Letters to the President of the Associated Apothecaries and Surgeon-Apothecaries of England and Wales, on the present state of the practice of physic and surgery. First series : intended to give a comparative view of particular systems of medical education, to consider the separation of medicine from surgery, to estimate the claims of the general practitioner, and to propose a more respectable mode of remunerating his attendance.

14

LETTERS

TO THE

PRESIDENT

OF THE

ASSOCIATED APOTHECARIES AND SURGEON-APOTHECARIES OF ENGLAND AND WALES,

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

Practice of Physic and Surgery.

FIRST SERIES.

INTENDED TO GIVE A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF PARTICULAR SYSTEMS OF MEDICAL EDUCATION; TO CONSIDER THE SEPARATION OF MEDICINE FROM SURGERY; TO ESTIMATE THE CLAIMS OF THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER; AND TO PROPOSE A MORE RESPECTABLE MODE OF REMUNERATING HIS ATTENDANCE.

"*Neque enim ullâ aliâ re homines propiùs ad Deos accedunt, quam salutem hominibus dando.*"—CICERO.

"Medicine is the guardian of health against death and disease."—GAUBIUS.

London:

Printed by E. HOWLETT, 10, Frith Street, Soho,

Sold by BURGESS and HILL, Windmill Street, Haymarket; HIGHLY and SON; T. and G. UNDERWOOD; J. CALLOW; COX and ANDERSON; A. BLACK, *Edinburgh;* and HODGES and M'ARTHUR, *Dublin.*

1820.

"When we reflect how many victims of disease, pain, and misery, are redeemed from the grave by the art of medicine; when the dearest of human blessings, and even life itself, are committed to its professors; can we form an idea of any function more dignified, more sacred than this?"

"As the enjoyment of health is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings this world can afford; so the utmost care and diligence ought to be exerted for the procuring and preservation of it. It is a jewel so inestimable, that too much cannot be given to purchase it; the best of riches, being a sound and healthful constitution of body."

LETTER I.

SIR,

THE remarks which I have the honour to present for your consideration, are preliminary to a more extended series, and intimately connected with the object of the association in whose meetings you preside.*

Until the Apothecaries' Act, a great portion of the community was liable to suffer from a class of unauthorized, ignorant, and empirical pretenders, more dangerous by their mal-practices than disease itself. This, I may venture to assert, without reference to any particular evidence; although I purpose to adduce a sufficient detail of facts corroborative of this assertion in the continuation of these remarks.

* The association is constituted "to promote the improvement of those branches of the profession exercised by the *general practitioners*, and by thus supporting their respectability, to protect in the most effectual manner the interests of the community at large."

By the Apothecaries' Act, the good of the public has been duly considered, in as far as it depends upon the qualifications of the general practitioner. The proofs of competency required at the examinations of candidates, afford a satisfactory assurance that the members admitted into practice are adequate to the discharge of their important duties.

The Apothecaries' Act has not only provided for the public welfare by a safeguard of professional skill, established on the basis of a competent education, but it has given to the general practitioner a sure foundation upon which to build a conscientious self-esteem. It has obtained for the *fraternity* the respectability which will always attend the members of a pre-eminently useful profession, when their practice is conducted on the principles of humanity and science.

Notwithstanding these advantages to the public, and to the general practitioners, *as a body*, the Apothecaries' Act is inadequate to support individual claim. It does not support the interest of the competent practitioner in the ratio of improvement in the system of his professional education which has been enforced by its regulations. "The public

welfare has been very properly made the first object, while the practitioner acquires no other advantage than protection from the intrusion of impostors into his profession, and a recognition of his right to the character and privileges of a lawful medical practiser."

The expensive elementary and professional studies which are required of the candidate for general practice are highly necessary, and when completed, should secure to him the fair chance of an adequate return.

The reputation of the general practitioner must always depend upon his professional attainments. The chief object, therefore, of his responsible duties ought ever to be made an honourable discharge of them, by seeking the best means for the re-establishment of health, and for the prevention of disease. In these exertions he is identified with the physician; and in army and naval services the surgeon is a general practitioner, to whose skill is frequently confided the health of much greater numbers than fall within the professional charge of the most popular physician in civil life. "The free and unsophisticated practice of English medical officers in the army and navy during the late war, has done

much," says Professor Carlisle, "to elevate the rank of their art, heretofore abused by mysteries, formalities, and mercenary intrigues."*

The well-educated general practitioner should receive for his services the recompence which is due to professional skill. In return for his trusts and ability, for the wear and tear of his body and mind, he, unquestionably, does deserve a remuneration congenial with the character of his art. He should not be compelled to seek for payment out of the profits of a trade, wherein he is *obliged* to become a loathsome dealer as the only method of establishing a charge. "I do not consider a clandestine profit upon the sale of drugs, at all a proper compensation for the charge and care of health and life. It has always been a source of distrust and dissatisfaction on the part of the public, and it must, consequently, operate as a degradation to a class of men, who are now and must ever continue to be in-

* "In army practice the sick are completely under authority; the injunctions of the medical attendant are sure to be obeyed. The phenomena of disease, and the operation of medicines, are correctly noted. By the facility of making frequent visits, the surgeon has it in his power to observe all the varieties of the case, and the succession of symptoms during its progress."

trusted with the health of the greater part of the community."*

It is, however, from so humiliating a routine of trade, and from calculations not at all conformable with the notion usually entertained of fair commercial profit, that the general practitioner is *driven* to obtain the reward of his professional services.

The immoral tendency and hurtful consequences of these proceedings, both as they affect the public, and dishonour the character, or disgust the feelings of a scientific practitioner, must be obvious. I shall, therefore, merely state in a general way on this occasion a fact, notorious in itself, that the practitioner is often constrained to remunerate himself for his attendance and advice, by prescribing a load of medicine in an expensive form. If this be done for the purpose of re-imbursing

* "The general practitioners draw from the same springs, have their medical and chirurgical knowledge from the same fountains, the same schools, and the same sources, as the physicians and surgeons of the London Colleges."

"The teachers in London of anatomy and surgery, of the practice of physic, chemistry, and all the sciences connected with the medical profession, render the metropolis the best school for instruction and practical information."

the medical attendant for his time, trouble, and talent, the absurdity of the custom is too gross to have communion with a liberal art; it is beneath the dignity of an honest calling. "The odium of exorbitant profits must always attach to the mode of remunerating medical services, by a list of charges resembling the bill from a chandler's shop."

An important regulation in the Apothecaries' Act requires from the medical candidate a testimonial of his knowledge in pharmacy. It demands that he who solicits the authority to prescribe for the sick, should also understand the art of compounding medicines.

But as the practitioner's time is sufficiently occupied in visiting patients, and in prosecuting at proper intervals those studies which continually demand the utmost attention of a reflecting mind, the pharmaceutical department of the business must be consigned to an assistant. Aware of the necessity of this arrangement, the Apothecaries' Act has required, that the fitness of the assistant shall be ascertained by his passing an examination in pharmacy; without which he is ineligible to compound the prescriptions of the general practitioner.

Thus the public is not only protected from the danger of ignorant prescribers, but is also secured from the serious mistakes of ignorant dispensers. That the most serious mistakes have ensued from the incompetency of the persons employed in pharmacy is too familiarly known to require any proof from examples. When several other statements which I have to make shall be established by detailed illustration, the particular evidence upon this point will be also laid before you.

If the general practitioner be desirous of obtaining the confidence of the public, he must first determine to respect himself. He must prove himself the member of an order in the profession distinct, both in his character and pretensions, from the mere pharmacopolist of former times.

The strictest scrutiny should prove him an efficient physician in the legitimate and most comprehensive acceptation of the term. A liberal system of elementary education, succeeded by a well-directed course of professional studies, should give him a full claim to be respected by the public and by the whole profession; since he derives both his theoretical and practical knowledge from the

most eminently learned physicians and surgeons, and is compelled to produce their certificates. "As a doctor's degree," says the scientific Gregory, "can never confer sense, the title alone can never command respect: neither should the want of it deprive any man of the esteem and deference due to real merit. If a surgeon or apothecary has had the education, and acquired the knowledge of a physician, he is a physician to all intents and purposes, whether he has a degree or not."*

With the surgeon, the candidate for general practice is completely identified, by possessing the highest licence which the college grants.†

* "To the honour of the well-educated apothecary it must be owned, that there are, and have been the most eminent physicians once of that order, and who have acknowledged the great utility of such an experience."

