

STATEMENT OF FACTS

BY

MR SYME.



ON the evening of Saturday 22d September, Mr Syme happening to call on his friend, the Reverend Dr Belfrage, at Slateford, was informed, that Dr Mackintosh had recently made certain statements to him regarding a lady,—a near connection of Mr Syme's, which were calculated to injure her, and to be very painful to the feelings of her friends. The nature of these statements is explained in the following letter, which Mr Syme received from Dr Belfrage on Monday afternoon.

MY DEAR SIR,

Slateford, Two o'Clock.

Dr Mackintosh's son has been here with a letter, requiring me to state what I reported to you. The following is my answer, which is just now sent off to him:—

MY DEAR SIR,

In reply to your letter, I beg leave to submit to you the following statement of facts:—

Mr Syme having called on me on Saturday evening, while your conversation was yet fresh in my memory, and being well assured that there existed a disposition in a certain quarter to annoy him, I considered it to be my duty, as his friend, to make him acquainted with a proceeding of which he was likely soon to hear, and which could hardly fail to give him uneasiness. I thought it probable, that, if he came to the knowledge of it incidentally, or if it was represented to him in a distorted and aggravated form, it would prompt him to have recourse to rash measures; and my object in conveying the information I gave to him, was to preserve him from being taken by surprise—to put him on his guard—to soothe the irritation of his mind—and to dissuade him from yielding to the impulse of resentment. What I told him was simply this: That I had learned from you, that Mr Liston had met Miss Willis one day lately on the street—that he said to her that he was coming to her party in the evening—that he went accordingly, Dr Robertson also being present. To which I added, as a remark of my own, that such conduct appeared to me, in the circumstances, to be very strange, as Mr Liston was not in the practice of visiting her; that it seemed to show on his part a disposition to provoke, and to indicate on the part of Miss Willis, either a facility which is liable to be imposed upon, or a levity which encouraged advances, which prudence, in the circumstances, would have forbidden. I was not aware that your family was present, as you did not mention the circumstance; neither could I declare with certainty whether you was there or no.

You say in your letter, that what you stated to me in conversation was given in confidence. This is certainly true in reference to one thing you mentioned. There you bound me to secrecy, and I gave you my promise; but with regard to other matters, I consider myself as placed under no obligation, but left at liberty to make a prudent and friendly use of the information you communicated, in any way that may contribute to your benefit, or the good of the other party concerned.

I have told you already what was my object in reporting to Mr Syme part of your conversation. It certainly implies no hostility towards you, and it discovers nothing but kindness towards him. The information might do good; it could scarce-

ly do harm. He received it with perfect calmness. He assured me that he would not allow himself to be carried away by irritation, and I expected to hear no more about it.

While I thus justify my intentions, I maintain that I have adhered strictly to truth. To me facts are precious, and I cannot intentionally misrepresent them. The knowledge of them can never be injurious to the innocent. No man who is ignorant of them is capable of judging or acting with propriety; and by making Mr Syme acquainted with the facts of the present case, I have placed him in a condition in which he can form an opinion of the conduct of others, and adopt such measures as are safe for himself.

Allow me to say, that I am very sorry in being the occasion of giving you uneasiness, and I hope that these matters will soon be comfortably settled.—I am,

Dear Doctor,

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. B.

My object in sending you this copy is to prepare you for the answer you are likely to receive. It would have been well if you had spoken to me before taking any measures. I hope you will bring the matter to an issue soon.

Yours always,

(Signed) JOHN BELFRAGE.

Mr Syme having satisfied himself that these statements were unfounded, * and that the gentleman there alluded to had been brought to the lady's house by Mrs Mackintosh without her previous knowledge or sanction, deliberated what course he should follow. The quarter from which he had received the information, and the motives with which it was communicated, as well as his wish to avoid bringing forward private names, made him unwilling to give the circumstances greater publicity. He therefore contented himself with causing the lady to be made

* The lady never met or spoke to Mr Liston on the street; and, previous to his being brought to her house by Mrs Mackintosh, had never been in company with him, except at Mrs Mackintosh's.

acquainted * with what had occurred, that she might consider whether she could with propriety continue her acquaintance with Dr Mackintosh's family. On this being done, she was sensible that she ought to discontinue that acquaintance ; and, thinking it best to convey intimation of this by writing to Mrs Mackintosh, applied to Mr Syme to furnish her with a draft of a letter. With that request he complied. Of the draft he has not preserved a copy, but, to the best of his recollection, it was in the following terms :—

Miss Willis having reflected on the circumstances of Mrs M.'s visit on Tuesday last, and on what has been reported to her since of Dr Mackintosh's conduct in regard to it, feels herself under the painful necessity of discontinuing all intercourse with Dr Mackintosh's family.

