

were given them by the same Drs. Warren and Hayward, Surgeons of the Massachusetts General Hospital! Would Mr. Wells have us believe that Dr. Warren and Dr. Hayward have entered into a conspiracy to defraud him of his fame and rights?

Is it not also very singular, that Mr. Horace Wells, having made so important a discovery as that which he pretends to, suffered it to die a natural death? for we hear no more of him or his discovery, until after Dr. Jackson and Dr. Morton had perfected the Letheon. If Mr. Wells did discover the principle of the Letheon, of which discovery his statement does not contain a shadow of evidence, it was his bounden duty, not only as a surgeon, but as a man, to make it known to the world; he had no right to abandon it; for such an abandonment would have been treason against humanity; neither his vanity nor his philanthropy would have permitted it; and if, having really made such a discovery, he had not the courage and the perseverance to make it known, and that without delay, then, instead of deserving the praise and gratitude of mankind, he would have merited their execration and contempt.

I shall not dwell upon the consideration that, in law and reason, the abandonment of an invention is a disclaimer; we are called upon, in charity to Mr. Wells, to believe that what he abandoned, whether his own discovery or Sir Humphry Davy's, was something impracticable and worthless, certainly not the Letheon.

In corroboration of the views and opinions herein expressed, I would call attention to the following extracts from communications from Dr. Henry Bennet, P. W. Ellsworth, of Hartford, Connecticut, and Dr. E. E. Marcy, of New York, all published in *THE LANCET* of March 6th, in connexion with the statement of Horace Wells:—

Dr. Bennet says,—“The results at which he (Mr. Wells) arrived were principally attained through the use of the nitrous oxide, which he preferred to ether, and which has not yet been tried, to my knowledge, in this country.”

Mr. P. W. Ellsworth says,—“After the idea suggested itself to him, he (Mr. Wells) debated for some time which to use, the (nitrous oxide) gas or ether; but preferred the former, as he thought it less liable to injure the system.”

Dr. Marcy says,—“In the month of October, 1844, a dentist of Hartford, Connecticut—Horace Wells, Esq., first made use of the nitrous oxide gas in extracting teeth. The results of his experiments were, that teeth could be extracted without the slightest consciousness of pain to the individual operated upon. During the same month, the writer of the present article, while witnessing the experiments of the gas, suggested to Mr. Wells the use of the sulphuric ether as a substitute for the nitrous oxide gas. Being familiar with the effects of both these agents, and knowing that other operations upon the system were analogous, I first urged upon him the use of the sulphuric ether, as being equally efficacious, and less troublesome to prepare. Upon reflection and more full discussion of the matter, I advised Mr. Wells to abandon the use of the ether, and confine himself to the exhilarating gas.”

From these extracts it not only appears that Mr. Horace Wells disapproved of the use of ether in comparison with nitrous oxide gas, but that, even so far as any experimental trials of ether were concerned, if there were any, he was indebted to the suggestion and advice of Dr. Marcy, who states that he was at that time “perfectly familiar with the effects of both these agents!”

To bring this matter to a decisive test, so far as England is concerned, I am prepared to state that Dr. Jackson and Dr. Morton make no claim whatsoever to the employment of nitrous oxide gas during surgical operations; so that if nitrous oxide gas really be an equivalent to, or optional substitute for, the vapour of ether, the public can freely avail themselves of it, and reserve their gratitude for the memory of Sir Humphry Davy, who first suggested its use, leaving Americans to settle any disputes as to the invention of the Letheon among themselves.

It is not my purpose, in this paper, already too long, to furnish all the evidence I possess of the title of Dr. Jackson and Dr. Morton, of Boston, to the merit of the invention of the Letheon; that title must be assailed by some stronger claimant than Mr. Horace Wells to render any very vigorous defence necessary. In the meantime, it may be proper to state that, first, Dr. Jackson and Dr. Morton have sworn, or legally affirmed, that they are the joint inventors of the Letheon; second, that the Board of Examiners of the claims for patents at Washington, several of whom are physicians, has found, after thorough investigation, the invention of the

Letheon, claimed by them, to be *novel* as well as useful; third, that the physicians and surgeons of Boston have, through Mr. Winthrop, a representative, and Mr. Davis, a senator, of Massachusetts, memorialized Congress to reward the inventors. With so strong a *prima facie* case as this, it is superfluous to enter upon the defence of their claims more at large,—the burthen of proof is upon the assailant of their title; and he must appear before the bar of public opinion with such strong evidence as would, in a court of justice, convict them of perjury.

It is the common fate of the great benefactors of men to be neither appreciated nor recompensed; fortunate are those among them who escape with these negative wrongs. The inventors of the Letheon have bestowed the greatest boon which medicine and surgery combined have as yet conferred upon mankind, and there are not wanting those who would detract from their fair fame, and deny them their fair reward.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, Duke-street, St. James's,  
March, 1847.

JAMES A. DORR.

