

spinal columns, and the anterior nerves, were formed before the posterior ones, and therefore necessarily preceded them in function, as well as various other facts, which I subsequently quoted in support of my doctrine, published in 1809, and added these to some observations previously published. Therefore I said, "if there be one general truth to be drawn from Tiedemann's labours on the foetal brain, it appears to be that the anterior parts of the cerebro-spinal system, medullary columns, pyramids, peduncles, and hemispheres, are formed before the posterior." These altogether asserted and supported me amidst the unceasing efforts of Sir Charles Bell and his school.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALEXANDER WALKER.

MR. GUTHRIE'S LECTURES.

[NOTE FROM MR. CRITCHETT.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Guthrie having by letter, through the medium of our mutual friend, Mr. Luke, given me his strong and reiterated assurance, that the paragraph in the lecture upon which I recently commented was not intended to refer either directly or indirectly to myself, I feel it due to Mr. Guthrie, and in accordance with my own sense of justice, to express my regret at having mistaken his meaning, and I beg leave to withdraw those expressions in my former letter, which, having been founded in error, cease to have any signification. I must be allowed to add, that my misapprehension of Mr. Guthrie's meaning was shared by all those professional friends whose opinion I had an opportunity of ascertaining, including many whose judgment and discrimination I highly value.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Finsbury square, February, 1849.

GEORGE CRITCHETT.

THE DEMAND FOR MEDICAL REFORM.—THE PROPOSED £500 MEDICAL REFORM FUND.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Are we for ever to be deterred from attempting to secure the highest good by the idea of its impracticability? Is a real reformation of our profession to be indefinitely postponed, because it has been pronounced to be impracticable? This cannot be; for how many of the impracticable reforms of our youth have we not seen accomplished?

The legislature may be induced, by the opinions of those in authority, to sanction the countenance of legalized grades in medicine; but the unalterable truth of its oneness will continually recur to minds never to be satisfied till this truth is acknowledged and acted on. The wisest of men, in times past, have acknowledged this truth, and acted on it; and although the altered circumstances of our time may call for a greater division of labour, yet the conviction remains, that the art of healing cannot be practised for the benefit of mankind by those who have their education limited, like the mechanic, whose energy may be required solely to perfect the tenth part of a pin.

Medical legislation can now but little affect those who, for fifteen or twenty years, have been moulded into shape by its oppressive powers; and the chief thing that true reformers of this class can reasonably hope to accomplish is, to secure a higher status and better government for those who are to come after them.

The law that sanctions an inferior grade in a pursuit such as medicine, condemns to punishment that portion of the subjects of the realm which it is its special province to protect. And can any one calmly contemplate the continuance of a system producing such a result? The rich can at all times secure for themselves talent of the highest order; but the middle classes, and especially the poor, are obliged, to a great extent, to be content with that grade of talent the law chooses to create for their benefit.

What, then, are the arguments used to persuade our lawgivers to continue the present system?—(for the proposed alterations cannot be considered any change in the system.) Surely they have produced some powerful testimony in its favour, or some unanswerable arguments against the adoption of the new system—i. e., the one-faculty system. All that I can discover in the mass of evidence that has been given by those in authority is, that they are satisfied with the *status quo*, and there is an attempt to frighten the country into the belief that an insufficient supply of medical practitioners would result from raising the present standard of education for those who are in future to be admitted into the profession. But how is this opinion compatible with the acknowledged over-crowded state of the profession? And how can it happen that quackery and illegal practice would be encouraged by compelling all who seek for medical renown to possess the

M.B. degree of the London University, or some other university where the examinations are equally strict, before they are permitted to take charge of the lives of her Majesty's meanest subjects?

Is not the degradation of the profession brought about by its overcrowded condition? What but the struggle for existence compels the practitioner to practise pharmacy? What but this fierce struggle obliges him to combine a retail trade with a profession, the dignity of which he has sworn to uphold?

That the profession is overstocked,—that we are treading on each other's heels in this race of life, is a truth which it would have been childish to relate did we not hear that grave and learned doctors had instilled into the ears of the Commons the fearful results that must follow a higher and uniform system of education. But do these advisers of parliament devise any other mode of stemming the present overwhelming tide of legalized quackery, or do they propose any better means of thinning our ranks, and without harm to the public—with actual benefit to it indeed,—taking from amongst us the chief stimulant for all unprofessional practices?

A correspondent has proposed the establishment of a Medical Reform Fund, and I will answer for it, that, poor as we are, and oppressed as we are by public and local taxation, a sufficient love for the welfare of our profession exists amongst us to raise twice the sum named, could we be convinced that money would work the required reformation. I cannot help thinking, Sir, that all we require to accomplish a work so true and just, is a few leaders, who will take up the cause for the love of it, and who have sufficient moral courage to continue the campaign till the cause is won. Until lately you have stood almost alone, but you have effected wonders, and I do not despair of seeing others as energetic as yourself, champions in the cause of one system of education, one system of government, and one honourable title for all practitioners of medicine.

I remain, Sir, yours sincerely,

WILLIAM ROBINS.

Upper Southwick-street, Hyde-park, Feb. 1849.

TOOTING AGAIN! — THE WANDSWORTH AND CLAPHAM UNION, AND THE TREATMENT OF ITS MEDICAL OFFICER BY THE GUARDIANS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The poor-law surgeons are seeking to be emancipated from their present base servitude, and they sigh for other and more suitable masters: the inclosed correspondence shows, I think, that they have reason to do so. Are not boards of guardians, in the words of a noble lord, "most usually ignorant, and sometimes insolent"?—I beg to remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

W. BAINBRIDGE.

Upper Tooting, Feb. 26, 1849.

To the Honourable the Poor-law Commissioners, Somerset House.

GENTLEMEN,—Herewith I send the copy of a correspondence between me and the guardians of the Wandsworth and Clapham Union. I beg to add, that on the 15th inst. I took my assistant, Mrs. Harrod, Mrs. Young, and her daughter, to the board; and that, with their testimony, I was fully prepared to prove to the guardians that their vote of censure, on the previous Thursday, was exceedingly unjust, and totally undeserved. But they would not permit my assistant to remain in the room, nor suffer me to utter a word in the way of defence or of explanation. With some difficulty I prevailed upon them to allow of the examination of the girl, of Mrs. Young, and of Mrs. Harrod; but it was carried on amid continual interruption and noise. I cannot now enter upon a detailed account of the scene at the board; but it is enough to say, that the same sense of justice which taught Herring to reward the little lying pauper with a shilling characterized the conduct of the guardians towards me upon that day.

I have the honour to remain, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient servant,

Upper Tooting, Feb. 24, 1849.

WILLIAM BAINBRIDGE.

COPY OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. BAINBRIDGE AND THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS OF THE WANDSWORTH AND CLAPHAM UNION.

Upper Tooting, Feb. 1st, 1849.

DEAR SIR,—I am anxious that you should mention the following circumstance to the board of guardians, which I consider to be of great importance:—

On Friday evening, Mary Ann Young was brought into my surgery in a state of violent convulsions, in which she continued a long time. After her recovery I hired a conveyance, and sent my assistant with her to her house in Tooting. Yesterday and