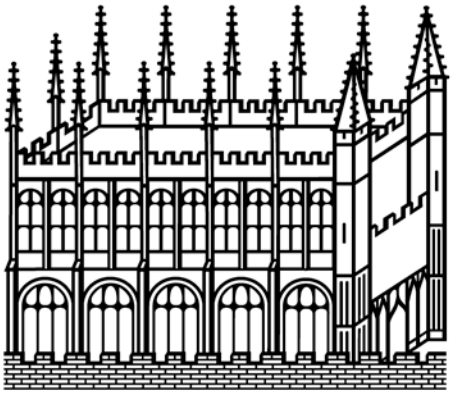

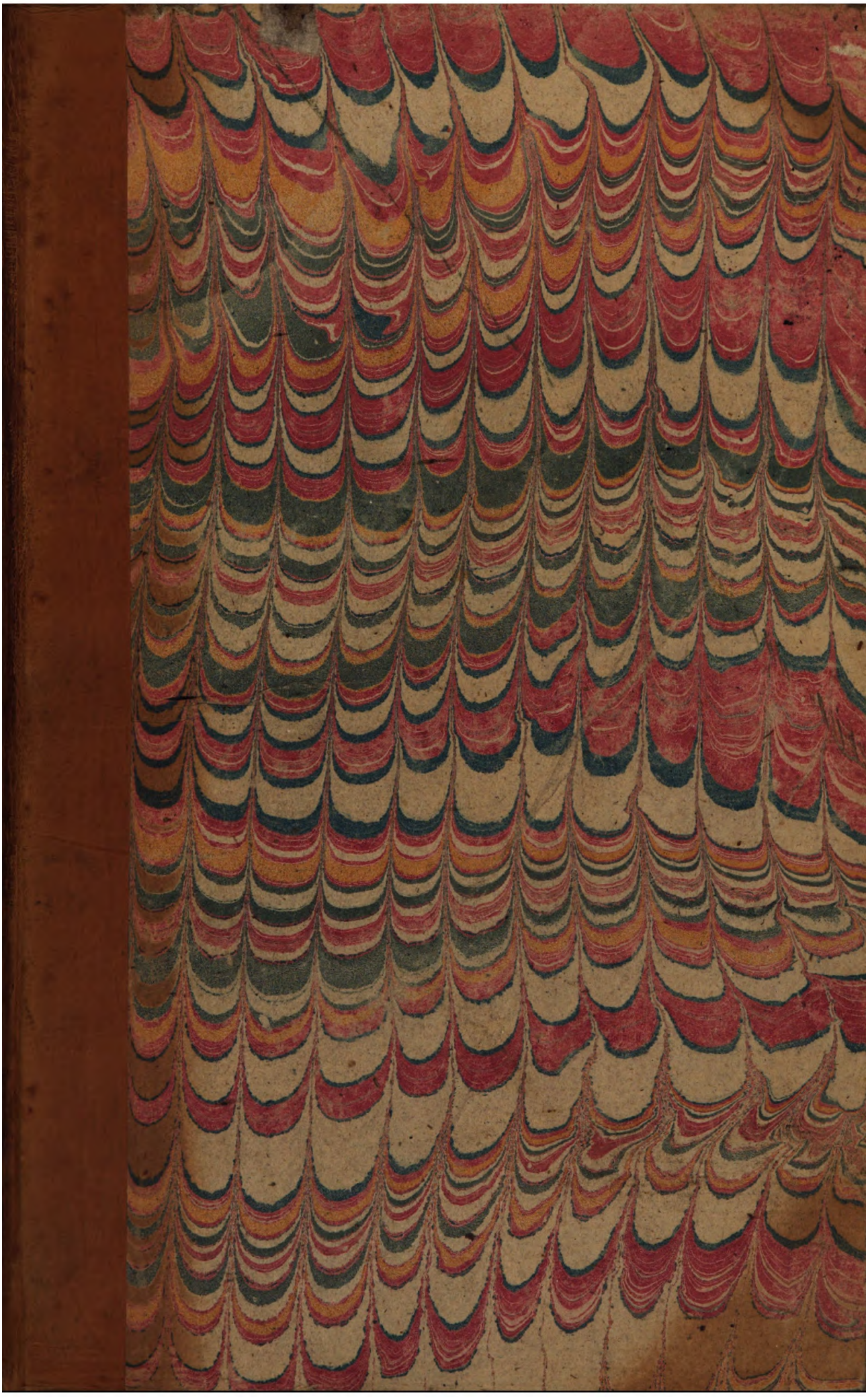

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OBSERVATIONS

ON

MEDICAL EDUCATION,

WITH A VIEW TO

LEGISLATIVE INTERFERENCE.

BY RICHARD JONES,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, LICENTIATE OF THE APOTHECARIES' HALL, AND LATE OF THE HONOURABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SERVICE.

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. SIR ROBERT PEEL, BART.

&c. &c. &c.

SIR,

I FEEL myself much honoured and obliged by the permission of dedicating to a person, so distinguished as yourself, the following observations on the education of medical men :—First, because the commanding position, which you occupy in the legislature of the country, gives you the greatest possible facility for carrying into effect any measure of which you approve, and in which the rancour of party spirit is not involved. And, secondly, because I feel more than satisfied in confiding the destinies of the medical profession to him, who could declare, in the House of Commons, "that, for the enlightened views, pure philanthropy, and liberal feelings of medical men, generally, he felt so much respect, that he did not hesitate to pronounce them a blessing to their native land, and an honour to humanity."

Influenced by admiration of the just and generous spirit, which gave utterance to these sentiments, I have ventured to request the permission which you have so readily granted; and, sincerely desirous that my profession may be rendered still more worthy of your approbation,

I have the honour to be, Sir,
With feelings of the highest
And most grateful consideration,
Your most humble
And obedient servant,
R. JONES.

Leamington, Oct. 22, 1839.

OBSERVATIONS,

&c. &c. &c.

In submitting the following observations, on medical education, to the public, it may, perhaps, be expected that I should advert to the preparatory studies of youth, and to the principles by which they should be, in all cases, directed. This, however, for my present purpose, is by no means necessary; since my object principally refers to the legislative enforcement of that test of capability, which presupposes the introductory and subsequent portions of education to be proper and sufficient of themselves, and, on the part of the medical student, to have been fully completed.

It is a remarkable fact in the history of legislation, that, whilst year after year has witnessed the revision of the interminable code of laws, which fill and embarrass our statute-book, no attempt has been made to improve, or even so much as to re-

view, those, upon which so much of the general welfare depends, as the preservation of health. This may, indeed, be considered extremely complimentary to the profession, as affording strong evidence of the estimation in which it is held by the public; yet it seems hardly justifiable to intrust to the influence of moral and discretionary feeling alone the discharge of duties, often so difficult in themselves, and always of so much serious consequence to mankind.

Setting aside, however, this moral view of the subject, it is manifestly the duty of the legislature to afford every possible protection to the public, under the peculiar circumstances, characterizing the medical profession. Such, for instance, are the powerful nature of the remedies employed—these remedies being in many cases carefully concealed—and the whole subject of the treatment of diseases being one, on which the public are very little capable of judging.* To prove this to himself, let any individual consider, whether he can determine that a protracted illness is to be attributed to the want of skill on the part of the medical attendant—or to the malignity of the disease under which the subject of inquiry is suffering? Such an

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* "The public are no judges of professional merit, and, in the present day, with some brilliant exceptions, give station to practitioners rather in accordance with their birth, parentage, and education, than with any reference to their powers of curing disease." —*Medical Gazette*, June 8.

inquiry can, indeed, only be answered by a reference to the general character of his professional friend, and to his standing in public estimation; and this is not always a correct method, by which the possession of medical knowledge can be ascertained. Under these circumstances, is it not highly necessary that the authority of legislation should be called upon to determine, whether equivocal and accidental circumstances, or the stringency of legal enactments, should henceforth be the public security against the dangers to which, in the great affair of health, all are momentarily exposed?

