

say that suspicious matter is put in a clear light by Dr. DUNCAN's clumsy explanations. It appears, upon his own showing, that for a paper containing a proposal, the execution of which, in the terms proposed, is considered of much importance by Dr. DUNCAN, Dr. MITCHELL not only did not get a prize, but was placed it is not known "how far down in the list" of competitors. Sincerely, we think Dr. MITCHELL has good reason to complain of Dr. DUNCAN's dulness of apprehension in passing over his papers. Dr. DUNCAN's language at the present time should be that of regret and apology, rather than of insinuation and rudeness.

Dr. DUNCAN states that if Dr. SIMPSON had seen Dr. MITCHELL's essay, it would not have assisted him. Dr. DUNCAN also expressly states that he did not mention the matter to Dr. SIMPSON. It is not a little curious, however, that the terms in which this invention was first introduced to the world should so very closely resemble the words of Dr. MITCHELL's essay. Dr. DUNCAN refers to two papers in the *Edinburgh Monthly Journal* as being from Dr. SIMPSON. In one of these there is an account of the first use of the Air-Tractor, in a few words, which we quote. We place in juxtaposition, a quotation which Dr. MITCHELL asserts was appended to his sketch of the instrument:—

Dr. SIMPSON, 1849.

"The instrument used in this case was very imperfect. It consisted of a common metallic vaginal speculum, fitted with a piston, and with the edge of the trumpet-shaped concave disc at its outer or broader end covered with leather. This broader and leathered end was coated with lard, and applied to the head of the child, and then an exhausting effect produced by moving the piston forwards. The apparatus would admit of much improvement and simplification, &c."

Dr. MITCHELL, 1847.

"I would propose an instrument, not more bulky than Lowder's vectis, and of which, on another sheet, I will make a rough sketch. It is on the principle of the air-pump, and consists of a tube and cup, by applying which to the child's head, a more or less partial vacuum can be obtained, quite sufficient to afford a considerable extractive power, without injury to the child; and the instrument might be modified in a thousand ways.

*The rim of the flattened cup might be made of india-rubber, or leather, and should be greased, if of the latter substance, with lard, previously to its adaptation to the fetal head.*"

It is not a little singular that Dr. DUNCAN was present at the operation detailed by Dr. SIMPSON, and if he did not tell Dr. SIMPSON of Dr. MITCHELL's paper, he certainly ought to have done so. But as Dr. DUNCAN evidently distrusts his own memory, there were good grounds for Dr. MITCHELL's suspicion of unfair treatment; and grounds which should have entitled him at least to the utmost courtesy of explanation at Dr. DUNCAN's hands. As we have observed, all this is irrespective of the value of the instrument which is the subject of dispute, and whose utility and safety still remain to be tested. The whole matter certainly does not place Edinburgh prizes in a very satisfactory light.

At page 410, we insert a communication which proves, in the most painful manner, the absolute necessity of a reform in the relations of union medical officers and poor-law guardians. It is evident, that in the present state of the profession nothing could guard against such a contingency as that related, but the permanency of these appointments, or, at all events, their dependence rather upon the Poor-law Commissioners than

upon the guardians. We regret that any man was found to put himself forward under such circumstances, and we sympathize, as will the bulk of the profession, with Mr. HYETT.

We insert, with pleasure, the Abernethian Oration for the present year. It must give satisfaction to the profession to see in how many ways the memories of our distinguished men are now honoured—a feature in medical history almost unknown until recent times. Every man, now-a-days, is gratefully reminded of HARVEY, HUNTER, SYDENHAM, COOPER, ABERNETHY, and the other lights of medicine and surgery. We shall consider it a good sign if these commemorative associations should increase and prosper.

#### THE ADULTERATED FLOUR AT STOURBRIDGE.

"We regret to have to announce that the numbers injuriously affected by partaking of the poisonous mixture referred to in our last, have very alarmingly increased since Thursday, and that several cases are likely to prove fatal. As many as six or seven families, numbering seven, ten, and fifteen members, have been ill in consequence of the poison having been absorbed into the system. The danger only becoming apparent when the symptoms were at their height, in many cases medical aid was not obtained till the parties were in a very dangerous condition. The following are the numbers of patients suffering severely from the deleterious compound, who are under the treatment of the medical gentlemen of the town:—Messrs. Freer, 150; Mr. Thomas Bancks, 70; Mr. Thomas Cooper, 60; Messrs. Betts and Giles, 50; Mr. Henry Wilson, 50; Mr. Norris, 30; and Mr. Norris, jun., 90; making a total of 500 cases. The greatest excitement prevails in the town respecting the matter, and notice has been given that a meeting will be held to investigate the subject."—*Kidderminster Messenger*.

