

Hospital elections and medical reform, addressed to the Governors of St. George's Hospital and to the profession / By Edwin Lee.

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HOSPITAL ELECTIONS

AND

MEDICAL REFORM,

ADDRESSED TO

THE GOVERNORS OF ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL

AND TO

THE PROFESSION.

BY EDWIN LEE,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY ;
CORRESPONDING AND HONORARY MEMBER OF THE IMPERIAL MEDICAL ACADEMY
OF VIENNA, THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MEDICINE OF NAPLES, THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
OF PRUSSIA, THE SOCIETIES OF PARIS, BERLIN, LEIPZIG, GHENT, FLORENCE,
BOLOGNA, MARSEILLES, BORDEAUX, &c.

LONDON:

JOHN CHURCHILL, PRINCES STREET, SOHO.

1848.



LONDON :

G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE "TIMES" AND
"CHRONICLE."

TO

THE GOVERNORS OF ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

HAD a vacancy in the Surgical Staff occurred at an earlier period, I should have offered myself as a candidate, in order to afford the Governors an opportunity of emancipating the Institution from the system of discreditable proceeding which has characterised former elections; but disapproving as I do of these appointments being decided by personal solicitation and favour, I am disinclined at the present time to engage in this mode of competition with gentlemen several years my juniors. I shall, however, have the honour of submitting to your consideration some circumstances connected with the last election, and exemplifying the prejudicial consequences of the system.

I have the honour to be, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient humble servant,

EDWIN LEE.

13, Curzon Street, Jan. 20, 1848.

PROTEST

Presented to the Chairman of the Special Board of Governors, convened for the election of an Assistant-Surgeon to St. George's Hospital.

I CANNOT allow the present occasion to pass without recording my protest against the system which has prevailed,—of the medical officers being virtually suffered to determine beforehand the succession to vacancies in the staff; a system liable to great abuse, and no less prejudicial to the interests of the Hospital, and to the advance of medical science, than unjust to those candidates who, having claims, are induced to come forward upon the Secretary's public requisition, which is thus rendered a formal mockery; and which tends to lead gentlemen, looking forward to these appointments, rather to have recourse to means of currying favour with those in office, than to seek to merit them by honorable emulation in a fair and professional competition.

EDWIN LEE.

February 4, 1848.

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TO
THE GOVERNORS OF ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

UPON the occurrence of a vacancy in the surgical staff, of the hospital to which I have been attached since 1824, I feel myself called upon to submit to your consideration some circumstances connected with the preceding election which caused so high a degree of excitement among the profession, and in which so many of you took an active part, in order the more fully to exemplify the prejudicial results of the system of the medical officers being virtually suffered to fill up vacancies, to the manifest injustice to individuals possessing strong claims; for although the gentleman who will now occupy the vacant post—to whose zeal and assiduity in the service of the Hospital, all who know him will bear testimony—may be qualified to do honour to the Institution; yet, the principle being bad in itself, this is no guarantee that upon future occasions there may not be a recurrence of proceedings which all well-wishers to the Hospital, and those who have the interests of the profession at heart will not cease to deplore. Moreover as a large proportion of the Governors of the Hospital are also members of the Legislature, I will avail myself of this oppor-

tunity briefly to shew the bearing of the present mode of electing medical officers in hospitals upon the question of medical reform, together with the consequences of the actual system of our medical organization, (appealing more to facts than opinions, and to the opinions of others when unprejudiced, rather than to my own, which might be considered unduly biassed,) and respecting which it is to be regretted so little information, with a disinclination to legislate, should prevail — such indifference presenting a striking contrast to the high interest with which the state of the medical profession—a subject coming home to the bosom of every family—was discussed in the French Chambers.

I have the honour to remain,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

EDWIN LEE.

13, Curzon Street, February 1848.

ON the last vacancy in the surgical staff of the hospital, a gentleman no less highly esteemed in the profession as a teacher and practitioner than for his private worth, who had already stood three contests, declined again to come forward, and perhaps subject himself to another reverse in competing with junior candidates, observing in the circular which he sent round to the governors,

“ Against the powerful influence so unceasingly exercised over the medical officers of the hospital, to the prejudice of my just claims, I feel it is impossible for me to succeed.

“ This meeting, (of the medical staff,) virtually operating to the prevention of all fair and open competition, was held six days before the vacancy actually took place, or could be publicly announced to the governors at large.

“ Under these circumstances, injurious to the interests of the charity as to the character of its medical school, I no longer seek an office which I could not hold without a sacrifice of the principles from which it is well known I have never swerved.

“ The strong expression of feeling in reference to these lamentable proceedings, which, within the last few days had reached me from a large body of the governors, affords evidence, I am willing to hope, of a reaction which, though too late for my individual advantage, will tend to the future elevation of hospital surgery.

“ This combined support of the medical officers, in the present state of the affairs of the hospital, would preclude the possibility of the success of any other individual, whatever his qualifications might be.

“ If, in our medical institutions, the governors delegate their elective powers to the medical officers without any reservation of private judgment, they must not be surprised if young men are induced to trust to their advancement, rather to the favour of those in power, than to their own talent and industry in the acquirement and improvement of professional knowledge; and much anxiety, expense, and heartburning, and ultimate disappointment, would be avoided by dispensing altogether, on the part of governors, with the privilege thus rendered merely nominal, of holding the appointments in their own hands.”

