

Remarks submitted to the medical professors of the universities of Scotland and Ireland, as well as to the licentiates : on the necessity of medical reform, as the consequence of the selfish conduct of the College of Surgeons, and the president and fellows of the College of Physicians of London / by Machaon.

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REMARKS

SUBMITTED TO THE

MEDICAL PROFESSORS

OF THE

UNIVERSITIES

OF

SCOTLAND AND IRELAND,

AS WELL AS TO THE LICENTIATES;

ON THE NECESSITY OF

Medical Reform,

AS THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE SELFISH CONDUCT OF THE

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS,

AND THE

PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS

OF THE

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF

LONDON,

BY MACHAON.

"Cousins, Henry and Astley,
A word I pray you."—REFORM!

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“ Facilis descensus averno, sed revocare
Gradum Hic labor, hoc opus est.”

GENTLEMEN,

YOU have long endured indignity of the bitterest nature, and at the same time injurious to the progress in life of those whom you are bound in honour to protect, in tamely allowing the College of Physicians of London, to re-examine the Graduates on whom you have deservedly conferred the highest honours in medicine ; and thereby to declare, not only to this nation, but to the whole world, that you are not to be trusted in the discharge of this sacred and important duty :—and, to use a mercantile phrase, that your bills are unworthy of confidence, and consequently, not to be circulated until approved by SIR H——Y H—L—D and his Retainers. It is, therefore, gratifying to learn, that a charter is about to be granted to the University of London ; and, there can be no doubt that this auspicious event, which will enable IT to assert its dignity, has been greatly promoted by the present Lord Chancellor, whose talents we always admired, but whom

we are now compelled to respect as the lover of his country, its free institutions, and, consequently, as the friend of order, of justice, and of humanity. His Lordship and his colleagues, may be truly said to have done much towards restoring to health the affairs of *Ruentis Imperii*.*

It appears that Lord Brougham was, sometime ago, present at a meeting of the College of Physicians, and we are told that he jocosely expressed himself greatly delighted with the position of the entrance of the hall, which is almost due north, as, from that quarter, he intended to let in a

* It is devoutly to be wished, that all corporate Medical, Surgical, and Hospital deceptions, so ably exposed in the *Lancet*, may be extinguished, as they are at once, not only a national disgrace, but if we longer submit to them, we shall be a disgrace to our profession, and the age in which we live. The records of history in their whole compass do not offer an example more pleasing than that of our own country at the present moment. The existing Ministers have, with great wisdom, identified themselves with the interests of the nation and its industry, by boldly and skilfully throwing themselves into the breach, in order to constitutionally root out a direful system of corruption and plunder of long standing; and in the execution of these paramount duties, and requiring so much skill, time and fair play must be given to our state Physicians, to whom the country is already so much their debtors, by the extinction of the rotten boroughs, which were so many political hells.

wholesome stream, with a view to cleansing the medical Augean stable of its vain and contemptible pretensions. The College of Physicians may be regarded as a rotten borough of the very worst description, because it, as it were, robs the Licenciates of large sums of money, under the promise of protecting them, while it affords them no protection in any form, unless degradation shall be construed into protection; and, the influence of the said college, moreover, seriously tends to affect the purse as well as the health of the metropolis, as the most inexperienced of the profession are to be found amongst the Fellows of the College of Physicians: but, notwithstanding this alarming defect in their medical attainments, they are invariably thrust into all situations of importance and profit, by profligate means. It is folly for a Graduate of either Scotland or Ireland to offer himself as a candidate for any situation or hospital in the metropolis, whatever his experience, merit, or attainments may be; because if I may so illustrate, a nine-days puppy of Oxford or Cambridge, as far as medical knowledge is concerned, will assuredly be preferred, in consequence of the unbecoming interference of the President and Fellows of the College of Physicians, which corporate body, instead of being the seat of liberality and learning, is, as it were, a kind of Cacus's den, (the proprietors being fond of live stock, carrying purses

tolerably lined) into which the Graduates of Scotland and Ireland are dragged, in order to be insulted, after having been, as it were, most unmercifully pillaged

