A Narrative of Facts:

IN A

LETTER

TO A MEDICAL FRIEND,

ON THE

REJECTION OF CERTAIN RESOLUTIONS

RELATING TO THE

QUALIFICATIONS OF MEDICAL OFFICERS

AT THE

SALOP INFIRMARY.

BY W. CLEMENT.

SHREWSBURY:

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LETTER, &c.

Dear Doctor S.

In compliance with your earnest request, I now hasten to lay before you the whole proceedings of our Special Infirmary Meeting, held on the 19th ult., the result of which was indeed a triumph over the best interests of that noble Institution.

In order that you may clearly understand the motives by which the Directors were induced to summon that Meeting, it will be necessary for me to mention what occurred at the different Meetings prior to the regular notice for convening a Special Meeting of the Trustees.

Dr. Evans and Dr. Darwin both sent in their resignations on the 27th of August last. The former had long intimated his intention of resigning, in consequence of his removal from

Shrewsbury; but not until this day had the slightest intimation been given of Dr. Darwin's intention: The Board of Directors, therefore received the resignation of the latter with surprise mingled with regret. At the next meeting, on the following Saturday, I protested, (as I had done before) against any Gentleman being in future elected Physician to the Charity, who had not a regular University Education. I beg this fact may be kept in view. *Two* eminent Physicians had resigned their situations, and *two* vacancies were to be filled up. If then my object was solely to serve a friend, and not the Charity, might I not have suffered the two rival Candidates to walk over the course quietly? No, my dear Sir; you well know I have often sacrificed my private feelings to what I considered my public duty; and it is well known what my sentiments have long been on the present subject.

Well! at this last mentioned Meeting it was proposed that the Directors should ascertain, if possible, the cause of Dr. Darwin's resignation, whose services were deemed by all so important to the Charity, and the loss of whose abilities would have been matter of public regret. In short, it was the wish of

every individual present, that his Letter of Resignation might be cancelled. The Board, with this view, deputed their Chairman to wait upon Dr. D., and to report at the next meeting the result of the conference. At the same time I gave notice that I should propose to the Board certain Regulations, subject to the decision of a Special Meeting of the Trustees, respecting the Election of Medical Officers in future to the Charity.

The Board met on the 3rd of September, and received the report of their Chairman, who had waited on Dr. Darwin. The following is a copy of their Minutes :

"WEEKLY BOARD, 10th September.—Ten Directors present.—The Board having duly reflected on the detriment that would ensue to the Infirmary if deprived of the great advantages resulting from the skill and experience of Dr. DARWIN, unanimously request the Chairman to write to the Doctor, acquainting him with their regret at his late determination of relinquishing the office of Physician, and intreating him still to retain that office, by which he has so long benefited the Institution; and requesting the favour of his reply to the Chairman previous to Wednesday next: to which day the Board is adjourned."

At this Special Board there were nine Directors present, out of the twelve. After Dr.

Darwin's Letter had been read, complying with the solicitations of the Directors, by *not* withdrawing his services from the Infirmary, the notice for a Special Meeting of the Trustees was then moved, and most respectably seconded. The Board divided: four were for the question, and three against it.—One gentleman declined voting, and the worthy Chairman had no occasion to vote at all. That I had a personal share in these transactions, in pursuing my duty as a Director and Trustee, and in conformity too with my general sentiments, I do not deny. Rather I rejoice in having made an endeavour to support the respectability of the profession, of which I am but an humble Member, and to rescue the Institution from degradation. But it will be evident to you, that the act of calling the Trustees together was an act of the Weekly Board of Directors; and not, as was peremptorily affirmed by one of the Speakers at the General Meeting, the "resolutions of Mr. Clement."

Some days previous to the Meeting, a CIRCULAR LETTER was sent to the Trustees, which, with my Answer to the same, I beg to introduce without any comment :—

"My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

"Impressed with sentiments of gratitude for the unexampled assurances of support with which you have honoured me, since I became a Candidate for the Physicianship of your Charity, in the prosperity of which (as a Trustee for life) I cannot but feel deeply interested, and desirous alone of promoting your benevolent intentions to the utmost of my abilities, by devoting the experience acquired during fourteen years application to every branch of medicine, and conscious that I could faithfully discharge the duties of that situation, was my sole inducement for offering you my best services as successor to Dr. Evans.

