

Medical reform a social question, comprehensively studied with the light of philosophy, history, and common sense : two letters to the Right Hon. Viscount Palmerston ... / by Joseph Sampson Gamgee.

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Miscellany⁴

MEDICAL REFORM A SOCIAL QUESTION,

COMPREHENSIVELY STUDIED WITH THE LIGHT OF

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND COMMON SENSE.

TWO LETTERS

TO THE

RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT PALMERSTON,

K.G., G.C.B.,

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

BY

JOSEPH SAMPSON GAMGEE,

STAFF-SURGEON OF THE FIRST CLASS AND PRINCIPAL MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE BRITISH-ITALIAN LEGION DURING THE LAST WAR, LATE ASSISTANT-SURGEON TO THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL AND PRESIDENT OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, MEMBER OF VARIOUS LEARNED SOCIETIES, BRITISH AND FOREIGN.



"For it is the truth alone I seek, and that will always be welcome to me, when or whencesoever it comes."—LOCKE.

London:

BLACKIE AND SONS,

WARWICK SQUARE, E.;

GLASGOW, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK;

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1857.

Price One Shilling.

"The longer I live, the more I am certain that the great difference between men, between the feeble and the powerful, the great and the insignificant, is *energy, invincible determination*,—a purpose once fixed, and then, death or victory. That quality will do anything that can be done in this world; and no talents, no circumstances, no opportunities, will make a two-legged creature a man without it."—*Extract of a Letter from Sir T. Fowell Buxton.*

"Men ought always to pray and not to faint."—*St. Luke, 18, i.*

"Mihi res non me rebus subjungere conor."—*Horatii Flacci.*

"Whatever we have said has been for the ultimate honour and security of medicine; and if, in discussing our subject independently, some hard sayings have been inflicted, the axiom *that true medical reform can only be based on medical scientific reform*, stands out the more boldly for the freedom with which it is proclaimed. While some may laugh, and some condemn, and some wince at our plain-spoken arguments, there are, as we know, amongst those who understand medicine and her position in current history best, those who will sympathise with us most; for there are no men who detect the imperfections of medicine so keenly as those who know it scientifically, and who grasp its great truth in the firmest embrace."—*The Sanitary Review and Journal of Public Health, March, 1857.*

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

IN OPPOSITION TO

MR. HEADLAM'S MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE
VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, K.G., G.C.B.,
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

MY LORD,—I shall not otherwise apologize for addressing you on the subject of Medical Reform, than on the basis of the question's importance, and of a firm conviction that it is inadvisable for the honor of science and the public good, that Mr. Headlam's Bill pass into law.

It has been stated by one of the most powerful Corporations in favor of Mr. Headlam's Bill, "That the object of Medical legislation can be no other than that of securing a well-qualified Medical profession, and of providing a registration, by which the qualifications of Medical practitioners shall be certified and published." I submit, with deference, as a less objectionable mode of stating the question at issue, that the object of Medical legislation is to promote, in the largest

measure, the health of the people, and the perfectionment of a science yet far from having attained the development of which it is susceptible.

Mr. Headlam's Bill is based upon two assumptions: firstly, that the Medical Corporations represent the Medical profession; secondly, that the interest of the Corporations is identical with that of the public. The first of these assumptions is demonstrably contrary to fact, the second gratuitously begs the whole question at issue.

The majority of the Medical Corporations are oligarchies; their history is one of illiberality to the learned, of party conflict, and comparative neglect of the public welfare.

I am opposed to Mr. Headlam's Bill because if passed into law, it will in great measure check discussion on evils within the profession;—the unsatisfactory state of clinical education, the management of hospitals, and, particularly, the corrupt system by which officers are appointed to them.

I submit that if as a general proposition it be inadvisable to invest sections of the community with the power of arresting the development of opinion amongst the masses, valid reasons for exemption are not to be found in the history of the Medical Profession, any more than in that of theology and law. Medical men are like their fellows, subject to the frailty of nature, which

inspires jealousy of, and disposition to resist attempts which, however much calculated eventually to advance truth and profit mankind, exercise an immediate influence contrary to preconceived ideas and individual interests. Compulsory orthodoxy is opposed to the progress of truth, which has its surest foundation in the free development of differences.

The hope, the real requirement of the Medical profession is, to advance with the spirit of the age; that is:—not the rivetting the fetters of monopoly, not the subjecting the public to party interests, but sacrificing these if the general good demand it,—advancing on the high road of experimental philosophy.

For these reasons, I pray that your Lordship's influence be exerted in opposition to Mr. Headlam's Bill

I have the honor to be,

MY LORD,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

JOSEPH SAMPSON GAMGEE,

Staff-Surgeon of the First Class,
Principal Medical Officer of the British-Italian
Legion during the last War, &c , &c.

