

Hospital Reports.

THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL.

CASES IN SURGERY TREATED IN THIS HOSPITAL.

Reported by THOMAS CARR JACKSON, Esq., Resident Surgeon.

DOUBLE INGUINAL HERNIA; STRANGULATION OF THAT ON THE RIGHT SIDE; OPERATION; RECOVERY.

HENRY U—, aged thirty-nine, a carpenter, a stout, corpulent man, was admitted into the hospital, under the care of Mr. Thomas Wakley, April 13, 1850, about seven A.M., suffering from symptoms of strangulated hernia. His own account of the descent of the bowel is, that while following his work, boring overhanded, the scaffold upon which he was standing tilted, and gave him a "rick," shifting his truss at the same moment, and he supposes that a portion of the bowel then descended, and was not returned when he adjusted it. This was at five P.M. on the preceding day; he continued his work, and at bedtime, on taking off his truss, he perceived a lump in the situation where his hernia usually made its appearance: this swelling gradually acquired a very unusual volume, notwithstanding his efforts to reduce it, and was rapidly succeeded by severe pain in the tumour, pit of the stomach, and dragging sensations in the abdomen, attended by great nausea and slight vomiting. He has hernia of the opposite side as well; has suffered from the complaint full twenty years on the side now strangulated, and from that on the left five years; was always able to reduce both with ease, and has worn a truss uninterruptedly from their first appearance.

The pain increased very much during the night, as did the sickness; he was unable to obtain any surgical assistance to attempt its reduction, and early in the morning came to the hospital. The bowels had been relieved during the night, but with great effort and distress. The tumour is as large as the fist, descending in the course of the inguinal canal to the bottom of the scrotum; the hernia on the left side being down, gives the whole mass a very bulky appearance. The usual means were resorted to, with a view of reducing the impacted bowel; amongst others, he was bled by the house-surgeon to sixteen ounces, who also tried the taxis carefully and continuously for an hour, but without in any degree lessening the bulk of the mass. Mr. Wakley was then summoned to the case, and ordered an injection, which returned, bringing away only some hardened lumps of fecal matter. At two P.M. he had vomited a quantity of greenish-looking fluid, with traces of stercoraceous matter, and the hernia was becoming tense and painful. Mr. Wakley now visited him again, and stated that he should at once proceed to relieve the intestine by operation, being of opinion that, one good and careful attempt at reduction failing, it was useless to persevere, as it would only increase the mischief in the bowels, and prevent that salutary change taking place after operation so necessary for its resuming its proper function, in which opinion Dr. Heale, who was present, concurred.

The patient having inhaled chloroform, and its full anæsthetic influence being obtained, another attempt was made to reduce the hernia, but without success. Mr. Wakley therefore made an incision along the upper surface of the tumour, in the course of the inguinal canal, and reached the neck of the tumour by successive divisions of the layers of superimposed fasciæ, and removed all constriction external to the sac, by division of the tendinous structures surrounding it, but without being able to effect reduction. The sac, which was very thickened, was therefore opened, giving exit to a quantity of dark-coloured serous fluid; and the stricture, which was very deep, from the corpulency of the patient, divided with a Cooper's knife. The intestine, of a deep purple colour, and showing that a little further delay would have been attended with danger, was then reduced, and the parts brought together, and confined by dressings and a pad. Ordered to take calomel, two grains; opium, one grain, in a pill, immediately.

April 14th.—Has passed a very comfortable night, the sickness, pains, and dragging sensations having been relieved at once after the operation; pulse 94, regular; tongue covered with a white, moist fur; slight heat of skin, and some thirst; abdomen flaccid, very little pain on pressure; bowels not relieved since the operation. Repeat the calomel and opium at bedtime; low diet.

15th.—Tongue moist; white skin; cool pulse, 96; but little pain in the abdomen on pressure; there is some œdema of the scrotum, and swelling of the testicle, on the affected side; bowels not relieved. To take one tablespoonful of castor oil immediately, and repeat the calomel and opium at bedtime.

16th.—Bowels were relieved freely last night and again this morning; no pain in the abdomen; tongue moist and clean; testicle enlarged, and painful to the touch. To have the testicle suspended, and kept wet with evaporating lotion. To take mixture of citrate of potash, one ounce; tincture of henbane, half a drachm; spirit of nitric ether, half a drachm, every four hours; castor oil, one ounce, to-morrow morning; continue low diet.

18th.—Doing well as regards the operation; bowels freely acted upon by the oil, but the testicle is much in the same state, and the tunica vaginalis is filled with fluid, with a blush of inflammation on the integuments. Fish for diet. Continue the mixture; to take mercury with chalk, Dover's powder, of each three grains, night and morning.

19th.—A puncture made in the scrotum gave exit to about two ounces of sero-purulent fluid; the testicle is hard, heavy, and enlarged; wound of the operation healthy. Continue medicines.

