

ASSOCIATION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

No. CXXIX.

LONDON: FRIDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1855.

NEW SERIES.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EDITOR AND GENERAL SECRETARY TO
37, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON.

Numerous communications have been received, which will be attended to
with the least possible delay. Mr. FRY's letter is in type.

THE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

SIR GEORGE GREY promised, it will be remembered, in reply to the deputation of the Association which waited on him on the 17th of last month, that no opposition should be offered by the Government to the introduction of our Medical Reform Bill. It was also agreed that Mr. Headlam, the member for Newcastle, should be the person to lay the Bill on the table of the House. That gentleman made two attempts last week to fulfil his engagement, but, unfortunately, without success. On the first occasion, the House was previously counted out on an Irish question; and, on the second, the prolonged debate on the Australian Bills extinguished the chances of all the motions on the paper. It is possible, however, that, before these lines reach our readers, the Bill may be before Parliament; and we therefore think it advisable to call special attention to the nature of the measure.

The Bill, then, is framed to establish a Register of legally qualified medical practitioners; to improve the system of professional education; to introduce something like uniformity of examination through the United Kingdom; to guarantee reciprocity of practice, on the foundation of uniformity; and to create a recognised governing body, which shall, as far as possible, truly and adequately represent the various interests of the profession. Retrospectively, the registration will include all those now (and till a given date after the passing of the Act) practising on any degree or license from any University or College in the United Kingdom—an arrangement which will do justice to all existing rights, and will remove many hardships and anomalies arising from the present state of the law. Prospectively, registration will be obtained by going through the examinations prescribed in the Bill. These are to be conducted, in each part of the United Kingdom, by the respective existing Colleges, upon an uniform plan; and are to be preceded, except in the case of University graduates, by an examination in the subjects of general education. Every person registered for one part of the United Kingdom may have his name registered for another, but will be compelled to join the corresponding college in the country to which he removes on an *ad eundem* degree. A general scheme for examination, to be enforced on every examining body, will be framed by the medical council created by the bill. This council is to consist of seven members elected by the medical colleges of the kingdom; four elected by the universities; and eight elected by the whole body of the profession. The Bill also contains clauses giving a right of practice, and of recovering fees, to all registered persons, and enacting provisions for the repression of fraudulent titles and of illegal practice on the part of those not registered.

The Bill of the Association, which we have thus sketched

out, was sent by Sir George Grey (together with another measure emanating from Dr. Simpson and other Edinburgh professors) to the various universities and medical corporations in the kingdom. The observations of most of those bodies have now, we believe, been received in reply; and though we do not pretend to be in the secrets of the Home Office, we have sufficient grounds for informing our readers that a great preponderance of opinion exists in favour of the Association Bill. We are not surprised, though we are much gratified, by this result, which bears out the observations we have already made in the JOURNAL. It is incontestable that the Edinburgh measure struck a blow not only against the colleges, but against the real interests of the whole profession; while our Bill, on the contrary, while it preserves the just privileges of the corporate bodies, strikes off the fetters of monopoly by which they have been disfigured, and, as we believe, injured also, and establishes those principles of uniformity in examination and qualification, of reciprocity of practice, and of free representative government:—all of which the profession need too much, and have striven for too long, ever to abandon.

While, however, we reiterate our objection to any measure which would subject the profession to the government of universities, or other extraneous bodies, we must observe that university education for medical students is a thing to be much desired. Now, this is directly encouraged by the Association Bill; for university graduates are to be exempted from the previous examination, and every physician will be obliged to take a medical degree. These provisions would confer a boon on the universities generally, and would of course especially benefit those with large medical schools, such as London and Edinburgh. University professors would do well to consider how much substantial advantage they would probably secure by the measure.

The Colleges must inevitably gain greatly if the Bill pass into law, though in a way that would improve, and not injure, the profession. Their revenues would be materially increased by the accession of new members, and they would gradually become the real representatives of *all* of their respective classes; instead of seeing, as at present, a number of outsiders who owe them no allegiance, and give them neither respect nor support.

To the profession generally, the creation of the Council designed by the Bill would be an immense advantage. The presence of a large proportion of members freely elected by the whole of their brethren, would give to its decision a weight both with the Government and the Legislature that would ensure attention to the just complaints of the profession. How much might be done through the influence of a really representative Medical Council for the suppression of quackery, the advancement of science, and the conservation of the best interests of the public!

The more we consider of it, the more are we convinced that this Bill of the Association is not only the best hitherto presented to the profession, but one which is deserving of warm support from all who desire the welfare of medical science. Let us trust that all the selfish opposition of corpe-