of primary consequence, and leading to the clearest and most satisfactory knowledge. He recommended his audience to embrace in their studies the whole range of medical science; to begin with surgery, as affording the best pathological and therapeutic evidence, and then to proceed to medicine, in which the only clear light is derived from the observation of disease and treatment in the cases called surgical. This comprehensive study is obviously necessary to general practitioners; but it is equally so to those who mean to be surgeons only. They must apply in their own department the principles and modes of relief deduced from a survey of medicine generally. The term pure surgeon, as intended to denote one who knows nothing more than surgery in its strict sense, has justly become an object of ridicule. An eminent surgeon, who has the thorough acquaintance with anatomy, physiology, and the general principles of medical science, necessary to such a character, will be constantly consulted in all kind of circumstances, and more especially in cases of obscurity, difficulty, and emergency. If he says that he has not studied this, that he knows nothing of that, that he cannot direct the treatment of a case under such and such occurrences, what can he expect but to forfeit the confidence of those to whom his ignorance becomes thus exposed, and in whose estimation he must hereafter be contented to rank below a general practitioner.

The Lecturer proceeded to observe, that these truths were now fully recognised and acted on in France, Germany, and the United States, in all of which there is one and the same course of education for physicians and surgeons—one examination for both, and full liberty for each individual to practise whatever department may suit his inclination or advantage.

Mr. Lawrence entered on some short historical details; and concluded by speaking in strong commendation of the zeal and activity displayed by several young physicians and surgeons in France, and of the great advantages which the student possesses in that country in prosecuting all branches of his professional education. He had on the table, and recommended to the attention of the class, the fourteen first numbers of Cloquet's *Manuel d'Anatomie*, observing, that the execution of the plates corresponded hitherto with the high expectations founded on the first specimen; also, Blandin's *Traité d'Anatomie Topographique*, with most beautiful lithographic engravings; and Rayer's *Traité des Maladies de la Peau*, with coloured figures representing the various affections with great fidelity.

SKETCHES

OF THE

SURGICAL PROFESSION IN IRELAND.

No. XVI.

MR. WILMOT.

I REGRET the necessity of having to approach the subject of this paper through the portals of a tomb which claims no passing tribute of public approbation; and should, consequently, prefer any other course to one in which silence might be considered disrespect to the dead, if the plumes of the hearse did not point to an important moral on the way. It would seem to be with scientific bodies as with empires, the death of an individual often discloses their weakness or their strength, either of which will be manifested in proportion as folly or wisdom predominates in their respective constitutions. In a well regulated state, where competition exercises its salutary influence, and promotion is the unerring reward of desert, the inconvenience experienced by the fall of official personages is of short duration; the nursery which produced them, in all probability, will soon supply their place; and the last accents of sorrow which mingle over their grave, may be the prelude to the orison of gratulation with which some worthy successor is hailed to their seat. In communities, on the contrary, whose vitiated ordinances have paralysed emulation, where the sunshine of patronage is dispensed through the chilling medium of monopoly, there is some danger that the dwindled and degenerate crop of intellect, reared in such an atmosphere, may ultimately produce a famine of worth. A pertinent illustration of this kind occurred in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, at the demise of the late Mr. Todd. The system which had chosen him for its centre had so vastly improved in those tactics, to which his own elevation was attributable during his short dictatorship, that it was with great difficulty his surviving adherents could procure an inheritor of his principles, with a sufficiency of other requisites, to fill the anatomical throne of York Street. Exertion had been so completely neutralised, and the ambition of the profession so successfully prostrated during his administration, that not a voice was heard to contend the highest honours to which genius could aspire. Mr. Car-

