

Medical reform / [by J. Brown].

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MEDICAL REFORM.

OUR GIDEON GRAYS.



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MEDICAL REFORM.¹

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WE have before us, two letters to Lord Palmerston on Medical Reform,—the one by our Professor of Clinical Surgery, Mr Syme ; the other by Dr Burt,—*noster cordialissimus* Burt. They are curiously unlike in their treatment of their common subject, and as curiously coincident in their main purpose. The Professor is concise, clear, inevitable—free from all superfluities of thought or word—his pen is as keen, as exact, and as much to the point as his knife—he has one thing he sets himself to do, and that one thing he does, so as to make any more, or any better doing of it hopeless. He is one of the few men in this wordy world, who know when they are done, and who are unable to speak when they have nothing to say. His, is what the clear-headed French call *la manière incisive* : you may not agree with him, but you must understand him.

Mr Syme, as he is, we think, the most thorough, is also one of the oldest of our Medical Reformers ; and on looking into his former letters to Sir James Graham and Lord Advocate Rutherford, the one twelve and the other seven years ago, we see that he had always the same central idea in his mind, though each time he has enunciated it, it has been with more simplicity and precision, and in fewer words. He proves, first, the urgency for legislative interference in the relations of medicine to the public. “The fact that it is at present impossible, by any extent of education or examination, in Scotland or Ireland, to obtain the right of practising as a Physician or Apothecary in England without incurring the penalties of a criminal prosecution, appears so inconsistent with reason and justice, as to admit of explanation only by supposing it unknown to those who have the power of affording redress.” We believe this monstrous fact, this genuine Scottish grievance, may now for the first time be known to many of our readers ; its mere statement, is argument sufficient. Mr Syme then defines the limits within which it is safe or competent, for the state to act in reference to medicine. “The object of legislative interferences is not to provide physicians or surgeons for the rich, but to protect the poorer classes of society from mismanagement by imperfectly educated practitioners. For, although it would be no less impracticable than inconsistent with the institutions of a free country, to prevent the people of any rank from being doctored according to their own notions, however absurd, it is clearly the duty of

¹ *Letter to Lord Viscount Palmerston.* By James Syme, Esq., Professor of Clinical Surgery, University of Edinburgh.

Letter to Lord Viscount Palmerston. By John G. M. Burt, M.D.

Government to provide that the authority of a license to practise should be withheld from all persons who have not completed a sufficient course of preparation; while, on the other hand, this sanction should not, by the extent of requirement, be placed beyond the reach of those who propose to cultivate fields of practice promising only a scanty remuneration, since, in that case, the poor would be left destitute of professional advice. All, then, really required is the establishment of this *minimum*, or absolutely essential amount of medical education, and the enforcement of its due observance." Thus there are three things required. 1st, To fix the *minimum* of qualification; 2d, To make this qualification absolute and universal, legalizing practice in any part of her Majesty's dominions; and, 3d, To secure the public registration of all qualified practitioners. To those who wish to master the essence of this subject, we recommend the perusal of the entire letter; it is only seven pages long, and it is hopeless to condense it, or quote from it, without injury and injustice; we shall only give what is its practical upshot. "Let each of the ten Universities, and each of the nine Medical Corporations, together with the Association of Provincial Practitioners in England, elect a representative, and to these twenty, let the Government add ten, so as to form a body of thirty, which might be named the General Council; and then let it elect ten of its members to be the Executive Council, of which the duty would be to determine the qualifications requisite for general practice; to ascertain what University and Corporations were willing to make this the minimum of their curriculum of study; to insure, by visitation and otherwise, that their regulations were duly observed; and to publish a Register of qualified Practitioners." If Lord Palmerston would ask Mr Syme to turn this into the form of a Bill, and adopt and pass it, he would hit the nail, and nothing else, on the head.

