

An address by the Society of Apothecaries to the general practitioners of England and Wales, on the second report of the joint deputation of the Society ... and the National Association of General Practitioners.

Contributors

Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London
National Association of General Practitioners.

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ADDRESS

BY

THE SOCIETY OF APOTHECARIES,

TO THE

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

OF ENGLAND AND WALES,

ON THE SECOND REPORT OF

THE JOINT DEPUTATION

OF

THE SOCIETY OF APOTHECARIES

AND

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS.

LONDON:

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AN ADDRESS
TO THE
GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES.

AT the very outset of the discussions which have occupied the profession during the last eighteen months, in relation to Medical Reform, the Society of Apothecaries publicly disclaimed any advocacy of personal or corporate interests, and pledged themselves to exert their influence in promoting the welfare of the important class of General Practitioners, and maintaining and strengthening the hold which its members possess on the confidence of the public.

They were induced, even before the introduction of Sir James Graham's first Medical Bill, to draw public attention to the position of the general practitioners, as a class, and in particular, to urge their claims to an efficient control over the education

and examination of their own class, a principle which, it was anticipated, the provisions of the Bill would be found to oppose.

On the appearance of the Bill itself, the Society were the first public body to express an opinion on its provisions, and to point out to the general practitioners the injurious influence which the measure was calculated to exercise on the position and prospects of that branch of the profession. The Society laboured to convince the Legislature of the deep interest which the public had in upholding the character and attainments of the general practitioners, and, as the only certain means of securing that object, of giving them a full and efficient share in the duty of determining and testing the qualifications of the future members of this class. The Society strongly deprecated the repeal of the existing penalties upon the practice of unqualified men, and enforced, as strongly as they were able, the necessity of a more efficient penal check being imposed upon such practice. They distinctly stated the course they should pursue with respect to medical legislation; they invited an expression of the views and wishes of their professional brethren, and promised to co-operate with them in an endeavour to procure a measure of Medical Reform, framed on broad and liberal principles, and calculated to meet at once the reasonable expectations of the general practitioners, and the wants of the public.

The general practitioners having very generally declared in favour of an independent organization of the members of that branch of the profession by an Incorporation of a Collegiate character, the Society were the first to represent the wishes of their brethren to the Secretary of State, and to invite his favourable consideration of that proposal.

In the meanwhile a voluntary organization of general practitioners had been rapidly progressing, and by the month of March in the present year a larger number of medical practitioners than had ever previously combined for purposes of mutual protection, had formed themselves into "The National Association of General Practitioners in Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery." This Association having communicated with the Society of Apothecaries as to the principles which it was desirable to advocate as the groundwork of the Charter of Incorporation, the Society had the satisfaction in the result of laying before the Secretary of State certain heads of a charter which had been mutually agreed upon between the Society and the Association.

The Secretary of State, however, required that before he proceeded to consider the terms of a new Charter of Incorporation, he should receive an intimation from the Society of Apothecaries of their readiness to resign the powers conferred upon them by the Act of 1815.

The Society, in advocating the grant of a new charter of incorporation, had contemplated, of course,

a resignation of their existing powers when such charter should be granted ; but they felt that they should not be consulting the welfare of the general practitioners, or acting consistently with the opinion they entertained of the advantages resulting to the public from the exercise of the trust reposed in the Society by an unconditional surrender of that trust, until they had a satisfactory assurance that any new arrangements which might be proposed were better calculated than the present to advance the real interests of the profession and the public. On the other hand, it would have been obviously inconsistent with the dignity of the Crown to have entertained an application for the grant of a Charter of Incorporation, which implied a reserved veto on such grant on the part of the Society of Apothecaries. Accordingly, the Secretary of State distinctly declined to treat with any parties who were not fully authorized to accept such a Charter on behalf of the general practitioners represented by the National Association, as the Crown might be advised to grant, and fully authorized also to relinquish the privileges of the Society of Apothecaries when the terms of the charter should be adjusted to the satisfaction of the parties entrusted with such authority.

