

Parliament. At last the people *willed* them, and the people obtained them.

So let it be with Medical Reform. In this case the Government is not as an opponent, but as our own flesh and blood. Sir G. Grey has even said in the Commons House of Parliament, "that he did not think the objection, which had been urged" (by the colleges) "against *many parts* of the Bill of the honourable member for Finsbury ought to prevail."

Are you, gentlemen, of the same opinion? If so, express it, and they will not prevail. Petition in its favour unitedly, perseveringly—Petition, Petition, Petition. Rest assured that the Government is listening for your voice—they are waiting to ascertain the views which you hold upon this question; they are asking you, as constituents, for a vote of confidence, or no confidence, in your so-called representatives. Be not silent in reply; quit you like men—Ay, or No.—I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

June, 1847.

A PROVINCIAL INFIRMARY SURGEON.

### MEETING OF THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS OF SHROPSHIRE AND NORTH WALES.

THE annual meeting of the Shropshire and North Wales branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, and of the resident medical practitioners of Shropshire, was held on Friday last, at the Raven and Bell, in this town, and was rather numerous attended by members of the profession from Oswestry, Wellington, and other towns.

P. CARTWRIGHT, Esq., of Oswestry, on taking the chair, observed, that in exerting himself to ensure a numerous meeting on that occasion, he had been influenced solely by the desire he felt, as president of the Association, to make himself useful to the profession. He thought advantage should be taken of the parliamentary committee now sitting on Mr. Wakley's Medical Registration Bill, to make the members of the legislature better acquainted with the wants and wishes of medical men. It was only necessary, in his opinion, that they should now come forward and make known their grievances, to gain all that was essential to the prosperity and usefulness of the profession, and raise its members in the estimation of society. By the Registration Bill a line of circumvallation would be drawn round the educated practitioner, broad and distinct enough to separate the mere pretender and quack from those who possessed legal attestations of their medical and surgical skill. Mr. Wakley's Bill was not, perhaps, all that could be desired; but he had done his best to simplify it, and adapt it to the present exigencies of the profession. He thought it was sound in principle, and it also appeared to him that there were many provisions in the Bill that would contribute to the protection and improvement of the profession. Mr. Cartwright then proceeded to point out, at some length, the present anomalous position of general practitioners. Excluded from the College of Physicians and insulted by the College of Surgeons, the great bulk of the profession was, he said, left unprotected, and stripped of that collegiate and social standing which their attainments entitled them to. The powers of the new Charter had been exercised by the Council of the College of Surgeons invidiously, and many had been made fellows who had no more title to that distinction, on the score of merit, than the thousands who had been passed over. The Council had divided a body which was essentially one, and elevated individuals, to the great disparagement of others. He, however, did not know that the members of the College would have very much to complain of, if the Charter had not given to the fellows the sole right to elect the Council, which was a matter of much more importance than conferring an honorary title on a few individuals, and seriously affected the right of the members. As the special advantages of the Bill, and the demands of the profession, were set forth in the petition he had the honour to present to them for signature, he hoped he had done right in preparing one for the occasion.

Mr. WOOD next moved a resolution in favour of the Registration Bill, and remarked that in 1845 the medical practitioners of Shropshire exerted themselves successfully in opposing Sir James Graham's Medical Reform Bills, and he was pleased to see several suggestions then made embodied in the present Bill. It was the duty of every body of men to take care of their own interests; and he trusted, as there was a parliamentary committee sitting, his medical brethren would not be backward in giving such information as would tend to enlighten them on the present state and wants of the profes-

sion. From their own committee, at the time he had just alluded to, nearly three thousand letters were sent out; and he was sure a similar system of agitation was all that was necessary to enable Mr. Wakley to pass his Bill.

The several resolutions advertised in this day's paper were then carried, as well as the following petition, which received about fifty signatures, and was presented to the House of Commons by Mr. Ormsby Gore, on Monday night:—

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.*

The petition of the president and council of the Shropshire and North Wales Branch of the Provincial Medical Association, and of the resident medical and surgical practitioners of Shropshire, in public meeting assembled, sheweth,—

That your petitioners beg respectfully to express their gratitude for the consideration you have evinced towards the medical profession, by the appointment of a committee to investigate the subject of medical registration, and the state of the law relating to the practice of medicine and surgery in these kingdoms.

That your petitioners are of opinion that the grievances which affect the medical profession arise from the following causes:—

1st. That ignorant and unqualified persons have the power of assuming with impunity professional titles and degrees, and thereby grossly and injuriously imposing on the public.