### THE “ASTLEY COOPER TESTIMONIAL.”

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—I shall feel obliged by your publishing the enclosed correspondence between Mr. Travers and myself, respecting the epigraph or inscription to be placed on Sir Astley Cooper's monument, in St. Paul's.

The history of the correspondence is briefly this:—The “Astley Cooper Testimonial Committee” having some difficulty in deciding upon the inscription, in consequence of most of its members having competed for the honour of writing it, agreed to refer the selection to the Rev. Dr. Hawtrey, of Eton College. Accordingly, the whole of those sent in were submitted, without the names of the respective writers, to the above-mentioned eminent scholar, for the purpose of his selecting that which he deemed the best and most appropriate.

After some time, the Rev. Dr. Hawtrey made his award in favour of the inscription which I had had the honour to write. What followed is explained in the correspondence.

I should add, that Mr. Travers, after a third attempt, I believe, succeeded in manufacturing an inscription, to the adoption of which, the rest of the Committee, *after dinner*, gave their consent. In its correctness and appropriateness, however, he appears to have so little confidence, that notwithstanding my repeated requests to have a copy, I have been unable to obtain one.

I regret extremely that the Rev. Dr. Hawtrey, for whose courtesy I feel bound publicly to express my acknowledgments, objects to the publication of his letter, which contains a complete answer to the imputations cast by the Committee, or rather Mr. Travers, upon the grammatical accuracy of my inscription. At least, it is the authority of one of the best scholars in the kingdom against that of a surgeon, on a matter purely of scholarship. However dexterous Mr. Travers' use of the scalpel may be, it would hardly qualify him to be a judge, or, at all events, a better judge on such a subject, than Dr. Hawtrey.

Mr. Travers has not thought fit to reply to or acknowledge the receipt of either my last letter, or one since written, enclosing him, by express permission, a copy of Dr. Hawtrey's letter. Doubtless, Mr. Travers has good reasons for his conduct in this as well as in the matter spoken of in our correspondence. I can only express my regret that he has not condescended to enlighten myself or the subscribers upon conduct which at present appears arbitrary and unfair, and in the highest degree discourteous and unbecoming, in the chairman of a public committee.—I am, Sir, your obedient and faithful servant,

JOHN JACKSON GOSSET.

Broad-street Buildings, March 5, 1847.

No. 1.—(COPY.)

140, Broad-street Buildings, Feb. 12th, 1847.

SIR,—Having just been informed of what I cannot but think a most unfair transaction as regards myself, I take the liberty of requesting that you, as one of the committee of the “Astley Cooper Testimonial Committee,” will be courteous enough to inform me at your earliest convenience, if it be true, as, until directly informed from yourself, I am unwilling to believe that one ranking so high, both in your profession and as a man of honour and a gentleman, would be a party to so unusual, not to say unhandsome, an act as the one in question. The act to which I refer is relative to the inscription to be placed on Sir Astley Cooper's monument.

Perhaps you are not aware that, after my inscription had been selected by Dr. Hawtrey, Mr. Callaway\* informed me officially that the Committee had consented to its adoption, and requested me to allow of certain verbal alterations which the Committee had suggested, and to which of course I readily gave my assent. Mr. Callaway also then informed me that the matter was quite settled, and that he would take care it should be inserted in the medical journals. I think, after the above statement, you will agree with me that the rejection of my inscription is most unhandsome, and that at least a full and perfect explanation ought to be afforded me as to the grounds upon which the Committee have acted.

I address myself to you, as I understand it is your inscription which has been substituted in place of mine; but I need hardly say that my communication is to the Committee generally.

I think, in fairness, I ought to add, that should my information be correct, I shall feel bound to inform Dr. Hawtrey of the slight passed upon him; and the subscribers, of the very unhandsome way in which the Committee have acted towards me.

Requesting that you will oblige me with an answer at your earliest convenience, I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,  
(Signed) JOHN JACKSON GOSSETT.

To Benjamin Travers, Esq.

No. 2.—(COPY.)

Bruton-street, Monday, 15th, 1847.

SIR,—I repudiate all imputation of discourtesy towards you. Either you have misconceived, or have been misinformed, on the subject. The Committee never did come to a final decision—at least I, as chairman, never heard of it, and you could not have been officially so informed, with a due regard to accuracy on the part of your informant. I will call together a committee, and lay your letter before them.—Your obedient servant,  
(Signed) B. TRAVERS.

J. Jackson Gossett, Esq.

No. 3.—(COPY.)

Bruton-street, Feb. 22, 1847.

SIR,—I am deputed by the sub-Committee appointed to superintend the erection of the monument to Sir Astley Cooper, to inform you, that at a meeting, held this evening, they have come to a final decision respecting the inscription to be placed thereon; and that any information which may have reached you in private conversation was not an authorized and official communication.

The Committee desire me to express their regret that any misconception should have occurred to cause you disappointment, or to create an impression on your mind that you had not been treated with due courtesy.—On behalf of the Committee, I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,  
(Signed) B. TRAVERS.

J. Jackson Gossett, Esq.

No. 4.—(COPY.)