And now for Dr Burt, or, as we who know him, like best to call him, John Burt. This letter of his has surprised us. We knew him to be a man of skill, of honour, of sense, and of heart—full of courage and public spirit—frank, outspoken—altogether a cordial and genuine man—the doctor-friend of many of our best men—himself the most genial and clubbable of men; but, till we read this capital letter, we, who have known him so long, did not know how well he could write. It is not only sound in principle, liberal in spirit, and excellent in treatment, it is eminently entertaining; you cry "hear, hear!" every now and then, at his palpable hits. It is not a letter so much as a *vivá voce* expatiation—a bit of his mind. You hear his manly, hearty voice,—down go his knuckles on the table, and he looks straight at you, with that honest, handsome face of his. It is, for all the world, as if our plucky and off-hand Premier, had found himself dining at 88, George Street, with some of the best of us; and after as good a dinner as his Lordship is likely to get in London, and when the second bottle of claret was on its rounds, were to say, "Come Doctor, what about your Medical Bills? What would you be at? What can I do for you?"—and up gets the not degenerate nephew of the Great Duke's Adjutant-General, takes a pinch out of that sociable and well-known box, and goes at it like a man. It is a speech; he is on his legs all the time. It is not philosophical—it is not always very formally logical, and

has a fine discursiveness. What can be better than the "Why?" in this opening thrust? No other man would have left it to itself, between two stops: it would have been, And why? or, Why then? It rings like the crack of an Enfield rifle. "My Lord,—Another session of Parliament has closed, and we have no Medical Reform. Why! Not, surely, because of the unwillingness of your Lordship's Government, nor of other Governments with which your Lordship has been connected, nor of the Legislature, to entertain the subject of Medical Reform; but because of its having been again, as formerly, presented to your notice in a false aspect, and beset with difficulties created solely by the very parties who are, and have been, seeking your assistance and protection. Like the drafts of all Bills previously introduced, those of the last session point more to the adjusting of differences in the profession itself, and to the reconciling of irreconcilable interests, about which Doctors had better be left to fight, than to the interests and well-being of the community, which it is the imperative duty of its rulers to study and promote. It has unfortunately happened that those of my profession who have hitherto exerted themselves the most in favour of what has been called Medical Reform, have been either teachers of medical science, or active leaders in some one of the medical corporations; they have thus been led to regard the subject from a peculiar, and, I may be pardoned for adding, a somewhat selfish point of view."

Here is his demolition of the satisfying-all-parties, and reconciling-all-differences expectation. "The fate of these measures has more and more strengthened my belief that then, as on all former occasions, too much was attempted, and that, notwithstanding the assurances given to your Lordship that the profession were nearly agreed as to what was most expedient should be made law, the Doctors were as far from unanimity as ever; and I feel that it ought to nerve any man who may, on the part of the Government, contemplate the introduction into Parliament of a new measure, that he is relieved from the apprehension of his work meeting the approval of 'all whom it may concern.'" What he says is wanted, is a Bill for the public, and especially for the poor public, and their Doctors; and he asserts, we think unguardedly, that "the passing of any one of these measures must inevitably have led (in some districts of the country at least) to the utter annihilation of even the present scanty and miserably inefficient medical superintendence, whilst it would have rendered hopeless the substitution of a better."

He then gives a startling account of the medical destitution of the Highlands, as ascertained in 1850 by the Edinburgh Royal College of Physicians. From their Report, it appears that at that time only "sixty-two out of 155 parishes were adequately supplied with medical practitioners, 52 partially supplied, and 41 *rarely if ever visited by any regular practitioner*. By the census of 1841, the 41 destitute parishes contain a population of 34,361. From a few parishes there are complaints of there being not even a midwife. In some places two-thirds of the people pay nothing; in others, the proportion of gratis to paying patients is as 19 to 1." We can, from our own knowledge, confirm the statement of one of the clergymen applied to, who says, "I know no class of men more extensively or more actively charitable than medical practitioners in the Highlands;" and of another, "I know of no class of men more inade-

quately remunerated than the medical practitioners of the Highlands, or who obtain a livelihood at a greater sacrifice of time and of labour." Well might Sir Walter say, as we all know he did, "There is no creature in Scotland that works harder, and is more poorly requited, than the country Doctor, unless, perhaps, it be his horse." And we cannot resist quoting a little more of that exquisite passage. "I have heard the celebrated traveller, Mungo Park, who had experienced both courses of life, rather give the preference to travelling as a discoverer in Africa, than to wandering by night and day the wilds of his native land in the capacity of a country medical practitioner. He mentioned having once upon a time rode forty miles, sat up all night, and successfully assisted a woman under influence of the primitive curse, for which his sole remuneration was a roasted potato and a draught of buttermilk."