As the circumstances which occurred at the meeting of the medical staff (which was attended by all its members but one, Dr. W.,) are unknown to the governors, I think it right to state them such as they have come to my knowledge, in order that the transaction may be viewed in its proper light. The then senior physician proposed, that in order to prevent the censurable occurrences which had attended former elections, it would be best for them

to give their collective support to the candidate who should have the "majority of their votes. This seemingly fair proposition was acceded to, Dr. —, having doubtless secured his majority beforehand, the two preceding physicians' vacancies being filled up without contest by friends of his, who had not, in as far as I know, superior claims. The vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. B. being then announced, a gentleman was proposed as the fittest candidate for the assistant surgeoncy, to be supported by the staff, whose qualifications I should be sorry to be thought to disparage, but whose name had not, I believe, been before the profession in any public manner except as secretary to the committee for presenting a medal to one of the surgeons, whom he had assisted in his private practice, on his retirement from the hospital. Some of those present expecting that a senior gentleman, who during several years had been co-lecturer with them in the hospital school, would have been proposed, thus, being in a minority, found themselves drawn into the obligation of either opposing their colleague or of remaining neuter. It may perhaps occasion surprise that a physician should interfere so actively in the surgical department, but that most persons would consider that the same influence which several years before was said in a medical periodical to have made the hospital a "focus of intrigue," was also exerted upon this occasion through the ostensible agency of another. The plan, however, failed; for many of the subscribers had become aware of the proceedings which had entailed upon the hospital an unenviable notoriety, and Mr. — being an active canvasser, obtained a majority over the staff. When it seemed most likely that this would be the case, the retired surgeon alluded to, though professing to take no part in the contest, nevertheless sent for the more successful

candidate, and threatened to bring up at the eleventh hour a sufficient number of votes to overbalance his majority.

I may perhaps, on the present occasion, be allowed to say a few words respecting myself. Having entered the profession as an articled pupil of the College of Surgeons, attended the courses of London and Paris during my apprenticeship, and filled the office of house-surgeon to St. George's Hospital, notwithstanding the unfair opposition of one of the surgeons who attempted to supersede my claims in favour of one of his protégés—(though I had the promise of the surgeon whose turn it was to nominate, and was the senior pupil)—I afterwards competed for the house-surgeoncy of the Birmingham Hospital; and so highly were my testimonials thought of, that although opposed to a candidate who had been a pupil in the hospital, and consequently possessing the local interest, my opponent obtained the majority of one vote only. I then passed some time on the continent, attending the medical institutions and investigating points of practice which at that time were not much known in England, but which I endeavoured to cause to be justly appreciated. Among these subjects was lithotrity, upon which I gave public demonstrations in London and some of the larger provincial towns, which were attended by many distinguished practitioners, and afterwards obtained the Jacksonian Prize, when the advantages of this method of operating, as compared with lithotomy, was the subject proposed by the College.

My subsequent journeys abroad having enabled me to make myself better acquainted with continental modes of practice, I always made the results known in England when likely to be useful, not without considerable sacrifice of time and means. On the more recent occasion likewise, when alterations were contemplated in the pro-

fession, having had many opportunities of contrasting the prejudicial effects of the working of our deficient medical organization with the more complete systems of regulation adopted abroad, I gave at my own cost an account of these modes of organization; whereas, when similar information was required in France, Austria, and Prussia, with a view to reforms in the profession of those countries, properly qualified medical men were commissioned to travel at the expense of government in order to report upon the subject. Having, therefore, always endeavoured to render to the profession such services as my opportunities and limited means allowed, I would gladly have engaged in a sphere of useful activity, by being attached to the medical staff of the hospital where I was educated; and though disapproving of the mode in which hospital appointments are usually obtained in England—viz., by personal favour and solicitation—as being derogatory to the dignity of the profession as well as prejudicial to the interests of these institutions, and of the community; nevertheless, on the last vacancy I intimated my intention of offering myself as a candidate. The succession was however (as has been already seen) arranged before the vacancy was announced; and a gentleman, formerly on the hospital staff, told me that my coming forward would be useless, the staff having decided upon supporting the candidate referred to. On my adverting to the secretary's requisition for candidates to send in their testimonials, (mine being from distinguished continental surgeons, which, though considering that some of them have spoken of me greatly beyond my merits, I yet deem it right, in self-justification, to append,) although my claims were admitted to be valid, yet the reply I received was, "Oh! but you know how these things are managed;" and indeed, from the experience which I had had of

former elections, in which my colleague in the house-surgeoncy had been engaged, I had no reason to expect anything but defeat; and not being inclined uselessly to enter the arena of unbecoming contention, I declined putting to trouble or inconvenience those governors who would have felt disposed to vote for me. The great dissatisfaction occasioned by the proceedings at that election, and openly expressed by many of the governors, would, however, have induced me to come forward had a vacancy again occurred within two or three years; but at the present time, I think it would have been an injustice to my professional position, to subject myself to be defeated by engaging with juniors in a mode of competition for which I am but little calculated, and from which I am strongly averse.