† "The London College of Surgeons grant their highest licence to men who practise pharmacy; and in Edinburgh, many, the very highest members of the profession of surgery, keep their own shops and dispense their own medicines." It is not the joining pharmacy with surgery, or with the practice of physic, which diminishes the practitioner's respectability; it is the improper recompense for labour and skill by a ridiculous surcharge upon drugs, which must often, in this view, be unnecessarily prescribed. "Since it is so necessarily incumbent upon

With the physician of *equal* experience he should be ready to compare in the previous qualifications deemed necessary to authorize him to practise. From the academician he should only be distinguishable by the *different mode* of acquiring a thorough knowledge of physic, and upon entering into practice by the *different* measure of his reward. It may be a question less absolutely determined than is commonly considered at a first view, by what particular method of proceeding a thorough knowledge of the art of healing is most certainly attained. "The universities of Oxford and Cambridge confer degrees of doctor in medicine, rather by distinction, as a course of academic discipline from theoretic doctrines, than as a consequence of full qualification in the art of curing diseases." Many persons who require the aid of physic, even those of exalted rank, are occasionally found, somewhat heterodox in the motives for their selection of a medical attendant. "On the competency of the general practitioner

every one who pretends to the practice of physic, to understand all the parts of pharmacy, there can be no objection made to a physician preparing his own medicines, but either by ignorant or interested men."

must the great mass of the community rely for the preservation of health and for the alleviation of diseases. To, by far the greatest portion of society they are the sole physicians, and even the highest ranks are often known to depend with the fullest confidence on their skill and ability. When obscure circumstances arise, or dangerous diseases occur, they submit to call in the physician, more from a desire of indulging their familiar attendant than from any hope of benefiting by the compliance."

Whatever difference it may be thought adviseable to make in the *amount* of recompense for services which are *essentially* the *same*, although performed by persons of dissimilar pretensions, the *mode* of remuneration should be, unquestionably, founded on a common principle. The general practitioner equally with the physician, is entitled to be paid for the exercise of skill. "His talent is the result of diligent application to particular studies; *his time is often his only estate*, and what artist is paid only for the materials he consumes? Is the solicitor paid six shillings and eight pence for a letter, as the price of ink and paper? The knowledge requisite to

dictate the letter, is the real object of remuneration."

When the untutored apothecary was merely a pharmacopolist, or at the most was *permitted* to prescribe for that numerous part of the community who could not afford to pay the physician's fee, while he was deemed totally ineligible to undertake the professional charge of the affluent; when his gains arose, exclusively, from compounding prescriptions, and neither learning, nor genius, nor skill, were considered necessary qualifications in the medical attendant on the poor, then indeed the earnings of his trade were congenial with his pursuits; and in their character, if not always in the sum total of their amount, they would be commensurate with his feelings, and often more than equal to his just desert.*

The Apothecaries' Act has however produced so beneficial a change in the cha-

* These apothecaries appear to have been astonishingly insolent to their superiors, one of whom remarks—"Their disrespect to the College of Physicians appears in this, that of late years they place our censors invited to their new master's dinner, at the second table: whereas always heretofore, they were seated at the first table, next to the master of the company."

racter of this department of the profession, that we no longer recognize its former features. The general practitioner, legalized by that act, and possessed of the education which its provisions require, must experience the consciousness of deserving the respect which is due to his station as the professor of a liberal art. By the assiduous exertion of his skill, and by the moderate amount of his claim in recompense of his services, the general practitioner will acquire the confidence and esteem of the public, when the real nature of the change which has been produced in the system of his medical education shall be better understood, and his abilities in consequence thereof shall be better made known.

With respect to the pharmaceutical department, it must be regarded, simply, as a useful adjunct. On certain occasions it is of the greatest advantage to the public, that it should be attached to the more important duties of the general practitioner; perhaps necessary on the ground of preventing the administration of remedies by unqualified persons. It would otherwise, I think, be adviseable that the compounding of prescriptions should form

as distinct a province from the duties of prescribing in general practice, as it is distinct in the practice of the physician and surgeon of the present day.*

If the druggist were required to compound the prescriptions of the general practitioner,

* This was not the opinion of Merrett, Goddard, Maynwaring, and the other physicians who wrote with such heat and animosity against the apothecaries of *their* day; "not," says Maynwaring, "in haste to be made public, but to give vent to and discharge the mind of the author." "For," says the doctor in his discourse against apothecaries, "it was the laudable practice of the ancient heroes in physic to prepare and compound their own medicines, to gain a true knowledge in pharmacy, which is the most excellent part of physic, and the proper and special business of every physician. The College of Physicians of London voted it *honourable* for a physician to prepare his own medicines: truly, if also they had voted it *dishonourable* not to do so, they had then enacted completely. To separate medicines from the physician, and make pharmacy a distinct business, is to abstract from him the quintessence of his knowledge." Another reason given by one of these gentlemen for recommending physicians to compound their own medicines is, "the having nothing to do with apothecaries *who have used us so unkindly*." "Who will eat out the credit of their masters; and you will find the physician to wither away by degrees, and grow less in the opinion of the people, as the apothecary multiplies and gets repute. So good an opinion have many people of the *skill* and *honesty* of an apothecary, that you need not fear but he will live."

he would have a considerable increase of trade thrown into his hands. With this accession to his business, he should engage to furnish his drugs at the most moderate scale of profit: and, as the Apothecaries' Act requires a voucher of the pharmaceutical knowledge of the assistant to the general practitioner, it is equally necessary for the public safety that the dispensing druggist should be subjected to a similar test.

If the law has deemed it requisite to secure the public against the serious risk of injury from ignorance, by demanding a certificate of qualification from the assistant of the general practitioner; does it not exhibit a singular anomaly that the prescriptions which are sent by the physician to the druggist are compounded by an unauthorized shopman? The best devised measures of the most erudite and experienced physician are often ruined by this extraordinary privilege conceded to ignorance in defiance of justice and common sense. "The dangerous œconomy of obtaining at the druggist's the medicines prescribed by the physician, requires a high insurance against mistakes and fraudulent sophistication; and I am at a loss to discover how the recommendation

of such shops by physicians and surgeons, is reconcileable to the laws and known customs of the two royal colleges." *Prof. Carlisle.**

As the field of the general practitioner's duty includes so large a portion of the middle classes of the community, the amount of recompense for his services should be determined by their several means. A minimum being established, he should, of course, give his gratuitous advice to those who are unable to afford the smallest rate of remuneration in the scale: while he might justly look up for payment more adequate to his fair desert from those of affluent possessions. With the opulent and dignified part of the public, we may always hope that merit will meet with its reward.

I shall for the present conclude. In the view which it is my intention to take of the present state of the practice of physic and surgery, there is much more serious matter for reflection than can be brought within the limits of a single letter. I purpose, however, to embrace an early moment to resume the subject.

* Vide Good's History of Medicine.

"It is a most substantial object with every man to be master of his profession. Competence of ability in it is his strict duty; and eminence in it, his best ambition."

LETTER II.

SIR,

THE mode of remunerating the attendance of the general practitioner, which I have proposed, would be consonant with the feelings and just pretensions of every well-educated member of the profession.

To reward medical skill by a payment for drugs, at a charge that bears no proportion to their intrinsic value, is highly objectionable. It carries with it an appearance of fraud which even the authority of the great writer on national finance is insufficient to do away.*

* This philosophical apologist remarks,—"The profit of Apothecaries has become a bye-word, denoting something that is uncommonly extravagant: this great apparent profit, however, is frequently no more than the reasonable wages of labour. The skill of an Apothecary is a much nicer and more delicate matter than that of any artificer whatever, and the trust which is reposed in him is of much greater importance; his reward, therefore, ought to be suitable to his skill and his trust, and it arises generally from the prices at which he sells his drugs. Though

Admitting the custom I reprobate to be a compromise between the practitioner and the patient, it is, nevertheless, peculiarly disgusting. It is a ridiculous species of unworthy dealing, in which the patient appears to avoid the payment for attendance, by sanctioning a practice that is greatly prejudicial to himself, and degrading to the character of the profession of physic. "Many diseases require few medicines; and yet it is expected that the practitioner shall most diligently attend. He recommends a proper regimen in diet, air, exercise, &c. when he might load the patient with medicines. Should he not then be paid for his trouble and advice? When the apothecaries went no further than pharmacy, they had only a right to be paid for their medicines: but when they are called upon and are duly authorized to prescribe, they have an indisputable claim to be rewarded for their skill."

he should sell them, therefore, at three or four hundred, or even a thousand per cent. profit, this may be no more than the reasonable wages of his labour, charged in the only way in which he can charge them, upon the price of his drugs. The greater part of the apparent profit is real wages, disguised in the garb of profit."

Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations.

The right which is here assumed, results from the improvement effected in medical education by the Apothecaries' Act. Prior to the passing of this Act, the subject, indeed, had received attention; but the view was necessarily different in many respects from that which is here taken, and the state of physic was less favourable for the reception of the change proposed.

If an argument were wanting to confirm the importance of the Apothecaries' Act in protecting the community against the mischief of medical ignorance, it might be unanswerably deduced from the disgraceful circumstances, which came out on the trial of a person who was convicted of delinquency against the statutes of the newly adopted law; while the heavy fine awarded against a physician for slandering a general practitioner, evinces the strong disposition there now exists in the public mind to do full justice to the merits of every branch of our profession; a disposition in the cherishing of which, the public has even a stronger interest than the profession itself.

The respect which was due only to a few meritorious individuals, who, *prior* to any

legal obligation, did not venture to prescribe for the sick without having acquired the requisite measure of professional skill, is, in the present day, become a just award to the *authorized community* of general practitioners.*

To secure the esteem and confidence of society, the competent practitioner must, *himself*, advance the justice of his fair pretensions. He must clearly prove that his claim is preferred for professional skill, and if his case be satisfactorily made out, the public will grant his appeal to their judgment and candour, and will show their approbation by an acknowledgement of his merit.

So long as the community were not secured from the dangers of medical ignorance by the Apothecaries' Act, the *fraternity* of general practitioners could possess no title to

* "If it can be shown that the *medical* education of the general practitioner is identically the same as that of the Physician, with the exception of passing a certain period at Oxford or Cambridge, where every knowledge but medical knowledge is to be acquired; I say, if this can be proved, it is not their charter, or their influence, that should prevent a useful member from assuming his proper station in society, or from receiving a just remuneration for his labour."

that station in the profession, which is their right when they are approved and constituted by competent authority.

Neither would the *occasional* appearance of a few skilful individuals, be sufficient to establish a rule, that could be extended to others, so long as they continued to prescribe on their own authority alone without undergoing a legal probation of their abilities. For, without a sufficient barrier be opposed to the promiscuous entrance of the ignorant with the deserving, the worst description of medicastors might continually intrude themselves. This we know to have frequently happened, until the wisdom of the legislature confirmed the Act of the Associated Surgeon-Apothecaries, and for the future shut the door upon those pretenders to the healing art, who were disgraceful to the profession and dangerous to the public.

Every one must lament the *necessity* which called into practice this description of impostors.

The necessity has, however, always existed, and would continue to exist but for the interposition of the legitimate general practitioner; unless indeed the number of physicians should

be multiplied fifty-fold, and they should be content to receive a remuneration very much below the standard of their customary fee.

Without the general practitioner, therefore, a great portion of the public would be destitute of efficient medical aid; and so long as every man who pretended to a knowledge in physic was permitted to practise, the assistance required was liable to be supplied by incompetent persons. It should also be remembered that "the less opulent classes of society cannot afford to pay different species of professional assistance; nor does it seem necessary that they should: unless it can be shown that the subdivision of medicine has conduced either to its improvement as a science, or to its beneficial application in practice,"—a position which, I apprehend, may be satisfactorily refuted.

It appears by the annals of physic that the medical advisers of the *middle* ranks and the *poor* were generally such persons as compounded the prescriptions directed by the physician for the *affluent*. And it further appears that this was the only source of knowledge from which the less opulent derived the benefit of professional aid. How

miserably deficient this kind of knowledge must have been, it is easy to conceive.*

The growth of this unworthy system of empiricism was *thus* encouraged. It was occasionally found convenient by the physician to direct the apothecary to visit his patient. This inclined the substitute to assume the more important duties of his chief. So incautious a privilege being once

* It could only have been with a view to correct the grossest abuses that the Royal College of Physicians published the following statute:—

"Because it is found by experience that the apothecaries, from the *prescripts* of *Physicians,* attain some pretence, or shadow of false knowledge; we determine and ordain, that no member of the college, for the future, add directions to their prescripts, but he shall leave them with the sick; in the mean time, let him command, that the medicine prescribed in the scrolls, be only signed with some titles or notes proper for their distinction, to the intent that nothing be smelt out by this sort of medicastors, respecting the design, intention, or uses for which the remedies are prescribed."

Mr. Addison, I take it, intended his satire to fall upon *this* "sort of medicastors," when he remarks, "if we look into the profession of physic, we shall find a most formidable body of men. The sight of them is enough to make a man serious, for we may lay it down as a maxim, that when a nation abounds in physicians, it grows thin of people."

obtained, it creates no surprise that the permission which was originally granted in an emergency should at length become a prescriptive right, and in future be adopted as a rule of independent action.

Now as the physician could only visit a limited number of patients, and as many of those were unable to recompense him agreeably to his expectation: so an extended theatre was presented, alike open to the learned and the ignorant. Disease might be conquered, and health restored to a valuable family, on some occasions, by the zealous exertions of a skilful, although unchartered practitioner; but then again, the most daring empiric was equally thrown upon society to practise an art, in the knowledge of which he possessed no better pretensions than compounding of physician's prescriptions.*

The general practitioner who is approved by competent authority as being thoroughly qualified to prescribe in medicine, and who possesses the diploma of the College of Sur-

* "Some physicians took them in their visits, whereby they acquired a little smattering of diseases, and made people believe they had acquired some skill in the art,"—"and they afterwards began to venture a little at practice."

geons, should claim to be paid for his time and talent, by a fee proportionate to the ability of his patient. He should not receive a remuneration by an exorbitant charge on an unnecessary, and therefore pernicious load of physic. It is, indeed, probable that upon this reasonable scheme of recompense, he would receive, in general, a less sum total than heretofore upon the old trading principle: but would it not be infinitely more gratifying to be paid a fair and moderate compensation in the character of a gentleman and man of science, than in a mode which "every one concerned for the honour of medicine, must reflect on with indignation?"*

I have already observed, that the objection

* "That the interests of health and the preservation of life, should be committed to any other than duly qualified and fitly authorised persons, is a monstrous absurdity; and that the charge and responsibility of such serious concerns, should not be as *respectfully* paid as the administration of worldly property, is equally absurd." "Common sense, common honesty, and common humanity, are at variance with the present condition of the pharmaceutical art, and the public, and the whole of the medical profession, join in calling aloud for a substantial, practical, and permanent re-modelling of this indispensable branch of physic."

which is *here* made to the present *mode* of remuneration, has also been urged by other authorities. But the views which those authorities deemed it adviseable to take of so objectionable a measure, were antecedent to the Apothecaries' Act.

One view of the subject arose from the gross ignorance of numerous prescribers, *when* the most incompetent person was not distinguishable, by any legal test, from the learned and skilful. As a remedy against this evil, it was advised that the physician should dispense his own medicines. "In regard to pharmacy," Dr. Gregory remarks, "it were much to be wished that those who make it their business, should have no connection with the practice of physic, or that physicians should dispense their own medicines." In the present improved state of medical practice, were the patient only to pay for medicines "at prime cost, and the whole profit to be thrown upon attendance, it would much alleviate the evil."

Another view of the same subject arose with the well-educated apothecary himself. He could only contemplate the *manner* in which his services were repaid by the cus-

tomary pharmaceutical impositions, "as a mode of proceeding which is repugnant to the feelings of every liberal and conscientious mind, and equally prejudicial to the interest of the patient and that of the practitioner." See Address of the London Committee.

