

own level those who by their superior merit or good fortune happen to be above him. Such are by no means my opinions. I would with all my might support the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, and raise the character of the medical profession; but I am not bound to submit to insult upon insult without an attempt at self-defence, and quietly suffer myself to be thrust out of my own college into an indescribable sort of an institution, an hermaphrodite, a little bit of one thing and a little bit of another, but nothing complete. Such the Royal College of General Practitioners appears to me; and I shall certainly strive to prevent that taking root as much as lies in my power. If that is radicalism, I am a radical. But it seems to me that my accusers neither understand my opinions nor their own. Let us see who are the radicals. How came the present state of things? The College of Surgeons having obtained a new charter, which conferred new honours and privileges on a favoured few, and degraded and insulted many of its members, caused much and reasonable dissatisfaction; and a few of the offended unnaturally and unwarily combined with many who, not being members of the college, had no cause of offence, to form a new institution for the purpose of overthrowing and opposing the existing college. Now who are the radicals? The Councils of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons most skilfully availed themselves of the folly and weakness of their opponents, and cautiously, though cordially, consented to the plan of the pseudo-college, because by its establishment a third and inferior grade of practitioners would be created and perpetuated, and the line of distinction so admirably defined and broadly marked, that there can be no mistake; and the public, especially in large towns, would have very little confidence in your member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. He would be doomed to practise under the physician and fellow of the College of Surgeons, as in olden times was the case with the apothecary, and to village practice and poor-law unions. At the same time that I would support the existing colleges, I think some reforms are necessary. All the members who passed before the late charter was obtained, ought to be made fellows after a fixed term of years, provided they are of good repute. I also think the Apothecaries' Company might now be abolished, and that the examinations should be conducted by physicians and surgeons, and that the examinations should be sufficiently severe to test the abilities of the candidate for the important part he is about to take in the exercise of his profession. I admit that the Apothecaries' Company has done much good in raising the education of the profession; but it has not kept pace with the times; and the whole thing is quite inconsistent with the functions of a trading company. After obtaining his diploma, every man should practise as he pleases. There is one more important point yet overlooked. What can the two colleges mean by excluding practitioners of midwifery from their councils, and omitting midwifery in their examinations? It cannot be that they repudiate the fairest portion of the human race as unworthy of their protection—that is impossible. Is it that they think the act of parturition is so simple, so easy, so free from casualties that often endanger the lives of both mother and child, that they consider any old woman is competent to the business? Surely they cannot and will not plead such ignorance as that. Then what is it that causes the neglect and discountenance of that branch of the profession, which certainly requires as much, if not more, anatomical, physiological, and pathological science, great patient endurance, presence of mind based on conscious knowledge, firmness, gentleness, and, in fact, all that make the accomplished physician or surgeon? I repeat—What can it be that causes its total neglect? This is a crying evil, and calls loudly for reform. But let us have no obstetric college; the present are sufficient, if they will but do the work.

A few words on the subject of education. I think a better preliminary education is required. I am aware that there have been, and are still, some very good surgeons possessed of very little classical and mathematical knowledge; but every man is not gifted with a mind capable of overcoming such disadvantages; and I think every candid man will acknowledge, that those who possess a fair portion of knowledge of those subjects, acquire an acquaintance with all branches of the profession with greater facility, and in a much less time, than those who are not so favoured. They also possess more ability to communicate what they know to others, and are therefore likely to be more generally useful to the profession and mankind. I believe the statement made by some of the members of the profession examined before the Committee of the House of Commons, that if the standard of education be raised high, you would not be able to procure a sufficient number of medical men for the wants of the community, is an error; the higher

the educational qualification, the greater number of respectable and educated men will enter the profession, and the only thing which will prevent them will be the manner in which they are likely to be treated by the public, but more especially the unjust and contemptuous manner in which the Council of the College of Surgeons treat their members whom they ought to protect.

With many apologies for intruding so much upon your time and pages, I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

HENRY JOHN GORE.

THE APPROACHING "PUBLIC DAY" OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—From a circular which I have this day received, I perceive that the 9th of May next is likely to be the public day of the University of London, I would beg to suggest the propriety of the graduates of the University dining together on that day. Although my own private habits are anything but those of a gourmand, still I feel, upon an occasion so important to the University, that some re-union of the graduates should take place. I am prompted to make the present suggestion from the example of the Royal College of Surgeons at their annual Hunterian Oration, when the "Fellows" dine together, and thus, doubtless, contribute to uphold what they think an honourable title in the profession. I believe a similar practice also obtains at the College of Physicians.

I take the liberty of addressing this note to you, as it is a subject of public importance, and shall feel obliged by its insertion in your journal.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

AN M.D. LOND.