Monday.

This note was sent on the morning of Monday the 24th of September. It was then thought proper to acquaint her brother-in-law, Mr Fraser, with what had taken place.†

* The lady had been made acquainted by her sister with the circumstances before Mr Syme saw her. Before expressing his own opinion he asked her what she felt it right to do ? She replied, " Certainly to have nothing more to do with the Mackintoshes," adding, " that this had been her first impression at the time of the extraordinary visit ; and that she deeply regretted having departed from it in consequence of the solicitation of Mrs Mackintosh, together with her assurance that the circumstance should be carefully concealed from Mr Syme." Mr Syme expressed his satisfaction at her taking this view of the case ; and stated, that, unless she had done so, he could not any longer have recognized her as connected with his family. As to the threats mentioned and darkly insinuated by Dr Mackintosh, he utterly disclaims and denies them. He begged the lady to consider well what she was about to do, and warned her not to take the step she proposed, unless she felt it to be called for by the *visit*, independently of Dr Mackintosh's statements at Slateford, which he had a presentiment would be soon retracted. She assured Mr Syme that such was her distinct understanding, and requested his assistance in expressing by letter her resolution to Mrs Mackintosh. After a good deal of solicitation, he wrote the copy of a note, which is the only part of his conduct not approved of by his friends, and which, in deference to their judgment, he regrets. The lady having approved of the note, proposed to commence it with " My dear Mrs Mackintosh," to which Mr Syme objected, as being inconsistent, and again advised her to write a note of her own in any terms that she thought proper.

† The object of communicating the circumstances to Mr Fraser, was to show that gentleman the reason which existed for not inviting the lady to his house with the family of Dr Mackintosh, and for not in any way leading her to resume any

On the morning of Wednesday the 26th, Mr Syme received the following letter from Dr Mackintosh :—

*31, Albany Street, Tuesday night,
25th September 1832.*

SIR,

Had I been told by Dr Belfrage that any one had traduced the character of my sister-in-law, I would not have allowed the sun to go down before the individual had done her justice, and made every atonement female delicacy could require. But, had I believed that her character had been purposely sullied, not to injure her, but that it might be communicated to me to wound my feelings in the most tender point, I would have taken such immediate steps as would at once have repaired the injured reputation of my sister-in-law, vindicated the honour of my family, and exposed a miscreant to public odium.

I believe any person in the situation of a gentleman, and possessing the feelings and spirit of a man, would act in a similar manner. But what did you do? You have said that you put the worst of these constructions on my conduct—that you were never so angry in your life; but, being afraid to seek any explanation from me, you contented yourself with making a petticoat job of it. The young lady was summoned into your mighty presence, you wreaked your vengeance on her in various ways, and after the shedding of showers of tears, you extorted a promise that she would write to Mrs Mackintosh, declining any further intercourse with my family. A letter was penned with your own hand, which Miss Willis was to copy: The precious original document I have seen. This measure was again insisted on the following day after Miss Willis had been made fully sensible that I and my family were quite innocent of any insult to her honour and delicacy; and that the whole story originated in some misunderstanding on the part of Dr Belfrage, quite unintentional on his part or mine. Yet she

intercourse with them. Mr Fraser promised that she should not be interfered with; and then said, that he thought Dr Mackintosh should be called to account for his conduct; to which Mr Syme replied, that, in his opinion, it was quite unnecessary to do so, as the lady would be best vindicated by being recognized in his family; and as no explanation on the part of Dr Mackintosh could make any difference in the terms on which he had previously been with that gentleman.

was treated by you with the cruel alternative of being cut off for ever from her sister's society and *your generosity*, or sending the letter to my family ! She most reluctantly determined to do the latter, and had no sooner done so, than she repented.