A different view of the state of medical practice was, at one period, presented in the appeals which both physicians and apothecaries made to the public from various quarters. It reflected on the alliance that was occasionally formed between the physician and the pharmaceutist.* "The friendship of apothecaries," says an enlightened and disinterested writer, "became highly useful to young physicians, and was often sought for, and requited by them, in the most disgraceful manner." It is upon the same topic that Dr. Gregory writes, "the obligation to apo-

* "In an appeal of this sort, it would be improper to rake up any of the shameful disputes and criminations, which have so often disgraced medical literature; but it would, at the same time, be unjust to refrain from telling the public, that several regular physicians and regular surgeons, have been detected in sharing the profits of retail drug shops."

thecaries is too often repaid by physicians in a way that every one concerned for the honour of medicine must reflect on with indignation."

The present system of medical education having, however, introduced the legally authorized general practitioner, the assistance of the diplomatized physician is less frequently importuned. Hence the bond of connexion which was formerly the subject of complaint, is now dissolved. The general practitioner prescribes for his patient, and employs a competent person to compound their medicines. Under these circumstances, he deserves a remuneration more worthy of his character, than the *mode* which had its origin in times of ignorance. He prefers no higher claim than to be recompensed in a manner becoming the liberal art he professes to practise, when he has proved himself worthy of confidence and trust.*

* " For a series of years, a spirit of professional jealousy has subsisted between the physicians and apothecaries, originating from a persuasion that a great proportion of the prescriptions of the former are directed to the shop of the druggist; while apothecaries have usurped the province of attending on and prescribing for the sick."

" The true dignity of physic is to be maintained only

It must, I think, be admitted that the present mode of remuneration is truly absurd, often injurious to the patient, and always disgraceful to the medical attendant. Nevertheless, the change which I proposed in a former letter, may be open to certain objections. These it would be desirable to obviate by such a modification as should yet keep the leading principle strictly in view.

It may be objected, that the druggist is not called upon to produce any testimonial of his fitness to practise pharmacy; hence many

by the superior abilities of those who profess it, by that openness and candour, which disdain all artifice, and which invite to a free inquiry."

"I apprehend, the dignity of the profession is not to be supported by a narrow, selfish, corporation spirit; by self-importance; by formality in manners, or by an affectation of mystery."

"Those long-continued technical obscurities, which at one time constituted the very form and body of the profession, seem to be now yielding to the fairer pretensions of science and intelligible observation."——"The propagation of general knowledge threatens a speedy invasion of those privileged establishments which uphold medical mystery."

"A physician of a candid and liberal spirit will feel no superiority, but what arises from superior learning and superior abilities; he will despise those distinctions founded in vanity, self-interest, or caprice."

serious mistakes have arisen from the ignorance of dispensers; and therefore it would be highly injurious to the community to intrust the druggist with the charge of compounding the prescriptions of the general practitioner.

It may also be urged in objection, that it might be attended with great inconvenience to send the prescriptions to the druggist's shop. This inconvenience would be often experienced even in large towns; and in country places it would be altogether impracticable.

Perhaps other objections may be offered to the suggestion contained in my last letter, of transferring the business of pharmacy into the druggists' hands, which may render it highly expedient for the general practitioner to continue to dispense his own medicines. Under these circumstances, I would propose that the general practitioner be paid for his attendance by a moderate acknowledgement, and that he should continue to employ a well-educated and legally authorized person to compound his prescriptions.

The medicines should be charged without profit when supplied by the general practi-

tioner. It would, however, be optional with the patient to have the prescription made up at the druggist's shop. Such is the outline of the plan I propose. The change which it contemplates in the mode of remunerating medical attendance I trust is correct in principle. It may however be susceptible of much improvement in the detail. I have reason to think it would be cheerfully accepted by the public, if the public were made sufficiently acquainted with their own interest.

With respect to the profession, I anticipate no opposition from the man of science. With the feeling expressed by the London Committee, he can never reflect upon the present mode of his recompense without indignation, "as repugnant to the feelings of every liberal and conscientious mind." But should the suggestion be approved by men of learning and integrity, it will, of course, be rejected by those of opposite sentiments. I cannot for a moment anticipate the acceptance of any liberal plan to raise the character of the general practitioner above the degraded station he occupies at present, from the man of trade whose chief object

is to prosper by the abuse of it: from the mere man of drugs, who, to cite an illustration more coarsely expressed than in reality overcharged, "possesses no mercy on the entrails of mankind."*

Hence that union of the fraternity is not to be expected, which would ensure the general adoption of the measure proposed. It must, therefore, remain for a while imperfect. I do not, however, entertain any apprehension for its ultimate success. I am sanguine in the belief, that its consummation will be found in the rising genius of the present times.

The interposition of a legislative Act to secure the payment of such a moderate acknowledgement as the defined nature of a certain medical attendance should be considered to deserve, would be no more than equitable. In my opinion, however, it is not indispensable. I should rather incline to wave a legislative interference, and leave the

* "How long, thou huge helpless public! wilt thou stand gaping like a brute, whose upper lip is wrung in the cord of the farrier, to receive whatever thy merciless drench-dealers may find it their interest to pour into thy capacious jaws? How long wilt thou submit to a pilfering collusion between Doctor and Apothecary?"

terms of remuneration with the patient himself.*

Were indeed a legislative protection deemed of more urgent necessity than I am led to regard it, it would scarcely be attainable. An opposition would arise to the measure with those who feel less interest in the public welfare and the advancement of medical science, than in arresting the growing prosperity of the general practitioner.

When the public become better acquainted with his qualifications; when the sources of his knowledge in the healing art are considered, and the improved system of his professional education is properly appreciated: then will the general practitioner receive the support he merits. He will be

* "It must be acknowledged that a medical practitioner has a full claim in equity to his professional emoluments; and it is, therefore, reasonable to conclude, that what subsists as a *moral* right, ought to be demandable, under proper regulations, as a *legal* right."

"His pecuniary acknowledgments may be refused from prejudice, captiousness, from parsimony, or from dishonesty."

"It would be difficult to assign a satisfactory reason why the Faculty should be excluded from judicial protection, when the just remuneration of their services is wrongfully withheld."

consulted agreeably to his real desert. Genius and an enlightened experience will be distinguished from names; and if in the language of commerce he brings a due proportion of practical ability into the market at a very moderate charge, he will unquestionably receive the full measure of his reward. The community will derive the greatest benefit from his skilful and zealous exertions in their service, and they will do that ample justice to merit which neither slander, open or concealed, envy, ignorance, malice or other uncharitableness will be able to prevent.*

Whether the system of his education be sufficient to fulfil these expectations, is a question of peculiar importance. It shall, therefore, form the subject of my next communication.

* "Opinions should be regarded according to their intrinsic merit, not according to the person from whom they proceed."—"It unfortunately happens, that the only judges of medical merit, are those who have sinister views in concealing or depreciating it."

"The London College of Surgeons, in giving to the country the Surgeon-Apothecary, familiarized to general practice by apprenticeship; grounded in a knowledge of the human constitution, and of diseases in general, by attendance on lectures, dissections, and hospital practice; and proved, as to his actual attainments by examination; have done more extensive and essential service to the community, than all the other medical corporations united."

LETTER III.

SIR,

THE candidate for general practice is taught by physicians and surgeons who are eminently qualified for the important trust. He receives their certificates of his diligent attention. To the general system of his professional education, I, therefore, do not perceive any ground of objection. "For, it is not possible to suppose that a physician gives *but a part* of his profundity to his disciple, or that he takes money of any student who is incompetent to receive the proffered learning."

A security against ignorance is provided moreover by the examinations which the student is compelled to undergo. By these his fitness *should* be accurately determined. The examinations *should* determine, by the strictest enquiry, the knowledge already attained. They should reject incompetency, and silence presumption. They give a passport to merit, and *should* guard the public against imposture.

When the student has obtained the certificates of his teachers, and is sanctioned by the diploma and license of the examiners, his qualifications have been admitted by their appropriate test. If, therefore, the requisite knowledge be thus legitimately ascertained, it were useless to question the mere *mode* of its acquirement.

Should, however, an ignorant pretender escape detection and obtain permission to practise, the fault has been ascribed to a defective system of professional education. The address with which negligence or incapacity sometimes succeed in eluding the vigilance and discrimination of the examiners, has been unjustly charged upon the general plan of instruction rather than upon personal presumption.

