

# ASSOCIATION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

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NEW SERIES.

## NOTICE.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE ASSOCIATION.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for the current year became due on the 1st day of January last; and subscriptions for next year will be due on January 1st, 1855. Members are requested to make their post-office orders payable at the General Post Office, London. Subscriptions may be paid at the Office of the JOURNAL, 37 Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, during business hours.

JOHN ROSE CORMACK,

General Secretary to the Prov. Med. and Surg. Association.

21, Edwards Street, Portman Square, London,  
20th October, 1854.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS are in type by Dr. MITCHELL, Dr. HODGKIN, and Dr. MACKENZIE. Other communications have been received; and their authors will be privately communicated with as soon as possible. Short communications find a place more easily and more quickly than long papers. Condensation ought to be practised to the utmost possible extent. There have been complaints that the length of the original articles exclude general news to a greater extent than is proper. As there is some truth in this remark, we wish very earnestly to inculcate brevity—not so much absolute brevity, as the compression of much matter in the fewest words.

EDITOR'S LETTER BOX. The letters alone of one week, which are sent for publication, could sometimes fill an entire number. We must consequently select; and as selection might lead to discussion, and useless correspondence, were letters publicly stated to be received which were not inserted, it is a rule not to publish the receipt of letters which are not inserted. Anonymous, insolent, and slanderous letters, are invariably thrown into the waste-paper basket: to the writers of other letters, for which it is impossible to find room, we are always happy to render privately any explanations which may be required. LETTERS from Sir John Forbes and Dr. Spencer Thomson are in type.

LEADING ARTICLES and PERISCOPIC REVIEW are postponed for want of room.

DR. MILROY'S QUERIES. We have received the following note from Dr. Milroy:—

"SIR,—From the accidental misplacement of words, in Question II of my letter, in last week's Journal (page 978), the sense is scarcely intelligible. It should stand thus:—'Did any, and which, of these cases occur in persons recently arrived from a place where the cholera existed? If so, give the name of the place, and the days when the person left it, and when he arrived in his new abode.'"  
"I am, etc., "G. MILROY."

## "REASON AND FAITH" IN THE RANKS OF THE PROFESSION.

THERE is nothing which so clearly distinguishes the medical writers of the present from those of the last generation as the greater accuracy of their mental operations. It is more than probable that this excellence has been attained by them, by their having recognised the necessity of closely observing facts, and connecting the ideas of those facts by a comparison of their particular phenomena, in contradistinction to the elder method of inquiry which, for the most part, set out from an independent and rude conception of the thing to be observed. An inquiry was conducted too often as if our abstractions were always developed from within, instead of being obtained by our penetrating into the machinery of objects from without—as if, in fact, it were more essential to construct an hypothesis before entering on a subject of investigation, than to bring the active part of our natural faculties to examine and comprehend the determinate properties of things, and so to abstract a clear notion of what is seen and classified.

But since accuracy in the exercise of reason serves to distinguish modern medical authors from their ancestors,

in like manner there is nothing which so distinctly marks the practisers of the art as their having adopted the higher principles of conduct in their daily life and practice, thereby forcibly contrasting with the illogical infidelity of their forefathers, and their (too often) corresponding immorality.

It may appear, perhaps, somewhat singular that two such qualities as these we are considering, soundness in the art of reasoning, and a bold advocacy of the principles of religion, should twenty-four years ago have been found united in one medical writer. Nevertheless, such is the case: in the year 1830, Dr. Abercrombie published his work on the *Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth*; and in 1833, appeared the smaller essay on the *Philosophy of the Moral Feelings*. Regarding this work, a recent writer remarks:

"This little volume may be regarded as forming the connecting link between the larger and more metaphysical work, and the series of tracts on practical religion, which he also wrote. It points out the distinction; but, at the same time, the harmony and co-operation, which exists between the intellectual powers and the moral feelings. It gives a detailed analysis of man as a moral being, in which the existence and operation of conscience as a distinct and regulating principle of the mind is insisted on; it criticises the different theories of morals which have been propounded by various philosophers, takes exception to them all, as not duly recognising the authority of conscience; maintains the perfect consistency with the strict course of philosophic inquiry, of an appeal to revelation; and concludes with what virtually is a practical application of the subject—a disquisition on the moral relation of man to the Deity."

We quote this passage from a biographical sketch of Dr. Abercrombie, by Dr. Douglas MacLagan, to whom the profession is indebted for an "unvarnished tale" of the life and character of a great and good man; and to whom we tender our thanks for having furnished us, not only with the thoughts which have suggested this article, but with one of the best illustrations in support of the opinions which it unfolds. It is to such men as Abercrombie that science, in its best sense, owes the realities of its conclusions, and it is to such men that the votaries of science owe the right methods of applying that higher kind of logic, which teaches them to use their reason in the most advantageous manner for the discovery of truth; which points out the criterions by which they may be sure they have attained it; and which, by detecting the sources of error, and exposing the haunts where fallacies are apt to lurk, at once warns them of their danger, and shows them how to avoid it.\*

We are therefore disposed to regard Abercrombie as a kind of firstfruit of that healthier spirit which is animating our own times, and instructing our youth in the possibility of bringing the testimony of natural reason to maintain the principles of our higher nature; nay, more than this, the bright example of Abercrombie's modesty and patience will serve to show that the pursuit of scientific investigation may be carried on with advantage in every situation in