In the meanwhile, as you had, as you thought, carried all your plans so nicely and quietly with the ladies, you were still afraid to meddle with me ; but, like the monkey in the fable, tried to use the cat's paw to save your own fingers. In fact, you sent Mrs Syme to induce Mr Fraser to undertake the more dangerous and difficult task, of bringing me to an account, for having injured the reputation of your mutual sister-in-law. I shall leave it to Mr Fraser to tell you how the affair has ended, and how many wounds he has received in the conflict.

The only object I have in view at present, is to assure you that I would inflict personal chastisement on you, for the base motives and conduct you have attributed to me in this affair, and for the injurious expressions you used when speaking of me to Mr Fraser on Monday, were it not for reasons which, it is to be hoped, you will feel and appreciate. I may mention, in conclusion, lest you should have any doubt of the authenticity of this letter, that it is written by my left hand, my right being disabled.—I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
(Signed) JOHN MACKINTOSH.

After some preliminary consultation, * Mr Syme requested his friends Dr Badenach, Surgeon to the Forces, and Dr Sharpey, to act for him, giving them full powers, and expressing his anxiety that they might bring the matter to a conclusion as speedily as possible.

It was arranged that Dr Sharpey should wait upon Dr Mackintosh, which he did, first at half past two o'clock, and after-

* Dr Mackintosh has alleged that Mr Syme hesitated in seeking redress. Mr Syme received the letter by the penny post a little before ten o'clock on Wednesday morning ; and having resolved to place himself in the hands of Dr Badenach, called upon that gentleman, who, he found, had gone to the Castle. Mr Syme immediately followed him there, and, within an hour after receiving the letter, arranged that he and Dr Sharpey should bring the matter to a conclusion.

wards at seven o'clock the same evening. The following are the minutes of these interviews :

Dr Sharpey waited on Dr Mackintosh at half-past two o'clock on Wednesday the 26th September 1832, on the part of Mr Syme, and required an apology from him, for having written a letter addressed to Mr Syme, dated the previous night, and stated, that, on Dr M.'s doing so, Mr S. was prepared to admit, that his having dictated the note alluded to was inconsiderate, and that he regretted his having done so.

Dr Mackintosh declined making any apology, on which Dr Sharpey requested Dr Mackintosh to name a friend, with whom Dr S. might arrange. This Dr Mackintosh declined doing.

After some conversation, Dr Mackintosh made the following proposal: " If Mr Syme will say that he regrets having acted " as he did in the first instance, and if all restrictions be taken " off from Miss Willis' actions, that Dr M. will say that he re- " grets having written the letter."

[*This in inverted commas was minuted at the time.*]

Dr Mackintosh stated that this was the only proposal he would listen to; and, on Dr Sharpey's again requesting him to name a friend, he refused to do so. He further stated, that he would not even have made that proposal, had it not been on account of ladies' names being unpleasantly introduced, and old recollections.

Dr M. was obliged to leave town immediately after this interview, and said that he would return again at six in the evening.

Dr S. again called upon Dr Mackintosh at seven, at which meeting the above minute was written by Dr S., as his distinct understanding of what took place at the previous meeting,—Dr Mackintosh also assenting to the same with this difference: That Dr M.'s impression of Dr S.'s proposal was, that Mr Syme requested an apology for the letter, and that, on this being given, he, Mr Syme, was prepared to express his regret for his conduct in the matter which led to the letter; under which impression, Dr M. now states that he made his proposal.

W. SHARPEY.

JOHN MACKINTOSH.

The above minute being written out and signed, Dr Sharpey stated, that Mr Syme declines Dr M.'s proposal, and again calls on Dr Mackintosh to apologize for the letter which Dr M. wrote to Mr Syme ; on Dr M. doing which, Mr S. is prepared to admit that he regrets having dictated the note alluded to by Dr Mackintosh,

To this Dr Mackintosh gave a positive refusal ; and stated, that taking Mr Syme's conduct into view from the beginning of the affair until now, when he has refused so reasonable an offer as the one made by Dr Mackintosh to Dr S. at three o'clock, he declines appointing a friend, or treating Mr Syme any longer as a gentleman, for the following reasons :

1st, Mr Syme did not call upon him to account for his conduct, when he supposed he had acted in such an infamous manner towards his sister in-law and towards Mr Syme, in having traduced the character of the lady, not to injure her alone, but that it might be reported to Mr Syme to injure his feelings. If he had done so, the explanation could have been readily afforded,—that the whole story originated in a misapprehension of Dr Belfrage, and that Dr Belfrage has since completely exonerated Dr Mackintosh to Mr Fraser, who waited on Dr Belfrage on the part of the lady, and Dr Robertson on the part of Dr Mackintosh.

