

TRUE AIMS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, AND
NECESSITY FOR DENOUNCING QUACKERY.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Amongst the numerous and substantial claims to the gratitude of the profession, to be based on your editorial labours, few, perhaps, are more entitled to consideration than those which arise from your uncompromising and indefatigable exposure of quackery, and your fearless denunciation of individuals of established reputation, for their encouragement, direct or indirect, of the growing nuisance. In this matter,—as, indeed, in every effort to promote the *real* interests of the profession,—the lay portion of the public are as much your debtors as ourselves; and it is devoutly to be hoped, that the rapidly increasing intelligence of the age may, ere long, place this truth within their apprehension. Meanwhile, however, the gullibility of mankind in general as to matters affecting health remaining what it is, deep culpability attaches to those men, who, occupying exalted places in the medical profession, either tacitly allow the influence of their names to be fraudulently employed in behoof of nostrums, or—oh, foul disgrace!—actually barter their recommendation of these pernicious abominations “for a consideration.” No one who looks upon his profession in any higher or better light than that of a trade, but feels a pride in believing it to be part of his high vocation, (albeit he is to live by ministering to the relief of disease,) to do all that in him lies for the *protection* of the public health. He knows that no department of human knowledge furnishes its votaries with such powerful means of benefiting their fellow-men as the science of medicine; and he owns a solemn obligation to use these means, not merely in the ordinary exercise of his art, when called upon, for remuneration or otherwise, to cope with disease and death, but as much, or more, in suggesting and aiding, without fee or reward, measures of good for the prevention of disease, and in instructing, warning, approving, denouncing, whatever habits or practices injurious to health come within his ken, or other occasions for his salutary offices arise. It is thus that a high-minded member of the profession feels that his calling is one entitled to public respect and gratitude; and it is from realizing this lofty idea of his profession, that he comes also to entertain a sentiment of true and chivalrous loyalty to it, so as to resent, as a personal injury, the unworthy conduct of any of its members, through which stain and discredit may attach to it. And need I ask if it be possible for our profession to maintain in public esteem the high and honourable character with which it is invested by all who love it, when those whose position should make them foremost in guarding it, with jealous watchfulness, from every mean and sordid taint, either actively contribute, or passively and supinely allow their influence to be prostituted, to the support of a pestilential knavery, which lives by deluding the unhappy victims of disease, and batters on the credulity of those whose sanguine hopes make them a too easy prey for the cupidity and wickedness of the quack.

But it was not my object to occupy your valuable space with general remarks of the sort into which I have been betrayed. All this has been better done by yourself and other contributors to your pages. I designed simply to thank you for what you have done, and to contribute my mite of evidence towards the establishment of your case. Medical men in the provinces will rejoice to find that you are not confining your castigations to the delinquents of the metropolis, but have begun to visit with special notice offenders of the same sort in the country. Nor is it of small moment that this should be done, as there is too much reason to believe that the degrading taint of patronizing quackery attaches to a large number of provincial practitioners; and though their influence is less extensive than that of a Bright or a Locock, yet is it often far from inconsiderable even in point of extent, while within the limits of their respective circles it is very powerful for good or evil. You published, last week, the name of a physician of Bristol, as one who had lent the sanction of his certificate to an itinerant cure of stammering. I send you now an advertisement, cut out of a provincial paper, of “Sydenham’s Pills,” the virtues of which are, as you see, attested by another of the Bristol physicians, and, strange to say, by another physician to the Bristol Infirmary. Surely, it behoves the governors of this institution (if they have any regard to the reputation of their hospital) to look into this. But it is with reference to the public interest alone that I forward the document for publication in *THE LANCET*. Dr. Wallis is, or has been, as I have understood, (and as the advertisement certifies in his behalf,) “in extensive practice in Bristol and Clifton; and if so, there is the greater need that his disclaimer, if he can furnish it, should be put in

forthwith, and that the nostrum, which I find has had for many years the benefit of his recommendation, should enjoy it no longer. If Dr. Wallis fail in doing this, and more,—if he do not punish, or at least publicly demand from the man who has so long, and doubtless profitably, used his name, an equally public renunciation of his fraud, the profession will, at any rate, know how to regard him, though the public may continue to be deluded by his authentication of a quack medicine, good “for all complaints to which the digestive organs are subject”!—Your obedient servant,
May, 1846. Φιλόκαλος.

* * * The following is the advertisement in question :—

“THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE.

DR. SYDENHAM’S APERIENT FAMILY PILL OF HEALTH, for both sexes, entirely Vegetable, prepared from the prescription of that eminent physician, Dr. Sydenham, who was justly styled the Father of Modern Medicine. A most valuable remedy for Bilious and Liver Complaints, Indigestion, Headach, Giddiness, Loss of Appetite, Flatulency, Gout, Rheumatism, Heartburn, Spasms, Lowness of Spirits, Costiveness, &c.

These celebrated Family Pills have been faithfully dispensed by the present proprietor for more than thirty years, and have obtained from all grades of the community a character and reputation which no medicine of a similar nature can pretend to. Dr. Sydenham’s Pills, being entirely free from Calomel, and a most happy combination of vegetable matter, require no confinement or alteration of diet during their use. Moderate exercise increases their good effects. They may be taken at any time when costive or uneasy in the stomach or bowels; and Sydenham’s Pills should be taken by persons of all ages when in this state, as they assist digestion, correct excesses of the table, give a healthy action to the stomach, remove most of the complaints to which the digestive organs are subject, and will lead to health and a cheerful old age.

Families and the proprietors of boarding-schools should never be without a supply of this valuable family medicine, as Sydenham’s Pills may be resorted to with the greatest safety and success on the first appearance of indisposition, and by adopting this course many serious and too often fatal attacks will be entirely prevented.

The following is the opinion of an eminent Physician practising extensively in Bristol and Clifton :—

“I have examined the composition of Dr. Sydenham’s Pills, and consider them as a very valuable remedy in all complaints to which the digestive organs are subject, especially Bilious affections, and an innumerable variety of diseases which are the consequences of an irregular and imperfect action of the organs of digestion. G. WALLIS, M.D.”

The high opinion entertained of Sydenham’s Family Pills by many of the most eminent of the Faculty in present practice, as well as the number of testimonials the proprietor is constantly receiving from persons of the highest respectability and standing in society, who have been materially benefited by their use, renders any eulogium on their merits superfluous, and must convince the most sceptical of the superior properties of this valuable established medicine, acknowledged by thousands as the best, safest, and most effectual Family Medicine now before the public.”

Small Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d.; Family Boxes 4s. 6d. and 11s. On the Family Boxes there is considerable saving.

PROFESSOR MURPHY’S REMARKS ON THE PRACTICE
OF THE LATE PROFESSOR DAVIS, AND THE
USE OF THE FORCEPS.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I have just read, with no little surprise, some remarks by Dr. J. Hall Davis, in the last number of your journal, (*THE LANCET*, May 23rd.) In a contribution to the practice of midwifery, Dr. Davis observes, “I am led to these remarks (on a case Dr. Davis details) by a statement, in the form of an opinion, which has made its appearance in a work recently published by Professor Murphy, of University College, whether based upon opportunities for forming a correct judgment or not, we shall see,—that his respected predecessor; the late Professor Davis, was disposed to advocate a boldness in the use of the forceps, by which, from his mode of expressing himself, we are to infer that he was not sufficiently cautious in his admonitions against their abuse, and too frequently