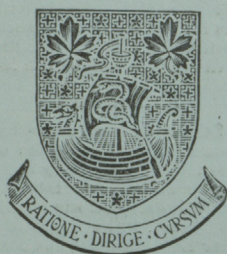


University College Hospital Magazine.



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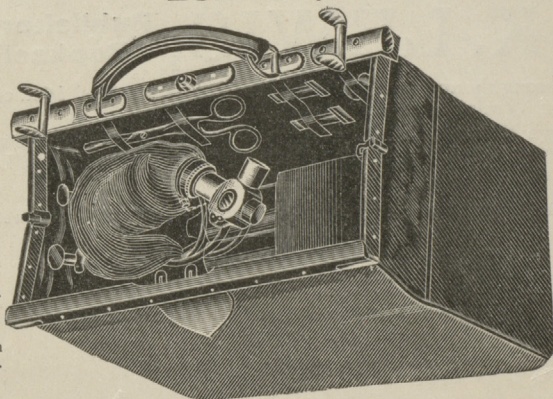
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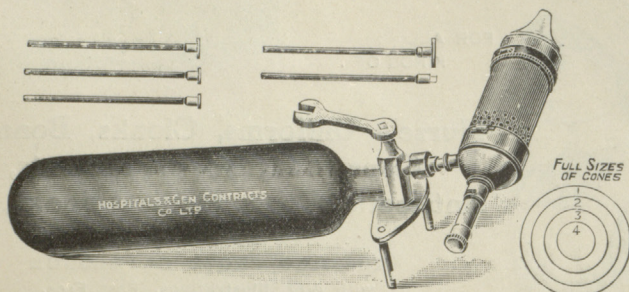
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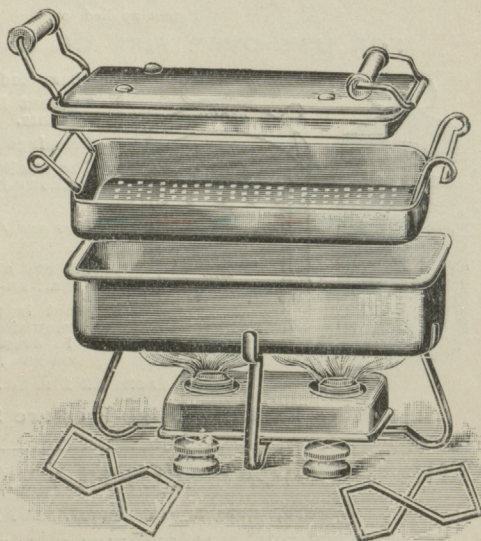