That a weak and idle pupil does, occasionally, disgrace his school, requires no particular evidence from me; but that he should obtain the certificates of his learned teachers, in testimony either of his diligence or proficiency, demands an explanation. That he should be approved by the courts of examiners, creates both surprise and regret.

It is not *now* my intention to discuss this

important topic. The professional rank and talents of the examiners give a reasonable earnest of their attention to the public welfare; an assurance of their devotion to the honourable character of the art they profess. It is, indeed, of the last importance that they fulfil the duty of examiners. They are the authorized safeguards of the public health against ignorance and empiricism. The sanction of their diploma involves the health and life of many a valuable member of society; inasmuch as it affirms the competency of the practitioner who obtains it. The examinations in medicine, while medicine is studied distinct from surgery and other collateral alliances, should be conducted by physicians, who are, in general, the teachers of the art. The Court of Apothecaries, agreeably to the present state of the practice of the healing art, should conduct the examinations in chemistry, materia medica, botany, and pharmacy; the College of Surgeons, as at present, in anatomy, physiology, and surgery.

To the *learned* and *ingenuous* graduate, every respect is due which a proficient deserves from the Notaries of medical science.

I fully appreciate his classical attainments, and the liberal scope of his general knowledge. But this tribute is not an award to names or chartered privilege. The diplomatized pretender, who, with much scholastic discipline, is yet entirely ignorant of the laws of medical evidence; is as dangerous an empiric, at the bed-side, as the unchartered and inexperienced apothecary. It is not my wish to compare the well-educated general practitioner with the accomplished academician; *except* in those pursuits which are strictly professional. In *these*, I am desirous it should be known that the general practitioner emulates the best informed collegiate. His duty can only be discharged with advantage to the public, or with honour to himself, by his possessing a competent knowledge of practical medicine, surgery, and pharmacy.*

* "All the sciences of observation are composed of facts. Human industry observes and collects these facts; and reasoning connects them. It classes them, unites them, or contrasts them, and determines their general or particular relations. The theoretic branch of a science, therefore, should consist of the mere exposition of the connection, classification, and relations of all the facts of which this science is composed: it should form, as it were, their summary."

The accomplishments which grace the education of the graduate, are by no means necessary to a thorough knowledge of the healing art. They are, however, sometimes particularly acceptable to the taste of the exalted personages whom he is often called to attend: and they are, assuredly, due to the patrician recompense he receives. Between the ordinary fees of the collegiate physician, and the moderate remuneration I would propose for the attendance of the well-educated general practitioner there is no comparison. It is true, the professional duties of each are precisely the same; and the diseases of the middle ranks and the poor, require the same extent of professional knowledge for their alleviation, as the diseases of the rich.

The best collegiate preparation can never make a true physician without the frequent observance of disease, although such a preparation should be deemed sufficient for the qualification of a diploma. "In the study of the therapeutic branch of physic, the rules can be developed only at the bed-side of the patient. It was by their clinical instruction that the Greeks and Romans taught the prac-

tice of physic; the same plan was followed by the Arabians."

When, therefore, a degree in medicine is conferred in honour of academical attainments without practical information; although the title of *doctor* be acquired, and the qualification of a diploma gives authority to practise physic, yet has the inexperienced graduate his profession to learn.*

Classical erudition, the mathematics, moral and natural philosophy, logic, natural history, drawing, the modern languages; these comprise a series of valuable attainments which possess a first place in the scale of preliminary pursuits. If to these be added a judicious system of elementary reading in anatomy, physiology, botany, chemistry, materia medica, pharmacy, medicine and surgery, a plan

* "Classical or polite literature, and the necessary qualifications of a good physician, are distinct and very different things. Though logic, mathematics, languages, &c. are considerable ornaments to the profession, yet they are not more conducive to a circumstantial and exact history of diseases than the art of painting is to a musician." Lord Bacon observes, "Physicians have appeared to more advantage as poets, antiquaries, critics, politicians, divines, &c, than in their own profession, because the line of their education leads chiefly to these studies."

is chalked out which embraces the outline of a good *preparation;* but it can promise nothing more, however perfect its execution.

To understand the nature of disease and the mode of its treatment, its history and causes, the only foundation of a rational practice of physic; the subject must be studied at the *bed-side.* It must be *there* explained to the pupil by frequent inspections of actual appearances in all the perplexity of their changeable features. It is at the *bed-side* that the young physician is taught to confide in nature alone. He soon learns to distrust his earlier estimate of the aid of general science in its application to the art of medicine.* It is in the volume of nature, in which her phenomena are so wonderfully diversified as not to be susceptible of a transfer into other books, that the student will best interrogate and comprehend her language; in which he will

* "Physicians have often made an improper application to their art, of the general theories or particular views belonging to the other sciences."——"We ought to begin by separating medicine from the sciences that do not relate to it; and its principles should be deduced solely from such facts as really belong to it, that is, from observation and experiments upon the living body, in its healthy and diseased states."

be taught that the true method of acquiring medical knowledge is by the repeated and attentive contemplation of facts. A course of elementary study is, unquestionably, indispensable. By this the judgment is improved, and conclusions are taught to be deduced with logical precision. But unless it points distinctly to the main object, "both labour and talent may become useless for want of a proper direction." The attention given to general science and polite literature may be more than their collateral aid deserves, when considered only as contributive to professional improvement.

By clinical instruction and anatomy as learned by dissection, a more perfect knowledge of medicine may be attained than by the most elaborate study of *mere* opinions. What has been dignified by the title of *theory* in physic, is but too often a useless display of unfounded hypotheses. To arrive at legitimate conclusions in an art which is entirely built upon facts, the subject must first be brought to the rigid test of an adequate experience.*

* "The art of medicine is founded upon experiment and observation, and the rules for exercising it are always

Nothing promises more effectually to clear the road for the student in medicine than a well-devised preparatory system. To prosecute the study of physic as a practical art, the course pursued should have a due regard to œconomy of time, that subsidiary topics may not occupy a greater share of attention than their importance requires.*

I have adverted to collegiate discipline as a system upon which to form the accomplished graduate who moves in the higher circles of fashion, and whose remuneration is placed beyond the means of the middle classes of society. I shall next consider the education of the general practitioner. In doing this I shall confine myself to a descrip-

modified by external circumstances, which can never be accurately known, except by one, long conversant with diseases, as they actually occur. Skill in medicine is therefore not to be acquired by reading alone."

* I here consider education in reference *only* to a particular purpose. Apart from this, I would not have the student " usurped by his profession"——" he is not always upon duty." On the contrary, " In the improvement and embellishment of his leisure, he has a sphere of action in which, if he can show none of the advantages of an improved understanding, whatever may be his skill or proficiency in his profession, he is no more than an ill-educated man."

tion of the system most commonly adopted in the present day; and in the conclusion I shall hope to substantiate his claim to the respect of the community as a legitimate professor and practitioner of the healing art.

I am aware that the system of professional education to which I refer is susceptible of much improvement. This must, however, in great measure, result from the support which the general practitioner shall receive from the public. Improvements in education imply an augmentation of expense; and this can seldom be incurred beyond the ordinary routine, unless there is a reasonable expectation of an adequate return.

In the education of the general practitioner every instruction should be given that can advance the knowledge of physic and surgery. But this should be accomplished with œconomy. No instruction should be sought which does not contribute to the principal object in view.

A college discipline, therefore, does not present the best scheme of professional education. It does not present a system of *medical* tuition more perfect than is elsewhere taught with much less expense. Without

recourse to an academical preparation, elementary studies can receive all the attention that is necessary in the education of a true physician.*

An apprenticeship, or period of pupilage under the tuition of an experienced general practitioner, is the mode of education commonly resorted to in *preparing* the medical candidate. An apprenticeship, however, is thought by some to be "the very worst mode which could be devised for a medical and chirurgical education,"—"mere loss of time." Such, therefore, have proposed a collegiate system in preference, even for the instruction of the *mere* apothecary.

