Either of these must influence the changes in a greater or less degree.

The process of decomposition, from its first step, tends to the softening and rendering less firm the various tissues of the body, and amongst these the membranes, more or less dense, which in some instances line, and in others invest, tissues of a less compact and looser structure. The result of this change is, that they become, themselves, more porous, and not only permit transudation, which they resisted before, but become active agents in imbibition, and the means of communication with cavities previously either quite or nearly inaccessible to the fluids of the body.

With a recollection, then, of these general principles in our mind, we may proceed to describe some of the post-mortem appearances which we so frequently meet with, and endeavour to distinguish those that are the result of disease, and those that are the result of one or other of the agencies of which we have spoken.

ON QUACKERY.

By J. M. COLEY, Esq., Senior Surgeon to the Bridgnorth Infirmary.

(Read at the Meeting of the Shropshire and North Wales Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, at Shrewsbury, on Thursday, June 13, 1839.)

IN the proceedings of the Association published in 1838, Dr. Cowan has, in a comprehensive essay, called the attention of the profession to the subject of medical empiricism, and, with the view of suppressing it, has proposed for consideration some excellent regulations, which he recommends to be urged, by means of petition, upon the notice of Parliament.

At the meeting at Bath doubts were expressed by some of the members, whose opinions are deserving of great respect, on the utility of any attempt to suppress quackery, which they were in hopes would disappear in proportion as popular education advanced. Unfortunately the bulk of mankind, however highly educated in general or classical knowledge, evince a disposition to believe the most marvellous statements, and the most impossible events in medical matters. This credulity is, however, a defect peculiar to human nature itself, and has in all ages been taken advantage of for various purposes by the designing. The reasoning faculty, which is essential for the purpose of separating truth from error, is not always discoverable, even in those who have enjoyed the advantages of education.

Non ex quovis ligno fit Apollo.

Hence it must follow that the mass of every nation will be found an easy prey to

medical charlatanery. It is, therefore, the obvious duty of a wise government to protect, as far as possible, all classes from the hazard to which human life is constantly exposed by the sale of dangerous specifics, and the employment of ignorant practitioners; and it is no less the duty of the profession to protect its own interests and support its own respectability, by co-operating with the Legislature in removing these national opprobria.

With respect to legal protection, the medical ought not to be made an exception to the other professions. The lives of her Majesty's subjects ought surely to be considered of as much value as their property; and those who devote their talents to the scientific cultivation and humane and honourable exercise of the medical art, cannot be too highly appreciated. The estimation in which the practice of medicine was held by the Romans, while they detested every species of fraud, and were ambitious to excel in honourable pursuits, and those which were beneficial to the community, may be inferred from the testimony of Cicero.

The profession in this country has, of late, been degraded by the disuse of penal statutes, the culpable indifference of the chartered bodies, as to individuals practising without authority, and by the disunion of the different regular members themselves. The tolerance which it is the fashion of the present day to extend towards unqualified practitioners, and which has been confirmed by the parsimonious and indiscriminate administration of the new Poor-Law Amendment Bill, in the appointment of medical attendants on the poor, has had a powerful effect in restraining the exposure and punishment of irregular surgeons and apothecaries. From a return to the House of Commons, published in the Third Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners, it appears that 27 medical officers attending the poor were practising *illegally*, having neither licesne nor diploma; and 201 were not qualified by the Apothecaries' Act. Hence it seems that the same parties, namely, the Boards of Guardians, comprising the ministers of justice and of the Gospel, who enforce, with invariable rigour, the penalties incurred by those who kill game without a license, are ready to throw the panoply of connivance over those who practise medicine without a license, to the injury of their paupers and ignorant neighbours. The encouragement thus given to fraud and incompetency in a matter which should not be left to the incompetent judgment and misplaced partiality of unprofessional persons, has a paralyzing influence on science, and is degrading to humanity.