\* \* The above paragraph was extracted from the *Morning Chronicle* of the 9th inst. We hope that some of the medical practitioners of Kidderminster will forward to us, for publication in *THE LANCET*, an authentic history of some of these cases. A calamity of such an extent, and alleged to have been produced by such a frightful cause, cannot fail to create a strong public sensation.—ED. L.

#### Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

#### THE FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS MEDICAL REFORM FUND.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—Time is on the wing. Days and weeks rapidly pass away never to be recalled, and yet we listlessly watch their transit. We have sat long enough with our elbows on our knees, and our chins ensconced between the palms of our hands, looking with placid gaze into vacant space. It would be a good dispensation, if a kick behind, or a blow in front, could be mercifully made to rouse us from our unaccountable lethargy. We are set at defiance by quacks of every grade, laughed at on all sides, broken up into little petty sections, some hoping for this good, others striving for that, without unanimity, without action, and without energy. Verily, it is a lamentable spectacle, and such as should not be afforded by medical men.

But, Sir, what is the cause of all this? What is it we really want? We want a leading organization of the profession. We want to know what we are to struggle for. We want men of firmness and courage to lead the way; men who know their status, and have resolution enough, amid all discouragements, to preserve it inviolate. Let this nucleus only be established and cemented, and it will soon show an increase so formidable as to carry all opposition before it. The little snow-ball only wants commencing, and thousands will soon be ready to exert their strength in giving it an impetus.

Why cannot a central committee be formed in London, without a moment's delay, in conjunction, if you will, with the

management of the "Five Hundred Pounds Medical Reform Fund"? Let this body be our rallying point; let it immediately take the whole question into deliberate consideration; let it broach some feasible and really comprehensive plan of action; let us cordially support it, and no man can doubt the result. There can be no question that, in England, we want a grand National Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, the members of which shall all receive a most extensive and scientific education in every department. Every man who has to treat disease should be well and carefully inducted into the whole science: after this has been done, let him pursue any walk of general or special practice to which circumstances or his own inclination may lead him. Why should it not be so? Because antiquated notions, vested interests, and a dog-in-the-manger spirit, say no. Let us, by combination, uproot these odious barriers to our own good and the good of the community. Let us endure them no longer. Let petty grades and petty distinctions be now and for ever abolished. We have all to treat the same cases, to perform the same operations, and to stand or fall by our own industry or negligence. Let every man rise by his own energy and by his own talent. All verbiage about medical reform will prove unsatisfactory until a system founded on justice and common sense be carefully concocted and vigorously prosecuted. What objection can there be, if we must have grades, to the very simple proposal advocated in *THE LANCET* of March 31, page 348, by Mr. George Wigan? His proposition is worthy of profound consideration.

What, again, has the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons proved, but a great big blister with a double quantum of cantharides in it? Has it not been the cause of universal irritation? I trust the "Five Hundred Pounds Medical Reform Fund" will purchase emollients enough to heal that angry sore. Why, Sir, if we are to be thus treated, if we are to have fellowships, I say, any member of the college who has practised his profession industriously for ten years has a far greater claim to this distinction than any novitiate who merely undergoes a second examination. When men have fairly learnt their profession, what are the next great points? Unwearied industry, extended observation, and daily practice. If these will not perfect them as good physicians and good surgeons, if these will not procure for them the confidence and respect of the public, fellowship may be heaped upon fellowship, and one petty distinction upon another, but they will only prove futile and altogether despicable.

"Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow,  
The rest is all but leather and prunello."

In conclusion, Sir, (for I will not longer occupy your valuable space,) I am of opinion that we ought not to listen for one moment to any proposition, let it come from what quarter it may, which will not only put us in our legitimate place, but protect us unceasingly against all uneducated intruders. It is needless to say that we all suffer dreadfully in this respect. Nothing is to be done without unanimity, great perseverance, and the requisite funds; therefore, let us all combine, heart and soul, to remedy the withering evils of our distracted profession.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
Halifax, April, 1849.

