

False accusation in the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society against a poor man because he suffered no pain while his leg was amputated in the mesmeric coma : and cruel refusal of the Society to receive his solemn denial of the truth of the false accusation / By Dr. Elliotson.

Contributors

Elliotson, John, 1791-1868.
Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London.

Publication/Creation

London, 1851]

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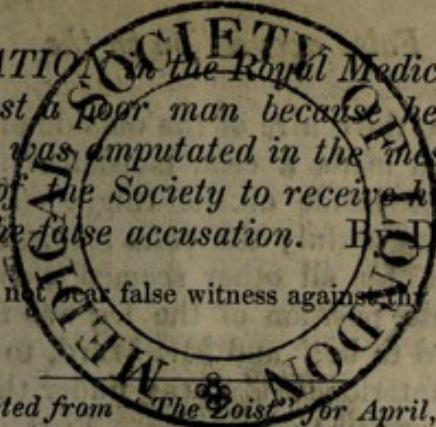
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FALSE ACCUSATION by the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society against a poor man because he suffered no pain while his Leg was amputated in the mesmeric coma; and cruel refusal of the Society to receive his solemn denial of the truth of the false accusation. By Dr. ELLIOTSON.



“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”
Ninth Commandment.

[Extracted from *The Zoist* for April, 1851.]

It is universally known that a leg was amputated* at Wellow in Nottinghamshire, in 1842, in the mesmeric coma, without any pain, and that the patient rapidly recovered. Mr. Topham the mesmeriser, and Mr. Ward the surgeon, drew up the case and transmitted it through the hands of Mr. Stanley† to the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, before whom it was read in the same year.

As the Society was satisfied beforehand, without any acquaintance with the subject of mesmerism, but by the force of irrational prejudice and bad feeling, that mesmerism was an absurdity and imposition, every kind of folly was uttered by the Fellows, to express their conviction that the poor patient was a rogue, and the two gentlemen concerned in the case a pair of blockheads or rogues, just as each speaker was inclined to represent them. Some talked of people who bore pain silently by strong resolution; forgetting that in such instances the strong resolution is manifested by some external sign, as holding the breath, clenching the hands, biting the lips, &c., &c.: whereas this patient shewed no signs whatever of resolution, but lay perfectly placid, without any muscular action or expression, and breathing calmly; just as they now frequently see patients lie when operated upon under the influence of chloroform, but not one of which patients, even if he does not lie placidly but struggles and hollas, or talks freely, is pronounced an impostor when he afterwards declares that he felt no pain.‡

“The operation was now commenced. ‘Mr. Ward, after one earnest look at the man,’ in the words of Mr. Topman, ‘slowly

* The first operation rendered painless in England by mesmerism was the introduction of a seton by my order into the neck of Elizabeth Okey in University College Hospital, in 1838. The second was the division of the ham strings by Dr. Engledue at Southsea, in 1842.

† Mr. Stanley most justly considered the case so satisfactory that he assured me it was “as clean a case” as he had ever read: and yet he sat in timid silence at each meeting, and allowed the authors to be ill treated.

‡ See my exposure of the self-condemnation of the enemies of mesmerism by their opposite conduct in reference to the senseless state induced by chloroform, in *Zoist*, No. XVII., p. 44.

plunged his knife into the centre of the outside of the thigh, directly to the bone, and then made a clear incision round the bone, to the opposite point on the inside of the thigh. The stillness at this moment was something awful; the *calm* respiration of the sleeping man alone was heard, for all other seemed suspended. In making the second incision, the position of the leg was found more inconvenient than it appeared to be; and Mr. Ward, to use his own words, 'having made the anterior flap,' 'was under the necessity of completing the posterior one in *three* stages. First, by *dividing a portion of the flap on the inside*; then *a similar portion on the outside*. This proceeding, which was of course far more tedious and painful than the ordinary one, was necessary to enable me to *pass the knife through under the bone and thus complete the whole*, as I could not sufficiently depress the handle to do so, without the two lateral cuts.' Yet, notwithstanding all this, the patient's 'sleep continued as profound as ever. *The PLACID look of his countenance never changed for AN INSTANT*; his whole frame rested, *uncontrolled*, in *perfect stillness* and repose; *not a muscle was seen to twitch*. To the end of the operation, including the sawing of the bone, securing the arteries, and applying the bandages, occupying a period of upwards of twenty minutes, he *lay like a statue*.'

"Soon *after* the *second* incision, 'a low moaning' was heard at intervals until the conclusion of the operation, that is, after the leg was off and while the arteries were tying and the bandages putting on, giving 'to all present the impression of a disturbed dream.' That it arose from troubled dreaming I have no doubt; for in the mesmeric coma it is common for patients, *after the lapse of a certain time*, to dream and talk, and especially if anything has just before strongly impressed them; and this patient was very likely, and from my experience I should say was almost certain, to dream of his having soon to undergo the operation, the thoughts of which had so acutely distressed him and must have occupied his mind to the last moment of his waking state. I have at this moment three patients who in the coma always dream and talk of something which has very recently, generally the same day, interested them, or of something they expect on the same day. Had it arisen from the operation, it would have occurred during the most painful periods; would have occurred, as it did not, exactly and only at moments of the proceeding most likely to be painful, whereas it occurred as much at moments when nothing was doing to give pain. The man could not have moaned from pain in spite of himself at moments when there was nothing to make him moan in spite of himself. It would have been increased, and indeed changed to a sudden and louder noise, whenever the end of the sciatic nerve was roughly treated. For, still farther to test his insensibility, Mr. Ward 'twice touched' and, as he informs me, *pretty roughly and with the points of the forceps*, so that he in fact pricked, 'the divided end of the sciatic nerve, without any increase of the low moaning.' The pain which such an experiment would occasion to a person in his ordinary state must be equal to a strong dart of tic douloureux; and I defy any

