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*Provincial Medical & Surgical Journal.*


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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1850.

DR. STEWART'S pamphlet, of which a review appeared in a preceding number of this Journal, opens up a subject of no slight importance in a country abounding as does our own with public hospitals and dispensaries. That deceit and abuse will creep into even the best managed institutions of every kind, is a truth too well acknowledged to require illustration; but admitting this, is it not clearly the duty of those whose province it is to superintend such institutions, to purge them of the delinquencies complained of rather than to sit down quietly under the imputations which are cast upon them? Whatever excuse may hitherto have been adduced for the supineness of the governing bodies of medical charities, on the score of ignorance of the existence of abuses, must now fail to have any weight, for the observations of DR. STEWART have brought to light some faults at least, which cannot be too speedily rectified, if our hospitals and dispensaries are really to be what they profess—institutions for the exercise of benevolence and charity, and not incitements of fraud and selfishness.

A tolerably intimate acquaintance with the working of medical charities has convinced us that the strictures of DR. STEWART are as far from unmerited as his accusations are from being overcharged; on the contrary, there are to our minds some matters untouched upon which might fairly have been added to the sum of charity improprieties; he has, however, as it is, provided ample food for reflection.

Of the first abuse referred to, that of persons becoming dispensary patients, for the sole purpose of extorting extraneous charity on the strength of the admission ticket, there is we fear but little to be said beyond admitting that it is one of the common resorts of mendicancy, and one, moreover, which has not been exposed among the many ingenious devices for contravening the injunction "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," which of late days have been so prominently held up to public reprobation. We do not, we confess, see any very feasible remedy for it, unless medical officers shall exercise more circumspection in admitting

patients, and become less terrified than is their wont, at the idea of offending the recommending governor, by shewing up the deception which has been practised upon him. That the kind-hearted portion of the community should cease to consider the supposed invalid a fitting object of private charity, is neither to be expected nor wished. There is, too, it must be admitted, even when the medical officer is fully alive to the probability of deceit, and is cognizant of the moral obliquity of the applicant's character, no little necessity for caution, if he would be chary of his reputation; for we all know that, although it may be easy to say when a man is labouring under disease, it is not so easy to pronounce that he is not ill when he maintains the contrary, as is sufficiently demonstrated by the many successful cases of malingering under the most vigilant medical supervision. A mistake in this respect would be no less damaging to his character for sagacity, than painful to his feelings.

Another grievance connected with charitable institutions, to which the profession is keenly alive, is the extension of gratuitous advice to persons who are not indigent. This is, indeed, a crying evil, and one which is no less unjust to the practitioner than to the more legitimate candidates for medical charity. This abuse, too, is one which it is unfortunately most difficult to rectify, from the want of means to gain correct information as to the patient's circumstances. On this point external appearance is a very fallacious guide. Many most deserving persons will, from habits of life, offer a cleanly and respectable exterior, which might erroneously lead to the supposition of a far larger share of this world's goods than they really possess; while on the other hand, as we have known, to our loss, the well to do will not scruple to assume the garb of poverty, to save their pocket and cheat the doctor.

Our space will barely admit of allusion to the contemptible meanness, so frequently practised, of subscribing to medical charities for the purpose of securing gratuitous advice to domestics; but while lamenting this and other of the legion of evils which press upon our beleaguered profession, let us not omit to inquire whether, for many of our troubles, we are not mainly indebted to ourselves? Are not, let us ask, our chief enemies those of our own household? In what other profession do we meet with so much personal animosity, so little collective unity?

Were we true to our own interests and the honour of our profession, how different would be our position. Instead of being at the mercy of every cockney or bucolical jack in office, the surgeon would be able to dictate his own terms. But now, let him be ever so oppressed by those who are either too dense or too selfish to appreciate his value, the chances are ten to one that the hardest blow of all comes from one of his own calling, who, instead of supporting him in his resistance to insult, is ready, by underselling him, to sneak into his place. Soon may the time arrive when there shall be more self respect, more cordial fraternization in our ranks; for not until a better spirit is dominant among us, shall we be able to protect ourselves from imposition and injury, or realise those advantages which the importance of our noble calling should claim for us.

WE notice with great satisfaction the published programme of the subjects for examination for the Fellowship of the College of Surgeons, as we do every project which has a tendency to refine and elevate the members of our profession. It has been too much the fashion of late, to depreciate the advantages of a classical education as a part of the medical curriculum, but we think under a most short-sighted policy. It is true that a man can cut off a leg or treat a fever, without knowing the Latin for either, but it is not less true without a certain amount of what is termed a polite education, he will not be fitted to take a position in after life, either comfortable to himself or edifying to others. The possession of such an amount of classical and mathematical information as will be required by the College of Surgeons, will have this good effect, that in demanding the acquirements of a gentleman, it will offer a strong presumption that the candidates have been educated among gentlemen, and therefore that with their classics and mathematics they have imbibed generous impulses, and have learned to despise everything that is illiberal in action or sentiment. Henceforward no one can enter the medical profession with the prospect of becoming a Fellow of the College of Surgeons, without the guarantee of such preliminary education as would fit him either for the church or the bar, and so would we have it. At the same time it appears unjust to make the new regulation retrospective; it would be but fair that all now in practice should be exempt

from an examination which few can qualify themselves for whose earlier years have been in such respects neglected. The programme alluded to is given below.

The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England announce that the subjects of the Examination of the candidates for the Fellowship of the College in Classics, Mathematics, and French, during the present year, (1850,) are as follow:—

#### *Classics.*

1. Herodotus, Book VIII.—2. Homer, *Odyssey* Books I. and II.—3. Cicero, *Oratio pro Milone*
4. Virgil, *Æneid*. Books I. and II.—5. The Translation into Latin of a passage in some English Author
6. Answers to a Paper of questions on Greek and Roman History.

#### *Mathematics.*

1. Arithmetic—2. Algebra, as far as to include the doctrine of Proportions and Simple Equations with one or two unknown quantities—3. Euclid: Books 1, 2, and 3; the fifth definition of Book 5: and the first six propositions of Book 6—4. Statics, so far as to include the Mechanical Powers and the Centre of Gravity—5. Hydrostatics, the Elements of, including the more common hydrostatical instruments—6. Optics The Laws of Reflection and Refraction; the mathematical theory of plane mirrors; and a general explanation of the formation of images by spherical mirrors and by lenses, and of the nature of telescopes.

#### *French.*

1. The Translation into English of a passage in one of the French Classical Writers—2. The Translation into French of a passage in an English author.

## Reviews.

*On the Operation for Strangulated Hernia.* By HENRY HANCOCK, F.R.C.S.E., &c. London John Churchill, 1850. 8vo, pp. 94.

IN the retrospective department of this *Journal*, for the 9th of January, we gave an extract from the *Lancet*, (in various numbers of which the above very valuable and well-timed work of Mr. Hancock was originally published,) setting forth some of his objections to Petit's operation for strangulated hernia, to oppose the general adoption of which is the chief aim of its publication.

In prosecuting the argument on this interesting subject, our author sets out by combating the objections to opening the sac, which have been so vehemently insisted upon by Petit, Le Dran, Munro, Bell, B. Cooper, Key, Luke, and Gay, and endeavours to show, (and not without good grounds,) that in the great majority of instances the mortality consequent upon the usual operation, is due not to the exposure of the peritoneum, but to improper treatment, partly before the operation, from abuse of the taxis, &c.,