It is well known to many that the succession to hospital appointments has been made a matter of direct pecuniary arrangement. I will not, however, dwell upon the occurrences which have taken place at other hospitals, but would ask, is it surprising, if elections are so conducted, that the proceedings of the medical corporations should have been attended with so great abuses, when it is considered that the hospitals serve as stepping-stones to positions in the councils of these bodies; that as consequences of those abuses so many qualified persons being precluded from the chance of advancing themselves by the direct means professed to be acted upon, should find the prospects with which they set out destroyed; that instead of a spirit of harmony in well-doing, professional enmity and jealousies should continue to be rife, and indirect actions of all kinds tending to lower the profession in public estimation should be had recourse to; or that such numbers, after having expended their means and the best years of their lives, should fail in obtaining an honourable

livelihood ; many, doubtless, considering themselves to be individually unfortunate, when, in fact, the cause is more frequently attributable to the system pursued.*

“The object of the subscribers,” observes a physician, who has published a brochure on hospital elections,† “is to find the most fitting man to carry out their intentions, and common sense teaches us that this should be done in the most simple manner, without entailing unnecessary trouble on any party, and with all respect to the private feelings of the candidates, and also to the dignity of the medical profession. The present plan is this: a vacancy is declared in the newspapers ; then follows advertisements by all the candidates ; next the sending of circulars or testimonials ; then canvassing personally or by friends ; and lastly comes the main difficulty of getting voters who have promised to the poll ; the real object of electing the most competent individual is thus put entirely out of the question. It is apparently never thought of, and consequently the result of the poll is not necessarily a proof of any other thing than the activity with which the successful candidate has advertised and canvassed. When we examine the system more closely it is really astonishing that the profession should submit to its existence for a moment. It is expected that individuals holding the position of gentlemen in a learned profession should advertise and give their pretensions publicity to the utmost of their power. Now, if there were no other act than this, it would be sufficient in itself to condemn the whole proceeding. There is nothing more repugnant

* I have already alluded to highly qualified gentlemen connected with St. George's, who have been obliged to emigrate or abandon the profession. Though it is not to be expected that all should occupy positions to which their qualifications may entitle them ; yet all have a right to a fair chance in competition.

† Observations on the present Mode of Nominating in Appointments to Public Medical Charities. By J. Sutherland, M.D.

to the feelings of a man of true honour than to adopt such a measure."

It follows as a natural consequence of the prevailing method, that instead of endeavouring to excel by honourable exertion, many who aspire to these appointments, rather seek by what means they may best ingratiate themselves with those who are most likely to forward their views. That many who have been elected under this system have reflected a lustre upon the profession, and have greatly contributed to the advancement of medical knowledge, is no argument in its favour, for distinguished men will arise in spite of any system, how bad soever it may be ; though their number will be thereby greatly restricted. At the period of Sir A. Cooper's decease a leading article appeared in a medical periodical referring to the career of this distinguished surgeon for the edification of students, as an instance of what may be accomplished by talent and application, and it is usual for lecturers to descant upon these qualities in their introductory discourses. It is doubtless laudable and with a good intention that inducements such as these are held out to pupils to exert themselves, but their expectations should not be too highly raised, for though it may be true that in the long run these means tend to ensure success, how many are there not who become exhausted during the course. Indeed, there are few persons acquainted with the present state of the profession in this country who are not well aware that without the adventitious aid of fortune or patronage, unaided talent, diligence, and perseverance, how great soever, would very rarely suffice to raise their possessor to distinction ; and were it not for the circumstance of Sir A. Cooper's having been placed by his uncle in the position of lecturer and hospital surgeon, his name might never have been heard of, and his

talents would probably have been buried in some obscure locality.

As contrasting with the foregoing instance and further illustrating the pernicious consequences of the present exclusive system in electing to hospital appointments, I will subjoin an extract from the last introductory lecture of the late Mr. Dermott, for many years a zealous teacher in London, and whose case, in being excluded from the fellowship, was brought before Parliament, as one of the many examples of injustice perpetrated under the charter granted to the College of Surgeons; which exclusion tended to the further destruction of his health. Speaking of those lecturers who hold out high expectations to students, Mr. Dermott observed:—

“ They will tell you perhaps what Hunter did, the immortal eminence he attained, and that emolument and fame lie before you—ready for your grasp. But these are untruths, gentlemen, and most cruel untruths, because they are calculated to deceive you; and those who are the promulgators of them are fully aware that ere long sad experience will prove to you that what I am about to tell you is but too true. I do not want to discourage you, but we must know the malignant evils which corrupt medical society, in order to get rid of them; and you should not be deceived by delusive prospects. These ‘ professors,’ gentlemen, in their introductory lectures, point to a fallacious meteor; they tell you of the bright sunshine of public approbation, but when you arrive at the summit of the eminence, you find a deep and dark gulf of monopoly separating you from the object for which you first started—the reward of public favour, and reasonable pecuniary emolument,—great fees, golden tolls, family patronage, are the passports over this gulf of corruption, as though talent, family interest, morality, and money, were gene-

rally, or even necessarily, combined in the same individual."

