

Whatever information you may be pleased to communicate, you may depend on being considered by the Society as strictly confidential.—I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
(For M. E.—.) ALEX. M'KEAN.

An answer, in course of post, will be very obliging.

The office thus relieves itself of all obligation regarding our professional opinion, except that for our answer in course of post, which will be very obliging, no doubt, to the applicant, whenever the answer is unfavourable, and withholds his or her policy.

The office should unquestionably enclose the fee, of which they might claim the whole, or a moiety, when the party is introduced.

The directors cannot suffer, for even if the certificate of health be false, (wilfully or ignorantly,) they have their remedy in their possession. But it is clearly very hard for applicants to pay one guinea for the pleasure of being debarred from the privileges which they are anxious to obtain, in consequence, they must be assured, of the communications of one in whom they have *confidentially* reposed all their bodily secrets.

This *vexata questio* should be forthwith settled, either by enactment, or a formal resolution of the profession.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
WALTER C. DENDY.

St. James's Park, Jan. 1850.

COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND ITS PROJECTED CHARTER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Through the medium of your pages, I beg to draw the attention of the authorities of the College of Physicians to the necessity of their taking a more active part in the subject of Medical Reform. Some months ago a draught of a new Charter was prepared, which had the very reasonable effect of causing those about to join the college to wait for the advantages to be derived therefrom. At the present moment, there are very many anxious to obtain the licence of the college, who naturally refuse to apply for it till the question of reform therein is decided. It, therefore, behoves the college to inform the profession whether or not the charter is likely to be obtained. It is clearly as much for the benefit of the college, as for that of its would-be members, that the point be settled; for, with the exception of those seeking the office of physician to a public institution, few, very few will apply for the licence, while the present uncertainty exists.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
T. C. D.

January 8, 1850.

FACULTY OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, GLASGOW.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have been amused as well as disgusted with the self-sufficiency of "a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh," in his silly puling at the awful idea of the Glasgow faculty applying for an amendment of their charter, which he sincerely trusts will not be granted them, because—mark the stupendously important reason—"I think that no diploma should be held legal, except that granted by a Royal College of Surgeons!" Shrink into nothingness, ye thousands of M.D.'s and apothecaries, for this illustrious "I" by itself I, thinks your diplomas should not be held legal. He complains that those holding the "paltry" diploma of the Glasgow faculty have the same privileges as he has with *him*, is astonished that the East India Company take the former, and modestly winds up with, "I trust the Bill which you are about to bring into Parliament will effectually put a stop to all those unqualified practitioners."

It will be gratifying to have been enabled to form some notion of the corporeal identity of this capital "I," this great unknown, who sincerely trusts for such a sweeping enactment. In absence, however, of all exact knowledge, he will pardon the freedom of a few random guesses. He is, most likely, a *gent*, for no gentleman could have so divested his remarks of that courtesy which invariably distinguishes him, no less towards his inferiors than to his equals. He must be a very young "member," vain, perhaps, of his new-fledged honour, and with no great reason to be confident in his own acquirements for future success—for his insolent invectives betray an overbearing disposition, selfish and unmanly spite, ignorance of usages of the society, and a total absence of professional libe-

rality towards those who, he states, "have the same privileges as" himself. He, perhaps, comes under the designation of a disappointed man, who fancies that if he could blast by his vilification those whom he has been unable to compete with on fair terms, he might chance to get a patient in the hoped-for scattering.

It has been rather customary of late for the idle and malicious to try to depreciate, in your pages, the character of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow; and their attempts have been treated hitherto with deserved contempt. The biting and snarling of this "Royal" cur, grown bold by the disregard shown to his precursors, now call for chastisement. I challenge him, not to repeat, but to prove, the grounds of his scandalous aspersion of a body of medical men as far superior in gentlemanly feeling to him as is the day to "black and ugly night." I challenge him to prove wherein the Glasgow Faculty diploma is "paltry," or by one jot, either as to required education, or examination, inferior to his own. As one of "those holding that diploma," but not that alone, I fearlessly press this challenge upon him, and demand, either that he meet it fully and unequivocally by the requisite proofs, or failing, as I know from my own experience of Edinburgh as well as Glasgow, and from that of others, he must, that he apologize for the insult recklessly cast by him upon "those holding the diploma."

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,
January, 1850. GLASGUENSIS.

