

and in 62 between 16 and 17, per 1000. These 101 districts form a group, called the Selected Healthy Districts, and serve as a convenient standard for comparison for the purpose of measuring the excess of mortality due to insanitary condition. Among the other districts the death-rate in 326 ranged between 17 and 20, in 195 between 20 and 25, in 23 between 25 and 30, and in the remaining 2 the rate exceeded 30. The wide range of these local death-rates still leaves an ample field for the beneficial effects of sanitation, the general results of which upon English mortality has been so marked since 1875.

The attention of those interested in the statistical use of death-rates is very effectively drawn to the influence of varying age distribution upon the recorded rates in different populations, especially in comparison between the recorded rates in urban and rural populations. A table is given in which the recorded death-rates in the several English counties during the ten years 1871-80 are corrected for variations of age distribution. The recorded rates ranged from 17.06 to 25.17, but after correction the range is considerably reduced from 15.97 in Dorsetshire, to 26.86 in Lancashire. Assuming the mortality in England and Wales in the ten years to be equal to 1000, the corrected rate in Dorsetshire would be represented by 751, while that in Lancashire would be 1263. Recorded death-rates, uncorrected for differences of age distribution, considerably understate the excess of mortality in urban as compared with rural populations. The baneful effects of urban aggregation upon mortality was nearly as well marked in 1871-80 as it was in the preceding decades, and the rates of mortality in groups of districts showed an excess, bearing an almost constant relation to the increase of density of population in each group.

Dr. Ogle's report and the tables which accompany it are full of interest, and deserve the careful study of all vital statisticians. It would be hypercritical, and almost Mephistophelian to complain that much of the interest attaching to this careful analysis of the decline in the English death-rate prior to 1881 (a decline which, indeed, scarcely commenced before the middle of the decade treated of in the volume under notice) is to some extent thrown into the shade by the still more marked decline that has been steadily maintained during the first half of the current decennium. This undoubted fact at any rate intensifies the profound interest that is now increasingly recognised in the connexion between the progress of sanitation, the decline of the death-rate, and the increased health and lifetime of the English people. The Registrar-General's Decennial Supplement, just issued, affords abundant material for the useful study of this important subject.

### THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC.

It was rumoured some weeks back that cholera had broken out in the north-western portion of France, and it was believed that it had been imported by sailors recently arrived from Tonkin, where the disease is still very fatally prevalent amongst both French sailors and soldiers. The rumour gained credit by reason of a large mortality from choleraic and diarrhoeal disease in and about the port of Brest and telegraphic information this week is to the effect that cholera is somewhat widely prevalent amongst some of the fishing populations on the coast of Brittany, and also that deaths from cholera have taken place in Brest itself. How far the disease may be imported cholera, or merely a local sporadic disease due to the filthy state of the port of Brest and to the want of sanitary arrangements in the fishing villages, cannot at present be stated; but quite apart from the risk which the large naval port of Brest runs from vessels and sailors returned from the East, it must be remembered that coasting and fishing boats in this part of France are within comparatively easy distance of the ports of Northern Spain, and that in this way Brittany runs a substantial risk. It will also be remembered that last year it was quite late in the season when Normandy, and subsequently the French capital, became infected with cholera; and it is in view of possibilities such as are now rumoured that we have all along felt considerable difficulty in asserting that an extension of the disease from the more southern portions of Europe was not

to be regarded as within the range of probability. Unless there is further extension of the disease which now prevails in North-West France, we are not very likely to learn the actual circumstances of the outbreak, for our neighbours are inclined to keep such matters quiet until extension of the mischief renders secrecy no long possible.

For some weeks past no fresh returns have been received as to cholera deaths either in Spain or in Italy, and it may be assumed that an abatement has taken place which foretells the cessation of the epidemic.

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

### UNIVERSITY REFORM IN LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit me to echo the suggestion made by you last week that the members of the committee of the Teaching University should lose no time in reconsidering their position.

On the day of the meeting of Convocation in Burlington-gardens one University pass-list was suspended at the entrance to the building. It was a list of students who had recently passed an examination of the University held in *Mauritius*—students who have probably never left *Mauritius*, and never will. The difficulty of transforming our present most useful British Examining Board into an adequate University of London was clearly stated by more than one speaker at the meeting, but hardly with the force with which it was suggested by the silent eloquence of the solitary pass-list. An adequate transformation would involve an entire change in the character of the University, and in the scope of its influence. To such a change even Convocation appears disinclined, and it seems to me hopeless to expect that the far more conservative Senate would ever consent to it. Any change that is inadequate would be worse than none at all.