* To make this evident by an example of frequent occurrence, a gentleman graduated with great eclat, and after doing so, he repaired to the Colonies of the Mother Country, where he practised with credit for nearly twenty years. On returning to Great Britain, he determined on settling in London as a Physician; but, to his astonishment, he found himself obstructed at all points in establishing himself in the metropolis. The Fellows whom he met in consultation would not attach his name to their prescriptions, the result of a by-law, and if he had continued to practise without authority from the College of Physicians, he would have subjected himself to a prosecution and fine. Thus situated, he paid a large sum of money, as many helots had done before him, which sums from Licentiates are divided amongst the Fellows, and consequently he became a Licentiate, which gave him no right to be chosen a Fellow; whose rank, according to the dogmas of the College of Physicians entitles him (the Fellow) alone to every thing that is good in the Medical Department of the metropolis. A Fellowship must come from the President of the College of Physicians to the Licentiate as a favor, not as a right; and even in this form, it cannot be granted until he has been ten years a Licentiate. Besides paying the money adverted to, he was subjected to a farce in the way of examination, as it was the depth of his purse, not the extent of his knowledge, they were anxious to ascertain. Why should not a Graduate of Edinburgh or Glasgow be

and plundered.* To render the said charter of the University of London effectual, in what regards the healing art, it would be beneficial to establish Doctors' degrees in medicine and in surgery, and these Doctors to be, in every respect, similarly educated, and to be professionally subjected to the same rigid examination in Anatomy, Practice of Medicine, Surgery, Chemistry, and Midwifery, leaving it to themselves, after examination, to

equally eligible to the Fellowship, as the Graduate of Oxford or Cambridge? While this obnoxious and unjust partiality exists, the Licentiate who is a Graduate of Edinburgh or Glasgow, and who suffers himself to attend the monthly meetings of the President and Fellows of the College of Physicians of London, must have the soul of a footman, and the brains of a turnspit: he cannot be alive to the just value of his character as a Physician and a Gentleman; they, the said Licentiates, should, to a man, withdraw from such disgrace. It is singular, that the professors of the Universities of Scotland and Ireland should not have made some efforts long before now, through the legislature, to rescue themselves and the Graduates of their respective Universities, from the effects of the injustice and degradation herein adverted to. This liberty of professional intercourse is demanded by national justice and humanity, and to which there can be no objections, as it will tend (even on viewing it on the principle of free trade), to alleviate the difficulties and expences of families in the treatment of diseases existing therein, and thus contribute to the welfare of our fellowcreatures, when so afflicted.

assume the title of Doctor of Medicine or of Surgery ; and, as the Doctor in Surgery, must, of necessity, practice Medicine, so ought the Doctor in Medicine, should he think proper, practice Surgery, as the professions have the same objects in view, in alleviating human misery by the prevention and cure of the numerous diseases to which mankind are subject. Both these Doctors to be considered equal in rank, and to teach and to practise Medicine, or any branch of their profession, they may think proper to attach themselves to, without restrictions from Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons, or Apothecaries' Halls, which constitute so many vile and detestable obstructions to the progress of science, as well as imposts on the purse of the community in which these privileged beings take up their abode. Human life is, unquestionably, as valuable in Scotland as in England, and such being the case, those professional attainments which qualify a Physician to practise his profession in Scotland, should also enable him to do so in England, where the means of attaining medical knowledge are greatly inferior to those of Scotland. The Legislature, by the powers which it has granted to Medical and Surgical Corporate Bodies in London, seems, heretofore, to have acted on the most unwise principle; for, instead of giving every facility to medical men, superiorly educated in Scotland, making

