PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.—PUBLIC NEGLECT OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled,—

The humble petition of the undersigned legally-qualified practitioner in medicine, surgery, and midwifery, of the city of Bath, sheweth,—

Your petitioner is of opinion, that questions relating to the public health have not hitherto received from the legislature of this country the degree of attention which is commensurate with their importance. He therefore regards with great satisfaction the introduction into your honourable House of a Bill, entitled, "A Bill for Promoting the Public Health." That whilst your petitioner highly approves of many of the provisions of this Bill, he has observed, with deep regret and disappointment, the entire omission of, or allusion to, the medical profession. This omission will not only be most grievously felt by the medical profession generally, but will be attended with very serious consequences to the community at large.

Your petitioner begs respectfully to remind your honourable House, that the care and the due conservation of the public health legitimately belong to the members of the medical profession, and they have not only the responsible and difficult duty of treating the various diseases to which the human frame is liable, but they are called upon to devote much of their valuable time, talent, industry, and perseverance, in the endeavour to discover the causes that produce them.

Your petitioner is of opinion, therefore, that any Bill or scheme which has for its object the promoting the public health will be exceedingly defective, that does not admit or provide for the appointment of legally-qualified members of the medical profession to share and assist in its due administration.

That your petitioner therefore earnestly and respectfully prays your honourable House to supply this defect in the proposed Bill, and to enact a law which shall require one or more members of the medical profession to form part of the General Board of Health, and also to appoint a medical superintendent in every district wherever this Bill may come into operation.

And your petitioner will ever pray.

GEORGE KING.

PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

To Thomas Wakley, Esq., M.P., Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Herewith I have the honour to enclose you a circular which I have caused to be sent throughout England and Wales, as therein mentioned. Since then I have received letters from many parts of the country, thanking me for the active steps taken, and at the same time expressing the obligations of the profession to you, for the manner in which you have already advocated the just claims of the profession, and the confidence the writers have in your renewed exertions, when the proper time arrives. In fact, several have already stated their intention of entrusting petitions to you, in preference to their own members.

I trust it is not too much to ask, that when the Bill is committed, you will, in this matter, as you have always done in other respects, plead the cause of that ill-paid and unrequited class—the poor-law medical officers of England and Wales.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant,
Kidderminster, March 1st, 1848.

W. RODEN.

"PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

Kidderminster, February 23rd, 1848.

SIR,—Finding, by the perusal of the above Bill, that the office of "Medical Officer of Health" is abolished, and that the profession generally will virtually be excluded from all its emoluments, which, after its disinterested labours in the cause, I can only regard as a gross insult to the profession, I have determined, at my own cost, as promptly as I possibly could, to address some one medical officer of every Union throughout England and Wales on the subject; annexing, in order to save time, a rapidly drawn up form of petition for presentation to Lord Morpeth and the House of Commons.

May I strenuously request you to second me, in this the eleventh hour,—in this last struggle, I may say, for the rights of the profession, by immediately getting the petition copied, and obtaining the signatures of as many of the medical officers of your Union as you possibly can, to two copies of the same, and transmitting one copy to Lord Morpeth, and the other to your member, for presentation to the Commons. If you fail, from any cause, to get signatures collectively, pray petition yourself alone, and induce others to do the same. Remember, however, there is not an hour to be lost.

I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully and obediently,

WILLIAM RODEN, M.D.,

Fellow of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, &c.

To —, Esq., Surgeon.

N.B.—The lawyers are, as usual, provided for. The town clerks throughout the country are to be appointed clerks under the Bill.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled,—

The humble petition of the undersigned Medical Officers of Districts in the Union, sheweth,—

That the medical profession has, for some years past, in a most disinterested manner, exerted its influence and lent its best aid towards the attainment of Sanitary Reform.

That your petitioners cannot help expressing their surprise and regret, that although in all previous Bills the services of a medical officer of health have been considered absolutely necessary, and his duties distinctly pointed out, the "Bill for Promoting the Public Health," now before the House of Commons, does not recognise the necessity for this important officer.

That the only offices open to the medical profession in this Bill, as far as the local boards are concerned, are those of the Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances, neither of which can, in reality, be held by a medical man, as the holding of the one would tend to degrade rather than elevate the profession; whilst the other would subject him to an invidious position, injurious to his private practice.