P.S.—Should my suggestion be deemed plausible and practicable, I would request the present committee of graduates to undertake the necessary arrangements.

London, March 29, 1849.

THE AIR-TRACTOR.

[LETTER FROM DR. DUNCAN.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your journal of last Saturday you have been pleased to publish, under the title, "Who invented the Air-tractor?" an editorial article reflecting upon Professor Simpson, and upon the mode in which I last year adjudicated the prize-exercises of his pupils which he entrusted to my decision.

The relative value of the different competition papers of the class was decided in a way in which it was impossible for me to have exercised any partiality or impartiality towards any of the candidates, even if I had had a wish to do so. And let me add, that if I had entertained any such wish, I would have considered myself a most improper person to undertake the responsibility in question.

The competition papers were written by the pupils within the class-room, in answer to a series of questions proposed on the spot by Dr. Simpson. They were given in, signed, as agreed upon, with mottoes, not with the names of the writers, and to read them over and decide upon their relative merits, cost me nearly three days' continuous work. Up to this moment I do not know more than the mere names of the four gentlemen who gained the prizes. I was not, and am not, personally acquainted with any one of them, nor did I know what their names were till, in the last day of the session, Dr. Simpson opened publicly in the class-room the sealed envelopes with the mottoes of the successful candidates written outside and their names inside.

Dr. Mitchell was one of the unsuccessful candidates,—how far down in the list I know not. It is his failure, I believe, that constitutes my great crime. But you know well that the self-vanity and malice of disappointed competitors is a thing almost proverbial.

As to the other point on which you comment—namely, the originality of the obstetric air-tractor, let me append one or two observations. Dr. Simpson has published two articles upon the air-tractor (see *Monthly Journal of Medical Science* for February, p. 566, and March, p. 618.) In each of these articles Dr. Simpson properly gives the credit of the suggestion of the instrument to Dr. Neil Arnott, and in the first paper has quoted in full Dr. Arnott's own words in regard to it. But, as certainly, Dr. Simpson is entitled to the whole credit of reducing this simple suggestion to actual practice. He has, I know, expended no small amount of time and labour

in doing so, and before the instrument was anything like perfected for practice, an immense number of experiments and alterations were required to be made with it. If Dr. Simpson had happened to read Dr. Mitchell's prize-exercise, in which he alluded to Dr. Arnott's suggestion, he would not, I am sure, have got any assistance from it. But I know he did not read the paper, and I am equally certain I never spoke to him of any observations on this and other points in Dr. Mitchell's competition papers. Indeed, I had no recollection that he had ever alluded to the sucker from the time I read his paper till I saw it referred to again in his first letter to Dr. Simpson.

Dr. Mitchell, in his published communication, avers that he had made the first practical application of Dr. Arnott's suggestion. I should be sorry to say that in this Dr. Mitchell wittingly makes a deliberate mis-statement to the profession, but, at all events, it is a mere delusion on his part. Had he ever, up to the date of Dr. Simpson's first communication, tried to make an air-tractor, far less applied it in practice? Has he done so yet? Within the last two or three months I have heard of several gentlemen who had tried previously to Dr. Simpson, but without success, to reduce Dr. Arnott's suggestion to practice by making an obstetric air-tractor, as Dr. Lyell, of Newburgh, Dr. Paul, jun. of Elgin, Dr. Thomson, of Hamilton, &c. These gentlemen proceeded in the matter much farther than Dr. Mitchell, in making an air-tractor, not merely writing about it.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Edinburgh, April 2, 1849.

J. M. DUNCAN.

THE ADMIRALTY AND NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit to request the insertion of an extract from a Memorandum, dated Admiralty, 1st February, 1849.

"On the first appointment of a medical officer he shall receive a commission as acting assistant-surgeon, and shall remain as such, during a probation of twelve months, after which, if he produce the required certificates, he shall be confirmed as an assistant-surgeon from the date of his first appointment.

"He shall, while serving in either of the before-mentioned capacities, only be entitled to mess with the mates and midshipmen in the gun-room, or as the case may be, according to the rating of the ship."

The above is no doubt the covert and charitable diction of Admiral Dundas and Captain Berkeley. It is ingeniously and cunningly framed at the decease of Lord Auckland, and at a period when the duties of Sir F. Baring, as First Admiralty Lord, had scarcely begun. It is well known that Lord Auckland was far from being indisposed towards naval assistant-surgeons, and but for his lordship's death the above memorandum would never have appeared; or can it be believed that such meets the approbation of Sir F. Baring? But this ingenious announcement is put forth to induce the friends of naval assistant-surgeons to believe that the Board of Admiralty are unanimously (?) resolved to resist these gentlemen being constituted ward-room officers! Naval assistant-surgeons have lately thrown off that apathy which for years had clouded their exertions. These gentlemen very justly ask a cabin for each assistant-surgeon, a seat at the lieutenant's table, a servant, and a suitable uniform—viz., two epaulettes. Such are the privileges and decorations of assistant-surgeons of the American navy.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
March, 1849.