23rd.—Gums slightly spongy; testicle softer; general health good; wound healing. Repeat powder at bedtime. To take iodide of potash, five grains; compound tincture of cinchona, one drachm; water, one ounce, three times daily; meat diet; pint of porter daily.

29th.—Wound of the operation healed; doing well; testicle has nearly regained its natural size; thickening of the cord disappearing; bowels regular. Continue mixture.

May 6th.—He was ordered to apply some diluted iodine ointment to the testicle, and was discharged cured May 25th.

THE APOTHECARIES' COMPANY v. J. G. K. BURT,
Esq., M.D. EDIN., &c.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As you have done me the honour to sympathize with me in the unfortunate predicament in which I find myself placed by the oppressive, and, as it appears to me, iniquitous and illegal, proceedings of the Worshipful Apothecaries' Company, I avail myself of your permission to publish a statement of my case.

Nearly two years since, I dissolved partnership with Mr. Smith, of Southam. I came to this place at Michaelmas, 1848. In August I received one of the usual printed circulars, giving me notice that I had been informed against for practising as an apothecary without a licence. I immediately wrote to Mr. Upton, explaining how I was situated—that I was a graduate of Edinburgh of 1828—had been 20 years in practice in England without being interfered with—that I considered myself entitled as a physician to visit and prescribe—and as to the rest, I considered that every one was, according to the present state of the law, entitled to act as a chemist and druggist—that, even if it should be decided that I had acted as an apothecary, still I was legally entitled so to do, as my father having served in the army during the war, I was entitled to the immunities of the Toleration Act of 1816, passed the year after the Apothecaries' Act, in virtue of which I was legally entitled to carry on *any trade* for which I was *apt* and *able*, any *statute, law, ordinance, or custom* to the contrary in any-wise notwithstanding. I considered, therefore, that as I had a special Act in my favour, mine was not a favourable case to select for prosecution; and further, I informed him that I was actually in negotiation with a physician for the succession to his practice. In reply I received the following:—

"Apothecaries Hall, 17 August, 1849.

"SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst. It has been decided by the Court of Queen's Bench, in the case of the Apothecaries' Company v. Collins, 4 Barnwell and Adolphus' Reports, 604, that a graduate of a Scotch university is not exempted from the operation of the Apothecaries' Act, and that he is liable to penalties if he practises as an apothecary.

"As a member of the medical profession you can hardly be ignorant that a Scotch physician is not legally qualified to practise as an apothecary, and that you are liable to the penalties imposed by that Act if you practice without legal qualification; and you cannot complain, therefore, if the law is put in force.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

(Signed)

"ROBERT UPTON,
"Clerk to the Society."

"Dr. John G. K. Burt,

"Upwell, near Wisbeach."

I again wrote to say, that if he would re-peruse my letter, he would find that I did not claim the right to practise as an

apothecary in virtue of my diploma. What I had stated was, that I practised as a physician, and as a chemist and druggist; and further, that if I wished so to do, I was legally entitled, in virtue of the Act before alluded to, of which he had taken no notice in his letter to me; and I enclosed confidentially one of the letters I had recently received from the physician I mentioned, to prove to him that I really intended relinquishing general practice, without requiring to be driven out of it. To this letter I received no answer. I therefore conceived that, as it was generally understood, for some years past, that they did not very willingly undertake prosecutions against regularly educated practitioners, I had made some impression on his mind. However, in November I received a notice to appear at the County Court of Wisbeach on the ensuing 5th of December. The trial took place accordingly, and after the informer's attorney had stated the case for the plaintiffs, my attorney took a preliminary objection that the plaintiffs had not fairly placed themselves in court, and then stated the various legal points in virtue of which I had considered myself entitled to act as I had done. The judge said he should take time to consider, and give his judgment at the next court day, Jan. 10th. On this occasion the judge non-suited the plaintiffs, with costs, because they had not brought their case into court in the manner specified by their own Act. This decision I have understood gave great annoyance to the Apothecaries' Company, not only because it inflicted a temporary defeat, but also because it entailed the necessity, in all future actions, of proceeding in a much more troublesome and expensive manner. After a couple of months' delay, I, in March, received a second notice from the County Court, citing me to appear on the 3rd of April. This time the plaint was signed by Upton himself; on the first occasion it was signed by the informer's attorney. It so happened that I had for many months been under recognizances to attend the Norwich Assizes as medical witness in a malicious stabbing case. As, therefore, I could not be in both places at once, I forwarded affidavits of the facts, and had the case put off till the next court day, May 10th, on my paying the costs of the application. In the interim I moved the Court of Common Pleas for a rule *nisi* to stay proceedings in the County Court, on the ground that they had specified four different persons, and four different parishes; and, as the Act inflicts a penalty of £20 for every offence, if I owed anything I owed £80, which was clearly above their jurisdiction. The rule *nisi* was granted by Baron Alderson, and proceedings stayed accordingly, the plaintiffs moving to postpone the trial to the ensuing court day, June 7th. Lastly, on Friday, May 24th, the Company came out in full force to crush me, employing as counsel, Martin, Q.C., M.P., &c., and Robinson, to argue the rule, and they succeeded in getting my rule discharged, and thus driving me back into the County Court of Wisbeach. However, even on this occasion they were not altogether successful; I gained a considerable point, it being decided that they must not take more than one case into court. They must select one of the four, and abide by it. Now, in the former case they jumbled them all together, and proved one thing by one patient and another by another. Such is the present position of this singular prosecution, and, considering the large number of medical men there are practising without the trading licence, I cannot but think that many of your readers will feel interested in the result. If so, I will write to you again, giving you the result of the next step, and at the same time making a few observations on the legal bearings of the Apothecaries' Act itself, as well as of the other, to the benefits of which I am entitled. All I regret is, that I am not a rich man, or I make no doubt I could carry on the contest to a successful termination. It has, however, already been attended with great inconvenience, annoyance, and expense; and if the Company is determined to persevere with action after action, no man of moderate means can, with his own single resources, long continue to carry on the war.

