

THOMAS WAKLEY,  
THE FOUNDER OF "THE LANCET."  
A BIOGRAPHY.<sup>1</sup>

CHAPTER VIII.

*The Founding of THE LANCET.—Its Purposes and Principles as revealed in the Original Preface.—Contents of the First Number.—The Promises of the Preface Fulfilled.*

THE first number of THE LANCET was issued on Oct. 5th, 1823, which was Sunday. It bears the imprint "Printed and published by G. L. Hutchinson, at THE LANCET Office, 210, Strand, London, where all communications for the editor are requested to be addressed (post paid). This work is published at an early hour every Saturday morning, and sold by Knight and Lacey, Paternoster Row, and by all booksellers in the United Kingdom." It is a fact significant of the stormy career upon which the new paper at once embarked that the names of the printers and publishers were omitted from the imprints after the second number. The names reappear on the title-page to the second volume, and the connexion of these agents with the paper is proved to be existent in 1825 by the unpleasant circumstance for them that they were made defendants in a case shortly to be mentioned and of the gravest importance not only to Wakley but to the literary world—the case of *Abernethy v. Hutchinson, Knight and Lacey*; but the future defendants obviously did not seek from week to week to share in the notoriety that THE LANCET rapidly began to enjoy. The editorial office at 210, Strand was a room in the printing establishment of Messrs. Hutchinson and Co., whose premises stood on the south side of the thoroughfare nearly opposite St. Clement Danes' Church, and consequently about fifty yards only from Wakley's private residence in Norfolk-street. From this it will be gathered that the true editorial office was Wakley's house, the address at 210, Strand being only given to preserve for the editor some measure of anonymity.

The preface in which Wakley defines with boldness and some ingenuity his intentions in coming before the medical world with a new journal is given below. The boldness is shown in a manner which in these days it is hard to appreciate, for the vested interests upon which his prefatory words declared deliberate war have so long disappeared from the history of the profession that we can hardly realise that they ever had their monstrous being. That the great hospitals of the metropolis were managed in the interests of a few rather than of the community at large seems to us now incredible. Yet so it was. A few persons through interest or purchase obtained the appointments and became at once pledged to dispose of these appointments by similar methods when the time should arrive. The medical profession as a body were wronged by their leaders. They paid for general education and special instruction which they did not obtain; they were examined under conditions which did not sift the grain from the chaff, so that the general intellectual status was perforce low; and they had no voice in the election of the rulers who thus mismanaged their affairs and misappropriated their fees. The ingenuity is shown by the temperate manner in which the war is declared and the large scope of the policy indicated. Not a word is said in abuse of persons flourishing under a corrupt system. Their words as theorists and their acts as clinicians are to be made public; if they object it must be for interested reasons. But it is assumed that,

being the men of distinguished light and leading that they should be, they can have no motive for desiring the shelter of the bushel; while the publicity promised for them is not to satisfy any narrow curiosity, but to benefit the medical profession, and therefore the world at large, by furnishing an opportunity to the rank and file of that profession of remaining in intellectual touch with their leaders.

*Preface to No. 1, Volume I., of THE LANCET.*

*(Reprinted in the second edition, but not in subsequent editions.)*

"It has long been a subject of surprise and regret that in this extensive and intelligent community there has not hitherto existed a work which would convey to the Public, and to distant Practitioners as well as to Students in Medicine and Surgery, reports of the Metropolitan Hospital Lectures.

"Having for a considerable time passed observed the great and increasing inquiries for such information, in a department of science so pre-eminently useful, we have been induced to offer to public notice a work calculated, as we conceive, to supply in the most ample manner whatever is valuable in these important branches of knowledge; and as the Lectures of Sir Astley Cooper, on the theory and practice of Surgery, are probably the best of the kind delivered in Europe, we have commenced our undertaking with the introductory address of that distinguished professor given in the theatre at St. Thomas's Hospital on Wednesday evening last. The Course will be rendered complete in subsequent numbers.

"In addition to Lectures, we propose giving under the head, Medical and Surgical Intelligence, a correct description of all the important Cases that may occur, whether in England or on any part of the civilised Continent.

"Although it is not intended to give graphic representations with each Number, yet we have made such arrangements with the most experienced draughtsmen as will enable us occasionally to do so, and in a manner, we trust, calculated to give universal satisfaction.