COD-LIVER OIL AND WILD DUCK.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following suggestion may perhaps be worth your notice. The cod-liver oil may be conveniently given in the form of the ordinary almond-oil emulsion, by substituting the cod-liver oil for the almond oil. It is most readily taken when thus prescribed, and many have told me that its flavour is like that of wild duck!—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

HECTOR CAMPBELL HELSHAM.
Assembly-terrace, Mile-end Road, Jan. 15, 1850.

ON THE SOUNDS OF THE HEART.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I read with much interest, in a recent number of your journal, an experiment made by Mr. Brakyn, of Dublin, to endeavour to elucidate the causes of the sounds of the heart. Feeling that every new fact which can be brought to bear upon a question still undecided, and so interesting as this, must be important, I resolved to try the experiment myself, and have made two repeated attempts, but have not met with that gentleman's success.

The second sound of the heart is very conclusively shown to be dependent upon the closing of the sigmoid valves; but on this I shall not dwell, as all controversy on this point has for a long time ceased. It was, I presume, to discover the cause of the first sound that the experiment was instituted.

The sound produced by the forcing of air into the ventricle, was certainly a lengthened one, but had nothing of that character about it that would mark it as the production solely of the shutting of the mitral valve; in fact, as I afterwards ascertained, regurgitation always took place into the auricle, and it was to the air rushing over the edges of its membranous curtains that my sound was no doubt in part due; and also, I may add, to a third cause, and which was the rush of air into the aorta. I by no means wish to assert that these causes operated in Mr. Brakyn's case, or that the sound he produced was not exclusively the result of the tension of the mitral valve, but I only wish to state, that having endeavoured to prove this myself, I have twice failed, and in all probability should do so again, for it seemed a matter of the utmost difficulty to drive a current of air into the ventricle with sufficient force, and in the proper direction, so as to close the valves suddenly and perfectly, seeing how they are fixed to the columnæ carneæ, which, in a post-mortem state, are rigid, and not readily admitting of extension. By opening the auricle to observe the valves, I found they never once perfectly closed, and even when placed nearly in apposition, they would not approximate when the current was directed upon them, without some air passing between and causing their vibration.

As regards the operation of the other cause, my experiments showed that when the mitral was shut, the projection of air into the aorta was also productive of a sound, and other

observations have proved the fact that a noise is always caused by the injection of air or liquid into a tube. It should be remembered that by laying the valve open, probably the aorta was quite occluded. That our attention should be turned to the flow of blood into the aorta as a probable partial cause of the first sound, is shown by the interesting case of the child with its heart developed externally, which came under the notice of M. Cruveilhier, and in which instance he invariably heard the first sound loudest at the origin of the aorta, as though proceeding from, and having its rise at that spot. Because the second sound is undoubtedly caused by valvular tension, that therefore the first is so caused also is not a logical sequitur, seeing how the mitral is fixed by muscular bands and surrounded by dense muscular walls, and not free to vibrate as are the sigmoids contained in a hollow tube with elastic walls. As a question merely of sound, for the reason that one might anticipate the sharp second as the result of valvular tension, so would the first appear more in accordance with that produced by a rush of blood than by the closing of a valve. Although I should place Mr. Brakyn's experiment before my own, on account of his many observations, and believe that the tension of the mitral valve did produce a large part of the sound, yet the difficulty of excluding the operation of other causes in my own case would make me rather incredulous whether they might not have some weight even in his, particularly as other observers would show a part of the causes residing elsewhere.

It will be seen I have referred merely to the practical part of the experiment, but there still remains a question of after-reasoning, and which is—What is the value of the experiment? Supposing the sound produced by Mr. Brakyn to have been wholly caused by the tension of the mitral valve, it does not follow that it is the same as the ordinary sound during life, for it is very possible that the sound produced in air, although resembling to the ear the natural one, is really not the effect of exactly the same cause, but equivalent to a valve acting in fluid plus the sounds arising from one or two other sources.

For all these reasons, and particularly the last, I cannot look upon the experiment as conclusive; besides, as I should have before mentioned, other experimenters have shown the sounds to be produced in a living heart when the valve was prevented from acting.

I may remark, in conclusion, that the second sound was certainly well illustrated by this clever experiment, and also many varieties of bruits might be produced by violently forcing the air back through the valves, so as to cause them to vibrate with different degrees of force.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
Camberwell, Jan. 1850. SAMUEL WILKS, M.B.

THE GENTEEL OUT-PATIENT ABUSE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Although I regularly "con" over *THE LANCET*, Mr. Hodgson's letter on the out-patient abuse escaped me till that signed "A Governor" drew my attention to it.