16, Upper Woburn Place, Russell Square,

July 2nd, 1857.

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

ON

MEDICAL REFORM AS A SOCIAL QUESTION,

COMPREHENSIVELY STUDIED WITH THE LIGHT OF

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND COMMON SENSE.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, K.G., G.C.B.,

FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

MY LORD,—Firmly resting on the conviction of the abstract truth of the propositions laid down in the Letter I had the honor of addressing you, the 2nd instant, I might hope in the rejection of Mr. Headlam's Medical Reform Bill by the House of Commons, without further attempt to demonstrate its radical demerits; and if the decision rested solely with your Lordship I should have no doubt whatever of the issue. But, reflecting that that Bill was read a second time before the House, the 1st instant, with 225 yeas against 70 noes, believing that honorable members have been misled as to the nature of the Bill by its advocates, who have with singular

adroitness used every means to secure a transitory success; believing that the smallness of the minority was due partly to inadequate consideration of the weight of the question, and partly to misplaced confidence in the abstract power of truth, I purpose addressing myself more fully to demonstrating the injustice, impolicy, and unphilosophical spirit of that measure. My statements shall be facts; my arms shall be taken from the arsenal of history and philosophy; my stand shall be taken on the stronghold of common sense. And as this is no party question, as it involves alike the honor of science and the material welfare of the people, as it concerns the palace no less than the cottage, and affects the comfort of the poor no less than the luxury of princes, I hope, I rely upon impartial consideration;—hope—reliance—which I should certainly not venture to express if exclusively appealing to your Lordship; but as I pen these words, they are being committed to the press, so that they may go before the world for judgment; that I in penning them may feel the salutary check of a heavy responsibility; the people, in reading them, have the opportunity of judging the sincerity, the force, of logic in spontaneously overflowing truth. And, if I be found to utter real truth, I hope in the few hours which elapse before the time appointed for the third reading of Mr. Headlam's Bill, a resolution will be

come to, if not to reject it for ever, to send it before a select Committee of the House, as the safest means of testing its merits; as the surest guarantee of deliberation in a question, which above all others demands no rashness.

I beg permission to address myself directly to the state of the question at issue.

Medical reform has now been publicly agitated for a quarter of a century; discussed under several governments with no other apparent result, than so strange a confirmation of the proverbial differences of doctors, that the disputants appear to have grown ashamed themselves; and the clamour now is, *a* Medical Reform Bill better than none at all—union better than division; but I say better no bill than a bad one—better a free expression of convictions and a generous emulation in the pursuit of truth, than complacent compliance with the imperious coercion of allied monopolies, pecuniarily interested in the maintenance of a state of things, alike derogatory to the march of learning, and to the health—moral and social of the people, and of the profession.

I say better no bill than a bad one; a legal enactment must prove practically injurious unless conceived in accordance with sound principles of political science; legislation for a section of the community must be detrimental to its honor, as a part of the great Commonwealth, if it do not

provide, in the largest measure, for the public want.

Sections, and such are professions, *a fortiori* corporate bodies, belong to the public, not the public to corporations and professions. But the Medical corporations, the supporters of Mr. Headlam's Bill, have gratuitously assumed that the health of the public is their appanage, and that to them belongs its administration *de jure* and *de facto*. It is because such assumption is unwarrantable that I oppose the Medical corporations—the supporters of Mr. Headlam's Bill.

It is not true, as an absolute proposition, that union is better than division, unanimity than difference. Englishmen, above all men, must oppose such errors, unless they are prepared to admit, without question, that the *one* voice of the Vatican, is, from the simple fact of its being *one*, a greater evidence of truth, than the independant religious belief of this great people,—unless they are prepared to admit that the President of the French Chamber is a more real embodiment of the sacred principles of freedom, than the Speaker of the Commons of England;—unless they are prepared to affirm, what they never will affirm, that under the sentence of the second of December, which silenced eloquence in Berryer, history in Thiers, social science in Guizot, France is more happy and prosperous than England under the Magna Charta Libertatum.

It is because Mr. Headlam's Bill in creating a gigantic monopoly, in attempting to coerce the free development of learning, is opposed to the fundamental spirit of English laws and customs, that I oppose it.

Forced unity is tyranny, and such is the policy of the Medical oligarchies, who support Mr. Headlam's Bill. Free development of opinion is the essential of scientific and social progress ; this is what the public stands in need of ; and it is only in proportion as it ministers to the wants of the public, in accordance with the spirit of the age, that the Medical profession can hope to be honored, can claim to be protected with the authority of Parliament. It is because Mr. Headlam's Bill places the public after a section, general good after interested monopoly, that it does not deserve the sanction of Parliament.