The Society, anxious to concur in removing the difficulty which thus presented itself, at once assented to the appointment of a deputation consisting, in part, of members of their own body, and in

part of members of the National Association, and confided to the deputation thus constituted the power of relinquishing the present privileges of the Society, when the deputation had succeeded in obtaining from the Minister such terms as they deemed satisfactory.

The profession are aware that the members of this deputation were occupied in protracted negotiations with the Secretary of State during the whole of the last session of Parliament, and that at the close of the session the deputation announced in a second Report of their proceedings, an arrangement which had received the sanction of the Secretary of State, and to which the deputation had assented on behalf of those by whom they had been deputed.

The Society's object in addressing their medical brethren at the present time is, to offer an opinion upon the leading features of this arrangement. It was necessary, however, in the first instance, to enter into some explanation of the position which the Society occupy in connexion with the pending arrangement; and their professional brethren will perceive from what has been stated, that any opinion which the Society may form, under existing circumstances, in favour of a given proposal, is likely to be, at least, an impartial one, inasmuch as the adoption of such proposal presupposes a surrender of the Society's present control over medical education.

The Society beg distinctly to state, that the remarks which they are about to make are addressed to the arrangement as disclosed by the Report of the Deputation, and that they purposely abstain from inquiring how far the Bill in its present shape carries out the terms of the arrangement, because the Society feel warranted in assuming, that if the Secretary of State has assented to the arrangement, and the Bill, as at present framed, does not give effect to that arrangement, the Bill will be so modified as to effect its object before it is again submitted to Parliament.

It appears then to the Society, that the proposed arrangement contemplates—

1st. The legislative recognition of the general practitioner as an individual legally qualified to engage in the practice of medicine, surgery, and midwifery.

2ndly. Due provision for rendering the future general practitioner fully competent for the efficient discharge of the important duties which devolve upon him; and—

3rdly. An organization of the existing general practitioners by an Incorporation of a Collegiate character, based upon the representative principle.

Now the only safe course to pursue to arrive at a sound judgment with respect to any arrangement, like the present, which professes to have for its object the public good, is to view it in its immediate relation to the public, and to regard its pro-

bable effect upon the interests of any particular class as important, just in so far as the interests of the public at large are involved in those of the particular class.

Looking, then, to the interests of the public at large, what should be the important object to be kept in view in remodelling the medical institutions of the country?

The public will naturally reason thus:—The medical attendant of the great mass of the population is an individual upon whose skill reliance must be placed in all emergencies. It is obviously of the utmost importance that such individual should be rendered as competent as possible for the discharge of the duties which thus devolve upon him. Take care, therefore, in legislating on medical affairs, that every thing be done which is calculated to improve the qualifications of this class of practitioners. And forasmuch as the public are not competent to judge of the qualifications of their medical attendants for themselves, let the skill and experience of the individual whom the law permits to practise in a medical capacity be tested by competent authorities, and let the law prevent, as far as possible, those who have not given evidence of their qualification from engaging in practice.

Now the general practitioners, as a class, have a direct interest in maintaining and elevating their professional and social status, and it is clear that they can only hope to effect that object by main-

taining and elevating the standard of their professional and general acquirements. Of this the general practitioners are fully sensible, and they have proved that they are so by the efforts they have made during the last thirty years to extend the education of students, and to raise the tone and character of their examination. It is admitted that those efforts have been successful; and the real struggle in which the general practitioners are now engaged, is to secure to themselves the power not only of maintaining the existing standard of qualification, but of elevating it, from time to time, as the means of improvement offer themselves. In striving for the attainment of so legitimate an object as this, the general practitioners may safely rely upon the support of the Legislature and the public. But the profession must suffer themselves to be reminded, that it is *this* object, and this object only, in which the public at large have any real interest; and that if the general practitioners calculate upon the sympathy and support of the public, they must satisfy the public that in the claims which they are urging upon the Minister and the Legislature, they are keeping this object steadily in view. Sir James Graham has publicly acknowledged the responsible position which the general practitioners occupy in relation to a large portion of the public, and has avowed his anxiety on public grounds to uphold the character, the station, and the attainments of that class of the profession; and the question, therefore, is really narrowed to an

inquiry—in what way can this object of acknowledged importance be best attained?

