

APRIL 5, 1856.

PROFESSIONAL HONOUR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Robins' letter in THE LANCET of last week, in which he involves my name as acting "unprofessionally" towards him, is such a strange compound of logic, perverted facts, and language, that I am induced to trespass upon your kindness for a reply.

In the first place, I am not disposed to take Mr. Robins' individual opinion as "to what is, and what is not, proper professional conduct in midwifery practice, where a stranger is summoned to attend the patient of another practitioner," although he laid down the law "ten years ago;" more especially if he base his opinion upon such a garbled structure as he built up in your columns on Saturday last. Nor can I think *his law* to be logical or sound, when he *appeals* to a professional tribunal for a verdict on my conduct, and before obtaining which, he *prejudges* the case by heading it "Unprofessional conduct in Midwifery Practice." At starting, "he takes hold of the wrong end of the stick." He says: "It appears, however, that the lessons which have been taught some men, have been lost upon them, or that they have been afflicted with bad teachers." This sentence is very true, and very good, and practical as it is from so good an authority, may yet recoil upon himself; for I would ask him by what "lesson" in language his "teachers taught" him to write "*neither Mr. Reece nor I was at home.*" But I will desist criticising further his law, logic, and grammar, and give you *my* version of this "unprofessional affair," leaving it into the hands of "that court" to which he appeals so confidently and prejudgingly for support.

Of the "facts" which "*all parties concerned*" agreed to be submitted to the profession through the medium of THE LANCET, (the best of all sources,) Mr. Robins has garbled some, omitted others, and penned the remainder in a style peculiarly applicable to meet his side of the question. He has omitted two important points, of which he knew, and which were likely to weigh in my favour,—viz., that I was not on friendly terms

with Mr. Reece, as I considered he had, on a previous occasion, served me an unprofessional trick, and this was the reason I refused to attend for him. Mr. Robins also neglects to inform your readers I offered him half the fee when he called upon me; and again, before I paid the patient a second visit, I sent and desired to know which party she wished should continue the subsequent attendance upon her. These are little omissions Mr. Robins thought unworthy of notice. But, Sir, if you will allow me, I should like to add something to that "little business colloquy" so curtly and graphically described by Mr. Robins.

Mr. M——, the husband in question, called at my house at a quarter past five p.m., on the 12th of last month, and desired to see me. I asked him his business; he wished me to attend upon his wife immediately, as she was in the last pains of labour. I desired to know the medical attendant of the family; he told me Messrs. Robins and Reece were engaged to attend her; he had gone to both of their houses *twice* since four o'clock. The first gentleman was out of town, and the latter was at a *dinner party*. He had been to Mr. Gaye, who was also absent from home, and he came as a *dernier ressort* to me. I told Mr. M—— that I declined going to a case where Mr. Reece was an interested party—for reasons above stated—and said that if my services were desired, and I *confined* his wife, I should expect *my* fee of a guinea. Mr. Maynard consented *at once*, (without considering he "*had been obliged*" to do so)—and "the doctor marched off to see the patient." She was delivered a quarter of an hour after my arrival, during which time Mr. Robins called, but *did not ask or desire to see me*, and left without an explanation. Now, Sir, Mr. Robins sleeps in the country—Mr. Reece, his substitute, is at a dinner party—(where, surely, he might have been sent for upon such an occasion, and have foregone the luxuries of the table, as an hour and a half intervened between the first message sent to him and the birth of the child). Mr. Gaye was out when applied to; and I, being at home, am supposed—according to Mr. Robins' view—to be at the beck and call, and to do the work for a person I dislike, to give up the whole of the fee; for what? to pander to Mr. Reece's "dining out" propensities. If such be Mr. Robins' idea of professional etiquette, I think, Sir, the sooner we have a "court medical," with a worthier president than Mr. Robins, the better.

Finally, Sir, in the evening Messrs. Robins and Reece called upon me; and the latter gentleman, who had evidently been "out to dine," was so unmannerly, rude, and pugilistic, that I was obliged to call my servant, and threaten to send for a policeman if he did not leave my house; his conduct was so boisterous, that my wife, who was lying in the room above, and had been confined only four days, became so agitated and nervous when I saw her afterwards, that I fear it may have given the first shock to an irritative fever, of which she died a fortnight after.

I trust that it may be a long, long "ten years" before Mr. Reece, with his hirsute companion, may participate again in such another "practical demonstration" which they so "indignantly" made at my then joyful, but now sorrowful, home.

I remain your obedient servant,

W. H. BORHAM.

N.B. I almost forgot to mention that the patient in question was formerly attended by Mr. Girdwood, who always had a *guinea* for her confinement, but he, being out of town at a time when another of her labours came on, could not attend personally, and Mr. Robins was sent for, who had a *double fee* given him in consideration of his not having been *engaged* to attend her; and *this fee*, with subsequent attendances, was *retained* by Mr. Robins. Whether Mr. Girdwood and Mr. Robins were friends, I am unable to state. This circumstance occurred, probably, about the time Mr. Robins wrote "What is, and what is not," professional etiquette in midwifery practice?

April, 1856.