michael contemplating, at the time, the founding of a new academy at the Richmond, and naturally imagining it more dignified and independent to lead in an orchestra of his own, than to play second fiddle to Mr. Colles in the theatre of Stephen's Green, very properly declined a canvass which his odious liberality, had he made the attempt, would have rendered a measure of more than doubtful success. Mr. Crampton, on the other hand, preferring the hunter's horn to the trump of fame, the clatter of the chase to the clink of boot-heels, and the saddle to the professor's chair, looked down from his elevation with contempt on the drudgery of didactic philosophy, and determined that the remainder of his life should be *legibus solutum*, free as the air of his favourite mountains. Mr. Kirby, on whom the eyes of the public were next turned, prudently withstood their challenging gaze without entering the lists, supposing that his laurels might wither if transplanted into a foreign soil; besides that, he had been meditating for some time the enjoyment of the *otium cum dignitate*, and the gout, in one of the shady glens of Wicklow, and had just turned over a new leaf in the book of "Genesis," in the cultivation of which, it is to be hoped, he has made some progress. Mr. Harrison alone performing the part of the fox in the fable, threw a longing look on the vacant chair; but the "grapes were sour," and facile as circumstances now made the capture of the prize, it was still immeasurably beyond the reach of his pigmy grasp. He alone destined not to succeed, pined in secret for the degraded office, unless report for once spoke the truth, and that Messrs. Porter and Auchinleck entertained some notion of becoming candidates; but the story must have been intended as a sarcasm on the better sense of this *par nobile fratrum* in science and politics. In this general slumber of the passions, or hybernation of Irish intellect, as if frozen into repose by the cold and heartless influence of College institutes, the sound of the die, which turned up a new professor in the cabinet, at length awoke the multitude, and rubbing their eyes with astonishment, beheld Fortune, as if to give another instance of the fickle dispensation of her favours, silently lowering the diadem on the brows of Mr. Samuel Wilmot, a gentleman of great private worth, much practical knowledge, but whose fame had not yet transcended the bounds of the Circular Road, except, perhaps, in the direction of Stevens' Hospital. Though residing in Dublin, and arrived beyond the middle term of life, his character had never been impressed by the stamp of publicity. His name was quite unconnected with books, extraordinary operations, and every other badge of distinction, by which

the modern harlequins of the profession may be recognised in the crowd. Nothing could be more unexpected, than that a man of his retiring habits and extreme modesty, should have conceived an idea of abdicating the comfortable sovereignty of his Swiss car, for the laborious avocations of the lecture room;—of talking for an hour without intermission, whose powers of speech had previously been seldom extended beyond the Parliamentary standard of eloquence in saying "Yes" or "No," in a case of consultation. It was, therefore, with considerable surprise that it was heard a few years back, that he had embarked his taciturnity and his purse in a speculation of teaching in conjunction with Messrs. Cusack and Jacob, at the Park-street Academy. Where the lectures were to proceed from, or how they were to be elaborated by so unpromising a machine, were questions more readily asked than answered; for it was almost impossible to imagine how the more delicate processes of cogitation could be conducted within a cranium compressed by so much adipose substance; or how fingers, in such a state of obesity, could brook the fatigue of leading the pen through its wearisome evolutions. In doubt, like many others, of the compatibility of intellectual vigour with corpulence, I confess I felt anxious in the result of the experiment which was about to be tried, and accordingly hastened to the scene of action, with a fervent hope of witnessing another instance added to those of Johnson and Gibbon, of the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, a phenomenon exclusively evinced amongst the dignitaries of the church. In a short time the object of my curiosity entered, his lower extremities moving in melancholy cadence of a minuet, his arms hanging in lethargic perpendicularity from his shoulders, and his head as motionless on the trunk, as the apex of Sugarloaf mountain on its adamant base. Not a muscle seemed to indicate vitality, or a feature to feel the mental impulse through their dense investment of fat, which was rendered still more conspicuous, by being squeezed into a shapeless rotundity by a sort of military undress, giving to the wearer the appearance of one of those half-pay lieutenants of fifty, whom rest and good quarters have pampered into a caricature on the heroic proportions of the hour-glass waist of our modern "men of war." Without any great stretch of fancy, you might suppose him to have come to perform the part of a somnambulist, and almost suppress your respiration, lest it might disturb his helpless tendency to sleep. With the exception of the eye, which has that cast of suspicious timidity, of fearful vigilance peculiar to hypochondriacs, none other of the senses manifested any signs of exasperation.