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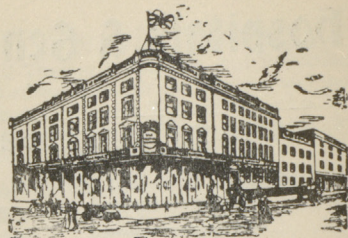
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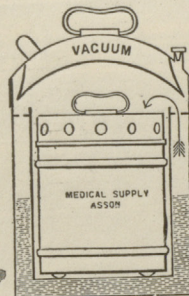
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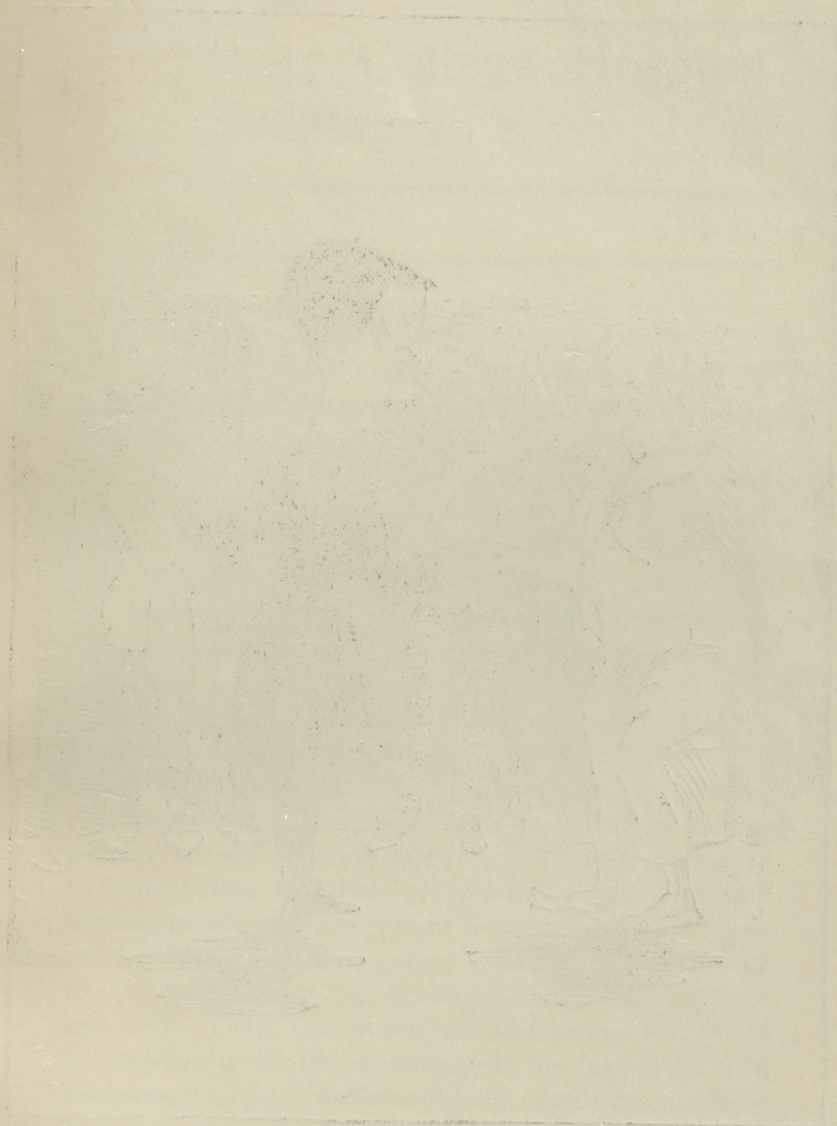
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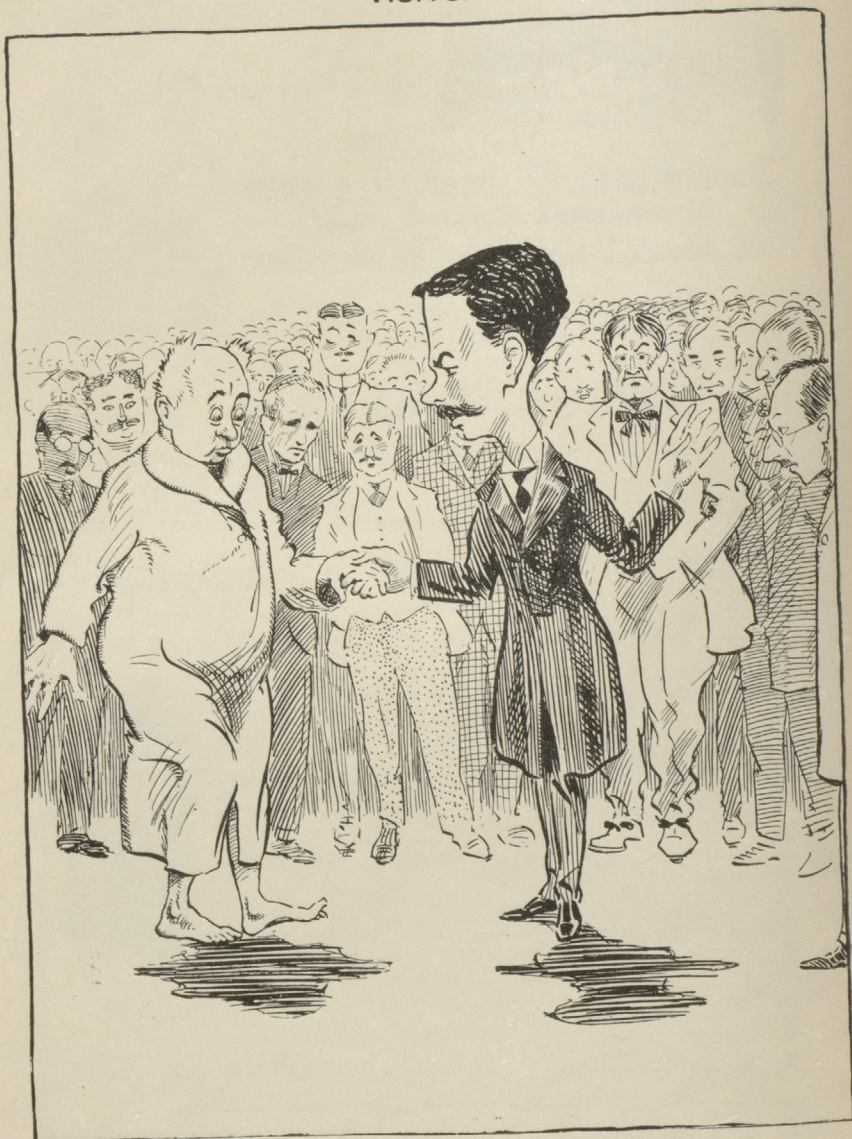
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No. 1—THE TABETIC TWO-STEP.

