

firmed; and that, unless countervailing antidotes be seasonably applied, the report of that commission, in 1828, will contain some admirable illustrations of the art of advancing backwards! It does not, indeed, follow, that their report, whether good or bad, will be necessarily acted upon. But it is obvious that the discussion of the subject is likely to be more useful and efficient before, than after the preparation of that report. By this course, the Commissioners themselves may be prevented from being misled by erroneous impressions, and the danger averted of their attempting, under delusion, to mislead parliament, and the public; and if, after the solemn warnings that are thus seasonably given to them, they should recommend the adoption of regulations, which, it has been shown, must prove mischievous, they will incur a double share of responsibility. In this I am strictly following the medical maxim, that "to prevent is easier than to cure." The sum of knowledge acquired during a course of preliminary education at the English Universities, is by no means in the ratio of the time occupied in acquiring it. To obtain the degree of B. A. in Cambridge, we are informed by an anonymous writer, that the questionist or candidate is expected to take in to the Senate House—the vulgar rules of arithmetic, four books of Euclid, and the first part of algebra, as that science is divided in Wood's Elements. Dr. Monk, late tutor of Trinity College, is quoted for asserting, "except in very few cases, the whole may be acquired in less than a year; thus leaving two years and a half to be employed in a way of which the University exacts no account." Now I should be glad to hear it explained, being much too obtuse to discern it myself, in what manner, and to what degree, the quantity and kind of preliminary knowledge mentioned, acquired in the space of three years, can benefit the medical student in the future exercise of his profession; and for what most requisite reasons the Universities of the north should, in this respect, be assimilated in discipline to those of the south. On the other hand, I can readily discern, without any extraneous aid, why, in respect to discipline strictly medical, the Universities of the south, in which "there is no provision made for the teaching of medicine or surgery, nor any course of medical study required for the degree of M. B.," should be assimilated to those of the north. To this there appears to be only one objection of which I am aware, viz. that, as under the very imperfect discipline at present pursued, the English Universities have the miraculous faculty of sending forth physicians of a superior rank to any that are elsewhere to be found, it is to be apprehended, that if their medical education were

rendered less imperfect, there would not be upon earth a rank sufficiently exalted to reward the merits of their medical graduates. Such a phenomenon cannot fail to be regarded as still more wonderful, (for truly the age of miracles cannot be said to be yet passed,) when we consider that, whilst from Oxford and Cambridge united there do not issue, at an average, six medical graduates in the year, and that from a hundred to a hundred and twenty are annually sent forth by Edinburgh alone, every one of the six southern should so far surpass in merit any one of the hundred and twenty northern graduates, that the former come forth ready made masters, in the shape of fellows, and the latter ready made slaves, in the shape of licentiates. Such miracles, I apprehend, are unknown in any other profession than medicine, and in any other country than England. But the spell is already broken. Let the medical graduates of the north henceforward rally under the legitimate standard of the independent physicians, associated in the metropolis, under the designation of "The Faculty of Physic," and they will be protected in their rights and privileges against all the machinations of the *magi* of the College of Charles II., who are utterly powerless, as will shortly be experimentally proved, excepting in the exercise of undue authority over those who are their blind or willing slaves. The power of the independent physicians, when united, is, on the contrary, for all good purposes, irresistible.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

AN ANTI-MONOPOLIST. C.

London, May 31, 1827.

DESIGNS OF THE "FACULTY OF PHYSIC."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Lord Byron has justly said, "cant is the crying sin of this double-dealing and false-speaking time of selfish spoilers—cant political, cant religious," and he might have added, cant *philanthropical*; thus all the late joint-stock companies held forth in their prospectuses, that their plans were for the public good. But I wish to confine my observations to the literary operations of an anonymous society of physicians, styling themselves the "Faculty of Physic." As these gentlemen, by their proposed innovations, purpose to affect, in a considerable degree, the interests of the general practitioner, and have thrust their opinions on the public in a variety of forms, I, as a general practitioner, feel that supineness would be a neglect of duty, for it is imperative in every man to uphold the respecta-