human being, in his ordinary condition, to be subjected to such an experiment without, not to say an increase of low moaning if he was already moaning, but without suddenly giving some other more decided sign of anguish,—without some interruption to the ‘perfect stillness and repose of a statue.’ Mr. Ward further informs me that he ‘once put his thumb roughly upon the nerve in taking the posterior flap in his hand to sponge, and also used the sponge very roughly.’ If the man had not been able to bear the pain of the operation without moaning, he would not have been able to retain the *perfect placidity* of his countenance, the *relaxed* and *motionless* state of his *lips* and *hands*, and the undisturbed regularity of his breathing.”

“The mesmeric state of the patient usually lasted half an hour; and, after this lapse of time, the operation having been commenced in rather more than a quarter of an hour subsequently to its production, and having occupied, inclusively of applying the bandages, above twenty minutes, he ‘*gradually and calmly*,’ as usual, awoke.”

“At first, he uttered no exclamation; and for some moments seemed lost and bewildered,—a characteristic and striking phenomenon so familiar to mesmerists when any visible change in external circumstances has occurred while the patient was asleep. But, after looking around, he exclaimed, ‘I bless the Lord to find it’s all over.’

“He was then removed to another room; and, following immediately,’ Mr. Topham ‘asked him in the presence of all assembled to describe all he felt or knew after he was mesmerised. His reply was, “*I never knew anything more; and never felt any pain at all; I, once, felt as if I heard a kind of crunching.*”’ Mr. Topham ‘asked if that were painful? He replied, “*No pain at all; I never had any; and knew nothing till I was awakened by that strong stuff*” (the sal volatile).’ Of course the moment he became sensible he must have tasted the sal volatile, and would fancy that it awoke him, and he must have continued to taste it for some time after he was awake. When mesmeric patients awake spontaneously, they continually ascribe their waking to their first sensation, or even to something imagined.

“The crunching no doubt was the sawing his own thigh bone.’ It is not uncommon for patients in the mesmeric coma, although insensible to mechanical causes of irritation, yet to hear more or less. As there are in mesmerism various degrees of insensibility to mechanical causes of irritation, from perfect to but slightly impaired sensibility, in different cases; sometimes in the same case at different mesmerisations; and sometimes at different periods of the same mesmerisation; and sometimes one part is insensible and another sensible: so there are various degrees of affection of hearing. In some cases patients hear not the loudest sounds; in others, they hear and answer questions; and it is very common for them to hear well at one moment and appear perfectly deaf at another, as the mesmeric conditions fluctuate in intensity: and the state of sensibility to mechanical causes of irritation and of hearing may bear no relation to each other. It would be wonderful were all this not to happen, since the very same observations hold in similar affections of a func-

tional character independent of mesmerism. I have no doubt that the man did confusedly hear the sawing of the bone in his coma.

“ ‘He was left easy and comfortable; and still found so at nine o’clock that night: about which time’ Mr. Topham ‘again mesmerised him (in a minute and three quarters) and he slept an hour and a half.’

“Two days afterwards, when he was put into the mesmeric coma, Mr. Topham proposed to Mr. Ward, who intended to dress the wound that day for the first time, to take this opportunity; and *the wound was accordingly dressed without the man’s knowledge, and therefore without the least pain.*

“The man has done perfectly well. Within twenty-four hours after the operation he was singing. In three weeks he sat up to dinner, ‘and had not a single bad symptom: *none even of the nervous excitement, so frequently observed in patients who have undergone painful operations, and who have suffered much previous anxiety in making up their minds.*’

“Such was the artless tale; beautifully true to nature in every incident, and at once recognized as pure truth by all who are not ignorant of mesmeric phenomena, or who do not unphilosophically allow unworthy feelings to supplant their judgment.”*

Mr. Coulson and a Dr. Truman considered that the man had been *trained* not to express pain. Of course by Mr. Topham and Mr. Ward: and yet the poor man was agonized with pain except when mesmerised.

Sir Benjamin Brodie talked of some people not being capable of pain: passing the fact over in cool silence, that, in the reading of the case ten minutes previously, the poor patient was declared to suffer exquisite pain from the slightest movement up to the moment the mesmeric insensibility was effected. Sir B. B. very boldly told of a person (Dr. Holland) not crying out under an operation, and therefore argued that there was no expression of pain: but he gave no account of the expression of the countenance, the breathing, the hands, —some or the whole of which I have always seen express pain when patients astonished us by their firmness. He and the rest seemed never to have thought of the difference between insensibility and firmness. As now they all employ chloroform, they may learn to make the distinction. Sir B. B. was sadly off his guard, for he added that, seeing a nerve lie bare, he touched it to see how the patient stood this wanton experiment, and the patient cried out. Mr. Ward seeing a nerve exposed, and a nerve far larger than that—and knowing the patient did not feel, touched it, but the patient did not cry out or express pain in any way.

Dr. Marshall Hall said the poor patient was an impostor because, when his leg was being cut off the other leg did not

* *Numerous Cases of Surgical Operations without Pain.* By Dr. Elliotson.

move :—a piece of preposterous folly ; and shewn to be so, for in the insensibility from chloroform, when an extremity is cut off, the other does not move ; and in the numerous painless operations since performed under mesmerism this movement of the corresponding extremity which is not operated on has taken place but once ; and was no doubt accidental. But there is no physiological folly too great for Dr. Marshall Hall to have the face to utter or write, so blinded is he by vanity.