The academical preparation advised by the

* "What is there to prevent a man of tolerable capacity and of determined application, from acquiring a respectable share of any branch of knowledge, that is within the compass of human comprehension? What is there more peculiarly difficult in the science of Physic, to prevent the apprentice of an apothecary from becoming an able and honourable physician, than there is in the science of Law, to prevent the clerk of an attorney from the future exercise of the functions of an advocate, or from acquiring the discernment and dignity of a judge? Surely not the accident of his not having taken a degree at Oxford or Cambridge.

authorities who condemn an apprenticeship, they regard merely as a qualification for clinical instruction and subsequent examinations. They do not consider a collegiate initiation sufficient to give its possessor a sanction to practise. But whether it be adviseable or not to resort to an university rather than to the tuition of an able practitioner; an objection has been urged against it on the ground that an academical education would interfere with the humbler duties of the apothecary in a manner which is inconsistent with his inferior claims.

Now considering that the only object is to make the student master of his profession; I am not disposed to regard this objection of any serious weight. On other grounds, indeed, I should prefer the mode of apprenticeship; which, in my judgment, gives a fair promise of efficient preliminary instruction in the healing art.

I am inclined to rest the most serious objections against an apprenticeship on the ground of its too frequent *abuse*. I consider it as a system that is capable of producing the best results, if advantage be taken to

profit by the benefits which it is competent to insure.*

Whether the plan of an academical preparation, or the mode by apprenticeship be adopted, to lay a foundation of medical and chirurgical knowledge; the rule of teaching theoretically and practically at the same time, of studying disease in the original by attention to actual phenomena, in addition to a careful perusal of the copies which have been made from nature by experienced masters, is a *sine qua non*. Medicine and surgery is a practical art. Every inference in it which approxi-

* "There certainly is not a school more excellently calculated for the attainment of much of the most useful knowledge the physician should possess, than the shop of an intelligent apothecary. Besides a thorough proficiency in the peculiar business of investigating and judging of the comparative goodness of medicines, and of their various preparations and compositions, if a young man, in such situations, be permitted to accompany his principal in his visits to patients, which, in most instances, is the case in the latter years of his apprenticeship; he commands the very best source of medical observation, information, and experience; he is initiated, by the best of all possible means, in a most essential branch of medical science, and is well prepared to continue his studies with advantage."

mates to the expression of a general principle is derived solely from the observation of particular facts. The application of the strict sciences to the formation of theory in medicine, is not only unavailing, but is often injurious.

I cannot better describe the plan which is usually pursued in the education of the general practitioner, than by stating an example as this occurred in the preparation of a youth for the practical duties of medicine and surgery.

He expressed an early predilection for the study of the healing art. The knowledge of this preference changed the direction of his school pursuits. The plan of initiation, which had a counting-house in view, assumed another character. A devotion to Latin and Greek was regarded indispensable. After the attainment of a tolerable proficiency in these, modern languages were studied, and more easily acquired. Geometry, after a course of arithmetic, was succeeded by natural philosophy and logic. These, with general history, may be said to have comprized the leading objects of his earlier

pursuits. A taste for drawing received the encouragement it so especially deserves from the student in medicine and surgery.

At seventeen he was apprenticed to an experienced general practitioner in a country town, who was one of the surgeons to a public establishment.

The early period of his apprenticeship was dedicated to the duties of his particular station, which gave him a tolerable knowledge of practical pharmacy, pharmaceutic chemistry, and materia medica. His leisure was occupied in the continuation of scholastic exercises. In the more advanced term of his apprenticeship, he accompanied his superior to the hospital, where he witnessed the method of enquiring into the complicated and ever-varying phenomena of disease; and attended to the exhibition and effects of the remedies prescribed.*

He also read some elementary works in

* "It cannot be doubted, notwithstanding the contumely with which some men, who have not enjoyed its advantages, affect to treat such a plan of medical education; that young men so initiated, if well, though *privately* educated, with equal talents for observation and with equal industry, cannot fail to become good practical physicians, earlier in life than any men can, who with the best acade-

medicine, both ancient and modern. The writings of the French physiologists improved his acquaintance both with their language and science. Anatomy was no further attempted than in copying the tables of Albinus and attending to the explanations. An elementary work on surgery was read with a view to assist his experience in the cases he witnessed both in the hospital and his master's private practice; but he did not attempt an elaborate course of reading either in surgery or medicine.

From this preparatory course the student derived the greatest advantage: not only as it went hand in hand with his early experience during apprenticeship, but by preparing his mind for the reception of those more comprehensive views which were presented to him afterwards, when he commenced attendance at the lectures, dissections, and hospitals.

At the termination of his apprenticeship, he began a new career by entering at the anatomical lectures. After the first course he began to dissect, and diligently attended

mical education are without that knowledge, which the apprenticed apothecary has the opportunity of acquiring."

to anatomical and physiological pursuits during the remainder of this probationary period.

At proper seasons he continued his classical studies, and exercised his talent in anatomical drawing. The first year afforded leisure for commencing an attendance on chemistry and botany.

The lectures on the principles and practice of medicine and surgery were accompanied by clinical instruction and hospital duties. At the close of his appointed period of initiation, he attended two courses on experimental philosophy.

When the system of scholastic preparation is conducted with energy upon the plan above detailed, a pupilage of three or four years may, then, be made initiatory to ultimate pursuits with every prospect of success.

The teachers in the several departments of professional instruction should ascertain the pupil's diligent attention by the sure test of frequent examinations; and they should refuse their certificates to such as do not submit themselves to this highly indispensable trial of their improvement. If, in these circumstances, the final exami-

nations which take place before the grave and enlightened professors who are invested with authority to accept the candidate or remand him to his studies, be conducted with deliberation, ability, and zeal, I see no reasonable objection that can be charged upon this system of education.

When, therefore, the candidate for general practice is thus recommended, the remuneration for his attendance should be congenial with the scientific character he holds. He should be recompensed for his time, labour, and skill, by a fee proportionate to his services and the means of his employer. He should not be compelled to make a charge in a manner which is repugnant to science and every honourable feeling; in direct opposition to good morals and common honesty, and therefore derogatory to the well-educated member of a learned and liberal profession. He does not claim the high remuneration which the graduate receives; but he claims to be rewarded for the exercise of his skill in the character of a gentleman.

Objections to the preparatory mode of professional education by an apprenticeship, have sometimes been urged without a due

consideration. Their ground has been assumed upon partial views of the subject. If, indeed, the master does not fulfil his duty, an apprenticeship must then exhibit a worse alternative than, even, the mere loss of time.

The duty of a master is not performed by his obtaining a liberal premium and procuring a full measure of service from the labour of his apprentice. He is bound to qualify him for the pursuit of those ulterior objects of study, by the full attainment of which he shall be enabled to pass his examinations with credit, and to enter upon the practical duties of his profession with every prospect of benefit to the public. The apprentice must be required, of course, to pay an assiduous attention to his master's concerns. From the proper performance of his pharmaceutical duties, he will acquire much useful knowledge. Pharmacy can only be learned by practice; and the materia medica is best understood when taught collaterally with the business of preparing medicines. "It is by examining the different articles of materia medica, that we learn to know them; it is by seeing them decomposed and compounded, that we acquire just notions of their properties."

It is remote from my present view to dis-

cuss further the separate pretensions of the different modes of pursuing a surgical and medical education: neither is it my intention to consider at much length, the course which the successful candidate would most advantageously adopt, when, having passed the ordeal of his examinations, he acquires the authority to practise.

I am desirous, however, so far to trespass upon your leisure as to recommend to the junior practitioner the outline of a plan, which I conceive would give strength and permanence to his early professional attainments.

In this view it should be impressed upon the mind of the student, that the legitimate sources of his information originate in the careful observance of phenomena, and the assiduous contemplation of recorded facts.*

Now with respect to actual observation, we must be aware, that the experience of any individual is very gradually acquired. Hence this inevitable deficiency can only be supplied by the experience of others.

In order to derive the greatest advantage

* "The cultivation of science in the early ages of Grecian philosophy, was undertaken on the soundest principles; namely, the observation of nature, and the collection of facts."

from the experience of those who have communicated the result of their knowledge to the public by their writings, it will be adviseable to weigh their systems with the utmost caution. The student should endeavour to ascertain facts, and separate them from the opinions to which they may have given rise; until a further accumulation of indisputable evidence either confirm or refute them. The validity of any statement of fact can only be appreciated by the character of the reporter. I am unwilling to think that medical writers are in the practice of making false statements, however erroneous their inferences may be found. It would be well for the student to register carefully, short notes of important facts, received from good authorities, refusing admission to the insertion of mere opinions.