"I have been absent from Shrewsbury some weeks, or should earlier have requested your attention to the Resolution proposed for discussion on the 19th instant, which is now brought forward, as a dernier resource, with the view of disqualifying me from filling the office (although I am a regular physician, legally authorized to practise my profession), and to admit candidates who exercise it without authority; for, Who are deemed men of regular education?—Those only who are duly licensed to practise by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, or the President, Faculty, and Elects of the Royal College of Physicians in London. Thus it appears neither Scotch or Foreign Graduates are legal practitioners, without having letters testimonial of approving and examination from the London College. The Framer of this Resolution could not be ignorant of this; but he appears not to wish to recollect that the London College is vested by the King and Parliament with such high authority, and that physicians not so li-

censed are exercising their profession in defiance of the laws of the land.

"Is it not evident then, that this motion is to benefit an individual, not the Infirmary, and to injure my interests with you by insinuating I had not testimonials of regular education? Thus maliciously attacked, it is due, not only to myself, but more especially to the respectable body of Trustees who have promised me their suffrages, candidly to state what my qualifications are, and for them to judge whether I am not worthy of the confidence I have solicited.

"Four years I resided for instruction with a Medical Surgeon, and was practically engaged in extensive private and hospital practice; I then became a Member of the University of Edinburgh, where I studied every branch of medicine, together with the clinical practice of the Royal Infirmary and Lying-in-Hospital; I am a regular Graduate, a Doctor of Physic, *without any grace*, having passed the usual examinations, and written a Thesis, *De Mania*, for my degree, which entitled me to become a Licentiate; and, at the earliest period the statutes allowed, I was proposed, by the Professors under whom I studied, and admitted a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh. Having since presented myself before the Royal College of Physicians in London, and been admitted a Member, with letters testimonial, authorising me to practise throughout England as a regular and legal Physician, not limited in practice to cases of insanity, as hath been reported, (with what view it is easy to conjecture) I assure you, I have and will continue to exercise my profession generally.

"Trusting this exposure of the latent design of the Proposer of the Resolution will induce you to attend the Special Board, and resist it as it now stands; (for, if it is your wish that any restriction should be imposed, let those be eligible who are sanctioned by law, viz. Licentiates of Oxford, Cambridge, and the College of Physicians in London, not those who are tolerated by custom only, such as Scotch and Foreign Graduates);

"I have the honour to be,
My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen,
Your most faithful and obliged servant,
JAMES PROUD JOHNSON."

"*High Street, Shrewsbury,*
8th October, 1814."

(CIRCULAR.)

[Addressed to the Trustees individually.]

"SIR,

"DR. JAMES PROUD JOHNSON, in a Circular Letter addressed to the Trustees of the Salop Infirmary, having personally accused me of being the "Proposer of a certain Resolution to be taken into consideration on Wednesday next," and with the "malicious" intent of "disqualifying" him from being "a Candate for the *Physicianship* of the Charity," I beg to say that the Resolution is not of a personal nature, but an abstract question of expediency with regard to the election of Medical Officers in future, and which question received the assent *of a majority of the Directors.* I therefore throw myself under the protection of the Trustees in general, from so foul and false an aspersion.

"Dr. Johnson, by his own account, "resided four years for instruction under a medical surgeon," and then became a member of the University of Edinburgh. He further informs us that, altogether, he has devoted FOURTEEN years' application to every Branch of Medicine.

"Now, out of these fourteen years, it is evident, from his own advertisements which are * subjoined, that he has been *nine years* a practitioner in Shrewsbury. Allowing, then, the four years for his apprenticeship, and the nine for his residence in Shrewsbury, we have thirteen years out of the grand total of fourteen which he has so intensely devoted to EVERY branch of medicine. Let us in charity then allow him six, eight, or ten months study in Edinburgh, by which he has acquired so many honourable distinctions, viz. "*Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh—Member of the Wernerian Society—Member and Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians London:*"—Thus, four years behind an *apothecary's counter*, and six or eight months study in Edinburgh, what a prodigious *generalship* in a Doctor of Physic "*without any grace!*" Unluckily, however, the University of Edinburgh, and that of Glasgow in a

* "The Degree of Doctor of Medicine was conferred "on Mr. J. P. JOHNSON, of Shrewsbury; after having gone "through the appointed examinations, and publicly defended his "Inaugural Dissertation *De Mania.*"—*Shrewsbury Chronicle, Oc-"tober 11th*, 1805.

