CORK MEDICAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION AND THE BILL.

To the Right Honourable and Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled.

The petition of the Committee of the County and City of Cork Medical Protective Association, humbly sheweth,—

That the experience of the last twelve years has convinced your petitioners that the efficiency and usefulness of the General Medical Council of Great Britain must remain extremely imperfect until considerable modifications in its constitution and working are effected; and your petitioners therefore regret that that body has been allowed to retain its original form for the purposes of the Medical Act, 1870.

That the modifications which appear to your petitioners essential to the successful working of the measure now before your honourable House are—

1. A reduction in the number of its members from its present cumbersome dimensions to one better calculated to accomplish practical results.

2. A more equable representation of the various bodies interested than at present exists. The representation might include the Universities, the other Licensing Bodies, and the General Body of the Medical Profession of the United Kingdom; the Crown; with the Medical Directors-General of the Army and Navy.

3. More frequent sessions of the Council, or the appointment by it of an authorised permanent executive, or both; the few days at present given once in the year to its important and multifarious requirements being utterly inadequate to the attainment of any beneficial results.

That your petitioners are strongly of opinion that the appointment of one examining board for the three kingdoms is the surest way to secure uniformity and efficiency of examination, and that the examiners should test practically, as well as theoretically, the qualifications of all candidates for the licence to practise.

That your petitioners cordially approve of the recommendation by the Board of Trinity College, Dublin, that after each State examination the names of the successful candidates and the numbers of their marks should be published, together with the names of the medical schools at which they had received their education, as is at present done by the Army and Navy Boards, and that no candidate should be admitted to examination until he had proved that he had received a regular medical education from some duly qualified body.

Finally, that your petitioners look upon it that, unless the third paragraph of Clause 22 of the proposed Medical Act be made imperative, and a prosecutor to be authorised by the Council be appointed, it is almost certain to become a dead letter.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed on behalf of the Committee,

JOSHUA R. HARVEY, M.D., Chairman.
CHARLES ARMSTRONG, M.D., Hon. Sec.

Notes, Short Comments, and Answers to Correspondents.

SOUTH-WESTERN DISPENSARY.

THE Committee of this well-conducted charity have issued their first Report, which speaks more eloquently for its usefulness than any amount of special pleading. The district over which its benefits are distributed is one of great and growing importance, while its selection of objects deserving of relief is so judicious as to make it co-operate rather than interfere with the local practitioners. Liberally as it is supported, and carefully as its funds are bestowed, its outlay was last year in excess of its income, so that the institution commences its second year with an adverse balance of £139, notwithstanding the services volunteered and performed by Drs. Bevis and Cunningham, and Messrs. Cass and Cooke. We hope the public will make a substantial acknowledgment of the claims so modestly set forth, but so signally well founded, of this useful charity.

Q.—We know of no regulation which forbids a Fellow of the College of Surgeons to dispense his own medicine, and to charge for it. But the practice of pretending to give advice gratis, and then charging an ordinary practitioner's fee for medicines supplied, is objectionable and undignified in a Fellow of the College.

"GOING TO THE DOGS."

AN odd change is taking place just now in a West-end establishment. A homœopathic chemist's shop is about to be converted into what is announced as "a canine infirmary." Is this a euphemism for "going to the dogs"?

Mr. Thos. Davidson (Berwick-upon-Tweed) is thanked for his offer.

THE ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Had your correspondent, "Pro Bono Publico," read my letter more attentively, I think he would have discovered that the sentence he quotes was not penned unwittingly, but as a summary of the pith and marrow of the argument set forth by the advocates of the general staff system; and your correspondent's uncertainty in recognising anything very marked or forcible in its character, I think tells rather in my favour, or that of the regimental system *versus* the staff. I am sure, at least so far as the general opinion of medical officers is of any value, it would speak for a continuance of the *present* state of things. I do not believe the proposed change is the offspring of any nobler motive than *economy*, and to get as much hard work for the money as can possibly be screwed out of reduced establishments. As to sentiment, &c., your correspondent may disbelieve in it as much as he likes; but, nevertheless, it has been, and will be, a shield of defence to many a noble and worthy object.

July, 1870.

Your obedient servant,

MACHAON.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

At a performance which recently took place at the Roseangle Recreation Grounds, a female acrobat, called Fraulein Laura, had a very narrow escape, owing to one end of the supports giving way just as she had ascended the high wire. She had the good luck, however, to fall between the ponderous shear poles, and escaped with no other injury than a terrible fright to herself and "a sensation" to the audience. This female Blondin does not appear to go through her part alone, but a child ordinarily accompanies her on the wire. Such exhibitions as these seem to us both cruel and demoralising. If men think fit to incur these risks, the case is different where women and children are concerned. These are generally driven by poverty to undertake anything likely to pay, and they are at the mercy of their fathers, their husbands, or the proprietors of exhibitions. Why do not some of the strong-minded, energetic women, who are so loudly asserting the claims of their sex, seek to get these performances interdicted? It is time for the law to step in for the protection of the children at any rate, and, indeed, the sooner exhibitions of female Blondins are prohibited the better.

