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NEW SERIES.

PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE NAMES OF MEMBERS WHOSE SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE RECEIVED, WILL IN FUTURE BE PRINTED ALPHABETICALLY ONCE A MONTH IN THE JOURNAL. The first monthly list—embracing all subscriptions for 1855 received up to the last day of January—will appear in the JOURNAL of February 9th. Members are particularly requested to bear in mind that subscriptions for the current year became due on the 1st day of January.

A safe and simple method of remitting subscriptions is by post-office order, payable to the undersigned at the General Post Office, London.

JOHN ROSE CORMACK, General Secretary.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BOOKS RECEIVED. [*An Asterisk is prefixed to the names of Members of the Association.] 1. WILSON, CHARLES, M.D. The Pathology of Drunkenness: a View of the Operation of Ardent Spirits in the Production of Disease. pp. 230. Edinburgh: 1854. 2. GREGORY, WILLIAM, M.D. Elementary Treatise on Chemistry. pp. 355. Edinburgh: 1855. 3. MACLISE, JOSEPH. Surgical Anatomy. Second Edition. Fasciculi V., VI., VII. London: 1855. 4. *SINSON, FRANCIS, M.D., F.R.S. Medical Anatomy. Fasciculus I. London: 1855. 5. The Language of the Walls: and a Voice from the Shop Windows. By One who thinks aloud. pp. 443. Manchester and London: 1855. 7. *BLACK, C., M.D. Pathology of the Bronchio-Pulmonary Mucous Membrane. Part II. London and Edinburgh: 1855.

ERRATA. In the Article on the Organisation of "Medical Studies in the Austrian Empire," published in last week's JOURNAL "six gulden" were erroneously stated to be equal to "£2:2" instead of twelve shillings; and "thirty gulden" to "£10:10," instead of £3. The name "Con-fut-su," should have been *Con-fut-see*. We have some more remarks to make on the subject of Medical Education in Austria.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATES "ON SOUL AND CONSCIENCE".

IN our last number we published a report of a trial before the Jury Court of Scotland, in which the plaintiff, Mr. George Glover, late surgeon to the Edinburgh police, was awarded £250 damages for certain defamatory statements published regarding him by the defendant, Professor Syme. The case is one of importance apart from the personal questions and local professional excitement, to which it is supposed to owe much of its chief interest. The facts have already (at p. 63) been laid before our readers. Mr. Syme's commentary upon them and his opinion of the verdict, have been communicated by him in a "Clinical Lecture" to the *Lancet*; and as they call attention to points of the highest importance and delicacy, we give them in the words of the writer.

"Mr. Syme addressed the students as follows:—GENTLEMEN,—I regret not having been able to meet you on Thursday last; and as you all probably know the reason of my absence, I may mention that the result of the trial which then took place, however unexpected, surprising, or incredible, so far from opposing, is calculated greatly to promote, the object which led me within the toils of the law. This was neither to make money, nor to avoid the loss of it, but simply to maintain the honour and character of our profession. For some time past, the criminal authorities here have pursued a system of selecting medical evidence that calls loudly for reform, which is not easy, when the members of the body concerned regard

every suggestion for improvement as an unwarrantable interference. But the head of the Justiciary Court has now promulgated from the bench the principles upon which the law of Scotland is administered in this respect, and it will now be the duty of the Legislature to consider how far the people of this country can live with comfort or safety under such a system. Not long ago, certificates of lunacy were given with the most reckless carelessness; but the law was changed, and personal examination has been strictly enforced, so that a practitioner of this city, who certified from his belief, founded upon information, instead of his knowledge derived from observation, was stimulated to greater accuracy by a fine of £50. Now, the effect of a certificate that life is in danger seriously compromises the personal freedom of those charged with the infliction of injuries, since the offence is thus rendered no longer 'bailable'; and I cannot doubt that, before long, measures will be taken to prevent any medical man from certifying, 'on soul and conscience', that life is in danger on account of injuries which he has not examined, and justifying himself from the charge of inaccuracy by attributing it to the erroneous information of others. Having carried the matter so far, I can do no more, and the responsibility of tolerating the grievance in question will, for the future, rest with those who have the power of remedying it; while I shall possess the comfort of knowing, that what was felt to be a duty, has been discharged, without regard to trouble, expense, or misrepresentation."

It will be recollected that Mr. Glover granted the following certificate:

"I hereby certify on soul and conscience that I this day examined Patrick Clark, aged about eleven years, lying at the Royal Infirmary, and find that he has a large lacerated wound of the soft parts on the outside of the leg, and a fracture of the bone a little above the ankle; that his life is in danger, and he is in a fit state to emit a declaration."

The slander published by Mr. Syme is thus described in "the issue" laid before the jury,—

"That the defender falsely and calumniously stated, of and concerning the pursuer (plaintiff), that he had granted a false certificate, inasmuch as he had therein expressed an opinion on a matter as to which he had no means of knowing anything; or did make a statement to that or a similar effect, to the loss, injury, and damage of the pursuer."

Mr. Glover had not examined the leg; and, when he said "that he found that there was a large lacerated wound, etc.," he meant that Mr. Syme's house-surgeon, Mr. Dobie, had told him that such a wound, etc., existed; and it appears that Mr. Glover's opinion as to the dangerous condition of the patient was also founded upon a statement of the same gentleman. This ought to have been explicitly stated in the certificate; but we cannot think that Mr. Syme acted with propriety, in proclaiming a charge of dishonesty against Mr. Glover in consequence of this omission. We are very far from defending the recognition of secondary medical evidence; but when we find Mr. Syme himself stating opinions as his own, which, in cross-examination, he explains to have been