It will be remembered that Sir James Graham's original proposal was to entrust the education and examination of the general practitioners to the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. To this arrangement the general practitioners objected, on the ground that the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons had been found indisposed to admit the necessity, or even the expediency, of a high standard of qualification for the members of that branch of the profession—that it was to be expected, therefore, that the education and examination which the general practitioners would have received at the hands of those Colleges would not have had a tendency to raise the qualifications of their class, and that there was reason to apprehend that the existing standard might not have been maintained.

This view of the subject having been pressed on the attention of the Secretary of State, and the claim of the general practitioners to the unrestricted right of determining the standard of qualification which shall be reached by the future members of their class having been at the same time strongly urged, Sir James Graham has yielded to that claim, and has remodelled his measure by the introduction of the important provision, that no person shall be permitted to practise as a general practitioner who has not satisfied a Board of Examiners, composed of members of his own branch of the profession, that

he is fully equal to the requirements of general practice.

Sir James Graham's answer to the general practitioners was in substance this: " You object to my proposal to entrust the duty of superintending the education and examination of the general practitioner to the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, on the ground that such an arrangement would have a prejudicial influence on the attainments of your class. I do not share your apprehensions, but I will give you the means of effectually preventing any such result as you anticipate. Educate your candidates, therefore, as highly as you think necessary; examine them in those branches of medical and general knowledge which you may deem essential as a qualification for general practice; no one shall be permitted to practise as a general practitioner without the sanction of your diploma; and the exercise of your discretion in these respects shall be unfettered. But although I have thus far modified my plan to remove all ground of apprehension on your part, I see no reason for exempting the general practitioner from an examination before a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons—an examination to which I propose to subject both physicians and surgeons, in addition to the examination they will be required to pass before the examining Boards of their own Colleges. I am of opinion, that the connexion which will thus be established between the three branches of the profession, will operate bene-

ficially for the profession itself, and the public will have an increased assurance of the candidate's competency to practise, for which I think myself fairly entitled to stipulate on their behalf."

The profession are already aware, that under the proposed arrangement, the examination by the College of General Practitioners will precede the examination by the joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons; and that upon passing the latter of these examinations, the candidate will become a member of the College of Surgeons. It may be desirable, however, to state the effect of the arrangement somewhat more in detail.

In the first place, the Council of the Royal College of General Practitioners will determine the course of study to be pursued by the candidates for their diploma, and also the nature and extent of the examination to which he will afterwards be subjected by the Court of Examiners of that College. The regulations of the College on these points will be subject, in common with the regulations of the other Colleges, to the supervision of the Council of Health; but it is obvious, that, practically, the powers of the Council of Health can never be exercised for the purpose of *detracting* from the amount of qualification demanded by any of the Colleges of their members. The province of the Council of Health will be to take care that each College *keeps up* to its own professed regulations, and if the examination of any College appears to fall *below* what the Council

deems a proper standard, to insist upon that standard being reached. Little jealousy, therefore, need be entertained of the interference of the Council of Health on the subject of the regulations of the College. The College will have express power given to it by its Charter to examine the candidate for its diploma in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, and in such other branches of medical and general science as the council may deem requisite, with a view to test the qualifications of the candidate for general practice. Upon passing this examination satisfactorily, the candidate will become a member of the College of General Practitioners, and receive his diploma accordingly. In virtue of his membership of the College of General Practitioners, he will become entitled to present himself for examination before the joint Medical and Surgical Board; and upon passing that examination satisfactorily, he will become a member of the College of Surgeons, thereby acquiring the right to the designation of Surgeon, together with the right of admission to the Hunterian museum and the library of the College; and he will be entitled, on presenting the letters testimonial of the joint Medical and Surgical Board, in fact, in virtue of his double qualification as a member of the Royal College of General Practitioners, and as a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, to register as a General Practitioner.