I remain, Sir, your very obedient servant,

JOHN G. K. BURT, M.D. Edin.,
Physician to the Southam Infirmary.

REGISTRATION OF DEATHS BY MEDICAL MEN.

General Register Office, April 11, 1850.

SIR,—I am sorry to learn, from your letter of the 9th inst., that you intend to give no more written statements of the cause of death for the purpose of being inserted in the register books, and that you mean to endeavour to persuade all medical men to adopt the same course.

I observe that you do not approve of the law, as it at present stands, making it imperative on a person present at death, or in attendance, to sign the entry in the register books as informant; nor do you seem to approve of the system at present in force, making it incumbent on the coroner to decide whether an inquest should be held when he is informed by the registrar of any case where there may be reason for suspicion; you appear to be of opinion that inquests should be held in all cases where there has been no medical attendant.

The law respecting civil registration might, I doubt not, be in many ways improved; but one alteration occurs to me which would, I think, be beneficial—to make it imperative upon all legally-qualified medical practitioners to give, under a penalty, written statements of fatal diseases to be recorded in the register books of deaths, in all cases where they lose their patients.

You speak of the "official feeling which degrades the medical profession;" if you mean to apply this to me, I shall be glad to learn from you in what instances I have attempted to degrade your profession since I have had the honour, unworthily, of presiding over this department.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your faithful servant,

GEORGE GRAHAM, Registrar-General.

To W. H. Brown, M.D., Walworth.

Dean's Row, Walworth Road, April 15, 1850.

SIR,—I am very well aware that the medical profession has at all times been most courteously treated by you, and I intended no observation of mine to gainsay this. It is not, however, the want of courtesy towards us from our officials, (all of whom, indeed, hold such a rank in society as to forbid the charge,) but of the non-allowance of that credit due to our respectability, and of that authority naturally due to our calling, of which I complain; and this, I fear, for the perfect intelligence of the community, is a general English feeling,—or rather failing.

As I do not appear to have made myself perfectly intelligible to you, you will, perhaps, for the importance of the matter, pardon a brief reiteration of my views.

Firstly. Every medical man, I conceive, is an officer of health to his patients, and therefore of his state.

Secondly. I imagined, until lately, that where death came under medical cognizance, it required medical authority prior to interment, and this, it seemed to me, was a great protection against assassination.

Thirdly. I was aware that when death had not come under medical notice, there being no suspicion, any party present at the decease could register it. I looked upon this, however, as a very wide loophole to crime, and I submitted to you that it would be better if the law appointed a medical man in each district to inquire into, and report upon, such cases prior to the registration for interment.

I would respectfully interpolate here, that I am perhaps weak enough to consider that death comes within the especial province of the medical understanding, and that any body trained to this better comprehends its manifestations than the most respectable silversmith, carpenter, or appraiser, that could be selected to the office of registrar of births and deaths for any district.

Fourthly. I thought that the *public* office of the coroner came into force when the *private* office of the medical man stopped—that is, of course, when this office had been consulted; and you will remark that I would always have it preliminarily consulted, and then, I may add, in reference to your observation, that I would give the coroner no discretionary power.

Thus, as I before observed to you, I would surround the sanctity of life most entirely by the police of medicine and the court of the coroner, and I am clearly convinced that this would afford the only perfectly protective system.

In conclusion, I would inoffensively repeat that any jealous or slighting feeling against the medical profession, and, I must add, any miserable squeamishness with respect to expense, such as that constantly manifested by the Middlesex magistrates in auditing the coroner's accounts, both operating against the due protection to human life, I look upon as highly dangerous to the community, and equally highly discreditable to the better sense of our persons in authority.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM HENRY BROWN, M.D.

To the Registrar-General.