To remove or lessen these dangers, by pointing out their existence, and by directing towards them the serious attention of the public and the legislative body, is the principal object proposed in the following pages.

In the first place, however, it will be proper to state to the reader, uninformed on this subject, the manner in which the members of the three grades of the profession—Physician, Surgeon, and Apothecary—are admitted into it.

In the case of the first of these—the Physician, the attainment of a degree in medicine, conferring the title of M.D. or B.M., has, within these few years, been made to depend on fair and honourable examinations, subsequent, generally, to a very strict course of appropriate education.* All this is so

* The Scotch Universities of St. Andrew's and Aberdeen, where,

satisfactory, that no further interference of the legislature seems to be required—unless it be to compel physicians, under a heavy fine, to produce their degree before a competent authority—the magistrate, for instance, of the town, where they intend to practise, and to give them in return the legal right to recover their fees.

Surgeons, properly so called, second in rank, educated as they usually are, and possessing the Diploma of their College, may be considered so far competent to the practice of surgery. Of late years, too, the education required by the College, preparatory to their examination, is so strict, and the examination itself is conducted with so much care—to say nothing of the examiners being men of the highest standing in their profession—that here again the legislature is spared the necessity of interference—except, indeed, so far as to insist, under pains and penalties, that every professor of the art of surgery shall first obtain the Diploma of the College of Surgeons, in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen. It will scarcely be believed that no such law of compulsion exists, and that a man may or may not "pass the College," as it is termed, just as his own inclination or conve-

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formerly, degrees could be purchased, on the testimony of two medical men as to the fitness of the candidate, have wisely introduced a reform into their own body, partly by the interference of Lord Brougham.

nience may determine.* In short, there is no method of informing the public, satisfactorily and authoritatively, whether he does or does not possess the necessary qualification.

The Apothecary, the third grade of practitioners in the healing art, appears to be a distinction little coveted; whether from Shakspearian association,† or other causes, it may be difficult to determine. But as his peculiar province is the compounding of drugs, the legislature did step forward, in the year 1815, to prevent her Majesty's subjects from being poisoned by the mistakes of unqualified practitioners.

The Act declares that no individual shall *prescribe and sell* medicine, without being privileged by a license from the Apothecaries' Company in London. The general effect of this law would, no doubt, have been highly beneficial, if the facility, with which its provisions may be evaded, had not rendered it worse than useless. For, on the supposition, which naturally emanates from it, that this branch of the medical profession is under the especial cognizance of the legislature, the public, lulled into a state of faithless security, are led to neglect all those inquiries, which, otherwise, would be thought necessary.

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* "In England the *unlicensed* may practise physic and surgery with impunity, whilst it is most dangerous to be a contraband apothecary."—*Medical Gazette*, August 17, 1839.

† "I do remember an apothecary," &c.

Having thus glanced at some of the distinguishing circumstances, in the present state of the three several orders of the medical profession, I am relieved from the necessity of calling in question one single regulation, established either by the College of Surgeons, or by the Society of Apothecaries, respecting the candidates' qualification for examination, or the examination itself. To the credit of these two important institutions, very great improvements have lately taken place; and, except in one instance, hereafter to be mentioned, it would be difficult to imagine a more complete system of education, or one better calculated to insure to the public the inestimable qualifications of a well-educated medical man.

As it is one principal object of these pages, to urge, upon the attention of the legislature, the necessity of compelling medical candidates to pass examinations *both* at the Surgeons' College, and at Apothecaries' Hall—in order to place the subject clearly before the public, and to show the reasonableness of the legal enactment, now proposed, in consequence of the difference in the two modes of education, I will here institute a comparison between them.

The last-published regulations of the College of Surgeons, and of the Apothecaries' Company, are as follow:—

The Royal College of Surgeons requires every candidate to produce testimonials of having studied

anatomy and physiology, by attendance on lectures and demonstrations, and by dissections, during two anatomical seasons. An anatomical season extends from October to April inclusive; and is understood to comprise at least one hundred and forty lectures in anatomy and physiology, occupying not less than one hour each, given on separate days; and at least one hundred demonstrations of the like duration, given in a similar manner; exclusive of dissections, of which distinct certificates are required. Testimonials are also required of having attended at least two courses of lectures on surgery, delivered at two distinct periods, or seasons, each course to comprise not less than sixty lectures;—of having attended lectures on the practice of physic, on chemistry, and midwifery, during six months, comprising not less than sixty lectures respectively; and on botany and materia medica, during three months;—and of having attended, during twelve months, the surgical practice of a recognized hospital in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Aberdeen; or, for six months, at any one of such hospitals, and twelve months in any recognized provincial hospital.

The Society of Apothecaries order that the Winter Medical Sessions be understood as commencing on the 1st of October, and terminating in the middle of April, with a recess of fourteen days at Christmas; and the Summer session, as commencing on the 1st of May, and ending on the 31st

of July.—First Winter Session:—Chemistry, anatomy and physiology, anatomical demonstrations, materia medica, and therapeutics.—First Summer Session:—Botany, and such other branches of study as may improve the students' general education. Second Winter Session:—Anatomy and physiology, anatomical demonstrations, dissections; principles and practice of medicine; medical practice of an hospital. Second Summer Session:—Botany, if not attended during the first summer season; midwifery and diseases of women and children; forensic medicine; medical practice of an hospital. Third Winter Session:—Dissections; principles and practice of medicine; midwifery, with attendance on cases, medical practice of an hospital or dispensary. The student is further required to attend the medical practice of a recognized hospital, from the commencement of the second winter, to the termination of the second summer session; and from that time to the end of the third winter session at an hospital, or recognized dispensary.

On comparing the systems of education, prescribed by the two bodies, it is obvious, that, for all purposes of general practice, except the mere manual operations of surgery, the education of the apothecary is much superior to that of the surgeon; and yet the latter is considered so much above the former, that the name of an apothecary is now scarcely ever heard of. This, however,

can be no great matter of surprise to any one, who considers, even with all the advantages of their superior education, what is the distinction with which they are received, or the remuneration by which they are rewarded.*

In this enlightened age, it seems scarcely to be credited that apothecaries are so circumstanced, as to be in a manner compelled to have recourse to the disreputable expedient of sending their patients a large quantity of medicine, in the shape of draughts, pills, and powders, in order to recompense themselves; when the essential portion of their ingredients might have been contained in a single bottle. All this, however, is notoriously true, and admits of no small excuse, so long as they are without the privilege of legally charging for their attendance. For their visits in the country, indeed, they are now usually paid; and even in towns they frequently append, to their long list of items constituting their accounts, a small charge

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* "An eloquent writer," says Dr. Cowan, has remarked, "that of all professions and occupations in life, the medical man's is the worst recompensed. Whilst others have their splendid rewards from the government of their country; whilst the clergyman sees before him the sacred mitre, the lawyer the venerable ermine, nay, even the political adventurer may grasp the highest honours of the state, the medical man has no such *stimuli* to urge him on;—no resting-place after a long career of industry;—too often bestowing blessings, health and life around him, he sinks in unforgotten slumber to his grave."

"It is worthy of observation that medical practitioners have rather fallen in public estimation, whilst their real knowledge has been increasing."—*Med. Gazette*, June 8, 1839.

for their atteudance. But it is still a just cause of complaint that this charge for attendance is looked upon as an extra charge, and paid more as a matter of compliment than of right. Some legislative enactment is, therefore, required, to recognize the principle of small charges for each visit, that thus the materia medica may be wholly subservient, as it ought, to medical attendance.

