

that the medical referees ought to be remunerated by the office, and they consequently allow the usual fee of one guinea when the premiums are not payable weekly or monthly, and the sum assured exceeds £100; but considering that on several of the smaller policies a few shillings only may be obtained, the directors trust the profession will concur with them in opinion, that the fee offered is as much as they can with propriety afford.

I have much pleasure in being able to state, that several of our medical referees, regarding the examination in such cases as a matter of benevolence, have intimated their intention of appropriating such fees towards the first payment under the policy, as an additional inducement to the industrial classes to avail themselves of the advantages now offered to them by the establishment of this company.

I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,
WM. THOS. WOODS, Resident Director.

THE SCOTTISH EQUITABLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your pages have lately contained much correspondence between medical men and assurance offices, relative to the paying or withholding the honorarium for filling up the medical certificate. Let me report the liberal conduct of the Scottish Equitable. I was requested by the agent to examine a patient of mine, and send my opinion in the usual form of reply to questions. This was afterwards sent to the medical referee of the office, who also examined the person, and made his report. The agent met me a few days after in the street, and very unexpectedly put a guinea into my hand, having satisfied their own referee as well. In thirty years' practice, I do not recollect to have experienced so liberal treatment.

Bucks, March 5.

W. S.

THE UNITY OF MEDICINE.—THE ONE-FACULTY SYSTEM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In undertaking to uphold the unity of medicine, or the one-faculty system, as it has been called, I am fully aware that I have undertaken a responsible duty.

The present want of system and unity in the profession is represented by powerful and learned colleges—colleges which have excited the admiration of past generations; which now command the attention of the Government, and which have attracted to them some of the wisest and best men of which the profession of medicine in modern times can boast. There is, then, besides the prestiges which belong to objects pronounced venerable by time, the reality of these institutions to be dealt with, and the opposition of their interested supporters to overcome.

The respective interests of existing medical institutions are very frequently conflicting; and often, individually and collectively, they clash with the public weal. My Lord Melbourne declared in the House of Lords, on the 13th of May, 1833, "that most of the difficulty of the subject (medical reform) arose from conflicting interests." And conflicting interests then succeeded, and they have ever since succeeded, in warding off the impending reform. But come the reformation will, in spite of all conflicting interests, and it will only be the more searching and complete for the length of time it has been delayed.

On the 25th of May, 1833, you, Sir, declared, in THE LANCET, in one of those powerful leaders which have made your journal known and valued throughout the world, that "by the institution, upon a just and comprehensive foundation, of a Faculty of Medicine for each of the three kingdoms, each enjoying like privileges, each securing like competency of medical attainment in practitioners, and all holding out the like friendly support to the scientific investigator, the law would be made to harmonize throughout the United Kingdom, existing anomalies would be abolished, and the practice of medicine secured on a basis which would lead to the production of the greatest national advantages."

These sentiments, Sir, inspired me with their truth when they were written, and seventeen years of observation has confirmed me in the conviction that they must be put in practice before there will be any rest for the profession.

Although the present want of system and unity is upheld by the colleges, and their "conflicting interests," I have such faith in the really great men in our profession, that I feel certain they have only to be convinced that one system of government for the whole profession would be for the public good, to make them come forward to relinquish any individual and special privileges they might have been induced to obtain, or which "the wisdom of our ancestors" had forced them to accept. It is not from the

truly great men in our profession, but from its parvenu aristocracy, that we may expect the greatest opposition to the one-faculty system. It may, then, be as well to allay the anger, and quiet the fears of these gentlemen—German doctors and all—by letting them clearly understand at once, that the reform we seek is not a question of resigning rights and privileges, or of demanding them; for, as I once before said, in a letter on this subject, legislation has done its best and its worst for us. All new laws to be just must be prospective in their operation. And no law can be permanent without being just. What is to be done by the legislature must be done for the future. We have not then, in truth, the least occasion to let our personal interests or feelings enter into the discussion of this question. The only question before us is, What laws affecting the future practitioners of medicine will be best for the public? Is it for the public good that things should remain as they are, or can we improve the profession of medicine by legislating for those who are in future to practise the art of healing?

Had it not been acknowledged, over and over again, on all sides, both in the profession and out of it, that the laws relating to the practice of medicine are defective—that some change is absolutely required—it would have been necessary, before going further, to have examined that question. But time after time it has been proclaimed to the world in the most public manner. One government after another has witnessed to this fact by attempting to provide a remedy; but time after time the inefficient remedy has been put aside, and the disease remains uncured.

Luckily, time works wonders.

It is the nature of the remedy, then, we have to inquire into; and we might be thankful that we are spared any examination into the nature of the disease, did we not most acutely feel how thoroughly its manifold symptoms are exposed to the public gaze. One favourable sign, however, exists. We have not absolutely stood still, while all the world has been progressing. But it is the fashion for those who wish to keep things as they are to talk of degeneracy, not thinking for a moment, if their condemnation was true, it would be one of the most favourable arguments that could be adduced in favour of a change. But I verily believe there is not a man among us who does not strive after improvement; who does not sincerely desire to see his successor more learned than himself. The great efforts now being made for reformation, indeed, prove that it is so. And we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that our profession does not contain within it a man who would advocate, either in public or private, a return to "the good old times" of the red fillet and barber's pole. These retrograde movements, happily, are not advocated by our profession; but are reserved as a monopoly for the monkish crew who have no faith in the gradual improvement of their race; and for the bigoted curer of souls who sees in that improvement an utter annihilation of his craft.—I am, Sir, very obediently yours,

Oxford-terrace, Hyde-park, March 2, 1850.

WILLIAM ROBINS.

A DESCRIPTION AND DELINEATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MACHINE FOUND IN THE VAGINA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Some time ago, a lady came to London in a wretched state of health. She complained of constant and excruciating pain in the region of the uterus, and there was profuse and offensive discharge from the vagina. The patient stated, that eight months before, she had consulted an accoucheur, who told her that "she was labouring under retroversion of the uterus, and that all her bowels were out of place." Believing that her womb was completely turned topsy-turvy, and that all her viscera were displaced, she consented to have an instrument introduced, which, the accoucheur confidently assured her, would restore everything to its natural position, and would not prevent her from riding on horseback, or even undertaking a voyage to India. The introduction of the instrument, she said, caused violent pain, but it was not once removed during eight months, though she had been in a state of constant suffering, had profuse foetid discharge, with sickness at stomach, and great constitutional disturbance. When an examination was made, the finger came in contact with a foreign body in the vagina, which was removed, with great difficulty and pain, in a black, half-rotten state. The vagina and uterus were found to be extensively ulcerated.

The following is a description and delineation of this extraordinary machine. It consists of a compressed oval ring, of German silver, in a black, corroded state, two inches and a half in length the long diameter, and one inch and a quarter in the short diameter; the perpendicular length or breadth of