THE NEW MEDICAL ACT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If, on one occasion, at an early period of its existence, THE LANCET went beyond the law, it did so only to promote truth and justice, and in that course it was sustained by medical power. The profession again requires the aid of THE LANCET. It is not necessary to go back to obsolete Acts of Parliament, but commencing with the Apothecaries' Act of 1815, (that must be considered as the legislative Act for the general practice of the medical and surgical profession: certainly there was a medical and surgical practice before, but this Act was for the better regulating throughout England and Wales of this most important occupation,) did the Government snatch the practice from those who had been hitherto acting for the amelioration of the woes of their fellow-creatures? Did the Government condemn them, *en masse*, as assumptive, ignorant, surreptitious practitioners, and at once declare their occupation gone? Did the Government require them to cease their use of skill and experience, and, throwing them aside without equivalent, make the law retrospective? Sir, that Act was framed in accordance with the constitution of the realm of England, and in harmony with the principles of equity, that wrong should not be done that right might come. That Act acknowledged the right of every person practising prior to its becoming the confirmed law; and not only granted the right personally to continue practice, but conferred certain privileges upon those who were under them as apprentices,—such as the right to examination, &c., under the then new Act.

Thus commenced the new era in medical legislation; thus commenced the period of examination for right to medical practice; thus arose a body of examiners to determine who were fitted to administer to their fellow-creatures those requirements which diseases, in their various forms, might necessitate; and thus, after their examinations, there came out a body of men in whom the confidence of the public was fixed, and by whose assiduity the health of the public was well maintained.

The examiners under this Act of 1815 gradually formed convictions of the necessity of increasing requirements from students who would have to come before them for examination, and from time to time issued their prospectuses containing the required curriculum of studies for certain data. Those examinations for such studies have been acknowledged by the profession to have been perfectly impartial, very just, and peculiarly appropriate. Further, the profession has been rather inclined to fear lest the examiners should raise their status beyond that which should be in justice required. And during the last forty-four years a steady progression in the improvement and extension of the knowledge of the science of medicine, and its application to disease, has been persistent. During that forty-four years, the practice of medicine and surgery has been legally in the possession of those who held the diploma of the Apothecaries' Company. Their rights have been frequently upheld, respected, and maintained in the various courts of judicature—their right, not only to prescribe and administer medicines for disease, but also to perform all and every operation for disease, and to assist Nature at any required period. And now, when a very large number of the profession have been thus lawfully practising, a new Act of Parliament is passed, so worded that magistrates and County Court judges decide it has a retrospective action; that it takes away the rights, privileges, and property of persons which belonged to them before such Act was conceived. Simply, we might ridicule such a ruling, because we are aware that the powers of Parliament are not equal to the making of retrospective Acts; that the attempt to exercise such powers is contrary to the Constitution of this realm. But, seriously, the Act is in operation; its pressure has commenced; losses have been already incurred, and must continue daily, until Parliament shall alter it, or until the superior judges shall decide against its retrospective operation. The injustice of this Act is too gross to be permitted to continue. It not only takes away the legal rights of a large and honourable body of practitioners, but it confers those rights on others who were previously acting illegally—who were not recognised as surgeons or apothecaries in our courts of law.

The licentiates who are thus attacked must not rest quiet under this iniquitous Act. They must unite, and by that unity show their strength and position. And if a secretary be wanting, I offer them my nights, being one of the injured body.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Hounslow, Nov. 1859.

WILLIAM LEE BAILEY, L.S.A.

REDUCTION OF DISLOCATION OF THE THIGH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A dislocation of femur into the ischiatic notch occurred under the care of Mr. Probert, surgeon of the Plymouth Iron Works, Merthyr Tydvil, which was reduced in the following manner, without the aid of pulleys:—The patient, a strong, thick-set, muscular Irishman, was placed on a mattress on the floor, and chloroform was administered. The thigh was then steadily reflexed against the abdomen, and at the same time slowly and firmly rotated outwards. In about a minute the head of the bone entered the socket with a loud snap.

This is the third case occurring in this neighbourhood, where the dislocation has been reduced without the aid of pulleys, &c.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

R. C. HUNTER,

Merthyr Tydvil, Nov. 1859.

Assistant-Surgeon, Plymouth Iron Works.

PREVALENCE OF SYPHILIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—

“There's something rotten in the state of Denmark.”

MALES.

C—, aged 26 years, engineer; chancre upon glans corona.
H—, „ 28 „ gentleman; chancre upon prepuce.
S—, „ 19 „ lighterman; chancre upon pubes and dorsum of penis.
F—, „ 29 „ groom; syphilitic ulceration of throat.
R—, „ 30 „ lighterman; „ „ „
D—, „ 28 „ engineer; chancre on prepuce. „
T—, „ 23 „ clerk; gonorrhœa.
O—, „ 29 „ carpenter; „ „
S—, „ 28 „ engineer; „ „
W—, „ 25 „ clerk; „ „
S—, „ 25 „ clerk; „ „
D—, „ 36 „ clerk; gonorrhœal rheumatism.
E—, „ 40 „ tailor; gonorrhœa and stricture.

FEMALES.

B—, „ 39 „ cowkeeper; tertiary, with nodes on right shin and hollow of instep.
H—, „ 36 „ shopkeeper; secondary eruptions.
F—, „ 22 „ sempstress; chancre on labiæ, secondary on bend of forearm, and ulcerated throat.
R—, „ 36 „ engineer's wife; syphilitic ulceration of os uteri, labiæ, and anus.
L—, „ 40 „ labourer's wife; disease of bones of the head.
F—, „ 28 „ barmaid; syphilitic eruption of left leg.
H—, „ 9 months; syphilitic eruption on nates.
S—, „ 24 years, shopkeeper; venereal sore-throat.
B—, „ 24 „ soldier's wife; gonorrhœa.

One week's tabular statement!

From the foregoing table it is patent to my mind that the motto chosen for its heading, simply substituting the word England for Denmark, would be substantially correct. Mine is by no means a large practice, and surrounded by numerous other practitioners, I have neither the belief nor the vanity to infer that my experience is greater or more extended than theirs; but from the above detailed statement of only one week, an imperative, though, perhaps, futile sense of public duty, compels me to call the attention of the profession and the public at large to the necessity of energy, perseverance, and united action in demanding our Legislature to cause such measures to be taken as may save our youth from contamination, preserve the health of our commonwealth, and blot out from our national character so foul a stain.

Now, the question naturally arises, How is this to be accomplished? With all reformers, I answer, Register! register! register! We cannot shut our eyes to the fact, although, as Christians, we do deplore that the social evil has reached a point demanding legislative enactment for its control, and that control can only effectually be exercised by subjecting such houses to Police regulations. In ancient records, we read that the leper was removed from the mass of the population; more recently the continental nations have employed the means of licence, combined with constant inspection and daily or weekly medical report on the state of the inmates of such licensed houses. A report of a case of infection by a frequenter of these houses is an awkward piece of business.