphate of zinc, which produced the desired effect. When he first saw the deceased, he thought opium had been administered, a supposition which was afterwards confirmed, as he had ascertained that pills consisting of opium and henbane had been prescribed.

The Coroner (to Dr. Wane)—After making yourself acquainted with the facts of the case, to what do you believe is the death of this young person to be attributed?

Dr. Wane—I believe to an attack of cholera. (Great sensation.)

In answer to questions from the Coroner and Jury,

Dr. Wane expressed his conviction that Dr. Cormack's treatment of the patient was cautious and judicious; and

The Jury, in returning a verdict of 'Natural death,' recorded that conviction.

The following is the medical jurors' correction, which also appeared in the *Morning Post*, July 28, 1847. It will be observed, that an interval of thirteen days elapsed between the publication of the report and its contradiction; thus showing, that sufficient time had been given Dr. Cormack to contradict it himself, had he been so disposed.

THE ALLEGED CASE OF CHOLERA AT PUTNEY.

It appears from a communication we have received from a medical gentleman at Putney, who was one of the jurors on the late inquest, that the evidence taken before the coroner, touching the death of Miss Sophia Dallett, has been most incorrectly reported, not only by ourselves, but by several of our contemporaries.

In an article inserted in our impression of Thursday, the 15th instant, it is inferred that the resident surgeons had too officiously busied themselves in promoting the inquiry, in order to make it 'a great medical case;' and further, that Dr. Wane and other medical gentlemen, parties who, it appears, had taken no part whatever in the actual medical treatment of the deceased, had exhibited 'the grossest mismanagement' of the case. Another incorrect statement in our report is, that an emetic of *twenty ounces!* of sulphate of zinc had been administered to the deceased. We are happy in being able to fully correct these several mis-statements, by directing attention to the following facts, as elicited at the coroner's inquest:—

1. That none of the medical gentlemen, with the exception of Dr. Cormack, the professional attendant on the deceased, entertained the least suspicion that the patient had laboured under symptoms of cholera, so that Dr. Wane did not make any such statement as, that 'he believed cholera to have been the cause of death.'

2. That the resident surgeons could not be said to have 'promoted' the inquiry, nor to have used any extraordinary exertions to make it 'a great medical case,' since it was solely through a letter of Dr. Cormack to the coroner, written upon his own responsibility, that the inquest was ordered to take place.

3. That it was Dr. Cormack, and not Dr. Wane, who acknowledged to having committed an error of judgment, in mistaking the effects of disease for narcotism by opium.

4. That it was *twenty grains*, and not *twenty ounces* of sulphate of zinc that was administered to deceased as an emetic.

5. That no rumours of an unpleasant character, imputing gross mismanagement to the medical gentlemen called in by Dr Cormack, have been known to prevail at Putney.

6. That if such rumours had prevailed, neither Dr. Wane nor Mr. Shillito, nor indeed any other medical gentleman concerned, could be fairly charged with faults of either omission or commission in reference to the treatment of deceased, since Dr. Cormack had the sole medical charge of the case from beginning to end, and sent for the advice and assistance of the two gentlemen above named, at a period when the case was deemed by him all but hopeless, and when the patient, in fact, was *in articulo mortis*.

It may be remarked, that the attendance of Dr. Wane and Mr. Shillito was an act of kindness towards Dr. Cormack, and that, therefore, these gentlemen have

the greater reason to complain of the imputation cast upon them by the paragraph in question, of the gross mismanagement of the case on their parts.

One or two of our contemporaries, we understand, in making up their report from several sources, have done considerable injustice to a Mr. Farmer, a chemist at Putney, by attributing the death of Miss Dallett to some domestic remedies (simple aperients) which were purchased of him by the family of deceased, and administered by them, on their own responsibility, a few days prior to the calling in of regular medical aid. The chemist, as appears to us, has been fully exonerated from blame by the following statement made by Dr. Cormack himself at the late inquiry :—'I did not convey, nor do I wish to convey, the idea that the disease under which I found the patient labouring, arose from improper medicines procured from the chemist.'

Dr. Wane also gave similar testimony. The correct verdict was, that 'Deceased died a natural death from peritonitis and inflammation of the bowels.'

It should be remarked, that in all Dr. Cormack's attempts to throw discredit upon the above statement, he has not succeeded in controverting *one single fact* therein contained. It is true, he has raised a *quibble* upon the assertion, that he, Dr. Cormack, had had "the sole medical charge of the case from beginning to end." If he had not the sole MEDICAL charge, I would simply ask, who had? It certainly cannot be disputed that he was the only *medical man* responsible for the case.

