

still to prevail? Are the body of the Fellows, the great majority of whom desire to see justice done, to have no part in these proceedings, except the solemn mockery of confirming nominations made without their consent? Will they still remain passive witnesses of the fact that honourable, highly-educated men, many of whom have worked hard with no little success to advance the science of their profession, are passed over year after year because they are either unknown to, or have no influence with, or for some petty reason are obnoxious to, a clique?

Let the Fellows once and for all declare whether the Royal College of Physicians is to be regarded as a mere club, admission to which is based on such peculiar principles that a self-elected few, forming but a minute percentage of the whole number of Fellows, can effectually exclude any given member, be his qualifications what they may; or whether it is to be looked up to as the leading body in the profession, and admission to its fellowship a reward of merit to members of honourable life and of good professional repute. The College has the sanction of antiquity and of hallowed names; but managed as it has been in recent years, it must fall rapidly in general estimation, and with many able but neglected men into positive contempt. Those who would at one time have esteemed the fellowship an honour, if too long passed over, first become indifferent, and then adverse. And if the neglect is offered to be repaired by a tardy justice, that which is no longer a boon would be refused with disdain. The College can easily recall cases in illustration of this point.

But if it be contended that membership confers all the privileges necessary for practice, and that therefore no ground for complaint exists, there is an easy and sufficient answer: no clique or party in a College has a right to say to another section in that College, You may be as well educated—in a word, as deserving in every way of our highest rank as we are ourselves, but you are not *our* friends; we, therefore, of our own will and pleasure refuse to recognise you as our equals. But, as a matter of fact, the exclusion is no imaginary loss; it is a positive disadvantage. A writer in the *Saturday Review*, speaking of the mode of election into the Royal Academy, says pertinently:—

“It does not at all follow that an injury is not an injury merely because it is negative. It is a great mistake to suppose that when an aristocracy exists, its influence is confined to those within its pale. The mere fact of being out of the pale is a very great matter when the pale has once been set up; and if you can establish an aristocracy in a profession, and keep certain members of the profession out of the aristocratic group, or clique, you do them negatively a great injury.”

It would seem that admission to the Academy is by no means on a satisfactory basis. But it is far more difficult to estimate degrees of merit in a matter purely æsthetic than in one resting on the broader bases of superior education, good repute, well-known and clever writings, or general professional reputation. It is certain that since admission to membership has been so largely increased, the distinction between Fellows and the grade next to them has become much better understood by the profession. And it is equally certain that the creation of the new class of licentiates has seriously deteriorated the membership in value.

It is not contended that, in the yearly selections by the Council for the fellowship, a sprinkling of names in every way eligible does not generally appear, nor that in most instances the men are such as should not be in due time elected. But it is maintained that the selections are made to the exclusion of others at least as deserving, and that it constantly occurs that many far more deserving are annually passed over, although of longer standing in the College than some of those selected. Let the College itself look to this in time. In these days of rapid, liberal progress, abuses cannot prosper long. An age which proceeds to destroy a national church because it has not the semblance of justice towards the majority of a people will not long tolerate injustice affecting even small numbers of the community. It is true that, as medical matters occupy but a very small portion of public attention, impunity has hitherto been due to obscurity. As for the profession itself, want of cohesion, small jealousies, and a selfish dread of being regarded as a marked man, alone give strength and power to be unjust to those who assume the guidance of our affairs. The reform now wanted should come from within, and should be originated without delay by the independent Fellows of the College.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

May 26th, 1868.

SENEX.

## THE POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I should feel obliged by the insertion of the following in this week's LANCET.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Dean-street, May 27th, 1868.

JOSH. ROGERS.

To the London and Provincial Poor-law Medical Officers.

Gentlemen,—The proposed aggregate meeting of Poor-law medical officers will be held at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, on Wednesday, June 24th, at 2 P.M. precisely; W. J. Clements, Esq., M.P. for Shrewsbury, in the chair.

Poor-law medical officers desirous of taking part in the proceedings, or willing to act as local honorary secretaries, are earnestly requested to communicate without delay with their obedient servant,

JOSH. ROGERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—We Poor-law medical officers ought to feel grateful to you for inserting the full report of the address of Dr. Rogers. His statements reflect so severely on the Poor-law Board, that it cannot allow them to pass without notice or contradiction, under penalty of being considered as unable or unwilling to do justice between its medical officers and the boards of guardians whom they are supposed to control, or at least advise, and of whose cruel mismanagement they must be prepared to share the opprobrium.

If it is capable of learning anything of its duty, the Poor-law Board by this time must have become fully aware that the management of the guardians is generally intensely stupid, selfish, and dishonest, and that to persist in showing confidence in our present local powers is only to lose surely, if not quickly, the good opinion and confidence of society at large.

The dismissal of Dr. Rogers is to me an illustration of a law the Poor-law Board has made for itself since its very origin,—“Cursed be those who attempt to do their duty.” This law is applied not only to ourselves, but to boards of guardians, and all Poor-law officers. Be brutal, be negligent, but above all things be cheap, and it shall go well with you; but be diligent, be humane, or cause money to be expended, and you shall have trouble, annoyance, and disgrace. So says, in deed, if not in words, a most important branch of our Government.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Chippenham, May 20th, 1868.

W. H. COLBORNE, M.D.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Accept my thanks for that you have done Dr. Rogers the justice of publishing in THE LANCET the condensed and corrected report of the speech he made at the meeting of the Metropolitan Poor-law Officers on the 29th ultimo, the true import of which would not have been known to the profession or the public but for this act of courtesy and justice on your part.

I consider this obligation conferred by you to be the greater because I know the space in THE LANCET to be so valuable, and that you have gone much out of your usual course to do an act of justice to an injured and oppressed Poor-law medical officer.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Guildford, May 25th, 1868.

RICHARD EAGER.

## THE ABYSSINIAN EXPEDITION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Now that the Abyssinian Expedition is over, and the campaign so gloriously and successfully terminated, the expectation of honours to be conferred, and rewards distributed, not unnaturally arises; and in the shower which doubtless will soon be permitted to fall upon the heads of the fortunate, it is to be sincerely hoped that the arduous and meritorious services of the medical staff of the hospital ships will not be forgotten.

Without at all wishing to detract from the merits of others, it may with justice be said that the former have borne the heat and burden of the day, in the shape of disease and invaliding of both officers and men, as well as the monotonous endurance of a hot and sickly climate; whilst the incongruous nature of