But to return to Dr Burt. His practical conclusion from his College's report is, that the manufacture of Doctors for the common people and the poor, is too expensive. Here is one of his bits of good-humoured irony. "Truly it were a blessing unspeakable did the profession betray such self-denying qualities as would induce them to surrender themselves to the gratuitous service of their country, and, despite the labour, the anxiety, and the heavy expense bestowed in acquiring or mastering not only the science of medicine, but the collateral sciences, did resign themselves cheerfully to the toils and perils of a country surgeon's life, on the average wages of a London coachman, or of a tolerably accomplished French cook. But until the symptoms of such a regeneration appear, it is vain to talk of limiting the profession to such only as can attain to proficiency in branches of study apart from, and in addition to, those which pertain strictly to the art of healing." What follows is excellently put, with occasional asides of refreshing fun :—

"It is long since the tide set in, in the medical profession, in favour of the addition of endless branches of study, all valuable in themselves, all praiseworthy in those who would be exercised thereby, and indispensable, it is to be hoped, in him who would rise to distinction in his profession, or would make his society coveted by his fellow-men ; but such should not be demanded of those who are destined for a limited but laborious and ill-requited sphere of professional usefulness, who at present too often attain to a mere smattering of general information, at the expense of a thorough and practical acquaintance with those particular branches of knowledge, upon which their usefulness in life and the well-being of society mainly depend. It has been too much the fashion with many learned men, to some of whom it may have been of little consequence whether they obtained their licenses in five or in ten years, to maintain that medical students cannot have their minds too richly stored with varied learning ; and they are encouraged to urge this view by the occasional appearances of pupils whose minds are equal to the task assigned them ; but those who have long had to do with the practice of the profession, know well, as men of ordinary understanding will believe, that such cases are exceptional, and that the number of years which it is in the power of a large majority of persons, who look to the practice of the profession as a means of subsistence (for rarely can it be said of profit), to give to study, is barely sufficient to

enable them to acquire proficiency in the branches of knowledge, a familiarity with which is essential to their own happiness and their patients' welfare.

"Your Lordship will please to observe, that I am not now dealing with honours in medicine; I am dealing with the extent of professional knowledge to be required of those who would propose to treat disease as recognised and qualified practitioners; and it is with all such that the State, for the protection of the public, ought to busy itself.

"What do those magnates in my profession, who have for years been dinning into the ears of your Lordship the necessity for Medical Reform, really expect to accomplish by legislative enactment? Are they to rear a race of physicians skilled in all languages, living and dead, perfect masters of logic and metaphysics, adepts in all the sciences, and pundits in all the ologies, and then invite them to settle down in the remoter districts of our country and its dependencies, achieving, by means of all this learning, what is poetically called an honest independence, which, being translated into the vernacular, means somewhat less than L.150 per annum, garnished with the vulgar vituperation of parochial boards? *In an important and populous county adjoining that of Edinburgh, where the tax upon incomes of L.150 a year was, some time ago, first established, only one medical practitioner was found to possess an income large enough to bring him under the operation of the law.*

"I say emphatically, that there is no want of doctors of this description; but there is a demand extensively felt both at home and abroad, and in our public services, for men of a different stamp—the rough-and-ready practitioner—the man who, not having expended a fortune in the preparation for the exercise of his profession, can afford to rest satisfied with a very limited income, and to whom the intercourse with civilized society is not a necessity of existence. These are the men whom alone it is necessary for our rulers to create, and whose fitness they are bound to secure. As absurd would it be to send silks and satins to clothe the inhabitants of the outlying districts of our rural population, as to provide the same people with medical attendants of high intellectual refinement, polished manners, and varied acquirements."

You are quite right: what the country wants, and what Lord Palmerston and the House of Commons, and you and I have to do with is, the production, in the greatest quantity and of the best quality, at the least expense and in the shortest time, of what our Doctor calls the "rough and ready practitioners"—the Gideon Grays of the profession.