Some, as Dr. James Johnson, declared they would not have believed the facts had they seen them.*

The speakers all passed over the striking fact, in addition to that of insensibility to pain, of the poor patient having quieter nights and an improvement in his health from mesmerism.

Yet, notwithstanding all these truths, and the intense importance of the paper, they resolved at the next meeting not to have the faintest trace of it upon their minutes—to erase all mention of the occurrences of the preceding meeting, upon the trumpery pretence that the case had been published since the preceding meeting. Now the authors were fully justified in publishing it : for Mr. Topham, addressing the president, formally withdrew it from the Society in my hearing—and in the Royal Society, upon the model of which this Medical Society was formed, authors often withdraw their papers as soon as these are read, and send them to the Royal Society for no other reason than to have it in their power to say that they had communicated certain facts to it. Mr. Topham and Mr. Ward were prepared to withdraw it, and printed it in readiness for immediate publication, because they had been threatened in private, if they dared to have it read in the Society, with all the virulence which they actually experienced.

“ When the chair was taken, a secretary read as minutes of the preceding meeting merely that such a paper had been read ; no abstract being given according to the established custom of the society. The authorities thus disdained to possess the particulars on their books. The president then put the usual motion for the confirmation of the minutes, when Dr. Gregory, known in connection with small pox and cow pox, rose to express his disapprobation of the authors having published the paper immediately that it was read.

“ Dr. Copland rose to oppose the motion on two grounds,—the character of the paper, and the publication of it by the authors without the permission of the society. He would allow no trace to remain that such a paper had been read. He protested that the

* Dr. Chambers and Sir B. Brodie have used the same philosophical language to many persons in regard to mesmerism.

paper ought not to have been read, because *the author was not a medical man!*—As though knowledge was ever to be despised from any source. Why one of the authors was a surgeon, though neither was a fellow of the society. He then contended that, if the account of the man experiencing no agony during the operation were true, *the fact was unworthy of their consideration, because pain is a wise provision of nature, and patients ought to suffer pain while their surgeon is operating; they are all the better for it, and recover better!* Will the world believe that such folly was gravely uttered? This will be remembered as a doctor's speech in 1842, when the doctor himself shall be forgotten. In due consistency, Dr. Copland, when he is about to have a tooth extracted, of course goes to a clumsy dentist and begs the man to give him all the pain he can. In due consistency, he of course gives his patients that physic which he thinks most likely to pinch them well, because they must be all the better for being twisted with sharp pain while *it is operating*; the agony must do them good, and make them anxious to take *his* physic again.

“Dr. George Gregory was so shocked that he proposed the affair should be promulgated by advertisement in three newspapers.

“Dr. Moore, of Saville Row, protested that the authors had violated the laws of the society; and, at the same time that he was so indignant at its publication having been taken out of the hands of the society, declared, most consistently, that it was unworthy of a place in their minutes. ‘How would the character,’ he exclaimed, ‘of that medical society be affected, on whose records it should appear that it had received and discussed a subject like mesmerism, when no proof existed as to its truth?’”

The clamour became frightful. Mr. Topham was censured in strong language behind his back for publishing the paper, and a visitor rose to defend him, but was immediately prevented from speaking by Mr. Cæsar Hawkins, and on the ground that the laws forbid any one not a member of the Society to speak. Yet there is no such law. Thus the Society enacted a law for that moment.

“Here was a body of men censuring an absent gentleman in strong language, and, when his friend rose craving permission to explain for him, that friend was instantly compelled to hold his peace. This was conduct unworthy of a society of men of the very humblest class. No law of the Society forbid Mr. Wood to speak; and, had there been such a law, the laws of justice, and of that charity without which Mr. Hawkins is as ‘sounding brass,’ would have been superior to it under these circumstances.

“This virtuous indignation at its publication was truly laughable. The speakers all knew that the Society would not have published this paper, and they would have risen in arms at the bare suspicion that the council contemplated such a thing; and yet as much clamour was made as if the Society had been deprived of a treasure. I resolved

to take no share in the discussion, as I knew that neither the authors nor the public would care whether the minutes were confirmed or not. I never enjoyed a farce of Foote's more than the acting of this evening; for, by a little effort, as I sat silently observing the speakers, I represented to myself that they were enacting all their parts for my amusement.

“So the virtuous indignation of a large majority condemned the minutes to non-confirmation,—a most ridiculous proceeding, since, from reporters being admitted, the whole proceedings of the previous meeting were already published in the various journals, and recorded more publicly than they would have been in the minute-book of the Society, which nobody sees but the secretary when he writes in it and the president when he signs his name.”—*Numerous Cases, &c.*

To mesmerists the perfect freedom of the poor man from pain during the operation was a familiar thing: and those visitors at the Society who were not of the medical profession could scarcely restrain the expression of their surprise at the Society doubting, and being ignorant of, one of the most common facts in mesmeric anæsthesia as regards mechanical injury. Since that day, many hundred operations, productive of intense agony in ordinary circumstances, have been performed without the slightest pain: operations of all sorts, amputations, cutting away of nails, extractions of the firmest-rooted teeth, removals of breasts and of immense tumors weighing from eight or ten pounds to above a hundred,—and with the happiest success. Dr. Esdaile has removed with success and perfect painlessness tumors so vast and so numerous that he would leave all the surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland in the shade, even had he not performed them without pain. I know of no other surgeon living or dead who has done such mighty things, or things approaching to such exploits. And yet all our surgeons pretend ignorance of his doings, though recorded in the *imperishable, yes, imperishable Zoist*: and the accounts of them, to the disgrace of the profession, are excluded from the medical libraries, and all notice of them from medical schools and nearly from all the medical journals of the United Kingdom. Posterity will read this black page of medical history with wonder.

