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NEW SERIES.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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

BOOKS RECEIVED. [* An Asterisk is prefixed to the names of Members of the Association.] 1. GLEN [John, M.D.] Theory of the Influence exerted by the Mind over the Body. pp. 78. Edinburgh and London: 1855. 2. GREENHOW [E. Headlam, M.D.] Cholera in Tynemouth in 1831-2, 1848-9, and 1853. pp. 26. London: 1855. 3. NELIGAN [J. M., M.D.] Atlas of Cutaneous Diseases. Sixteen Coloured Plates, with Letter-press. Dublin: 1855.

THE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

WE have readily given insertion to the letter of Professor LAURIE of Glasgow, which will be found in another part of our columns; but nevertheless we must be permitted to express doubts as to whether the description and elucidation of ancient charters can have any great practical weight at the present moment. "MEDICAL REFORM" has been so long discussed, its leading principles have been so thoroughly agreed on, the Bill now before Parliament is meeting with so much support, that it is hardly fair to expect the profession to abandon its practical prospects of legislation for the sake of wrangling over the terms of a few charters granted by Scotch monarchs in the middle ages. Life is too short, and time too valuable, to debate public questions of pressing and paramount importance upon data derived from parchments written in a bygone age, when society and the medical profession were both totally different from what they now are. What we have to decide is the *actual condition of the medical profession, and the way to improve it*. Its condition some centuries ago may amuse antiquaries and instruct philosophers, but cannot be the rule by which legislators ought to be guided in remedying existing evils.

Even granting for a moment, what has never yet been made clear, that the Scotch Universities had the power of licensing in medicine, is that any reason why they should retain it now? In mediæval times, the Universities doubtless comprised, after a rude and imperfect fashion, all the various arts and callings of life; but as civilisation advanced, and the division of labour was established, the profession of medicine threw off its ecclesiastical trammels, and obtained for itself a local habitation and a name. The foundation of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in each country is the date at which the profession began to assume its legitimate position in society. The art of healing, no longer a mere adjunct of monkish pedantry, grew at once into a defined science. To throw us back again into the position of a mere Faculty in the aggregation of University pursuits, is to take some long and dreary steps back to ancestral barbarism.

But, surely, if any additional argument were needed for a Medical Reform Act, it would be found in Professor Laurie's letter. He tells us that there is no licensing body qualifying for all branches of medicine, nor claiming a power over all Scotland. The only tangible conclusion to be drawn from his statement is, that the same endless confusion which exists south of the Tweed is to be found north of it also. Now, the Bill before the House of Commons will

remedy this evil; it will establish harmony and order, in the place of discord and chaos. Surely it were better to give to this Bill a fair and hearty support, and thus to show a readiness to remedy confessed abuses, than to rip up the old rivalries of chartered bodies, from the fifteenth century downwards.

Besides, the Bill really carries out the very principle for which the Scotch Universities are contending. No one is to be registered, *in futuro*, as a physician, who has not taken a University degree. This brings the state of things we contemplate to the same point with the third conclusion arrived at by Professor Laurie.

We believe that the Bill of the Association would confer the greatest benefits on the *general body of the profession* in Scotland; and the more so, that it was drawn with a knowledge of the state of things north of the Tweed, which will not be increased in any important particular even by Professor Laurie's undoubted learning and careful research.

As we said at the beginning of this article, the question has been discussed too long to need elucidation now. We have taken all the soundings of the coast, and should now concentrate our energies on endeavouring to steer the vessel of reform into a safe harbour.

As for the question to which we alluded before, whether Scotch University graduates can be registered under the Bill, it is really one on which no person who has read the Bill, and who is at all conversant with Acts of Parliament, can doubt for an instant. The mistake arises from supposing that a schedule is any enacting portion of a measure; whereas it is merely explanatory, and explanatory of that part alone to which it refers. In this case, two qualifications for physicians are laid down by the 20th section: the first is a degree from any University; the second is a licence from any of the licensing bodies mentioned in the schedule. The schedule, therefore, refers to the second alone, and does not in any way qualify the first.

THE ALTERED CLAUSES OF THE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

IN pursuance of the promise we made at p. 619 of JOURNAL for July 6th, we this week give a list of the alterations which have been made in the Medical Reform Bill published at p. 814 of the JOURNAL for September 8th, 1854. The Bill, so altered, is that which has been introduced into Parliament by Mr. Headlam.

CLAUSE V. The four members of Council chosen by the universities are to be "*persons qualified to be registered under this Act.*"

CLAUSE XIV. The *Medical Council* (instead of the Secretary of State) is to fill up any vacancy which may occur in its body from death, resignation, or incapacity to discharge duty.

CLAUSE XVI. The quorum of the Medical Council is proposed to be *six* instead of *four*.

CLAUSE XVIII. The preliminary examination is to be in