

A letter to the Rt. Hon. Sir George Grey, bart., M.P. ... : on medical registration and the present condition of the medical corporations / by Emeritus.

Contributors

Emeritus.

Grey, George, Sir, 1799-1882.

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Publication/Creation

London : printed by W. Tyler, 1851.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/mp68pyq7>

Provider

Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. The original may be consulted at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. where the originals may be consulted.

This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

*J. W. Sellar
from the Author*

A LETTER

TO THE

RT. HON. SIR GEORGE GREY, BART., M.P.

HER MAJESTY'S PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE
HOME DEPARTMENT, &c., &c., &c.

ON

MEDICAL REGISTRATION,

AND THE PRESENT CONDITION

OF THE

MEDICAL CORPORATIONS.

BY

EMERITUS.

Μεγα βιβλιον μεγα κακον.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WILLIAM TYLER, BOLT-COURT;

AND MAY BE HAD OF ALL MEDICAL BOOKSELLERS.

1851.

R55311

P R E F A C E.

IN the following Letter an endeavour has been made to bring under your notice the state of the Medical Profession, its Colleges, Halls, and Universities, with the view of inculcating and showing that there is a public necessity for, and a prevailing feeling in favour of, an immediate Registration of that important body of professional men. And when we consider that ships and vessels, and every craft that sails, are registered and numbered, that masters, mates, and mariners in the mercantile and naval marine are registered, that births, deaths, and marriages are registered, that assurances upon titles and deeds affecting real property are registered in Scotland, and to be registered in England, and all undertaken for the purpose of promoting and protecting the interests of the Public, does it not then become an important omission if they should continue to be deprived of the advantages that may be realised by the adoption of a judicious system of Medical Registration, which can be carried out with the greatest facility, and at little expense to the country?

<https://archive.org/details/b28042360>

MEDICAL REGISTRATION.

SIR,—Medical Education, more extended in its provisions, and accompanied by greater stringency in its examinations ; a complete and well-arranged system of Medical Registration, with amendments in the laws by which the numerous Medical Corporations are governed and its members at present so dissatisfied, involving, as they do, principles and alterations much desired and urgently called for, as being of the greatest importance to the interests of the profession and the welfare of the public, and which have long occupied your serious and best attention without success, as also that of your predecessor in office,—every proposal hitherto submitted and advocated having ended in bringing forth an abortion incapable of being adopted, owing to the many conflicting and discordant opinions maintained and cherished by the different branches of the medical profession, each with distinct and rival claims and privileges, under a multitude of variously-named corporate bodies, who are all too anxious to retain every legal right they now possess, and even solicitous for more ; but too fearful lest, by any change in the confused state of medical law and government that now prevails, amendments accommodated to all the wants of the

profession can only be introduced by such means, that the remodelling of one corporation must necessarily lead to the downfall of the other, this too-groundless fear very naturally gives rise to feelings of jealousy; and to its prevalence must be attributed the impossibility of any one party bringing forward a uniform plan acceptable to the majority of the whole profession, the numerous deputations you have so courteously received, patiently and kindly listened to, from the general practitioners, the Council and Court of Examiners of the Medical Corporations, must have brought conviction to your mind that there is, unfortunately, too much of truth in this assertion, and have disheartened you and others, though anxious for the advancement of the profession, from submitting to Parliament any mode of relief until the great body of the medical faculty are more agreed among themselves upon the measures they may wish to see sanctioned by new legal enactments, that it seems almost presumptuous in an individual no longer connected with that learned body, proposing and advocating any change by which their attainments will be increased, their utility enlarged, and character elevated; at the same time that the public will be protected from the injury that must always and of necessity be associated with the presence of ignorant and unqualified medical practitioners exercising their craft among and upon the community, to whom no facilities whatever are now afforded for ascertaining the legal qualifications of their medical attendants, whether they possess any or none; and this information can only be easily furnished by the establishment in the metropolis of a central public office, for the purpose of carrying out, through its

agency, a complete and compulsory system of Medical Registration for the United Kingdom and its Colonies.