bility of his calling in life, individually and generally. The objects of this association are fully set forth in a document inserted in your publication of the 3d of February, wherein their professed object is to re-organise the whole medical profession, or, in other words, to substitute physicians in lieu of general practitioners. This conclave might not inappropriately be called the *joint-stock company of physicians*, having for their object "*to bring into activity the GREATEST SUM of talent, knowledge, and integrity, and to ensure to the COMMUNITY, (mark!) in the highest attainable degree, the preservation of health and prolongation of life!*" *Risum teneatis.* This whining pseudo-philanthropy may catch the *οι πολλοι*; but this junta should be aware, that there are some too deeply read in human nature not to see that pretended public good is made the stepping-stone to private aggrandisement. These gentlemen go on to say, that, "from their position in society, they have no interest in perpetuating delusion or abuse." Do they mean that they have no interest in a change in the organisation of the medical profession but that which results from their desire for the *public good*? As to any alteration they may contemplate in the regulations of the London College of Physicians, I dare say it may be necessary, reasoning on the broad principle, that in all human institutions mal-organisation may take place; for man, and the works of his hands, must decay, fall, and pass away. As regards men corporate, it is as well known that they will give rise to regulations and acts which, as individuals, they would shrink from, as that two horses will bear double the burthen one will, although perhaps not in the same ratio.

Passing on to their resolutions, they seem to think, with Sterne, that "they manage these things better in France;" and taking their computations as correct, we find, that where there is one physician in London, relative to the population, there are five in Paris; and where there is one surgeon in Paris there are five in London; thus the physicians and the surgeons have changed places. These surgeons, I contend, are the only *respectable* general practitioners; for putting aside the facility of admission into the London College of Surgeons, to become a member of it subjects the student to a course of study in anatomy and clinical instruction in an hospital which, in the majority of cases, must qualify him to become a respectable practitioner; therefore the 2,000 practising apothecaries (if such a number exist) can, in London at least, be little better than venders of medicine, and their practice must be confined to such a class as not at all to interfere with the physician. If any body of men have reason to complain of the apothecaries, especially of

their undertaking surgical cases, it is the members of the College of Surgeons; and at the same time to regret that, from supineness or imbecility, their College has not procured for them one legislative enactment to prevent unqualified persons from encroaching on their duties. The facility of obtaining a licence from the Company of Apothecaries is so notorious, that men, denominated *Grinders*, advertise to ensure success for one guinea.

The Apothecaries Act, in my humble opinion, has brought, and is daily bringing, more discredit on the medical character of this country than any one judicial act that could possibly have been devised. It has sent forth men, under LEGISLATIVE SANCTION, from behind the counters of the medicine venders and apothecary, after *six months* attendance upon lectures and the practice of a dispensary, to remedy morbid actions in the varied and complicated parts of the human frame, a piece of mechanism, the *chef d'œuvre* of the Almighty, of which they know not the fabric or the function. From a perusal of their circular, I think it will be obvious that the object of this association is to diminish the number of general practitioners and increase the physicians. Now, taking them on their own ground, what advantage are the public to derive from the change? Is there any talisman in a Scotch diploma which makes the professor superior to the general practitioner? Are the facilities of acquiring knowledge in medical science in Edinburgh superior to those in London? Or are surgery and physic quite separate sciences, or are they "one and indivisible?" The general practitioner prescribes in medical and surgical cases, and he superintends the preparations of his medicines. Is there any thing so complicated in pharmacy as to distract his attention from the healing art, which has been absurdly divided into *medicine* and *surgery*? The general practitioner practices midwifery, and, allowing for one moment the divisions of medicine and surgery, to which does it belong? Then who so fit as he who practices in both? Is his practice in his profession more confined than the physician's? Then in what is he inferior to him? In the pomp of an empty name. I apprehend that the respectable general practitioner, on the average, will be found, in his education, equal—in his acquirements, superior—and, in his practice, to have more extensive opportunities of obtaining knowledge, than the physician. I would contend, that he who understands and practices his profession *generally*, will be a more able practitioner in each separate branch than he who commences by practising in but *one* of the divisions. In a large metropolis, like London, I have no doubt such a division of

