

Association Medical Journal.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12TH, 1855.

THE CRISIS.

In the present position of the affairs of the Association, it may not be amiss to leave for a moment the subjects of difference which have of late unhappily obtruded themselves upon us, in order to consider what fruit the Association has borne to its members, and to the science of medicine. Twenty-three years is indeed a good age for a society numbering so many members as ours does, and is in itself a testimony to the soundness of its organisation, and the correctness of the principle on which it was founded. But there are other and better proofs that it has never lacked the abundant sap which distinguishes a vigorous and self-supporting institution from a languid and dependent one. From an early period in its existence, we may point with pride to the issue of its *Transactions*, in the fifteen volumes of which lie some of the choicest thoughts of the medical mind of the period. As we turn over its leaves, we might show how ably the medical topography of England has been treated by Forbes, Shapter, and many other eminent associates; or how, in the brilliant retrospective addresses of Pritchard, Hastings, Conolly, Cowan, Budd, Forbes, and a long list of distinguished physicians and surgeons, the mother-thought of the half-yearly abstracts is to be found. Neither, when we are considering the medical literature to which the Association has given birth, must we forget the contributions to this JOURNAL—contributions gathered from every part of these isles, and reflecting truly the science and practice of the provinces. Of no less importance to the well-being of medicine is the social weight of the Association, banded together on all occasions to obtain justice for the oppressed. Its powerful voice it was that wrung from the unwilling authorities the honours of the Crown, and gave to the medical officers serving in the field those decorations which had been so long denied to them; its petition forced from the hostile Admiralty cabins for the assistant-surgeons; from its bosom sprang the Benevolent Fund; and from the charitable heart of one of its Executive Councillors that beneficent institution the Medical Benevolent College. Of the use the Association has been in creating a brotherhood among its members, we need scarcely speak. In the midst of a disorganised profession, it has stood out an organised and compact body for the lifetime at least of one generation; it connects us with a race of medical men that is passing away: it comes to us with almost a prescriptive right; and without doubt it is the only society among us worthy to be called a Guild of Medicine. Its vigorous youth has been succeeded by a healthy manhood, the muster roll of its members having increased of late years in an extraordinary manner; and, as the flower of its acts, it has put its hand to the great professional question of the day—the work of Medical Reform.

We ask, can any member of the Association look back upon the honourable track it has left behind, or consider for a moment the sphere of usefulness that lies before it, without feeling the deepest regret that passionate party spirit should have so shaken it to its foundation? If by

any struggle within its own bosom it should hereafter unhappily be overturned, is there any member, even of the victorious party, but would remember with the deepest regret that he had helped to drag up one of the deepest roots any medical association ever struck amongst us? Would it not increase his regret to remember that he had done this thing at a moment when the medical profession was treated with supercilious contempt by public men, *because* its members were so disunited?

An Association, speaking with the voice of two thousand members, distributed throughout the country, and having a certain influence at elections, might indeed make a minister listen respectfully to its suggestions; but this body, once deprived of its united action, what weight would the profession have with the Home Minister? Without the power of the Association at its back, the Reform movement would, we are convinced, remain in abeyance for another generation. There are some few, however, who perhaps dream that it is possible to erect a new Association on the ruins of the old one. Alas! for such a delusion. Associations are like London children; there is a great mortality among them in the first years of their existence. "The many fail, the few succeed", and these not until years have past, not until many devoted men have worn themselves out in nursing them.

We have said perhaps enough to show the value of the Association we are sorely trying by hasty words and yet more hasty deeds. May we not ask for a little breathing time—a short pause to enable the heated atmosphere to cool, and to afford leisure for the Association to right itself from a sudden and unlooked for difficulty? That a better spirit is abroad, the conciliatory tone of many of the speeches made at the Metropolitan Branch Meeting, on Tuesday last, sufficiently proves; and we trust that, ere long, means will be found to heal the wound under which the Association is now suffering.

THE MEMORIALS OF THE SURGEONS AND ASSISTANT-SURGEONS IN THE CRIMEA.