In order to apply, and enable you to comprehend, the appropriate remedy for the disorder by which the medical body politic is so much afflicted, it is requisite to enumerate the symptoms of the malady from which it sustains injury ; these are of a most anomalous kind, difficult to comprehend, erroneous in principle, and contradictory in their character, the medical man, pronounced by law, in full health and vigour in England, being found labouring under disease, and incapable of performing any of his usual functions, whenever he presumes to practise his art in Scotland, and *vice versâ* ; the gentleman qualified to wield the lancet, and administer medicines in Scotland, so soon as he crosses the Border, must sheath his weapon, and dare not make a charge for the smallest quantity of medicine, if he has any fear of the penalties that may be extorted under the provisions of the Apothecaries' Act of 1815, which likewise inflicts the same injustice upon their medical brethren from the Sister Kingdom. The rivalries and forays between the divisions of this now happily United Kingdom have wisely and luckily, for the peace of society, long ceased in every respect, but among the professors of the healing art ; and the day must soon dawn when that will also terminate.

The symptoms of the case may be classified under the following heads :

1st Cap. The qualified class, connected with corporate bodies, possessing the power to confer medical degrees and licenses to practice ; these are so many, that few even of the profession are well versed in all

their varied curricula of study, requirements, titles, and privileges, while the great mass of the deeply-interested public are profoundly ignorant on the subject, and of the titles and rights that are granted and conveyed by their several Charters of Incorporation. In England, the Medical Corporations to which they belong are,—

1. Royal College of Physicians, consisting of fellows, candidates, inceptor candidates, licentiates, and extra licentiates.

2. Royal College of Surgeons, consisting of fellows, and members or licentiates, in both Colleges, under a President, Council, and Court of Examiners.

3. Apothecaries' Hall, consisting of a Board of Examiners, members,* and licentiates; and, as contemplated by the Act (clauses defective), of assistants.

4. University of London.	} Consisting of Bachelors and Doctors of Medicine.
5. University of Oxford.	
6. University of Cambridge.	

In Scotland: 1. University of Edinburgh. 2. Ditto Glasgow. 3. Ditto Aberdeen. 4. Ditto St. Andrews, consisting of Doctors of Medicine only. 5. Royal College of Physicians. 6. College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. 7. Faculty of Physicians; and, 8. Faculty of Surgeons, Glasgow. No Apothecaries' Hall.

In Ireland: 1. Trinity College, Dublin; consisting of Bachelors and Doctors of Medicine. 2. Royal College of Physicians. 3. Royal College of Surgeons;

* The members participate in the profits derived from the trade in drugs and chemicals carried on by the Company; they are few in number, and from this very limited body must the Examiners (by their Act of Parliament) be chosen.

and, 4. Apothecaries' Hall, Dublin,—in all, eighteen Institutions, with about thirty-six differently-named orders of members; though generally known in the largest cities as Physicians, Pure Surgeons, Surgeons, and Apothecaries, or General Practitioners, when the two last qualifications are combined. In the country and small towns only Physicians and Surgeons are known; the former for consultation, the latter for general practice.

To these Corporations they are admitted members by complying with their curriculum of study, and passing the examinations; the former, for the most part, consists in having been engaged from four to five years in acquiring professional knowledge by an apprenticeship, attendance upon Lectures and Hospital practice at the recognized medical schools. Some of these Institutions, namely, University of London, and Royal College of Surgeons, London, &c., are open to the students from every British school of medicine; while others, namely, Oxford, Cambridge, and the Scotch Universities, save St. Andrews, are exclusive and accessible only to those students who enter to the classes of the Professors attached to the respective Universities, and who are also their Examiners.

2nd Cap. The Unqualified Class, who are connected with no recognized institutions, and are not under the necessity of passing any examination; they consist of the Chemists and Druggists, Dentists, Aurists, Cuppers, Chiropodists, &c.

3rd Cap. The Irregular Class, consisting of the Vampire Tribe of Quacks, Bone-setters, Nostrum-venders, &c., &c.