University College Hospital Magazine.

Vol. I.

JULY, 1911.

No. 7.

EDITORIAL.

THIS number completes our first volume. So far, so good, and we confess to that feeling of satisfaction which marks the attainment of the first milestone on our journey. We take this opportunity of thanking our contributors for their support, and our subscribers for their encouragement. We cannot, however, let the occasion pass without one complaint—the lack of contributions from the junior men. With one or two striking exceptions, the whole of this volume is the work of senior men, Staff, and old students. This is the converse of what ought to be. The MAGAZINE is the organ of the Medical Society, and, as such, should be, in the main, the product of its present members. Until it becomes so, its existence must remain a precarious one—dependent on outside support instead of being self-sufficient. And we refuse to believe that this lack of material arises from any poverty of talent in the present generation. Should anyone hold this view, it can speedily be dispelled by a visit to our Refectory on any day between the hours of 12.30 and 1.30. There the visitor will find young U.C.H. at its mid-day meal, the scantiness of the fare more than compensated by the brilliance of the conversation. Here he may listen to subtle paradox, sparkling epigram, and delicate imagery—and all of this the accompaniment of

an alcohol-free lunch. Why should all this run to waste? Why not let it spread its radiance far beyond the confines of U.C.H., into all the distant corners of the earth? What Gower Street has laughed at to-day, let China and Honduras smile at to-morrow! We know, of course, that to reduce some of this to cold print were a task as hopeless as successfully to bottle the shimmering foam of the sea. But part, we feel sure, has body enough to stand the process, and for that part we now appeal.

We should like to draw particular attention to the intensely interesting article on Dr. Elliotson, which appears in this number. It is a tragic story, with no very obvious moral. We see a brilliant career wrecked by what is usually regarded as an obstinate error of judgment. Of Elliotson's honesty of purpose there can be no shadow of doubt. In mesmerism he saw a therapeutic agent of apparently enormous power, and he sacrificed everything for its sake. Even when it seemed discredited and exposed—a veritable lost cause—he refused to abandon it, and, so far as we know, never recanted his belief. And who will dare to say that he was altogether wrong? Is our present-day medical treatment such a conspicuous success that we can afford to sneer at mesmerism, or any other form of "suggestion"? Every student who has done his ward-clerking must have seen for himself how few medical cases we can really cure. In one well-known hospital, we were surprised to find that the custom prevailed of admitting patients with *Tænia* into the medical wards. A somewhat cynical friend explained the reason; *Tænia* was the only thing they could really hope to cure—an interesting statement, though leaving us in doubt whether it was the host or the parasite that was cured. This is perhaps an exaggeration, but the fact remains that in the great majority of cases, the utmost we do is to try, by careful nursing and feeding, to give the