"We have the golden bar of exclusiveness put up between the mass of pupils at large and the favoured few. The industrious pupils after spending their money and time in London, return from the metropolis in shoals with empty pockets, heartless and prospectless, and are in mockery told that the profession is overstocked. Some having no solid reward in sight as a stimulus to study, sink into idleness and dissipation, whilst the least meritorious, the most-monied and family-patronized pass through the wicket and over the suspension-bridge of monopoly. This is absolutely the state of the medical profession. We have dresserships, house-surgeoncies, appointments in the army and navy, lectureships, physicianships, and surgeoncies to public institutions, and in fact to all medical offices of trust obtained by purchase, private patronage, and chicanery. Personal solicitations, begging or canvassing from door to door, sycophantish placards and advertisements, are had recourse to—a system which degrades the medical man below the most paltry shopkeeper whose favour he solicits—is a blasphemy and insult to the very name of science, and reduces the whole of the profession to a placarding, favour-begging, and advertising body of the lowest and most servile stamp. As the results of this system, we have the dastardly board-room brawls, and intrigue of party and private interests, whence spring the horrid jealousies, narrow-minded feelings, and bad actions which dishonour the medical profession, and which proved the death-blow even of John Hunter.

"There is in our present system encouragement to vice and discouragement to morality; there is preferment without talent, not preferment as the result of it. Our uni-

versities and hospitals are so many 'rotten boroughs,' where a system of favoritism and private interest is fostered. And thus are science and human life in this country made the victims of private interest and party cabal.

"We have the non-medical governors of our institutions called upon to do what it is impossible they can do, viz. to judge of the comparative medical merits of candidates. Thus the vast majority are decided by mere 'hearsay,' which at best is a most treacherous informant; and thus are the governors made the mere tools of the medical officers already in power.

"Let us refer to the evidence of Mr. King, given before the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into Medical Education, in the year 1834. He stated, that during his career in Paris he obtained many professional honorary appointments. He obtained the distinction of being a member of the *ecole pratique* at the first *concours* on the first attempt. He next obtained by similar *concours* an appointment as dresser at the public hospitals, and after that he competed for the prizes which are given every year after public *concours* to the members of the *ecole pratique*. The next year he competed for the *interne*, which is somewhat similar to the office of house-surgeon to our hospitals; and on the second *concours* he obtained the nomination of provisionary *interne* for the following year; on the third *concours* in the hospital, he was elected the second *interne* at the Hôtel Dieu. At the time Mr. King was elected he had the good fortune to be unanimously chosen; and his name being most conspicuously an English one, and the trial public, the question arose whether or not, being a foreigner, he was eligible. After some deliberation, it was decided that foreigners should be admitted to the *concours*, and that they were eligible; and the expressions used by the reporter on that occasion

were, 'that the council being influenced by motives of a high national order, had in their wisdom declared that France was the country of all the talents that would honour and serve her.'

"At the end of each year Mr. King obtained a prize; and during his service at the hospitals, he obtained by concours the gold medal which is given for the best register of cases and the best reports thereon. Mr. King further stated, that 'the men who distinguished themselves at *concours* are those on whom the eye of government is constantly fixed for the conferment of public honours and trusts.' Mr. King afterwards unfortunately came to England. 'I was then not admitted,' says he, 'for examination at the College of Surgeons until after making several applications. There was considerable delay and deliberation.'

"He became a candidate for the assistant-surgeoncy to St. George's Hospital; but the result was that he was given to understand by one of the full surgeons of the institution, that no man had any chance of becoming hospital surgeon unless he had been an apprentice or pupil to the hospital. Thus a man may be reduced to beggary in England by pursuing the same course which infallibly leads to the highest distinctions in France,—for preferment medical men will not get in England without patronage. Poor King in leaving a foreign land to exercise his talents in his own country, fell from prosperity, lost sight of all his bright prospects of future advancement, and died the victim of despair." *

Analogous cases to that of Mr. King are but too common, (though seldom brought prominently before the

* Sir C. Bell, Mr. Carpue, and many other distinguished members of the profession, may also be cited as instances that success in practice is not in England dependent upon high qualifications.

public) in the present over-crowded state of the profession, respecting which the "Medical Gazette" (March, 1846,) remarked :—

"A contemporary has suggested that it would be a benefit to the profession if the universities and colleges of the United Kingdom were prohibited from granting diplomas for several years, and arbitrary as such a rule may appear, we verily believe that it would be attended with less evil to the community and to the profession itself than the continuance of the practice here brought to light, viz. of sending out yearly on the population of this country an army of 269 physicians, 660 surgeons, and 373 apothecaries, deriving their qualifications from sixteen different systems of study, and receiving their licences to practise from so many different colleges, universities, and societies."