"DEMENTATION, Dr. Johnson, thinks it necessary "to acquaint the Public that he attends Patients in a Dementa-"ted state, at their own houses, and continues his House for their "reception and cure."—*Ibid. June* 16. 1806.

late regulation, require, by their Statutes, three years actual residence, before a degree of M. D. can be conferred.

"If our neighbour DOCTOR SMITH, of *UptonMagna*, has really a St. Andrews or an Aberdeen Diploma—no matter how he obtained it—HE *has a* † *claim to be admitted* (by paying his Fees of 100 Guineas,) a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh, because he is a *Graduate* of a SENIOR University.—As a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh, (particularly if he happens to enter a Student at that University for a few weeks,) he may also present himself with Letters testimonial before the Royal College of Physicians in London, and obtain their Licence to practice: having, however, first of all paid the requisite *Fees.*

"Dr. SMITH, therefore, with all these "blushing degrees and honours thick upon him," would, in truth, be equally eligible with the present Candidate for your suffrage, under existing circumstances.

"I have the honor to be,

Your humble Servant,

W. CLEMENT."

Shrewsbury, October 17*th*, 1214.

† Since the above Letter was circulated, I have been informed, from *high authority*, "that no person with a Doctor's Di-"ploma from any University *can claim to be admitted*, nor are "there *any Fees* to be paid on admission." The Fellows, it seems, are chosen by ballot—(not by examination.) They can *claim a Licence* to practice in Edinburgh by paying Fees.

I now come to the Meeting of the 19th.—Sir John Hill, Bart. was called to the Chair, and the Secretary read the following Notice :

"*SALOP INFIRMARY.—Notice is hereby given,* that a Special General Board of Trustees will be held at this Infirmary, on Wednesday, the 19th Day of October next, at twelve o'clock :

"To take into consideration the expediency or inexpediency of electing Pysicians to this Institution, who have not Testimonials of a Regular Medical Education, and who are not Graduates of either the English, Edinburgh, or Foreign Universities :

"Also the expediency or inexpediency of electing Surgeons, in future, who have not Diplomas from the Royal College of Surgeons : Likewise, the expediency or inexpediency of electing House Surgeons, who have not served a regular Apprenticeship, and who have not attended at least one course of Anatomical, Medical, and Surgical Lectures, in London.

"Also to take into consideration the propriety of electing Dr. Evans, Physician Extraordinary to this Infirmary."

Mr. Forester, M. P. for Wenlock, immediately got up, and said "that the Infirmary went on very well in the old way : he had heard some good Sermons on its prosperity ; and thought it *inexpedient* to make any alteration."

He was seconded by Sir Corbet Corbet, but no formal motion was then made. I objected to this novel mode of proceeding, and insisted upon Mr. Sutton being allowed to move the Resolutions, and take the sense of the meeting thereon. Mr. Sutton (senior surgeon to the Infirmary) was then allowed to proceed.

In rising to propose the Resolutions, founded on the Advertisement which had just been read, Mr. Sutton assured the meeting that it was with a full conviction on his mind that the adoption of them would ultimately tend to the benefit of the Institution. He wished to keep up the respectability of the Charity equal to those of the neighbouring counties. Mr. Sutton then read the Resolutions, which follow:

"THAT no Gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of PHYSICIAN to this Charity who has not regularly attended the Medical Courses of Lectures, at one or more of the following Universities, viz. Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Leyden; and who shall not produce to the Trustees, satisfactory evidence of his being a Graduate of an University at which he hath studied.

"That no Gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of SURGEON, who is not a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons in London, and not practicing Pharmacy.

"That no Gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of HOUSE SURGEON, unless he hath served a regular Apprenticeship of not less than five years to a Surgeon or Apothecary; aud who has not attended at least one course of Anatomical, Medical, and Surgical Lectures in London."

After reading the Second Resolution he observed, that it might be asked why a Dublin diploma should be excluded? To which he answered, that Dublin did not receive English Diplomas.

