

see disease in all its variety of clime, type, and malignity affecting mankind; sanitary reports are sent yearly to England from all stations, and no doubt contain valuable information. "Why not make these treasures public for the profession generally?" Depend on it they would be appreciated.

Now let me make the following suggestions:—Army medical officers are constantly returning home, on leave or duty, from all parts of the world; let them be invited to give a public lecture on any subject in their profession they fancy; some like medicine; others, surgery, chemistry, botany, zoology, or other branches of science. Let those who are willing be invited to do so, with the approval and sanction of the chief of the Army Medical Department presiding; make the matter *voluntary*, and plenty will be found who can do so with credit. When these lectures are decidedly the work of industrious men, let them not be forgotten in professional advancement. There is no royal road to learning, and men rewarded in this way will, I think, consider they honestly deserve it, and no grumbling can ensue: no interest of "general this," or "colonel that," of the Guards, to have men kept at home for a few years, and promoted over others, whose bronzed and care-worn features bespeak their hard duties.

There are many eminent physicians and surgeons in the service who, I think, will be inclined to approve of my suggestion, and give a public status to the department. Why keep the valuable contents of the Military Medical Museum at Chatham? Medical officers there are birds of passage, and cannot fully appreciate the wide-world collection. A few years back a proposal was made to establish a military medical club in London by subscription of so many days' pay. I, for one, responded to it, but the matter dropped. Now that the department has greatly increased, I think it feasible. The advantages that would accrue are obvious. Remove the valuable museum from Chatham to London, attach a lecture-room, and it would tend more to the advancement of the department than anything else. If this cannot be done, annex the collection to that of Hunter at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, and distinguish it as the "Military Collection." When quartered at Hongkong, I presented many valuable curiosities to the department, especially Chinese oil-paintings. The latter cost me there over thirty guineas; but I have heard (I hope it is not true) that these very pictures lie in a lumber-room at Chatham, at the service of the spiders, unnoticed and uncared for. This should not be.

Lastly, if my proposal of lectures should be thought worthy of consideration, (remember we have dedicated some to Hunter, Harvey, and other great men of our profession,) dedicate my proposal to the deceased chief, as "the M'Grigor lectures."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

The Grove, Clevedon, Somerset,  
April, 1858.

J. MC G. CROFT, M.D.,  
Staff-Surgeon, *resigned*.

## THE ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE AGAIN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I address you on a subject of much importance to the less fortunate of our professional brethren, their widows, and orphans—viz., the bartering and trafficking for votes at the elections of the Royal Medical Benevolent College, and the abuses inseparable from the system of *proxy voting*, whereby the more needy and friendless of the candidates are virtually deprived of a fair chance of success. I offered some remarks to the governors last year, which were followed by complaints from Mr. Allison, of Retford, and Mr. Jones, of Beaumaris, the latter of whom shortly afterwards sent to the editor of the *British Medical Journal* the following extract from a note addressed to him by Mr. Probert:—"The Council and myself are quite of the same opinion as yourself in respect to the mode of voting, and be assured it will be altered before the next election."

The only notice I have seen of any alteration on the subject of voting was an announcement in December last, that "governors may use their votes for as many candidates as there are vacancies to be filled, or may accumulate them all on any one candidate;" and that "new subscriptions need not be paid one month before an election in order to enable governors to vote." No reference was made to proxy voting. The effect of these alterations, with the aid of proxy voting, will, I apprehend, be, to convert the election into a simple question of purchase. For example: if there be six vacancies, six votes may be purchased for a guinea at the time of election, and given immediately for any one candidate; if there be eight

candidates, eight candidates may be bought for the same sum, and so on, in proportion to the number of vacancies to be filled up. Any candidate who can secure the attendance of an active friend or agent, with his wits about him and his pockets duly lined, need not be very apprehensive of failure, for the longest purse will always prevail; but small indeed will be the chance of the poor and needy, the friendless orphan, and the necessitous widow, and equally small will be the chance of success to the regular subscribers and governors, who support and have supported the charity by their annual contributions, if their votes can be swamped by the votes of governors made on the day of election, to serve a particular purpose, and who, when that purpose is served, will probably never be heard of again. No greater discouragement can be given to charity than the misuse of charitable funds; and surely that cannot be said to be a good use which fails to carry out the benevolent intentions of the donors by failing to secure fair play in the election of objects. The elections should be so arranged and conducted as to be above suspicion; and this, I think, is not difficult. Let Law 15, which provided that *no governor should vote whose subscription had not been paid one month before the election*, be re-enacted; let every governor be required to return his voting paper, *sealed up*, to the secretary by a given day; and let a general meeting of the governors be called within a week to open the voting papers, and, rejecting any papers that may have been improperly tampered with, ascertain and declare which candidates are elected. There will then be less opportunity for collusion and barter than the present system offers. The purchase of votes on the day of election to hospital appointments has been found so prejudicial to the best interests of the charities, by excluding the best practitioners, who will not become purchasers, that in many hospitals a law has been introduced to prevent it; and I fear the removal of this salutary check will be found equally injurious to the Royal Medical Benevolent College, by excluding the most worthy, because the most necessitous, of the applicants.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Stamford, April, 1858.

EDWARD BARBER, M.R.C.S.

## MEDICAL REFORM—THE STAMP DUTY ON DIPLOMAS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—May I call the attention of the profession to a point of no little importance. It is proposed to grant a new charter to the Royal College of Physicians of London, which is to become the Royal College of Physicians of England. In this case many physicians in the provinces may wish to join it; but many of them, in common with myself, have had to pay a considerable sum for stamp duty. As a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, to which a new charter is also to be granted, I have already paid £25 for stamp duty on my diploma. Is it just or reasonable that on joining another College of Physicians, in another division of the United Kingdom, I should have to pay this duty a second time?

Now that the medical reform question appears in a fair way of being settled, I would, through THE LANCET, urge this subject of stamp duty on the consideration of my brother physicians. I have written to the Hon. W. F. Cowper and to the two members for Sheffield, and I would advise every physician in the provinces also to urge this point on their own members. Considering our labours for the public, without fee or reward, in hospitals, dispensaries, &c. &c., I think it would only be reasonable to remit the stamp duty on all medical diplomas. At any rate we must not be called on to pay a second time; for if we have to do so, the advantages of medical reform will indeed be questionable.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sheffield, April, 1858.

JOHN CHARLES HALL, M.D.

## THE MEDICAL BILLS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—When Lord Palmerston, with earnest purpose of bettering the legislation of the country on medical affairs, brought the subject before Parliament in 1854, he declared that the primary object he sought to establish was uniformity of education. His vigorous penetration led him at once to seize this important principle, and in introducing the subject he used these words—"That which is wanted is some uniform system of education, some uniform test of qualification." The whole profession assented with one voice to the truth of Lord Palmerston's declaration, and would have thought it monstrous