"The great advantage derivable from information of this description will, we hope, be sufficiently obvious to everyone in the least degree conversant with medical knowledge; any arguments therefore to prove these are unnecessary and we content ourselves by merely showing in what directions their utility will prove most active.—To the Medical and Surgical Practitioners of this City whose avocations prevent their personal attendance at the Hospitals—to Country Practitioners whose remoteness from the head-quarters, as it were, of scientific knowledge leaves them almost without the means of ascertaining its progress—to the numerous classes of Students whether here or in distant Universities—to Colonial Practitioners—and, finally by adding to the stock of useful knowledge of every individual in these realms. In this attempt we are well aware that we shall be assailed by much *interested* opposition; but we will fearlessly discharge our duties. We hope the age of '*Mental Delusion*' has passed and that mystery and concealment will no longer be encouraged. Indeed we trust that mystery and ignorance will shortly be considered synonymous. Ceremonies and signs have now lost their charms, hieroglyphics and gilded serpents their power to deceive. But for these it would be impossible to imagine how it happened that medical and dietetical knowledge, of all other the most calculated to benefit Man, should have been by him the most neglected. He studies with the greatest attention and assiduity the constitutions of his horses and dogs and learns all their peculiarities; whilst of the nature of his own he is totally uninformed and equally unskilled as regards his infant offspring. Yet a little reflection and application would enable him to avert from himself and family half the constitutional disorders which affect society; and in addition to these advantages, his acquirements in medical learning would furnish him with a test whereby he could detect and expose the impositions of ignorant practitioners."

The last paragraph of this preface conveys in telling words the real purpose of the new paper. THE LANCET was devised to disseminate medical information primarily, and incidentally to make war upon the family intrigues and foolish nepotism that swayed the elections to lucrative posts in the metropolitan hospitals and medical corporations by letting the flooding light of publicity upon hole-

<sup>1</sup> Chapters I., II., III., IV., V., VI. and VII. were published in THE LANCET, Jan. 4th, 11th, 18th, and 25th, Feb. 1st, 8th, and 15th respectively.

and-corner mischief in either class of institution. The first was the veritable object of Wakley's paper, and he never lost sight of it; but it may be necessary now and again to insist further upon this point, because his more bellicose task of fighting the opponents of progress, being so much more sensational in its developments, necessarily attracted wider attention than his beneficent schemes for post-graduate education of the profession by the publication of addresses and hospital reports, and for the amelioration of the educational condition of the student. Indeed, while he remained constant to his original design of supplying information, almost every passage in his life for the next ten years that had its origin or took its colour from his connexion with THE LANCET goes to prove that he considered himself to be under a mandate from the profession at large not only to keep them well posted in the scientific side of their work, but to see that the rights of the general body of practitioners were not infringed by a particular set of persons. This attitude it was that prompted him to violent attacks upon individuals whom he considered to oppose the progress of the cause he had not adopted, but invented; this it was that made him so intolerant to the contemporary medical press, which was written to please the eminent few rather than the profession at large; and this it was that was responsible for all the good that arose, directly or indirectly, from the founding of THE LANCET, as it was responsible for certain errors of taste and judgment which marked the early career of the paper. An eloquent man of passionate convictions is not always prudent in balancing his phrases; a young editor with a good cause and no one to supervise his manuscript is not always mincing in his epithets. There were things written in the early numbers of THE LANCET that would not have appeared had the editor been a man of wider experience; but the harm that they did was small and recoiled chiefly upon Wakley, who was never afraid to meet his liabilities, while the value of his fearlessness and ardour to the cause of reform was incalculable.

The contents of the first number of THE LANCET should now be enumerated as showing how far the editor proposed to carry out the promises of his preface. A surgical lecture by Sir Astley Cooper, Sergeant-Surgeon to the King, occupied the place of honour. This lecture was preceded by a paragraph which gives us some idea of the position held by the eminent and eloquent surgeon at that time:—

"At half-past seven the Theatre (the theatre of St. Thomas's Hospital) was crowded in every part by upwards of four hundred Students of the most respectable description; in fact we never before witnessed so genteel a Surgical class: the sight was most pleasing, for they all appeared gentlemen of cultivated manners and good education."

A class of four hundred! When it is remembered that all these students had paid fees of three guineas and upwards, and that the greater part of the money so collected belonged to the lecturer, it will be seen that a successful hospital lecturer occupied in those days not a bad pecuniary position. And this fact explains both the eagerness of the senior men to be succeeded by their friends and their relations, and the absolute righteousness of Wakley's contention that only the best men should hold such posts. The amiable reference to the demeanour of the audience emanated from a certain editorial prudence we are bound to believe. The new journal was partly addressed to the students, and it was the design of the founder to make the grievances of this class a prominent feature in his arguments for medical reform, therefore it would be but ordinarily civil to put them in good conceit with themselves. The next article is headed "Politics," and its alternative title is "Enlightened Liverymen." It has no medical interest at all, but is a short display of Wakley's vehement and occasionally truculent literary style when

dealing with those opposed to him in thought. Of the younger Pitt Wakley speaks as follows:—

"His admirers, in rapture, called him a 'boy-statesman' in his twenty-third year; and in his forty-seventh year he was still the same; still the official coxcomb, running after wild impracticable schemes, regardless of everything but the gratification of his own senseless, remorseless, and petty ambition."