That the appointment of a medical officer of health, according to the plan of former Bills, would remove these difficulties; that such a functionary, in the opinion of your humble petitioners, will be found requisite to aid and assist the local board and its officers with his counsel and advice, to point out what are nuisances prejudicial to health, to report on the sanitary condition of his town or district, to indicate the best modes of preventing the spread of contagious diseases, and the causes on which they seem to depend, and your petitioners would respectfully intimate, that to perform these duties none would be found more competent, from the nature of their present engagements, than the medical officers for the respective districts under the poor law.

That the medical officers under the poor law are necessarily brought daily in connexion with the very evils the present Bill is intended to rectify. That the question of public health is almost entirely the question of the improved health of the poor man; that the greatest nuisances exist in and about his dwelling, which he cannot, like the rich man, quit for a healthier spot; and that with these circumstances, together with the ailments with which the poor are afflicted, the district medical officer is more particularly conversant.

Your petitioners therefore most earnestly suggest that the Bill may provide for the election, by the local boards, of medical officers of health, as for clerks and treasurers of boroughs to be appointed clerks and treasurers under this Bill, that the medical officer or officers of boroughs and districts shall be the officers of health under this Bill.

And your petitioners will ever pray."

* * We have slightly shortened this petition by omitting a few sentences which were not essential to the objects which the petitioners must hold in view. When petitions are of considerable length, they often confuse the gentlemen presenting them, unless they are previously well acquainted with the subject.—ED. L.

Correspondence.

ON PRIORITY IN THE USE OF TWO CLAMPS IN THE TREATMENT OF POPLITEAL ANEURISM BY COMPRESSION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—THE LANCET for February 12th, 1848, contains a communication from Mr. Wilde, (the editor of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine*,) the greater portion of which had been read at a recent meeting of the Surgical Society of Ireland, and appeared in the *Dublin Medical Press* for January 19th, 1848. A full and complete answer to Mr. Wilde's statement was read by me at a subsequent meeting of that Society, and was published in the same number of the *Dublin Medical Press*. As you have re-published Mr. Wilde's communication, with some additional remarks by him, I trust to your well-known character for impartiality to afford me room for a short reply, in the next number of THE LANCET.

I shall commence by observing that Mr. Wilde's remarks in THE LANCET contain no answer to the very serious charge which I brought against him in my communication to the

Surgical Society of Ireland; on the contrary, he seeks now to shift the responsibility to the shoulders of others, which I cannot permit; and he tries to evade the question by insinuating that I denied the accuracy of the report of a case of popliteal aneurism treated by compression, contained in the case-book of Jervis-street Hospital, which I never did; while he endeavours to lead the reader to suppose that the question at issue is different from what it really is, which I shall endeavour to prevent.

My accusation against Mr. Wilde was simply this: that in an article, entitled "Observations on the History of the Cure of Popliteal Aneurism by Compression," written by him under the signature of "Editor of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine*," and contained in the number of that periodical for August, 1846, he gave an untrue version of a case of popliteal aneurism, that had been treated by compression three years previously—in fact, that he invented, and added to a case, in order to enable him to claim for another the credit of introducing an improved method of applying compression, which I had been the first to use in this city.

I shall therefore now place side by side the authentic version of this case, as given by the gentleman who treated it, which will be found in the twelfth volume of the Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and Mr. Wilde's version of the same case, published three years afterwards.

Abstract of the Case of Robert Hoey, read by Professor Harrison at the Meeting of the British Association, in Cork, in August, 1843.

"The instrument at first used was that described by Dr. Bellingham in the *Dublin Medical Journal*. The pressure was made in the groin, (the case being one of popliteal aneurism,) and kept applied for about an hour at intervals, its degree being regulated by the patient himself. In the progress of the case, the instrument was obliged to be changed, and one known by the name of L'Estrange's tourniquet was applied at a different point on the limb; but this becoming irksome, a modification of the carpenter's clamp, suggested by the patient himself, was used, and continued until the aneurismal swelling subsided, and all pulsation had disappeared. The collateral circulation appeared well established, and the motions of the limb were unimpeded and free from pain. Although the symptoms of the disease had disappeared, Professor Harrison had recommended the instrument to be continued for some time."

and relaxed that above, and so alternated from one to another, always making sure that the circulation was fully commanded by one instrument being screwed down, before he loosened the other. He had thus the satisfaction of completely effecting his own cure; but fearful of any return, he wore the clamps even outside his trousers for a considerable time afterwards."