40, Broad-street Buildings, Feb. 24, 1847.

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 22nd inst. Therein you inform me that "the Committee of the Astley Cooper Testimonial" have come to a final decision respecting the inscription to be placed thereon; may I tax your courtesy, as chairman of that Committee, so far as to request that you will inform me what that decision is? In the absence of other information,—Dr. Hawtrey having selected my inscription, and the whole matter having been submitted to his arbitration by yourself and co-committeemen,—I should conclude, as a matter of course, that you had acquiesced in the decision of the tribunal selected by yourself, had not the diplomatic style and ambiguous brevity of your note led me to surmise a different conclusion.

May I further request to be informed, whether it was denied, on the part of Mr. Callaway, that his communication to me was supposed by himself to be official? or whether you could suppose such a communication as that described by me in my former letter could be looked upon in any other light than as official? I did not deem for a moment, when dealing with gentlemen and men of honour, that so transparent an evasion would be had recourse to; otherwise I might have added further to what I then said, that Mr. Callaway stated he would have at once two copies made, one for Mr. Bailey, and one for the proctor who transacts such business on behalf of the dean and chapter of St. Paul's; that he also said he was glad the matter was at last settled, and congratulated me upon being the successful competitor.

I cannot believe that Mr. Callaway, your honorary secre-

\* The honorary secretary of the Committee.

tary, can have so far exceeded the authority entrusted to him by the Committee as to request my sanction to certain verbal amendments in the epigraph selected by Dr. Hawtrey, without the Committee having agreed as to its adoption. As none of my statements are questioned, I presume Mr. Callaway, of whose honour and integrity I have the highest opinion, admitted their accuracy. I request, then, to be informed precisely whether my inscription has been received or rejected.

The Committee disclaim all discourtesy towards me; which disclaimer I of course am bound to receive; but I do not think that a distinct statement as to the previous, and if any, the present objections to the receipt of my inscription, (and if the latter, a copy of the inscription adopted,) would have been any extraordinary extension of courtesy towards the author of the inscription selected by Dr. Hawtrey as the best, and which, upon being submitted to him a second time, he declares to be in every way worthy of the subject, and to be exempt from the grammatical errors ascribed to it by the Committee over which you have the distinguished honour to preside.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

Benjamin Travers, Esq.

JOHN JACKSON GOSSETT.

ON THE MISCHIEF OF THE SELF-ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

ENGLAND is the place for "pills," and Englishmen are the dupes that swallow them! Right or wrong, let them be big, little, round, oval, flat, or square, John Bull's stomach is always ready, and down they go with a merry welcome! Rather a curious propensity for otherwise sensible people, but no less curious than true.

Let the veriest knave or idiot only set a pill-machine to work—christen his little globular masses by a strange name—advertise them well, as being made from an invaluable and never-failing recipe, which, of course, everybody must implicitly believe, and John Bull, his wife, and all their little pill-taking pledges, will instinctively open their mouths, like unfledged rooks, and swallow away, without rhyme or reason!

"Englishmen are a pill-taking people. It may be their boast that, as they eat more roast beef and plum-pudding than any other nation, so do they, with a courage peculiar to themselves, bolt more drugs, mineral and vegetable, than the rest of the world beside. Indeed, make anything into a pill, and John Bull will swallow it. Verily, he hath a courageous stomach!

"The British government, too, overtly aids and abets the medicinal doings of its children, who have good leave to experimentalize on their intestinal machinery, so that they pay for it. By virtue of a stamp, a man may take the safest and most legal cut from this world into the next. If, with a criminal contempt of the pill-vendor, he jumps into the Thames, or inserts his neck into a noose, what a fuss there is with the coroner, the jury, the witnesses—what reflections upon the sanity of the deceased. Now, let him make away with himself by means of pills, and he goes out of the world like a respectable man—pays government duty for his death.—and there is no beadle to summon a meddling coroner, and curious jury. Hence, our advice is, to all weary of this rate-and-tax-paying world, not to bring any discredit upon themselves, by a rash appeal to water or rope, but to subside from life in a quiet, respectable manner, paying a government duty for death, and thus emulating the self-devotion of the old Roman. Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori! It is a sweet and gracious thing to die for the stamp-office."—*Punch's Pocket Book.*

It clearly matters not to John, whether the pill be really suitable for his case or condition; he wastes no time about that; and, if he did, it would be impossible for him to discover a difference between it and any other pill, because he could only judge from size and outward appearance; so he cuts all reflection short, by dropping the bolus into his stomach, where he knows, at least, that it will be out of sight,—and "out of sight out of mind" is an adage as old as John himself.

It seems quite sufficient for this unreflecting man to be convinced that he has perpetrated the act of swallowing a pill; and though it may never do him any real good, because misdirected, yet it affords an inexhaustible fund of self-satisfaction. Thus he undeceives himself, day by day, while a superlative halo floats around his ethereal brain that he is preparing himself to live for ever! What a pity to undeceive this calm, contented, open-your-mouth-and-see-what-God-will-send-you philosophy!