But though the world has made gigantic progress in its knowledge of mesmerism and the humble and poorer members of the profession have been decidedly on the move, the fashionable, the important, and the talking and writing members, have remained perfectly still, standing up to their middle in the same cold swamp of ignorance in which they stood in 1843, when *The Zoist* was established and I published the proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society,

and an account of all the painless surgical operations performed up to that period; as the following details will exhibit to the astonished world.

At the meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, held on the 10th of last December, Dr. M. Hall, in a discussion upon chloroform, before he sat down seized the opportunity of informing the meeting that the man whose leg Mr. Ward had taken off without pain had now confessed himself an impostor and asserted that he suffered like other people; and the President and Fellows allowed him to make these statements without interrupting him. The following are the reports in the four London weekly medical journals.

Medical Gazette, Dec. 20, 1850, p. 1076. "He thought it was ill judged to have changed from ether to chloroform, as the former is less dangerous and as capable of producing anæsthesia. If a patient is in a state of anæsthesia, he can be moved: and the *mesmeric experiment*, performed some five years since, to produce this state had been CONFESSED TO DR. HALL BY THE PARTY OPERATED ON AS ALL A TRICK."

Medical Times, Dec. 28, 1850. Dr. Hall "then spoke of the amputation performed some years ago under the alleged influence of mesmerism. This has since BEEN PROVED to have been a SHEER FRAUD."

Institute, Dec. 23. "Dr. Hall then alluded to a case of amputation under mesmerism, the particulars of which had been read before the Society some years ago, but had since been acknowledged to have been a piece of trickery and knavery."

Lancet, Dec. 28, 1850. Dr. Marshall Hall said that "before he sat down, he begged leave to communicate a fact of some interest to the Society. The Fellows would doubtless remember the case of amputation read to it some time ago, said to have been performed during a state of anæsthesia induced by mesmerism. It was argued by him at the time, that the reported perfect insensibility of the patient proved too much. Volition being removed, there ought to have been some reflex movements. He indicated that this man had since confessed that he acted the part of an impostor."

Thus Dr. M. Hall led the world to suppose that he had received the confession of guilt from the patient: for he contradicted none of these printed reports. Mr. Topham wrote to him, enquiring whether it was true that he had so spoken in the Society: and the following was his answer;—

"Sir,—I duly received your note yesterday and, in reply, beg to state,

"1. That the report of my observations in the *Lancet* is perfectly correct.

" 2. That the fact, which I stated before the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, was communicated to me by a gentleman whom I have known for the third part of a century, and whom I regard as among the most honorable and truthful of men.

" 3. That I do not feel called upon to give up this my authority to you without reserve; but that I will do so to any gentleman or gentlemen in strict confidence.

" 4. That I have shewn your note and mentioned the facts of the case to a friend, to whom my informant has been equally known for a long series of years; and that this gentleman's opinion entirely coincides with my own.

" 5. That I never shall cease to raise my voice against everything derogatory to my profession—whether originating, unhappily, within its ranks, or coming intrusively from without.

" 6. That I am of opinion that, in these days of multifarious folly and quackery, every member of my profession is called upon in honor to do the same.

" 7. That you will be pleased to regard this as a final communication.

" I have the honor to be, &c., &c.,

" MARSHALL HALL.

" 38, Grosvenor Street, Jan. 16, 1851.

— Topham, Esq."

Thus Dr. M. Hall had accused a fellow creature at a public meeting of a society, on the authority of another person, but without giving his authority, and refuses afterwards to give up his authority unless in secret and to individuals who should be bound not to mention it to any body!

But this is not the whole.

Dr. Hall next sent to the editor of the *Lancet*, March 1st, a copy of his letter to Mr. Topham with this addition;—

" A few days ago, I was told that the credibility of my statement at the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society would be called into question at the next meeting of that Society. I therefore addressed a note to my informant, a gentleman long known to Professor Grant, to Dr. Robert Lee, to Dr. Webster, of Dulwich, and to many others, in order that I might have his written authority for the truth of my statement. I enclose this gentleman's reply for your [Mr. Wakley's] private perusal. It contains the following declaration;—

" "The confession of the man was distinctly and deliberately stated to me by a person in whom I have *full confidence*.

" "It was in Nottinghamshire that I was told the fact, last August, and I FULLY BELIEVE IT.'"

Thus Dr. M. Hall now confesses, that he not only did not have the statement from the poor man, nor from a person—nameless and never to be named to the world—who heard such a confession from the poor man; but from a person—nameless

and never to be named to the world—who had it from some other person—nameless also.

Of course any further remarks upon Dr. M. Hall are out of the question. I leave him and his deeds to the world for judgment.

Mr. Ward went to the poor man, and received an express denial to the accusation. Mr. Ward despatched by post to Dr. M. Hall, March 11, this denial, with a request that he would make it publicly known to the Society: and Dr. M. Hall says he never received the letter. But, thinking that a formal denial would be advisable, Mr. Ward requested the Rev. J. Sampson and a medical gentleman, named Williams, to visit the poor man and take his statement.

The following is the document given to Mr. Ward by these gentlemen after their visit on Saturday, March 22.