their way in the capital and throughout the kingdom, it has opposed every obstacle to their progress, by sanctioning Corporate rapacity. The College of Physicians yields no protection to Licentiates, indeed it is much more terrible to its friends than its enemies, as, by its absurd regulations, it discourages the diffusion of useful members of the profession throughout the metropolis, and it is laughed at and held in contempt by false prophets and charlatans, to which latter body, the Fellows, from their great and ill-founded pretensions, have many points of resemblance. Such medical degrees, as adverted to, should be conferred by Universities alone, and all Colleges throughout the kingdom ought to be compelled to respect them, by receiving their inscription, without fee, and from these to select the most deserving for the rank of Fellow, which distinction should be open to Graduates from all the Universities of the United Kingdom. These Universities can also assuredly ascertain a man's competency in Chemistry, Pharmacy, Surgery, Midwifery, as well as in Medicine, and when ascertained satisfactorily, and the degree of Doctor conferred on him, as a consequence of such examination, he ought to have an undoubted right to practise Surgery, Midwifery, or Medicine, as well as every other branch of the profession (even to the opening a shop, should he deem it necessary, as an Apothecary) throughout the

British dominions both at home and abroad. Such a line of conduct adopted by Universities, under the sanction of the Legislature, would soon put an end to the ungenerous war, waged on the pockets of the community, as well as on the money of the Graduates of Scotch and Irish Universities by the College of Surgeons and the College of Physicians. Let there be Faculties of Medicine in different parts of the kingdom, for men of science and talent to inscribe their names, but should they decline doing so, such a line of conduct ought not to disqualify them from practising their profession to the advantage of the communities in which they live, and their own honour. Another order might be created under that of Apothecary, and a fourth under that of Chemist. None of them to practise their callings without due examination from the University or School, qualified to grant certificates of their competency to perform the duties imposed on them as Apothecaries and Chemists; and the force of these qualifications, when once granted, under very moderate exactions in the form of fees, to enable their possessors also to practise their callings throughout the British dominions. No one in future to be allowed to compound medicine, or prescribe, who had not previously received a medical education. The Apothecary and Chemist to be eligible to the degree of Surgeon or Physician, by subsequent study and examina-

tion ; so that the profession should be a chain of links so respectable as to be resolvable into each other. The duties of humanity are greatly hampered and restrained by the professional pride, selfishness, and vanity, of the President and Fellows, as the Licenciates of the College of Physicians, are prohibited from practising Surgery, Midwifery, or compounding their own medicines ; but in Edinburgh and over the whole of Scotland, it is sanctioned, to the great advantage of the community. This interdiction is a most rank and fetid job on the side of the President and Fellows of the College of Physicians, who have supported a system so beneficial to themselves, by the inducement it holds out to Apothecaries and Chemists to employ them, but, at the same time, so detestably injurious to the cause of humanity.* To render the matter clear, the individual who has now the honour to address the Graduates of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Dublin, is not altogether dependent on his professional exertions, which enables him, like many others, to be occasionally

* Nothing disrespectful is here intended to Apothecaries, who, many of them, are too independent to allow themselves to be entrapped by such a bait. It is adduced to shew the motives in which the illiberal decree originated ; as those who made the law can repeal it, should it not be rendered beneficial to its framers.

useful to a class of society far more to be pitied than the pauper himself. This remark is here submitted, in order to clearly illustrate the evil genius which pervades the present state of things in medicine, as it will shew the difficulties that are not only opposed to the exertions of the Physician, but to the interest of the community at large, under existing circumstances, as a Licenciate of the College of Physicians, without perjuring himself, cannot let blood or perform any Surgical operation, nor yet can he, as already observed, compound his own medicines, so that his prescriptions must go to a Chemist or Apothecary, to whom the state of the patient is unknown, by which a bill for operations and medicines is soon run up against the indigent individual, which altogether defeats the humane exertions of the Physician or Surgeon. The Physician should, unquestionably, be allowed to bleed, or perform any other operation that may be necessary in the course of his practice, and also compound his own medicines. The Surgeon and the Apothecary undertake the treatment of the most dangerous diseases afflicting the human frame, and which come within the province of the Physician, and the good of the community; as well as even-handed justice requires that the Physician should, if he think proper, practise Surgery, Midwifery, and Pharmacy, as his education im-

