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ON THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND ITS REFORM.

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TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

(Concluded from page 149.)

In the midst of all this professional plethora, dismemberment, and degrading competition, the cry for medical reform is becoming louder and more urgent among all the working members of the profession, though the medical corporations have shown no awakening sympathy on the engrossing subject—judging, it is supposed, that they have sufficiently guarded the interests of the profession and the public, by raising the standard of education, and by increasing its expense to the aspirants for membership. Such, moreover, is our unfortunate destiny, that the just and ingenuous complaints of our grievances never reach the ears of our natural and constituted guardians and protectors, but only excite the gratuitous sympathy and interest of some extra-professional patron, who, to extract golden opinions from a clamorous and expectant community, most disinterestedly volunteers an inquiry into our wants and grievances, and holds out the hope of long-deferred amelioration and sound reform, at length to present us, out of the abundance of legislative investigation and wisdom, with only a species of King Log to reign over us.

Such, I conceive, is the nature and bearings of the bill now before the profession, and which, after several years' incubation, was brought to light on the last days of the late session of parliament. Agitated, depressed, and, if possible, degraded, as was the previous condition of the profession, this fresh legislative boon appears the unkindest cut of all to the dignity of the profession, notwithstanding its just and commendable recognition of the great and necessary principle of an equalized scale of education and of a community of privilege to practise to all entering on the threshold of professional life, not forgetting its useful restrictions as to druggists, "*et hoc genus omne*."

But like the acts which have preceded it, and relate to the profession, as we have noticed, its concoctors have contrived, seemingly with studious insult, to present, in the cup of general amelioration, a few bitter and repulsive drops to the members of the profession,—apparently always for the purpose of cooling, if not of quenching, their clamour and zeal for obtruding their grievances, real or imaginary, so often, as of late they have been alleged to do, before the public eye, and for venturing to bring the nauseous subject of physic before the patricians of the legislature. It was surely enough for poor-law surgeons and parish vaccina-

tors to subject their talents and time to a Dutch auction, and to submit their surgical and medical administration of vaccination to the wisdom and science of operative farmers and slopsellers, in the absence of any medical board of appeal, without inflicting upon the whole body of the profession the still deeper degrading measure of registering their name, address, and qualifications, annually, with the common sub-registrars of births and deaths, loaded with the charge of a fee, as if they were a community of licensed beersellers and pawnbrokers, who required an annual revision of their conduct and pretensions, before they were again allowed to serve the public.

Such being some of the principal causes which have slowly and accumulatively, led the profession to its present state of redundant supply of practitioners, and to the agitation, compulsory competition, and the humiliating grievances that exist among a great majority of its members, it remains, in the second place, to consider in what manner all these subjects of complaint and of unwholesome polity may be more or less alleviated, if they cannot be wholly removed.

From what has been stated, it may be seen, that several of the injurious circumstances under which the profession labours, cannot be remedied by any extraneous aid or interference, fiscal, academic, or legislative—such as the redundant supply of medical and surgical talent above the demand required for the public health. This excess is already beginning to correct itself, from internal reaction, as all other disposable commodities do, when they exceed the demand. Notwithstanding the rapid increase of population, all the schools of late years are remarked to be attended by a diminished number of pupils; and in the provinces to the north of England, and, it is believed, in other parts of the kingdom, practitioners of late find great difficulties in getting apprentices, who are diminished to one half in many of our large towns, and their place is more or less supplied by salaried assistants. This paucity of young aspirants does not arise altogether from the increased expense of education, nor from the fear of the examining ordeals for a diploma or license, but from parental and other calculations of the prospective bad return for the money and time that must be expended on their children or wards' education. It is, moreover, to be expected that this discouraging sentiment will prevail for some time, as young men now will perceive that the avenues to profitable employment are becoming more and more less easy of access, from the increasing number of medical charities, and the monopolies of early practice being forestalled by poor-law surgeons and vaccinators, whose election more often depends on the party politics of the place than upon any other claims.