With this view I should advise him to read, in the first place, the most approved practical systems; and subsequently, the series of facts which are reported in a long catalogue of periodical works. The observations which the junior practitioner will be assiduously employed in making when occupied with active professional duties, must regulate and determine, after all, his ultimate opinions, and re-

concile or separate them from the conclusions adopted by written authorities.*

I recommend also to those who are entering upon the exercise of their professional duties, the practice of writing correct histories of every interesting case consigned to their charge; also as frequent a conference as may be possible with the learned members of our fraternity. Every candid practitioner must confess the embarrassments by which his judgment and determinations are occasionally assailed at the bed-side of serious disease; such as he did not look for in nature, having only studied the subject in the specious schemes of nosological arrangement. On trying occasions, the most serviceable information will be brought to bear upon the mind of a zealous and erudite practitioner by friendly communication with candid and intelligent men, and by calling to recollection the leading features in the historical details of cases formerly noted with care.

* "What indeed is science, but the accumulated observations and discoveries of a succession of many people, framed into a system? When this is once accomplished, every individual may then avail himself of the labours of others, and thus arrive, in a compendious manner, at a competent knowledge of any art."

When the system of education above described has brought the candidate to his practical duties, a less rigid attention to professional studies will permit him the leisure to cultivate other objects of general knowledge. He will then derive the highest gratification from the continuation of his classical pursuits. He will improve his acquaintance with natural history, moral philosophy, general history and travels.

In thus considering the plan of education as at present adopted to form the general practitioner, I do not represent it as a perfect scheme: but it is commensurate with the object in view. It is sufficiently well calculated to give to the public a competent medical and chirurgical adviser. One, who deserves the respect and encouragement due to that measure of professional skill, which a regular education implies, when improved by experience and directed by the desire to be useful to society. If the general practitioner, who aspires to the possession of the public confidence, be unadorned with the plumage of the college bird, it should be had in remembrance that he makes no pretension to a college reward.

" Omnes medicinæ partes ita connexæ sunt, ut ex toto separari non possint."—CELSUS.

" The fortunate union of the two sciences, which should never have been interrupted, ceased when, on the decline of the schools of the empire, Justinian withdrew the revenues from the Chairs, to bestow them on the Church. The ecclesiastics then became the depositaries of all that was known in medicine, as of every other branch of knowledge; but religious motives made them imagine, that they ought to abstain from the study of anatomy and surgery."

LETTER IV.

SIR,

THE division of the healing art into separate departments, and the allotment of these to practitioners of different denominations, might conduce to its improvement, by directing the attention to fewer objects of research, if such a division were founded in nature. It might also facilitate labour, were these distinctions as applicable to the practice of physic and surgery as to the mechanic arts.

On this ground, indeed, the separation of medicine from surgery has been defended by high professional authority. "The distinction between the provinces of physic and surgery," it has been observed, by Dr. Percival, "should be steadily maintained. This distinction is sanctioned both by reason and experience: for the division of skill and labour is no less advantageous in the liberal, than in the mechanic arts."

But it will appear, on a strict enquiry, that

the distinction adverted to is inadmissible. The separation of medicine from surgery cannot be maintained. The parts into which the healing art has been divided, are intimately connected with, and *so* illustrate each other, that it is impossible to understand some parts while ignorant of the rest. When, therefore, it is considered upon what grounds this division has been adopted, and to what *practical* extent it is *now* maintained; a question may arise as to the benefits which society, and the healing art itself, derive from the distinctions attempted to be imposed by the line of demarcation that has, thus ostensibly, been drawn. "These observations," Professor Carlisle remarks, "necessarily comprise both the offices of the surgeon and the physician, because I could not separate the consideration of local distempers from constitutional influences: nor does it seem beneficial to the sick, that such distinctions should be practically enforced."

From the pen of another eminently enlightened professor of the healing art we have a similar opinion. "No part of the animal body," Mr. Abernethy observes, "can in general be very considerably disordered, without

occasioning a correspondent derangement in other parts of the system. An evil seems to me to have arisen from the artificial division of the healing art into the medical and surgical departments. This division has caused the attention of the physician and the surgeon to be too exclusively directed to those diseases, which custom has *arbitrarily* allotted to their care."

It has however been suggested, that *as* in the construction of machinery the artists acquire skill and dexterity by each having a particular province assigned to himself; *so*, in preserving the springs of life in health and vigour, a similar division of labour must be equally beneficial. But no analogy here exists. In the mechanic arts the perfection of each part of a machine depends upon its own particular construction: but although the separate parts may be formed independently of each other by artists who are unacquainted with the other divisions of the work, yet must a *single* mind of a more enlarged comprehension regulate the whole. Independently, therefore, of the essential difference which obtains between the *living* system and a system of mere human machinery, the ana-

logy adverted to entirely fails. For in the practice of the healing art the physician bears no relation to the workmen employed in the fabrication of a machine. He is not employed to *construct*. His exertions are directed only to preservation and repair. To the preservation of a system, the several parts of which are associated during life by an inseparable bond of union. If the similitude which has been traced between the offices of the physician and the labours of the mechanic can be brought to apply, it must be by comparing the physician with the master builder in mechanics, and not with the separate artists he employs. He must comprehend the whole scope of the finished machine, in order to regulate its movements, and to understand its parts in detail.

The art of healing has for its object the wonderfully intricate structure and diversified functions of the *living* body, in which, I may repeat, no part can be thoroughly understood independently of the rest. The vital system, with its multifarious influences and affections, admits no subdivision in the consideration of its movements. It presents a system of organization *sui generis*.

Formed with an excellency beyond our highest admiration, in a manner beyond our keenest scrutiny, the living body possesses agencies and actions peculiar to its vital nature, with which the inanimate creation affords no just comparison. The animal fabric is constructed of many parts, which possess the faculty of performing various functions: and it is preserved in vigour, or deranged both in structure and in function, by influences that are excited through means, to us, wholly inexplicable.

The system of life is like a chain, the links of which are connected by universal sympathy. No link is materially affected without influencing the other. An external irritation often occasions internal derangement: and peculiar states of internal organs exert a powerful agency over external disorders. The most trifling affection of a mere point on the surface of the body, will occasion universal disease, and death; as, for instance, in Tetanus when produced by the slightest imaginable puncture, or by mere abrasion of the skin. Similar effects will also result from internal irritations; as in the example of worms in the intestines exciting convulsions

and death. Sometimes we perceive a cause of disease acting directly upon an organ essential to life, when the most striking effects appear in the more obvious derangement of a distant part. "Hippocrates, we are told, formed many of his notions, and much of his practice in the cure of *internal* diseases, from what he observed in those seated *externally*. The analogy of external and internal diseases is obvious. The knowledge and cure of external affections is a master key to the study, and practice of Medicine." "Without anatomy there can be no true physiology: and pathology can be founded only on the latter."

To divide, therefore, the healing art into shares on the consideration, that diseases are either general or local, external or internal, while we view the ever-varying influence of universal sympathy and association in the phenomena of life, is, surely, an unnatural distinction in relation both to principle and practice.

"The distinction of internal and external diseases has no more foundation in nature, than that between diseases of the right and left side of the body. The distinction between local and general diseases cannot be main-

tained, since organs the most distant are sympathetically influenced, and constantly drawn into consentaneous derangement."

It would be useless on this occasion to trace to its origin the precise period when the separation of medicine from surgery took place, or to search for the motives of its adoption. For no satisfactory conclusion could be drawn from rules however ancient, or however salutary they might once have been, should their continuance be found inapplicable to the present state of science. "The various histories of physic agree, that the ancient Physicians, from Æsculapius and Hippocrates among the Greeks, to Celsus and Galen among the Romans, practised the different branches of Medicine."—"The art of surgery was not separated from medicine till in the times of ignorance and barbarism."