2nd. That no uniform standard of conjoint medical and surgical education exists, and that divers colleges and bodies corporate have the privilege of granting degrees and titles, at rates of education and qualification essentially differing from each other.

3rd. That the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons hold an irresponsible power, which, in the instance of the College of Surgeons, under their recent charter, has been arbitrarily and injuriously exercised towards its members.

4th. That the Apothecaries' Company is the only body corporate capable of granting a licence to practice in England and Wales, and may thus interfere to prevent those from practising who possess higher qualifications than the members of that body.

Your petitioners, therefore, considering it essential to the health and safety of the public, as well as to the improvement of the profession, that these grievances be redressed, entreat your honourable house,—

1st. That the Medical Registration Bill be passed into a law.

2nd. That one uniform and determinate standard of conjoint medical and surgical education, combined with two or more practical examinations, be established, and that no person, after the passing of the Medical Registration Bill, be registered or entitled to practice, who cannot produce testimonials of having completed such conjoint education and examination, excepting always those in actual practice at the time of the passing of such Bill, and qualified to be registered under it.

And 3rd. That a just and fair system of representation be accorded to the great body of the members of the profession in their several colleges; and, in particular, that the irresponsible power now possessed by the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons be so modified, on the representative system, as to impart to those institutions a greater influence, security, and efficiency.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

In the evening, most of the gentlemen who attended the meeting dined together in the large room at the "Raven and Bell," under the presidency of Mr. Cartwright. The usual loyal and professional toasts were given, and Dr. Drury, of this town, was elected president of the Association for the ensuing year.

### Correspondence.

#### FEES FROM LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANIES.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

Asylum Foreign and Domestic Life Office,  
72, Cornhill, London, June, 1847.

SIR,—Your correspondent J. A. W., in your number of 29th ultimo, observed that a moderate annual contribution by the several life offices to a fund for the relief of the widows and orphans of medical men, whilst forming a large certain addition to the fund for the support and comfort of the

bereaved individuals whose interests it represents, would be a graceful conciliation of the very painful and difficult question now constantly raised between the office, the referee, and the proposer.

As I addressed you on this difficult question as far back as 1837, and you were good enough to publish my letter in *THE LANCET* of Nov. 11th in that year, I now lose no time in saying that the Asylum Company, of which I am resident director, and which has uniformly acted on the opinions then expressed, will feel much pleasure, as one of the one hundred existing life offices, in making a contribution to a Life Insurance Fund, for the benevolent object advocated by your correspondent, so soon as we shall receive an intimation of such a system being in operation.—I have the honour to be, your obedient servant,

GEO. FARREN.

COPY OF A LETTER ADDRESSED TO MR. H. SMITH.

SIR,—Having seen in this day's *LANCET* a correspondence bearing your name, I beg to suggest that it should be inserted in *The Times* newspaper. I am sure there are many spirited medical men still left among us that will subscribe to pay the expense. I, for one, am ready to contribute my mite, if the correspondence be inserted, bearing the names of all the parties, except that perhaps of the gentleman whose life was to be insured, and if he made no objection, that should also be given in full.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

G. I. PINCHING, Surgeon.

Gravesend, May 8th, 1847.

EXTRACT FROM THE "POST MAGAZINE," DEFENDING NON-PAYMENT.

"The information is usually required by the authorities of life assurance offices, at the request of the patient himself; so that if it be not given, the question of withholding it is entirely between the doctor and the individual of whose state of health he declines to afford testimony. The person who goes to an assurance office to make a proposal for effecting an assurance on his life, does so, we presume, for the benefit of his family, and not with the remotest view of advancing the interests of the parties with whom he desires to form the contract. It is, therefore, the greatest piece of absurdity in the world, for that individual's medical adviser to decline stating what has been his knowledge of the patient's constitution, on the ground that the office may benefit by the information. References of every kind are, invariably, for the benefit of the parties giving them. A man wishes to obtain credit as a trader, and gives a reference to some friend who will bear testimony to his honesty. What would be thought of the friend who declined to give any opinion upon the subject, without receiving a fee from the merchant, under a consideration that the latter would derive benefit from the sale of his goods—altogether overlooking the much larger benefit to be derived by the party to whom they are to be disposed of. A person might as well decline to give a character of a good servant, on the ground that the man's new employer would derive advantage from his services.

"It should be observed, that the information required by the assurance offices is simply a statement of knowledge derived from past experience, and not an expression of opinion to be formed by farther inquiry, and the exercise of professional skill; and we assert, that neither morally nor legally can a medical man withhold the information if required by a patient to furnish it. The patient is as much entitled to his physician's opinion respecting his state of health, as he is to the prescription or the medicine by which it is to be improved. He pays for both; and the patient is as legally qualified to send a Life Office letter for the one, as he is to send his own servant for the other.