Here our friend, taking another pinch, and possibly emptying his glass and filling it, turns full upon the Viscount, and asks him if, in a practical point of view, it would not be good generalship to buy off the opposition of the London College of Surgeons and the Apothecaries Company, those perennial Thalabas of every Medical Reform Bill within the memory of man. "Has your Lordship ever considered to what an extent the cause of Medical Reform might be promoted by pensioning the examiners of this body, who ought not to be expected to surrender what has for many years been a principal source of their income, without compensation?" In regard to this vested interest, it is worth recording, that the late well-known Mr Guthrie states, that the fees of examination in his college are looked upon as the most certain provision for

old age, being drawn when all other sources of income fail. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ!* No wonder than they resolve to die hard. They are on the spot; they have the charge of the *viscera* of a majority of the Legislature; they reign paramount over all their wives. Who has any chance against them? *Date obolum Belisario*, and send him from the door; he is old and blind, and has outlived his time, but he knows the road to the house, and is for ever reappearing.

Dr Burt has, as we have seen, some good hits at the mischievous system of cramming young students, addling their brains, and leaving their senses and their sense unexercised and untaught, and their fingers too; furnishing instead of forging their minds. Chemistry and Botany, and much of Physiology, are, as general subjects of knowledge, become, in their entirety, impossible sciences; so that, if a young man sets himself to get up any of them, and still worse, all of them, and thinks himself a chemist or botanist, he might as well make his bread of sawdust, and think himself nourished. Why should a man of fifty, and a man it is to be supposed above his fellows, try to cram into every one of his students everything he and every one else knows, or has known? The present style of systematic lectures has become a mighty engine of oppression, confusion, and mischief.

Dr Burt is quite right in saying that the obstructions now in the way of a cheap and rapid manufacture of Doctors, have mainly to do with the extent to which "illicit medical practice" has gone; for it is in this as it is with whisky—make the legal whisky, or doctor, *dear*, and you bring in the contraband article like a flood. "There are, at the lowest estimate, one thousand individuals in England who practise without any license; and it is well known that the largest fortune of late years left in the profession from practice, in a country district in England, was accumulated by one who had no license."

But we must end. Let our readers get this racy, honest letter. It has not much of what we call authorship; it is all the better for its purpose; but it is thought, and felt, and spoken like a gentleman, and a man of a free and candid nature, who, if he is, as we know he is, a good Doctor, is also a man of general *nous* and public spirit, and has no corporation entanglements. We, for our part, like its "promiscuousness:" it is not dry, it is not pedantic, it is not in any way pretentious; but it is full of good stuff, and will set many a one a thinking, when a severer, and it may be more consecutive and consequential performance, would set them asleep.

There are only two things we think Lord Palmerston should not listen to in Dr Burt's letter. The first is, the proposal that Parliament, directly and *ex proprio motu*, should enact the *minimum* of qualification, and should give forth the shortest and universal *curriculum* of study. You might as well ask that pancreatic and over-worked body, to settle the abstrusest questions in mathematics, engineering, or any exact science requiring personal experience; this is out of their line; like other gentlemen, they take advice in such cases. Our House of Commons, besides having ten times too much to do, has of late been making that ten into twenty, by reversing its last year's votes. Look at the votes on the Ordnance Survey for Scotland, for instance. We are sure Mr Syme's way would work better—a permanent Council responsible to Parlia-

ment. But we agree with Dr Burt, that some means should be fallen on, to give practical permanency to the *minimum*, when once fixed.

We also think Mr Syme's Council is made of more workable and fairer materials; indeed, as we said already, his letter defines, explains, exhausts, and settles the entire subject.