This in fact is the chief of those evils resulting from the absence of legislative control, or superintendence over the various bodies to which is intrusted the charge of medical affairs, whence the profession is actually in a more disorganised state than it was in a neighbouring country prior to the revolution at the close of the last century. In consequence of the competition which has long prevailed between these bodies to induce candidates to present themselves for examination, the object of the majority of students is to obtain with as little trouble and expense as possible the certificates requisite to enable them to pass the short and simply *viva voce* examination, which cannot under any circumstances be considered a sufficient test of capabilities, but it becomes scarcely an apology for a test when the examiners have a direct pecuniary interest in the numbers of those examined, which it is hardly necessary to say is peculiar to this country. I have already shewn how strikingly this system stands in contrast as regards

its effects, with the methodical plan of studies and the various examinations to which those who enter the medical profession in continental countries are subjected, and the following corroborative observations of a medical traveller, with reference to the Vienna school, will further illustrate this difference. " Thus we find that, according to this very extensive and well-arranged course, not only is the routine of subjects accurately defined, but the student is obliged strictly to adhere to them in the manner and order marked out by the board of medical directors. I cannot too strongly admire or recommend the practice, more especially as it is one whose adoption in Great Britain would be a vast improvement of medical education. In England, with few exceptions, (and even in those exceptions the kind of instruction is very meagre,) there is little or no preparatory education required by the different colleges or licensing bodies. The student is at perfect liberty to attend what lectures he pleases, and how many he will first attend, the object not being how he can best prepare his mind by initiatory degrees for the more mature branches of study, but how he can soonest, easiest, and cheapest become possessed of the certificates of attendance upon these lectures, a large majority of which lectures he has never heard, nay, may never have seen the lecturer till he comes to purchase from him the necessary certificates. There being no tests required as to his knowledge of any of the subjects, he is supposed to study till the hour of his examination, still some years distant a great number of them have never cost him an hour's thought or reading; and when the examination does arrive, the chances that he is never asked a question, except upon anatomy, surgery, and a little physiology, are, in the chief licensing institutions in Great Britain, so slight as almost to amount to a certainty. Hospitals

and practical subjects are attended to long before the theory has ever been learned. The pupil really walks the hospital without acquiring a definite knowledge of any one thing: he witnesses operations of which he neither understands the rationale nor the cause, except by his grinder during a few hard months' study prior to his examination, the result of which more frequently depends upon his memory than upon his practical knowledge. He is never once called upon to test or exercise his acquirements, until the hour before he receives a license to practise, and too frequently he finds at the conclusion of his studies that he has begun at the wrong end. As matters now stand, this is not the student's fault, but the fault of those who have or ought to have the direction of his studies and pursuits. The contrast with Austria and the Medical Schools of the Continent generally, may be learned from an examination of the programmes of the different lectures. Moreover, as in the cliniques, so also in the lectures, the students are examined by the professor at the end of every six months, twelve at a time, as to their proficiency in the subject of each course of lectures they have attended, before they are permitted to pass to a higher class.*

After these studies the medical candidate must pass two examinations; the first being accessory, the second is entirely practical. He must further write a Latin dissertation, and defend it against four disputants; after which he obtains the diploma of Doctor, which, however, confers no license to practise, until he has passed the rigorous theoretical and practical state examination.

This great abuse in the English system has been repeatedly adverted to in the medical periodicals. Thus the "Medical Gazette" lately observed: "The mercenary

* Wilde's Austria; its Literary, Scientific, and Medical Institutions.

competition which exists among the licensing bodies of Great Britain and Ireland, is the secret cause of the degradation of the profession. Rules are relaxed, and the fees for diplomas are reduced, in order to attract candidates; and young men may become physicians or surgeons at an age which renders it quite certain, that either their preliminary or their medical education must have been shamefully neglected. Until this scandalous competition is suppressed, there can be but little hope that the profession will assume that respectable position in the social scale to which it is justly entitled. When every street in the metropolis and in great provincial towns is overrun with medical practitioners, the schools and colleges vie with each other in lowering fees and in reducing the period of study and amount of qualifications to a minimum. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that English medical practitioners should everywhere complain that they are unable to live by the practice of their profession." *

Thus, also, a quarterly periodical of this year says:—"We hope this speech (Count Montalembert's in the French Chamber) will serve as a warning to ministers of state and legislators, not to seek to pervert a learned profession into an instrument of political influence, nor, in avoiding this error, to fall into another, which is far more likely to happen in this country, or rather which has already happened to a great extent, and which it must be the business of the legislature to cure: that of surrendering the profession to be mismanaged by certain great medical corporations for their own selfish and ambitious purposes. It is a disgrace to our legislature that they have made no progress hitherto in the cure of evils of the nature of which they are or ought to be fully aware.

* September 18th, 1847.

Far be it from us to desire the destruction of our medical colleges ; but our legislators will never make any progress in the cure of the intolerable anomalies and grievances of medical legislation if they do not resolve to turn a deaf ear to remonstrances proceeding from such bodies as are founded, as they too generally are, on selfish and exclusive views ; and if they do not base their measures on public interests alone, to which the whole machinery of medical schools, colleges, and incorporations, ought in all reason to be altogether subordinate and subservient.”*

“ It is easy,” says Count Montalembert,† “ to plead a cause in a narrow spirit, but this is not the way to gain and excite the sympathy of legislative assemblies, whose duty it is to watch over the welfare of the general

* Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal, January, 1848.

The following comparison of the number of Candidates examined and rejected at the College of Physicians, (Licentiates,) the College of Surgeons, and the Apothecaries’ Company, during 11 years—1823-33—shows that the rejections are less numerous in proportion as the fee is large ; and, as may be seen from the large lists published in the papers, of those who now pass the examinations no alteration is likely to be effected unless by legislative interference.