This is hardly an accurate or temperate account of a patriotic statesman and a great fiscal politician, who guided our country autocratically, perhaps, but unselfishly and splendidly in times of her severest need. It may be taken for granted that William Cobbett inspired the sentiments, though Pitt, the creator of Peers, was not likely to be a grateful personality to the editor of a journal directed against the abuse of oligarchical privileges.

Then follows a paragraph headed "Dr. Collyer," containing an innuendo against that gentleman's character which gained double force from the fact that the subject was a well-known dissenting minister. Next we have three columns entitled "The Drama," in which Elliston's acting in the *Rivals* at Drury Lane and Kemble's in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Covent Garden come in for favourable notice. Then we come to an important department, entitled "Medical and Surgical Intelligence." It contained reports of three cases from a clinical point of view—viz., a Case of Anasarca, a Case of Hydrocephalus, and a Case of Hydatids of the Liver; a long reply from Mr. Henry Earle, assistant surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, to Sir Astley Cooper, who had, a little hastily, attempted to controvert his junior's views on the union of Fractured Femur; and two editorial articles, one entitled Obstruction of Blood in the Lung, and the other the Fatal Effect of Fear. In this department Wakley borrowed largely from his contemporaries. The first clinical case was communicated to his columns specially, but the second came from the *London Medical Repository* and the third from the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*. Mr. Henry Earle's letter was a judicious reply to a ridiculous accusation from Sir Astley Cooper. The great Guy's champion said that the surgeon from St. Bartholomew's took a favourable view of the chances of union of a fracture of the cervix femoris so as to exalt the practice of St. Bartholomew's Hospital where the prognosis in this injury was good at the expense of Guy's where it was bad. The letter was addressed to the Editor of the *London Medical Repository*. Of the two editorial articles only the second is original. It is an interesting little account of a case where a patient at the London Hospital died suddenly while an operation—of course, without the production of anæsthesia—was being commenced upon him for the ligature of a femoral aneurysm. Next we find a column headed "Medical Extracts." These are short, practical remarks on treatment and pathology derived from the lips or written works of Abernethy, Wilson, and Hamilton. The germ of a great idea lay hid in the next article, entitled "The Composition of Quack Medicines." In this we have the results of an analysis of Dalby's Carminative, Daffy's Elixir, and Spelbury's Antiscorbutic Drops. A batch of newspaper extracts follow, whose force and point are not very obvious to modern readers; and the number closes with a reprint of an open letter from Charles Lamb to Robert Southey, Poet-laureate, which appeared in the *London Magazine*. The number had thirty-six pages in all, and no wrapper.

As will be seen, the promise of the preface was very fairly carried out in the first number. An excellent clinical lecture followed by records of interesting cases in surgery and medicine gave the scientific information, to disseminate which Wakley put in the front of his intentions; while a free-spoken communication from a distinguished hospital official about another still more distinguished colleague gave sufficient evidence that no amount of prestige was to protect a

man from criticism in the columns of THE LANCET. The analysis of certain quack remedies was the protoplasmic origin of an enormous organisation—THE LANCET Special Analytical Commissions—while the editorial note upon a sudden death occurring at a hospital was doubtless inserted as a proof that the doings within those fastnesses of prejudice and secrecy were open to the editorial gaze.

It was characteristic of the young journalist that he should never have considered whether he had a legal right to publish Sir Astley Cooper's lectures. His intentions were good, and he would have expressed them somewhat in this way:—I will publish the lectures of the hospital surgeons and physicians to their classes; if they are good so much the better for the profession at large who will read them in my pages and for the students who have paid to listen to them; if they are bad their publication will let my audience—which I mean shall be the whole of the medical profession—see that the students are being taught by men unfit to hold the posts for which they are paid, and to which they had been corruptly elected. It was a good example of fairness on Wakley's part that he should have selected Sir Astley Cooper as the first lecturer to be introduced to the medical public. Sir Astley Cooper was then at the zenith of his fame. He was a splendid lecturer, with enormous experience to draw upon and lucid methods of presenting his facts, so that the issue of his lectures was a real boon to the profession. Had Wakley desired he could have selected as a specimen a lecturer belonging to the privileged and highly paid classes, some inept bungler—there were such in those days,—and have reported him and criticised him simultaneously. But he desired to *inform* as much as to *reform*, and whatever his legal position might have been in the matter, consideration of which will form the subject of our next chapter, the great value that the publication of such lectures was to the medical world is beyond all doubt.