plies a thorough knowledge of all those branches of his art. By extending the influence of talent and regular education to the humblest departments, the greater will be the benefits conferred on society. To the judgment of the writer, no medical man sacrifices his dignity, however low he may descend in his exertions and operations, when these tend to alleviate human misery; but, on the contrary, by these efforts he must rise higher, not only in his own estimation, but in the eye of the community in which he lives. It is the power and right that is here contended for, without permission from Colleges; so that a well educated Surgeon or Physician, under the painful vicissitudes of life, may no longer find his acquirements an obstacle to his interests. The corruptions of Universities may be restrained by parents refusing to send their children to such Universities, but the corruptions of Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries' Halls, when once instituted, are difficult to be vanquished, because this must be done through the medium of the law, which is invariably uncertain and tedious in its operations in cases of this nature.

Such being the case, the Universities of the kingdom should have the power of granting degrees in Surgery and Medicine to all those candidates, wherever educated, who shall prove themselves, by their talents, justly entitled to them, after having encountered a rigid course

of study, and an equally rigid and impartial examination. These degrees, conferred with so much care, and to be attended with as little expence to the candidates as possible, should also be valid in the Army and Navy, as well as throughout the whole of the British Dominions. Such a plan would soon put an end to corporate corruption in Medical and Surgical affairs in Great Britain and Ireland.

The preceding propositions will, no doubt, be regarded by the present head of the College of Physicians, as an attempt to spread darkness, disgrace, and vandalism over that part of the healing art, at the head of which he is placed.* There can be no doubt, however, that they will be regarded with a different eye by the present Lord Chancellor and his colleagues, whose example and devotion to the interests of their country we would re-

* We entertain great respect for Sir H—y H—l—d, as a skilful Physician and a Gentleman, but, unfortunately, the instant he enters on the merits of Oxford or Cambridge, as compared with other Universities of the United Kingdom, he assuredly gambols.

“For who did ever play his gambols,
With such insufferable rambles?”

HUDIBRAS.

commend to the attention of all corporate bodies, and their heads, should they be desirous of maintaining their stability founded on the good opinion of the communities in which they live. The College of Physicians has here been spoken of in its corporate capacity, because its members, generally speaking, when regarded individually, are, in their vocation, virtuous. It is the heartless, it is the corporate hypocritical delusion, in holding out protection to the public and the Licentiates, it is the unjust, and ungenerous system, that is here reprobated and viewed with indignation, not the private characters of these men.*

* Every man may at present put his name on his door as a Surgeon, and which implies a knowledge of Medicine; and every individual may, from the Quack to the Chemist, prescribe, and assume thereby the character of the Surgeon or Physician.

Is this backing their friends? Is this protecting the public and the Licentiates, from the latter of whom they have taken large sums in the form of examination fees? The unblushing attack on the pockets of those who had previously taken their degrees at such Universities as Edinburgh and Glasgow, is very dishonourable; and which is rendered still more so, by the neglect of their duty. The unfeeling rejection of such men as the illustrious Armstrong and Good, is a proof of the ignoble spirit which pervades their corporate decisions.

When it is considered that the brightest ornaments of these Colleges of London, the Hunters, Bailie, Bell, men born and educated in Scotland; men in whose blood and structure the stream of original genius was deeply implanted, the whole of the corporate conduct of these bodies, assumes decidedly the character, not only of injustice, but of the foulest and blackest ingratitude. The beautiful discovery of Bell in the nervous system, is as important as the discovery of the circulation of the blood; and will have a much greater effect in unfolding, before long, an intimate knowledge of the laws of the animal and intellectual economy; and yet, a set of very ordinary beings, comparatively speaking, have the profane audacity and folly to do their utmost in degrading those Universities, where such illustrious men were educated.—

“But ’tis strange;
And often times to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence.”

MACBETH.