I am opposed to Mr. Headlam's Bill because in aiming at the entrenchment of monopoly, it threatens invasion of the public domain ; it is opposed to the spirit of the age, which is—growth in wisdom without restriction, beyond that which the Creator has imposed, as the boundary of the human understanding ; within which boundary, it is well to plant marks as signals of progressive stages ; but it is contrary to the principles of Divine law, to the soundest principles of political science, to plant barriers, which shall

do violence to efforts to progress in the development of truths possessing universal interest.

And yet it is in this age, when the future King of England fathoms the depths of natural philosophy in the public lecture-room guided by the demonstrations of Faraday—when in the halls of Lambeth Palace the Primate of England invokes the Divine blessing on the Evangelical Alliance after a prayer by a Dissenting minister—when the Consort of the first Lady in the land, our gracious and beloved Queen, comes down to Willis's Rooms to head a movement for the education of the people,—when the most eminent Bishops in the hierarchy have resolved on preaching to the masses the pure truths of religion from the platform of Exeter Hall,—when the old universities have determined on throwing open their portals to the hungry and thirsty after learning, whatever their birth, their fortune, or their belief,—it is in this age that a few interested Medical oligarchies apply to Parliament for monopoly—for penal enactments, no less powerless against evil, no more powerful for good, no less a stain on the escutcheon of science, than were the prejudiced and cruel laws with which learning was fettered in ages of the past. It would seem as if the Medical corporations were never to learn, that Truth only unveils her fair form at the wooing of pure souls, who love her for her own sake. She withers unto death when accosted by the claw-

ing hands of the rapacious, who try to beguile her with handcuffs as bracelets, to persuade her that the tyranny of dictatorship is the protection of just law.

It is because such is the illiberal, unphilosophical, and impolitic spirit of Mr. Headlam's Bill, that it deserves to be opposed, by all who believe that the interests of the world demand greater regard than do those of a *coterie*; and that interested monopolies merit no support, in a question which involves the glory of science—the health and welfare of an entire people.

I infer great reason for opposing Mr. Headlam's Bill, from the fact that it was *unanimously rejected by a select Committee of the House of Commons* in the last session of Parliament; from the manifest falsity of its plea of giving a representative voice to the Medical profession; whereas it only provides a ballot box for the secret votes of the money-gorged palsied corporations. I infer further reasons for opposition to Mr. Headlam's Bill from the fact, that it claims vast powers of taxation not to be amenable to the supervision of Parliament; the grounds for opposition are still further strengthened by analysis of the composition of the bodies which support the proposed law. Only the most powerful of these bodies is it necessary to examine in detail, and firstly the Council of the College of Surgeons of England.

I venerate and love the Surgical Councillors

William Lawrence, Benjamin Travers, and Joseph Henry Green; I venture to believe I accurately weigh the works of John South and Moncrieff Arnott, but I can only regard them as the surviving relics of an extinct generation, not as the philosophers of the present, the legislators for the future; if it be objected that the Houses of Parliament offer marvellous examples of the representatives of a former epoch, moving war and making peace, inspiring vigour and checking folly in the present generation, I reply yes; but Brougham, Palmerston, and Lyndhurst, have lived working for mankind half a century in public assemblies; in the fire of contest ever chaining victory to the standard of intellectual progress and of social right; whereas the ancients of the College of Surgeons have, in their dotage, been deaf to the voice of science, have struggled against popular opinion, have oppressed the Medical profession; and at its expense, at the sacrifice of learning, and of the people's welfare, have divided in a virtually self-elected *coterie* the proceeds of gain ill-gotten, by power undeserved, in a borough as rotten as old Sarum but infinitely more disgraceful; for its rottenness has been hidden with the mantle of Hunter—that immortal genius, whose history from childhood to death, whose mind, whose works, whose every feature, are living protests to the principle and practice of the Council of the College of Surgeons, which is one

of the chief, if not *the* chief, supporters of Mr. Headlam's Bill. What is such support?

Why should not Paget and Bowman, Fergusson and Simon, long since have replaced those of the College Councillors who are even richer than their fellows in reminiscences of the close of the last century, most in arrear of the knowledge of the day? Because the Council of the College of Surgeons has never deemed it to its interest to understand the saying of the immortal Liston, that, in surgery at least, years are not necessarily the measure of experience; they have never perused that eloquent passage of history which records the leading of the Commons of England by William Pitt at twenty-six years of age. No, the ancients of the College of Surgeons have grown in despotism with age, irresponsibility, and opulence; they have to the utmost excluded vigour and learning from their councils, and therefore their creature, Mr. Headlam's Bill, does not merit the approval of the British Legislature.