patient some chance of working out his own salvation. When a sufferer comes for treatment, his one anxiety is to be made "better," to be put into more harmonious relation with his environment. It matters not a scrap to him whether his physical signs are changed, or not; from his point of view, to *feel* better is to *be* better. In other words, in most diseases there is a mental factor to be reckoned with as well as a physical one. In orthodox medicine, the tendency has been, and is, to concentrate attention on the latter, to the neglect of the former. We may be allowed to quote an example. Some time ago, we happened to be present at a meeting of medical men, when one of them recounted the case of a patient of his. He suffered from tabes dorsalis, and failing to get relief from his pains and ataxia, at length sought the assistance of a "Christian Scientist." From that day he improved, and at the time of the meeting, had been practically free from pain and had walked much better, for a year. His physical signs, however, remained unchanged. The comments on the case were, "coincidence," "the well-known tendency of tabes to show periods of amelioration," &c., &c. But not one of those present, except ourselves, dared to hint at a possible connection between the treatment and the improvement. This is wrong. In the face of the obvious limitations of ordinary physical therapy, the mental factor will come more and more into prominence. Hypnotism, Christian Science, psycho-therapy, call them what you will, are bound to play an increasing part in the drama of disease, and orthodoxy will either have to give them recognition or be swept aside by their increasing flood. And it may well be that future generations will recognize that Elliotson, though mistaken in some of his details, was right in broad principle, and worthy, not of obloquy, but of high praise.

JOHN ELLIOTSON, M.D.Camb., F.R.S.

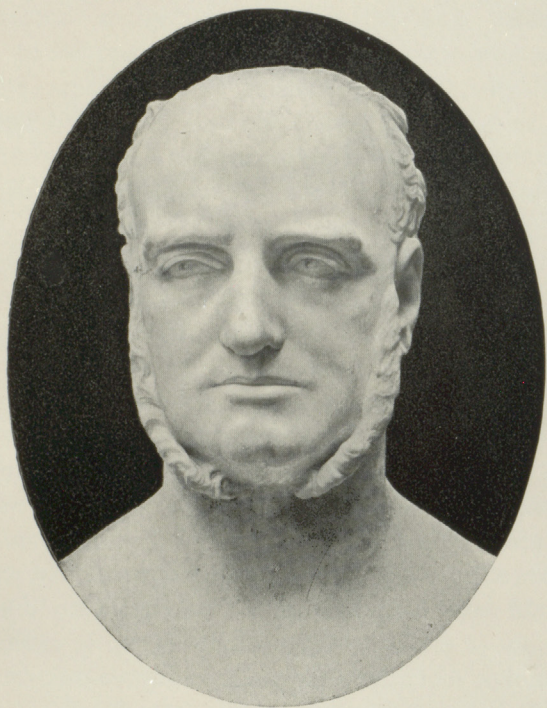
Physician to University College Hospital, 1834-38.

PICTURE this scene on Thursday, May 10, 1838, in the chief theatre of our old Hospital, which was then so new that only a part of the building was actually completed. London was excited over the question of mesmerism, and an audience of more than two hundred gentlemen, medical and lay, including the Marquis of Anglesea, the Duke of Roxburgh, the Earl of Burlington, and others, had assembled to see Dr. Elliotson, Senior Physician of the Hospital, demonstrate the facts of Animal Magnetism.

An anæmic, hystero-epileptic girl of 18, Elizabeth O'Key, "a housemaid of diminutive proportions," according to the notes of the case, was brought down from Ward III., where her case had been under observation for more than a year. The girl was mesmerized by a few passes of the hand, and* "her dull and Hippocratic countenance at once changed to one of mingled archness and simplicity. Advancing to the Marquis of Anglesea, who sat immediately in front of her, she said with innocent familiarity and a peculiar and agreeable tone of voice, 'Oh, how do ye, white trousers? Dear, you do look so tidy, you do. You are a nice man.' Dr. Elliotson now, while behind her back, passed his hand from above downwards in a line with the middle of her back, when she instantly fell into the lap of the gentleman next to her in a state of perfect sleep."

The demonstration went on to various details, and it provoked still wider interest in London. But in the Hospital itself these inquiries were not welcomed by the Medical Staff with enthusiasm, and the Committee had already in March laid a complaint before the Faculty of

* The *Lancet*, 1838, p. 282.



DR. JOHN ELLIOTSON, F.R.S.

From a Bust in possession of the Royal Society of Medicine.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

Medicine of the College touching "the inconvenience to patients in the Hospital and the injury to the property of the establishment that was occasioned by the concourse of strangers who assembled to witness the practice of Animal Magnetism."