Mr. Wilde, in concluding the case, observes,—

"Although this man owes much to Professor Harrison, who commenced his treatment and cure, he certainly achieved for himself, personally, a great good, and for science a very valuable improvement."

And in the summary with which his "History" concludes, Mr. Wilde remarks,—

"That the improvement introduced by Dr. Harrison's patient, Hoey, of applying a number of clamps along the course of the artery, has done much to remedy this defect,

and has afforded surgeons a very valuable hint on the subject."

The accuracy of the foregoing abstract of the case of Robert Hoey, as given by Dr. Harrison, whose patient he was, I have always acknowledged. The accuracy of the version of the same case, given three years subsequently by Mr. Wilde, in the *Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medicine*, of which he is the editor, I have always denied; and I have not hesitated publicly to assert that I believe the greater portion of it to be "purely his own invention." Thus—

1st. The description given by Mr. Wilde of the clamp, said to have been used by this patient, is utterly untrue; he never had or used such an instrument.

2nd. That this patient either had or used two such clamps as Mr. Wilde describes, is likewise utterly untrue.

3rd. That this patient "maintained continuous pressure for upwards of twenty-four hours" at any one period, or by any instrument or instruments, is utterly untrue.

4th. That this patient either "achieved for science a very valuable improvement," or "afforded surgeons a very valuable hint on the subject" is likewise utterly untrue.

There are two other passages in the short extract which I have given from Mr. Wilde's version of this case, in which facts are mis-stated, but I do not wish to take up time or space by noticing them here; I shall merely refer your readers to my paper, read at a meeting of the Surgical Society of Ireland, held January 8th, 1848, (which was published in the *Dublin Medical Press* for January 19th, 1848,) for further particulars.

Your obedient servant,

O'BRYEN BELLINGHAM, M.D., F.R.C.S.I.

One of the Surgeons of St. Vincent's Hospital.

Dublin, February, 1848.

GRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The time appears to be now rapidly approaching when some material changes will be effected in the organization of the medical profession. It behoves us, therefore, to be up and stirring. There can be no doubt that intrigue and equivocation are being actively employed by some of our corporations. It is just now of the highest importance to scrutinize most carefully every action in which they are engaged. Private interest is paramount. The College of Physicians is endeavouring to raise itself from its proper position, as a professional corporation, actually above the universities. The other corporations have their secret objects. All who are desirous of upholding the true dignity of learning and high professional qualifications should not now slumber. You have repeatedly stated, what I believe is now generally admitted, that the highest rank in the medical profession in this country is occupied by the graduates of the University of London. Undoubtedly, such is the case. Doctors of medicine take precedence of all other members of the profession by the law of the land, and their learning, as tested by perhaps some of the severest examinations in the world, justly entitles doctors of the metropolitan university of these realms to hold a rank inferior to those of no other university.

But jealousy and detraction are here also hard at work. The different corporations have too plainly shown that their only object is individual aggrandizement. Let not, therefore, the graduates of London suppose that their rights will be respected unless they vigorously insist upon proper respect being shown them. It appears to me to be now urgently required that the graduates in medicine of London should combine and act with deliberation and firmness; that they should communicate seriously with their chancellor and fellows on the one hand, and with the government on the other; that they should impress on the senate the necessity for active co-operation on the part of the heads of the university, and on the government of the country the high character of their degrees, and of the qualifications of which those degrees are the representatives; that they should watch carefully every movement on the part of their pretended friends and professed opponents, and be ready to act combinedly and firmly against every aggression. I feel somewhat surprised that this has not been proposed before; graduates of London have been trusting too much to their consciousness of superiority, but this will not suffice. Let us therefore lose no more time, but forthwith organize ourselves; and as the difficulty often lies in the first step, allow me, Sir, through you, to invite all graduates of London, being doctors or bachelors of medicine, who are willing to join, to send me their names on or before March 15th, that a provisional committee may be forthwith formed, and means taken to effect the above desirable objects in the most effectual manner.