WHEREAS,

An assertion having been publicly made to the effect that *James Wombell*, labourer, late a patient in the *District Hospital at Wellow*, in the county of Nottingham, (who underwent the operation of amputation of the thigh under the influence of mesmerism,) had made a *pretended confession*, as to his actual feelings at the time, in variance with the declaration which he made *immediately after the operation was performed*: the above-named James Wombell, having been this day seen by us, the undersigned, makes, in our presence, the following affirmation, to the truth of which he is ready to swear.

I, James Wombell, of the parish of Carlton-upon-Trent, labourer, do hereby most solemnly affirm, that I never have made any *pretended confession* or *statement* to any one as to the sensations which I experienced under the operation that was performed upon me in the Wellow Hospital while under mesmeric influence other than those which I mentioned at the time, when questioned by Mr. Topham and other gentlemen who were present. My statement then was, that "*I never felt any pain at all*;" "*I once felt as if I heard a crunching*." To this statement I still adhere, and again do most unequivocally assert, that *I felt no pain at all under the operation*, and therefore that I never did make, or could have

made, the confession imputed to me. And to this, my solemn affirmation, I hereby set my mark.

James Wombell, × his mark

Signed by James Wombell, } THEOPHILUS SAMPSON, Rector of
this 22nd day of March, } Eakring, Notts.
1851, in the presence of } THOMAS M. WILLIAMS, M.R.C.S.

Carlton-upon-Trent, near Newark, Notts.

I, Theophilus Sampson, Clerk-Rector of Eakring, in the County of Nottingham, do hereby certify, that I have this day examined (and required the accompanying affirmation from) James Wombell, being led thereto by the feeling of having been myself an *ear-witness of the expressions* used by the patient at the time referred to, the veracity of which appears now to be impugned.

Witness my hand this 22nd day of March, 1851,

THEOPHILUS SAMPSON.

At Carlton-upon-Trent, near Newark, Notts.

But the cruelty of the case does not end here.

It was presumed that the Society, having allowed Dr. M. Hall to give a deliberate contradiction to a scientific statement made at a meeting eight years ago,—viz., that by means of mesmerism a certain patient had been rendered insensible to the pain of an amputation, (as insensible, we may now say, as if he had inhaled chloroform,)—and to accuse a fellow-creature of wicked imposition, would, in common justice, have allowed the poor man to deny the accusation and declare his innocence by means of a Fellow of the Society, in the the place where, and as publicly as, the accusation had been made.

Dr. Ashburner went to a meeting of the Society, with a statement from Mr. Ward that the man totally denied to him the accusation made by Dr. M. Hall. He arrived after the secretary had begun to read a paper, and was told by his friends that he was too late.

He attended the next meeting, which took place at the end of a fortnight; and, when the business of the evening was beginning, rose for the purpose of presenting to the Society a copy of Mr. Baillièrè's edition of a translation of the Baron von Reichenbach's Researches, availing himself of the oppor-

tunity to make some observations on the nature of the work, and had wished, in reference to his own note in the book on Luminous Animals, to pay a passing tribute to the memory of a former distinguished member of the Society, the late Professor Macartney of Dublin; when, having alluded to "some statements made by a member of the Society on a late occasion, with reference to an operation of amputation performed while the patient was under the influence of mesmerism," he was, I understand, suddenly interrupted by the president, Dr. Addison, who would not allow him to finish his sentence, saying he remembered the subject alluded to by Dr. Ashburner, "*which had arisen, he did not know how, in the course of conversation at a previous meeting.*" No doubt the gentlemen who had originally presented the paper in relation to the case might think themselves aggrieved by the charge made by Dr. Marshall Hall, but *this meeting* was not the proper occasion to discuss the truth or untruth of the assertion made by a member on a former occasion,—*that must be settled elsewhere.* Dr. Addison felt bound therefore to request that Dr. Ashburner would not now introduce the subject." Dr. Ashburner wished, however, in presenting a book which he said was distinctly a work on *mesmerism*, to explain certain matters. But the word *mesmerism* so excited Dr. Copland, that this gentle man roared out "*Order, order,*" at the top of his voice, and was so well seconded by the loud clamour of many others that Dr. Ashburner bowed to the chair in order to restore the calm which should at all times characterize the proceedings of those pretending to the position of gentlemen.

Dr. Cohen, of St. Thomas's Hospital, then endeavoured to procure a hearing, and said (though only heard by a few in his immediate vicinity, Dr. Copland determining, it seemed, to reduce the meeting to a bear garden) that "He hoped for the future that no member of the Society would be allowed to make any statement at one of their meetings to which a counter-statement would not be allowed in reply; that their present proceedings were manifestly unjust."

Every member should feel aggrieved by the stain inevitably and for ever attached to the Society by its late unwarrantable proceeding. A number of persons calling themselves gentlemen listen to a statement declared to be false, and to be a lie,—asserted, a fortnight before the meeting that has so distinguished itself, to several members in the library to be false,—that assertion forming a topic of conversation among the members of the council,—and yet these persons hug and protect the falsehood, widely disseminated in the

pages of the *Lancet* as a fact stated before the Society, and refuse to become the vehicle for carrying the real light of truth to the world. If Dr. Addison could be literally translated, his words might run thus, "Dr. Marshall Hall may have told an untruth; he and his friends of the *Lancet* may have used this Society as their tool for the propagation of his untruth! We choose that no counter-statement shall be made here to anything Dr. Marshall Hall pleases to utter." The Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society wish it to be handed down as a fact historical, that in their opinion anything is fair against mesmerism.