In a specious document, just published, entitled "The Case of the Council of the College of Surgeons," that body claim consideration for the material works with which they have embellished their institution, for the means they have expended in thereby adding to the monuments of the nation. But those funds have been in great measure supplied by votes of Parliament, for the express object to which they have been

applied; and the Council have no claim for special consideration on the plea of having done that which, by common law, they were bound to do. Another source of those funds have been the fees obtained by granting diplomas after examinations so paltry and unreal, as to be alike derogatory to scientific honor and to the national welfare.

What credit to the Council of the College of Surgeons if in the museum and library they have deposited the surplus of ill-gotten treasure, after dividing a lion's share *pro bono proprio*? What credit can that Council claim for the genius of Hunter and Owen, the enlightened devotion of Queckett, the real causes of the present aspect of the Hunterian museum? What credit can that Council claim for the appearance of the library, sole work as it is of Stone and Chatto? What right have that Council to hide themselves behind such a bulwark as Belfour, the Napoleon of secretaries, who, in spite of corrupt inspiration, after mediæval precedents and party squabbles, has wondrously succeeded in hiding the monster's face with a passable mask.

How is it that the Ancients of the College of Surgeons point to the Museum and Library as their apologists? By the same logic, the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the treasures of the Museo Borbonico, and of the Palazzo Farnese, might be adduced as justification for the

horrors of Procida and Montesarchio, of the Bagno di Nisida and Castel Sant' Elmo. It has always been the custom of despots to claim immunity for the moral violence they inflict, by pointing to the monuments raised with the treasures too colossal for self-indulgence to usurp and spoil. Why does not the Council of the College of Surgeons point to the votes of its constituency? why does it refuse discussion on its acts? why does it repudiate the healthy maxim, that public servants should be responsible to their public masters? Because it has habitually done violence to intellectual freedom, oppressing the learned whenever it could, and loving lucre more than wisdom. To use the words of one of the Medical authorities, "It is not the men but the money; not the general practice, but the price of the College diplomas which the College of Surgeons desire to 'recognise' for the future, as they have in times gone by."*

In issuing the specious document already alluded to, under the signature of its three chief officers, and the title of the "Case of the Council of the College of Surgeons," that body unwittingly cast a missile which rebounds against itself. What case has the Council apart from the Members of the College; why has it *never* advocated, indeed never recognized, the rights of its

* "The Lancet," 1842, vol. i. p. 237.

constituents? What *case* has the College of Surgeons *at all* in the social question of Medical Reform, at variance with public interest, inconsistent with its provision, on the sole basis of claim to the greatest good on the whole community. The very fact that that Council comes forward *speciously to plead a case at all against the public*, is proof of its interestedness,—fatal disqualification, because inevitably fatal to its impartiality.

I am opposed to Mr. Headlam's Bill, because in a matter of learning, by its proposed system of registration, it parcels out the British Empire as the domain of a joint-stock Company of Medical Corporations, which it invests with powers over the rights and persons of men of learning, as vexatious as the passport system of the Continent,—utterly at variance with English notions of right and independence.

I am opposed to Mr. Headlam's Bill because under the mask of protecting the public by putting down quackery, it is powerless against the brazen-faced impostor, only tyrannical against the educated surgeon and physician. I am about to quote from the reasons adduced against that Bill, by one of the most distinguished medical philosophers of our time;* “In this Bill there

* Professor Laycock, in “Medical Times and Gazette,” June 20, 1857, p. 628.

are no pains and penalties for ignorant quacks ; these are only for the duly qualified practitioners You tell me the quack cannot recover his fees under the Bill. What of that? He is a business-man, and always takes his fee before he gives his advice. And if he cannot be legally appointed surgeon to a union, or hospital, or regiment, or ship, may I ask, Has the ignorant, mischievous quack ever applied for those offices? You say he will incur penalties if he does anything to imply that he is registered under the Act: then he will glory in his superior freedom, and have a large brass plate on his door, deeply lettered, 'John Snooks, Herbal Doctor and Water-Caster, *not registered.*' By what logic do you reach the conclusion, that when you have fined, say Sir B. C. Brodie, before two city aldermen, for not being registered (if he chance to be in that predicament) and sent him to prison for obstinately refusing to pay, you have hit John Snooks a heavy blow, and given his practice great discouragement? Will he not, with some show of reason, argue that he is the safer man of the two, or the law would have looked as sharply after him as after Sir Benjamin."