The memorials of the medical officers now serving in the Crimea prove how deep is the discontent created by the regulations of the medical service in the army. Framed in the midst of peace, these regulations are found to fail altogether in the presence of the enemy, or, what is worse, to render the military surgeon jealous of the greater privileges of the more favoured executive officer. He sees with pardonable discontent that the years of scientific study which he has undergone only place him, on entering the army, on a level, as regards rank, with his far junior military brother,—a level from which the rigid regulations of the service will not allow him to leave until many years have passed over his head,—until the ensign, perchance, who joined with him, has got his company. It cannot be urged that the more rapid promotion of the executive officer is a measure of the greater danger he undergoes during a campaign; for the medical man has not only to perform his duty at times under fire, but when all is over, when the bullet has ceased to strike and the shell to drop destruction, he has to perform his labours where the unseen arrows of disease fly in the crowded wards, and kill as surely as the deadly Minié. Never, perhaps, were the ambulances pushed closer to the very edge of battle than they have been of late in the Crimea, and never has the

medical officer done his duty in more exposed positions than under the walls of Sebastopol, as the many letters from commanding officers, published in the *Times*, have generously born witness to. Among those lately received, descriptive of the fatal assault upon the Great Redan, we wish particularly to draw attention to one written by an assistant-surgeon of the 55th Regiment, which shows the devoted spirit in which these gentlemen do their duty. Following his regiment up to the head of the sap, he set to work amid a storm of bullets. "I was struck twice", he writes, "once on the back by, I think, a grape shot, but I had no time to look, and once on the foot by a rifle-ball, both 'smarters', but that was all. I was too busy to observe anything that was going on, so, except the first rush, I saw nothing, I may say, of the attack. While I was hard at work among the wounded, the soldiers around cried out, 'Doctor, you must get out of the way, they are retreating!' So I looked up and saw our men rushing helter skelter into and over the open space to the trenches in the rear of us. I did not exactly know what to do, so I drew my sword (which, by the way, got very bloody that day, but not with Russian blood), and went on with my dressing till I had finished all about me, and then thought of moving off. I could not leave poor Richards, as we all expected the Russians would be among us every minute, so there was nothing for it but to put him on my back and carry him, which I did, until I got a stretcher by some means or other, and raised some men of the reserve to carry him home!"

This was true heroism, and worthy of any reward; yet the poor assistant-surgeon got no step for his gallantry, whilst his friend Richards, in the natural course of things, is sure of promotion. The deadening influence of the leaden rule, which enjoins upon the assistant-surgeon a five years' probation before he can obtain advancement, must be obvious to all; it says to him, in the plainest possible language, 'However great and noble your devotion, no reward or pecuniary encouragement shall you have until your dreary servitude is accomplished, a servitude which, in addition to your ordinary duties, includes your working as a dispenser, clerk, and dresser.' We feel a blush of shame as we write these words, and can scarce believe it possible that scientific English gentlemen should have humbly to beg that they may be relieved from the performance of these almost menial offices. We wonder what regimental officers would say were they directed by the Horse Guards to keep the sergeants' books? Yet this would be the analogous duty to that actually performed by scientific young men in the British army!

Having to put himself in training for the duties of his post so long before the executive officer, it ought naturally to follow that his retirement should be earlier; but exactly the opposite is the case; he is desired to burn the lamp of life at both ends, as it were—to enter earlier, and to retire later, than other officers, "actually by one-fourth, and virtually by one-half." Of the other part of the assistant-surgeons' memorial we need not speak; enough has been shown to convince the reader that they are suffering under no sentimental grievances, but those which go at once to destroy their self respect, to depress their spirits, and to place them at a cruel disadvantage with their brother officers. We trust that the good offices of the Association may be exerted in removing these grievances as effectually as they were employed in procuring for them those personal decorations which so many of them have nobly earned.

ASSOCIATION INTELLIGENCE.

METROPOLITAN COUNTIES BRANCH: SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING.