The abnormal signs or defects elicited by examin-

ing into the state of these corporate bodies, and its members, are,—

1st Defect,—and which appertains to and is inherited by all the Medical Corporations,—is the absence of the representative principle; the Council and Court of Examiners being self-elected, and for life, the members generally having no voice in the management of the affairs of the institutions to which they have been admitted: but, in spite of this close and now exploded system everywhere else, it must be confessed that the Colleges of Physicians, and Surgeons, London, have always been honoured by the presence of some of the most distinguished and eminent members of the profession, among the Council and Court of Examiners. By the recent Charter granted to the latter Institution; a partial remedy has been devised, by giving the power of election into the Council to about 300 of the members, who have been admitted, most by selection, and some by examination, into a new class, called the Fellows of the College.

2nd Defect is, that the highest honour in medicine, the degree of Doctor Medicinæ, is usurped by the least medically educated individuals, so far as the test by examination on subjects exclusively medical are concerned. For instance, the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge,—the degrees from which are much prized and esteemed by the higher classes, and generally sought after by physicians patronized by that order in society,—have nothing worthy of the name of a medical school attached to their Colleges; and it has been given in evidence by their graduates, before a Parliamentary Committee, that their medical examination was almost nominal, consisting principally in reading a

Latin Medical Thesis before the Gentleman Bedel; but to compensate for this deficiency, they must have taken the degrees in arts: this gives a polish to their manners, and a ready assurance, that finds them a favourable acceptance among the refined circles, as well as a more easy admission into the College of Physicians, London; good classical scholarship being held by that body in greater estimation than a knowledge on anatomy, medicine, and its collateral sciences; so stated by the late Sir D. Barry, a licentiate of the College.

3rd Defect is, that the most searching of all the medical examinations, that of the University of London, which is continued on several occasions, and most extensive in its requirements, confers only honorary degrees. The graduates of that University cannot practice as Physicians, without they obtain, in addition, the license of the College of Physicians; and if they enter into general practice, may be prosecuted under the Apothecaries' Act, and subjected to heavy penalties.

4th Defect is, that all the Scotch Universities confer the distinguished degree of Doctor of Medicine upon its alumni at too early a period of life; the students educated there receiving by a single examination, at twenty-one years of age, by four years' attendance, and on entrance into practice, the honour that should be reserved for a later period; and not then, unless great additional knowledge has been acquired in the field of practical experience; in addition, their course of study is not so prolonged, or their examination more searching than that of the general practitioner in England, who has passed the College and Hall. Many

of these graduates have been rejected at the latter place, in consequence of the want of a practical acquaintance with the drugs used in medicine ; it is therefore doubly wrong to grant the highest honour on first embarking in the profession, or without a more strict examination and the greatest medical acquirements, as it is lowered in estimation thereby.

5th Defect. The compulsory apprenticeship of five years, ordered by the Apothecaries' Act, to a licentiate or some person in practice, before 1815, its duration is so long, and its name not being held in repute, it acts most unjustly upon the interests of parties who have passed the days of youth, and wish to enter the profession of medicine ; it forms an insurmountable barrier to their desires, and its speedy removal is expected.

6th Defect. The limited examination of the Royal College of Surgeons, London, as it embraces only anatomy, physiology, and surgery, it enables candidates to obtain a diploma ; under the sanction of which, without having passed any examination on many important branches of medical science, they impose upon the ignorance and credulity of the public, in medical matters, and though imperfectly educated, and only half examined, they practice every branch of the profession, even in this country, but particularly in the Colonies and on board of emigrant ships, to which they should never be appointed on the strength of the diploma of the London College ; if this had been attended to, the surgeons attached to those vessels would have been of a more educated, and consequently superior, class, and might have checked the disgraceful scenes reported to have lately occurred

on board of those ships. It also has the injurious tendency of lowering the standard of Medical Education, and of causing many idle and ignorant medical students from Scotland and Ireland to pass for Surgeons the College in England, who are tempted by the reduced scale of examination to avoid the more extensive one of the Scotch and Irish Colleges; and it is even said that their rejected candidates have subsequently passed, and found almost immediate admission into, the London College.