Yes, according to Mr. Headlam's Bill it is only John Snooks and his fraternity who are to enjoy the privileges of *habeas corpus*, without the intervention of the Medical Corporations; their official authority is reserved,—to be exercised in

granting tickets-of-leave to the Symes and Locks, the Andrew Smiths and Brodies, the Walshes and Forbes Winslows.

The advocates of Mr. Headlam's Bill argue that it is the Bill of the Profession, that it is supported by the Corporations. As to the first part of this statement, I utterly deny the truth of its spirit; the profession, as a body, has never been consulted; the Corporations, as sectional councils, have never asked for the vote of their constituents. True, the great moneyed interests concerned, the clamour,—*better a bad Reform Bill than no bill at all*,—the artful suggestion that a large number of petitions to the House of Commons with few signatures have more weight than a few petitions with many signatures,—a *ruse* actually suggested by the supporters of the Corporations, all these influences, I say, have created a movement, which would exercise undue weight, if its fictitious nature were not exposed, if it could not be urged as a challenge for disproof, that the Medical profession has never been consulted, in the only sense that the voice of a great public body can be heard, so as to have constitutional weight. Let the Corporations take up this challenge, and disprove the charge against them by deputy, when the Speaker of the House takes the chair on Wednesday next, and Mr. Headlam's Bill comes on for a third reading.

Granting for the sake of argument,— a vicious

argument I preface,—that all the Corporations are in favor of Mr. Headlam's Bill, how is it that those oligarchies which, ever since Medical reform was first mooted, have been quarrelling about the contents of their coffers and the relative thickness of the dust on their parchments, are now unanimous? What common bond has united them? What medley of forces has been combined into the resultant,—the pretended line of truth and equity? MONEY,—EGOTISM,—FALSE PRIDE,—ANTIQUATED PREJUDICE,—into these forces does the resultant trace back.

Here is another challenge for the Corporations. Let them on Wednesday next, when the Speaker takes the chair for hearing the motion that Mr. Headlam's Bill be read a third time, instruct one of their supporters to enlighten the House, as to the real cause or causes of their singular accordance; and further let them state on particular grounds, by what process, on what principles Mr. Headlam's Bill, if enacted into law, is to further science and benefit the public,—in the large measure which the public has a right to anticipate. No more for the moment of the discussion,—better Mr. Headlam's Bill than Lord Elcho's; for, in comparisons, the real merits of individualities are too apt to be misjudged; the philosophical plan is to examine quantities singly before confronting their relative values. In pursuance of this process, what, it is enquired, are the

absolute merits of Mr. Headlam's Bill? Why, in the interests of the commonwealth, on the basis of history, philosophy, and common sense, is that Bill a good one? I submit that if its supporters cannot answer these questions, on evidence, to the satisfaction of the House of Commons, then that Bill is a bad one, and deserves to be denied the force of law by the British Legislature.

Still, for the sake of argument, proceeding upon the assumption that all the Medical Corporations support Mr. Headlam's Bill, it may be well to enquire further, how hitherto they have supported it. The *Case* of the College of Surgeons has been disposed of,—I hope satisfactorily to logicians and common sense Englishmen, if not to the Council of that Institution. What now is the case of the College of Physicians? In addressing myself to this question, I desire to mark the estimation in which I hold the College of Physicians relatively to the College of Surgeons, of which I have already treated. The latter was incorporated in 1800, on the pretext of the Hunterian name; the spirit of its council's administration has been little else than an insult to the memory of its greatest ornament,—its first cause. But the College of Physicians is really a time-honored body; and who is it that does not feel a veneration for age, even apart from every other consideration? The College of Physicians has, for ages, held power

in the State; and even though that power have not unfrequently been exercised for evil, though it has often been dormant when the cause of truth invoked it in vain, it commands reverence as one of the bodies of the State. Even as a body it has claims on the spirit of equity, which Southey, in his Book of the Church, inspires in

“Those who seeking to give and merit fame,
Justly should bear a critic's noble name.”

“It behoves us ever to bear in mind, that while actions are always to be judged by the immutable standard of right and wrong, the judgment which we pass upon men must be qualified by considerations of age, country, situation, and other incidental circumstances, and it will then be found that he who is most charitable in his judgment is generally the least unjust.” With this spirit do I judge the President of the College of Physicians, who, in 1693, committed Groenvelt to Newgate for employing cantharides! But if that time-honored body in the person of its chief officer desire to claim exemption from the sentence—