On reading the Third Resolution, he observed, that the duties of the House Surgeon were now very important:—that he had occasionally to prescribe to the patients of both the Physicians and Surgeons; that he had to take charge of all minor accidents until the Surgeon of the week saw them; that in the absence of the Surgeons he had the controul of all the Pupils; and finally, that he is master of the family, and that a very large one. Mr. S. therefore left it to the gentlemen present to say, whether a youth of eighteen or nineteen

years of age was competent to such a situation.

I seconded Mr. Sutton's Resolutions with the following remarks—

"You are now called upon, Gentlemen, to take into consideration the propriety of adopting the Resolutions which have been just read. The welfare of this excellent Charity most undoubtedly depends upon the skill, talents, and respectability of its Medical Officers.—If any gentlemen will please to refer to the records of this Institution from its first foundation in 1747, they will find a succession of Physicians and Surgeons eminent for their medical science and erudition. The Physicians were ALL Graduates of the English Universities, or of Edinburgh, or of Leyden. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are certainly not considered in themselves efficient Schools of Medicine. Persons who are intended for the profession, study physic at those ancient seminaries as a branch of liberal education and scientific knowledge; but it is well known that they attend the auxiliary schools of London and Edinburgh, and continue members of the University for seven years before they are allowed to practice; and only then under the degree of Bachelor of Medicine: Eleven

years completes the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

Edinburgh stands pre-eminently the first Medical School in the world, as it furnishes a complete circle of medical instruction. The degree of M. D. conferred on the candidate, is obtainable only by an actual study of six sessions and one summer, with regular attendance on all the classes: He must write a thesis in Latin, and defend it in the same language, and afterwards undergo the ordeal of a strict examination *five* different times before six of the professors, in all the branches of medicine. Leyden, prior to the French revolution, was considered the first Continental Medical University; Gottingen and Montpellier were likewise held in great reputation; Dublin University has lately acquired considerable improvement as a medical school, by the liberality of an exalted individual, the late Sir Patrick Dunn, who has bequeathed a large property to support Professors, analogous to Edinburgh. This school is now in its infancy, and no doubt will in time become an *efficient one*. Glasgow, until within a very few years, ranked little higher than the twin sisters of St. Andrews and Aberdeen. It is now, however,

an improving medical university; but it does not require the students *personally* to attend all the sessions; and will receive certificates of attendance, from London, Edinburgh, or Dublin, to form a part of their graduation. This university will confer the degree of Doctor by a slight examination, nor is it ever necessary for a Candidate to write a thesis.—Therefore a Degree obtained at Glasgow is by no means considered, even at this day, so respectable as one conferred at Edinburgh. Doctors of the colleges of St. Andrews and Aberdeen, obtain their diplomas without residence—without examination—by two Medical Doctors merely certifying that the Candidate is a proper person, deeply informed in medicine, and well qualified to receive the degree of *Doctor of Physic* from their University *by paying his Fees.*—He may write a thesis in Latin or English, or perchance he may get somebody to write it for him; or he may leave it alone. The fees were formerly £13. 6s. 4d. and are now about £24. This shameless prostitution of every thing that is respectable and honourable, cannot be too highly reprobated. If, however, this system of Doctor-making were confined solely to those who have by *long ex-*

perience and *high reputation* in practice *deigned* to accept their diplomas, we should have little grounds for complaint; but it is well known that they dispence diploma's by *private favor*, or *gross venality*, to those who have no pretension either to learning or tolerable experience: in short, these colleges are the nurseries of charlatanism. In proof of this assertion need I name a Brodum, a Solomon, a Lignum, and innumerable others?

"Having now, Gentlemen, taken a cursory view of the different schools of medicine in the United Kingdom, I hold it is not necessary for me to add one word more to prove the necessity of a regular University education, as insisted upon at *other* Infirmaries in this Kingdom, to entitle Candidates to become Physicians to our own Charity.

"The Salop Infirmary stands too high in estimation servilely to copy rules and laws from similar Institutions: no—Gentlemen; as it is one of the most venerable, I hope it will continue also one of the most *respectable*. I have, notwithstanding, procured as much information on the subject for this day's consideration, from the neighbouring Charities, as enables

me, with confidence, to lay the whole of the correspondence before this respectable assembly :

The following Letter I addressed to the Surgeon, or House-Surgeon, of each Infirmary :

Shrewsbury, Sep. 1814.

