

If professional attainments are to be estimated by the professional education which the examining bodies require the candidates for their diplomas to show evidence of having received, I do not think that the members of the college, as such, need to plume themselves upon their superiority. The Apothecaries' Company has taken the lead in every branch of medicine, with the exception of one, and that is surgery. This is the case even in regard to anatomy, which might be considered to belong more peculiarly to the college. The examiners at Apothecaries' Hall do not examine into the surgical qualifications of the candidates for their licence; but as I remarked in my former letter, students are so biassed towards the study of anatomy and surgery, that nineteen out of every twenty when they leave London to practise in the country are, whether they have the diploma of the college or not, better surgical than medical practitioners.

The case then stands simply thus: the professional education which is required by the Apothecaries' Hall is better calculated than that of the college to make good medical practitioners in every respect except one, and that is surgery. But this deficiency is remedied by the students themselves, who have strong inclinations for the possession of surgical knowledge, and who, looking forward to the prospect of having to perform all the ordinary surgical operations, such as amputations, operations for hernia, &c., scarcely ever fail to pay such attention to the subject as will enable them to meet any demands which may be made on their surgical qualifications and skill. Even if there be some licentiates who hand over their surgical cases to others that have more coolness and determination, and are possessed of more surgical knowledge than themselves, there are also members of the college to be found whose actions correspond with those of the licentiates. I am, therefore, utterly at a loss to know in what the superiority of the members of the college, taken as a body, consists, except it is in the possession of the diploma, and this I deny to be any test of superiority whatever.

There are several other points which are alluded to by "A Constant Reader," but which do not strictly bear upon the point at issue, and therefore I shall pass them over, except one. Your correspondent considers twenty guineas a small matter. I am glad for his sake that the *res augustæ domi* have not troubled him; but I can assure your correspondent that the reverse has been the case with no inconsiderable number of medical practitioners, who in consequence would not speak so indifferently of the importance of such a sum.

To conclude what I have to say upon this subject. The British Medical Association has adopted, with regard to this double qualification, a style of disrespect towards the

licentiates, which is totally unwarranted by the circumstances of the case. Under pretence of caring for the poor, this association has obtruded its self-exalting notions upon the notice of the poor-law commissioners, and has endeavoured to disparage in public estimation a body of men who I will venture to say, and my assertion will be as good as that of the members of the association to the contrary, are, taken generally, equal in capacity and knowledge to the persons of which the association is composed. I am, Sir, yours, &c.

A SUBSCRIBER.

July 27, 1842.

KIDNAPPING PATIENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In justice to the profession to which I belong, I lay the following glaring case before the public. Had it been a single instance, from the same quarter, I might not have noticed it; but as it is only one out of many, equally bad, I select it as of most interest.

A young man, a dispensary patient, under my charge, laboured under stone in the bladder, for which I advised him to submit to an operation. I stated to him that I would perform the operation in his own house, or, if he preferred it, he might go to the infirmary, where more conveniences would be provided than he could otherwise have. This, the young man said, he would decide upon in a short time. However, in the mean time, the apprentice to a general practitioner in this town, named Elliot, met the young man in a joiner's shop, on leaving which the patient said, "I must go and see Mr. Reeves at the dispensary." The apprentice asked what ailed him, and the patient answered, "I have got stone in the bladder." The apprentice then advised him to call upon Mr. Elliot, and the lad did so. After the patient had answered Mr. Elliot's questions, and stated that Mr. Reeves had advised him to submit to an operation, Mr. Elliot intimated, that if he allowed himself to be operated on he would surely die, and at the same time read to him some statistical table, showing that almost every one died after an operation for stone. Mr. Elliot then proceeded to examine him, and stated that there were two stones, and that he could cure him without cutting, or any danger. This the lad gladly listened to, and came and told me what I have above stated. I told him that I never discovered more than one stone; and if Mr. Elliott had persuaded him to the contrary, he would ultimately find out his mistake. At the same time I informed him that no operation could be unattended with danger.

After a short time Mr. Elliot operated, cut down upon the membranous portion of the

urethra, dilated the prostate, and took away one small stone. I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

WILLIAM REEVES,
Surgeon to the Carlisle Dispensary.
Carlisle, Aug. 8, 1842.

MEDICAL PUBLICATIONS SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am glad to find, from a letter in last week's LANCET, that my suggestion (LANCET, No. 8, May 21), for the formation of a medical publication society, on the plan of the Camden and Parker Societies, is likely to be carried out, and that a committee of medical men in London is about to be organised for the purpose of establishing the society. As the success of the society will mainly depend upon the character of the committee, I trust the forthcoming prospectus will include the names of gentlemen who are well known to the profession, and celebrated for their literary and scientific attainments. The subscribers will then pay their guinea with confidence, and regard the character of the committee as a sufficient guarantee for the prudent fulfilment of the designs of the society. I have reason to think that the proposed society, if properly established, will meet with the support of the profession, and that with good management a thousand subscribers may be obtained. When this is accomplished the satisfactory working of the society, in a pecuniary point of view, will be secured. Suggestions for rules have been sent to me, but I will not occupy your pages with them: my principal object at present is to keep the subject prominently before the profession, being confident that a medical publishing society will be found a most valuable means of spreading widely and cheaply the literature of our profession. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

FERGUSON BRANSON, M.D.
Sheffield, August 9, 1842.

THE INCOME-TAX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—You will oblige me, as well as many other subscribers (those of about three years' standing in practice), by giving in your next Number some information on the following point, viz.,—Are country general practitioners to return themselves in the income list as professional men, or as professional men and *traders*? For instance; a surgeon and apothecary has to *pay* for drugs, and he *sells* the medicines. Therefore he is, to all intents and purposes, in trade. The difference will affect me and many others in this way. I began practice *four* years ago. In

the first two or three years I made but little profit, consequently, if I am allowed to take the three years' average, I can escape the tax; whereas, if I must return myself as purely a professional man, it will be on my last year's receipts, and I become subject to Sir Robert's "tender mercies." This is a very serious point for young practitioners. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

A SUBSCRIBER.

August 7, 1842.

* * If a professional man keep a shop and retail drugs, he is a trader as well as a member of a profession. But if he supply drugs merely in conformity with his own prescriptions, we are of opinion that his return should refer to the *profession* alone.—ED. L.

HAY FEVER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A correspondent of yours asks to be informed "of a successful mode of treatment of the disease termed 'hay fever.'" If he will try the *tinctura lobeliae inflatae*, in drachm doses three times a-day, I think it will not fail in relieving that most troublesome affection. I shall be glad to know the result of his cases, and am your obedient servant,

Q. Q. Q.

August 6, 1842.

NOTE FROM MR. LANGSTAFF.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As your correspondent "W. C. N." has mentioned my name in Mr. Semple's case, perhaps you will have the kindness to insert the accompanying, which deviates materially from the statement made by Mr. Semple. Your compliance will oblige, Sir, yours, &c.

GEORGE LANGSTAFF.

New Basinghall-street,
August 1, 1842.

Some time ago Mr. Semple, jun., called on me with a view of obtaining my opinion respecting a portion of morbid production which he had found on examining the brain of a patient. On first looking at the specimen it resembled a thickened state of the arachnoid membrane, or a vascular adventitious production (appearances I have frequently seen). By careful inspection I detected that the diseased part was composed of two dense layers, with blood in a fluid state between them, which led me to suppose they were portions of the arachnoid coat, and that the effusion of blood occasioned the sudden death of the patient. Had I been present at the autopsy, I might have arrived at a more correct pathological conclusion.