"A Governor" says—"The plan suggested by Mr. Hodgson, that no patient should be admitted to the hospital without a certificate from a clergyman or medical man that the applicant is a proper object for gratuitous relief, would altogether exclude the most destitute class of persons—foreigners, poor Jews, poor Irish, who know nothing of London parsons or doctors."

Why should it be so? There is no rule without an exception; and surely men who can form a tolerably accurate diagnosis of disease can distinguish a foreigner, a Jew, and an Irishman!

I maintain there ought to be some guarantee of good faith on the part of the applicant, always leaving a discretionary power to the physician or surgeon; and I would suggest when there is any doubt that he or she should unhesitatingly be referred to a conveniently-placed poor-box, with the intimation that "they should do to others as they would that others should do to them."

I feel indignant when I reflect how many there are beflooned and bedizened, who take up the really poor man's room, and the physician's time from the poor man, when they are well able to afford first-rate professional advice; and from my position I know many such; although I am aware no observations of mine or others would be of much avail in shaming such when appearing in a medical publication, yet I trespass on your columns, or better still, if you, in your own peculiar way, will suggest to the official professionals that it very much

rests with themselves when imposition is attempted to be practised upon them or their respective institutions. In much haste, I am, yours faithfully,

January, 1850.

A REGULAR ONE-YEAR SUBSCRIBER.

* * Mr. Hodgson has rendered a service to the profession and the public by re-opening the discussion on the scandalous abuses connected with the gratuitous relief afforded to out-patients at many of our public charities. It is an evil of enormous magnitude, and we will see what can be done by the press towards effecting its abolition. We are informed that it is not an uncommon thing for consequential gentlemen and pert ladies, after they have received, for weeks together, advice and medicines gratis at some of our hospitals, to request, on taking their leave of the medical officers whom they have plundered, to render their best assistance to their servants, whom they are about to introduce as new patients. We are positively informed that examples of impudence of this kind are by no means of rare occurrence.—ED. L.

THE ROTHBURY UNION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have only this day received your journal for Dec. 29th. Circumstances occurring, over which I had no control, prevented me from seeing it sooner; otherwise I would have replied, long ere this, to the communication which you state you received relative to the proceedings at the Rothbury Union Workhouse.

I now beg to observe, in reply, that it is my wish to intrude myself as little as possible upon your valuable time. But you will at once perceive, when I tell you that I am the appointed medical officer of the Rothbury Union Workhouse, that I am bound, in justice to myself and friends, to give a faithful explanation of the circumstances which has led to the production of the statements of your correspondent, who, by the way, seems to excite your feelings of sympathy for being exposed to such an annoyance, as I am not sensible of having given the slightest cause for annoyance to any one in connexion with my duties relative to the Rothbury Union.

The Mr. Todd, with whom my name in the article in question is brought in contact, is, I believe, unconnected with any medical body, either in England or in Scotland. All Rothbury, however, can bear testimony to the fact, that I have had to take legal proceedings against him for attacking my dwelling-house, and that he was bound over by the magistrate to keep the peace.

I may also inform you that he was dismissed from the Rothbury Union, and that I had the honour of being appointed in his room, which may partly explain the cause of his hostility.

It will now be my duty to give you a full account of the cases referred to, as they were reported in the medical officer's journal kept at the workhouse.

On Sept. 30th, my attention being called by the master of the house to examine three little girls; I found them suffering from scabies; they were put under treatment, and dismissed as cured, and entered upon my journal on the 12th of October. The disease appeared again on the 23rd of November, upon a little boy, and on examining the other inmates, I found five or six of them slightly affected; they were all put under treatment, and the last case was dismissed from my journal on the 7th of December; and since then it has not appeared. The board of guardians held their usual meeting on the 17th of December, and made the following report in the Visitor's Book:—"The inmates are healthy, the infectious disease prevailing a fortnight ago, and referred to when the committee last visited the house, has disappeared." This was signed by two of the parties who made the former entry—

"Is the medical officer regular in his attendance?—Yes."

I have now given you the facts of the case. The whole affair, from beginning to end, has been nothing but a scheme concocted for the base purpose of injuring my reputation. Whatever may be the results of such unmanly attacks, they shall not disturb the equanimity of an irreproachable conscience. With reference to my qualifications, I beg to say that I have the honour to be a Licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. I was regularly educated in the University and medical schools of that city.

In conclusion, I beg pardon for trespassing so long upon your time, and can only offer as an excuse that I could not