2dly, Because Mr Syme insulted the honour of his family in a covert way, by writing the note for Miss Willis to copy, thus making her the instrument of conveying the insult.

3dly, Because, although he would have given Mr Syme the satisfaction of a gentleman if he had sought it in proper time, he will not now consent to place his body unnecessarily as a target, upon which Mr Syme may try to restore his lost honour.

(Signed)

J. MACKINTOSH.

Note by Dr SHARPEY.

Dr Mackintosh having signed his statement of reasons, declared that he would hear no more on the subject that evening. Dr S. remonstrated against this, and required to be permitted

to minute a reply which he assured Dr M. he had full power to do without further consultation with Mr Syme's friends,—at the same telling him that he considered the reasons assigned by him to afford no ground for refusing Mr Syme satisfaction for the letter; that the statement of them could only be looked on by that gentleman as insulting to him; and that, if Dr M. persisted in his resolution to refuse satisfaction, he must abide the consequences. To which Dr M. replied that he was prepared to do so. While Mr S. was writing a memorandum to the above effect, Dr M. bade him good night, and left the room.

It was late when this last meeting ended. Mr Syme's friends felt some difficulty in determining what steps should next be taken in circumstances so unexpected; and as Mr Syme was under a call to go to the country early next morning, and as there was no prospect of his presence being immediately required, it was thought unnecessary to detain him. They ultimately determined, that, on Mr Syme's return from the country, he should be advised to address a letter to Dr Mackintosh, couched in such terms as his conduct might seem to him to require.

Mr Syme returned at three o'clock on the morning of Friday the 28th, and at eight o'clock A. M. sent the following letter:—

*2, Forres Street, 28th September,
Friday Morning.*

SIR,

You have refused to grant me satisfaction for the insulting expressions contained in your letter of the 25th of September. Therefore, the only resort left me is to tell you that you have forfeited all claim to the character of a gentleman and a man of honour.—I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) JAMES SYME.

I was in a distant part of the country yesterday, and did not reach town till three o'clock this morning.

(Signed) J. S.

Dr Robertson called at the Surgical Hospital about eleven o'clock, and stated, that he came from Dr Mackintosh. Mr

Syme replied, that, in that case, his proper course would be to communicate with Dr Sharpey. Dr Robertson said, that he had no authority from Dr Mackintosh to communicate with any one but Mr Syme himself,—that he held in his hand a letter sealed and addressed to Dr Mackintosh by Mr S., which he was instructed to return. He added, that he had not been consulted in the affair farther than as to the disposal of the letter in question, which he had advised to be returned on account of the delay between the time of its being received by Dr Mackintosh, and Dr Sharpey's last communication with Dr Mackintosh. The following note was written upon the cover:—
 “ Given into Dr Mackintosh's hand at half-past nine on Friday
 “ morning, and sent to Dr Robertson immediately with the seal
 “ unbroken.

(Signed) “ J. MACKINTOSH.”

Mr Syme stated, that he did not consider it right to enter into explanations with Dr Robertson, but that he could not refrain from telling him, that he had gone to a distant part of the country at eight o'clock on the previous morning,—that he did not return till three o'clock that morning,—and that the letter was sent to Dr Mackintosh at eight. *

A few copies of this Statement, without note or comment of any kind, were circulated among Mr Syme's friends. Dr Mackintosh has thought proper to print it, together with a laboured defence, the object of which is to show that he was justified in refusing Mr Syme satisfaction for his extraordinary letter. This Dr Mackintosh attempts to do by trying to make it appear, that Mr Syme constrained the lady to discontinue her intercourse with Dr Mackintosh's family,—that he did so on the ground of the imputations thrown upon her conduct by Dr Mackintosh at Slateford,—and that Dr Belfrage had completely exonerated him from all blame on this account. Granting that Dr Mackintosh had established all these positions, the laws of

* Mr Syme went to Jedburgh, and, in returning, was detained at Melrose, by being taken to see another patient at some distance, in a different direction.

honour would have afforded him no excuse for refusing Mr Syme satisfaction ; since no law recognizes the principle, that the perpetration of one offence protects the offender against punishment for a second. But there is not one of these positions established on truth. The discontinuance of acquaintance was the lady's own proposal,—the ground for it was the liberty taken with her by Mrs Mackintosh, in bringing the uninvited guest to her house,—and that Dr Belfrage had not exonerated Dr Mackintosh will appear from the subjoined Statement.