Of late years, in large towns, where there are good chemical establishments, a preferable order of things has sprung up, in the custom of charging small fees for attendance, and sending the prescription to the druggist. Now this custom, for such merely it is, entirely unauthorized by law, bears so much resemblance to the case of physicians, that the title of *consulting surgeon* is now given to those who adopt it; and whose practice is always extended from their own province of surgeon, to that of the accoucheur and the apothecary, only differing from the general practitioner, in not compounding their own medicine. Hence it becomes, in the highest degree, necessary, that the examination at Apothecaries' Hall should be legally enforced upon *all* candidates, otherwise the more extended practice, just noticed, might be adopted by those who are totally ignorant of the nature of remedies, and of the treatment of internal diseases.

The necessity of enforcing the examination at Apothecaries' Hall will yet more strongly appear,

if we advert, once more, to the course of studies, prescribed by that body, *in addition* to the course prescribed by the College of Surgeons. This important extension of the plan of education requires one winter and one summer session to be devoted to the principles and practice of physic, and to medical attendance at an hospital—six months to midwifery, and the diseases of women and children, and especially, it should be noticed, to *attendance upon cases*—four months to botany, and such other studies as may be calculated to improve the student's general education—five months to materia medica—eight months to therapeutics—and four months to forensic medicine.

In framing the Apothecaries' Act, the legislature never could have contemplated the facility with which it may be evaded by the members of the College of Surgeons; since the possession of the diploma, failing to recognize the capability of treating internal diseases, carries with it the *appearance* of more than ordinary competency for it. Thus it runs—" Know all men by these presents, that we, the Court of Examiners of the Royal College of Surgeons, have deliberately examined Mr. ——, and have found him fit and capable to exercise the art of *surgery*. We therefore admit him a member of the College; and authorize him * to practise the said art accordingly," &c. &c.

* Without that authority, however, no man is forbidden to practise surgery, except by an old law, passed in the reign of Henry VIII., which is never acted upon.

Now the most liberal interpretation of the word *surgeon* implies the possession of no other knowledge, beyond such an acquaintance with anatomy as to enable him to perform operations without risking the loss of life, or the integrity of parts essential to it; and also, such an acquaintance with physiology, as to enable him to determine how far accidents and malformations may affect the performance of the vital functions. So, again, his knowledge of remedies would be confined to such as possess the power of controlling the effects of external violence, or of bringing the system into the most suitable state to bear the shock of operations.

This seems to be a proper place for pointing out to notice a serious defect, as it appears to me, in the plan of education, enjoined by the College, at which I have before hinted *, or rather in the subsequent examination, as it is now conducted. The curriculum directs that the candidate shall attend lectures on midwifery, for six months—and these will, of course, include a view of those cases in which important surgical operations must be performed. It might be supposed, therefore, that questions, on that particular subject, would form part of his examination; otherwise there would be no sufficient proof that he had ever attended any such lectures at all. It is strange, however, that no such investigation takes place; arising, I pre-

* See page 6.

sume, from the circumstance, that none of the examiners practise as accoucheurs, and, perhaps, also, from a supposition, that the examination at Apothecaries' Hall supplies the deficiency—a further proof that legislative interference is necessary, in order to enforce the latter as well as the former examination.

To me, I cannot help saying, it appears, that the department of medical education relative to midwifery should be wholly confided to the College of Surgeons; and I shall venture to suggest, therefore, that a professorship, in this particular department of the art, should be immediately instituted.

At all events, however, it is certain that the most careful attention should be paid to this subject; not only because it constitutes so large a proportion of every man's practice, whether as consulting surgeon, or surgeon and apothecary, but, also, because it is a department of the profession frequently occupied by ignorant women; and, in consequence, regarded by the public with less consideration than its importance demands. Thus, if the female survives her confinement, and the life of the infant is preserved, no inquiry is made whether the shock which the system of the mother has sustained, followed, perhaps, by delicate health, to the latest period of existence, was the effect of natural and unavoidable circumstances, or the result of unskilful treatment,

arising from defective education. Again: in that long catalogue of diseases peculiar to infancy and childhood*, where the little sufferers are unable to describe their feelings, how painfully responsible, in all such cases, is the situation of the medical attendant!

One department in medical education is called *forensic;* and I am not aware that, in a court of justice, a surgeon, not possessing the apothecary's qualification, is considered less competent as a witness; or that his opinion, on the probable cause of death, is considered less important. But is it not, on the face of it, evident, that his qualification to decide on many points, coming within the meaning of *forensic medicine*, must be defective, in the same proportion as his education has been so?

Having thus remarked upon the insufficiency of the examination instituted by the College of Surgeons, to attest the qualifications necessary for general practice, I hardly need say that the apothecary's examination does not even profess to give any attestation at all to those qualifications, which fit him for the particular practice of the surgical art. But, strange to say, the law imposes no restraint upon any member of the Apothecaries' Company,

* It appears, by the Parliamentary Tables, that *more* than one-half of the deaths which annually take place are those of children under five years of age, and of the aged above seventy. The diseases of these two classes, and those of women in the pregnant and puerperal state, cannot be studied at hospitals, as they are now constituted.

if it be his choice to practise surgery. Now, one of these two things must happen;—either all apothecaries are members of the College, and, therefore, fully competent to participate in all its privileges, or they take advantage of their education as apothecaries, and practise surgery, without the diploma of the College. For, the title of apothecary in England, unaccompanied with the prefix of surgeon, is now almost unknown*.

It has now been sufficiently proved, as I trust, that the fiat of legislation should go forth, to define the conditions on which men should be permitted to assume either one or the other of the two medical titles, and that he should be confined to that division of the profession which he assumes comprehended within the strict meaning of the term †. Perhaps the following might be a convenient division—*consulting surgeons*, who have passed the College and the Hall, but who do not compound their own medicines; *surgeon-apothecaries*, who have equally passed their examination, and who compound their own medicine; and *apothecaries*, who have passed their examinations at the Hall, but who practise neither as surgeons nor as accoucheurs.

Thus the public would be secured in the best

* In this observation, I believe, I am quite correct, with two or three exceptions in London.

† "No one not duly qualified should be suffered to assume a title calculated to mislead the public into a belief of his competency."—*Dr. Barlow's Inquiry into the General State of the Profession.*

manner against the danger of imposition; and thus a body of men would be presented to their choice, of whose qualifications they would have the most satisfactory assurance of which the case admits.

This legislative enactment would, also, be attended, no doubt, with the happiest effects in checking or destroying the growing and pernicious influence of quackery, in all its various and hateful forms,—an object the more important from the general credulity of mankind, and from their total ignorance on the subject of medicinal remedies*. They naturally listen to fair promises, in the shape of universal pills of health, or never-failing cures for all diseases; especially for those which are deemed, in the present state of our knowledge, incurable. It may be a question how far legislation should go in securing the public against the numerous evils attendant upon seeking relief under these deceptive appearances. Some may think with Dr. Cowan, "that the sale of all secret reme-

* Sir Benjamin Brodie remarks that, "with respect to the great majority of society, whose minds are not accustomed to these investigations, and who do not know the difficulty of obtaining exact evidence as to the operation even of the remedies in common use, it would be almost a waste of time to endeavour to enlighten their minds on such subjects. They will always be disposed to hear and believe the histories of the marvellous cures of hysterical affections. With them, conjurors of all kinds, from Prince Hohenlohe, and the professors of animal magnetism, down to the most vulgar impostors, will always be the successful rivals of those practitioners who have studied their profession as a science."—*Lectures on Nervous Affections.*

dies should at once be declared illegal, and the venders thereof liable to a heavy fine for every offence;" especially, as he observes, what, indeed, is well known to all professional men, "that almost the whole of quack medicines are the revival of some once-popular formula of our obsolete pharmacopœia, or the recipe of some well-known practitioner, which he was in the habit of daily prescribing."