"Sir,

"Will you do me the favour to answer the following Questions, respecting the Election of Physicians to your Charity :

"Are the Physicians who attend your Infirmary considered regular, and graduates of either of the English Universities, of Edinburgh, or of Leyden ?

"Do you know whether Doctors of St. Andrews, Aberdeen or Glasgow are eligible ? and

"Have you known any who have been elected with *such* Diplomas ?

"An early answer will much oblige, Sir,

"Yours, &c.

"W. CLEMENT."

The subsequent Letters are the Answers I received :

"*Gloucester Infirmary, Sept.* 29, 1814.

"SIR,

"I should have answered your letter before, but waited the opinion of the Governor at the Board

this day. There does not appear to be any objection to either of the Universities mentioned in your *first* question. One of our physicians is of Edinburgh, and when he was elected there was no obstacle to his election.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"SAMUEL MUTLOW."

"P. S. Dr. Baron, as above alluded to, from Edinburgh, is the *only* instance where a Scotch Physician has been appointed to our institution."

"*Hereford, 26th September*, 1814.

"Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter; and in reply to your questions to observe, that all the Physicians who have attended this Hospital from *its first institution*, have been *regular* Graduates, either of one of the English Universities, or of Edinburgh, or Leyden.

"I am, &c,

"PHILIP TULLEY."

"*Birmingham, October* 1814.

"My Dear Sir,

Your friend Mr. Enock having communicated to me your wish for information respecting the qualifications of the Physicians attending our Hospital, I beg to inform you that, of four at present in attend-

ance, one had his Diploma from Oxford, and three from Edinburgh. We have no express Rule relative to the qualification of Physicians to this Establishment, but I believe that there has been no precedent of any one *irregularly educated* being appointed to the situation.

"I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

"BOWYER VAUX."

"*Worcester, October* 12, 1814,

"Dear Sir,

"I have sent you our statutes and our last report.

"There are some Bye-Laws respecting the faculty, which are not yet printed: but none which have any reference to their specific qualifications: I wish this were more particularly attended to, and we now *talk of doing it*. You, I perceive by the Newspaper, are going to set us a good example, and I presume there will be no opposition to your plan. When it is adopted, I suppose you will publish a new and corrected edition of your Statutes.

"Believe me, dear Sir,

"Yours very sincerely,

"W. SANDFORD."

"*Liverpool Infirmary, Sept.* 20, 1814.

"SIR,

"The following copy of the twentieth Law of this Infirmary, will, I apprehend, be a sufficient

reply to the favour of your letter of the 17th instant.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"W. GRESLEY.

"LAW 20. That no gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of Physician to this Charity, who has not regularly attended the medical lectures at any of the following universities, viz. Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Dublin; and who shall not produce to the Trustees, satisfactory evidence of his graduation, if required."

"*MANCHESTER INFIRMARY, 9th mo.* 19, 1814.

"To W. Clement.

"THE Rules of this Infirmary require that its Physicians should have obtained an honourable Degree by studying at one of the universities. A person possessing a cheap Scotch Degree is not eligible as physician to this institution; I cannot say whether such an one has ever filled that appointment, but I understand that a Glasgow or Aberdeen doctor once offered his services, and was *rejected*. Our Physicians are all graduates either of Edinburgh or Leyden, and practice medicine only; and our Surgeons are all Members of one of the colleges: we have no amphibious physicians, or those who live by practising physic, surgery, midwifery, &c. I hope this will give thee the requisite

information ; should it fail to do so, I shall be happy to make any further communication in my power.

"I remain thy friend,

"JOHN SIMS,

House Surgeon."

Sir Corbet Corbet briefly observed, that he had heard nothing to make him change his mind. The Secretary then worded the following Motion for Mr. Forester, and it was seconded by Sir Corbet :

"That it is inexpedient to make any alterations in "the statutes respecting the election of a Physician, "Surgeon, or House-Surgeon."