Dr Mackintosh has committed the following errors :

1. Making an untrue and injurious statement at Slateford.
2. Sending Mr Syme a most atrociously insulting letter.
3. Making himself the judge of his own cause, and refusing to name a friend who might have entered into the merits of the case with Dr Sharpey.
4. Refusing on his own responsibility to give Mr Syme satisfaction.
5. Publishing to the world that Dr Belfrage had exonerated him, while he had in his own possession a letter from that gentleman, distinctly insisting upon his own accuracy.

Any comment upon these delinquences would be superfluous ; and Mr Syme considers it unmanly to apply harsh epithets to an individual in the situation of Dr Mackintosh.

STATEMENT by Dr BELFRAGE.

Slateford, 18th October 1832.

After having this morning perused very cursorily the printed statement which Dr Mackintosh is circulating among his friends, I was strongly impressed with a conviction that every one who reads it, and who has not otherwise become acquainted with the circumstances, will draw from it the following conclusions :

1. That the whole affair reported to me by Dr M., and of which I gave an account to Mr Syme, relates to a young lady with whom the latter is connected—that I had no good reason for making any communication on the subject—and that, therefore it ought to have been suppressed.

2. That the account which I gave of what was told me by Dr M. was incorrect, and that I am now sensible it was so ; and

3. That I have retracted, in the presence of Dr Robertson

and Mr Fraser, all that I had previously said, and expressed my regret for the rash and foolish part I had acted.

I have no hesitation in asserting, that these conclusions are as false as they are injurious ; and, notwithstanding my extreme reluctance to meddle with strife not belonging to me, and to have my name coupled, however remotely, with a transaction which I regard with abhorrence, yet a regard to truth, as well as to character, obliges me to come fearlessly forward, and to make the following counter-statement :

The conversation out of which so much trouble is said to have arisen took place at Slateford on Friday the 21st September. On that day Dr Mackintosh, whom I had not seen in my house for many months, did me the honour to call upon me ; and as a serious misunderstanding had, during the interval, taken place between him and Mr Syme, he seemed anxious, by giving me a minute narrative of the causes which led to it, to remove from my mind any impression unfavourable to himself. He mentioned that it was all owing to Mr Syme's conduct in regard to Dr Robertson,—that he acted towards that gentleman most unhandsomely, in furnishing him with a testimonial calculated to invalidate rather than support his pretensions, while he had given to a rival candidate a certificate of the most flattering description. On this part of his statement I remarked, that I did not see how Mr Syme could be blamed, inasmuch as he had intimated to the parties that he wished to have no concern in the matter, and had written testimonials only when he was forced to abandon the neutral ground he desired to occupy, and had then fairly and honestly expressed the opinion he had formed of the qualifications possessed by those gentlemen. To this Dr M. replied, with great emphasis, that it was not an *honest opinion* that Mr Syme had given,—that he had been influenced in the whole affair by a selfish policy,—that he would soon have cause to repent of what he had done,—that it was quite certain he would *go down in no long time*,—that, in consequence of arrangements already made, and others which were contemplated, it would be seen that his class would fall off this winter—that his practice would decline—that his nearest friends would desert him,—and that a circumstance had recently occurred from which I might judge how matters were going, and which,

he was sure, would exasperate Mr S. prodigiously. Here he told me how Mr L. had met Miss W. on the street, said to her that he was coming to her party in the evening, and that he went accordingly, Dr R. also being present. All this, and a great deal more, Dr M. stated without the smallest hesitation, in the hearing of two individuals, members of my family, as well as of myself. After he was gone, we talked for some time over what we had heard, expressing our regret that Mr S. should be regarded with such hostile feelings,—our conviction that a conspiracy was formed to do him every possible injury,—and our desire that he should be apprized of what was going on, that he might adopt measures for his own safety. It is not easy to determine what is the duty of a friend on such an occasion. Men are found to act very differently. Some yield to the impulse of generosity, others follow the dictates of prudence. The former are willing to make any sacrifice in the cause of friendship; the latter are only anxious to save themselves from trouble. Though I had yet come to no resolution as to the course I would pursue, I confess that I was much more disposed to act a generous than a selfish part. Such was the state of my mind when Mr Syme called upon me on the evening of the following day; and then, as is stated in my letter of the 24th to Dr M., “while your conversation was still fresh in my memory, and being well assured that there existed a disposition in a certain quarter to annoy him, I considered it to be my duty, as Mr Syme’s friend, to make him acquainted with a proceeding of which he was likely soon to hear, and which could not fail to give him uneasiness. I thought it probable, that, if he came to the knowledge of it incidentally, or if it was communicated to him in a distorted and aggravated form, it might provoke him to have recourse to some rash measures; and my object in communicating to him the information was to prevent surprise—to put him on his guard—to soothe the irritation of his mind—and to dissuade him from yielding to the impulse of resentment.”