The following are reports of this sad business in the weekly London medical journals.

The *Medical Gazette*, March 7th, p. 428—

"Previously to the paper of the evening being read, Dr. Ashburner made an attempt to address the meeting respecting a statement made at a meeting of the Society, held some weeks previously, by Dr. Marshall Hall, with respect to the report of the case of a patient who appeared to have had his leg amputated under the influence of mesmerism, and which Dr. Hall stated the party operated on had confessed to him to be a deception.

"The President considered that this was a question which rested entirely with Dr. Marshall Hall and the party who read the paper, and could not now be entered into before the Society.

"Dr. Ashburner again attempting to address the meeting, and order being called from all parts,

"Dr. Copland rose and said it was evident that the gentleman now attempting to address the meeting was insulting the Society.

"The President said this course of proceeding was quite irregular; and, order being restored, the business of the meeting was proceeded with."

The *Medical Times* of March 8, in its report of the proceedings of that evening makes no allusion to the subject, nor any in the subsequent numbers of the 15th and 22nd.

The *Lancet* of March 1, p. 239—

"Several new fellows having been nominated, and the ballot having commenced, Dr. Ashburner, in presenting Dr. Reichenbach's work on Animal Magnetism, requested to say a few words respecting a statement which had been made at a former meeting, in relation to a case of mesmerism. He was proceeding, amid much interruption, to say, that a fellow of the Society had remarked, in reference to an operation which had been performed during mesmeric sleep, that the man so operated upon had acknowledged himself an impostor. Here the calls for the Chair became so general that Dr. Addison rose and explained to the last speaker that the Society could not be made the place to discuss points of evidence. The paper alluded to had been read a long time since, and the allusion to the subject of it, made on

a late occasion by Dr. M. Hall, was to the effect that the medical men in attendance had been imposed upon. But, however anxious the gentleman interested might be to shew the contrary, this was not the place to do it, and he must request that no such attempt would be made. It was entirely a question between the parties interested in the statement made. Dr. Ashburner and Dr. Cohen subsequently attempted to address the Society, but the interruption became so great that they sat down, Dr. Copland declaring that it was an insult to the Society for any gentleman to attempt to address them respecting a paper which ought never to have been read, and the record of which had been erased from the minutes."

And in its answers to correspondents, p. 263, we read—

"*M.D.*—Dr. Cohen was, we think, very ill advised in the matter. The president acted with firmness, but with his usual urbanity and impartiality. There is no just cause of complaint against the course pursued by Dr. Addison."

The Institute,

"On Tuesday sennight a singular attempt was made by the mesmerists to arrest the ordinary business of the evening, and to bring on a discussion on mesmerism, which was, however, frustrated by the firmness of the presiding President, supported by all the Fellows present. Some years ago the council permitted a paper to be read there, describing the amputation of a limb under the supposed influence of mesmerism. This was made a great card by the mesmerisers, and frequently quoted in support of their opinions. At a subsequent meeting of the Society the minutes of that proceeding were expunged from their books, and still more recently, during the present session, in fact, Dr. Marshall Hall announced that he had had proof that the man operated on was an impostor. This naturally galled the relaters of the case, and on Tuesday night Dr. Ashburner, after the minutes were read, got up and addressed the meeting on the subject, but was called to order by the President, who said that the case was a matter now between those gentlemen and Dr. M. Hall, but it would be quite irregular to discuss it further at that Society. After some demur Dr. Ashburner sat down, but a Mr. Cohen was not so easily put down. In spite of the stringent opposition of the Fellows present, and the repeated intimations of irregularity from the President, he persisted in speaking for several minutes, although not a word could be heard, his voice being drowned in the calls for order, &c. At last Dr. Copland came to the rescue, and told him he was insulting the Society by his conduct, and a sense of the indecency thereof then seemed to strike him, and he resumed his seat. Although we have had many years' experience of Medical Societies, we do not think we ever before witnessed such a scene. If Mr. Cohen be a Fellow of the Society, he should be called upon to apologize."

In Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* we read as follows,—

"Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr. *Blindman*,

Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. (*Narrow-mind*), Mr. (*Selfish*), Mr. Heady, Mr. *High-mind*, Mr. *Enmity*, Mr. *Liar*, Mr. *Cruelty*, Mr. *Hate-light*, and Mr. *Implacable*; who every one gave in his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilty before the judge.

“And first among themselves, Mr. *Blindman*, the foreman, said, ‘I see clearly that this man is an heretic.’ Then said Mr. No-good, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth.’ ‘Aye,’ said Mr. Malice, ‘for I hate the very looks of him.’ Then said Mr. (*Narrow-mind*), ‘I could never endure him.’ ‘Nor I,’ said Mr. (*Selfish*), ‘for he would always be condemning my way.’ ‘Hang him, hang him,’ said Mr. Heady. ‘A sorry scrub,’ said Mr. *High-mind*. ‘My heart riseth against him,’ said Mr. *Enmity*. ‘He is a rogue,’ said Mr. *Liar*. ‘Hanging is too good for him,’ said Mr. *Cruelty*. ‘Let us dispatch him out of the way,’ said Mr. *Hate-light*. Then said Mr. *Implacable*, ‘Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death.’ And so they did; therefore he was presently condemned to be had from the place where he was to the place from whence he came, and there to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented.”

The present proceeding is but a poor imitation of what was done in regard to the lady whose breast was removed painlessly in the mesmeric state many years ago in Paris by M. Cloquet. She was styled an impostor by an anonymous member of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society; and the *Medical Gazette* lent itself to the false account.

