

4th.—The creation of a fund, to be appropriated to the protection of the members, and for the general exigencies of the society.

5th.—The establishment of a *benevolent* fund, by contributions from members of the profession at large, and other charitable persons, for the relief of distressed medical men and their families.

The limits of a prospectus will not allow of a full detail of the objects contemplated; but it may be observed, in addition to the foregoing general statement, that it is intended, as soon as practicable, to effect some regulation respecting the mode of professional compensation; and, if necessary, to procure a legislative enactment to authorise the General Practitioner to make a fair and open charge for his services. It is also intended to protect, individually, those members who may become involved in questions which may be considered by the Committee to affect the interests of the society as a body.

Notwithstanding that there are numerous charitable funds for relieving distressed members of particular branches of the medical profession, it is found that there are many members of that profession who are not objects of relief from any of those funds; and it is, therefore, to supply this desideratum, that the plan of a General Benevolent Fund has been adopted, the application of which, it is intended, *should not be confined to this Society exclusively*, but should be extended, at the discretion of the Committee, *to every member of the profession*.

The affairs of the society are under the management of a president, vice-president, and a committee.

A house, or chambers, will be engaged, as early as possible, for the use of the society.

The society will meet at such stated periods, and in such manner, as will be hereafter determined.

The foregoing is a brief statement of the views of the founders of this society, and of the advantages intended from its institution, the plan of which may be enlarged, or curtailed, according to the support it may receive.

The committee of management entertain a confident hope that the society will be of great utility to the general body of practitioners, whose attention to this subject is earnestly recommended.

WILLIAM GAITSKELL, President.

* * It is requested that all applications and communications be made and addressed (post paid) to Mr. W. Senhouse Gaitskell, Solicitor, 21, Stamford Street, Blackfriars.

DETECTION OF NITRIC ACID.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Since my paper on nitric acid was sent to your Journal for insertion,* I have made some additional observations on the decolorisation of the sulphate of indigo, for which I shall feel obliged by a place in your columns, as an appendix to the remarks already submitted to your readers.

I have made trial of various specimens of sulphuric and muriatic acids, and find that the former, if of the brown tint, or after exposure to the air, does not act so powerfully as the *transparent* kind; one transparent sample in my possession, obtained from Mr. Smith, of College Street, totally bleaches the blue fluid, in the proportion of twenty drops to 43, while another of the brown kind requires nearly treble that quantity to produce the same effect. On the other hand, the yellower the muriatic acid the more powerful is its bleaching action; if long kept and much exposed to the air, it loses much of its power.

Besides these acids, I find that the following substances, and in the proportions stated, completely destroy the colour, some with an extraordinary degree of delicacy. The most remarkable is the chlorate of potash, which acts in the ratio of the 400th part. The protomuriate of tin bleaches the solution in the cold, in the proportion of 1 to 180; when boiled, 1 to 300. Acidulated promuriate of iron, prepared from the red oxide, and a specimen of muriatic acid, of very inferior decolorising power, destroyed the colour in the proportion of 1 to 580. The muriate of potash, prepared with the same acid and carbonate of potash, in the proportion of 1 to 250. Caustic potash, when boiled, caused a yellowish coagulation, and the discharge of the colour, which was faintly restored on the cautious addition of a little nitric acid after the fluid had cooled. The hydriodate of potash also caused decolorisation, and the action was accompanied by brisk effervescence.

It is only necessary for me to remark further, that experimentalists on this subject should not tint the fluid *too deeply* with the sulphate of indigo, otherwise the superior *delicacy* of the nitric acid in effecting the discharge of colour, may lead to an erroneous idea, that the sulphuric and muriatic acids do not act as I have described. In instituting a set of comparative experiments, Dr. Christison's directions should be implicitly observed, namely, "A solution of

* Dr. O'Shaughnessy's paper was received early in February, but accidentally mislaid till the time of its publication.—Ed.

indigo in sulphuric acid is to be added to the inspected fluid, till it communicates a perceptible blue tint; care being taken not to make the tint too dark," &c. The best method of preparing the blue fluid, is by triturating indigo with a little strong sulphuric acid, then boiling it for a few minutes in a Florence flask, diluting with water, and filtering. The filtering is especially necessary, as different effects are produced in a fluid containing indigo mechanically suspended and another holding it completely dissolved.

I am, Sir,

Your very obedient servant,

W. B. O'SHAUGHNESSY, M.D.

65, Lauriston, Edinburgh,

June 2d, 1830.

DUBLIN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

MR. CARMICHAEL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg leave to disabuse you, and, through you, the public, respecting certain grossly calumnious misstatements contained in your leading article of May the 29th, 1830.

On the 15th day of May, Mr. Carmichael gave notice of the following motion: "That he would move that the College should elect annually, from amongst its members at large, a council of fifteen (five to form a quorum), to whom shall be confided all those matters now managed by the Treasury, Finance, Museum, and Library Committees; and that all by-laws be prepared by this body, and be submitted by them to the College; that they shall report their proceedings at each quarterly meeting; and that one-third of this number shall not be re-eligible the succeeding year." He prefaced it by saying, that his reasons for this notice were, that the members were becoming too numerous for a deliberative body; that in the infancy of the College, its affairs might easily be conducted by the members at large, when its meetings usually consisted of from ten to twenty members; but that now, when the large room of meeting was usually filled, the debates became so lengthened, that seldom any of the senior members could attend so as to be useful, and that, consequently, the business of the College was in the hands of the juniors, or rather in the hands of such demagogues of the body, as took the trouble of caballing for votes; and it was well known that a regularly organised body managed the business of the College, having the power of dispensing its funds, regulating its proceed-

ings, and even of making by-laws, a precious sample of which was exhibited in those relating to the qualifications of candidates for letters testimonial, and in the shameful distinctions made between those laid down for the apprentices and students who had not been indented. That, therefore, he proposed a system by which the College should entrust the management of its affairs to a council elected annually by its own members, to which all should be eligible, and for fear of any undue influence or reservation of power, that five of this number should be deemed ineligible for the succeeding year.

Was this, Mr. Editor, the appointment of a council "partly appointed for life"? or was there any thing analogous in a body thus elected by a fair system of delegation, to the *junto* in Lincoln's Inn Fields? Let us place side by side the form of government of the London College, and that proposed by Mr. Carmichael, and we shall see, that far from resembling one another, they are in every respect contrasts. The council of the London College were originally appointed by Government for life, with power themselves to fill up vacancies occurring in their body by death. They are thus at present self-elected, have absolute control over the affairs of the College, and are in no degree responsible to the body they govern for their use or abuse of power. In the constitution proposed by Mr. Carmichael for the Irish College, the council were to be elected by the members at large, *annually* and *by ballot*; a third of the members of council were to retire from office at the end of each year, and the whole might be dismissed, at the pleasure of the College, if they had shown themselves unworthy of the trust reposed in them; and, finally, all by-laws were to be passed at the quarterly meetings of the College itself.

But though Mr. Carmichael's scheme were all it has been represented to you, it would still be infinitely preferable to the existing state of things; for no system of government could be attended with such injury and disgrace as the present.

Doctor Jacob, instead of replying to any of Mr. Carmichael's arguments, brought in by the head and shoulders some observations on Mr. Carmichael's introductory lectures; but, although we were present, we cannot bring to our recollection in his "eloquent reply," any thing but his usual tirade of froth, vulgarity, and apparent disregard for truth. Notwithstanding the strong reasons for passing Mr. Carmichael's motion, he withdrew it, perceiving that the sense of the meeting was against it.

In the Number of THE LANCET for February 6, 1830, you comment, with no less justice than severity, on the disgraceful,