THE REMEDIAL MEASURES AND THEIR OBJECT.

1st Object should aim at establishing uniformity in the Medical Corporations of the three divisions of the kingdom, as they differ most in Scotland, where there is no Apothecaries' Hall. It is considered that the introduction there of a similar company will effect that object without any occasion for doing away with the existing medical institutions; these three Companies being established, their powers over the general practitioners, as now exercised in England and Ireland, should be diminished; but greatly extended over the Chemists and Druggists, of which body they should for the future have the principal oversight and management.

2nd Object. The necessity for the apprenticeship of five years, which must be completed for admission into the Apothecaries' Companies, should be abolished, and in lieu thereof a discretionary pupilage of one or two years should be substituted; but the apprenticeship should be strictly enforced for the Chemist and Druggist, to render him competent to carry on that

business, as well as to check the discreditable practice that has of late years sprung up, of medical men in general practice keeping an open shop, and attending to a retail trade in drugs, perfumery, and even quack medicines.

3rd Object. The examinations should be more divided, passed at regular intervals, and should not embrace so many subjects at one time; a full and perfect knowledge of the vast store of facts and theories comprised in all the subjects embraced by the present examinations being beyond the reach of even the most talented; they are too frequently mastered, in a superficial manner, by a rapid process of reading up for the occasion, or by the aid of a class of teachers called Grinders, and not having been acquired by slow and continuous industry, are soon forgotten. To these circumstances it is mainly to be attributed that the Professors have so often complained that their most diligent pupils have not been complimented as much by their examiners as those who they have known to be less attentive to their studies. By frequent written and oral examinations on fewer subjects at a time, and a thorough acquaintance with them strictly insisted upon, this pernicious process and complaint will both be rectified.

1st Division of the examination to be conducted by each of the three Apothecaries' Companies, to consist of Latin, as at present ordered; which may take place at the conclusion of the pupilage, or at any time during the apprenticeship.

2nd Division. To comprehend botany, chemistry, and materia medica; which may be encountered at twenty years of age, and on being passed, to constitute

(with the apprenticeship concluded) the qualification for the Chemist and Druggist.

3rd Division. To embrace medicine, midwifery, and medical jurisprudence, on attaining twenty-one years of age. The pupil having succeeded in going through this further scrutiny into his attainments, should receive, instead of the license of the Companies, only a certificate from their hands, to the effect that he has passed satisfactorily. This certificate should not qualify to attend upon medical cases, as now granted by the license, but should only render the person possessing it eligible to present himself for examination on anatomy, physiology, and surgery at the Colleges of Surgeons. Having obtained the diploma by passing this extended investigation into his medical knowledge, he may, by presenting that document, claim the right to be registered and recognized as a qualified medical practitioner, with the power of making and recovering a regulated charge for visits and attendance, of holding any public medical appointment, and of practising his art, not limited by the divisions of the kingdom, but throughout all the British dominions.

By these means no person will be enabled to exercise the art and science of a Surgeon, as he can at present, by the rules of the College of Surgeons, London, without having undergone any test by examination of his knowledge of medicine; and also no person will be permitted to practise medicine, without a knowledge of surgery, as now sanctioned by the Apothecaries' Company.

4th Object. To remove the right of conferring medical degrees from every institution that now exer-

cises that privilege, unless the parties presenting themselves for examination for the higher honour and distinction are registered medical practitioners, and have passed at the Apothecaries' Hall and College of Surgeons. The degree of Bachelor and Doctor of Medicine, as indicating greater attainments, and a more searching examination, will then be a title of honour, and much prized; a similarity to the academical distinctions granted by other institutions will prevail, where the titles consequent upon success at the examinations are uniform and regularly progressive; the Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees invariably preceding that of the Bachelor and Doctor of Law and Divinity, the usual custom~~x~~ not consisting in bestowing the highest honour, unless the inferior degrees have been first acquired; the very reverse being the practice with the Medical Institutions.