But whatever difficulty might stand in the way of putting down the sale of nostrums *, there could be none in removing, from the face of the country, a set of men, who yet impose upon the credulity of mankind by some quaint appellation, or by the more general term of "bone-setters." These doughty heroes of strengthening plasters and bandages, acquire fame by marvellous declarations of little bones being displaced, where no such convenient *little bones* happen to exist, and by going through violent exhibitions of pulling and twisting the suspected limb, till a cracking in the joint

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* Dr. Cowan gives the following as the profits of government from the sale of quack medicines—stamps 30,000*l.*—advertisements 10,000*l.*—licences 4164*l.*—wrappers 1685*l.*—patents 300*l.*—total 46,149*l.*

"Now no one will pretend that this comparatively trifling sum can much impede our efforts for the redress of our grievances—or that its conservation is of such vital importance as to render it probable that every principle of justice and all regard for the public good should be sacrificed for its continuance. On the contrary, we believe it will prove no real obstacle to our success; and even if that sum should be deemed important, it would not be difficult to propose a far more unexceptionable source of public revenue."—*Observations on Quackery.*

is heard, or a tremendous groan escapes from the deluded victim. In either case, the bold assertion of having accomplished the task of reduction is unhesitatingly proclaimed and too easily believed.

To show that the influence of quackery exists to a very great degree, not only amongst the uneducated, but also in the highest rank of life,* I shall take leave to relate an occurrence which came within my own knowledge. A lady, highly connected, was thrown from her horse, and had the misfortune to fracture her arm near the wrist. As if distrustful of the whole host of regular practitioners, to be found within a few miles of her residence, she sent for a reputed "bone-setter;" and even required her family medical attendant to be present, and to submit to the indignity of witnessing the surgical department filled up by him. The consequences—most lamentable to the lady!—were, a very limited motion of the wrist, and an unsightly bump—which, though submitted to the inspection of Sir Benjamin Brodie, are likely to go with her to the grave.†

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* "Are not some of the great, the noble, the learned of the land, amongst the blinded abettors of quackery? Is it not notorious that many of this class are credulous, beyond expression, with respect to the professions of quacks and the curative powers of their nostrums?"—*Cowan on Quackery.*

† At Suffolk Assizes, in 1838, an action was brought, on the part of a young woman, named Gladwell, against the Rev. Mr. Heygate, a clergyman of the Church of England. She had been attacked with inflammation of the ancle, which the Rev. Gentleman—assuming, without any authority or qualification, the office

That persons, even of some powers of discrimination and judgment, should occasionally have recourse to the use of quack medicines, is, in some degree, conceivable; and may be thought, in some measure, excusable. In cases, where the skill of regular practitioners, perhaps, in long succession, has been tried and found unsuccessful, it is certainly not very wonderful that the desire of relief from pain, or the dread of serious or fatal consequences, should induce the sufferer to fly, as a last resource, to the hope of a speedy and perfect cure; which empiricism, with bold front and loud voice, announces to the miserable and the despairing. But it is, indeed, astonishing and mortifying to see persons, of the higher or the middle ranks, and not destitute of common understanding, contemptuously turning away, in surgical cases, from the well-instructed anatomist—who, by the information which books impart, and, above all, by the actual inspection which dissections afford, has acquired a knowledge of the interior, as well as the exterior, of the human frame,—and seeking the aid of the confident and boastful pretender, who knows no

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of surgeon—treated as a fracture; and the terrible consequences were a mortification of the limb, followed by amputation, which became necessary to save the life of the sufferer! Mr. Bree, an intelligent surgeon of Stow Market, in his evidence, given at this trial, said, "I brought the defendant forward, as an illustration of the want of protection to the medical profession, and to the public; since here we see a man, without a diploma, or any proof of necessary qualification, practising as a surgeon—and this has been going on for the space of thirteen years or more!"

more than the mere outward configuration of the body on which he is to operate, and is entirely unacquainted with the joints, the ligaments, the muscles, the glands, the nerves, and all that constitute the hidden parts and springs of the complex machine. What would be thought of a government, if, by an absolute law, the medical men of this generation were ordered to renounce their own enlightened views and skilful practice—the accumulated results of long periods of improvement—and to return back to the notions and practices of the dark ages? And yet the censure due to such folly and madness, would be so much the greater than that which individuals, in these times, incur, who place their confidence in assuming ignorance, rather than in well-formed knowledge, and well-trained skill, only because the mischief would be so incomparably greater, in the one case than in the other.

I have thus stated the strong grounds, as it appears to myself and many others, on which legislative interference may be reasonably demanded, for the benefit of medical science and practice. But, important as I conceive this part of my subject to be, I venture to offer these pages to public attention, chiefly for the purpose of bringing forward a proposition, by which, on the least consideration, it cannot fail to appear, that professional education will be most completely accomplished; and the benefit of the

healing art, in a high degree, secured and promoted.

To present a graphic description of the responsibilities attached to medical men, would require a pen infinitely more skilful than my own; and on this account I could have wished the task to have fallen into more efficient hands. But I am emboldened to proceed, because the lapse of seventeen years, since I entered into my profession, has perpetually reminded me, of the necessity that these important, nay, I may almost add, sacred duties, should be committed to the charge of men, who, both by education, and, above all, by experience, are fitted to receive it. Perhaps there are few situations more adapted to impress deeply, and even painfully, the minds of professional men, than being placed, early in life, in charge of small communities on ship-board; where, far removed from all other assistance, they have only the unsatisfactory guidance of books, in the treatment of diseases, which, for the first time, they are doomed to encounter. I can only say how forcibly this was felt by myself, during a voyage to India, when left in sole charge of the ship, in the absence of the surgeon. Of course I consulted the best authorities on the treatment of tropical diseases; and yet it was with a most anxious mind that I looked forward to the result of the treatment they prescribed. How valuable, under such circumstances, would

have been the aid of a little previous experience *!

The following observation of Sir Benjamin Brodie might well serve to introduce almost any plan, by which something like the benefit of experience may be obtained, previous to the commencement of practice:—"In the systematic form which the writings of pathologists usually assume, it is impossible to find a place for a large portion of knowledge, which long experience has enabled physicians and surgeons to acquire; and to receive which at an *early period* must be of the first importance in their professional career."

I have already observed upon the sufficiency of the plan of education and the mode of examination, both of the College and the Apothecaries' Hall; and yet I am convinced that, after young men are thus, in the best manner, prepared for the duties of their profession, they cannot yet be considered, with all the knowledge they have brought from the schools, as fitted to contend against the numerous and various "ills," in the state of the bodily health, "which flesh is heir to."† However diligent may

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* By the rules of the service of the Royal Navy, no assistant-surgeon can be promoted to the rank of surgeon until he shall have served *three* years in the former capacity, one year of which must be in a ship actually employed at sea.

†The editor of the *Medical Gazette* for October 5, when referring to the insufficiency of medical education for the purposes of general qualification, states "that students are apt to be led away by attend-

have been their preparatory studies, and however honourably they may have passed their examination, yet such is the peculiar nature of the practice of medicine, and such is the difficulty of recognising disease under its ever-changing forms, that no scientific acquirements could sufficiently qualify them for the arduous task—without adding what may be called a second part of their education—no less necessary than the first—experience and reflection.*

Dr. Abercrombie, in speaking on this subject, well illustrates the insufficiency of knowledge, untried, unaided, by actual practice:—"In this manner," says he, "young practitioners are in danger of attempting to ascertain disease by its agreement with the nosological characters; and are drawn away from that minute attention to the

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ing to the more important operations in surgery, which, perhaps, they may never be called upon to perform, whilst those of daily occurrence are disregarded;—the treatment of an old sore, for instance, which it would seem almost impossible to pass over, and yet of which the student *who has got through his examination* is, unfortunately for himself and the public, sometimes practically ignorant."