Elliotson's ardour to explore the new lands that seemed to be opening out before his view was at first invincible, and he readily persuaded the Faculty to support their colleague, he then being Professor of Medicine, and to accept his explanation that the complaint was insufficiently justified. On the Council of University College, however, despite the support of Lord Brougham, his actions were viewed by many with grave doubt of their wisdom, and his endeavour to avoid the difficulty with the Hospital by seeking leave to give clinical demonstrations to the public in a theatre of the College, met with their opposition and refusal. Elliotson was wilful and headstrong as the proverbial "allegory on the banks of the Nile." The last twenty years of his life had been filled with struggles for reform and innovation in various details of medical teaching and practice, from which he had hitherto never failed to emerge the victor.

So he bluntly disregarded criticism and went his way.

The visits of our modern neurologists are as moonlight unto sunshine compared with the next great assemblage. On June 2 the theatre was once more crowded throughout a long séance. For three hot hours the Reverend Bishop of Norwich was perforce content with standing room; and Mr. Thomas Moore, the poet, could find no other spot to view the experiments than a small quadrant-shaped shelf whence, at the end of more than two hours and a half, he descended covered with whitening from the walls. On this occasion three Earls were present. Elizabeth O'Key was once more, according to a chance phrase preserved in some contemporary minutes of the Medical

Society, the "Prima Donna of our magnetic stage" and she certainly did not appear to be suffering from stage fright. In the course of varied demonstrations of the cataleptic and mesmeric states, her arm was bound to a splint. Awakening and seeing the bandaged limb she laughed heartily and said, "Oh, look here, what the devil's that?" Dr. Elliotson attempted a reproof with the remark that such words would frighten Mr. Stebbing, the Chaplain of the Hospital, who was looking on. She replied, "I don't care for Mr. Stebbing nor the devil neither, my dear. . . . There now, don't look savage," and in delight at a relenting change of countenance she threw her arms around the Doctor's neck.

Disturbed by the notoriety of these proceedings, the Medical Committee of the Hospital felt compelled to ask Dr. Elliotson to refrain from further "public exhibitions." He complied with their request, but continued to investigate the properties of mesmerized gold, water, and such like, while his clinical clerks were busy daily with manipulations of the patients in the Wards.

Here, before moving on to the final development in the story of O'Key which led to the severance of Elliotson's connection with the Hospital, we may stay for a little and look back to earlier history.

Born in London and educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, Elliotson was early appointed an Assistant Physician to St. Thomas's Hospital. At once he showed his eagerness for new knowledge by his passionate advocacy of the use of what was then a new instrument, the stethoscope. Older physicians derided his detailed enumeration of physical signs in chest disease, and comfortably looked for his ruin on hearing that he was accustomed to keep the wooden toy on a table of his consulting room. In therapeutics he was evidently guided by the principle that what

is worth doing at all is worth doing well. An instance that is still quoted is his treatment of tetanus by red oxide of iron made into an electuary with treacle and beef tea, of which he persuaded a patient to swallow 2 pounds daily and cured the deadly malady. Another prescription still in use was introduced by him, namely that of hydrocyanic acid for gastric pain; it was admitted that the discovery of its value came from a mistake in diagnosis, for the remedy, which was regularly used for hæmoptysis from phthisical lungs, was given by mistake, but with unexpected benefit, in a case of hæmatemesis.

Elliotson was a keen teacher. When appointed to St. Thomas's in 1817, he was prevented from lecturing to the students because Guy's and St. Thomas's had their medical school in common, and the Guy's men on the staff being in the preponderance absolutely forbade a Thomas's man to lecture. To this Elliotson objected strongly and actively, with the result that in 1825 the schools separated and he was given full teaching facilities.

In 1829 he commenced to contribute to the *Lancet* an admirable series of clinical lectures based on cases in St. Thomas's Hospital. Their clearness rapidly won for him reputation and practice, with the result that in 1831 he was chosen for the first Professor of the Practice of Medicine in the new London University, the University College of our day. This freed him from a difficulty in which he had been entangled at St. Thomas's by his outspoken antagonism to the old-fashioned spirit in which his colleague, Dr. Williams, taught medicine there. Untrammelled by old traditions and people of old ways of thought, Elliotson gladly threw himself into the new work with great vigour and success, so that the number of students attending his lectures grew rapidly. As Dean of the Faculty of Medicine he had some correspondence with the recently formed Medical Society,

which is preserved in our minutes and is worth quoting at length for the artificially pedantic phrasing which was employed by our predecessors, students whose real nature is doubtless much more truly indicated in the first volume of *Punch* or in Dickens' picture of Bob Sawyer; unless we can believe that the academic atmosphere of University College had softened the coarser spirits, thus anticipating the modern generation of students who have no fellowship with Mr. Samuel Huxter of St. Bartholomew's.