5th Object. The College of Physicians, except under special circumstances, should only admit to examination for their license to practice as Physicians, candidates who have obtained the degrees of Bachelor and Doctor of Medicine. That institution will then take the rank of the First Medical Corporation; and its members being the best educated and the most examined, will justly be considered the most learned medical body in the British empire.

6th Object. The medical profession being an educated and intelligent body of gentlemen, it seems but proper that they should have in their own institutions the benefit of the representative principle and responsible management; but as the majority of the members are much dispersed throughout the country, and

abroad, and cannot take any part in the elections, in the first instance it may be found, for every desired purpose, a sufficient extension of the suffrage that two vacancies out of every three in the Council should rest with the Fellows, and one with the Members.

7th Object. Besides compelling the Chemist and Druggist to pass an Examination, it may be expedient that only a limited number, but sufficient for the wants of the public, should be permitted in each district, and then licensed by the Magistracy, who should retain the power of withdrawing their license, upon representations from proper Medical Inspectors, to be appointed by the Apothecaries' Companies, that they adulterate or sell inferior drugs and chemicals, or prescribe in medical and surgical cases. Every person may be considered a competent judge of the ordinary articles of food and clothing, though few can distinguish good from bad medicines. By this ignorance generally prevailing, it is made a necessary evil that a close inspection should be exercised over all the practices of the dispensers of medicines and prescriptions. Universal free trade must be productive of benefit in most articles, though not so in medicines; for under that system, by the preparation of prescriptions and medical recipes, a profit or tax is levied, to the public disadvantage, varying from 300 to 1,000 per cent., by the Chemists and Druggists, and which may be prevented by bringing that business under the influence of a well-regulated and restrictive monopoly.

8th Object. For the suppression of quackery, the Stamp-duty on their nostrums should be doubled, and the advertisements and placards of the demoralizing

class,—as Messrs. Perry and Co., &c., &c.,—should be prohibited from insertion in the public journals, and from distribution in the streets and all public places.

9th Object. To abolish the practice of signing by the Professors and Teachers, the certificates of Students, that they have diligently attended their lectures, these are based on fraud and falsehood, and signed as a matter of form; and I know, from my own experience and that of others, that they are obtained without attending a single lecture; but instead, to substitute an examination of their class at the end of each session, granting certificates to those who have made a certain proficiency, and to the effect that they have answered correctly two-thirds of the questions; a rejection might then afford a salutary warning, by teaching them their deficiency, and thereby inculcate the necessity of habits of greater diligence and exertion; and if not capable or inclined to apply the labour that is requisite for success, it may determine them at an early period, and before much expense has been incurred, to abandon a profession so sacred and responsible in its character, and exacting in its demands on the mental capacities, talents, and attainments of its members.

Whatever reforms may be introduced, a prudent policy dictates that all vested rights and privileges, which have been the growth of a long course of bad legislation, should be respected, it is not to be supposed that the fruits of reform can be reaped by the present generation of medical men, who must rest satisfied with having secured to them every right and qualification they are now in possession of, and that only, leaving the benefits for their successors.

Any attempt to unite into harmony the discord that now prevails amongst the profession, by giving an equality of privileges to all its members, will lead to such an outburst of opposition as must ensure the certain rejection of any measure, however excellent its provisions may be; this is the rock upon which Sir James Graham's Registration Bill mainly foundered, enabling, as the greater part of the profession in England supposed it would, a large influx of Scotch Graduates, and Members of the Colleges of Surgeons from all parts of the kingdom, now excluded, to Register, and upon that registration to secure a qualification to which they had not previously been entitled.

ON MEDICAL REGISTRATION.

