the whole recent conduct of the Council at the conferences, shows that the College of Surgeons cannot be entrusted to examine and license the general practitioners of this country, whether alone, or in conjunction with any other body. Let not the general practitioners trust the body which has repudiated, insulted, and trampled upon them. They may be "geese," but I trust they never will be silly enough to commit their interests to foxes.

Question 3rd.—"If not, is it desirable that a separate incorporation of the general practitioners should be obtained?"

Undoubtedly it is; and nothing else remains but for the general practitioners to achieve their own independence, in a truly representative college of medicine and surgery, with the entire management of their own affairs, and the control of the education and licensing of their own body, subject, of course, to any general regulations of a council of education for the whole profession. This I consider is a question which at all meetings for its determination ought to be decided entirely by the votes of the general practitioners, because it does not concern the consulting physician nor the consulting surgeon.

The physicians have their own College, and, if they wish it, by all means let them retain it, and reform it, if they think fit. The consulting surgeons have their own College, and their own constituency, why should they be disturbed? let them remain in all that purity for which they have sacrificed so much. But the Hunterian Museum and Library belong to the whole body of the members, and must be opened to the profession at large, without let or hindrance. The general practitioners, acknowledged by none, repudiated and insulted by all, ought surely to have their College where they can meet and discuss their own affairs, without fear of arrest if they open their mouths, as at the College of Surgeons! Would such a College carry out the three principles of the Provincial Association, and tend to the unity of the profession? I say, Yes! The power of the three departments would then be balanced, by each possessing corporate rights and privileges;—they would then meet on an equality; and then a joint board of examination might be formed, to apply uniform tests of qualification for all who should enter the profession. This might be the general licence to practise medicine and surgery "throughout the whole extent of her Majesty's dominions;" and this licentiate of medicine and surgery might join either of the Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons, or General Practitioners, as inclination or circumstances might lead him. There would then be uniformity in education, and a relative unity in the profession, and the great object which all have in view would be certainly attained—viz., a supply to the public, and the public services, of medical practitioners highly educated, and qualified to practise all the branches of the profession.

The importance of the subject has carried me much farther than I expected or intended, but, in conclusion, I trust that the example set by the great meeting in London on Thursday last will be followed at Brighton, instead of the unfortunate and suicidal proceedings which I regret to have observed at some of the branch meetings, and by which the great body of the medical practitioners of this country would be bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tender mercies of the College of Surgeons.

Believe me, ever yours, very faithfully,

To Thomas Martin, Esq.

GEORGE WEBSTER.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF A NEW MEDICAL CORPORATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My name has been published in THE LANCET, by mistake, as one of the *delegated* members in attendance at the Hanover-square meeting of general practitioners. I have no such pretensions, having been a silent spectator of the fray ever since the first year of the reform agitation, and was present at this meeting, the representative only of my own opinions. But since you have provoked my speech, I will venture to tell you what those opinions are, and in so doing, shall lay claim to little less power of resonance than was assumed by one of the speakers in that assembly, who re-echoed the voice, as he told us, of five general practitioners like himself; and certainly not more than another, who assured us that he spoke the sentiments of three thousand.

After so long a contest, and so much argumentation as has been spent on this subject, it is best to speak to conclusions. It is obvious that the wants of society have called into existence three principal denominations of practitioners of the healing art; and whatever may be said of its indivisibility, we have long had, and long shall have, physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, all professing to hold themselves distinct, but still constantly encroaching on each other's pursuits, and giving the public ample cause for merging their pretensions in the common title of "the doctor."

The neglect of the College of Physicians, and other licensing bodies, to supply the great mass of the community with the doctors most in request, of easy access, and general usefulness, has brought about the union of the two most popular branches in one person—the apothecary—part having usurped the province of the physician, to boot; for so early as the days of Garth, and Arbuthnot, and Pope, it was complained that

"—— 'Pothecaries learn the art,
From doctors' bills, to play the doctors' part."

I say nothing of the manner in which, from these humble beginnings, the general practitioners, or surgeon-apothecaries, have grown into general estimation; it is sufficient that society stands in need of such, and so they exist. But whatever may be the merits of this body of men, and however great their general usefulness, it is not necessary, for the sake of their own immunities, nor for the general good, that they should force themselves on the collegiate bodies, on whose thresholds they wait. Society stands in need of consulting physicians and pure surgeons. There is not only a fancied division of labour, but it actually exists, and is operative for the public satisfaction.

I would say, therefore, let the Colleges alone; and if the general practitioners can find an excuse, either in their own importance, their helplessness, or their union for the public good, to take refuge, or to assume dominion, in a corporate existence, let them do it independently, craving protection of the state for public service already done, and to be still more efficiently performed.

