

obtaining the iron in a state of minute division, the application of heat to the oxide of iron, in contact with hydrogen gas.

Mr. PAYNE read a paper on the pulvis antimonii compositus, and Dr. James's powder. He stated that the antimonial powder having been introduced into the Pharmacopœia of 1787 as a substitute for James's powder, it was desirable to investigate the comparative merits of the two remedies for the purpose of ascertaining "whether there be any ground for upholding an empirical preparation, which involves, moreover, so gross an impost on the public." From the summary of the opinions of Dr. Paris, Dr. Powel, Professor Brande, Mr. Phillips, and others, which Mr. Payne quoted, it appears that both remedies are uncertain in their effects, and indefinite in their composition. They consist of oxide of antimony and phosphate of lime, but the efficacy chiefly, if not entirely, depends on the degree of oxidation,—the protoxide possessing considerable activity, while the binoxide is inert. The variation in the dose is, as Mr. Payne observed, a sufficient indication of the uncertain effect, as three or four grains are generally considered sufficient, while Dr. James in his printed directions orders twenty or thirty, and in some cases a hundred have been administered without any effect. Mr. Payne alluded to the opinion of Dr. Thomson and Mr. Phillips, that minute doses of emetic-tartar or potassio-tartrate of antimony would answer every purpose for which the above preparations are administered, and produce a more uniform result:—"If the James's powder is positively found to be more salutary in its effects than the antimonial powder, further efforts should be made to assimilate the latter preparation to the former, which, in the present advanced state of chemical knowledge, cannot be impossible, and probably a less continued heat, and a more finely-divided or levigated state of the article might be useful." "If, on the contrary, both preparations are found to be unsatisfactory, the substitution of Mr. Chenevix's method of preparing them by precipitation, or the use of tartar-emetic or other efficient antimonials might be exclusively adopted."

Professor BRANDE considered both the preparations unsatisfactory in a chemical point of view; he thought it came within the province of the physician to decide the question by the effect on the system, but his own experience led him to prefer the potassio-tartrate of antimony to either antimonial or James's powder. He also considered the protoxide of antimony formed by the decomposition of cream of tartar to be a more certain and efficacious remedy than the one prepared by heat.

Two other papers were read: one on the formation of fulminating silver in the preparation of permanent ink, by Mr. Burgess;

the other, on the potassæ sulphas cum sulphure, by Mr. Macleay, of Edinburgh.

Several modifications of glass syringes were exhibited, among which was the one introduced by Mr. Acton, which we have figured in a recent Number.

Mr. MORTON, professor of medicine at the Veterinary College, exhibited, and explained the use of an instrument which he has invented for the detection of arsenic.

The meeting was numerous attended by chemists as well as members of the medical profession. Among the latter were Professors Pereira, Graham, Brande, and Drs. Marshall Hall, Hodgkin, and Ridge.

LIFE-ASSURANCE MEDICAL-CERTIFICATE FEES.

THE following correspondence having terminated exactly as it should have done, we give a place to it in our pages. Correspondents often address us on the same subject, but on every occasion for expressing an opinion thereon we have given one that has been adverse to the claim made upon the assurance-offices for a fee. The person proposing to assure his life is the proper party to pay for the certificate, on receipt of which only will the office enter into a legal compact with the applicant. We have over and over again pointed out the fact that the surgeon is named by the applicant for the policy, is supplied the questions at the applicant's request, and obliges the applicant himself by making, or becomes *his* creditor for the worth of, the replies, without which no office would grant to a candidate the policy that he seeks. At the same time we must express our firm belief that Mr. Harvey considered that while directly pursuing his demand for a justly-due fee on his own behalf, he was indirectly promoting, with a proper *esprit du corps*, the interests of the profession generally.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—On the 16th November I received one of the usual letters from the secretary of the Clergy Mutual Assurance Society, containing seventeen queries, but without either a fee inclosed, or any intimation that one would be forthcoming, I therefore immediately sent the following letter. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

GEORGE HARVEY.

Castle Hedingham, Essex,
Nov. 23, 1841.

"Castle Hedingham, Nov. 16, 1841.