FREDERICK SMITH GARLICK.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg to assure you of my perfect readiness to contribute two guineas (or five, should it become necessary) towards the "Medical Reform Fund;" and in the confident hope that a sufficient amount will very soon be guaranteed, I venture to urge the expediency of an immediate organization of a committee to carry out the objects in view. That the great mass of practitioners is strongly opposed to the measures put forward by the medical and surgical corporate bodies and the "National Institute," as being only calculated to perpetuate most of the evils already existing, and create others of still greater magnitude; that they abhor the very name of the projected "College of General Practitioners;" and view with the greatest indignation the monstrously unjust and iniquitous proposal, to force all who do not practise medicine or surgery, exclusively, into a new and inferior college; and deprive such of them as possess university degrees of their well-earned titles of distinction, (thus trampling on the rights of all the universities, as well as of their graduates,) no one in the least acquainted with the feelings entertained by the profession can for a moment doubt; and I am firmly convinced that a leading executive of "good men and true," earnest, active, and persevering, to encourage us to exertion, and direct and concentrate our efforts, is alone wanted to save us from the dire

infliction with which we are threatened, and ensure a just, if not a complete, measure of reform.

I am, Sir, yours very truly,  
F. B. HUNT, M.D., F.R.C.P. Edin. &c.  
Farningham, Kent, April, 1849.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—The lamentable state of disunion amongst us makes a person almost despair of any change for the better, but it is the duty of every well-wisher, apart from those interested few who would batten on the ruin of their brethren, to assist in this one effort to ward off from their profession one of the heaviest blows and greatest discouragements with which it was ever threatened, and which, if successful, must, I believe, end in degradation, if not ruin, to the great body of medical men, and grievous injury to the public. Would that the case were fairly laid before the public. Understanding their own interests in this respect, they at least, unlike the great body of medical men, would be too cautious to allow themselves to be sold, and too powerful to be sacrificed.

You will please add my name as a subscriber to the proposed "Medical Reform Fund."—Yours &c.,  
Oxford-street, April, 1849.

WILLIAM RYAN, M.B.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Will you be pleased to mention my name in your next *LANCET*, as a subscriber of half-a-sovereign to the "Five Hundred Pounds Medical Fund," payable when the full complement is obtained.

That some kind of medical reform is needed, I believe few will have the hardihood to deny; for, in our present chaotic state, we possess a much lower status in public estimation than any of the other liberal professions.

I am, Sir, obediently yours,

C. WRIXON, M.R.C.S.L.

Seymour-place, Euston-square, April, 1849.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I am desirous that my name should be among the number of those willing to contribute to the "Medical Reform Fund." I shall therefore be quite ready to transmit the stated fee, fixed by yourself, when requested to do so.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sampford-Parva, Devon, April, 1849.

R. S. PENKIVIL.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I shall feel obliged if you will insert my name as a subscriber of half a guinea to the "Medical Reform Fund," and shall be happy to forward a second subscription, if necessary.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Cambridge, April, 1849.

JOHN DEIGHTON.

Mr. OBRE's compliments to the Editor of *THE LANCET*, and will thank him to add his name as a contributor to the "proposed fund, the object of which is to save the surgical profession from its impending degradation."

Grove-place, Alpha-road, April, 1849.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—My humble contribution of half-a-guinea to the "Medical Reform Fund" shall be at your service when required. With best wishes for the success of the cause,

I am, Sir, most truly yours,

JAMES WILLIAMS, M.D. &c.

Leintwardine, near Ludlow, April, 1849.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg you will add my name to the list of the "Five Hundred Pounds Fund" as a subscriber of £1 1s.

Yours, most obediently,

Lewisham, April, 1849.

C. WILSON STEEL.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I agree to forward 10s. 6d. to the "Five Hundred Pounds Medical Reform Club," when required.

Nottingham, April, 1849.

Yours truly,

I. MASSEY.

THE APOTHECARIES' COMPANY v. LOBO.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I have very often heard it said, and also have frequently seen it in print, that the Apothecaries' Company would not prosecute any party holding a diploma or degree