The two great stumbling-blocks to this simple line of procedure appear to me to be, on the one hand, reluctance or fear rather of forfeiting the title of surgeon, the style of gentleman, and a fancied hold on the noble museum, library, and other property of the College; and, on the other, the horror of the word apothecary, and the fancied attachment to that appellation of the idea of dealing in drugs. Now, for the first, it does not follow that the surgeons'hip of the one corporation may not be immediately as honourable as the other, or that a man may not take a fellowship in either; and, for the second, I dispense my own medicines, as many hundreds, better men than myself, must do, to insure their efficacy; but for the last thirty years I have not made my charges for them, nor by them, and abide by the general acquiescence in my resolution to be paid for the exercise of my calling, and not for my "apothecary's stuff." And I am fully assured that a little exercise of moral courage on the part of the profession generally, would soon settle the public opinion on that head; and thus the imputation of the "amphibious" character assigned to us by a late orator, would be thrown back on the parties who "gall the kibe" of the College of Physicians, and practise medicine whilst they profess pure surgery.

One word more, in this crisis of the fate that awaits the medico-surgeon of this generation. I do not counsel unanimity, because to talk of that is nonsense; but I advise union, for the obtaining, what that excellent man Dodd, the late surgeon to the Chichester Infirmary, told me he thought indispensable, a "College of our own." Concentrate your forces on that object, and do not fritter them away on unattainable ones, or for the support of associations that do you no good, and only subserve a moderately useful conviviality. Give your adhesion to the benevolent and warm-hearted schemes of Newnham and his friends;—turn from the wind-bags of provincialism, and from the seductions of a doubtful courtesy, and give your attention to the completion of a corporation, whose motto, in time, shall be, *Nulli secundus*.

Pulborough, April 15, 1850.

P. J. MARTIN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At the meeting which was held at the Hanover-square rooms on the 11th instant, I stated it was in evidence that the existing Charter of the Royal College of Surgeons of England was, in truth, forced upon the Council of the College by the late Home Secretary, Sir James Graham. Mr. Ancell, however, in his reply, said "this was not so; the College had petitioned for it." Now, Sir, I think that whoever reads the evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons, by Mr. Guthrie, will consider that I was justified in making the above-mentioned statement. It may be true that the Council did petition for the present Charter, but was it not against their will, and merely to please Sir James Graham. Without doubt, they acted in a very unjustifiable manner in receiving a Charter without consulting the members of the College at large, and fully deserve the censure which has been so properly cast upon them. Perhaps you will be kind enough to reprint that part of Mr. Guthrie's evidence relating to the question at issue.*

* It is unnecessary to reprint the evidence, as the fact is well known.—ED. L.

The subject at the present period is not unimportant, for if Sir J. Graham did compel the Council of the College to yield against their judgment and inclination, I cannot understand why Sir George Grey, in his turn, should not make them succumb, when requested so to do by a great majority of the members of the College; at any rate, it would be wise for us to request the present Secretary for the Home Department to reorganize the College of Surgeons; and it will be quite time enough for gentlemen to assert that he will not listen to us, when he has himself refused. A cripple in the right way will beat a racer in the wrong one; and I am of opinion that another medical incorporation should not be summoned into being without our trying every legitimate means to unite the surgeons in general practice in the existing college in Lincoln's-inn Fields, as the first really great step towards a Faculty of Medicine, which must eventually be created in this country. I am very much afraid that some gentlemen really wish to see a third college instituted, which, I believe, they would consent to style the Royal College of General Practitioners. In fact, Mr. Ancell remarked at the meeting that there were many reasons which might be assigned why a college, specially set apart for the cultivation of so-called pure surgery, should exist. I hate the term general practitioner, and cannot resist observing that if medicine and surgery be one and indivisible, we should all of us use our best endeavours to decrease the present number of licensing bodies, and not surely seek, except as a last extremity, to augment them. Let us endeavour to legislate for the broad science and art of medicine, *par excellence*; let us take care that all surgeons in general practice pass one and the same kind of examination; and then, when once a man has been admitted into membership, permit him to practise the whole, or any special portion, of the general art, which he deems most suited to his opportunities and peculiar capabilities. All other systems of medical policy are *contra naturam*. At all events, I believe that seven out of every ten of the surgeons in general practice in the provinces are not yet prepared to support a demand for another medical college. Before they will do so, they will struggle hard with the Home Secretary, for the purpose of inducing him to concede their rights to them in the present College of Surgeons, and it will be some time before they will take "No" for an answer to their just demands. Men of earnest character and experience in life know that a thing thoroughly wished is half won—that a persevering desire after a worthy object works out its own fulfilment, *aspirat fortuna labori*! Of the Council we will ask nothing; from Sir G. Grey we will earnestly request incorporation in the College of Surgeons on the representative principle.