"The information in such cases, which the medical man is requested to furnish, will in many instances have been derived by himself, at considerable cost to the individual who requests an Assurance office to apply for it; and, even if it were legal to refuse to give an answer to the plain question asked of him, the refusal would be most scandalous, considering the connexion of the parties, and the stake at issue with one of them. Whilst the doctor is huxtering about a trumpety half guinea, his neighbour's family may be thrown into a state of destitution by delay.

"The argument to which we have already referred, that the office profits by the information, is not worth a button. Admit that Assurance offices were to submit to the extortion, it is not these institutions that pay the fee, after all, but the assured, in having a corresponding amount held back from the bonuses by which the value of their policies is increased, according to the profits of the office divided amongst them.

"Further, the proposal is not practicable, inasmuch as, in case of fraud, the office would, by payment of a fee to the medical referee, be deprived from calling him to prove certain facts to which he might be able to depose. The office pays its own medical man, and it is but right that the party proposing to assure should pay his, if payment in that quarter is considered requisite."

LIFE ASSURANCE CIRCULAR.

The Legal and Commercial Office has issued the Address, from which we extract the following. As in this office Mr. Charles Buller, and Mr. Samuel Martin, Queen's Counsel, are trustees, and Mr. Montagu Chambers, Mr. T. O. Anderdon, and Mr. Cockburn, all Queen's Counsel, are directors, the circular may be taken as a sufficient answer to the legal opinions of the "Post Magazine."

"Legal and Commercial Life Assurance Society,  
73, Cheapside, London, Feb. 1847.

"In presenting to your notice a prospectus of the Legal and Commercial Life Assurance Society, I beg leave to direct your attention to some peculiar privileges offered by this Society to the medical profession, which it is presumed will bespeak the favourable consideration and support of its members. *This Society admits most fully the just claims of the medical referee to a fee, on requiring from him a certificate of the health of the party proposing to effect a life assurance.*

"It is clearly for the benefit of the Society, and therefore of the assurers themselves, of whom the Society is composed, that the medical referee should answer the queries proposed to him fully, carefully, and with reference to his past experience, of the health of the party seeking an assurance—he is even required to give an opinion as to the eligibility of the life for assurance. The information thus given by the medical referee is of a confidential nature, and it is a document of value to the office, yet it is customary to refuse a fee for it. Surely it is unreasonable to require or expect that this service should be rendered without the payment of a fee.

"This Society has advanced a step further in recognition of the rights of the medical profession to remuneration for the performance of services which are decidedly conducive to the prosperity of the Society. It has placed the medical practitioner on an equal footing with the solicitor in that respect, and it allows him the same liberal commission usually given to other professional men for the introduction of a life for assurance on the completion of the assurance.

"Few men have more frequent opportunities than medical men of appreciating the necessity and benefits of life assurance, and of extending widely its sphere of usefulness, by recommending it in the numberless instances which come under their notice, where its timely adoption may be the only means of securing future provision to families.

"J. C. HARDY, Sec."

THE EQUITABLE LIFE OFFICE.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—I am glad to find that Mr. Henry Smith has revived the subject of fees to medical men, when consulted by Assurance Societies on the safety and security of transacting business with their customers; and I am surprised there should be any difference of opinion by whom the medical man should be remunerated, or that his fee should not be given him before he has given his opinion, thereby releasing him from the bias so generally admitted to influence opinions. The office says he is to get it from his patient. Yes—after he has offended him by giving an honest opinion, on which the policy is refused. I have more than once offended a valuable patient by so doing. As to the office not divulging the answer, it is sheer nonsense; it will be discovered by the patient when he applies to the office a second time to get his answer to the proposal; and I know, from experience, that the medical man does not get a fee in half the cases, unless it comes from the office.

Sir, the public is not generally aware of the great wealth and superior advantages derivable from assurance in the Equitable Society, that society never advertising, or allowing public reports from its quarterly meetings. Now this rich society has obtained opinions from medical men on nearly 30,000 policies, since its institution in 1762, without fee, thereby saving as many guineas, which were justly and honourably due to members of the medical profession—a considerable sum of itself, by accumulation. By this means, and the excellent management of its directors and other officers, it has at present a fund of between nine and ten millions sterling, although, in the years 1830 and 1840, more than six millions were given in additions to the 5000 oldest policies.