* "In adverting to the want of practical examination, previous to the granting of diplomas, I entirely disclaim imputing blame to any body of men. I have mentioned it as a defect, but as a defect which has a most material influence on the direction of your studies. It is not that I allege or complain that the effect of the present system of examination is to direct too much of your thoughts to the scientific part of your profession, but that sufficient attention is not thereby insured to the paramount object of all medical education—the acquisition of *practical skill.*"—*Dr. Arnott, Professor of Surgery in King's College.*

phenomena, which alone can lead to a correct diagnosis." Dr. Holland also remarks:—"It is a frequent error of young practitioners to allow themselves to be betrayed into a hasty diagnosis or prognosis of the disease, either by their own nervousness, or the importunity of the patient, and those around him. The fault is serious, not only as a source of embarrassment, but often by impairing integrity in practice, from the desire to redeem a wrong opinion thus given *."

I well remember, when attending St. George's Hospital, in the year 1819, Mr. (now Sir B.) Brodie saying to me, in reply to my suggestion of a medicine, then little used, that "He thought our remedies were already sufficiently numerous; but the great art was to know when and how to make use of them?" And is not this art the result of experience? and can experience be gained, whilst the student is engaged in the acquirement of nearly the whole circle of science? Nothing surely can be more unreasonable than to expect it; nor can anything be more unjust towards the public, than to intrust so serious a charge, as that of health, to knowledge without experience—if, indeed, it be true, that sufficient security against the fearful risk is by any possibility attainable.

All medical men, who have been a few years

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* Medical Notes and Reflections.

in practice, sensibly feel how much they had to encounter, on first commencing it, in the doubts and fears which assailed them on every side; and especially in the difficulty of determining whether nervous excitement was really produced by the irritability of the nervous system, and therefore requiring stimulating treatment, or whether it was not the consequence of inflammatory excitement, and, therefore, requiring depletory measures? Dr. Holland, in speaking of bleeding in affections of the brain, known under the familiar terms of strokes, or apoplectic seizures, offers these remarks:—"The use of the lancet is easy, and gives a show of activity in the practitioner, at moments, when there appears peculiar need of this promptitude. Current opinions and prejudices are wholly on the side of bleeding; and the complexity and danger of the cases tend to obscure the results of the treatment pursued. The physician needs all his firmness to decline a practice, thus called for, where the event is doubtful, and when death may be charged upon his presumed feebleness or neglect." If the experience of Dr. Holland leads him to make this admonitory, and, in my opinion, most important observation, is it likely that those, without experience, can determine the question?

On the very first view, every one must be struck with the extreme disadvantages attending the early introduction of a young man into the field of an

extensive practice, soon after having passed his examination. For, without experience to guide him, he must depend upon theory; no time is left for reflection even upon his own proceedings; he is in danger of being led, by public patronage, into a hasty approval of his own practice,* and blinded to the necessity of that keen investigation into the nature and treatment of disease, without which he can never discharge his duty, creditably to himself, or fairly or faithfully to others. Lapse of time and multiplied occupation, of course, will furnish the necessary experience—but, till then, how painful the state of the practitioner!—how hazardous that of the patient!—"The first step to wisdom is to know our own ignorance;" and there is no profession, to which this golden maxim is of so much precious value as to those professing the healing art.

As men advance in years, they look back, with more and more vivid recollection of the anxieties they endured, in the earlier periods of their practice; and they become more and more sensible of the necessity of carefully noticing and recording facts, as they daily occur; and of deducing from them all those inferences, which are capable of being turned to practical uses in relieving or curing

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*A writer of high eminence has even hazarded the assertion, "that those persons are most confident in regard to the characters of disease, whose knowledge is most limited, and that more extended observation generally leads to doubt."—*Abercrombie*, p. 381.

disease. An excellent example, in illustration, occurs at this moment to my recollection, worthy to be noticed, admired, and imitated. It is that of an old but exceedingly active surgeon and apothecary, in this neighbourhood, who has been in practice more than fifty years. In a conversation with him on the subject of medical education, and the supreme advantages of experience, he said "that he had never omitted putting down the symptoms and the treatment of every case, during the half century of an active life; and that he frequently pointed out to his young men the progressive improvement in his practice, by referring them to the treatment of similar cases in antecedent years." Who can help perceiving the utility of such a practice, or feeling the value of such a testimony to its importance? Who is not aware that scarcely a single day elapses, without presenting some new appearance in the nature and progress of the disease; or without affording some new proof that the errors of the past year have been detected by the practice of the present?

But if further evidence be required to show that in the medical profession scientific knowledge is, indeed, good, but practical experience is better, that evidence may be abundantly found in the first chapter of Dr. Holland's admirable work; nor can I refuse myself the satisfaction of transferring a large portion of it to these pages:—"There can be few better tests of a sound understanding than the right

estimation of medical evidence : so various are the complexities which it presents ; so numerous the sources of error. The subjects of observation are those, in which matter and mind are concurrently concerned ;—matter under the complex and subtle organization, whence vitality and all its functions are derived ;—mind, in its equally mysterious relations to the organs of sense, thus formed ; both subject to numerous agencies from without ; both undergoing great changes from disease within. Individualities of each have their influence in creating difficulties, and these amongst the most arduous, which beset the path of the physician. *Few cases occur strictly alike,* even when the source of the disorder is manifestly the same. Primary causes of disease are often wholly obscured by those of a secondary kind. Organs remote from each other, by place and function, are simultaneously disturbed. Translations of morbid actions take place from one part to another. *Nervous affections and sympathies* often assume every character of real disease ; while remedial agents are rendered uncertain in their effects, by the various forms of each disorder, by the idiosyncrasies of the patient, by the difficulty of securing their equal application or transmission into the system, and, finally, by the unequal quality of the remedies themselves.

" These difficulties, the solution of which gives medicine its highest character, as a science, can be adequately conceived *by the medical man alone.* It

is the want of this right understanding, which makes the mass of mankind so prone to be deceived by impostures of every kind, whether it be the idle fashion, as to a particular remedy, or the worse, because wider, deception of some system, professing to have attained, at once, what the most learned and acute observers have laboured after, for ages, in vain."

Encouraged by such high authority as the above quotation presents, conjoined with the preceding observations on the necessity of experience, added to education, I shall now introduce the plan I wish to submit to the consideration of the medical body, —ultimately, with their approbation, to be proposed to the attention of both Houses of Parliament.

After the proper course of education has been completed, and attested, by the admission of the candidate as a member of the College of Surgeons, and a licentiate of Apothecaries' Hall—before he shall be permitted to practise, on his own account, he shall be compelled, by law, to pass a probationary period of two years with some practitioner who has been in practice ten years—taking that as the minimum period; and that, at the expiration of this time, a licence or qualification to practise shall be granted him from the government, on the testimony of the practitioner with whom he has probationized—which may be further attested by the magistrate of the county.

It is a little remarkable that a similar idea, as to the necessity of some experience to qualify a man for the practice of his profession, should have struck Mr. Serjeant Talfourd. I observe, in the *Medical Gazette*, just received, the following proposition for the qualification of medical men, undertaking the charge of the sick poor, as one of those to be brought forward next session of parliament:—"No one shall be eligible to a future appointment, unless he shall have *practised for three years;* that, if he shall dispense medicines, he shall be a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Company; or that, whether he be a physician or an apothecary, he shall also be a member of the College of Surgeons.*"

The mere outline of the plan just stated at once suggests the advantages of it—first, to the young practitioner himself. For, what greater advantage could be proposed to him, than that of setting out in his professional career under the auspices of one more experienced than himself; from whom he may expect to receive, what most of all he must desire, that information and advice, that encouragement or caution, which long experience alone can supply?