As Dr M. was led to correspond with me on the 24th, in consequence of his having been called to account for what he had said respecting Miss W. it is easy to see that this was the only subject on which I was required to report in my let-

ter; but in my conversation with Mr Syme on the 22d, the conduct of that young lady was hardly in any degree an object of attention. It called forth only one passing remark,—it was the part that others were acting on the occasion,—it was the attempt they were making, through the medium of this near family connection, to insult Mr Syme, to mortify and annoy him, with which I wished to make him acquainted; and when I mentioned that there appeared to me the strongest evidence of a conspiracy to do him injury, and that the above was only one of the numerous measures resorted to in order to destroy his peace, his respectability and success in life, it will not perhaps be thought that I proceeded inconsiderately and rashly on the occasion, or that I was actuated by the love of tattle and of mischief, but that I was influenced by a generous concern for Mr Syme's welfare, and that I would not have been his friend if I had withheld from him the communication I made.

The second conclusion which will be drawn from the Statement is, that the account which I gave of what was told me by Dr M. was incorrect, and that I am now sensible it was so. It is said, Statement, p. 21, "Dr M. assured Dr Sharpey, that he had been completely exonerated by Dr B., upon whose *erroneous statement* the whole business was founded;" and again, p. 14, "the Reverend Gentleman is now satisfied that he took up erroneous impressions of what Dr M. had said." Here two assertions are made, and of the one I would say, its truth is not yet proved; and with regard to the other, of the truth of which I alone am competent to judge, I most decidedly and solemnly deny it. How does it appear that my statement was erroneous? Is it enough to determine the point that Dr M. says so? Certainly not, unless his testimony (and he is a party in this case,) be entitled to more credit than that of the opposite party together with that of another individual who was present on the occasion, and who must be sustained as a competent and impartial witness. Dr M. has indeed declared, that he never heard that Mr L. had met Miss W. on the street, and that Miss W. encouraged his visits, and therefore never could have said that such was the case. Though the truth of the premises be admitted, it is not easy to see the legitimacy of the conclusion. Dr M. here shelters himself under the plea of impossibility.

He surely does not mean physical impossibility ; for unquestionably every man is liable to commit what is called a *lapsus linguæ*, and it is in the power of every individual, if he chooses, to make a partial, an exaggerated, or erroneous statement. If he means a moral impossibility, that arises from a combination of circumstances too numerous to be mentioned at present, such as the value which a person attaches to truth, and the sense he entertains of the obligations under which he lies strictly to adhere to it. It is well known that some regard it as a matter of very little importance—that they hold it to be lawful in certain circumstances to violate it,—that they consider it enough if they are correct in the great leading particulars,—and that they are quite at liberty to embellish the minutest details to any extent necessary to give effect to the narrative. Here I wish to insinuate nothing to the prejudice of Dr M. How it stands with him in these respects there are others far more able to judge than I am, and most willingly do I leave the question to their arbitration.

But it is easy to see that little ingenuity is required on my part to get up a plea of precisely the same kind. When Dr M. was gone, after his long and unfortunate communication of the 21st ult. a distinct impression remained on my mind that Mr L. met Miss W. on the street, and said that he was coming to her party in the evening, and that he went accordingly. A similar impression was felt by a member of my family who was present. Both of us traced it to the information which we had just received from Dr M. To what other cause *could* we refer it? We had seen no other person ;—we had not time to dream ;—we are not in the habit of mistaking the creations of fancy for the impressions of memory. The facts were few in number,—of a kind not to be easily misapprehended,—and they were reported to Mr S. in the course of twenty-four hours. How, in such a case, could the error have originated with us? That precisely the same impression should have been made on the minds of two individuals by the same conversation, when in that conversation there was nothing to produce it, is very strange. The effect could not take place without a cause, and if the cause be not what we have assigned, it will be impossible to find any other consistent with the laws which govern human nature, unless Dr M. has the boldness

to assert, that we have agreed to utter a deliberate falsehood; or if, from such a charge, our oath and our known character for more than thirty years are insufficient to protect us, we can entrust the vindication of our nature to a higher Judge and the award of a more solemn tribunal.

