which has come prominently forward, and, through the medium of its able and learned physician, Dr. Conolly, been the means of affording to the world a series of clinical lectures on insanity, which will be read with interest, not only by the medical profession, but by philanthropic individuals belonging to every age and clime.

But to return to our learned friends the commissioners. How comes it that we have been saddled with the present hybrid race, part legal, part medical? Let us again refer to *THE LANCET*, 1846, vol. i. fol. 133:—"In the first legislation on the subject, in 1774, the whole jurisdiction in lunacy may be said to have been given to the College of Physicians. The president and members of the then College of Physicians were to elect five fellows, who were to grant licences, and to act as commissioners. If this board had properly fulfilled their important duties, the members of the medical profession would stand in a different relation to the question of lunacy to what they now do. For upwards of fifty years the College of Physicians held these extensive powers, till at length a gradual accumulation of the most flagrant abuses in the treatment of the insane was the cause of an entire change in the laws of lunacy. Mr. R. Gordon, in introducing his Bill in 1828, urged as a specific reason for fresh legislation, the gross dereliction of duty on the part of those hitherto charged with the supervision of insane persons. The consequence was, that the nomination of the commissioners of lunacy was transferred from the College of Physicians to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. If, however, in former times, the governing bodies of the profession have fallen short of their duties, the faculty in general may claim a large, indeed almost the entire, amount of the credit due to the philanthropic exertions which have raised the poor lunatic from the state of a caged beast to that of a patient suffering from a heavy disease. In the present law the balance has not been restored; but we are severely punished for the omissions and commissions of former generations."

By this statement, it appears that we are indebted to that stately, antiquated, and science-fostering pile, the College of Physicians, for this stigma and insult to the medical profession. Is this the only instance we could adduce? I fear not. We have read, in bygone days, of their pitiful and tyrannical attempts to exclude from any participation in their honours such men as Armstrong; and whilst others, who have contributed nothing, or next to nothing, to medical literature, (to wit, the late Sir H. Hallford and Co.,) have been loaded with dignities and honours, probably on the Scripture principle, "To him that hath shall be given."

But to return to the learned commissioners in lunacy. Why do they not impress on the legislature the imperative necessity of providing every county in England and Wales with its own proper hospital for the cure or remedial treatment of its insane poor? How long is the present disgraceful and iniquitous system of farming out pauper lunatics at so much per head per week, (like brute beasts,) to the keepers of private mad-houses, to continue? How are these mad-houses (or at least many of them) conducted? Let any one read attentively the commissioners' solitary report to the Lord Chancellor, and say whether some further protection is not absolutely required for the pauper lunatic. Let me ask one question further: Have the commissioners, in any single instance where gross brutality and neglect have been clearly proved, adopted summary measures for immediately remedying the evil? If they have not done so, of what practical use are these same commissioners? Are these same abuses or any of them in the public or county lunatic asylums, or are they not in the private licensed houses? Do not the commissioners visit these same houses? Could they not prevent a renewal of the licence by reporting the cases of improper treatment or gross neglect to the justices acting in the neighbourhood of such licensed houses? Have not all the grand improvements in the treatment of the insane, abolition of mechanical restraint, &c., originated in public asylums? Have any improvements originated from the commissioners themselves? These gentlemen were busy, some time ago, attacking the management of the Hanwell Asylum, and carrying on a crusade against the expense incurred in treating chronic cases of lunacy in a properly constructed building. Do they wish us to return to the old and abominable practice of retaining such cases in the parish workhouse? I would humbly suggest to them the propriety of looking more closely to the warmth, mode of ventilation, proper classification, employment, and sources of amusement, &c., provided in the licensed houses, where, within closed doors, and deprived of that all-powerful and most wholesome corrective of abuse, the free admission of the public eye, the unfortunate maniac (rich as well as poor) is

still subjected to the unrelenting handcuff, or the filth-engendering strait-waistcoat, to scanty innutritious diet, (frequently worse than that provided for the blackest felon,) and to the noisome atmosphere of a solitary cell, impregnated with the odour of accumulated filth, and all this too at a distance of several miles from a medical man. Here is an Augean stable worthy of their Herculean labours. Let them reform these abuses, which daily and hourly occur under their very noses, and then will they see more clearly how to direct the operations of the magistrates of Middlesex. In conclusion, I would humbly suggest the propriety (in following up future vacancies) of having a preponderance of medical over legal commissioners, and of electing them from the mass of medical officers of public hospitals for the insane, from men who have spent many years in watching the habits and peculiarities of the insane, and therefore thoroughly and practically acquainted with the machinery and proper working of an hospital for them.

South Derbyshire, July, 1846.

THE LUNACY COMMISSION.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—In *THE LANCET* for Aug. 8th last, I read, with much pleasure, Mr. Smith's remarks "On the Bad Effects of Blood-letting in the Treatment of Insanity"—a subject which cannot too frequently or too earnestly be urged upon the profession—the general practitioners especially. Since my appointment here, as medical superintendent, some eighteen years ago, I have held the same view, and could adduce many mournful cases in confirmation of his.

In August, 1845, I replied, in *THE LANCET*, under the signature, "F.T.W.," to the letter of "A General Practitioner," quoted by Mr. Smith, and then advanced in substance what Mr. Smith has more fully enlarged upon. I continue convinced that insanity, particularly as presented to us in hospitals, is a disease of debility; and to be managed successfully, must be treated as such.

But I am grievously surprised that whilst so warmly and ably advocating a cause of such interest and importance, Mr. Smith should have descended to such unmeasured and unjust abuse of the commissioners of lunacy. I am quite at a loss to understand upon what grounds the unwarrantable attack was made. Surely it will not be denied that the vigilant inspection of the commissioners, and the reports founded thereon, have led to the great and blessed improvements now going on in every hospital and asylum in the kingdom. Indeed, Mr. Smith himself quotes from these reports as though they were of some value. Although I believe the law under which they act is in many points objectionable, as interfering with the free operation of Christian charity, by subjecting hospitals, supported by voluntary contributions, wholly, or in part, to many pains and penalties, still I must firmly declare that the commissioners discharge their duties, as far as I have seen, with great patience, kindness, and address, and with a determination to search out every abuse; and I have generally received from them some useful hints during their perambulations and inspections of this hospital. I am therefore greatly grieved that any member of my profession should be betrayed into the use of such terms as "a set of imbecile old dotards," and "smirking briefless barristers," and beg to protest most earnestly against their applicability to the commissioners in lunacy.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

F. T. WINTLE,

Resident Medical Superintendent, Warneford Hospital for the Insane, Oxford.

August, 1846.

REVIEWS.

Commentary on the Hindoo System of Medicine. By T. A. WISE, M.D. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., Cornhill. 8vo, pp. 431.

THE more we contemplate the history of the Hindoos, the more we are convinced of the great antiquity of this curious and interesting nation, and their extensive acquirements in literature, science, the arts, and civilization. None but those who are acquainted with the languages of the East can form any idea of the surprising knowledge of this ancient people, anterior to that of the Greeks or Egyptians; and the science of medicine is not a little indebted to Dr. Wise, a well-known Sanscrit scholar, for the researches he has made in this department.