But though the advantage on the one side is great and obvious, yet how, it will be asked, stands the case on the other side? What man, established in his profession, would receive another, for two years, into his confidence, put him in possession

* Thus negatively acknowledging the absence of any qualifying law!

of all his professional knowledge, and introduce him to his patients, when, perhaps, at the expiration of his probationary term, he might set up in the same town, and take a dishonourable advantage of the introduction thus afforded him? But this objection, formidable as it looks, is at once completely obviated by requiring a declaration from the young probationer, that he shall not practise *within ten miles* of the town in which he resided; without the consent in writing of the man with whom he was connected. The declaration should be made in due legal form, and its obligation enforced under heavy penalties, recoverable by the mere proof of his having so trespassed. This legal provision being settled and known, during the two or three years occupied in preparing for his examination, every student would have many opportunities afforded him, for the purpose of selecting some practitioner, with whom to pass the term of his probation, at the required distance from the place in which he himself intends to practise. Or, supposing, on the other hand, the student to have no fixed destination, the period of probation would afford time for inquiry and for deliberation, which would probably lead, in the end, to the choice of some situation favourable to his views and wishes.

The possibility of injury being thus removed, it may reasonably be expected that a moral feeling of attachment will spring up between the parties, more powerful to prevent all ungenerous opposition

of interest than any provisions of law. There is even a probability that, during the probationary period, foundations would be laid for many valuable partnerships—connexions very different from those which are now so often inconsiderately formed, where the parties are comparatively unacquainted with each other. Or, supposing that no such permanent connexion takes place, still the young probationer, at the expiration of his term, if at all deserving, may be assured of receiving letters of recommendation; which, coming from an old and experienced practitioner, perhaps of high reputation, must greatly contribute to his successful establishment, wherever the place of his future residence may be fixed. Nor is this all. His first friend and adviser, on commencing his professional course, it may fairly be presumed, will always be disposed, or even delighted, to hold friendly communication with him, and to impart to him, from time to time, advice or information, more or less interesting and important, even to the latest period of existence.

Though such an explanation seems hardly necessary, yet, perhaps, some may expect that I should state what, as it appears to me, would be the duties of the young probationer. As the person with whom he is to pass his term would be one of his own selection, there could be little doubt that the arrangement would be mutually satisfactory. Aware that his advantages would much depend upon his own

exertions, I can conceive no situation in life where duty and inclination would be more agreeably blended. As to his active services, he might be considered in the light of a junior partner; whilst, in all other respects, he would be regarded as a companion and friend. The entire absence of pecuniary considerations, between the two parties, would be a perfect security against any misunderstandings to which medical partnerships, on that account, are liable. Upon the whole view, my own feelings would lead me to contemplate a period of two years, so passed, as one of unmixed pleasure, as well as of great improvement. Stimulated by an ardent desire to put to the test the theories of the schools, under the direction of an elder practitioner, and attentively employed in watching their application in the treatment of diseases; what superior advantages would be attendant on time so employed, compared with any similar occupation, during the prosecution of his studies in London!

I will here anticipate an objection, which may be alleged on the score of expense, against the gratuitous plan of probation now proposed. Such expense, amounting to the cost of maintenance for two years, can hardly be put in competition with the importance of acquiring every possible qualification for the exercise of a profession, on which no less depends than the issues of life and death. It might even be urged that this expense will be

repaid, with interest, by an introduction to more extensive practice, in a given time, than he would otherwise obtain. For it seldom happens that men are much employed during the first two years of their own practice; and their term of probation, by adding so much importance to their character, and so much well-grounded confidence in their skill, would evidently place them, on setting out on their career, in much more favourable circumstances. Nor is it too much to presume, that the character of the medical profession would, by the proposed arrangement, be so much raised and improved, that the public would cheerfully acquiesce in any plan for its being still better paid.

That the numbers entering into the profession would not be diminished by any additional expense, may be fairly inferred from the circumstance of its present crowded state; though the cost of education, in consequence of the extended period now enjoined by the two medical bodies, is double that which it was twenty years ago. But in order to open the door of accommodation, so as to admit the student, to whom even the smallest sum is an object, I would propose that a period of two years, passed, as an assistant, with a practitioner of less than ten, but not less than three, years' standing, should be taken as equivalent to one year; and that, if the services be continued for four years, it should be considered as a full equivalent to the whole term of probation. There are many successful practi-

tioners, who require the assistance of another long before their tenth year of practice, but who would not be entitled to claim it gratuitously; and from such, the more indigent, but not less meritorious, class of those issuing from the medical schools may seek employment and obtain remuneration, and thus become legally qualified for practice.

If any further objection be raised to the proposed plan, on account of the two additional years it would require before the student commences practice on his own account; I would suggest, as a compromise, that the period of five years' apprenticeship should be contracted to that of three; and the examinations permitted to take place at the age of twenty-one, instead of twenty-two; thus adding one single year only to the time of preparation already required.

Dr. Abercrombie, in his admirable and most philosophical work on the Intellectual Powers, observes—"Such is the difference of opinion respecting the place which medicine is entitled to hold among the physical sciences, that, whilst one has maintained that it rests upon an eternal basis, and has within it the power of rising to perfection, it has been distinctly asserted by another that almost the only resource of medicine is the art of conjecturing."* He further observes—"The un-

* "An eminent physician," says D'Alembert, "relinquishing the practice, which he had exercised for thirty years, said, 'I am weary of guessing.'"

certainty of medicine—the theme both to the philosopher and the humorist—is deeply felt by the practical physician, in the daily exercise of his art. It becomes, therefore, an inquiry of the utmost importance, what the sources of this uncertainty are —where that point is, in our researches, at which its influence begins—and when we arrive at this point, what the means are by which it may be diminished?" Now, it does appear to me, that the distressing uncertainties, here stated, will be materially lessened, in the case of each individual, by the opportunities which the probationary period will afford to him; first, of making cool and careful observations under the skilful direction of another; then, of generalising facts; and, finally, of deducing greater certainty in practice; of all which the results cannot but be favourable to the progressive advancement of medical science.

When it is considered that the immense field of medical observation extends over the whole United Kingdom, it must, of course, include all those circumstances comprehended within the statistics of medicine, such as locality, temperature, peculiarity of employment, &c.—in addition, also, to the peculiar treatment of the various diseases, and forms of disease, which the operation of these causes cannot fail to produce. Here, then, a question arises —What becomes of the great mass of experience, which is daily and hourly acquired, by so many busy actors, on the vast and varied scene of the

medical world ? Is it anywhere recorded ? It is true, the periodicals of the day furnish a channel of communication, open to all ; and yet the fact is, that many pass through a long life without once availing themselves of it. This fact may easily be accounted for, from the fatigues and anxieties which weigh down the energies of the very man who has, perhaps, the most to communicate—or else from extreme disinclination to writing — or from doubt of the value of the information to be communicated—or from fear that the communication of it may operate injuriously to his private interests.

Many of our best medical writers have strongly insisted upon the importance of recording facts, as they arise, for the general benefit of the science. Dr. Abercrombie, in the section devoted to the arranging, combining, and separating of facts, says —" A full collection of uniform and essential facts on these subjects, cleared, as far as we are able, from all incidental combination, is the only true foundation of medical science ; and any system, however ingenious, which rests upon any other, can be nothing better than hypothesis and conjecture." Dr. Holland, also, in his Preface to ' Medical Notes and Reflections' (the very title bearing the impress of coincidence of his ideas and my own), says, " that he gives the result of his observations during twenty years of medical practice in London. During the whole of which time he was accustomed

to preserve notices, not merely of particular cases, but, also, of such general observations as were suggested to him by actual observation."

