INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.

Is the commencement of an undertaking like the present, it is customary to make some prefatory statement, by which those who give it their support may be put in possession of the views and prospects under which it comes before them. The custom is in itself a harmless one, and as some advantages attend a formal introduction and commendation of a work to the regards of the reader, we shall follow in the beaten course, and shall endeavour, on the present occasion, to set forth the main objects for the promotion of which the Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal is established.

The most important of these are—1st, to use the words of the Address of the Provincial Medical Association, issued at the institution of that body,—The maintenance of the honour and respectability of the medical profession; 2nd, The affording a special means of communication for the several medical and branch associations which have been formed in various parts of the kingdom; 3rd, The promotion, as far as possible, of the interests of these admirable institutions, and more especially of those of the Provincial Association; 4th, The collecting and recording of the numerous facts observed in every part of the provinces, many of which are now diffused through various channels of information, and too often overlooked from the very causes which should render them of the greatest utility; and 5th, The working out of those rich mines of information and medical instruction—the County Hospitals, Infirmaries, and Dispensaries.

The maintenance of the respectability of the profession, as it will readily be perceived, necessarily involves the contemplation of those great questions of medical reform which are now engaging the attention of medical practitioners. In the consideration of these we shall at once take the highest ground,—that of public utility. The establishment of a system of competent medical education; the securing to the profession a wholesome form of government; the suppression of empiricism; the providing of proper medical attendance for those who are unable to procure it for themselves; and the placing of these and other portions of medical police under the superintendence of those who are the best acquainted with the subject,—are all and each of them but so many modes of advancing the welfare and guarding the interests of the community in general. At the same time, these measures have a direct tendency to maintain medical practitioners, as a class, in that rank of society which, by their intellectual acquirements, by their general moral character, and by the importance of the duties entrusted to them, they are justly entitled to hold.

Of the utility of associated interests, both in giving unity to the efforts of the scattered members of the profession for the attainment of the preceding objects, and in encouraging and promoting scientific and practical inquiries, the proceedings of the Provincial Association, and of the several societies which have been formed since the foundation of that body, afford ample proof. The public mind is becoming better informed upon many of these great questions, and more alive to their intrinsic importance. They are beginning to be considered, not merely in the light of a personal struggle, on the part of the medical man, for his own individual rights and privileges, but also as a part of the system of a wise and effective form of government, in which the health and lives of the people become equally objects of attention with the regulation and preservation of the rights of property. The direct bearing of the exertions of these institutions in effecting measures of practical improvement, is evinced by the enactment of the Small-Pox Prevention Act, and the exclusive confiding of the practice of vaccination to the hands of those who are, by education and practice, alone qualified for the task. We feel gratified in announcing that the effects of the Report on Vaccination are becoming more and more manifest. That Report, together with the petition founded upon it, directly led to the most beneficial legislative measure that our profession has ever obtained from Parliament.