Mr. Counsellor Bather next addressed the meeting, and industriously endeavoured to convince them of the *personal motives* of those Members of the Board who were induced to call the Trustees together.—According to this speaker's apprehension, the object of the meeting was of a personal nature, and the Resolutions "were Mr. Clement's Resolutions." He took particular occasion to notice the Universities of Salamanca and Salurnam, and said, he supposed Leyden was mentioned in the proposed resolutions as complimentary

to an eminent physician then present. He triumphantly asked, why were not the Universities of Dublin and Glasgow included? In short, he discerned nothing but party motives in the resolutions. No instances could be produced of incapacity in any Medical Officers which had been elected according to the antient regulations of the Infirmary; and although the Trustees knew nothing about Medical Degrees, yet as they always brought with them common sense when they assembled for the purpose of supplying any vacancies, he did not see why they should propose restrictions upon themselves by assenting to new regulations.—The other parts of his speech were of a personal nature, for which he was once called to order.

Counsellor Hart said, "Go on in the old way by all means."

Mr. Parr declared he should vote against the Resolutions because they were proposed on the eve of an Election.

The Rev. Mr. Bather would not allow that the Letters which had been produced were at all in favour of the Resolutions: there was not one instance of a positive law on the subject.

[Here I got up with some warmth and again read the letter from the Manchester Infirmary.]

Shortly afterwards the Meeting divided—a large majority in favour of Mr. Forester's motion. One of the before-mentioned speakers *vociferated* "For Mr. Clement's Resolutions!" In consequence of this marked personality few gentlemen held up their hands.

Thus ended this memorable meeting. It terminated certainly not as you or any professional man could wish; or—if unacquainted with Shrewsbury—could foresee: yet to me the issue was not at all extraordinary. I did not expect that the Resolutions would be carried. Many persons who had been warm advocates for the election of one of the present Physicians at the Infirmary, believed that the motions were intended to cast a slur retrospectively; therefore *they* could not vote for them. Others, taking up the subject as a party measure, (for every good design is here construed into a party measure) opposed it with all the virulence of party zeal: Some were led by friendships; others were constrained by hasty promises; and some had not the courage to act in conformity with their better

knowledge. But I believe no man can produce the shadow of an *argument* to prove that these resolutions, or some of similar import, would not have been beneficial to the Institution. That no gentleman moved any amendment, approaching in some degree to the object in view, such as requiring every candidate to produce Testimonials of the course and duration of his studies, that we might thence judge of his qualifications, I own disappointed me much. In a meeting so respectable, I did expect that Education and Study would have found advocates, and that those recommendations in any Candidate would have been admitted as a presumptive, if not a positive, proof of his fitness.

You smiled, I am sure, when you perceived that one of my opponents at the meeting was a Clergyman of the Established Church, and another a * Barrister. To the first it never occurred that in his own profession a certain number of terms must be kept, and a routine

* These two gentlemen must excuse my allusions to them in this place. They chose to attack me personally at the Meeting, and their conduct and observations evinced that as one man may profess *Religion* without having charity, so another may practice *Law* without justice.

of education gone through at College; and that a Candidate for Orders must undergo *some kind* of an examination before he puts on the gown: preachers who have not passed through these ordeals are termed Methodists. Now that which the gentleman would call irregurality and methodism in his profession, would be deemed quackery in mine.

Nor did it occur to the Barrister that a man must pass some portion of his early life as a student, and that if at College he does not obtain a degree, he must plod at the Inns of Court during an additional number of years. Law, like medicine, is a sedate, unimpassioned matron; she will not be wooed successfully by striplings and pretenders. The gentleman would understand my remark I am sure. Perhaps the paucity of his own briefs proves it.

It was triumphantly asked by this gentleman, Why should the Trustees fetter themselves with restrictions! they always bring common sense with them when they come to vote on these occasions. True—But by what application of common sense can we judge of the abilities and qualifications of a stranger

who presents himself as a Candidate without testimonials? Can we judge of his practical abilities by his powdered periwig or gold-headed cane, or by his possessing a Glasgow or an Aberdeen M. D., or by his having vended some nostrum? I will suppose a case, (which, for aught I know, may be realized,) wherein the proposed "restrictions" would be advantageous. A person of superficial education, or rather of no medical education or practice at all, and consequently without regular testimonials—by his address obtains friends who propose him a candidate for the physicianship; while other regular physicians who wished to offer themselves, but disdaining a competition with him, withdraw: Without a rival, the pretender is elected. Whereas, if proper testimonials were requisite, his exclusion would be certain.