Such is the arrangement as regards the education and examination of the general practitioner, which

the Society understand to have been assented to by the deputation.

There are two features in this arrangement upon which (before noticing the objections which have been urged against it) the Society particularly desire to fix attention, and these are, first, that the general practitioners themselves will have the power of testing the competency of the future general practitioner in medicine, surgery, and midwifery; and, secondly, that no individual will be able to acquire a legal title to practise as a general practitioner, who has not satisfied a board of examiners, composed of members of his own class, of his proficiency in *each* of those branches of medical knowledge. At present, many individuals engage in general practice after obtaining a legal qualification to practise *medicine*, but who have undergone no examination as to their skill in the practice of *surgery*. Other individuals, again, are found in general practice who have acquired a legal qualification to practise *surgery*, but who have undergone no examination as to their skill in the practice of *medicine*. And lastly, there are individuals who have satisfied the constituted authorities of their competency to practise both in medicine and surgery, but who have enjoyed no opportunity of having their skill in *midwifery* attested, simply because there is no Body at present authorized to institute an examination on that subject. This anomalous state of things will no longer exist, for it is now proposed that before any indi-

vidual obtains permission to enter upon general practice, he shall satisfy those who are best able to form an opinion of the amount of qualification necessary for general practice, that he is competent to administer relief to the sick in all emergencies. It is difficult, as the Society conceive, to overrate the importance of these provisions, when viewed in connexion with the influence they are likely to exercise on the qualifications of the future general practitioner.

The principal objections which the Society understand to be entertained to the arrangement are, that it places the College of General Practitioners in an *inferior* position, inasmuch as its diploma will not give the holder a title to registration; and that the examination which the general practitioner is required to undergo before the joint medical and surgical board, implies a want of confidence in the examination to be conducted by the College of General Practitioners, and is therefore calculated to depreciate the value of that examination, as a test of qualification, in the public mind.

It is unnecessary for the Society to premise, that if these objections are well founded, they are of the most grave character.

It is well known that the proposal for the examination of the general practitioners by a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons did not originate with the deputation, but that such examination was superadded by the Secretary of State as one of the conditions on which he would consent to recommend

the grant of a charter of incorporation to the general practitioners. The Society of Apothecaries had contemplated that the examination of the general practitioner in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, would have rested with the College of General Practitioners, and they are satisfied that the public interests would not have suffered if that arrangement had been adopted; but the Society do not concur with those who think that the examination before the joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons is one which necessarily implies a want of confidence in the examination by the College of General Practitioners, or that the arrangement in this respect is calculated to detract from the dignity or impair the public usefulness of that College. It must be borne in mind, that the physicians and surgeons are each to be subjected to an examination by the joint Medical and Surgical Board, in addition to the examination by their own Colleges. Therefore if the College of General Practitioners is supposed to lose any dignity from the fact of its examination not qualifying for registration, it is a loss which that College suffers in common with the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that all the Colleges do sustain an apparent loss of independence in being rendered incapable of granting a licence to practise on their single attestation of the competency of a candidate, the Society of Apothecaries cannot think

that there is anything in the circumstance of the Legislature thus providing an additional security against the admission of incompetent persons into practice which either of the Colleges would be justified in regarding as derogatory to its real dignity; and whatever opinion may be entertained on this subject by members of other branches of the profession, the Society of Apothecaries are of opinion, that it would ill become the general practitioners, who, as a class, are struggling for the power of maintaining a high standard of qualification, and guarding themselves against the risk of that standard being depressed, to exhibit any jealousy of an additional test of the qualifications of their candidates, because the direct operation of such an additional test must be to assist in the accomplishment of the very object they profess to have in view.