“In the *London Medical Gazette* for the 2nd of last December, immediately after an imperfect and incorrect account of the discussion in the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society on the paper which detailed the case of amputation in the mesmeric state, is an anonymous letter of three paragraphs,—signed ‘a member of the Medical and Chirurgical Society,’ who is ashamed to give his name, and therefore does the deed in darkness,—the first styling the account ‘very silly’ and unfit for the society, the second heartlessly accusing the poor patient of deception, and the third as follows:—

“It is rather remarkable that it should have occurred to no one present to mention the case of a woman whose breast was amputated, some years ago in Paris, by M. Cloquet, while she was (as it is supposed) in a state of mesmeric stupor. This woman was believed to have been insensible to pain during the operation; and was a better actor than the man mesmerised by Mr. Topham, as she did not even moan. Some considerable time afterwards, however, while dying of an internal complaint in another hospital, she confessed to the nurse that the whole had been a cheat; that she had experienced pain like other persons, but had sufficient command over herself not to shew it.’

“The Nottingham surgeon, to whose letters I have already twice

referred, writes,—‘some years ago in France the breast of a female was removed while she was professedly in the mesmeric sleep. She died a *few days afterwards*; an operation which in other cases rarely indeed proves fatal. Is it not too probable that the attempt to bury the anguish in her own bosom proved too much for nature to sustain? Another mesmeric operation case succeeded better, but the patient subsequently confessed that her insensibility was all feigned.’ ‘Many similar cases have occurred, &c.’

“Now the statements of both writers are *altogether untrue*.”

“Madame Plantin was never in an hospital, but the wife of a wealthy merchant of Paris; resided in a country house which she could hardly be prevailed upon to leave in the fine season of spring to take up her abode in Paris for the purpose of being mesmerised, for she disliked mesmerism because it had been tried upon her at different times unsuccessfully, and she was unwilling to submit to the restraint of mesmeric treatment; and she was terrified at the thought of a surgical operation under any circumstances, and declared she would rather die, and had indeed suffered severely from refusing even to be bled in one of her pregnancies.

“M. Cloquet testified to the Academy that she was pious, modest, and incapable of any collusion; and Dr. Caldwell of America, hearing a rumour in London that this surgeon confessed he had operated upon other patients in an ordinary state who bore the pain as unmoved, called upon M. Cloquet, in Paris, to ask the question, and told me that he received for answer, ‘*Jamais! jamais! jamais!*’ However, Dr. Davison, a friend of mine, called upon M. Cloquet at my request in January, to make enquiries respecting the case; and the following is an extract from his reply,—

“‘The letter to which you allude in the *Medical Gazette* is *false* in every particular, save the death of the patient. The lady was *never the inmate of an hospital*. She was the wife of a rich *negociant*, an excellent person, respected by all who knew her. She died *above a fortnight* after the operation, of a *pleurisy*; the wound having done well, and she having taken a drive some days previously. Cloquet saw her and is *quite sure that she never made the confession alluded to*.”

As to the other case, spoken of by the Nottingham surgeon, Dr. Davison has made every enquiry in Paris, and cannot learn that it ever occurred. ‘Many similar cases have occurred!’ I call upon him to make good all his assertions. He knows that Mr. Wood flatly contradicted him in *The Nottingham Journal*, in regard to the one, and pointed out that he gave no authority whatever for the others: yet, though two months have elapsed, this candid person has never replied or ventured to recur to the subject.

It was most improper in the *Medical Gazette* to insert a serious *anonymous* charge against a person now no more,—and that person a female, a foreigner, and whose family are all now resident in Paris and of great respectability; and shameful in the Nottingham surgeon to make these wholesale accusations, not one of which he has been able to prove.

“The unscrupulousness of so many medical men to blacken the characters of their fellow creatures, already one would think sufficiently afflicted, by accusing them, without any other reason than their own ignorance, of imposture, is a foul spot upon the profession. Wherever a person displays mesmeric phenomena, or is cured or even relieved by mesmerism, he is at once impudently called an impostor, and any sort of thing fabricated to support the cruel charge.

“ ‘L’homme est de glace aux vérités ;

Il est de feu pour le mensonge.’

“ *La Fontaine.*

“The Okeys not only were impostors, but confessed the imposition!

“In a letter, *paid for as an advertisement*, in the *Newry Telegraph* for last February 9, signed—

“ J. MORISON, M.D.

“ J. WOODS, Surgeon,

“ W. STARKEY, M.D.

“ G. H. KIDDS, L.R.C.S.

are these words,—‘If we except Dr. Elliotson,—whose mind always exhibited a tendency to wild and extravagant theories, and who in consequence of his attachment to the marvellous lost his chair in the London University, as also his standing as a practitioner,—all the others, as Mesmer, Dupotet, La Fontaine, preached the mesmeric doctrines to some advantage, if not to the public, at least to themselves.’ I never knew even the names of these four gentlemen before, but they ought to be aware that the character of my mind is the opposite of what they aver. I have never speculated, but have always devoted myself to the observation of facts; so that, whatever I have advanced, I have seen ultimately established.