I forgot to mention that during the discussion Mr. Sutton stated, on his personal knowledge, that an instance of incapacity had occurred in the situation of House-Surgeon. If, then, one instance of incapacity be known, it is possible that more might be adduced; and if an instance has occurred in one office, it is possible that it might occur in another. And

was it not judicious to provide against future incompetency?*

It was said, by more than one speaker at the meeting, that the Infirmary "had gone on well in the old way;" "it had flourished under its present laws, and therefore it was inexpedient to make alterations." In reply, I need only observe that as Mr. Sutton's assertion remains yet uncontradicted, *that* instance alone shews the necessity of some new regulation for preventing a recurrence of the evil. But admitting that the institution has gone on *well* in the old way, it does not follow that it might not go on *better* in a new way. It is not criminal to alter or supply whatever experience has discovered to be defective. No human code was ever yet formed perfect: it must be improved and rendered permanent by repeated amendments and alterations: "I "would not," said Mr. Burke, (and he was not very fond of innovating) "I would not "exclude alteration neither: when I changed "it should be to preserve. I should be led "to my remedy by a GREAT GRIEVANCE. In

* Greater vigilance is necessary in choosing Physicians than Surgeons, because incompetency in the former, cannot be so readily discovered,—no person being allowed to inspect the Physician's books or pharmacopœia.

"what I did, I should follow the example" of other institutions.

The Letters, then, from the Surgeons of six other Infirmaries *all* concur in stating that *their* Physicians have always been Graduates of the English Universities, or of those of Edinburgh, or Leyden. We have *two* examples of positive laws on the subject, from two of the first Hospitals in the Kingdom, except those in London. The reason why the other institutions have not positive laws, may be easily conceived. "Cheap Scotch Diplomas*" were not formerly so much in fashion, nor had those who possessed them the audacity of modern Empirics.† Long ago they exhibited themselves 'tis true, upon the stages of mountebanks; but they did not venture to rush into the Board-rooms of our Infirmaries.

I believe neither yourself nor any one who is much acquainted with me, will suspect that I harbour a jealousy of others, or feel an illiberal wish to depress merit. I have not, in-

* See the Letter from the Manchester Infirmary, page 24.

† It appears by the Letter of the respectable Surgeon at Worcester, that some regulations, similar to those proposed by Mr. Sutton, are in contemplation at the Infirmary in that City.

deed, any overweening fondness for degrees which have no dignity in them, nor for titles when conferred on men without merit. Yet I am not so narrow in my creed as to believe that there is no such thing as native uneducated talent. We have been told (*Poeta nascitur, non fit*) that a man may be born a Poet; but I never yet heard of any man being born a Physician.

If to constitute a sound and useful Physician, he ought to be regularly educated step by step during a series of years, and attain his knowledge as a disciple of learned men, and have that knowledge ripened by reading and extensive observation; surely, my dear Sir, there could be no impropriety in requiring, as a passport to our Infirmary,—that no Gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of Physician who had not attended the medical courses of Lectures at *efficient* and *respectable* Colleges, and who is not a graduate of the University at which he studied:—That no Gentleman shall be eligible to fill the situation of Surgeon who is not a member of the College of Surgeons; nor that of House Surgeon unless he had served an apprenticeship of five years, and attended one course of Lectures.

Would any gentlemen who conscientiously felt themselves qualified to discharge their duties in offices of so great a responsibility, object to these tests of their qualifications?

Do we admit into our families Servants with *mock characters,* or without any recommendation from their former situations, or without knowing that the persons who recommend them to us are respectable and worthy of credit? And if we would not entrust our household affairs to others without having first scrutinised their pretensions, and ascertained the respectability of those who recommend them, shall we presumptuously confide our lives and the lives of our friends and families to Physicians without an assurance of their worthiness and skill? Or,—shall we elect to our CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS, men to whose abilities we would *not* entrust the lives of our friends and families, nor call to our own bedside in the hour of sickness and peril?—God forbid! "Let us do unto others as we would they should do unto us."

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

W. C.

WATTON, Printer.]