(To be continued.)

ARMY MEDICAL REPORT FOR 1894.

(FIRST NOTICE.)

THE issue of the Army Medical Blue-book has followed closely on the heels of that of the navy. The date of the prefatory letter of the Director-General to the Secretary of State for War is Dec. 4th of last year, but the report has only just appeared. In addition to the usual statistical and tabular statements on the health and sanitary condition of the army for 1894, the volume contains a dozen papers of professional interest, together with a record of meteorological observations at Netley and stations abroad for the year, and announcements connected with the Parkes and Alexander Memorial Prizes.

As regards the health statistics of armies, and of the British army in particular, it has to be borne in mind that there are several reasons why these should differ from statistical deductions derived from other sources. The young men entering our own army, for example, are selected as healthy and fit for military service to begin with, and they are invalided out of the service when they become unfit or attacked with diseases which are either incurable or likely to become chronic, fatal, or to seriously impair their military efficiency. The military differs from the civil population of the United Kingdom in that soldiers having to serve in different climates are exposed to various climatic causes of disease, the results of which are frequently manifested at later dates, so that from these and other causes it is difficult to obtain any really correct and reliable bases of comparison between military bodies and other communities. The army of this country, too, with its various colonies and dependencies, differs from the armies of other nations, and an exact basis of comparison can only be properly instituted between regiments or bodies of men who have gone through similar environing conditions or been similarly circumstanced in their military service. There is no other army that is placed

under the same conditions as that of this country; the army of France somewhat resembles that of England in this respect, but that of Germany scarcely does so at all.

Turning, however, to the health of the British army at home and abroad we are told that the statistics of the troops serving in the United Kingdom during 1894 compare favourably with those of the preceding year. There were, however, 11 cases of small-pox, the highest number recorded in any year since 1838; but there was a marked decrease in the other eruptive fevers. Enteric fever also shows a definite decrease, although an outbreak of the disease attributable to water-pollution occurred at Caterham. Influenza shows a large decrease in 1894 as compared with 1893, and venereal disease also declined. As regards the colonies the general health shows improvement in comparison with 1893. This improvement was marked in Egypt and in the Mauritius. At Hong-Kong there was an epidemic of bubonic plague following the outbreak at Canton, and our troops did not altogether escape, although the disease was practically confined to the Chinese. The rate of sickness in Bengal was increased in 1894 as compared with that of the previous year or the average of the preceding ten years, the increase being mainly malarial fever and venereal diseases. Cholera also prevailed. A very severe outbreak, it will be remembered, took place at Lucknow, where 144 cases occurred, 97 of which were fatal. The polluted sand of the filter beds attached to the wells was the alleged cause of the outbreak in question. The statistics of sickness in the other presidencies—Madras and Bombay—also compare unfavourably with those of previous years, the chief factors being, as in the case of Bengal, malarial fevers and venereal affections. Enteric fever also contributed towards the increased rates of sickness and mortality.

The average strength of the European troops at home and abroad was 203,469 in 1894, and the following shows the ratios per 1000 of strength:—

European Troops.	Ratio per 1000 of strength.					Average sick time to each soldier.	Average duration of each case of sickness.
	Admitted.	Died.	Sent home as invalids.	Discharged as invalids.	Constantly non-effective from sickness.		
Troops at Home and } Abroad... .. }	985.3	8.75	22.72	15.23	61.04	Days 22.28	Days 22.63

While the mortality in the United Kingdom during 1894 was 3.70, and at Gibraltar 2.97, and at Cyprus 3.45 per 1000 respectively, it was 8.61 for Egypt, 8.51 for Bermuda, 10.29 for Mauritius, 17.98 for China, and 16.81 for India.

As compared with the average ratios per 1000 for the previous ten years we may say that the death-rate for troops serving at home and abroad was 9.60, for those serving in the United Kingdom 5.36, Gibraltar 5.01, Cyprus 8.07, Egypt 20.64, Bermuda 10.49, Mauritius 17.55, China 10.65, and India 16.27 per 1000 respectively.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON.

PROPOSED ABOLITION OF EXAMINATION IN PHARMACOLOGY.

AN extraordinary Comitia of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians of London was held on the 13th inst., Sir J. RUSSELL REYNOLDS, Bart., President, being in the chair.

The REGISTRAR read the gracious reply from Her Majesty the Queen and from H.R.H. the Princess Henry of Battenberg to the vote of condolence passed by the College at its last meeting.

The PRESIDENT stated that a reply had been received from Sir W. Jenner thanking the College for its congratulations sent to him on the occasion of his eighty-first birthday.

The College Seal was set to copies of the new College List for the information of the Registrars of the General Medical Council.