And now for a closing word for ourselves. Mr Syme's scheme is, as we have fully stated, the best, the simplest, and the least objectionable, *if* it be wise and necessary for the State to do anything in the matter. There is much in this *if*; and after consideration of this difficult and little understood subject, we are inclined to hold, with Adam Smith, that the law of free competition is absolute, and applies to the doctors of the community as well as to its shoemakers. In a letter to Dr Cullen—published for the first time by Dr John Thomson in his Life of that great physician and great man, whose fame, great as it was and is, it has been truly said by Sir William Hamilton, has never equalled his deserts—written before the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*, he, with a mixture of humour, argument, and sense, equally excellent, asserts, and we think proves, that human nature may be allowed safely, and with advantage, to choose its own Doctor, as it does its own wife or tailor. We recommend this letter to the serious attention of all concerned. We may return to it specially, but we give some specimens: its date is 1774. “When a man has learned his lesson well, it surely can be of little importance where, or from whom, he has learn't it.”—“In the Medical College of Edinburgh, in particular, the salaries of the professors are insignificant, and their monopoly of degrees is broken in upon by all other universities, foreign and domestic. I require no other explication of its present acknowledged superiority over every other society of the same kind in Europe.”—“A degree can pretend to give security for nothing but the science of the graduate, and even for that it can give but very slender security. *For his good sense and discretion*, qualities not discoverable by an academical examination, it can give no security at all.”—“Had the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge been able to maintain themselves in the exclusive privilege of graduating all the Doctors who could practise in England, the price of feeling a pulse might have by this time risen from two and three guineas” (would that “Time would run back and fetch that age of gold!”)—“the price which it has now happily arrived at, to double or triple that sum.”—“The great success of quackery in England has been altogether owing to the *real quackery of the regular physicians*. Our regular physicians in Scotland have little quackery, and no quack, accordingly, has ever made his fortune among us.”—Are we now, where we were then?

Dr Thomson did not find in Dr Cullen's papers any direct reply to the arguments of his friend; but in a Latin discourse pronounced two years afterwards, at the graduation, he took occasion to state in what respects the principles of free competition, though applicable to mechanical trades, do not extend to the exercise of the profession of medicine. His argument is conducted temperately, and by no means confidently. He remarks, with equal sagacity and candour, “that there are some who doubt whether it is for the interests of society, or in any way proper, to make laws or regulations for preventing unskilled or uneducated persons from engaging in the practice of medicine; and

it is very obvious, that neither in this nor in most other countries are effectual measures adopted for this purpose." His argument is the common, and we think unsound one, that mankind can judge of its carpenter, but not of its Doctor. We believe that the same common sense regulates, or at least may regulate, the choice of your family Doctor, as it does the choice of your architect, engineer, or teacher.

In a word, our letter to the Prime Minister is, Make a clean sweep ; remove every legislative enactment regarding the practice of medicine ; leave it as free, as unprotected, as unlicensed, as baking or knife-grinding ; let all Colleges, Universities, Faculties, and Worshipful Companies whatever, make what terms they like for those who choose to enter them ; let the Horse Guards, let the Customs, let the Poor Law Boards, let the Cunard Company, demand and exact any qualification they choose for the medical men they employ and pay, just as Lord Breadalbane may, if he likes, require red hair and Swedenborgism, for his Lordship's surgeon to his slate quarries at Easdale, or his house physician at Taymouth. Give the principle its full swing, and, by so doing, be assured we would lose some of our worst Quacks, those who are endogenous and work *ab intra* ; but we would not lose our Alisons, our Symes, our Christisons, Begbies, and Kilgours, or our Brodies, Lathams, Brights, Watsons, and Clarks ; and we would, we are persuaded, have more of the rough-and-readies. Gideon Gray would have an easier mind, and more to feed himself and his horse on, and his life would be more largely insured for his wife and children. And if the ancient cry of compensation rises up wild and shrill, give the *Belisarii* their pence, and let them be contemptible and content.

“ FUGE MEDICOS ” AND OUR COUNTRY DOCTORS.

[THE following short paper from the *Scotsman*, was occasioned by a correspondence in that newspaper, in which Doctors in general, and country Doctors in particular, were attacked and defended. In the attack by “ Fuge Medicos,” consisting of two long letters, there was much ability with not much fairness, and not a little misapplied energy of language, and sharpness of invective.]