“ ‘The Okeys,’ these gentlemen further say, ‘were proved to be impostors, and afterwards acknowledged the tricks which they had practised on the credulity of Elliotson.’ The only reply to be made is, that *this is totally untrue*. One of them was said by Mr. Wakley to have been reported to have figured at Irving’s chapel. The report was not only totally untrue, but I cannot find that it existed before it appeared in the *Lancet*. Mr. Wakley, like Dr. Johnson, is a father, and he should have some feeling for innocent young females, who, though in the humbler walks of life, are not his inferiors in respectability. He even advertised in the morning papers, ‘An editorial article on the tricks and deceptions practised by performers and patients under the stale name of animal magnetism, shewing the total failure of the patients to fulfil the promises of the magnetisers, when the signals which pass between them are effectually disallowed.’—*Numerous Cases, &c.*

But more has been done to the poor Nottinghamshire patient. Existence at any time was denied to him, and I was obliged to assure some persons that he was not a fabulous creature.

The present proceeding itself is perfectly stale: for it was once before enacted the year after the operation, and is thus recorded and reported in *The Zoist* for July, 1843. In a paper on the anti-mesmeric falsehoods of medical men, I wrote—

“Medical men in different parts have reported that the patient whose leg was amputated without pain in Nottinghamshire has confessed that he cheated. I paid no attention to this report till last week I received a letter from a friend, beginning thus:—

“‘I am constantly greeted with the information that the poor man whose leg was amputated last year, has lately acknowledged that the account of his being asleep and insensible to pain is all a hoax. As those who set this story afloat are said to be medical men of high repute, I am anxious to have it in my power to give a flat contradiction to it. It was only this morning that a lady told me she had lately heard a learned professor of Cambridge assert that it is a well-known fact that the man now says he was awake during the whole of the operation. Could you get me a line from Mr. Topham or Mr. Ward, contradicting the said report, and enclose it to me, you would greatly oblige, and enable me with confidence, the next time such a thing is asserted, to make use of language more plain than polite, particularly to the faces of certain persons in London active in spreading this falsehood.’

“I therefore wrote to Mr. Ward, who amputated the leg; and he forwarded the following certificate from the patient, which I will preface with part of a note from that gentleman:—

“‘I have this day sent off the certificate witnessed by Mr. Flint, as Vicar of Wellow, to give it if possible more weight. Wombell cannot write, and I therefore thought it almost a necessary precaution, as the sceptics are so unscrupulous. I had not previously been able to meet with the two together.’

“‘I hereby declare that I have never said that I had deceived Mr. Ward, and had felt the pain of the operation he performed upon me, and I further declare that I stated the truth at the time, namely that I never felt any pain at all; but that I once felt as if I heard a kind of crunching.

“‘James Wombell, + his mark.

“‘Witnesses { Charles R. Flint, Vicar of Wellow,
C. G. Wheelhouse.

“‘Wellow, June 20, 1843.’

“These reports occurring at different times, on differing cases, and all similar, are evidently no mistakes, but wilful fabrications. I shall make no further remark than that such conduct is as shortsighted as immoral.”

Let me assure all my medical brethren that I have exaggerated nothing in my accounts of mesmeric phenomena and cures: that I have spared no labour to ascertain the truth:

and have observed and experimented dispassionately and with the greatest anxiety not to be wrong or lead others astray. I do not hesitate to declare that the introduction of mesmerism into our treatment of medical and surgical patients is as mighty a thing as the introduction of steam into mechanical operations. If mesmerism is found useful in such a multitude of cases, so different from each other, let us remember that blood-letting, opium, mercury, iodine, and other remedies, are each employed usefully in cases of great diversity. The best expression of the agency of mesmerism in the cure of disease that I can give is, that mesmerism has a tendency to assist the living system to right itself when wrong, and in whatever way wrong,—to augment the power of the *vis medicatrix nature*.*

* Mr. Ward has sent the declaration and following note to the President and Council of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society:—

To the President and Council of the Roy. Med. Ch. Society.

Gentlemen,—As Dr. Marshall Hall, a few weeks ago, made the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society a medium for publicly disseminating a misstatement, and as he has declined giving up his authority *except in confidence*, may I beg the favour of you to lay the accompanying declaration before the members. I cannot think that a number of my professional brethren, among whom there are so many who rank high not only in their profession, but as gentlemen, would wish their Society to be made the medium for making public a slander without allowing the same for its refutation.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your very obedient servant,

W. SQUIRE WARD.

James Wombell + his mark

Charles R. Flint, Vicar of Wellow
C. G. Wheelhouse

Witnesses

Wellow, June 20, 1843.

These reports occurring at different times, on different cases, and all similar, are evidently no mistakes, but wilful fabrications. I shall make no further remark than that such conduct is as abhorred as immoral.

Let me assure all my medical brethren that I have exacted nothing in my accounts of mesmeric phenomena and cases that I have spared no labour to ascertain the truth.

and have observed and experimentally demonstrated that with
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 into our treatment of medical and surgical patients is as
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 blood-letting, opium, mercury, feeding, and other remedies,
 are each employed usually in cases of great diversity. The
 best expression of the agency of mesmerism in the cure of
 disease that I can give is, that mesmerism has a tendency to
 assist the living system to right itself when wrong, and in
 whatever way wrong—to augment the power of the
 living system.

Mr. Ward has read the following note to the President
 and Council of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society:—
 "To the President and Council of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical
 Society.—As Mr. Mitchell has a few weeks ago made the Royal
 Medical and Chirurgical Society a motion for publicly disavowing a statement,
 and as he has declined giving up his address except in consequence, may I beg
 the favour of you to lay the accompanying declaration before the members. I
 cannot think that a number of my professional brethren, among whom there are
 no many who rank high not only in their profession, but as gentlemen, would wish
 their Society to be made the medium for such a public avowal without allowing
 the same for its revocation.
 "I give the honour to be Gentleman your very obedient servant,
 "W. Spence Ware."