I cannot think that the advocates of a real London University—a University for London students—are wise in continuing to waste precious time and still more precious energy in knocking at a door which cannot be opened for them except by a process of destruction. I say "precious time" advisedly. I doubt whether the advocates of the movement realise how precious to them the present moments, rightly used, might be. As you, Sir, suggest, the recent resolution of the College of Physicians (which, based on the recommendation of a joint committee, the College of Surgeons may be expected soon to adopt) presents an opportunity which may quickly pass, and can never recur in equally favourable degree. The Colleges desire that a degree in medicine should be attainable by London students, to which their own diplomas should be a stepping-stone. With some reluctance, but under the pressure of what they feel to be a supreme necessity, they propose, no other means existing, to endeavour to obtain the power of conferring such degree. There is probably not one of the Fellows of either College who would not much prefer that the degrees should be given by a University of which the Colleges formed part. They may or may not be successful in their intended effort. In the opinion of some, whose judgment is entitled to the highest respect, they will be successful. If they obtain their end unaided, circumstances will have changed. They will then have little to gain by the establishment of a Teaching University. Now they have much to gain; their difficult task would be facilitated and would be accomplished in a more satisfactory manner. The help they could now render the scheme is immense; the help they might now receive from it is great; the success of each object would be assured.

The opportunity is, however, more than one of corporate co-operation. The problems of "a local habitation and a name" are not least among the difficulties that a new University would have to surmount. The former is the greater practical difficulty of the two. But the elements for the solution of the problem are probably open to prompt action. The Colleges have acquired a piece of ground on the Thames Embankment, in a central position, on which to erect a building for examination purposes. There is more

land than they want, and they propose to let a part of it. Is not this an opportunity for the location of a University of which the Colleges form part? The examination-rooms will be unused by the Colleges during nine-tenths of the year, and the whole ground would suffice, not only for the requirements of the Colleges, but for the effective commencement of all the work contemplated for the University. I firmly believe that the present "University of London," pursuing its present work, would ultimately gain far more than it would lose were a true London University working by its side.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

W. R. GOWERS.

Nov. 1885.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Although I regret that Lord Justice Fry and some of the members of his committee were unwilling to accept my proposal to refer back to them their scheme for further consideration, I do not think that the cause of University reform in London need eventually suffer by the rejection by Convocation of the alternative amendment. In so important a matter as the reorganisation of the University of London, a few weeks' delay is not to be regretted; and having regard to the conflicting opinions expressed by eminent medical graduates, and to the difficulty of satisfying the aspirations of some of the professors of University College, it may be well to pause before completely revolutionising the government of a University which, be its faults what they may, has undoubtedly exercised during the last fifty years a beneficial influence upon the higher education of the country. The task assigned to the Special Committee, of which I and several of those who voted with me were members, was not an easy one; and those who are now willing, if required to do so, to take up the work where others have left it, look for the co-operation and support of all who are really desirous of reforming the University without impairing its present usefulness.

I still hope that a scheme may be devised which shall not interfere with the existing functions of the University, and shall yet give to London an educational organisation that may justly claim to be regarded as a Teaching University; and I have sufficient confidence in the good sense of Convocation to believe that if such a scheme be submitted to them, the desire to raise the status of their University will induce them to adopt it.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Savile Club, Nov. 10th, 1885.

PHILIP MAGNUS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I ask you to permit me to explain why I went with the majority in rejecting the proposals to alter the constitution of the University of London. I wish to state *in limine* that in this communication I do not claim to represent others, but I would not obtrude my own views if I did not think it possible that some practical good might come from the consideration of them.

I was uncompromisingly against the proposals, because they seemed to me to constitute in effect a polished weapon to be presented to the Senate with the polite invitation that therewith that august body should commit the "happy despatch." The scheme was not for reorganising the University, but for absolutely destroying it and erecting on its ruins another institution, with new aims, new methods, and new tendencies. This course might be legitimate enough if the extant evidence proved that the University as at present constituted is a failure; but what is the teaching of facts at the present time? Surely, that the degrees of the University were never in higher repute, never more sought after. So testify the long and ever-increasing lists of candidates for matriculation and of concurrents at all the examinations of the University.

It has been asserted and reiterated that the University of London is a mere examining board and not a teaching university, and the dictum seems to have been accepted as beyond controversy; but in my opinion, and in this relation I know that I have others with me, it is a teaching university, and that in a high sense. It has so arranged its regulations and its examinations as to render the elevation of the standard of education in all institutions which send up candidates to its portals a positive necessity; and, moreover, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, it has prescribed *methods* of instruction. It has made in many sub-

jects, such as chemistry and physiology, practical instruction a necessity for success at its examinations. Inasmuch as it has formulated educational regulations, has demanded a certain standard of knowledge, and has in some cases prescribed methods, I cannot understand how it can be contended that the University is not a teaching university.