It might perhaps have been better, if our hard-headed, hard-hitting, clever, and not very mansuete friend “ *Fuge Medicos* ” had never allowed those “ wild and stormy writings ” of his to come into existence, or into print, and it might perhaps also have been as well, had we told him so at once ; but as we are inclined to be optimists when a thing is past, we think more good than evil has come out of his assault and its repulse. “ F. M. ” (we cannot be always giving at full length his uncouth Hoffmannism) has, in fact, in his second letter, which is much the better, answered his first, and turned his back considerably upon himself, by abating some of his most offensive charges—and our country doctors have shown that they have sense as well as spirit, and can write like gentlemen, while our town doctors have cordially and to good purpose, spoken up for their hard-working country brethren.

We are not now going to adjudicate upon the strictly professional points raised by “ F. M. ” whether, for instance, bleeding is ever anything but mischievous ; whether the constitution, or type of disease, changes or not ; whether Dr Samuel Dickson is an impudent quack or the Galileo of medicine ; whether Dr Wilkinson is an amiable and bewildered Swedenborgian, with much imagination, little logic, and less knowledge, and a wonderful power of beautiful writing, or the herald of a new gospel of health. We may have our own opinions on these subjects, and hold them not pedantically, but likewise not uncertainly ; their discussion lies out of our beat ; they are strictly professional in their essence, and ought to remain so in their management. We are by no means inclined to deny that there are ignorant and dangerous practitioners in the country, as well as in the city. What we have to say against “ F. M. ” and in favour of the class he has attacked is, that no man should bring such charges against any large body of men, without offering an amount and kind of proof of their truth, as, it is not too much to say, it is impossible for any mere ama-

teur to produce, even though that amateur were as full of will and energy as "F. M.;" and unless he can do so, he stands convicted of something very like what he himself calls "reckless, maleficent stupidity." It is true, "F. M." speaks of "ignorant country doctors;" but his general charges against the profession have no meaning, and his Latin motto as little, unless ignorance is predicated of country doctors in general. One, or even half-a-dozen worthless, mischievous country doctors, is too small an induction of particulars, to warrant "F. M." in inferring the same qualities of some 500 or more unknown men. But we are not content with proving the negative: we affirm the positive; we speak not without long, intimate, and extensive knowledge of the men who have the charge of the lives of our country men, women, and children, when we assert, that not only are they as a class fully equal to other rural professional men in intelligence, humanity, and skill, and in all that constitutes what we call worth, but that, take them all in all, they are the best educated, the most useful, the most enlightened, as they certainly are the worst paid and hardest worked country doctors in Christendom. Gideon Gray, in Scott's story of the Surgeon's Daughter, is a faithful type of this sturdy, warm-hearted, useful class of men, "under whose rough coat and blunt exterior," as he truly says, "you find professional skill and enthusiasm, intelligence, humanity, courage, and science." Moreover, they have many primary mental qualities in which their more favoured brethren of the city are necessarily behind them—self-reliance, presence of mind, simplicity and readiness of resource, and a certain homely sagacity. These virtues of the mind are, from the nature of things, more likely to be fully brought out, where a man must be self-contained and everything to himself; he cannot be calling in another to consult with him in every anxious case, or indulge himself in the luxury of that safety which has waggishly been explained as attaching more to the multitude of counsellors than to the subject of their counsel. Were this a fitting place, we could relate many instances of this native sagacity, decision, and tact, as shown by men never known beyond their own country-side, which if displayed in more public life, would have made their possessors take their place among our Nelsons, our Wellingtons, our Abercrombys, or our Napiers. Such men as Reid of Peebles, Meldrum of Kincardine, Darling of Dunse, Johnston of Stirling, Anderson and Clarkson (the original of Gideon Gray) of Selkirk, Robert Stevenson of Gilmerton, Kirkwood of Auchterarder, and many as good—these were not likely to be the representatives of a class who are guilty of "assaults upon life," who are "let loose upon some unhappy rural district, to send vigorous men and women to their graves," who "in youth have been reckless and cruel, given to hanging sparrows and cats, and fit for no humane profession," etc., etc. Now, is there either good sense, good feeling, or good breeding, in using these "unmeasured terms" against an entire class of men? Assuming—as from the subtlety and hairsplitting character of his arguments, and the sharpness and safety of his epithets, we are entitled to do—that "F. M." belongs to another of the learned professions, we ask—What would he say if a "Fuge Juridicos" were to rise up, who considered that the true reading in Scripture should be, "The devil was a *lawyer* from the beginning," asserting that all country lawyers in Scotland were curses to the community, that it would be