The only part of this document to which any reasonable objection could be taken by Dr. Cormack, was the omission of a complimentary *addendum* to what was given as the *correct* verdict of the jury. As the return, however, was one of "natural death"—which, of course, inculpated no one—there was little need to insert these additional remarks—remarks, by the way, which it would appear, upon the very best authority, had no right to have been placed in connection with the verdict in the first instance.

At a recent inquest held on the body of a person who met his death on the Brighton and Portsmouth Railway, one of the jury proposed to append some remarks to the return of 'accidental death,' when the coroner, F. H. Gell, Esq., interposed, and said, "No; you can't do that. Chief Justice Denman has decided, that juries must return *only the cause of death;* and that they *have no right to make comments of any kind in their verdicts.*"—*Brighton Paper, Oct* 9, 1847.

So, then, after all, the medical juror committed no great enormity by omitting that in his communication to the *Morning Post,* which was decidedly illegal in the original verdict. But does not a complaint respecting this immaterial omission come with an exceeding bad grace from one who, in his pamphlet, has made so many? I am really surprised at the hardihood of the author in challenging a comparison in this respect. Not only are there numbers of omissions, both in Dr. Cormack's report, and in his reprint of the correspondence, but interpolations, substitutions, and alterations, of all descriptions abound in the pamphlet, and are most conspicuous in those parts where "revisions" seem to be particularly needed, either to soften down expressions inconveniently harsh against himself, or to render those more acrimonious that were inconveniently mild against his antagonists. My readers will scarcely be prepared—dishonourable as I have proved my opponent to have acted, in excluding from his report

the whole of the medical evidence in my favour—to hear, that in the very newspaper paragraph that has given rise to all the correspondence in the *Morning Post*, deliberate alterations—no less than *eleven in number*—have been made by Dr. Cormack in transferring the same to the pages of his pamphlet! Yes! in this one short article of about thirty lines there is to be discovered one interpolation, omission, or substitution, in, upon an average, every three lines of the reprint!! Nor is this all. In other letters of the correspondence the same tricks of revision are to be detected. Thus, in one of Dr. Cormack's communications to the *Morning Post*, transferred to his pamphlet, is to be found the word, "like," craftily introduced before the words, "Tom Thumb," in a passage, no doubt intended in the original to have been highly offensive to the medical juror. There is, to say the least of it, some considerable difference between being called an insignificant personage, and being said to have done a simple act *like* one. Again, in one of the medical juror's letters, wherein that gentleman speaks of the family of deceased applying to me "but twice for medicines for their relative," the words, "for medicines," which are to be found in the original, are thought unnecessary in the reprint—thus leaving the readers of the pamphlet to draw an inference that I was known to have visited the deceased in the capacity of a regular medical attendant! Could there be any thing more unfair or dishonest?

In the same letter, as well as in other parts of the pamphlet, similar alterations occur, the object of making which is transparent enough; and yet this is called *a correct and unabridged account* of the transaction. And this, too, is the way in which the Doctor deals with people's reputations!!

It may be thought a piece of presumption in me, a mere druggist, to take to task a physician; but I really cannot part with my opponent without offering him a wholesome piece of advice; and I will do this in the same words—changing but the name—as once did a learned Serjeant of the law, in replying to an attack by a gentleman of Dr. Cormack's own profession. '*Au reste*: Follow the example of Lady Teazle, and return your diploma to the scandalous college, with the ordinary message, that you, John Rose Cormack, M.D., *Fellow*, &c. &c. &c, have retired from practice, and kill characters no more.'

By what has been set forth in the preceding pages, I trust it has been rendered tolerably clear to my readers, that not only has the endeavour to shift upon me the entire onus of such a case as the one under consideration been prompted by some of the worst feelings of human nature, but that the tactics of Dr. Cormack throughout the controversy, (*especially in omitting in his pamphlet the entire medical testimony bearing in my favour*) has been altogether unworthy of an honourable antagonist.

The provocation to asperity on my part, in the compilation of this commentary, has therefore been very great, but I trust my readers will give me credit for some considerable forbearance, when they consider the malevolence which must have dictated the attacks. Did I,

in reality, feel any great amount of personal animosity, I should take advantage of other and more certain means that are open to me for revenge. My object, however, being rather to establish a wholesome conviction than to gratify any malicious feelings, I must be permitted simply to express a hope, that all those who have listened to the calumny, will not only have the patience to read, but the candour to admit the vindication here attempted.

To those of my indulgent readers who act on the just principle, that it is always expedient to arrive at the truth by examining both sides of a question, I now, with the fullest confidence, leave my case for consideration and judgment.

High Street, Putney. JOHN FARMER.
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