At length, however, he did commence, but with such an infantile delicacy of voice; and faltering utterance, that one look exhausted your whole stock of commiseration. The exhibition instantly excited that painful species of sympathy which humanity feels for its kindred in cases of embarrassment, and you are half inclined to be angry with the temerity of an attempt to wield the passions, or command the attention of an audience, by such inadequate means. But his passive humility and look of imploration completely disarm your critical hostility, and you would as soon snatch a reed from a drowning man as entertain a harsh thought against him; and I should wish myself, that truth might for once be compromised in description, for the sake of feeling. At first you would suppose that his discourse was the product of extemporaneous inspiration—the efforts of a mind rich in the recollections of reading and observation, but unable to manage its own wealth—to reduce the chaos of facts, arguments, and theories with which it laboured into shape. In the course of a few minutes you will discover your mistake, and perceive that the speaker has not only reflected most profoundly on his subject, but that, with every appearance to the contrary, he has really distilled his meditations through the pen, though he left the receiver of the product at home, trusting to his memory to give some idea of its qualities. The endeavour to recover the sentential arrangement of the composition only adds to his confusion, out of which it has been said he was not unfrequently helped by one of the pupils turning prompter on the occasion. The practice, if generally introduced into our theatres, would certainly be a great improvement, and might be justified by the high precedent of the Roman Forum, when a *tibicen*, I believe, or flute-player, by the modulation of his instrument, always kept the orator in tune. Much time would thus be saved from consulting slips of paper, many unseemly pauses prevented, and a signal act of mercy rendered to the English language, which suffers such serious mutilations in the hands of maiden lecturers. From the fitful manner in which Mr. Wilmot's discourses were delivered, it was difficult to fix the value of the matter; but it may probably be fairly set down of average quality. In those specimens in which I heard him on unsettled points of surgery, his views did not seem to have transcended the known boundaries of the question—not to have penetrated farther than his predecessors, the *terra incognita* of the dispute—to have remained, in short, satisfied with a mere negative or affirmative adjudication of the difference at issue. Of the routine information on any given sub-

ject, and the capability of its application in practice, he appeared sufficiently possessed; but to the spirit of pathological enterprise, to that philosophical discontent excited by the inadequateness of therapeutic agency to the exigencies of disease, he seemed a total stranger.

In the other department of his duties as professor, it is not surprising that a man, not much in the habit of dissection, should be guilty of anonymous anatomy in his lectures upon that subject, and he might now and then be heard descanting very learnedly on “this artery which accompanies that nerve over the muscles which you see here,” &c., from which descriptions much knowledge may of course be derived. In one of the requisites of a teacher, and not one of the least important, the power of communicating his ideas and of vividly impressing them on the minds of an audience, he is obviously defective; his other qualifications may be tolerated, but can never command admiration. When we contrast the place with the performance, the office with the man, the disproportion is too obvious to escape the notice of the most superficial observer. The private whom we admire in the ranks, if elevated to a command would sink rather than rise in our estimation from the apparent discrepancy between his fitness and the responsibility of his new commission. It is therefore in the capacity of lecturer to a national establishment, as the representative of the present, and the instructor of the future surgeons of Ireland, that Mr. Wilmot fails of giving satisfaction, and not as a private practitioner or hospital surgeon, for in either of these characters he has perhaps no superior in Dublin. This distinction may be the more necessary on the present occasion, as observations of a similar import made upon other individuals have been ingeniously tortured into constructions which were never dreamed of by the writer. Without the slightest reference, therefore, to the merits of this gentleman, the writer must persevere in thinking that it is an inauspicious omen to see the highest offices filled, the most confidential stewardships disposed of in the republic (?) of science without a concussion of intellect—a collision of the faculties by which the lightnings of genius might be elicited from its oftentimes clouded abode. Such, however, must ever be the case in all societies whose laws discourage competition, by placing the fate of merit in the power of a few, for it need scarcely be observed, that a scheme of favouritism may be more readily perpetrated by a dozen than by twice that number, and so on in proportion. Under such circumstances, few will take the trouble to contend for superiority where merit is at the mercy of a junto, where selection

means congeniality of principles ; and judgment is but another name for elective predestination. The evil does not terminate here, (though the disadvantage of inefficient teachers is sufficiently great,) it extends its malignant influence throughout the whole body—represses the energy of the pupil as well as of his master—and thus contaminates the professional embryo in his first moments of scientific existence :