I would therefore hesitate long before attempting to alter the constitution of the governing body of an institution which has done such good work, and I could not look upon it as an unmixed advantage that the representatives of teaching bodies in London, having diverse interests and being of varying degrees of importance, should be placed in such position as to sway the destinies of the University. On the other hand, I think it is a matter of congratulation that the Senate is, as at present, not to be influenced by the conflicting interests of individual schools. It will, of course, be asked, Are there no educational wrongs to be righted in London? The answer is, Undoubtedly there are; but it does not follow that a change in the constitution of the University of London is the best plan to bring about such rectification.

The movement which has culminated in the report lately submitted to Convocation seems to have been initiated by two cries—both legitimate enough: the one to provide a medical degree accessible to the bulk of London students; the other to provide educational machinery for those who, having left school, require a higher training, and yet are unable for many reasons to leave London. As regards such educational machinery London is sadly deficient. With all such aspirations, in common with many others, I warmly sympathise. But is there any reason why London should not have two universities? The vast increase of population, the legitimate cravings for higher knowledge, the importance to the State of educating people of culture and of science, press for a far greater development of our educational machinery than heretofore; and where can a provision for collegiate education be better made than in London? The agitation from outside for such reconstruction of the University of London as should enable the bulk of medical students to obtain a degree without leaving the metropolis seems to me to have been fostered by miscalculations. On both sides, without and within, it has been urged *nemine dissidente* that the examination standard of the University should not be lowered. If that be so, and so large a proportion of the men who have passed the matriculation examinations fail, how is it possible that the University could satisfy the want of the London medical student for an ordinary degree in medicine?

To provide a university for London which shall grant the degree of Doctor of Medicine on terms which shall not be more difficult of attainment than in the case of the northern universities seems to me neither unjust nor impolitic; and as regards medicine and surgery the Faculty is ready made, with its controlling body constituted by the united Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. And why should not other faculties be added, so as to constitute a veritable university?

I know that I am drawing upon myself the punishment of the critic, but I cannot understand why the scheme for the establishment of a teaching university for London has not shown in the very foreground the necessity for constituent colleges. As complete colleges we have only University and King's: surely we want others east and west, and north and south. May I urge these practical points for consideration?—that in the interests of the higher education it would be most advisable that new colleges be established in and near London, so that London may be presented with the advantages for education and culture of a university city; and that none could initiate such a work with greater chances of success than those who are attached to the staffs of hospitals; for their own science departments would constitute the science faculty of such a college, and the friends of education would, probably, not be loth to institute faculties of arts and of technology. So the medical student of the future would first come to the Arts and Science Department of the College, and the hospitals would one day be left to their legitimate and sufficient purpose, in so far as they subserve education—viz., to teach only clinical medicine and surgery and pathology. Such scheme for the foundation of a college in the east end of London and near to the London Hospital, has occupied the attention of my colleagues and myself, and I do not despair that in the future it may be established.

It is devoutly to be hoped that the cry of vested interests will not be raised against the establishment of such a

university. It is not likely to come from the University of London, which would remain what it is, an honours university, drawing its *alumni*, as it now draws them, from all parts of the world and from many established universities. May we not hope that a movement for justice to the London medical student and for better educational facilities for London, will be opposed by none whose mission is to instruct and improve?

I am, Sir, yours truly,

A. ERNEST SANSON, M.D.

Harley-street, Cavendish-square, W., Nov. 10th, 1885.

## THE FELLOWS AND MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The assumption in your leader of last week that the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons, as well as the Members, are in favour of the first resolution carried at the meeting on Oct. 29th, induces me to ask you to put on record some of the reasons why I for one voted in the minority, and to say that I am well aware that a large number of Fellows are not in agreement with the vote which was then cast.

The reasons are these. I am not convinced by the argument that because a man has passed the examinations for the M.R.C.S., and has paid his fees, he has *ipso facto* acquired the right to vote for the election of the Council; and I conceive Mr. Gamgee's simile of taxation and representation to be founded upon an altogether false analogy. As regards the fees, the candidate receives distinctly a *quid pro quo*: he obtains his diploma, which is really his object in submitting himself to the examinations; he pays a small tax to Government in the shape of a stamp; he pays for being examined, the labour entailed in which process he probably never thinks about; and he contributes a certain amount to the funds of the College, which sum goes in great part to the payment of officials and the maintenance of the machinery that is necessary in order to provide the benefits referred to, but which also provides him with one of the best libraries and museums in the world. And yet he is not contented!