	Examined.	Rejected.	Rejected out of 100 examined.	Fees paid by the approved Candidate.
				£ s.
College of Physicians	133	7	5·3	56 17
College of Surgeons	4621	316	6·9	22 0
Apothecaries’ Company	4843	666	13·8	6 or 10‡

Medical Almanack, 1841.

† Speech before the Chamber of Peers.

‡ Six guineas for those intending to practise in the country—ten for London practitioners.

body of the nation, and not yield up the commonwealth to the depredation of special interests within its bosom."

The laxity of examination was formerly such that, according to the evidence of Mr. Guthrie, (himself a member of the council,) as quoted by Sir James Clark, many were allowed to pass "who could not spell very common words in their native language." "What the acquirements of the candidates for the college diploma were before 1836, Mr. Guthrie does not inform us; but such it seems is the deplorable state of ignorance of those permitted to pass the Royal College of Surgeons. Are men so educated worthy of being intrusted with the important duties attached to the ordinary medical attendants of the community? Is it surprising that quacks and quackery should thrive when such is the education of the regular practitioner? Such a state of things ought not to exist in a civilized country, and would not have existed at the present day had the institutions entrusted with the regulation of medical education done their duty."*

The remark of Sir James Clark, some years ago, applies equally to the late examinations before the medical registration committee: "It would appear that the members of the medical corporations are alone consulted upon the subject, and that they, as might be expected, are strenuously exerting themselves, to obtain all they can for his own institution, while the claims and feelings of the great body of the profession seem likely to be lost sight of. Permit me, however, most respectfully to remark that it is the general practitioner whom a sound measure of medical reform is most calculated to benefit. Let me remind you also that it is they who are principally calling for reform, and who, believing that they have little to expect at the hands of the present medical bodies, look to

* Letter to Sir James Graham.

the legislature through you, sir, to improve their position." *

With reference to the College of Physicians, the journal already quoted farther remarks: "If it be the case that the College of Physicians have granted an extra licence on a trivial examination of less than an hour, it reflects disgrace on the College. We do not wish to specify cases, but we could easily show that the fellowship has been conferred on men who were good classical scholars, but most ill-informed in the profession." (May 1846.) Thus, also, the author of the article on Medical Reform in the *Quarterly Review*, says, "Young men with the smallest possible amount of medical science were at once admitted as fellows, while some of the most accomplished and experienced physicians remained in the ranks of the licentiates. Nor was this all. No regulation was thought to be necessary as to medical education; the degree of M.D., which in itself means little or nothing, as there are universities where it may be purchased for a few pounds, with two years' residence at any university, being all that was required, the consequence was that many were admitted as licentiates, and even as fellows, whose medical education was inferior to that which has been for some years required of the apothecary."

On the College recently applying to Government for a new charter to empower it to include within its jurisdiction all physicians in England and Wales of a given

* "We cannot look with much confidence to this source of amendment (the corporations). The corporations are all independent of each other; there is no bond of union between them. They have to legislate for a profession, the different branches of which are necessarily much connected with each other, but they all act separately. They are responsible only to themselves and to the slow operation of public opinion, and we cannot shut our eyes to the fact, that their interests are not always identical with those of the public."—*Article on Medical Reform in Quarterly Review*.

age, without examination, but *on paying a certain fee*, the animus is sufficiently apparent; indeed offers of the fellowship have been made to individuals, which in one instance to my knowledge were declined; and Dr. Hodgkin in his recent pamphlet observes, “It remains to be seen what effect will ultimately be produced on the body of general practitioners in consequence of many of their number voluntarily seeking the distinction of licentiates which *with no little injustice to the original licentiates has been offered to them by the college.*”

It would be impossible to estimate the amount of injury produced by the facilities afforded of obtaining licences to practise, the profession being thereby deluged with a host of ill-qualified practitioners, between whom and those who by diligent labour have entitled themselves to confidence, the public is frequently unable to discriminate, inasmuch as all hold the same title. Some idea of the extent to which this abuse has been carried may be formed from the following circumstance recorded a few months ago in the medical journals:—“A pastry-cook of Taunton was able in the course of a twelvemonth’s residence in London to obtain the certificates requisite for passing the examination at the College of Surgeons, the authorities of which institution, on being made acquainted with the manner in which the diploma had been obtained, applied to the new member to return it, which, having paid for and passed their examination, he declined to do, and continues to practise homœopathy under its sanction. Another person also obtained the diploma of the college by means of false certificates, which implied that he was attending lectures at a period when it was proved that he was acting as an assistant elsewhere. A correspondent of the *Lancet* moreover states, that there are many other persons who have obtained the diploma of the college,

with no more medical education than a two years' attendance on lectures. Thus it would appear provided the parties presenting themselves for examination are prepared to pay the fees, no very rigid investigation of their qualifications as to the important duty of taking charge of the health of the community need be apprehended by them. Nevertheless some of the examiners before the Medical Parliamentary Committee, aver that the system works well.*

"The system in our college," says Mr. Lawrence, "is as perfect as possible. I think it answers all the purposes very well indeed. I think it provides that the public shall have practitioners who are competent to discharge the duty entrusted to them." And, with reference to the above-mentioned case, further says, "He was examined in the usual way, and passed through a very fair examination. At the present moment if the Governors of St. Bartholomew's choose to elect the pastrycook, who lately successfully underwent our examination, there is nothing to prevent them electing him a medical officer of that institution. We have not any power to make him give back the diploma. We have no power of punishing a party who gives a false certificate."