A Special General Meeting of the Metropolitan Counties Branch was held at 37 Soho Square, on Tuesday, October 9th, at 4 P.M.; J. RISDON BENNETT, M.D., President, in the Chair. The following members were present: S. S. Alford, Esq.; Henry Ansell, Esq.; W. H. Borham, Esq.; William Camps, M.D.; C. T. Carter, Esq. (Hadley); W. G. Carter, Esq. (Kilburn); J. F. Clarke, Esq.; N. Clifton, Esq.; Robert Dunn, Esq.; Edward Evans, Esq.; Sir John Forbes, M.D.; George D. Gibb, M.D.; Samuel Griffith, M.D.; Alexander Henry, M.D.; Edwin Lankester, M.D.; Charles F. J. Lord, Esq.; S. W. J. Merriman, M.D.; Edward W. Murphy, M.D.; William Ogle, M.D.; Robert H. Powell, M.D.; John Propert, Esq.; Benjamin W. Richardson, M.D.; Charles H. F. Routh, M.D.; Joseph Seaton, M.D. (Sunbury); Francis Sibson, M.D.; George J. Squibb, Esq.; Alexander P. Stewart, M.D.; T. G. Traquair, M.D.; Alexander Ure, Esq.; T. Ogier Ward, M.D.; George Webster, M.D. (Dulwich).

The PRESIDENT, in opening the business of the meeting, said:—I do not think it is necessary I should occupy your time at any length. A requisition was sent to the Council, signed by ten members, requesting us to call this meeting. It is as follows.

"To the President and Council of the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association.

"London, Sept. 15th, 1855.

"We, the undersigned, members of the Metropolitan Counties Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, request that, in terms of Law 4 of the Branch code, you call a Special General Meeting of the Branch, to consider what steps ought to be taken with reference to the proceedings of the recent meeting at York of the Parent Association.

"JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.	ROBERT DUNN.
NATHANIEL CLIFTON.	ALEXANDER HENRY, M.D.
T. L. W. THUDICHUM, M.D.	B. W. RICHARDSON.
W. H. BORHAM.	HENRY ANSELL.
EDWIN LANKESTER, M.D.	JOHN PROPERT."

It was my wish that a special meeting should be held on the subject; and I had requested our Secretary to convene a meeting, I believe, on the same day that he received the requisition I have read. I felt myself it was necessary that some notice should be taken by us of the proceedings at York; and having taken some days to consider the whole of those proceedings, and our position at present in reference to the Parent Association, I felt it would be incumbent upon me to make some personal communications to the Branch. However, I was anxious to ascertain the views of the members generally before I took any step which might possibly put the Branch to any inconvenience. I will now call upon the Secretary to read the resolution by which the deputation was appointed to attend the York meeting, and then request that deputation to give us their report of what took place at York. We have a report in the JOURNAL of the proceedings, which is no doubt to a certain extent authorised; but it will be better for us to have something still more official upon which our proceedings may be based. As we had a deputation to attend the meeting, we must be content to abide by their report of what took place.

The SECRETARY read the resolution.

Mr. ANSELL said, the Report he was about to read was agreed to unanimously by the four members of the deputation who were present at York—Dr. Lankester, Mr. Propert, Dr. Cormack, and himself. Dr. Cormack's name was not appended to the Report, for reasons assigned therein.

REPORT OF THE LAWS REVISION COMMITTEE OF THE METROPOLITAN COUNTIES BRANCH OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION, APPOINTED AS A DEPUTATION TO CONFER WITH THE LAWS REVISION COMMITTEE OF THE PARENT ASSOCIATION, AND TO SUPPORT THE VIEWS OF THE BRANCH AT THE GENERAL MEETING HELD AT YORK.

"In accordance with a resolution adopted at the General Meeting of the Association, held at Manchester, the Laws Revision Committee, appointed at that Meeting, published, in the JOURNAL of May 28th, a draft revised code of laws, to be submitted to the General Meeting to be held at York in August of the present year; and having, at the same time, invited suggestions