"October, 23, 1833.

"To the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine.

"SIR,—The Meetings of the Medical Society of the University having been resumed under the most auspicious promise for the fifth session, we have the pleasure of announcing to you the re-election of the Professors constituting the Faculty of Medicine as Honorary Members.

"The object of the supporters of the Society is the attainment of professional improvement, for which purpose Essays penned by its members, the discussion of their various opinions, and a reciprocal interchange of information are carefully cultivated. In furtherance of its views it is extremely desirable that, among its other rules of discipline, the most rigid punctuality should be enforced in conducting the business of the Society. From a general feeling, therefore, that the ringing of the lodge bell at the hour appointed for the President to take the chair on the evening of our assembly would very much conduce to so salutary an effect—

"We the undersigned officers of the Society beg that you will use your influence with the Faculty in obtaining for us our request. We furthermore take this opportunity of submitting to the Faculty the state of our polity, and feel happy to assure that respected body that a most

spirited desire for improvement prevails amongst the medical students of the present session.

"We have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your most obedient servants,

"W. J. E. Wilson, *President*.

"T. H. Cooper, *Secretary*."

"37, Conduit Street.

October 26, 1833.

"The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of London begs to acknowledge the receipt of a communication from the Presidents and Secretaries of the Medical Society of the University announcing the prosperous condition of the Society, and conveying the assurance of the zeal of the students together with a request that the lodge bell may ring when the time arrives for the President of the Society to take the chair.

"Of the zeal and excellent spirit of the students he has no doubt: he sincerely rejoices in the prosperity of the Society and in the name of his brother professors and his own, he offers his best thanks for the kind attention of its members. He has no hesitation in saying that the bell shall ring according to their request; and the Presidents and Secretaries have only to wait upon Mr. Coates and inform him that it is the lodge bell which the Society is desirous of having rung."

Lectures without immediate reference to clinical cases were felt by Elliotson to be somewhat barren, and he was foremost in urging that a hospital be established in connection with the University. His success as a teacher no doubt gave force to his arguments and hastened the events which led to the opening of the North London or University College Hospital in 1834. To this he was appointed Senior Physician, and at once resigned his position at St. Thomas's. The surroundings were

new, the task of creating a London University an inspiring one; and Elliotson was associated in it with such men as Robert Liston, Graham the chemist, Sharpey in Physiology, and Robert Grant in Comparative Anatomy. It is certain that Elliotson's investigations of the mesmeric state were prompted solely by an honourable zeal to discover new truths at all costs, and to prove himself a worthy compeer of such colleagues.

His early treatment of epilepsy had been a vigorous application of known therapeutic measures—"calomel,* gr. v night and morning until the mouth became sore, and then only 1 oz. of magnesium sulphate daily. To be cupped on the temple and on the occiput, a seton in the neck, and leeches every other day to the temples." Elizabeth O'Key, the girl named above, was admitted to University College Hospital on April 4, 1837, for hysterio-epileptic attacks, and was at first treated in the accustomed way by very copious venesection and drugs. Later in the year a Baron de Potet, from Paris, persuaded Elliotson to attempt mesmeric treatment. The clinical notes for November and December are a steady repetition of the success with which she could thus be brought out of the "delirious state" succeeding to her epileptic fits. On January 14 is an interesting chance note that Messrs. Charles Dickens and Cruikshank were present at such a demonstration in the Ward. The remaining notes† of the case ought to have been continued in the next Case Book, No. 18, but from this, alas, the pages named in the index for O'Key, 170 to 187, are missing: there is only at the end of the book a rough pencil sketch of the girl's profile to cover the loss. Unfortunately,

* Clinical Lectures in the *Lancet*, 1829, p. 118.

† On January 20, 1838, a girl of 12, Hannah Hunter, with hysterical paraplegia was successfully mesmerized by the clerk, Mr. Tegetmeier, who is now the doyen of University College Hospital students, and probably the only surviving witness of these scenes.

too, a description of the case which was presented by Mr. Wood to the Medical Society in 1838 disappeared the same year; so it is impossible to find in our own records any further essential details.