The college was, like the College of Physicians, desirous of obtaining from Government a supplementary charter, for the avowed purpose of remedying this injustice done in the creation of fellows under the former one; proposing to admit to the fellowship those who had been unjustly excluded, *on payment of ten guineas each*,

* I have elsewhere adverted to the sale of the post of examiner in the College of Surgeons, on condition of the receipt of half the annual fees. When the gentleman concerned in this transaction subsequently vacated his post as surgeon to an hospital, a lengthy advertisement signed by him appeared in the papers, setting forth the qualifications of the gentleman whom he recommended to the Governors for the vacant assistant-surgeoncy, and who obtained the appointment.

which it is not likely any would do whose claims were really valid. As a proof of the hostile feeling which procured my exclusion from the fellowship, I may here state that the late Home-Secretary, to whom I had been personally known, wrote to the President of the College, (the same surgeon to whom I have had occasion to allude,) inquiring the grounds of my exclusion, to which the reply was, that my claims had received every fair consideration, and that the mode of becoming a fellow by examination was open to me ; whereas I can state on the authority of one of the Council, that neither my claims nor the Secretary of State's letter, were ever submitted to the Council. These claims are, however, now before the profession, who may form their own opinion respecting their validity.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that a state of matters such as has been briefly depicted, does not exist in any other civilized country ; nor is it surprising that quackery, which is a necessary consequence of such a state, and which it will be useless to attempt to arrest by merely repressive measures, should be more prevalent in England than elsewhere. Having already treated the subject more in detail,* I trust that enough has been said on the present occasion to shew the urgent necessity of the adoption by the legislature of means for remedying the present disgraceful state of our medical organization. Partial alterations would do little towards removing the abuses complained of ; and I cannot conclude better than by quoting the judicious remarks of Sir James Clark, who observes :

* Remarks on Medical Organization and Reform, Foreign and English ; inscribed to the Right Hon. Sir James Graham.

The Medical Reform Question ; inscribed to the Right Hon. Sir George Grey.

“The mere reform of the existing medical institutions, would have small influence in tranquillising the present agitated state of the profession, because such a partial measure of reform would do little for the great body of practitioners. On the contrary, I am inclined to believe, that such a limited reform would produce an injurious effect upon the profession, by giving a temporary stability to institutions which are not, and as far as I can see cannot, be adapted to represent the profession as a body. Reform of the medical corporations, would even be of little permanent advantage to themselves, for it is quite certain, that any reform of these bodies which has not for its aim and end the good of the whole profession, and the advantage of the public, cannot and ought not to endure. I would ask, Sir, the advocates of such a partial measure what are the great objects to be aimed at in reforming the present anomalous state of the profession? Is it not to improve and equalise the education of the medical men throughout the country, in order that the public may be supplied with competent medical advisers? Is it not to raise the character of the general practitioner, and to put an end to the discontent which has so long existed in the profession on account of the unequal and generally imperfect education of its members, and the vexatious regulations respecting the privileges of men licensed by different bodies; and finally, is it not to unite the whole profession into one corporate body? Can these objects be attained by reforming institutions, the separate existence of which tends to keep up the very evils complained of, while they exercise little or no beneficial influence on the profession? Such a union of the whole profession as is here advocated, must come; it is inevitable because it is the only reform which is consistent with the natural order of things that is founded in justice, or can place the pro-

fession as a body in the position which it ought to hold among the liberal professions."

"Were the Government to decide that the whole medical profession shall be incorporated into one body, and that to this body only would be granted a charter of incorporation, I firmly believe all obstacles to the union of the colleges would soon be removed, and that in the course of a very few years, we should see the united institutions exercising an influence on the character of the profession and on the progress of medical science far beyond what the present corporations ever did, or ever could do in their separate capacities."

The great influence which the mode of electing medical officers in hospitals must exert upon the state of the profession, and the interests of the community—so long as the present system of organization is suffered to exist—will I think now be sufficiently apparent; and I will, in conclusion, express the hope that a fair appreciation of the *bonâ fide* claims of competitors on the part of Governors to these Institutions will in future tend to put an end to these appointments being made a means of compensating services, or to subserve other personal ends.

POSTSCRIPT.

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

“THE permanent and incidental income of this Institution during the past year amounted to £10,261 10s., and the expenditure to £9,138 12s. 8d. The expences of the museum and library were respectively £2,524 14s. 9d. and £406 0s. 3d. Yet there is no school, and the expenditure of the museum and library is but £3,000 a year. What a happy and flourishing state of affairs, where no hated rival can be raised to distinction, and no opportunity afforded impudent aspirants to raise themselves!”—*Dublin Medical Press.*

APPENDIX.

TESTIMONIALS FROM CONTINENTAL SURGEONS.

The Testimonials from the German and Florentine Professors were received subsequent to the last surgical vacancy in the Hospital, the following Parisian ones having been on that occasion sent to the Governors in a circular.