well if the Lord Advocate "would try half-a-dozen every year" for devouring widows' houses, and other local villanies; and, moreover, what would he think of the brains and the modesty of an M.D. making an assault upon the legal profession on purely professional questions, and settling *ab extra*, and off-hand and for ever, matters the wisest heads *ab intra* have left still in doubt? The cases are strictly parallel; and it is one of the worst signs of our times, this public intermeddling of everybody, from the *Times* down to "F. M.," with every science, and every profession and trade. Sydney Smith might now say of the public, as he said of the Master of Trinity, "Science is his *forte*, omniscience is his *foible*." Every profession, and every man in it, knows something more and better than any non-professional man can, and it is the part of a wise man to stick to his trade. He is more likely to excel in it, and to honour and wonder at the skill of others. For it is a beautiful law of our nature that we must wonder at everything which we see well done, and yet do not know how it is done, or at any rate know we could not do it. Look at any art, at boot-closing, at a saddler at his work, at basket-making, at our women with their nimble and exact fingers—somebody is constantly doing something which everybody cannot do, and therefore everybody admires. We are afraid "F. M." does not know many things he could not do. Though he as strong in assertion, he is not so modest in estimating his own powers, knowledge, or province, as his initial name-sake the late F. M. the Duke of Wellington—one point of whose greatness was his frank confession at all times and in all places of his ignorance when he knew he was ignorant. Our "F. M." has yet to attain this grand step in knowledge.

Again, and in conclusion, we repeat that our Gideon Grays are, as a class, worthy and intelligent, skilful and safe, doing much more good than evil. They live in the hearts of the people, and work day and night for less than anybody but themselves and their wives are likely ever to know, for they are, most of them, unknown to the Income-tax collectors. They are like the rest of us, we hope, soberer, better read, more enlightened, than they were fifty years ago; they study and trust Nature more, and conquer her by submission; they bleed and blister less, and are more up to the doctrine that prevention is the best of all cures. They have participated in the general acknowledgment among the community, thanks to the two Combes and others, and the spirit of the age, of those divine laws of health which He who made us implanted in us, and not we ourselves, and the study and obedience of which is a fulfilling of His word. We can only hope that our clever and pancreatic friend "F. M.," if on his autumn holidays in Teviotdale or Lochaber, he has his shoulder or his lower jaw dislocated, or has a fit of colic or of apoplexy, or any of those ills which even his robust self is heir to, may have sense left him to send for Gideon Gray, and to trust him; and to make a slight alteration on his Hoffmannism, and cry lustily out, in worse Latin and with better sense—Run for the Doctor—"Fuge pro Medico."

As already said, all of us who have been much in the country know the hard life of its doctors—how much they do, and for how little they do it; but we daresay our readers are not prepared for the following account of their unremunerated labour among paupers:—

In 1846, a voluntary association of medical men was formed in Edinburgh, with the public-hearted Dr Alison as chairman. Its object was to express their cordial sympathy with their brethren in the remote country districts of Scotland, in regard to their unremunerated attendance on paupers, and to collect accurate information on this subject. The results of their benevolent exertions may be found in the Appendix to the First Report of the Board of Supervision. It is probably very little known beyond those officially concerned; we therefore give some of its astounding and lamentable revelations. The queries referred to the state and claims of the medical practitioners, in the rural districts of Scotland, in relation to their attendance upon the permanent or occasional parochial poor. Out of 325 returns, 94 had received *some* remuneration for attendance and outlay. In one of these instances the remuneration (!) *consisted of three shillings for twelve years' attendance on seventy constant and thirteen occasional paupers*; a fine question in decimals—what would the average visit come to? It belongs to an impossible arithmetic, and transcends De Morgan. But worse remains. One man attended 400 paupers for eight years, and never received one farthing for his skill, his time, or his drugs. Another has the same story to tell of 350, some of them thirty miles off; he moderately calculates his direct loss, from these calls on his time and purse, at L.70 a-year. Out of 253 who report, 208 state that, besides attending for nothing, they had to give on occasions food, wine, and clothes, and had to pay tolls, etc. 136 of the returns contain a more or less definite estimate, in money value, of their unrequited labours; the sum total given in by them amounts to *thirty-four thousand four hundred and fifty-seven pounds in ten years! being at the rate of L.238 for each!* They seem to have calculated the amount of medical attendance, outlay, and drugs, for each pauper annually, at the very moderate average of four shillings.