“ For who would virtue of herself regard,
Or wed without the portion of reward ? ”

Where there is no object there can be no preparation, no more than there can be imitation without a model ; for human nature can rationally aim only at what is attainable by human means. Whatever is placed beyond its reach by a contingency over which it can exercise no control, excites no expectation, and of course the means of securing success are neglected, to the manifest injury of the public and the advancement of the science. It may, therefore, be of greater importance than the acts of the York-street legislators would as yet evince, that those prizes in the lottery of life, though few, should be generally understood as the invariable bounty of excellence ; that all obstacles to ambition, which are but too numerous without the adventitious aid of cabal, should, as much as possible, be diminished, and that the humblest may hope to obtain the reward, if his strength carries him to the goal ; as it is only by extending the circle of competition, procuring the highest standards of instruction and example, and scrupulously dispensing patronage, that science can be diffused, emulation excited, the profession raised to its destined elevation, and when lecturers are removed from their mortal toils and wept for their virtues, that worthy successors may be found amongst the living ; as the rose, plucked at eve from the healthy stem, will be followed by another, as fresh and fragrant, ere the returning sun go down.

ERINENSIS.

Dublin, Jan. 14, 1827.

THE ART OF ADVANCING BACKWARDS ; OR,
REFORM OF THE SCOTCH UNIVERSITIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I learn that the Royal Commission for visiting the Scotch Universities, sitting in modern Athens, are playing the very devil, and are such adepts in the art of advancing backwards, that they bid fair, in their retrograde course, speedily to re-enter

the enviable darkness of the monkish ages. With the medical department they seem determined to meddle the most, probably because they know it the least. In attending to the numerous and urgent demands of these left-handed reformers, the time of the professors, and especially those of the healing art, is almost wholly occupied. After having examined all the professors, and such other persons on the spot from whom they expect to get information, it is understood that the Royal Commissioners intend to call upon the learned public at large, for views and suggestions as to the means of *increasing the value* of degrees in all the departments of the Scotch Universities (i.e. of rendering them as costly as those of Oxford and Cambridge), and for the mode of *improving* (i.e. lengthening) education for each. If, with respect to medical education, their opinions were to be considered as laws, or their decisions as final, it would be unfortunate indeed, since there is not an individual among the whole set who is at all acquainted with the medical profession, or with the qualifications of the various classes composing it. They consist principally of legislators and lawyers, educated in the English Universities, interspersed with a few divines bred in those of Scotland. Their composition, even for general purposes, would be extremely faulty, if such a commission were not in its very nature objectionable ; but for the consideration of matters connected with medicine, they must be deemed to be incompetent in the highest degree, an incompetency indeed which has been already fully evinced ; for if the views which appear to be at present entertained should prevail, the effect will be to favour the Universities of one part of the United Kingdom at the expense of those of another. There will be an end of Scotch degrees in medicine ; they will be inaccessible to Englishmen and Irishmen, and indeed to all who cannot afford to reside *eight years*—a great part of the life of a man—within the precincts of a University ; and, in such a case, those Universities in which anatomical, medical, and surgical instruction is on the smallest scale, would, as they are suffered to assume peculiar privileges, be preferred. The scanty outlines or rudiments of medical education, which would be thus supplied in a period of eight years, might, it is true, fit the graduates of those favoured seminaries for being fellows of the London College of Physicians, but would by no means fit them for the skilful practice of physic or surgery.

The Royal Commission to visit the Universities of Scotland was the result of a petition from the University of Edinburgh for a royal visitation, to determine and fix the relative rights of the honourable patrons and the *Senatus Academicus*. Some circum-