

Be it so. The mark of their brother Cain is upon them, and requires only deeper incision to stamp them indelibly with the Stygian dye. Shall I, Sir, ascribe this notorious assemblage of fellows to any sordid or selfish motive? Can I, or will the members generally, ascribe it to a desire to elevate the profession? Will they look upon it as an act of brotherly love to infuse those absent and much to be regretted principles of liberality and justice, which all good fellows desire to inculcate? To all, and each of these, Sir, I confess that I have some misgivings, although my personal knowledge of some of the aforesaid fellows might induce me to look charitably upon them. Shall I presume too much, Sir, if I here borrow a sentence from the immortal Addison, who states, that "the accomplishments of science and the gifts of Nature are valuable only as they are exerted to the interests of virtue, or governed by the rules of honour to the general good. Knowledge without justice is cunning rather than wisdom, and the mind prepared to meet danger by its own eagerness, and not for the benefit of the public, deserves the name of audacity rather than courage!" I will therefore, Sir, postpone my own conclusions to a future day, and remind your readers of a ludicrous anecdote, related by the incomparable Sterne, not irrelevant to the present position of the twenty-four fellows *by examination*. Dr. Slop, on his way with the obstetric instruments, by some unaccountable accident sticks fast in the middle of a horse-pond; Obadiah then leaves him to his fate, but before he departs, respectfully takes off his hat. This misplaced complaisance will bear reflection from the fellows, for—

"Those who all sense of others' ills escape,
Are but as brutes, at best, in human shape."

I would suggest, Sir, respectfully, that these gentlemen enlarge their views of charity by a more intimate acquaintance with the religio medici of Sir Thomas Brown! or I would remind them of an observation made use of by our best authors—viz., "that man must have virtue in him who confers with such writers as Seneca and Epictetus?" Shall I advise a consultation—I expect no fee; and too happy should I be, though entitled by seniority to the fellowship, to suspend acceptance of it if it would afford them satisfaction, or conduce to the general good. Under present circumstances, I should look upon it as an honour in the breach, not in the observance. When I see those men who consider themselves occupying a higher and prouder sphere than myself carrying out deeds worthy of record, I should not withhold admiration. Till then, I shall content myself with a philosophy of my own, and look to the Platonic and Socratic school for actions and ideas unintelligible and unpractised by the moderns! But there are exceptions; and before I conclude, I cannot refrain offering a comment of admiration as to the liberal and honourable motives of the two fellows who moved and seconded the amendment. They were, in truth, the barley loaves and fishes of the members, and deserve their gratitude. Such conscientious and manly conduct must meet its own reward; and although *one* is your own son, Sir, I will not say that he equals his sire on these cardinal points, but I the triumph most willingly accord to him, and to Mr. Erichsen, so gallantly and ably obtained. The spirit of the age is with them; they promise well; success must follow. May it be so, is the sincere desire of,

Sir, yours obediently,
WM. SETH GILL.

Colebrooke-terrace, Islington, March 30, 1850.

THE MEETING OF "THE FELLOWS BY EXAMINATION."

[LETTER FROM J. S. BARTRUM, ESQ., F.R.C.S., BATH.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—This morning I received a letter, emanating from a committee of the fellows of the College of Surgeons by examination, and, in common with many parties equally interested as myself, and with others, who from not being thus personally interested are able to form an impartial judgment in the matter, deeply regret that so many of the fellows by examination, who have already signed the memorials to Sir G. Grey, and to the Council of the College, should have thus added a new difficulty in the way of the College of Surgeons.

Had I been present at the meeting on Monday last I should have warmly supported the amendment proposed by Mr. Erichsen and Mr. Wakley, having forwarded to Mr. Druitt a letter expressing similar sentiments.

I would therefore ask those gentlemen who are raising this new question, whether it would not be more generous, and eventually more politic, for us, so few in number compared with the parties aggrieved, not to insist on our personal interests in the matter, and to disregard our present presumed position, if by foregoing it we can at all aid in the settlement of the much agitated discussion of the Charter of the College of Surgeons?

How the committee can state that the proposed modification "will be highly injurious to the profession," or "add to the dissatisfaction of that large portion of the members who will not be entitled to the fellowship either by age or examination," I cannot understand, as those who obtained the diploma subsequent to the Charter of 1843 clearly understood their position previously to becoming members; and there can be no doubt that the proposed alteration would much tend to soothe the present embittered feelings of the older members, since all members prior to 1843 will eventually be able to attain the fellowship if they can obtain the required recommendations. The admission of many new members to the fellowship without examination will necessarily lessen its value, but scarcely more so than if the original list of honorary fellows had been larger than it was; and those who are punctilious about their "honours" will still be able, if they please, to add "by examination;" it must, on the other hand, be remembered, that we have attained the *status* at a much earlier age than we could have otherwise got it, and if it be of any value, is probably worth the payment of ten guineas.

I would therefore venture to urge upon those similarly circumstanced as myself, not to help forward this newly-raised agitation, but, forgetting their personal interests, to help the College in its present dilemma, that they may have the satisfaction of feeling that they have thrown no impediment in the way of an amicable settlement of this branch of the medical profession.

Having a great dislike to polemics, especially to medical polemics, I will add nothing more than the expression of my hope, that the Council of the College will forego its requirements of ten guineas from the new honorary fellows now proposed to be made, and that the suggested arrangements will be carried out for the examination of the general practitioners, by examiners appointed by the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, without the institution of a new College, which eventually would become a refuge for the destitute.

I have the honour to be, Sir, yours obediently,
J. S. BARTRUM, F.R.C.S. by examination.

Bath, March 28, 1850.

THE MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY.

[NOTE FROM DR. WEBSTER.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your correspondent, "Amicus Curiae," having requested to know the grounds upon which I gave an opinion, at the recent anniversary meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, respecting the privileges of fellows, I shall feel much obliged if you will allow me to state, through your pages, that in lay corporations, like the above-named association, every fellow, when legally admitted, becomes, as it were, a joint proprietor of its entire property, or, to use forensic phraseology, he forms one of a corporate body, seized and possessed of its goods and chattels, for the general and individual benefit of all the members. Consequently, any person so qualified is entitled, at reasonable hours, to inspect every document belonging to the Society, and even to take extracts—subject, of course, to the proviso, that no document should be inspected, the examination of which—title-deeds, for instance—might lead to the corporation being deprived of some part of its property. These vested rights are clearly defined by law authorities, and there are instances on record where the officers of a corporation had to pay the costs of a *mandamus*, moved in the Queen's Bench, in case of refusal; whilst, in respect of freemen of municipal corporations, according to the statute 12th George III., chap. 21, the officers are made liable to a penalty of £100, for refusing permission to inspect the municipal register. In support of this opinion, and as collateral evidence, it may be stated, that as a member of the Royal Institution I can examine the records of every meeting of members, all official correspondence, and any paper or books the property of that corporation. Again, at the Royal Society, as a fellow, I can inspect the minutes of every meeting of council, after confirmation; also the proceedings of committees, and all documents belonging to the association, from the charter of Charles II. up to the present