Not only did the Fathers of Physic practise the different branches of the healing art, but in modern times the London College of physicians deemed it necessary for the physician to understand surgery, "forasmuch as the science of physic doth comprehend, include, and contain the knowledge of surgery, as a special member and part of the same." The

same Royal College considered pharmacy likewise an essential link in the chain of practice. Their members frequently proposed in publications, the propriety of dispensing their own prescriptions; a practice which pretty generally obtains among the Surgeons of Edinburgh, and which was recommended by Dr. Gregory to the Physicians of that City.* The Royal College of Surgeons of London grant their diploma to those who practise pharmacy: and although many of the London Surgeons do not dispense their own medicines, yet do they practise physic as well as surgery; and often to a much greater extent.

Medicine and Surgery are, indeed, inseparable. This must appear obvious whenever

*"Hippocrates not only wrote more fully than any of his predecessors on surgery and anatomy, but was a bold and skilful operator himself; and the medicines he prescribed, there is every reason to believe, he compounded with his own hands."

"It is certain," says Conringius, "that the ancient physicians prepared all their medicines with their own hands; that they attended to surgery, healed wounds, and performed every operation the medical art requires."

"In Great Britain, as in all other countries, the first physicians were pharmaceutists, and compounded their own medicines."

the subject is examined on its own merits. " Surgery must borrow certain views from general medicine, in the same way that medicine is often obliged to have recourse to surgical assistance."——" They are one and indivisible."——" The two sciences are interlocked at all points."——" Physic and surgery are only parts of a grand whole; one cannot be known without the other."——" If a line is to be drawn between medicine and surgery, the latter must be confined to *mere* manual operation. The practice of medicine immediately begins when the dressings are applied."

Pharmacy might be made a distinct branch of the profession of physic, if confined to the practice of compounding medicines. The separation of pharmacy however may, in certain points of view, be considered injurious. No physician should be ignorant of pharmacy, and it can only be understood by practice. " It is not by the perusal of books that we can learn pharmacy: but by witnessing the various processes of this art, by performing them ourselves, and by rendering ourselves familiar with the subjects of them, and the instruments by which they are effected." The

joining pharmacy to the other branches of practice is particularly convenient to the public. It affords moreover a satisfactory assurance that, as a branch of the healing art, it is in proper hands when conducted under the immediate direction of the person who prescribes.

There are some who consider the division of the healing art into separate departments, to have a sufficient foundation in the advantage which it presents of maintaining a regular scale in the medical ranks of society. They regard it as it affects the interest of the practitioners, without any reference to the advancement of their art.

It is stated by the advocates for separation, on this principle, that a collegiate education, when supported by interest and affluence, gives the graduate in physic, an elevation in rank, to which the profoundest knowledge and most enlightened experience of an unchartered practitioner can advance no claim. This may be true: but as it respects the improvement of science, and the good of mankind, the argument entirely fails. "There is so close a connection between all the branches of medical science, that, whatever

artificial distinctions may be made, medicine and surgery must always be understood by one and the same person." The living body must be considered as a whole in relation to its functions, healthy or diseased. It possesses that perfect unity in itself which no precedence of rank in society, no college regulation, can ever disturb without doing an injury to the best interests of science, whatever artificial distinctions may be voluntarily practised or politically enforced.

The importance of a knowledge of morbid anatomy toward the establishment of accurate diagnosis, in what has been denominated general disease, renders dissection equally necessary in medical as in surgical tuition. Hence the rudiments of operative surgery are ingrafted, as it were, on professional education, as the necessary consequence of medical research. The knowledge of anatomy, thus indispensable to the understanding of medicine, implies a certain proficiency in the art of dissection : and from the frequent practice of dissecting, operative surgery would follow as a matter of course, were it an object to cultivate the healing art on the unity of principle o which nature and reason so distinctly point.

Thus is the union of medicine and surgery

a consequence of the thorough prosecution of either the one or the other; without adverting to the arguments in proof of their natural connection deduced from the unity of the system of living organization. "So intimately is the province of the physician connected with that of the surgeon, that it is difficult to say where the one begins, or the other ends. A man cannot be a good physician without a *practical* knowledge of surgery, nor can he be a good surgeon, who is not acquainted with the laws of the animal œconomy, and general principles of the medical art."

I need not inform you, Sir, that medicine and surgery are practised by one and the same person in many large towns, and, very generally, in the navy and army. Nor need I to expatiate upon the well-known merits of those who, in country practice, or in the public service, have so eminently contributed to benefit mankind and improve the healing art.

In the Metropolis is chiefly set up those nominal distinctions, which regard medicine and surgery as separate departments of practice. But, in truth, this separation even in

London is more specious than real; as will be made obvious, when we consider attentively the extent to which such separation is in effect maintained. "The distinction between the two branches, it has been remarked by an acute and accurate observer,* cannot be drawn, even in the largest cities. To be convinced of this, let any one sit down by the side of Cooper and Abernethy for a day, and he will see these illustrious surgeons lopping off nine diseases with the quicksilver pill and cascarilla, for every one which they remove by the knife"——"he will see patients of all ranks afflicted with general disease resort to surgeons for medical advice. Hence it is evident, that the sense of mankind acknowledges not the artificial divisions which have been made in the profession." They are, in fact, erroneously founded, and are in direct opposition to the nature of things: and as such, they are almost entirely disregarded by the well-educated surgeon. "Upon the whole, it appears that no person possesses real knowledge in any part of medicine, beyond what is acquired by observation and sufficient experience; nor can the healing art

* Dr. James Johnson.

be studied thoroughly, but upon the plan of Hippocrates, in a complete union of all its branches. It may be compared to a circle, which will not admit of any division of its parts, without injury: and accordingly Celsus asserted, that all the parts of medicine are so connected, that no one part can be separated from the whole."

The practice of the healing art, in London more especially, is divided into three distinct departments. In the country districts, in many large towns, in the navy and army very commonly, these departments are united in one and the same person. The physician being seldom consulted, in his private practice, by the middle classes and the poor, holds a station above comparison with the general practitioner. But the general practitioner, and the surgeon who does not practise pharmacy or medicine by the authority of a diploma, are more nearly allied. They are examined as to their fitness by the same authorities, and receive their diploma from the same College. So far they are nearly indentified. They sometimes set out with the same scheme of preliminary education, and pursue the same course of ulterior study. A plan of

preliminary study is, indeed, prescribed by the direction of the Royal College of Surgeons as the proper initiation for the candidate, with which all are equally bound to comply. The candidate for the practice of surgery *alone* gives in general a more exclusive attention to the operative department. This, of course, requires constant practice; and the operative department of surgery will, consequently, be best conducted by professors from the hospital ranks. The exclusive attention, however, given to operative surgery, is sometimes prejudicial to the medical department of the art, which is liable from thence to become neglected. This is a consideration of the greatest importance; for the benefit mankind derives from the exercise of surgery, proceeds perhaps more frequently from comprehensive and enlightened views of the general laws of the animal œconomy than from the most dextrous performance of formidable operations: the necessity for which a scientific practitioner will sometimes be able to prevent. If in their initiation and subsequent examinations the surgeon and general practitioner possess the resemblance which is marked above, in their practice a considerable dif-

ference obtains. The surgeon does not dispense his own medicines, but receives a physician's fee for his advice; and if he practise medicine, or in other words advise in cases of general disease, he does so without having undergone the medical examination which the laws requires.

The uniting pharmacy to the offices of the surgeon and physician constitutes the general practitioner, and creates the difference between him and them. Pharmacy is a branch of physic which it is necessary to understand. The general practitioner is therefore obliged to pass an examination in pharmacy. He is likewise examined in medicine and in surgery. From the Physicians and Surgeons of the Colleges he receives his professional education, and the testimonials of his fitness to practise. In this relation he stands with respect to the physician and surgeon; and for the rest, I should be gratified in detailing to you, from a minute and extensive inquiry, the genuine character of his personal experience: which I am persuaded would do full honour to the practice of the healing art.

I beg, Sir, in conclusion to express my sincere good wishes for the success of your zea-

lous exertions. By the act you have obtained from the Legislature, you have already done the most important service both to the public and to the fraternity of general practitioners. You have laid a firm and excellent foundation. A little time, with an enlightened and persevering energy, will complete the superstructure; and establish the character of the general practitioner as a legal depositary of medical and surgical science.

Printed by Elizabeth Howlett, 10, Frith Street, Soho.