Mr. G. E. Etheredge (Bromyard).—The article must have miscarried.

THE PURIFICATION OF PRE-BREATHED AIR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Four elements, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, lie at the foundation of the human organism; form, as it were, its quaterniad of vitality. The atmosphere, as rich in the last two of these elements, is, physiologically, food—material, that is, from without destined to be assimilated within the body. As proof practical of this, contrast many highly-fed but anæmic denizens of large towns with such as are, in the country, though sparsely fed, at the same time rosy, healthy, and well nourished; and credit the difference, in great part at least, to the nutrimental properties of air, care being, of course, first taken to select cases free from lung disease. Pathologically, phthisis is born of foul confined air, just as much as typhoid fever of bad water, or dyspepsia frequently of improper articles of diet. Emphatically it is the disease of bricks and mortar. On the double grounds, therefore, of physiology and pathology (sciences which, rightly interpreted, ever walk hand and hand, and should be studied together, the former being the basis of the latter even more truly, if possible, than anatomy is of surgery), no question of hygiene can be more pressing than how constantly to provide a healthy in-door atmosphere for respiratory and other purposes; and this particularly in large shops, workrooms and factories, churches, schools, and courts of judicature, theatres, assembly-rooms, and places of public resort generally, with last, yet certainly not least, dormitories; for, as in these most people of necessity continuously pass more time than in any other apartment, and as, further, during sleep the restorative processes are most active, and the susceptibility to morbid influence is at its maximum, here, above all, is it important that the external surroundings should be favourable. How far they ordinarily are so, let anyone (a medical man going to a night case, for example) satisfy himself by the evidence of special sense upon entering even a spacious bedroom occupied by a single individual. As for the remedy of keeping the window slightly open all night, not to mention the disturbing influence of traffic, &c., in a climate like our own it is during a considerable part of the year inapplicable in the case of the delicate—those, that is to say, who most stand in need of it. To resume, however. There are two conceivable methods of ensuring a healthy in-door air. First, that of its constant renewal by processes of ventilation—a problem beset with great practical difficulties as yet certainly far from being fully overcome. Why then should we not conjoin with this (acting in the line of supplement, not of course of substitution) the second possible mode of meeting the case—call chemistry to the rescue, and endeavour to purify the air already breathed, as well as get all the fresh supply we can? The work to be done would here be twofold. First, the removal of the injurious carbonic acid expired; secondly, the supply of fresh oxygen for that consumed in inspiration. The former purpose could be secured most easily, and at an expense merely nominal, by the simple expedient of having a number of small tanks or vessels filled with lime-water scattered about the room, with a due supply of fresh lime at the bottom for the water to redissolve, in place of that precipitated as carbonate of lime by the absorption of the carbonic acid of the air. If any forms of animal or vegetable life could be found to thrive in these hygienic aquaria, thus combining beauty with utility, so much the better. The necessity for a fresh supply of lime at the bottom would, of course, be indicated when the supernatant liquid ceased to become milky when breathed into. Next for the supply of fresh oxygen. In this case we want a compound at once rich in that element, and yet easily parting from it, the medium of decomposition being, if possible, the simple one of the animal heat evolved in respiration. Have we not such a compound in permanganate of potash, and would it be too expensive for the purpose? The only thing to guard against is not surcharging the air with an excess of oxygen, so as to render it overstimulating. To prevent this, we need to add a self-registering apparatus for constant quantitative analysis of the amount of oxygen in the air, supplementing this amount when deficient in the way above named.

In conclusion, I would commend these thoughts to the consideration of practical chemists and physicians. Should I, however, have overlooked any previous suggestions in the same direction from any other quarter, it may, perhaps, be excused by the incessant claims of arduous country practice—claims which clip the wings of wide research,—and this contribution be then taken simply as a fresh tribute to the undoubted importance of the subject, and a stimulus to the renewed exertions of those best able to cope practically with its difficulties.

Dunster, Somersetshire, June, 1870.

Yours truly,
R. JENNINGS, M.D., &c.

Dr. J. Northcote Vinen must use his own discretion about continuing to forward the document he alludes to. We certainly cannot pledge ourselves to publish it. All communications to THE LANCET must rest entirely on their own merits as regards their chances of being noticed.

£ need not be alarmed. The Lords do not oppose a money Bill. The Bill is therefore safe.

Mr. J. A. Fisher.—No. The qualification is a surgical one only.