After the events of June described some pages earlier, the public demonstrations in the Hospital ceased; but in August, Elizabeth and her sister were carefully tested by Mr. Wakley, the Editor of the *Lancet*, at his private house. Elliotson believed that special magnetic virtues in respect of mesmerism were possessed by nickel; in his own presence it was shown that the girl could be thrown into violent hysterical opisthotonus by the contact of a lead button as easily as by nickel, the conditions having been so arranged that Elliotson thought he was applying the nickel when really only lead was used. After this the *Lancet* definitely renounced belief in the existence of animal magnetism. Elliotson, however, persisted with great intrepidity in his investigation of the phenomena; and it was about this point that his judgment laid itself open to serious criticism. Looking for a physical explanation of the phenomena, he thought that patients in the mesmeric state were much more delicately sensitive than normal people in their reaction to some external stimuli; apparently he did not see that the extreme sensitiveness rested on a peculiar readiness to respond to mental suggestions, but believed in an especial refinement of the senses for the appreciation of very slight physical stimulation by external objects. So he argued that his mesmeric patients might be able to prognose the issue of ordinary medical cases by their quicker readiness to perceive some effluvium of impending death. Very imprudently, as it seems, he put this to the test. In the evening he would take the hysterical girl, Elizabeth O'Key, to a male ward and stand with her by a patient in the grip of some mortal malady. A

convulsive shudder seized the girl, and she exclaimed that "Great Jackey (the Angel of Death) was on the bed." At the next she shuddered but slightly, because "Little Jackey was there." These prophecies were duly noted down and given in a sealed paper to the Hospital apothecary. The consequent uneasiness and alarm in the ward at night must have been a fair parallel to that among the Zulus at King Solomon's Mines when Gagool was visiting.

The governing bodies had no course but to interfere, for the ease of the patients and the credit of the young medical school were alike disturbed. On December 22 it was resolved at a session of the College Council that "steps be taken to prevent the practice of animal magnetism or mesmerism in future within the Hospital": and in consequence the Medical Committee courteously requested Dr. Elliotson to discharge O'Key, who had been two years in the Hospital, and to refrain from further mesmerism in the wards. He refused and resigned on December 24, 1838. At the same time he vacated his Professorship of Medicine in University College. As proof of his singleness of mind in pursuing this psychological research and of his utter avoidance of all quackery for the sake of augmenting professional practice, it should be noted that Elliotson never alluded to the question of mesmerism in his set College lectures, nor again in his systematic book (1843) on the "Principles and Practice of Medicine." Recognizing this, the students held a mass meeting on January 5, 1839, and by 124 votes to 113 passed a motion regretting his resignation.

But the step was inevitable. Elliotson would brook no interference with his investigations, and yet it was clearly wrong that they should be pursued so in a public hospital with a teaching school. A quotation from one of his own pamphlets written later (1843) shows the danger

incurred: "I have heard that Sir Benjamin Brodie (a chief authority on the physical manifestations of hysteria, especially in the simulation of joint disease), when I demonstrated mesmerism at U.C.H., used to say that he disliked turning his horses' heads towards Russell Square to see a patient, lest people should think he was going to that scene of humbug, University College Hospital."

The Hospital continued to prosper, despite the loss of its chief teacher, and it was soon strengthened by the advent of many brilliant men inspired by the genius of Sharpey. But Elliotson suffered greatly. Those were days of sharp and pitiless rivalry, and the medical profession watched his fall with little regret. In 1837 he was in the full maturity of his powers, his practice the best in London, and he admitted to be the most brilliant of its clinical teachers; while his reputation was further supported both by the scientific merit of having translated Blumenbach's *Physiology*, at a time when physiology and German works alike were little known in England, and by many clinical observations of value. His prompt appreciation of the value of Laënnec's stethoscope has already been named. He was the first to introduce into England the use of quinine instead of Peruvian bark for malaria; and in a series of most painstaking observations he had demonstrated the possibility of glanders being communicated to the human subject.