Such valuable records may well be expected from a man so highly distinguished as Dr. Holland: but it is for the purpose of collecting the observations of the more numerous, most useful, though less distinguished class, that some effectual plan seems desirable ; and, instead of allowing them to perish, as they now do, to preserve them for the benefit of present and all future generations. As the case stands, year after year passes, and the same blank remains to be filled up ; unrecorded facts and practical deductions continue to accumulate, till death closes the whole scene of their exertions, and all the fruits of their labours are lost to the country and the world.

Now, in order to secure and to extend the benefit of the long experience, which these veterans have acquired, and to rescue their observations and their discoveries from oblivion, the plan of a probationary period seems admirably adapted. Suppose, for a moment, the plan approved and adopted—the man of forty years' standing in the profession would, in that time, have received into his charge, at least, fifteen young practitioners. To these he would have communicated all his professional information ; and they, in their turn, would convey it for their own use, and that of others, to different and distant parts of the kingdom ; founding upon it new obser-

vations and discoveries, and keeping up a perpetual accession to the general stock of medical knowledge. In this manner all the advantages would be obtained which an arbitrary government could afford, if armed with the power of compelling every man to record, with the regularity of a ship's log-book, every variation in the endless catalogue of diseases, as well as the treatment adopted for their relief; with this distinction, however—that in the one case the information would be confined to the mere written record, whilst in the other it would become the subject of frequent and careful discussion—of which the happy result can hardly fail to be the clearer perception, or the stronger confirmation, or the more general diffusion of medical knowledge—often, perhaps, producing some real and valuable additions to it. In short, upon the plan proposed, the genius of discovery would find that even the less brilliant scintillations would not be lost for want of striking upon well-digested materials to cherish and support them: nor, on the other hand, would old and established facts be buried in oblivion for want of some tablet, as it were, on which to record them.

In favour of the young probationer it should also be stated, that probably his time would not be so entirely occupied as not to leave much that might be devoted to the further cultivation of those collateral branches of science, to which his curriculum of education had so recently introduced him. I hardly need dwell upon the useful purposes to which such

a comparatively leisure period might be turned; nor on the probabilities that something would often be done, by inquiring and active young men, to promote the interests of general knowledge, as well as of medical knowledge in particular. Every one must feel how powerfully the toils and fatigues of private practice operate against the inclination to keep up or to extend an acquaintance with those sciences, which are more immediately subservient to the practice of medicine. How valuable, therefore, is the short period which passes before this check comes into operation!

Although the balance of advantages, arising from the arrangement now proposed, may turn in favour of the young probationer; yet the old practitioner, on his part, would feel himself much interested and instructed by the information, fresh from the schools, which would thus be conveyed to him, of the more recent discoveries and improvements by which the attention of the medical professors in the metropolis may have been engaged. It would be hardly possible to appreciate too highly the value of such information, thus regularly communicated, every two years, to the man, whose time is so occupied as to admit only of a slight, interrupted attention to the periodicals of the day, or to the numerous and important works which are continually issuing from the press. A pleasing picture might be drawn of the earnestness and the interest which would be excited, on such occasions—whether we consider the facts

disclosed, more or less important as they may be, or whether we consider the vivid description with which they would be attended, or the varied manner in which different individuals would regard the relative bearings of the same information.

Again: amidst the perplexities and anxieties, attendant upon every man's practice, what relief and satisfaction would the presence of a constant associate afford—who would always be disposed to listen to his observations—to enter into the causes, which create doubt or suspense in his mind—and to discuss every difficult point of practice, with so much kindness and consideration as to secure, in some degree, the advantages, without the expense, of a formal consultation! Under ordinary circumstances, where the communication may be considered merely in the light of an agreeable interchange of thoughts, what a perpetual circulation of old and new matter would be kept up!—so that the true value of newly-discovered remedies, or of long-cherished old ones, would be clearly understood; and, instead of crude materials being continually thrust upon the public at an enormous premium of their worth, we should be able to ascertain their real virtues, and impart the results for the benefit of mankind*.

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* Perhaps few situations afford a more powerful illustration of the necessity for the adoption of some plan of this description, as well as of the benefit likely to result from it, than the residence of medical men at places of fasionable resort. As so many indivi-

Though it may be thought that enough has been said upon the advantages of bringing experience to bear upon inexperience, and solidity of reasoning upon hypothetical speculation, as essential, in perfecting the education of a medical man; yet there is still another consideration, which may justly be urged, in confirmation of all that has been hitherto stated. There are some circumstances, in the existing state of things, which operate strongly against that interchange of observation and opinion between the young and the old practitioners, which surely would be beneficial to both, and, through them, to the whole community.

When young men first commence practice on their own account, they are naturally desirous of securing the confidence of their patients, by the successful issue of their own mode of treatment;* and except, therefore, in extreme cases, the experience of the old practitioner is rarely called for. On the other hand, men, long established in business, relying upon the remedies which experience

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duals, from all parts of the kingdom, continually assemble in such places on the score of health, opportunities are afforded them of seeing a great variety of cases, and of becoming acquainted, in a far greater proportion than any other set of men, with the difference, which so frequently prevails, in the treatment prescribed for their relief.—Ed.

* "In a science such as medicine, indeed, requiring an accumulation of facts which must often be the result of the labour of ages, partial generalising may sometimes be admitted merely as a help to the memory; provided we keep constantly in view the imperfect nature of such deductions, and be constantly attentive to correct them by further observations."—*Abercrombie.*

has led them to think most valuable, are apt to fall into a routine of prescribing and practice, which too often refuses to recognise the improvements of the age—though so evidently unreasonable in itself, and so unjust to those who repose on them their confidence.* This is a very serious evil: and it must be admitted as no small recommendation of a plan—like that proposed in these pages—that its object is, to bring together, in close and friendly union, the young and the old; and as the one usually leans, with preference, to long established, and the other to newly-discovered modes of treatment, it may fairly be expected that the happy result will be to blend together all that is good in the old, with all that is better in the new practice.

The advantages of drawing together, in friendly collision, the old, who are prejudiced, and the young, who are unprejudiced, may be illustrated by referring to the varying estimation in which numerous remedies, at different times, have been held. Some of these, on their first introduction, under the sanction of enthusiastic practitioners, have been

* The benefit which a physician derives from his own opportunities of observation, in common language called his experience, is not in proportion to the period of time over which it has extended, or the number of facts which have passed under his view. It must depend on the attention with which he has observed these facts. In real acquisition, consequently, his progress is slow; for much of his improvement consists in detecting the fallacy of systems which he once considered as established, and the instability of principles in which he once confided as infallible."—*Abercrombie.*

declared specifics for disease; and yet these, in process of time, have been pronounced worthless, or, perhaps, injurious. But, in all probability, there may still some real virtues be found in them, which might, in certain cases, still be usefully employed. Instead, therefore, of being wholly discarded, because they have failed to realize the representation of some wild enthusiast, such remedies would probably obtain an important place among the valuable articles of the materia medica; and that, in consequence of discussions between the young and the old practitioners—the one inquiring the reasons of their present rejection, and the other explaining the grounds of their former reputation.

I cannot close my observations on a plan fraught, as it seems to me, with benefits to all classes of the community, without dwelling, with pleasure, on the thought that it would secure, to those practitioners who have been long and laboriously employed in the duties of their profession, a short season of recreation, which must be to them most desirable and necessary. Absence from home, even for a single day, is always a source of painful anxiety; unless they have a friend to whom, with satisfaction to themselves, which rarely happens, they can commit the discharge of their duties. But it may be fairly presumed, that their young associate, towards the end of his second year, must be thoroughly ini-

tiated into their practice, and fully qualified to take their important charge upon himself.