It may be said, however, that there is a difference between the examination which the general practitioner is required to undergo before the joint Medical and Surgical Board, and the examination to which the physicians and surgeons will be subjected, inasmuch as in the case of the physicians and surgeons the examination by the Medical and Surgical Board will *precede* the examination by his own College, and will be merely preliminary in its character, whereas in the case of the general practitioner the examination by the joint Medical and Surgical Board will *follow* the examination by his

own College, and will be the examination, therefore, upon which the right to registration will immediately ensue.

It will be remembered, that it was originally intended by Sir James Graham, that the examination by the joint Medical and Surgical Board should precede the examinations of the Colleges in the case of the general practitioners as well as of the physicians and surgeons, and that the Right Honourable Baronet's Bill of the 7th of May was framed in conformity with that intention. The deputation have fully explained in their Second Report the circumstances which led to the present proposal to reverse the order of the examinations as regards the general practitioners, and it is unnecessary therefore to repeat that explanation here. The Society, however, are desirous of making some observations in reference to the proposed order of these examinations. Assuming, for the present, that the competency of the general practitioner to practise his profession is to be tested by a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons, as well as by the examining Board of his own College, the Society entirely concur in the opinion of the deputation, that the examination by his own College should *precede* that by the Medical and Surgical Board.

The Society regard the examination of the general practitioner by members of his own class, as valuable, because, in connexion with the previous regulation of his course of study, it vests the power of

fixing the standard of qualification, which the candidate shall be required to reach, in those who have a direct interest in *elevating* that standard, and they anticipate that the amount of benefit resulting to the public from the possession of that power will be found to be very much in proportion to the degree in which it is freely and independently exercised.

Now if the candidate for general practice is to pursue his studies in conformity with the regulations of the College of General Practitioners, and upon the completion of his studies is to present himself before the examining Board of that College, and if he is required to satisfy that Board of his competency to practise *every* branch of his profession as his first step on the road to a legal title to registration, it is difficult to see how the power of determining the qualification of the general practitioner could be *more effectually secured* to the new College. And what is to interfere with the *independent exercise* of that power? The judgment of the examining Board cannot be influenced by the issue of any previous inquiry as to the competency of the candidate, for no such inquiry can have taken place. Whatever opinion may be formed by the examiners on the merits of the candidate, must necessarily be the result of the exercise of their own unaided and independent judgment; and the Society cannot but think that this circumstance is, of itself, well calculated to dispose the public to form a favourable opi-

nion of the efficiency of the test, and to give weight to the decision at which the examiners may arrive.

The Society do not deny that the examiners may be influenced in some degree by the prospect of the examination which is to follow, but it seems to the Society that such influence must needs be of a beneficial character, because the only effect which the existence of a second inquiry could be expected to have upon the members of the first examining Board, would be to render them the more diligent and cautious in the discharge of their duty, from the knowledge that any deficiency of the candidate which might elude *their* notice would be likely to discover itself on his second examination. On the other hand, if the examination of the College of General Practitioners were to *follow* an examination by a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons, although, in theory, the College would have the power of rejecting a candidate who failed to satisfy them of his competency in any particular, it is obvious that, practically, there would be great difficulty in rejecting a candidate who had already succeeded in satisfying a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons; and if the public should be found to sympathize with a rejected candidate under such circumstances, (as they might possibly be disposed to do,) there would be great danger of the latter examination failing to command respect, and ere long the great advantages which would have resulted from an efficient examination conducted by an examining Board of general

practitioners, might be lost to the profession and the public. By reversing the order of the examinations, this very serious objection (perhaps the only serious objection which can be urged, upon strictly public grounds, to the examination by the joint Medical and Surgical Board) appears to be obviated.

