

condescend to act in offices which better-educated persons would spurn. The consequence has been, that young men, in some instances, have been engaged as assistants without any qualification whatever for the office—uneducated in every sense of the word. The result has been most unfortunate. The whole community of assistants has been influenced by the incapacity of a few, and consequently most unjustly reduced, in the opinion of the profession, to nearly the same standard. We have received many, and no doubt well-grounded complaints, both from practitioners and assistants, of the conduct pursued by one to the other. We must acknowledge, however, that though the evils are due, in a great measure, to the cause we have specified, it is quite certain that other causes are also in operation to isolate the position of the assistants from their employers. It cannot be denied, that occasionally assistants are not treated with a proper degree of consideration. There is, probably, no profession in which those who are subordinates have more irksome duties to perform than in medicine. If a young man be a dispensing assistant only, the confinement and the monotony of his life are sad drawbacks—for book-keeping does not add to his comforts—but if he be what is called a visiting and dispensing assistant, the addition brings almost constant night-work, and a low practice is fostered. Surely a gentleman who performs all these offices satisfactorily, deserves not only proper remuneration, but great consideration and kindness. That these are awarded to him, is, we believe, true, in many instances; but in others, the very opposite is the case, and the hard-worked and accomplished assistant is treated in a manner which we shall not now designate.

But if some practitioners treat their worthy assistants with unbecoming harshness and neglect, there are assistants who behave in an unjustifiable manner to their employers. They have no *qualification*, as we have said, for their calling; the result may easily be imagined. What then, it will be asked, is the cure for these evils? It will be admitted, we believe, by all unbiassed persons, that to raise the position of the assistant, the first essential is, that he should be *qualified*. This, at all events, would remove the main cause of the evils we have enumerated, by abolishing that “unrestricted competition” which has so long prevailed. No doubt there are many difficulties in the way in carrying out this proposition; but it is quite evident that the competition must be confined to the *qualified*, and this can only be effected by an amendment of the law.

Correspondence.

“Audi alteram partem.”

SMALL-POX AMONGST THE ESQUIMAUX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As the following short notice of small-pox occurring among the Esquimaux of the coast of West Greenland may interest those of your readers who devote a few of their spare hours to epidemiological pursuits, perhaps you may deem it worthy of appearing in the columns of your valuable and widely-circulated journal.

A whaler belonging to one of our northern ports set out upon her voyage in the icy seas early in April. She had not proceeded far on her passage across the Atlantic until small-pox, previously latent in one or more persons, broke out, and spread over a great part of her crew. Early in May, she arrived in Davis Straits; and at this time, or very soon thereafter, two deaths occurred. In pushing northward in quest of whales and with the view of getting to the west coast of the

straits in a high latitude, her commander often thought it prudent to keep close along the coast of West Greenland, to avoid the risks of being carried southward among the drifting ice. On one of his near approaches, the Esquimaux, always on the alert to visit British ships, came off, four in number, from one of the Danish settlements in the Egedesminde district, about latitude $68\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$; and as it has always been the custom to treat these inoffensive creatures with extreme kindness, the commander thoughtlessly permitted them to step on board his infected ship, and to barter their slippers and other trifling articles with her crew, some of whom were now convalescent, receiving in exchange cotton handkerchiefs &c. In a few hours they got into their canoes, and shortly arrived at the settlement, where they made a few passing remarks (which for the time were forgotten) upon the hideously disfigured faces of part of the crew of the ship they had boarded. They soon became ill, many others caught the infection, and in a few weeks six deaths took place from this loathsome disease—a disease which, so far as I know, was never before known to have appeared in Greenland. The diseased were carefully watched by as few attendants as possible, and all intercourse was cut off from the infected settlement; and when I visited a portion of the coast to the northward in the following October, there was not a person, young or old, at any of the settlements to which I had access, who had not been vaccinated; and many of them who had not been present to undergo that operation when the surgeons made their tour, transferred the virus themselves. With these precautions, the spread of the disease was happily prevented.

I remain, Sir, yours respectfully,

P. C. SUTHERLAND, M.D., M.R.C.S.E.,

Late Surgeon in the Arctic Searching Expedition.

Buckingham-street, Strand, Dec. 1852.

HULL MEDICAL PROTECTION SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was not a little surprised the other day at reading your remarks upon the transactions of the Hull Medical Protection Society.

You assert it is not in keeping with the spirit of the age that the Apothecaries' Company should give their sanction to the prosecution of gentlemen who have passed through a certain course of medical education—viz. qualified themselves as candidates for the diploma of the Royal College of Surgeons. I should like to know what the curriculum or examination of the one is, compared to the other—the one a mere bagatelle, capable of being mastered by an ordinary first-year's student; the other only, on an average, by one out of four of those, call them what you will, candidates for the licence; and this statement is not a little confirmed by a comparison of the lists of names I see appended weekly to your valuable journal.

Now, Sir, do you not think that, after serving an apprenticeship of five years, completing a very extended curriculum, undergoing one of the most strict and searching examinations in the kingdom, as well as that comparatively little thought of at Lincoln's-inn-fields, I am not entitled to some protection from the encroachments of the M.R.C.S., who, besides completing a curriculum and passing an examination inferior in every sense of the word to mine, acts boldly in defiance of the law—a law which he ought, and not unfrequently too well knows the existence of, but failing by a series of circumstances to comply with, settles down, practises—nay, I dare assert, robs his more enlightened and liberal-minded neighbour the M.R.C.S. and L.A.C.?

Such the spirit of the age! Gentlemen possessed of the double qualification too tolerant, and members of the Royal College of Surgeons base enough to avail themselves of it. Such should not be the conduct of men professing to be gentlemen in an age like ours. Societies like that in Hull deserve to be supported, and I trust, ere long, more will be established throughout the kingdom. Let those who have the double qualification unite, and petition the Apothecaries' Company to aid them in prosecuting, or, what perhaps would be more acceptable to the majority of members of the Royal College of Surgeons, admit them for examination on presenting their diplomas from this time up to the same period next year; those failing to satisfy the Court of Examiners, or not availing themselves of the opportunity of conforming to the law, to be dealt with accordingly. If gentlemen considered as members of the profession do not conform to the laws of the land, how can it with justice be expected that the dispensing druggist or vile quack will do so? As a true British subject, I considered it my duty to conform to the laws of the country, and I request the members of the College of Surgeons to do the same; and I defy