labour as exists is beneficial to the public, and a medical man, after some years exercising his profession as a general practitioner, may, with advantage to himself and the community, confine his attention to but one branch; and with his practical knowledge he will leave far behind him the young devotee of the dogmas and theories of schools and colleges. Again, in country towns and villages, who will you substitute for a general practitioner? But allowing it practicable in large towns, where is the family who would like to have, at various times, three distinct individuals, the physician, the surgeon, and the accoucheur? Capricious fashion might reconcile it in high life, but in the middle ranks of society, where the general practitioner, from his habits of familiarity and his education is looked up to as a friend and counsellor, and is often called upon to "minister to a mind diseased," to relieve the mental agony of the sick and become the comforter of their kindred, his coming is looked for with anxiety, and his presence is hailed with gladness. He becomes the depository of the secrets of families, and to him are divulged hidden infirmities which delicacy would conceal from a comparative stranger. I ask, in middle life, how would you replace the general practitioner?

From the interests of the general practitioner having become invaded simultaneously by this joint-stock company of physicians and Sir Anthony Carlisle, it would almost appear that a coalition had taken place between them to reduce the general practitioner to a *pharmacien*, or exalt him to the rank of a *pure* surgeon. I would ask the doughty knight, where is a woman, in the "pain and peril of child-birth," to look for comfort and assurance of well-doing? Surely not to one whom she knows to be weak and like unto herself. Let a hæmorrhage come on, and in what female attendant will be found presence of mind to dictate, and firmness to carry into execution, the necessary remedial measures? And as to any improper feeling in a medical man towards a parturient female, who would entertain such an idea for a moment? It is a libel on human nature.

In conclusion, I must beg leave to apologise for taking up so much space in your journal in considering the Utopian projects and propositions of this *anonymous* society of physicians, feeling convinced that the *respectable* GENERAL PRACTITIONER will continue to enjoy the confidence of the community in defiance of the Apothecaries Act, the effusions of Sir Anthony Carlisle, or the projects of the *independant* association of physicians. I am, Sir, yours &c.

Hammersmith, W. SIMPSON.

June 12th, 1827.

PROFANATION OF THE COLLEGE OF EDINBURGH!

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As you seem to take cognisance of what goes on in our Hospital, perhaps you may feel inclined to make known some of the almost incredible proceedings in the College, to wit, ladies studying *midwifery* and *natural philosophy*! Will you believe it? The sacred portals, formerly darkened only by the flowing gowns of Robertson, of Black, Stewart, Cullen, Playfair, and Gregory, are now profaned by the rustling sarsnet, silk, and satin, of a petticoat audience, and muffs and parasols occupy the places of text and note-books. *Ita res se habet*. Last year Hope pocketed some 800*l.* by his ladies' course of chemistry, and would have done the same this year, but for the *goring* he received from "*John Bull*" on account of it. This season Leslie, who likes money and good living nearly as well as he does philosophy, and whose corporation would spurn Jack Falstaff's girdle by some inches, has been spouting away on thunder and lightning, pneumatics, and hydraulics, to the same party. What times we live in! It is reported, that three or four of those who attended Hope last year, have actually *matriculated*, and taken advantage of the College rules! It happens that little Hamilton, the midwifery man, lectures in the same wing of the quadrangle with Leslie, in a room above him, which the wags call the Cock-loft, and at the same hour. He, too, has conceived the preposterous idea of his lectures being entertaining and useful to the fair sex! Further, the clinical and therapeutic lectures are given at 4 p.m., the hour the *femmes sages* and *sages femmes* come down from their studies, and the same stair leading also to this lecture room, we have the daily felicity of encountering them on their passage down. Drs. Alison and Graham, the professors of the two last-mentioned branches, never before had so many "*bloods*" in their class, as since this meeting on the stair has been going on. What a fine stimulus to study! These gentry would, to a man, have been sporting it in Prince's Street, had not such rich opportunities presented themselves in their own halls.

To return to the principle of blue-stock-ing lectures, how must your readers despise those who adopt such measures. Hope, they say, wanted a wife, and what now corroborates the opinion is, his having banished the hair-powder from his professional cranium, and replaced the vest of