Yet for the sake of the truth that he believed to lie within his grasp, he deliberately chose the action that imperilled all, and in which failure could not but bring ruinous disaster. Being freed from Hospital duties, he devoted all his passionate energies and effective personality to the advocacy of mesmerism; a special hospital and a journal, "*The Zoist*," were established for its study. But even Elliotson failed utterly: the time was not ripe,

and the method was wrong. Still, from the path of honour he never swerved; only his judgment was at fault, and so he quickly fell from the luminous summit to which he had attained and spent the last thirty years of his life unhappily, the gloom ever increasing around him, yet never tempting his brave temper to quit the belief that he had accepted and undertaken to justify to the world. Financial failures added their troubles, and when he ultimately died in 1868, an old man of 80, few remarked that his life had flickered out or remembered the brilliant blaze in which it once had shone.

The portrait is, by the kind permission of its President, copied from a bust in the possession of the Royal Society of Medicine. Like the oil painting by Ramsay in the College of Physicians, it shows the face of a strong vigorous man. The lithograph hung at present in the staff room of our Hospital is a wretched production of some female enthusiast, suggesting dreamy spiritualism watered by hydrocephalus. In person Elliotson was below middle height, of dark complexion, and walking a little lame as the result of an accident to his knee. His portraits do not show the beard which he grew in 1826 when he discarded knee breeches and silk stockings, the customary parade of the physician, and said that he would dress like the rest of the world.

In diagnosis he was regarded as slow and hesitating, but in treatment most resolute. Of his kindliness, honesty, and power to impress confidence no better evidence need be sought beyond the fact that Thackeray, a man gifted with a clear vision of the faults and weakness of mankind, dedicated his novel "Pendennis" (1850) to Dr. Elliotson,* and doubtless praised him in the portrait

* The Fellowes medals were founded in 1837 by the Rev. R. Fellowes, LL.D., as an expression of his gratitude to Dr. Elliotson for the skill with which he had cared for his recovery from a serious illness.

of Dr. Goodenough, who tended Arthur Pendennis and little Fanny Bolton as well, "a scientific character and a roight good fellow, bedad," as Mr. Costigan said.

Elliotson's name is first on the list of Physicians of University College Hospital: it has almost dropped out of memory, while many of his successors are famous and remembered for the brilliant work that they achieved. Yet he boldly attempted a larger problem than any of those who followed after him, and he sought to solve it by clean, scientific analysis. The effort and the sacrifice alike are worthy of all praise.

Rightly to appreciate his work in connection with our Hospital is difficult, for the evidence quoted here is meagre. But this emerges clearly. He was a man of power and some originality, fighting for reform in the interest of the medical student and his profession at every step of his life until his great fall; given to a modern, frank view of things; sceptical of opinions and statements that could not be fairly proved. He failed at a task that was too great for his abilities, where judgment, patience, and the rarest tact were needed, yet lacking; where help and criticism from other minds might have kept him on the path towards the truth, and yet this all essential aid was perforce withdrawn in the angry discussion into which he plunged after his act of separation. The immense importance of the question he clearly saw in its every aspect, whether it were for therapeutics, or as a means to allay the pain of surgical operations, or for probing into the machinery of the human mind. His writings indeed inspired Esdaile, a surgeon of the East India Company at Calcutta, to perform from 1845 to 1851 a large number of surgical operations successfully upon mesmerized patients. It was to this that Liston referred in his excited remark after the first operation under ether: "Well, gentlemen, this Yankee dodge beats

mesmerism hollow." And had it not been for the introduction of anæsthetic drugs, it is probable that in this direction Elliotson's investigations might soon have borne good fruit. Braid, a Manchester surgeon, who in the forties also made use of the method, interpreted the phenomena in a sense that runs closer to modern teaching, believing that they bore no relationship to any form of magnetism, but were simply due to mental suggestion acting on an individual who was made more susceptible by his state of mental narrowing and concentration.

The tragedy of Elliotson's failure was indeed more than that of one man fallen from high estate. It marked the eclipse of a new school of thought, darkened by the massive conservatism of English opinion. opinion that once held it impious to lessen the pains of labour by chloroform, and still suspects all psychologists who venture beyond mere theory to practical control, of being either charlatans or dangerous meddlers. Perhaps Elliotson had not the powers to carry the inquiry to a successful issue, and we need not lament that with him we lost a man who would have raised our School's history to a still higher place of honour. But his conspicuous fall strengthened greatly the hands of his opponents and deterred those who might have followed. For fifty years all such inquiry ceased in England, while it was gradually developed in Germany and France. Their schools are now teaching us.

T. R. E.