

ciently below the level of the circumscribing belt to make the pressure effective on the uterus, as at present the strain would be almost equally made on the bones of the pelvis. Mr. Kingdon mentioned a belt made by some poor woman, which was worn before delivery, and effectively tightened immediately after by strings, attached for that purpose. Dr. Blicke bore testimony to its advantages. Mr. DENDY considered that Mr. Miles' instrument, by compressing the uterus between the pad and the promontory of the sacrum, would prevent, and not assist, the action of its muscles. The subject led to a discussion of the merits of the various modes in use for suppressing hæmorrhage of the uterus. Dr. Blicke thought plugging of the uterus and vagina the most effectual; Mr. Browne extolled the cold affusion; Mr. Shearley, the acetate of lead; Mr. Waller, bandaging, if it were only for the comfort it afforded; and Dr. Walshman, the insertion into the uterus of a sponge and tape, after clearing out all coagula, keeping the sponge in the uterus three or four days.

LAWS RELATING TO THE PROFESSION OF MEDICINE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit me, through your medium, to draw the attention of the profession to a subject of the greatest importance: it has been frequently stated, and is pretty generally believed, that the Royal College of Surgeons has no power to hinder any individual from practising for his own benefit; this however is erroneous; and to prove this I will quote a passage from a work just published, and which should be in the possession of every medical man.* It is from Mr. Willcock's truly valuable treatise on "The Laws relating to the Medical Profession," &c.; and at page 82, sect 11, is the following:—

"Every person, except a *physician*, however learned or skilful he may be, is liable to a penalty of 5*l.* for *every time* wherein he may practise surgery within the cities of London or Westminster, or within seven miles of London, for his private lucre or profit, before he has been admitted to practise by the College of Surgeons; one half of this penalty is given to the king, and the other to the public use of the commonalty or society; and the masters or governors for the time being are empowered to recover

the same by action in any court held within the city of London." "I am not aware," observes Mr. Willcock, "that any proceedings have ever been instituted under this clause of the charter of Charles the First, which is, by way of reference, incorporated in the act 18 Geo. II. c. 15, by section 8.† And there may be some doubt whether, notwithstanding the words of that section, such penalty can be recovered in any manner, *except* by an action in a court of record, or other public court of the country; for although the charter proposes to give the corporation the power of distress, such power cannot be exercised without making the College both judge and party, and giving some, or the whole, of the members of it, authority to hear and decide in their own cause, which neither the charter nor the statute pretends to give them, and which Lord Holt has said the Legislature cannot give."

"Every person, except a *physician*, however *competent* he may be, is liable to the penalty of five pounds for *every month* during which he may continue to practise surgery in any part of England, *except* London and Westminster, and seven miles around the former city, unless he has been admitted by the College of Surgeons, or *approved* of by the *ordinary*, or, in his absence, by the *vicar-general* of his diocese, and the other appointed persons by 3 H. 8. c. 11. The proceedings under this act against a person practising surgery are similar to those which may be instituted by a *common informer* against an unqualified physician."

This being the case, and from a perusal of the act of 18 Geo. II. c. 15, and of the charter of the 22d of March, 40 Geo. III., I find the above, together with divers other privileges, confirmed in the most positive manner; and although the president and council of the Royal College of Surgeons have not yet thought proper to put these penalties into force (which in the case of some empirics that could be named they ought), yet I, as an humble member of the profession, consider it to be my duty to give this information, and thus afford those liable to the penalties, the power of avoiding any actions which, from this work, it appears the College has the power of instituting against them. And thus let the old adage be borne in mind, that "*a preventive is better than a cure.*" And I would strongly advise every professional man to peruse the work in question, as it contains much judicious advice, combined with a mass of valuable medico-legal information. I have to apologize for the length of this letter, but the subject would not admit of

* Vide Charter, 15 Aug. 5 Car. I. clause 9, inserted in the same work, p. 181.

† Ibid. p. 186.

curtailment, and trusting to your kindness to admit this in your Journal,

I remain yours obediently,

H. W. DEWHURST, Surg.

Grosvenor Terrace, Oct. 1830.

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, Oct. 16, 1830.

We shall say a few words on the work of Mr. Willcock in our next Number. Medical law is now the universal topic. It is an error, however, to suppose that the College of Surgeons has the power to prevent unqualified persons from practising surgery. The Corporation of Surgeons, which existed under the act of 18 Geo. II., expired, or was dissolved, about 1790. The present College of Surgeons, therefore, is, comparatively speaking, a new institution, and was founded under the charter granted by George III. That charter, as it has not been confirmed by Act of Parliament, could not confer upon the members of the Council the privileges that were enjoyed by the Corporation under the Act of Geo. II. If the College of Surgeons possess the powers which Mr. Willcock the barister has conceded to them, why did the Council apply for a *protecting* Act of Parliament in the year 1816? The College took the best advice on the subject. It was well understood that it had not the power to prevent the intrusion amongst the public of unqualified surgeons; therefore it was anxious to obtain an act from the Legislature which should compel all persons who were about to practise surgery, to purchase a diploma from the College. Lord Gifford, the then attorney-general, and the present Lord Chancellor, the then solicitor-general, both stated as their decided opinion, that the College had no power over unqualified practitioners. Hence the application to Parliament; but the Legislature having, in 1815, been nauseated by the Apothecaries' Company, the members of the House of Commons, persons not possessing the most sound constitutions in the world, could not find stomachs for any more physic. The job therefore was rejected, and principally through the exertions of Sir Robert, at that time Mr., Peel. We want one, general, comprehensive law, which can be easily obtained if the members of the profession will only exert themselves in a proper way. We shall endeavour to assist forthwith in the goodly undertaking.

UPON a further inspection, we are not inclined to give publicity to the documents referred to in our last number, concerning the affairs of the WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL, because they are of a nature to place the question upon too narrow a basis, and because they involve many private matters which ought not to be introduced in the discussion of an important public question.

A Correspondent, whose letter we insert at page 108, takes exception to the term "jobbers," which we applied to the promoters of the scheme for rebuilding the hospital at Charing Cross. The expression is certainly a harsh one, and the more so because it is felt to be appropriate by the persons for whom it was intended. At the same time we are most willing to confess that it would be scandalous if we were to insinuate, even for an instant, that the whole party of Trustees, who advocate the removal of the hospital from its present site, are influenced by any motive other than a most ardent desire to uphold the best interests of the charity. It is not right to impute improper intentions to any governor who may support the proposition for removing the hospital to Charing Cross, even if it should be demonstrable that his own private interests would be materially benefited thereby. Neither is such evidence conclusive that the undertaking would be detrimental to the poor, prejudicial to the public interests, or unjust towards the founders of the hospital. The reasons that are advanced on both sides of the question should be carefully considered, and imputations upon motives ought to be studiously avoided; but an opinion delivered on either side of the question, if unsupported by argument, should not have greater weight in deciding the question, than a mere silent vote. What, then, are