M. D.

PROTRACTED LABOUR FROM TWISTING OF THE CORD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On perusing the last number of your interesting Journal (March 31st), I find, under the head of "Medical Societies," the report of a paper on "Protracted labour induced by the twisting of the cord around the neck of the child," read before the Westminster Society by Mr. I. B. Brown, and in which the writer observes, "that amongst the various causes producing protracted labour, obstetric writers have not mentioned the above, and yet it is not at all uncommon." If by the term "obstetric writers," the author of the paper alludes merely to those of this country; and as it is natural to suppose he has not ventured so broad an assertion without ascertaining that the works of our principal obstetric authorities are deficient on this point, we may take it for granted that British accoucheurs have overlooked this cause of protracted labour. An exception however must be made for Smellie and

Burns, who have both distinctly alluded to it in their writings.

But the subject has been amply considered by foreign authors, and a very superficial glance at their writings will suffice to convince us that, on the continent, the twisting of the cord around the neck of the child, as a cause of protracted labour, is, to use a trivial expression, "as old as the hills;" that it has, at different periods, been the subject of discussion, and that experienced men are still divided in opinion as to the influence it may have over labour, although, perhaps, the majority appear inclined to think that it is frequently a serious obstacle.

In conclusion, I may add, that the subject was very ably treated a few years back by M. Hirtz, of Strasbourg, in a paper presented to the Academy of Medicine of Paris, in December, 1843, and published in the *Gazette Medicale* of Paris, May 10th—17th, 1845, under the following title: "Mémoire sur la brièveté nativé ou accidentelle du Cordon ombilical."

My intention, in making these remarks, is in nowise to detract from the merit of Mr. I. B. Brown in bringing this subject before the profession, but merely to point out, that if it has been neglected in this country, it has long since been well understood on the continent.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. MANLEY, M.D. of Paris, & M.R.C.S.E.

Harrington-square, Hampstead-road, April 2, 1849.

CLERICAL INTERFERENCE WITH MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Trusting to your determined opposition to everything that infringes the rights and dignity of the medical profession, I take the liberty of penning the following account of another instance of that growing evil—clerical interference. In a small town, a few miles from Liverpool, some twelve months back, one of the medical men died rather suddenly. He had a large practice, and consequently the goodwill was sold. An Irish M.D. was the purchaser. He came under the auspices of the incumbent of one of the churches and his friends, and though perfectly unknown to them he was everywhere recommended as the only fit medical man to heal the wounds incident to Episcopalians. He commenced his career as befitted a protégé of the church, mingling his prayers with his draughts, and his medical injunctions with scriptural texts. But ultimately, his practice not keeping pace with his piety, he found it expedient to return to the Green Isle. Nothing daunted at their first discomfiture, the incumbent and his friends found another medical man, a simple apothecary, from the Channel Isles. This gentleman, like the last, they recommended through thick and thin, though there are several other medical men of long standing in the town; and not satisfied even with that, they have had the meanness to attack the private character of the oldest resident practitioner, and have thus deprived him of several respectable patients. If this should be thought worthy of insertion, it will no doubt meet the eyes of the delinquents; at all events it is a case in point to show that the medical profession groans under other shackles besides the oppressions of ignorant poor-law guardians, or the degradations attached to the naval service. If a medical man holds no parish appointment, and is thus freed from the inquisition of his inferiors, he is still not safe. Such is the anomalous condition of the medical profession. We steer amidst dangers of every sort. "Incidit in Scyllam qui vult vitare Charybdim."—Yours most respectfully,

LIBERTAS.

Medical News.

NEW FELLOWS.—The following gentlemen, all members of the College, were admitted "fellows" at the meeting of the council, on the 11th inst.—viz.,

BARKER, EDGAR, Edgware-road; diploma dated March 5th 1824.

BUTLER, HENRY, Hobart Town, Van Dieman's Land; July 28th, 1843.

COLBORNE, WILLIAM HENRY, Chippenham; July 17th, 1846.

FORSTER, JOHN COOPER, Wellington-street, Southwark; November 15th, 1844.

HAYERS, JOHN, Bedford-place, Russell-square; December 15th, 1837.

LARKINS, THOMAS BROOKS, Hon. East India Company's Bombay Service; December 23rd, 1836.

SARJEANT, ARTHUR, Meriden, Warwickshire; Nov. 19th, 1841.