Another objection which has been urged to the arrangement is, that it is unreasonable that a double examination should be rendered imperative in England, as a title to registration, when a single examination only is required in Scotland and Ireland. Now the observation which first presents itself on this objection is, that the single examination, as it is called, in Scotland and Ireland, is an examination before a joint Board of Physicians and Surgeons, being, in fact, the examination originally designed for the general practitioners of *this* country, and against which they have protested ; and the additional examination to which they are to be subjected in this country, is intended to form their security against the evil which they have anticipated from the other. No doubt it would be competent for the Legislature to admit the general practitioner of England to registration on the diploma of his own College, and so subject him to only one examination ; but we have seen that the Minister of the Crown declines to recommend the grant of a charter on these terms, and it is unnecessary, therefore, to refer to other obstacles (of scarcely less difficulty) which would have to be overcome before such an arrange-

ment could be effected. The objection, however, is one which existed rather to the former arrangement than to the present, inasmuch as the Bill, in its present form, contemplates that the general practitioner in Scotland and Ireland shall undergo separate examinations before the College of Physicians and the College of Surgeons, thereby rendering a double examination necessary in Scotland and Ireland as well as in England; so that any temptation to the English student to present himself before the examining Boards of Scotland or Ireland, for the purpose of escaping what might be considered a severer test of his qualifications in this country, will be removed.

The Society, from the length of time during which they have had the control of the education and examination of the general practitioner in medicine, may be supposed to feel an especial interest in those features of any measure of Medical Reform which more immediately relate to the qualifications of the *future* members of the profession, and they may appear, perhaps, from this circumstance, to have dwelt too exclusively on this branch of the present arrangement.

They have not, however, overlooked the other features of the scheme, and they feel bound to admit, which they do with unfeigned satisfaction, that on the whole they are such as are well calculated to promote the welfare of the general practitioner.

It is still matter of much regret to the Society,

that the utmost concession which Sir James Graham is at present willing to make to the wishes of the profession, in reference to a direct penal check upon the practice of unqualified persons, is to retain the penalties imposed by the Act of 1815. The Society, however, are not disposed to undervalue the importance of *this* amount of concession, because the principle of a penal check being admitted, the necessity for a more efficient check may perhaps hereafter be more clearly demonstrated, and the remonstrances of the profession be attended with better success. As far as *indirect discouragement* can be made available for the purpose of preventing the practice of incompetent persons, the Bill, in its present form, appears to the Society to effect all that can reasonably be expected. But indirect discouragement, important as it is in aid of other more powerful checks, is not alone sufficient. The act of practising without qualification should be treated as an offence, and the offender brought within the reach of punishment.

In expressing a general approval of the proposed arrangement, the Society of Apothecaries do not mean to assert that a better scheme might not have been devised, or that an arrangement more in harmony with the opinions and feelings of the general practitioners, as a class, might not have been suggested; and if the general practitioners had been the *only* class of medical practitioners in this country, there would have been comparatively little difficulty

in framing a measure which would have provided for the public wants, and have been at the same time generally acceptable to the profession. Such, however, is not the state of things with which the Legislature has to deal. There are other classes engaged in the practice of the medical profession in England besides the class of general practitioners, and the individuals composing those classes have opinions and feelings on the subject of the proposed changes which have as fair a claim to the impartial consideration of the Legislature as those of the general practitioners themselves. And the truth is, that although the boundary line between the practice of the physician, the consulting surgeon, and the general practitioner, is to some extent defined and settled, there is a great deal of neutral ground upon which all the three meet; and so long as this is the case, it would be unreasonable to expect that any arrangement which proved acceptable in all points to one of these three branches of the profession would be favourably regarded by the others.