“Il lupo perde il pel ma non il vizio,”

it should consider that on it falls the *onus probandi* the titles to exemption. If we are to judge the

expressions which fell from honorable members of the House, last Wednesday, with reference to the arrogant spirit of a famous circular, it would appear as if the required titles of exemption would be rather difficult to prove, for that document is indeed a most extraordinary combination of bad judgment and misplaced intolerance. It says in one part, "it is earnestly to be deprecated, therefore, that this Bill should fall under the hands of a Select Committee of the House, by which means it might be so mutilated that it would be impossible for the Profession to receive it." What have we come to that Doctors talk of a Bill—their cur—*falling under the hands of a Select Committee of the House of Commons*. ESPRIT DE MOLIERE ILS TE DEMANDENT ENCORE. Who is it that empowered the scribes to threaten Parliament with the rebellion of the Medical profession against its mandate. Were it needed, were not the insult too arrogant, the profession would tender apology *en masse* for so unwarrantable an offence. And yet its perpetrators ask to be allowed to enjoy, *versus* the meek and lowly,—for such are the learned,—the penal laws of Henry VIII. No fear of the House of Commons granting such a request on the part of the modern Medical Ancients.

But however sincerely I am influenced by the highest considerations in the special behalf of the College of Physicians, it is impossible to lose

sight of the fact that that institution—as an institution—is very far behind the age; that it has most ungenerously, most unbecomingly, most unphilosophically, treated the general body of the Medical profession; and, on the present occasion, when the honor of that profession is involved in a question pending before the Commons of England, the College of Physicians of London is said to have descended to publishing, or causing to be published in its behalf, the scurrilous anonymous document above alluded to, against the principles dearest to the fraternity of the learned. The Dulcamara manifesto is to be seen in the halls of Colleges, and on the tables of most libraries; it has appeared in the public journals, and by some of them, by the best informed, has been attributed, seemingly on good grounds, to the College of Physicians, from which body, be it noted, no disavowal of the disreputable affiliation has hitherto been published.

Besides advocating the supposed merits of Mr. Headlam's Bill on the most flimsy pretexts, the manifesto purports to demonstrate the alleged defects of Lord Elcho's contemplated measure, and in doing so, it urges as an objection to it, that it is a Scotch measure, designed unduly to benefit the learned North of the Tweed,—a brotherhood at which it professes to sneer. This new species of patriotic love and scientific cosmopolitanism has found echoes in others of Mr. Headlam's

advocates, who now plead support for his Bill because it is *not Scotch*. But what philosophy is this? Headlamites where is your history—where your common sense? Have you no respect for the dead that are immortal—no reverence for the sentence of contemporary justice?

It would be beneath me, and that because beneath the high merits of the cause I plead, to attempt to disprove the charge of partizanship against Lord Elcho. I admit—how many admissions have I made for the sake of argument in the futile attempt at defence of the Medical oligarchies—I admit that Lord Elcho's Bill *is Scotch*. What then? Did William and John Hunter come from Kamschatka? Is Brougham of the land, even though he be of the family, of Pericles? Spirit of Liston, wert thou embodied in Pall Mall? James Syme, William Sharpey, James Clarke, and Andrew Smith, what are you? *Donner Wetter*, they are all Scotch!

Yes, Modern Athens has been the cradle of our greatest intellects, the London world is in most instances but the battle-field for mastery. When the old Universities of England had barred their gates after the fashion of mediæval intolerance, where did the great spirits breathe and wax in strength, to bless the land with the glowing radiance of their light? What would the gold of England have been without the genius, the heart, of her two sisters? Enough, I

hope of this discussion, in a question above all others pertaining to the entire people. Where the learning comes from it matters not; learning, real, deep, rich, varied, philosophical learning must settle the question; and if a Laplander is to be the man to propose the scheme of Medical Reform which is most to honor science and benefit mankind, then let two monuments be erected to the Laplander; firstly, the elevation of his proposal to the dignity of law; secondly, the perpetuation of his image in the first building of the empire destined for the assembly of Medical men.

It has indeed been a most ill-judged zeal on the part of the College of Physicians, or its Commissioner, to raise itself in the popular esteem by attempting to sneer at the learned, amongst whom the Scotch have no superiors; to attempt, at the expense of truth and justice, to make a parade of the claims of Medical Corporations. The College of Physicians should have known from history, that, if Medical corporations have little right to sympathy from the masses, they have less from philosophers; except in so far as these know that the cause of truth is often propitiated by antagonism. In the history of Medicine, it is not the Medical corporations that fill the greatest number of pages with the annals of discovery—blessings to mankind. After the night of ages it was not a corporation, it was Mondini, who in Bologna

made the first step towards a positive Medical philosophy, by examining first the organization of human bodies. In the 16th century, the great benefactors were not corporations, but Paré, Vesalius, and William Harvey ; who all worked in spite of corporations ! And, what of Jenner, of the Hunters, and hundreds more ? The Medical corporations have been our Nero and Bellarmino—not our Solomon and Lorenzo il Magnifico.