"Sir,—In reply to your letter of yesterday, containing various questions relative to the health of the Rev. —, I beg leave to inform you that I have, in common with several other surgeons, formed the resolution of

not replying to such queries without a fee, which fee we have no hesitation in saying ought to be paid by the proprietors of the office, as they (and not the individual desirous of insuring) ask the questions for *their own* safety and satisfaction; if therefore you will have the goodness to forward me the sum of one guinea, all the questions shall be immediately and decidedly answered. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"G. HARVEY."

The reply was this:—

"40, Parliament-street, Nov. 17, 1841.

"Sir,—In the Clergy Mutual Assurance Society there is neither a proprietary or any paid directors; the latter render their services gratuitously for the benefit of the profession, and as therefore the assured members alone share the whole of the profits, the society does not undertake the payment of medical fees. I have inclosed your note to the Rev. Mr. ——. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"WM. WEBB."

The same post brought me the following letter from my friend, who was *desirous of insuring*:—

"November 18, 1841.

"My dear Sir,—I have this morning received from the Clergy Mutual Assurance Office your note addressed thereto respecting the fee; the secretary writes me word that, as there is neither a proprietary nor any paid directors, the assured members alone share the whole profits, and that under these circumstances the society does not undertake the payment of medical fees. It appears strange to me that all usual and necessary expenses are not paid by the office and deducted from the profits. As it appears not to be their practice, I shall be happy to bear the fee myself. Believe me very sincerely," &c.

We would add the rejoinder of Mr. Harvey to Mr. Webb, but its publication entire is not necessary to the case. It concluded thus:—

"The Rev. Mr. —— agrees with me in opinion that the fee ought to be paid by the office and deducted from the profits, but as this is not your practice, he offers to pay it himself; this, however, I hope, on reconsidering the matter, you will not allow him to do. I have returned your letter with all the questions answered, in what I hope will prove a satisfactory answer to all parties, and remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

"G. HARVEY."

PROPOSED UNION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am happy to find from a letter headed "MEDICAL STUDENTS AND THE CAUSE OF MEDICAL REFORM," in THE LANCET of

Saturday last, the 11th instant, that there is one, at least, amongst the medical students in London who is alive to the prospects which present themselves to us in our future hopes of practice, and I cordially agree with the writer of that letter in thinking that some steps ought to be taken by the students themselves, if they wish to remove those abuses that at present exist, to prevent them from looking forward to success in practice after they have completed their studies.

I also think that nothing will tend so greatly to remove those abuses as a GENERAL UNION of the medical students attending the lectures in this metropolis, as well as those of the provincial schools. I concur with him in thinking that now is the time for an union among them. Each student who has the interest of his profession at heart should put his shoulder to the wheel, and by his humble efforts assist those members of the profession who have for years, under the name of the BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, been endeavouring, but, alas! hitherto in vain, to remove those abuses under which the medical profession and its members have so long groaned.

When every student considers that it is for his own future prospects that he will be exerting himself, I doubt not that he will hail, as a grand step in the cause of medical reform, the proposition of a GENERAL MEETING of all the students of the metropolitan medical schools. I have given the subject a good deal of consideration, and have long been of opinion that the students might, by union amongst themselves, greatly forward the interests of the profession, and assist in removing those abuses and impediments by which every student's prospects of practice is at present clouded.

I hope that the writer of the letter to which I have referred will not delay in taking those steps that he has in view, and that the students of that college to which he belongs will set a noble example to every medical school, not only in this metropolis, but throughout the United Kingdom. An early date should be chosen for the meeting, and I doubt not that we shall receive assistance from the senior members of the profession. On such an occasion no party jealousy of schools should interfere.

With one extract from the letter before referred to I will conclude. The writer says, and I know of no words more to the purpose,—"Perhaps medical students are ready to answer, 'It is not for us, but for the senior members of the profession to interfere in this matter.' Let such objectors pause, and consider the validity of their position. It is not the senior or the successful practitioner whose interest it is to reform these abuses, because he has, by some lucky accident, or some fortunate interest, set at defiance these unlicensed innovators. No; he feels not the burden, and will not strive for rights which