The first Medical Bill of Sir James Graham, which was understood to have been introduced with the assent of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, was regarded by the general practitioners (and the Society think rightly so) as a measure destructive of their class of the profession. The third Bill of Sir James Graham (which was certainly not universally acceptable to general practitioners)

was denounced by the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons as a measure by which it was proposed to sacrifice the interests of the physicians and surgeons to gratify the ambition of the general practitioners.

Under such circumstances nothing is so easy as to discover that a proposed arrangement, however beneficial it may be in the main, fails to effect *all* that a particular class would wish to see effected, and therefore, to denounce it to that class as impolitic and unjust—nothing so easy as to excite disappointment and discontent, and to fix the reproach of failure upon those who by a firm but temperate advocacy of the claims of their professional brethren, when *principles* were at stake, and by the encouragement of mutual concession in questions of *machinery and detail*, have perseveringly laboured to reconcile conflicting interests, and to assist in overcoming the almost hopeless difficulties surrounding the question of Medical Reform.

The great question for the general practitioner to decide is, whether the proposed arrangement, as a whole, secures to him the great objects for which he is striving? Does it secure to him all he enjoys at present? Does it give him a representative institution, in which he will be allowed to exercise a real control and influence over the management of his own affairs; an institution charged with the duty, and possessing the power of representing his feelings, and watching over and protecting his in-

terests? Does it give him the power of maintaining his present professional and social status? And above all, does it give him the power of securing for the *future* general practitioners at least as good an education, professional and general, as he has succeeded in obtaining for himself, and the means of extending that education with the increasing facilities of acquiring professional and general knowledge? The Society of Apothecaries are of opinion that the arrangement does, in effect, secure these objects.

Public bodies are not more readily persuaded than individuals to relinquish powers which they conscientiously believe they have exercised for the public good. The Society of Apothecaries have not been under the necessity of trusting exclusively to their own judgment in arriving at the opinion, that their administration of the Act of 1815 has been attended with highly beneficial results to the profession and the public. They may be permitted to feel an honourable pride in the discharge of public functions with which they have been so long entrusted, and the exercise of which has been attended with such marked success. They are now invited by the Government to relinquish the performance of these duties with a view to facilitate the remodelling of the medical institutions of the country in conformity with the supposed requirements of the present times. The Society have consented to do so, but only upon condition

of the interests of the public, and of the class of general practitioners, being benefited by the change. As the sole aim and object of the Society, while they have had the administration of the Apothecaries' Act, has been to promote the public good by improving the qualification of the medical attendant of the great majority of all classes of the people, so will they only be induced to relinquish, with their own consent, the duty in which they are engaged, when they are satisfied that the great object to the maintenance of which they are pledged as a Society, will be effectually advanced by their doing so. The Society may err in the opinion they may form with respect to the present or any future proposal of Medical Reform, but they are not in a position in which their judgment is likely to be warped in favour of any change by the attraction of its novelty. The change, when it comes, implies on their part relinquishment of power, and that a power of effecting certain good. In stating, therefore, the opinion they entertain in reference to the present proposal, they feel that they may at least claim for it the consideration which is due to an opinion formed by those who are placed in a favourable position for exercising an impartial judgment.

The Society have too painful an experience of the unmixed evil resulting to the profession and the public from the protracted discussion of the question of Medical Reform, not to be most anxious to render every assistance in their power in effecting

a speedy settlement of that question. If the public (for whose benefit these changes are contemplated) could be made aware of the pernicious influence which the present unsettled state of the medical profession is exercising upon the studies of the pupils and upon the attainments of those who are entering upon practice, and if they knew (as the Society have too much reason to know) that the number of individuals who are emboldened by the present state of things to enter upon practice without qualification of any kind, is rapidly on the increase, they would, unquestionably, demand either that new arrangements should at once be made, or that the existing medical institutions should be left to discharge the functions assigned to them as efficiently as they are able under their present organization.

With these observations the Society invite the calm and dispassionate consideration of the general practitioners of this country to the arrangement which the second Report of the Joint Deputation has laid before them.

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