Having touched Lord Elcho's measure, which was withdrawn from the House after Mr. Headlam's unexpected success, on Wednesday the 1st instant, it may be deemed bounden on me to express opinion more fully as to the relative merits of the two Bills. But I do not feel called upon in the interest of science and of the public to enter into such comparative consideration ; and that, because I have disputed Mr. Headlam's Bill on its own grounds ; I have dissented from the proposition,—better a bad bill than none at all ; I have avowed the maxim, better *not* to affect science with legislation, than to fetter it with *bad* legislation. Yet, in the firm belief that Mr. Headlam's Bill will not pass into law, I venture to comment further on some points in Lord Elcho's, as an exposition of the positive ideas I entertain, with reference to the principles worthy of adoption in the foundation of medical legislation.

The principle of Lord Elcho's Bill—to form one Medical Council to take cognizance of *all* that regards the public health—is pre-eminently philosophical. The proposal to place that Council under one head to have a seat in Parliament, appears commendable in policy, especially honorable to the Medical profession. The implied proposal in Lord Elcho's measure, so to class the existing Medical interests, that they shall all be subject to the public welfare, and to the honor of the general profession, is manifestly based on the soundest principles of political science. When that proposal shall be raised to a law, the public, the world, will have the benefit of generous emulation between institutions the *vis vitæ* of which has hitherto been expended, much too largely in antagonism of cliques incompatible with the interests of science. Lord Elcho's proposal to empower the Crown exclusively to nominate the general Medical Council suggests a desirability of modification, in so far as it seems to imply lack of respect and confidence in the body of the Medical profession; which is a body second to none, I deferentially venture to submit, in the sincerity of its allegiance to the throne—in its attachment to the truths of religion—in its claims on the confidence of Parliament; claims which, to be fully developed, only require that the parasites which have so long preyed on the very vitals of the Medical Family, be kept in due subjection.

Since no degree of self-confidence in impartiality can warrant, on the part of a disputant, presumption of ability comprehensively to consider philosophical questions amidst the clamour of antagonisms, I do not presume on this occasion fully to develop a scheme of Medical Reform. But if I may venture succinctly to sketch a plan, it is this. The interests of the public, in the widest sense, require to be consulted and provided for, so as not only to fulfil present want, but to allow of natural development with time, as wants grow and extraordinary exigencies occur. The interests of the public are the best interests of science. The Medical profession requires to be so organized, that while it shall have the vigour of a body, scientific and politic, composed of healthy families, it may grow as a great repository of learning, for the glory and practical benefit of men.

In drawing out a scheme for the attainment of these objects, the general principles of science and of social economy are applicable. But some special considerations should have weight. Medicine stands in great need of being worked at, more in accordance than it now is, with the general plan of experimental philosophy ; nature requires to be studied more comprehensively than has hitherto been done, by the majority of students of the frame of man. By comparative examination alone can nature's laws, in health and disease,

be understood. In few words, medicine must be studied with a more decided spirit of practical philosophy than it now is. Provision must be made for the best possible preliminary training ; when the professional curriculum is entered upon, public health, the management of hospitals, the thorough study of health and disease, require deeper thought than is generally imagined ; and it will be quite as easy to manage hospitals, colleges and libraries well, as to manage them badly. The first great thing is, to be aware of the want. The want is great ; I said three years ago in public, that *walking a hospital*, and *operating theatre*, are about the two most literally correct expressions in the English language. More reality, less tinsel, such is the want. Hospital appointments must be made by merit, not by favor corruption and purchase, as is now very extensively done.

Incidentally I may remark, the physical and therapeutical knowledge of medicinal agents, requires study. Apothecaries company should be *de facto* what it pretends to be. Let it take up the science and practice of pharmacy, and leave the science of medicine proper to the medical body ; but be it noted, with a wretched constitution and bad principles, it has worked very respectably. If the Councillors of the College of Surgeons and of Physicians had rivalled in good intent the Apothecaries at Blackfriars, their debt to posterity

would be less crushing. Be it further noted, I pray, that I have not the honor of being an Apothecary. This statement is made to avoid the charge of interestedly flattering the Most Worshipful Company.

Medico-political considerations must be brought to weigh especially for the benefit of the masses of the profession,—exceptions—individuals—take care of themselves.

As to the question of QUACKS, I have nothing to propose for their regulation; because I am unable so to define them as to ensure their recognition by the officers of the law. Such a definition—concise and unmistakable—would be a real addition to the English language and to lexicography generally.