Again, there is no analogy, as far as I am aware, in the constitution of similar bodies and corporations, for such a state of things as it is proposed to institute. This may be said to be a high Tory argument, not to be tolerated in these days of change, if not of advance; but it may fairly be answered that, even if much more could be said than has yet been said in favour of the justice of the proposed change, it behoves those who are advocating it to point out very clearly the advantages which are to be anticipated from it. Now, Sir, I hold that if proof were to be sought for the opposite contention, a strong argument might be urged from the proceedings of the meeting of which you speak in such complimentary terms. I have scarcely met with anyone, even amongst the many who are jubilant over the result, who did not seem to be really ashamed of both the matter of many of the speeches and the intemperate manner in which they were delivered. I am not intending to defend the Council for the way in which their part of the business was conducted. They would, perhaps, have acted more wisely in submitting to the meeting an actual report rather than a confused collection of minutes, and putting forward one of their number to act as spokesman. Perhaps this would have been more business-like and more conciliatory. But what I wish to point out is that, if these so-called reforms are carried out, it will be to meetings such as this, or more likely to much smaller ones of the same sort, that the affairs of the College will be handed over; for the unmanageable constituency of 16,000 medical practitioners can never be polled, and if it could, it would have but little knowledge of the matters on which it was required to vote. Fancy those army and navy surgeons for whom Mr. Gamgee makes such a plaintive appeal, scattered all over the world, taking an active part in the politics of the College. The result, therefore, must inevitably be the handing over of the power now exercised (and admittedly not exercised badly) by the Fellows to meetings called together by a few active spirits, and guided by the inspiration of anonymous and irresponsible writers; and one may be excused for deprecating this introduction of the irritating influence of the caucus into our hitherto

peaceable profession. As for Mr. Swain's notion of submitting all the important decisions of the Council to meetings such as these, it seems to me like referring every vote in supply to the vestries throughout the country.

Lastly, Sir, are we not the College of *Surgeons*, and is not our Council largely occupied with matters which concern the *surgical* part of medical education—that is, the surgical as opposed to the medical? Is it, then, reasonable that nearly half the members of the Council should, as the proposed scheme suggests, possess the distinguishing qualification of not being surgeons but general practitioners, or at least of not having obtained the special surgical distinction which the College offers to them?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Wimpole-street, Nov. 9th, 1885.

RICKMAN J. GODLEE.

## THE TITLE OF "DOCTOR" FOR LONDON MEDICAL STUDENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is not without reason that Continentals credit the ordinary Englishmen (not Scotch or Irish) with the peculiar characteristic of viewing all institutions and customs which are not in strict accordance with those which exist in his own country as necessarily inferior, and it is often the somewhat discourteous manner in which he gives expression to this form of egotism, and so airs his fancied superiority, that makes him so disliked on the Continent and elsewhere. This peculiarity is naturally intensified in Londoners who consider that anything not produced or procurable in London is of little value. This belief I have frequently found exemplified, and it is well illustrated by the demand lately made on the part of the diplomats of the London colleges to have the title and degree of M.D. legally conferred upon them, and by the allegations which have been adduced in support of their demand. The letter in your issue of Oct. 24th by Mr. Shirley Deakin, F.R.C.S., reiterates these allegations, which simply are: 1. That the diplomats of the London colleges are better educated than the graduates of the Scottish and Irish universities. 2. That the Scotch and Irish universities are not real universities in the true—i.e., English—sense of the term. 3. That therefore the London diplomats should be put on an equality with the graduates of those so-called universities by being immediately turned into M.D.'s. In reply to all this, I utterly deny the pretended equality of the London diplomats, and for these reasons:—

1. The proficiency in Arts required by the London colleges from their diplomats is notoriously behind that required by the Scottish and Irish universities.

2. The Science Examination, as it obtains in the Scottish and Irish universities and the University of London, is not provided for by the London colleges, excepting to the limited extent in which the College of Physicians examines in Chemistry and Medical Botany.

3. I do not think the London students have such facilities for systematic training and clinical instruction as are procurable in the Scottish and Irish schools, and this want, which I take to be a defect in medical education, I consider, is mainly due to the very plethora of London hospitals and the absence of some great central teaching body in touch with all those hospitals—a want which is now making itself felt, and with the expression of which I fully sympathise.

4. Nothing has been, or can be, urged on behalf of the London diplomats which could not be urged with equal justice on behalf of the diplomats of the Edinburgh, Dublin, and Glasgow colleges, who also hold double qualifications, and whose examinations are certainly equal to those of the London colleges; but until all these diplomats undergo examinations in Arts, Science, and Medicine equivalent in every way to those of the Scotch and Irish universities, then, but not until then, will these diplomats have a just and honourable claim to the M.D. degree.

Having disposed of contention No. 1, I will now proceed to No. 2; and here, again, I must note the obliquity peculiar to English vision when looking at anything foreign, which appears to afflict Mr. Deakin. He totally overlooks the fact that the university system of Scotland is a national one, which has existed for over 400 years; and that was not framed to suit the views and requirements of the wealthy