Some gentlemen think that inasmuch as surgeons in general practice are more engaged in the practice of restrictive medicine than pure surgery, they should be styled physicians in general practice, and incorporated in the College of Physicians. Some few years since I maintained this position in *THE LANCET*. But I submit now, that although the word surgeon, considered logically, is certainly restrictive, yet, considered historically, it has come to signify a member of the profession of general medicine; one who practises his art as a whole in contradistinction to a mere special practitioner. This distinction should not be overlooked—for, as Latham says, in his admirable work on the English Language, "so certain is language to change from logical accuracy to logical licence, and at the same time so certain is language, when so changed, to be just as intelligible as before, that I venture upon asserting, that not only *whatever is, is right*, but also that, in many cases, *whatever was, was wrong*. There is an antagonism between logic and practice; and the phenomena on both sides must be studied."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

New Kent-road, April, 1850.

T. C. LEWIS.

MR. PEPLOE CARTWRIGHT AND THE DEPUTATION FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—Permit me to correct an error of your reporter, who, by some misconception or other, has, in his report in your last number, placed my name on the deputation, which was appointed at the meeting of the National Institute, held on the 11th inst.

I was by courtesy nominated on a former deputation, but declined to act, inasmuch as I am not of accord with those who think a new incorporation necessary, merely because the Council of the College of Surgeons are intractable. To me it appears more in unison with the proper feelings of Englishmen to seek, through the medium of the legislature, the correction of those abuses that have crept into the institutions connected with our profession, rather than to alienate ourselves from them, and thus throw away indiscriminately the corn as well as the chaff.

Having seen many and great changes, I do not despair of yet witnessing such a re-construction of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, as will be far preferable to any rival or supplementary institution. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oswestry, April, 1850.

PEPLOE CARTWRIGHT.

THE SYDENHAM SOCIETY.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—With "a subscriber's" letter on the Sydenham Society, in the current number of *THE LANCET*, I can most cordially agree. The opinions there expressed, I feel pretty sure, are those held by no inconsiderable number of the members, and ought to be taken into consideration by the Council, at their next annual meeting, as I cannot but think the Society will ultimately suffer by a continued opposition to the frequently expressed opinions of its members.

With regard to the number of volumes issued I have never heard but one opinion, which is, that they are unnecessarily numerous. With the large type at present in use in every volume, this excessive number may be in some measure, although not altogether, excused. But is this large type invariably necessary? Certainly not. Now, although not obliged to refer to the practice of the Cavendish Society for justification of this opinion, it may yet be sufficient to state, that their volumes are not issued in corresponding type; the second volume of last year's issue being in much smaller type than the one before it. Had the works of Hippocrates been published in that style, they would have formed one handsome volume of 640 pages, a little larger (about thirty pages) than the one volume of Harvey's works. To this there could have been no reasonable objection.

With regard to the proposed bibliography, I can say for myself, that were my other volumes complete I would not have it. How the Council dare undertake such a publication, in face of the notorious failures of bibliographies, general indexes, &c., I cannot imagine; and shall not think the members well treated unless, by some means, their opinion be taken on the subject. I feel confident that were this done a decided majority would be against the publication.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Manchester, April 15, 1850.

ANOTHER SUBSCRIBER.

P.S.—Could you spare a few lines for a short notice of our grievance you would confer a great obligation on many of your subscribers.

ON HYDROGEN GAS.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—My attention has but recently been directed to an article in *THE LANCET* of March 16th, by Mr. Stevenson, of Sidmouth, in which he attempts to prove that hydrogen gas, long considered a simple body, is in reality nothing of the kind, but a compound of water and electric fluid; the conviction being expressed, that water has never been decomposed, but is, in fact, hydrogen gas deprived of electricity.

Now, it must strike any scientific man that the facts and reasons brought forward to support this doctrine are obviously quite insufficient; they may easily be explained on the supposition of hydrogen being a simple body and water a compound; while there are other facts, much more numerous and important, quite irreconcilable with the former theory, but readily comprehensible on the common views. Now, the first and chief fact on which Mr. Stevenson rests his belief, is the apparent escape of an inflammable matter, which he supposes to be electric fluid, when a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen gases are ignited by a spark. These seem rather slender grounds for presuming hydrogen to be electrified water. In the first place, what proof is there of the inflammable matter evolved being electricity? May it not rather be the usual result of combustion of hydrogen and other substances with oxygen, heat, and light, only momentary in duration, as the combustion is momentary. But assuming this, is also assuming the heat and light evolved in all combustions where hydrogen is concerned to be the result of electricity, an inference by no means justified. Then the disappearance of the oxygen has to be accounted for, which is done by supposing it absorbed by the water. But then the oxygen ought not to be essential; it should be possible to ignite the hydrogen and form water without it! Can Mr. Stevenson do this? Is it not a more rational and probable explanation of the phenomenon (presuming that the matter evolved is electric) to say that both gases, oxygen and hydrogen, contain separately in a gaseous state a larger quantity of latent electricity than when liquid and combined, and that when they unite and are suddenly condensed, the excess of fluid (electric) is set free.

The evolution of hydrogen from water by heated metals is