Finally, in the capacity of a humble advocate of Medical reform, I may state confidence in philosophy, history, and common sense, as fully equal to promote the honor of the Medical profession. But beyond the pale of that triumvirate, the Medical family would be disgraced; it is because Mr. Headlam's Bill is not within the domain of philosophy, history, and common sense, that I again pray your Lordship to pronounce judgment against it,—*for science—for the general welfare.*

Here, my Lord, I should close but for necessity of apology to you and to the world. All I have said you have long known. I have not presumed to inform you, I have only trespassed on you to

petition for the cause of truth and public good. I have thought the chances of my request being granted would be enhanced by stating the reasons of my prayer, for I have felt that those reasons are in accordance with the history and spirit of your Lordship's life.

I have had another motive in stating reasons more fully. Having ventured to engage in discussion on a public question on the political matter most directly touching the profession to which I have the unspeakable happiness and pride of belonging, my only justification rests in the reasons which induced me.

I have not the honor of being personally known to your Lordship; I might have obtained the honor of an introduction, but as an individual I could have no weight in the decision of the question. It is only in proportion as I have addressed you in accordance with large philosophy, impartial history, and sound common sense, that the cause at issue can be materially benefitted.

Your Lordship will, I trust, regard me as an example of the great family of Medical Students,—I use the expression in its real sense,—under the yoke of rapacious, retrograde Medical Oligarchies. You will I trust remember that for us pleads the British Athens, for us pleads the University of Young England,—the inspiration, aye under divine permission the creation of

Henry Brougham; for us pleads the Alma Mater of William Harvey, under the chancellorship of our Queen's Consort; for us, my Lord Palmerston, pleads the history of your whole life, of the life of William Pitt, John Russell, and Robert Peel—of the lives of the really great ones, of all parties and of all ages; for us have pleaded in the House of Commons, amongst many others, Mr Duncombe, Mr. Cowper, Lord Elcho, Viscount Goderich, and the illustrious scion—hope of the future—of the house of Derby; for us plead all history and all philosophy; for us pleads the Sense of senses—the Universal—the Common Sense.

I pray you, my Lord, to be indulgent if I have been indiscreet; in such a cause, with but few hours to plead it, it was difficult to control excessive zeal as Talleyrand bid his secretaries. The bed-side and the dead-house, not the forum and the Court, having been my school, I have perhaps pleaded with too much rashness; doubtlessly an experienced advocate would have pleaded with less anxiety, but the cause in hand, mankind, the world of science versus monopoly and prejudice, needs no artifice. Plain-spoken truth will gain the day.

Another request, my Lord. Medical students, again I use the term in its largest acceptation, can so rarely hope to have the ear of Government, that the occasion must not be lost. I pray

your Lordship so to influence our fortunes that our footing shall be secured in the State, as a body of intelligent and useful men;—our body is, we grieve to think, plagued with sundry sores and decaying branches; but if we be permitted to sap truth in proportion as we thirst for it, to grow unfettered in the full light of day, we know as one of the truths of our profession,—the sores will heal, and the decayed branches fall off. The progress must be a slow one, all great and good works advance slowly; all we desire is that ours be allowed to advance untrammelled by bad laws: only aided by Parliament, when that august Assembly shall deem us deserving of such aid, in such manner, as really to benefit us as a part of the nation.

In addressing you for students of medicine generally, I have some precedents. I am fairly known to students, they have often honored me with confidence, always have they befriended me: and as I have expressed their thoughts—our common wants—I confide firmly in their support:—they may be relied on. If the principles here struggled for be ever in peril, Joseph Lister and Benjamin W. Richardson, you will defend them;—*Capei ed Ercolani per la fè nostra smentirete la mendacia*;—oh, disciples de l'Ancienne Académie de Chirurgie, de l'Académie de Lapeyronie, de Louis, de Petit, de cette cohorte d'immortels qui furent une famille, jusqu'à ce que

la guillotine fit taire Lavoisier: vous vengerez tout attentat à la foi commune—la foi du monde scientifique: vous justifierez la malédiction du préjudice, de l'avarice, de l'ignorance. And then—whatever my individual fortunes—the voice of history will be echoed, with ever-deepening accents and sweetening melody, through the infinite vastness of unmeasured time.

May your Lordship long live—a glory to the nation, a benefactor to the human race,—such is the earnest prayer of

Your anxious and devoted Servant,
JOSEPH SAMPSON GAMGEE,

Staff-Surgeon of the First Class.

Principal Medical Officer of the British-Italian
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The Royal College of Physicians, London

October 1888

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MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

The Royal College of Physicians, London

ARTHUR HENRIE, F.R.S., F.R.C.P.

President of the Royal College of Physicians



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