Is there any other country on the face of the earth where such a state of matters can be found? Such active charity, such an amount of public good, is not likely to have been achieved by men whose lives were little else than the development of a juvenile mania for hanging sparrows and cats. We believe we are below the mark when we say, that over head, the country doctors of Scotland do one-third of their work for nothing, and this in cases where the recipient of their attendance would scorn to leave his shoes or even his church seats unpaid. There is something quite wrong in this; but it is no ignoble nature which would do so much for nothing, and say so little about it.

We are glad to see "F. M." reads Sir William Hamilton. We doubt not he does more than read him, and we trust that he will imitate him in some things besides his energy, his learning, and his hardihood of mind. As to his and other wise men's pleasantries about doctors and their drugs, we all know what they mean and what they are worth—they are the bitter-sweet joking, human nature must have at those with whom it has close dealings—its priests, its lawyers, its doctors, its wives and husbands—the very existence of such expressions proves the opposite—it is one of the luxuries of disrespect. But in "F. M.'s" hands these ancient and harmless jokes are used as deadly solemnities upon which arguments are founded.

To part pleasantly with him, nevertheless, we give him three good old

jokes:—The Visigoths abandoned an unsuccessful surgeon to the family of his deceased patient, “*ut quod de eo facere voluerint, habeant potestatem.*” Montaigne, who is great upon doctors, used to beseech his friends, that if he fell ill they would let him *get a little stronger* before sending for the doctor! Louis the Fourteenth, who, of course, was a slave to his physicians, asked his friend Molière what he did with his doctor. “Oh, Sire,” said he, “when I am ill I send for him. He comes, we have a chat, and enjoy ourselves. He prescribes. I don’t take it—and I am cured!”

We meant, had we had space, to have said a word or two to the public on the kind of certainty to be reasonably expected from such an art as that of healing, and on the unreasonableness of patients in their expectations, and the dishonest or stupid pretensions of many of the profession. But we must defer this—we end with asking our readers and “F. M.” to ponder these wise words:—

“In fact, there is no study more difficult than that of physic; it exceeds, as a science, the comprehension of the human mind.” “Physic is one of those departments of knowledge in which there is frequent necessity for the exercise of an incommunicable faculty of judgment, and a sagacity which may be termed transcendental, as extending beyond the simple combination of all that can be taught by precept.”—*Dr Thomas Young.*

“There are certain inward gifts, more akin to genius than to talent, which make the physician prosper, and deserve to prosper, for medicine is not like practical geometry, or the doctrine of projectiles, an application of an abstract demonstrable science, in which a certain result may be infallibly drawn from certain data, or in which the disturbing forces may be calculated with scientific exactness—it is a *tentative art*, to succeed in which demands a quickness of eye, thought, tact, invention, which are not to be learned by study, nor, unless by connatural aptitude, to be acquired by experience; and it is the possession of this *sense*, exercised by patient observation, and fortified by a just reliance on the *vis medicatrix*, the self-adjusting tendency of nature, that constitutes the true physician or healer, as imagination constitutes the poet, and brings it to pass that sometimes an old apothecary, not far removed from an old woman, and whose ordinary conversation savours, it may be, largely of twaddle, who seldom gives a rational account of a case or its treatment, acquires, and justly, a character for talent and infallibility, when men of talent and erudition are admired and neglected—the truth being *that there is a great deal that is mysterious in whatever is practical.*”—*Hartley Coleridge’s “Life of Dr Fothergill.”*

J. B.