After what I have now stated, it is needless to add, that I distinctly deny the truth of the assertion made by Dr M., “ that the Reverend Gentleman is now satisfied that he took up an erroneous impression of what Dr M. had said.” It appears to me very strange that such a sentence should have been allowed to enter into the Statement which is now in circulation. Dr M. had addressed to me a very polite note dated 2d October, in which, among other things, he says: “ It will vex me much, if, “ through this affair, our friendly intercourse shall cease. Whether it shall do so or not, I shall ever entertain the kindest “ recollection of you and yours, and of the many happy hours “ spent in your society.” In reply to this letter I wrote to him on the 9th October, saying, “ that, though I disliked extremely “ any thing that had the appearance of artifice and reserve, “ that prudence told me that it was better, in the present circumstances, to be silent;” to which I added, “ I therefore “ leave the case with you, so far as I am concerned in it, without comment, referring you to my letter of the 24th September, which contains both my statement and apology. That a “ mistake, a very serious mistake, has occurred, is unquestionable; but whether it has originated with you or with me, is “ a matter which may not be easily determined. If ever the “ question is settled, it must be not by a reference to presumptive circumstances, but by an appeal to direct evidence.” Here I explicitly adhere to my original statement, and refer obviously to direct evidence which I was able to bring forward in support of it, and of this letter Dr M. was certainly in possession on the 10th current, at the very time when he was writing his pamphlet, or when the proof-sheets were submitted to his correction, as it was not published till the 13th. I ask, then, how, in such circumstances, the Doctor could deliberately assert that the Reverend Gentleman was now satisfied that he took up an erroneous impression of what Dr M. had said. I confess that I am surprised and staggered, and grieved to find him ca-

pable of making such an assertion, while my letter was lying before him. There are only two ways in which I can account for his conduct. The one is, that the Doctor has printed and circulated among his friends what is false, knowing it to be false. The other is, (and it is the more favourable hypothesis,) that he had no recollection at the moment of what I had written ; but, if his memory failed him in an instance so recent and so remarkable, is it at all unreasonable to suppose, that he must have forgotten in a great measure the particulars of the long, desultory, and unfortunate conversation which he had with me on the 21st ult. and that he is incapable of bearing testimony on the subject ?

The last conclusion which will be drawn from the statement is, that I have retracted, in the presence of Dr Robertson and Mr Fraser, all that I had previously said, and expressed my regret for the rash part that I had acted. I do not say that this is expressly asserted ; but it is the impression which the language will convey to the mind of a careless reader. See p. 21. It is usual, when a conversation is recorded, that the minute is written at the time in the presence of the parties, and subject to their correction, and it is not considered to be complete, till all are satisfied with its accuracy. One would therefore have expected, that Dr Robertson and Mr Fraser would have observed this mode of proceeding ; or, if they chose to draw up a minute of our conversation after they left me, that they would have transmitted to me a copy of it, and waited my correction before they sent it to the printer. But they pursued a course widely different. They were satisfied with manufacturing something that would please their employers, and the production of their art never came under my inspection till I met with it in the printed Statement ; and, now that I have seen it, I have to complain that it does not give an accurate account of the *res gestæ*, but that it is vague, partial, ambiguous, and calculated to mislead. It is said, “ that I exonerated Dr M. from all intention of creating upon my mind an impression injurious to any party concerned in the matter.” Here the minute is vague and far too general. I look upon Mr Syme as a party principally concerned in the matter ; and assuredly Dr M. said what was both intended and calculated to make an impression on my mind

very injurious to him. But this was no part of the subject of my conversation with the above gentlemen. The question they put to me was, Did Dr M. show any hostile disposition towards Miss W., or any wish to injure her character? My answer was, None; that he seemed to entertain for her a very high respect; but that the particulars which he inconsiderately narrated respecting her had led me to form the opinion which is expressed in my letter to him of the 24th ult.