*From M. Roux, Professor of the Faculty of Medicine,
Member of the Institute, Surgeon to the Hôtel Dieu, &c.*

I certify, having known very particularly Mr. Edwin Lee during the different periods of his residence in Paris; that he has attended with remarkable assiduity my visits and operations at the Hôtel Dieu, and that in the relations which he has had with me, I have repeatedly been enabled to perceive the good spirit by which he is animated, to convince myself of his extensive information, and that if he be favoured by circumstances, and placed upon a fitting theatre of observation, he will not fail to become a distinguished man.

*From M. VELPEAU, Professor of the Faculty of Medicine,
Member of the Institute, Surgeon to the Hospital la
Charité, &c.*

I certify having known Mr. Edwin Lee for about ten years, and have been able to assure myself of his zeal in attending our visits and operations, of the solidity of his knowledge, and that at the different periods of his residence among us, I have always seen him pursue with ardour his medico-chirurgical studies.

*From M. LISFRANC, Professor of the Faculty, Surgeon
to the Hospital la Pitie, &c.*

I certify that Mr. Edwin Lee has followed with much zeal and exactness my clinical courses at various periods for several years, and that he has always exhibited proofs of a high intelligence, and of very distinguished talent.

From M. RICORD, Chief Surgeon of the Hospital du Midi.

I certify that Mr. Edwin Lee has followed at different periods, during several years, my hospital visits and practice, and that in the scientific relations which we have had together, he has always given me proofs of a profound and varied knowledge in medicine and surgery.

*From M. CIVIALE, Inventor of the operation of Lithotrity
(crushing the stone in the bladder.)*

I certify that Mr. Edwin Lee has followed during several months, and at various times, my practice at the Hospital Necker, and that he has assisted, with much zeal, at a great number of operations of Lithotrity, both at the hospital and in my private practice.

From M. SICHEL, Surgeon to the Ophthalmic Dispensary.

I beg to certify that I have known Mr. Edwin Lee for several years, during which he has repeatedly attended my courses and clinic on the Diseases of the Eye, and that he has fully availed himself of the opportunities which he has enjoyed in order to acquire very extensive knowledge in the diagnosis and treatment of Eye Diseases.

From M. ROBERT, Surgeon to the Hospital Beaujon.

I certify that Mr. Edwin Lee has followed my courses of Operative Surgery, and that in the numerous relations which I have had with him, I have been able to appreciate his extensive information and surgical skill.

From PROFESSOR DIEFFENBACH, *of Berlin, Chief Surgeon to the King of Prussia, &c.*

Mr. Lee, whom I have known for some years, is a gentleman of excellent disposition, high talent, and great knowledge as regards practical medicine and surgery. As an author, he has already attained a distinguished name, and the scientific world hails with satisfaction any production from his pen. It is, however, more particularly to be desiderated, that Mr. Lee should be afforded the opportunity of distinguishing himself in an honourable position connected with a large hospital, which, with his superior talents, he will assuredly not fail to be.

Berlin, Sept. 17, 1844.

From PROFESSOR VON WALTHER, *of Munich, Surgeon to the King of Bavaria, &c.*

Mr. Lee attended with the greatest assiduity and attention, during his residence at Munich of several months, the surgical and ophthalmic clinic under my direction, and I was consequently able, with much satisfaction, to appreciate his superior knowledge in medicine and surgery, his sound judgment, and his zeal in the cultivation of medical science. Being already known as the author of several instructive works, I can only congratulate his country, and any hospital to which he may become attached, on possessing such an acquisition.

Munich, Nov. 17, 1844.

From PROFESSOR VON AMMON, *of Dresden, Surgeon to the King of Saxony, &c. &c.*

Mr. Lee, whom I have had the honor of knowing during several years, has afforded me frequent opportunities of convincing myself, from the experience I have had of his judgment in individual cases of disease, of his extensive knowledge of medicine, surgery, and eye diseases. I beg further to add the observation that Mr. Lee has acquired a complete knowledge of the state of medicine and surgery in Germany, which distinguishes him from most of his compatriots.

Dresden, August 13, 1844.

From PROFESSOR STROMEYER, *of the Universities of Munich and Friburg.*

I had been acquainted several years with Mr. E. Lee, when the opportunity was afforded me of testifying in writing that he is the most highly-informed young man of his country and profession whom I have known. His profound acquirements in the various branches of medical science, render it difficult to say whether he is more proficient in medicine or in surgery. It is to be wished that he may occupy in his own country a position commensurate with his zeal and talents.

Friburg, Nov. 7, 1844.

From PROFESSOR RADIUS, *of the University of Leipzig.*

I hereby attest that I have known Mr. Lee for several years, by personal acquaintance during his sojourns at Leipzig, as also from his works, and therefrom entertain a very high opinion of his proficiency in practical medicine and surgery. On which account he was elected an ordinary foreign member of the medical society of this city.

Leipzig, August 7, 1844.

*From PROFESSOR ANDREINI, of Florence, Surgeon to the
Grand Duke of Tuscany, &c. &c.*

I, the undersigned, declare that I have with much satisfaction known for several years Mr. Lee, of London, who has attended my clinique in the Imperial and Royal Hospital; and that in the medico-chirurgical argumentations which I have held with Mr. Lee, I have always admired his profound knowledge and the rare ability with which he is endowed: and as an earnest of the high esteem which I entertain for my distinguished friend, I present him with this attestation.

Florence, February 15, 1845.