

vindication of my character against the charge of injustice or want of courtesy which I judge to be implied in the passage last quoted.

It is with considerable reluctance that I venture to obtrude myself, at this length, upon your time and patience. It would, I assure you, have afforded me far greater satisfaction to have been your correspondent upon other topics, having the greatest possible objection to querulous disputes of any sort: and nothing but absolute necessity shall hereafter induce me to engage in so profitless and puerile a controversy as that which has reference merely to personal popularity.

I remain, dear Sir, your obedient servant,
Oxford-street, Manchester, September, 1847. J. WHITEHEAD.

BREACH OF PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE.

ANSWER TO DR. HARPER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have perused with surprise Dr. Harper's reply to my letter, published in THE LANCET of the 4th instant. I am compelled to say that Dr. Harper's communication is almost entirely devoid of truth. I shall proceed to comment, however, on his reply, as briefly as possible.

Dr. Harper writes thus:—"Mr. Emmett states that a patient of mine, on seeing him, immediately wished him to perform an operation with the knife;" but this the patient positively denies, and so do I. I never stated such to be the case, and I refer you from Dr. Harper's garbled quotation to the original of the 4th. I did not mean that Mrs. F— wished me to perform the operation instantly, but that when the true nature of the case had been explained, she immediately decided on having the operation performed; and as Dr. Harper was rather averse to this, wished *me* to operate.

In the latter part of the paragraph, Dr. Harper's meaning is rather obscure, though I do not attribute this to anything intentional. If he would intimate, it was with great reluctance *he* undertook to prevail on Mrs. F—, I readily believe it; for he had been many weeks impressed with the inutility of an operation. If he would imply that it was with difficulty he could prevail on Mrs. F—, then I know he also writes truly; for she wished me to have been present at the time, and she told me to-day (the 18th) that she used these words to Dr. Harper's friend, Mr. —: "I will not have my eyelid cut off;" for, she added, "I wished in my heart for you to be present." So much for this part of his refutation.

The next part lies entirely between Dr. Harper and myself. I distinctly reiterate the fact, that it was clearly understood that he should see Mrs. F— on the 18th ultimo, to inquire into her reason for so suddenly altering her opinion, (as both Mrs. F— and Dr. Harper had been opposed to the operation previous to the time of consulting me.)

In the next place, I am at a loss to ascertain why Dr. Harper should think no answer to my note of the 20th at all necessary. Pray, under what combination of circumstances did the doctor then labour? I imagine his reasons to be unsatisfactory, or he would probably mention them.

Dr. Harper errs again: I am not a perfect stranger in Darlington, my family having resided within a few miles for about thirty years. Several medical friends in the town and neighbourhood have also expressed themselves to me in a manner highly satisfactory, with reference to this affair, some of whom have informed me that want of courtesy is no new failing in Dr. Harper. If he expected me to go credential and testimonial in hand, he has been mistaken; I think a gentleman would not condescend to do so. I did not leave him entirely in the dark as to my opinion of the treatment of the case; for I condemned interference with the disease, unless as palliative, or for entire removal. The case was taken for fungus hæmatodes, and he had been slicing off small portions, and applying the solid nitrate of silver. It grew under this original mode of treatment. Dr. Harper told me so himself; and the patient corroborating him, I am induced to believe it.

Dr. Harper refers to my misguided energies. I know not what he means: if the path I have chosen is misguided, I will follow it to the end. I must apologize for having written so fully; but I wish those at a distance to be equally satisfied with the truth as those that are resident in the town. I now decline any further communication with Dr. Harper unless he will attempt to explain himself before a Court-Medical.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

September, 1847.

W. D. EMMETT, M.R.C.S.E.

MEDICAL FEES AT INQUESTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The judicious manner in which you have remarked on Mr. Maybury's "Complaint against a Coroner," which I have only just seen, induces me to give you the following explanation of the matter.

The deceased had committed suicide, having suffered from an attack of fever for a day or two previous. The inquest was appointed, and when I proceeded to hold it, I found the names of two medical gentlemen in the list, as witnesses. One of them had attended the deceased during her illness, and was also called in on her death being discovered; the other was Mr. Maybury, who had only been called in after the death, and whose evidence was therefore useless and unnecessary. I immediately asked why Mr. Maybury had been troubled to attend, and the officer stated that he had summoned him by desire of the deceased's master, who said that if the Coroner did not pay him, he would.

In order to save Mr. Maybury's time, I immediately told him, with all possible courtesy, that I should not require his evidence. He, however, stayed till the other medical gentleman had been examined; and what he then supposes to be a want of courtesy, was simply this,—that as he persisted in urging his claim to give evidence, and to be paid his fee, I was obliged, somewhat decidedly, to stop him, because he was taking up time improperly, and preventing the proceeding of the inquiry.

The wrong impression which he seems to be labouring under arises from his confusing his claim for attendance on the deceased with his claim to be a witness before the Coroner,—two perfectly distinct matters. For the former he will doubtless be paid by the deceased's master, who called him in; but for the latter he could have no claim to be paid, unless his attendance were required by the Coroner, who is to form a judgment as to what medical witnesses are requisite, and not to burden the county with unnecessary expenses.

I have too much respect for the medical profession to treat any of its members uncourteously; and I very much regret that any member of it should have addressed to me such a letter as I have received from Mr. Maybury on this occasion.

I am, Sir, your faithful servant,

London, September, 1847.

WILLIAM PAYNE.

SIR,—Respecting Mr. Palmer's (of Mortlake, Surrey) note, in which he complains of the unceremonious and unjust treatment he received at the hands of the coroner, I conceive, that as he appears to have been duly and regularly summoned by the coroner to attend at the inquest, if he took out a summons against the coroner, at the County Court, for the amount of his fee, it would at once be awarded to him by his honour, as that *legally-appointed fee* is intended as a remuneration to the medical man for his *time*, as well as for any information he may afford to the Court.—I remain, your obedient servant,

Horsham, Sept. 1847.

J. S. BOSTOCK, Surgeon.

LIFE ASSURANCE.—FEES TO MEDICAL MEN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I concur most heartily in the opinion, that medical men are fully entitled to their fee for certificates to life assurance companies; but I blush to read the confessions of your correspondent, "Nil Desperans," in THE LANCET of September 11th; and sincerely do I hope that his is the narrative of a supposititious case—not a real one. How can a man reconcile it to his conscience to do so grievous a wrong to all parties—to commit so great a crime himself, as to make a false declaration? Does he not know that assurance offices have a right to deprive the executors of the assured of all the benefits of the assurance, if on inquiry they ascertain that the policy has been effected by fraudulent means; and that thus, the coward who was afraid to offend his patient, by telling the truth, will have inflicted grievous injury on his family? Does he not know that he is liable to be summoned as a witness into a court of justice, where, after being submitted to a searching examination, he will be compelled, in the face of the world, to proclaim his own shame?

No, Sir; the only path for a medical man to pursue is, to answer fearlessly, if he answer at all, to the questions put to him; by so doing, he will be acting honourably as regards himself—kindly as regards his patient.

But, Sir, I would suggest that a register be kept—say at THE LANCET Office—for the purpose of registering the names of such medical men as may desire to pledge themselves not to