It is said farther, that Dr B. was now convinced that the impression which he entertained previously of the whole circumstances was erroneous. Here the minute is defective. It says I was convinced, but it does not state how, or to what extent. Dr Robertson, who was an eye-witness, related to me distinctly the particulars of the case. I told him that I gave full credit to his testimony; that I was now satisfied that the facts were quite different from what Dr M. had represented; that it was quite possible for the Doctor to have fallen into a mistake, as he was not an eye-witness, but merely a reporter like myself; that he might have received incorrect information; that he might have misapprehended some parts of the story, or have given an inaccurate account of them; but whether it was so or not, I felt assured that I had reported the case as it had been told me; and that my recollection of it was so distinct, and that my impressions were so deeply rooted, that it was impossible for me, in justice to my own mind, or consistently with truth, to give any other account of Dr M.'s conversation than I had done. Why was not this entered in the minute? Was it not possible for these gentlemen to do justice to others, without doing injury to me, or, at least, exposing my conduct to all kinds of conjecture and abuse?

It is mentioned, in fine, that "Dr B. regretted having communicated these erroneous impressions to Mr Syme." If by this it is meant to affirm, that I expressed sorrow for having apprized Mr Syme of the hostile measures that were carrying on against him; for having reported to him what Dr M. had stated to me; the minute is most incorrect, and altogether calculated to deceive. I did no such thing. The case was simply thus: I mentioned to Dr R. and Mr F. that I had told Mr Syme, in a letter which I addressed to him on the 24th ult., that it would

have been well if he had consulted me before having recourse to farther measures,—that I was now willing to extend this remark to myself,—and that it would have been well, now that I knew the consequences that had followed on the inaccuracy of the information which Dr M. had imparted to me,—if I had sought and found an opportunity of conversing with the Doctor again, as the subject being then brought anew before his mind, he might have been led to see and correct the error which he had fallen into; and that thus the case in its corrected form would have been conveyed to Mr S., and much mischief have been prevented; and now I am disposed to extend this remark still farther, and to add, that it would have been well for Dr R. and Mr F. if they had submitted their minute to my inspection before sending it to the press, as, in that case, I would now have been saved the trouble of exposing its vagueness, its ambiguity, and its tendency to mislead; and would have had no cause to complain of the disorderly procedure, and of the unhandsome and unjust manner in which, in this instance, they have acted towards me. I have done, with adding only one sentence more. Deeply as I regret the use which has been made of the information I gave, and the consequences that have resulted from it, for neither of which I am responsible,—I am gladdened by the consciousness that, in the whole affair, I have been actuated by pure and benevolent motives,—that I have strictly adhered to truth, and am not aware that I have felt unkindly, or acted unjustly, towards any party concerned.

JOHN BELFRAGE.

P. S.—I am sensible that there are some readers to whom this statement will appear unnecessarily minute. There are others, however, to whom its particularity will be its chief commendation; for, as Dr Paley has remarked, there is always some truth where there is considerable particularity.

J. B.

STATEMENT by Dr SHARPEY.

Dr Mackintosh in his Statement has made some observations on the manner in which I acted, which are calculated to convey an erroneous impression of my conduct, and of what took place. To reply to these in particular is unnecessary, and would only withdraw attention from the main facts of the case. There is, however, one assertion which I think it proper to correct, namely, that I had taken offence when none was given, and made a threat which I did not fulfil. What really happened was this:—When Dr M. had signed his reasons of refusal, I wished to write down something in reply of the same tenor as what I subsequently told him verbally, and then to have the minutes regularly closed, and signed by us both. This I was prevented from doing by Dr M. who took up his own copy of the minute, and declared he would hear no more on the subject till next morning. On my remonstrating with him, he declared, that, if I had written any thing more, he would have destroyed it,—spoke of his own superior knowledge of such matters,—and alluded, as I conceived, to my inexperience, in a tone and in terms which I felt to be offensive to me. I confess that I was then irritated, and told him that he showed a disposition to give me an affront, which I should be forced to resent. On this he said he meant no sort of offence to me, and on my reminding him of his expressions, he explained, that I had mistaken their tendency. This is a correct account of the cause of the threat, and the way it terminated.

W. SHARPEY.