What a premium is here, for assiduity and care in the cultivation of professional acquirements! and what powerful security does it afford to the young man, that all the information of his experienced friend would be faithfully imparted to him, in order to enable himself, once in every two years, to obtain the reward of such a holiday. Nor would the advantages of the prospective privilege be confined to the associating period; but would equally extend over the ten years, intervening, before medical men would be qualified by law to receive *gratuitous* assistance. Since, as their selection, by the educated student, would be so extremely desirable, a powerful stimulus would arise towards keeping up their professional attainments, in order that they might become the more immediate object of his choice.

Viewing the whole circumstances in combination, it may be asked, what arrangement would be so likely to benefit, both the profession and the public, as this noble species of competition?

Thus set free on their tour of recreation, with their minds at ease as to the obligations which hold them so closely and so constantly bound to the place of their residence—how invaluable to them would be the opportunity of enjoying the pleasures and the benefits of travelling—in a journey through their own or foreign countries—

or, if living in the country, in a visit to the metropolis—renewing their acquaintance with their early friends and instructors—and witnessing for themselves the varied improvements in the practice of medicine and surgery, which the hospitals may afford!

Dr. James Johnson has particularly remarked, in several of his most popular books, upon the happy effects of occasional relaxation from the severer studies; and affords, in his own person, a striking example of its sanatory influence. And yet it is lamentably true, that those who are most sensible of the benefits of travelling, and who have been the first and the most urgent to proclaim those benefits to others, are those to whom, more than to any other class of society, they have been denied.

The plan, proposed in these pages—contemplating an extended period, to be devoted to the preparatory studies of medical men, in the best and safest manner—must stand or fall by its own merits. But, at least, it may claim to be conceived and brought forward in accordance with the spirit of the times in which we live—and, on that account, may recommend itself the more to public attention. The present is the age of inquiry and improvement. The whole human race seems as if suddenly awakened to new views, and roused into powerful action—eagerly pressing forward to some higher and better order in the state

of human affairs. As in the moral and political world, so there is a mighty stir and movement in the medical world. Of this abundant evidence is to be found, in the existence and proceedings of medical associations—in the spirit and the contents of medical periodicals—in the numerous and important works on the subject of medical science and practice, which the press is continually sending forth; and in certain plain indications that this subject will ere long seriously engage the attention of Parliament,—as I shall now proceed slightly to notice.

Within these few years several associations have been formed, calculated to promote the progress of medical science and to protect the interests of the medical profession. Amongst these, the Provincial Medical Association, founded by Dr. Hastings, of Worcester, as being the first, deserves particular notice. Its great object is proposed to be carried forward by the institution of annual meetings, held in different parts of the kingdom; and, also, by the occasional publication of a volume of ‘ Transactions,’ containing an account of their proceedings, and various articles, contributed by their members. The design is undoubtedly good; but the allotted period of two days is far too short for the purposes intended; especially when it is considered, that, amongst the limited number who attend the meetings, few can contrive to be absent for more than a single day.

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely to be expected that much addition can be made to the improvement of either practical or scientific medicine.

The British Association for the Advancement of Science, too well known to be more than generally alluded to, furnishes, in its Medical Section, another occasion for the discussion of medical subjects, and for the investigations of the sciences connected with them. Though its annual meetings, as an assemblage of the talents of the country, are sufficiently attractive to medical as well as to all other scientific men, yet the more direct purposes, connected with their profession, render it a meeting of peculiar interest to them. The object of this section would, of course, stand the best chance of being accomplished, by the attendance of men well informed on subjects of practical medicine; and would, therefore, require the presence of those most actively engaged in the duties of their profession. But of these, so few can possibly attend—so limited, besides, is the time allotted, and so great the attractions of the other numerous sections—that, "unless some powerful exertion is made for it, the Medical Section must soon cease to exist."* At all events, both meetings cannot be necessary, unless they were, in some direct manner, connected with each other.

The annual report of another body, called the

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* *Med. Gazette*, Sept. 1839.

" British Medical Association," has just been published. The views and objects of the society, as announced by it, on the subject of medical education, are much in unison with those stated in the preceding pages; and exactly accordant with my own views, is the further proposition of one faculty of medicine—one uniform system of qualification—and the establishment of a general medical senate, for the purpose of protecting the rights and privileges of the medical body, and of assisting the government on all subjects connected with the public health.

In the code of laws, to be submitted to the consideration of the legislature, reference is made to the evils attendant on imperfect education; but it does not embrace anything of the nature of the subsequent arrangement, recommended in these pages; nor does it advert to the importance, or point out any method, of preserving the information, collected by the individual members of the medical body, and to keep it in perpetual circulation, so as to be conveyed to the most distant parts of the empire, and to be transmitted down to future generations.

As a proof how considerably the reforming and improving spirit of the age has extended, the following instance deserves to be particularly noticed and universally applauded. The College of Physicians have lately announced a regulation, by which general practitioners, who have been

regularly educated, and have attained the age of forty, may be admitted to an examination without any previous matriculation. Nothing can be more creditable to the college than this liberal feeling towards experienced practitioners; whether it is considered as an admission, on their part, of the value of practical knowledge, or as a matter of convenience to medical men who may be desirous of taking a higher step in their profession without submitting to the task of recommencing preparatory studies.

Associations, for the purpose of promoting medical science, are undoubtedly of high utility and importance. But one great and almost insurmountable obstacle has hitherto stood in the way of all such associations, in the difficulty of securing the attendance of medical practitioners; who can never be long absent, without serious inconvenience, from the scene of their professional labours. This obstacle, it need not be repeated, would be entirely removed by the adoption of the plan, so fully explained in these pages. The way being thus thrown open to the convenient attendance of all who are concerned, one general medical association might be formed and established in London; whose annual meetings, continued for at least three months, every practitioner in the kingdom of a certain standing* should have the pri-

* Ten years.

vilege of attending as often as he conveniently could. It might be based on the principles of the clubs in London, and might be kept open throughout the year for the general convenience of all its members. It might be considered as a sort of medical senate; and as its sessions might always be dependent on the assembling of Parliament, all questions, arising in the great council of the nation, affecting public health, might be referred to the medical board so constituted, and thus obviate the necessity of appointing special committees in the House of Commons.

In concluding these observations, it is encouraging to remark that the time is evidently fast approaching, when the whole subject of medical education will be brought under parliamentary notice. Mr. Warburton and others, in the House of Commons, have already thrown out intimations of some intended movements on the subject; and the unusual circumstance of the editor of a medical periodical* being an active member of parliament, favours the probability that inquiry will not long be delayed. Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, also, has expressed his readiness, at the suggestion of the Medical Association, to bring forward a motion to provide that none but medical men of three years' standing shall be appointed under the new Poor Law Act; and it is stated that, for the future, a

* Mr. Wakley.

medical man is to form one of the Poor Law Commissioners. It is, also, another remarkable circumstance, that medical men are now, for the first time, so generally coming forward as candidates for the office of coroner. Let it be added that the periodicals teem with observations, forcibly expressed and urgently repeated, on the necessity of placing on proper grounds, under legislative sanction, the whole system, not only of medical education, but also of medical practice. All these circumstances, indicating the improving spirit of the time, and emanating from it, are, in the highest degree, auspicious to the hopes of every well-wisher to the health and the happiness of mankind.

If the great body of the medical profession would occupy themselves, during the present parliamentary recess, in suggesting hints, and in preparing or promoting plans, of medical improvements, which may be worthy the consideration of the two houses on their re-assembling ;—and if they would receive the observations, contained in these pages, as a small but well-meant contribution, to the furtherance of that great and important object, the most sincere and fervent wishes of the writer will be accomplished.

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