

renown, or used, as heretofore, like true Celts, gaily to dance the Highland fling, while arrayed in the picturesque costume of their great-grandfathers, should sanction similar unpatriotic propositions. But I expect better resolves from my courageous countrymen, and have more faith in their independence, than seriously to imagine they would ever be so craven as to approve, much less advocate in any form, bureaucratic English centralization, instead of true self-government.

However, a division has already sprung up in the Celtic camp, even at head-quarters; as shown by the manifesto issued lately from extra-university preceptors, and which bodes good to the cause of judicious improvement. According to their statement, the power of examination for professional degrees is now entrusted to a small irresponsible body, viz., the Medical Faculty of the University. In no country, it seems, does a conclave of less than twelve members exercise the uncontrolled function of granting or withholding certificates of fitness to practise, like that prevailing in Scotland. Each professor examines on the subject about which he lectures; and his decision has no check. In fact, the master passes his own pupils. The monopoly thus enjoyed by these dignitaries should therefore be removed. Still, not content with their present privilege of conferring an honorary title, the same parties wish also, this document asserts, a share in testing the fitness of future general practitioners, and so extend the Edinburgh Faculty's influence much further over students; which would induce them to frequent their college classes, instead of attending those of opponents. This proceeding is designated as "unfair," as it would give academical dons a predominating position, by constituting faculty members the exclusive examiners, not only of their own alumni, for whom some might perhaps entertain a predilection, but of every other candidate educated elsewhere. This system is protested against by the private teachers, which indicates that an internecine war has sprung up amongst the modern Athenians, and proves that medical affairs in northern regions are far from being satisfactory. But when friends fall out, then sound principles of reform must triumph.

Several other important topics, bearing upon genuine medical reform, might be discussed; but as the House of Commons must soon decide whether any measure shall be passed during the present session, it is unnecessary to pursue so very vexed a subject further, at present, than to express my opinion that no measure will be generally acceptable which promotes the pecuniary interests of one section, in place of advancing the honour and independence of the entire profession.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

June 8th, 1857.

SCOTO-MEDICUS.

### MEDICAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I crave permission, through the medium of your columns, to draw the attention of the members of the medical profession in Great Britain and Ireland to a point propounded in both the Bills now before Parliament, in which they essentially agree, and which appears to require observation.

*Mr. Headlam's Bill*, sect. 38, lines 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, runs thus—"It shall be lawful for the general council to make regulations for dispensing with such provisions of this Act as to them shall seem fit in favour of persons practising medicine or surgery within the United Kingdom on foreign or colonial diplomas or degrees before the passing of this Act," &c.

*Lord Elcho's Bill*, sect. 50, lines 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, runs thus—"It shall be lawful for the medical council to make regulations for dispensing with such provisions of this Act as to them shall seem fit in favour of persons who, after due examination, shall have obtained any foreign or colonial diploma or degree which in the country where such diploma or degree has been granted would entitle the holder to practise medicine or surgery," &c.

It will be seen at once that, should either of these Bills become law, the entire regulations as to foreign diplomas will be left to the whim of the council; that the three kingdoms may at any time be inundated by the holders of these diplomas or degrees, and the profession in these realms deprived thereby of that protection which the law in its present state affords them.

It will be in the highest degree unjust to the profession if so grave a matter be left to uncertainty at all, especially so if left to the caprice of a body of individuals so necessarily changeable as the council must be, from the very nature of its constitution. On such a point the law should be fixed.

Again: justice to the holders of foreign diplomas and degrees cannot be urged as a reason why they should be placed on an equality with the possessors of the British qualifications, but

the contrary. Since it is true that in Continental countries the British qualification is not permitted (I believe, in a single instance) to confer a title to practise, without first passing some examination, or procuring some licence in each particular country, (whatever that licence may be,) it will be exceedingly unjust to us British practitioners that foreigners be allowed to practise here without first undergoing our legal test—and obtaining our licence.

Further: uniformity of qualification throughout the three divisions of this kingdom is ostensibly a strong motive for legislating on medical affairs at all. In passing the clauses referred to, this principle will be completely ignored, and that which is now illegal and penal at once rendered legitimate. By no means should Parliament interfere with any person holding a legal qualification, nor should it, on the other hand, usurp the functions of our various licensing bodies. Surely it has matters in hand which it better understands! *Making Doctors it had better leave alone.*

I remain, Sir, yours, &c.,

Colchester, June, 1857.

S. A. PHILBRICK, M.R.C.S.

### POOR-LAW MEDICAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I shall feel obliged for space to inform the Poor-law medical officers that I have forwarded their petition to the House of Commons. It received the signatures of 191 gentlemen at the Freemasons' Hall, 114 of whom were Union officers. Of the latter, 93 are resident in various parts of the kingdom, and some of them at great distances from London; indeed one gentleman travelled nearly 300 miles for the express purpose of attending the meeting—a reproof to his metropolitan brethren, 21 only of whom could spare time to appear at the Hall and sign the petition.

A report of the meeting has been sent to every member of the House of Commons, also one to each Poor-law medical officer. Should any of the latter have been accidentally omitted, a copy shall be immediately sent on application.

To all those who have joined the Association, an abbreviated form of petition has been sent. I trust they will not only sign it themselves, but endeavour to persuade their colleagues to do the same, and send it speedily to the House of Commons. I have not forwarded petitions to the non-subscribers, nor to those who signed the petition at the meeting; but should any gentleman desire to have them, and will write to me to that effect, I will send him one or more immediately.

I have written to the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Apothecaries' Hall, urging them to petition in our favour. I have also written to the Poor-law Board, a copy of the letter I enclose.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

RICHARD GRIFFIN, M.R.C.S.

12, Royal-terrace, Weymouth, 6th June, 1857.

12, Royal-terrace, Weymouth, 6th June, 1857.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to enclose you a copy of the petition to Parliament from the Union medical officers, and also a report of the meeting held the 28th ultimo.

It is not through any want of respect that the Union medical officers have not again memorialized your honourable Board, but from a feeling that you are fully acquainted with their grievances from the numerous memorials forwarded to you last year, which you promised to take into consideration. No improvement in their position having accrued, it is the general feeling that your honourable Board require to have your hands strengthened by the intervention of the Legislature. They have therefore petitioned the House of Commons, and trust you will shortly be enabled to carry out that reform in the Poor-law medical department which is so much needed, and which your medical officers as a body so ardently desire.

I have the honour to be, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

The Poor-law Board.

RICHARD GRIFFIN.

### ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

[LETTER FROM DR. JAMES JOHNSTON.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a letter which you did me the honour to insert in THE LANCET of May 23rd, I stated my convictions in favour of well-trained regimental hospital sergeants, as more likely to be steady and intelligent than we may chance to find young dis-