The narrow limits within which the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in London exercise their jurisdiction, and the expensive and difficult proceedings requisite

to convict offenders under the Apothecaries' Act, afford intruders an easy ingress into the profession; and the various standards of qualification adopted by the different Universities in Great Britain and Ireland, have had the effect of introducing a disparity of talent and want of harmony and social feeling among practitioners. In some instances preliminary education, the very key to the knowledge of medical science, is almost dispensed with; and in others testimonials of qualification are given without a competent examination. The extension of the studies insisted upon of late by the Royal College of Surgeons and the Society of Apothecaries, will be found highly beneficial; while the liberal spirit manifested recently by the London College of Physicians, is calculated to diminish the complaints of exclusiveness so long raised against that learned body.

If it is probable, as some suppose, that the march of education will remove the evils of empiricism, it must be effected by the establishment of a higher and more uniform standard of education for the medical profession itself. Every practitioner should possess an intimate knowledge of medicine and surgery, as well as a general information on midwifery and the collateral sciences, engrafted on a perfect acquaintance with Greek and Roman literature. It may be found in practice convenient to pursue one or all the branches of the profession. In the former case our motto should be—

"Omnia scire, non omnia exsequi."—TACITUS.

The study of ophthalmic, as a branch of general surgery, and the appetite for this pursuit excited by the writings and practice of some of the principal surgeons of the present time, may be adduced as an instance of the beneficial effect of extending the sphere of information in the profession itself; for, since this department of surgery has been generally cultivated itinerant oculists have disappeared in England. To a more uniform and exalted standard of education of the profession, therefore, and not of the public, must the former look for a corresponding disappearance of illegal and ignorant competitors; for it has been shown that the education of the people has by no means tended to discourage a propensity to employ unqualified practitioners. On the contrary, it has had, with some of the educated classes, an opposite effect, in proportion as the popularity of domestic medicine, of late, unfortunately, a fashionable study, has extended.

The artificial division of the healing art, which has now so long subsisted, and which has gradually introduced disunion and conflicting interests, has tended to increase the number of ignorant practitioners, and to lower one department of the profession in the public estimation. In many instances medical cases are placed under the care of

those who have only a surgical diploma, and surgical cases under the care of those who possess only a medical license; and sometimes the druggist or lady's house-keeper officiates as dispenser to the physician or surgeon, residing at a distance too far to admit of decent attention to the patient. The British Medical Association, which has been established for the purpose of protecting the real interests of the profession, has set a laudable example to all other societies connected with the practice of medicine, surgery, and midwifery. One of the principal objects of that Association appears to be to promote reform by advocating the necessity of adopting an uniform standard of examination for every candidate. While other societies have altogether avoided any decided attempt to reform the practice of the profession, being intent only on the advancement of science, this Association has directed its operations in a special manner with the object of protecting the regular practitioner, and exposing fraud, ignorance, and empiricism.

At a meeting held on March 26th last, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:—

"That this Association, with the view of taking measures for suppressing quackery and protecting legally-qualified practitioners, invite their own members and the profession generally, to forward to the Council the names of all persons in their respective neighbourhoods who are practising illegally, or who assume titles to which they have no just pretensions.

"That the members of the Association, and the profession generally, be invited to communicate to the Secretary, by letter addressed to Exeter Hall, the name and address of any known unqualified person living in their neighbourhood, who practises under any denomination, or by any mode whatever, those branches of medicine, surgery, or man-midwifery, which the existing laws have hitherto restricted to individuals duly and legally authorised to exercise the same."

As soon as the list of empirics and other illegal practitioners is completed, the Association would confer a benefit on the community if they would publish the names and residences of the parties, and circulate them to every public library and principal hotel in the United Kingdom: and the Royal College of Surgeons in London, and the Society of Apothecaries would advance the interests of science and the public good, if they would distribute, in a similar manner, annually, a printed list of their respective members and licentiates. The term empiric must be interpreted in the conventional sense in which it has of late been applied, and not in the philosophical manner in which it was understood in the days of Aristotle.