As some measure of Legislative relief is sought for, and admitted by all parties to be requisite, it is incumbent upon the Legislature, as an essential preliminary to any great change, that all the members of the medical profession, with their qualifications, should be first registered, I therefore beg leave to submit that a well organized plan of Medical Registration, for the protection of the public against unqualified practice, may be most effectually carried out, by the establishment of an office similar in every respect to the Registration-office to which I am attached; the arrangements there pursued, and perfected by an experience of some years' duration over a much larger body, being most admirably adapted for securing the registration of all the medical men, with a British qualification, in the United Kingdom and its Colonies. The office to be called, the General Register and Record-office of Prac-

tioners in Medicine, Surgery, and Pharmacy, including Apprentices, Pupils, and Students. No qualifications whatever will be granted by this office, though the rights which the prior qualifications have bestowed cannot be exercised or enforced without they appear, and have been registered on its books. Its principal object will consist in making and keeping a register of the names of every medical man, and of the medical corporations to which they have been admitted members, with their ages, birth-place, &c. It will also preserve a record of their place of residence, and of the branch of the profession they are practising; and, in addition, it will furnish an interesting and accurate statistic of their number, rate of increase, mortality, &c., &c.

In order to carry out these objects, the first process that will be required consists in the applicant filling up a printed Claim-paper, supplied by the office, which will be similar to that in use by Candidates for the Army Medical Service, and must contain a statement of his studies and qualifications, to be transmitted, when completed, to the Registration-office, accompanied with a declaration, made before and signed by a Justice of the Peace, as to its correctness; this must be confirmed by the testimony of at least two respectable parties, that they have been acquainted with the applicant, as a medical man, practising in their neighbourhood for at least two years, or by other documentary evidence.

This Claim-paper (which may be further verified by a reference to the books of the Medical Corporations of which they there allege themselves to belong), on being completed to the satisfaction of the Registrar,

will entitle the applicant to a Certificate of Registration.

The Registration Certificate should be of an elegant design, with a distinguishing number, and arranged on the principle of a banker's check-book. It should be issued through the medium of the Medical Corporations and the Principal Officers of the Inland Revenue Department, to convenience the members of the profession, and should consist of two portions, both to be signed by the applicant. It should also bear the signatures of the authorized parties attached to the office from whence it is issued, and also that of the party by whom it is issued, in whose presence the applicant who is entitled to the Certificate portion must, if possible, produce his Diploma, or License, and attach his signatures; the other portion, marked Office counterpart, is then separated from the Certificate at the *foil*, and with the Claim-paper and declaration annexed, should be returned to the Registration-office; and from the information thereby obtained, combined with annual returns from the profession, containing an account of the branch they cultivate, their Pupils, Apprentices, and respective places of abode, will the system of Registration be carried out, and the genuineness of the Certificate authenticated.

Any person who fraudulently alters or makes use of any Certificate which has not been legally issued to him, or to which he has not been entitled, or does not place it in some conspicuous part of his surgery or dwelling, or refuses to produce it when demanded, should be liable to a prosecution for a misdemeanour, or to be summarily punished before a Magistrate by a

penalty of £50, or by imprisonment for Three Months; and any person who refuses to deliver up a Certificate which has been cancelled or suspended, should be liable to the like summary punishment.

The Registration for distinguishing the educated and qualified from the uneducated and unqualified Medical Practitioner being completed, the time and opportunity will have arrived convenient for the appointment of a Council of Health, to be composed of Medical Gentlemen, with the Secretary of State for the Home Department as its President, for advising with the Government upon Sanitary measures, to overlook the Registration-office, Universities, Colleges, and Medical Schools, to withdraw or suspend Certificates, and to institute and conduct prosecutions. The Medical Profession being by these means elevated into the dignity of a department of the State, communicating with the Government, it will be the bounden duty of that Department, as expressing its wants and desires, to bring forward the reforms that are needful for its amelioration, and whatever they propose as emanating from an authorized and competent source, may be expected to meet with the cordial support and approval of the profession and the public.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

EMERITUS.

CUSTOM-HOUSE,

London, Feb. 1851.

Wm. A. Miller
President
College of
Liberal Arts





D. W. Seller
President
Royal College of
Edinburgh