Uniformity of education, whenever it may be established, must be followed by uni-

formity of practice; and the silent progress of events seems to indicate the approach of such a revolution. Should the dispensing of medicines be generally, as it has of late been partially, confined to druggists and private families, every general practitioner must feel entitled to a remuneration for attendance and advice, as a compensation for the loss of the profit of his medicines; and the courts of law, with a spirit of justice which characterises the British legal profession, have already established that right to the humblest members of the medical profession. Old habits and associations rendered the dispensing of medicines formerly an essential part of the province of every general practitioner; but since that department has been gradually devolving on persons pursuing it as a trade, it has become rather an obstacle than an advantage to apothecaries, who have been unjustly supposed to practise their profession for the sake of the profit derived from their medicines, rather than as a scientific and honourable occupation. It is much to be regretted that our intercourse with France and Germany has thus assisted the introduction of a species of national pride, which, according to Cicero, prevailed in the Roman empire with respect to mercantile affairs:—

“Mercatura autem, si tenuis est sordida putanda est: sin magna et copiosa, multa undique apportans multumque sine vanitate impartiens, non est admodum vituperanda.”

The time, study, and expense required to render a practitioner competent to understand and prescribe for every case that may come before him, entitle him to a corresponding encouragement and protection in the exercise of his arduous and laborious duties. On his discrimination and skill in the various accidents and diseases to which they are liable, may depend the lives of many of his fellow-creatures. It has been already shown that the encouragement of the public is capricious. We must, therefore, look to the educated part of the profession for improvement in its social condition, and for that discouragement of ignorant practitioners which may operate as an example to their respective patients, and give to patronage its proper influence and direction.

The plan proposed by Dr. Cowan for the suppression of quackery, which, according to his statement, is more prevalent now than at any former period, appears well calculated to effect the object in view, especially that part of it, which, if carried into effect, would enable an informant to take the offender before a magistrate, and subject him at once to the payment of a fine. The form of a petition to Parliament by the same writer seems also well adapted to call the attention of the Legislature to the subject, and to provide redress; and there never was a more appropriate period than the present for the profession to make an united and simulta-

neous appeal,—as the evidence before the Committee in the House of Commons must have proved the necessity there exists for a reform in the practice as well as the education of the medical profession. The subject demands the cordial support of the philanthropist and the legislator. It is a question of national importance, and if an earnest, respectful, and temperate petition, signed by every member of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, were forwarded to the British Senate, there is no doubt that redress would be obtained. Nothing short of the most stringent laws can be relied upon to extirpate quackery, and protect the licensed practitioner.

One of the chief advantages which medical men may expect from associating in support of their common interests, is the power they acquire of co-operating and urging their complaints upon the attention of the Legislature. Like bees, intent on the construction of their habitation, and impelled by the irresistible force of instinct, by combination, energy, and perseverance, they must ultimately overcome every obstacle.

M. BAUDELLOCQUE

ON

COMPRESSION OF THE AORTA,

TO

ARREST UTERINE AND OTHER HÆMORRHAGES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—The enclosed contains the substance of a paper by M. Baudelocque, entitled “Compression of the Aorta through the Abdominal Parietes considered as an Efficient Means of Arresting every kind of Hæmorrhage occurring in Labour, together with that following Wounds of the Arteries of the Inferior Half of the Body.”

I am not aware that the practice advocated by the author of this paper is generally known; should you think it expedient it should become so, perhaps you will afford it a space in your Journal.* I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN CROUCH CHRISTOPHERS.

No. 17, Portland-street, Soho-square,

July 8, 1839.

The idea of compressing the aorta through the abdominal wall, in cases where the life of a woman in labour is menaced by hæmorrhage, was the result of observing the inefficiency of the means usually employed to check it.

* Cases illustrative of M. Baudelocque's practice have frequently been published in this Journal.—ED. L.