ADDRESS IN MEDICINE

BY

SIR DOMINIC CORRIGAN, BART., M.D.,

AT THE

*Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association, at Dublin,
August 7th, 1867.*

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—The President of this great association has already welcomed you to Ireland. Let me feebly, perhaps, but with all my heart, echo that welcome on this the first occasion of our meeting here. My next duty is to thank you for the distinction you have conferred upon myself in requesting me to deliver the address of this day,—a distinction that would be a high one were it conferred by my own College,—high if conferred by the profession of my own country, but which now comes to me as a triple honour when presented to me by the profession of the United Kingdom. And among the bonds that unite the three divisions of this our kingdom together, there are none stronger than those of our profession, soaring in its exercise above all sectarian discords. We know no difference of race, or creed, or colour, for every man is our neighbour; and when we remember that the Redeemer, while on earth, chose the healing of the sick as one of the most impressive evidences of his divine mission, we must ever hold in respect the exercise of a profession that devotes its efforts to the same object.

On the walls of our old, and I hope soon to see it on our new, College Hall, stands the motto, to remind us of this,

“ΠΑΡΤΙΣΤΟΤ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΙΑΞΙ.”

Perhaps the greatest, truest, and most convincing tribute that can be paid to the worth of the profession of medicine is this, that when members of our profession have spent a long life in its exercise,—when on their death-beds,—when the past is a dream, the present a flitting moment, and the future an awful eternity,—they have thought the best use they could make of their wealth was to leave it to hospitals and schools of medicine, where the profession they had so long followed would continue to be taught and to be practised. In our own city, we have only to look around us to see examples of this. On the north, one of the noblest piles of architecture in the city, the Rotunda Lying-in Hospital, devoted to the relief of suffering woman, was founded by a physician, Dr. Mosse, who gave his fortune and years of labour to the work. Westward is one of our greatest hospitals, Stevens's, with upwards of two hundred beds, always open to the sick, founded by the bequest of a physician of the name. In another direction is the celebrated Carmichael School of Medicine, built from the bequest of a good and great man who has only lately passed from among us, distinguished as a great surgeon and teacher, who served his country, cured the soldier abroad, the civilian at home, and who left a large portion of his wealth to promote the teaching of medicine, as the best boon he could leave behind him for fellow man. Eastward we see Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, one of our foremost schools of clinical medicine and surgery, built and supported mainly by a fortune left by the first President of the College of Physicians under its present charter, granted by William and Mary. He was an Englishman, and Physician to William the Third, and that noble hospital, opening its gates to all comers in need of relief, stands a monument of charity on the part of its founder, and of reproach to us that while the Englishman, dwelling among us in the midst of all the bad passions of civil war, felt equally for all, and left this monument of charity to our people, “we never joined in love”. A better future is, I trust, brightening for us, and when it comes, I think we may truly say, that no hands have done more than those of our own profession to grow the olive of peace and charity. I could adduce other instances, but these are enough.

We have in the meetings of this great association, as laid down in the programme of its formation, and well put in the address of Dr. Burrows (now President of the Medical Council) to this Association in 1862, two “great objects at heart, the advancement of medical science, and the elevation of the social condition of our profession”. We are thus at liberty to direct our efforts according to our judgment in the one or the other channel. I have chosen the latter; for these reasons, that medical science has been so ably and so exhaustively dealt with by my predecessors that I feel myself unable to add to what they have done; and, moreover, I well know there are many here more fitted to instruct me than I am to instruct them. I do not feel the same hesitation to direct my efforts in the other channel. Placed, as I happen to have been by the favour of the senate of the Queen's University, on the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom, I have been able to make myself better acquainted than I otherwise should have been with the several relations of the branches of the profession to one another, and to the great

sphere of society of which it forms a part. I feel myself now, moreover, in a position somewhat such as a member of the House of Commons may be during recess, when he avails himself of the first opportunity of laying before his constituents and the public the experience he has acquired, the views which he entertains, and his explanation of the course which he has pursued while acting as a representative. I know sufficiently well the learning and the feeling of those distinguished members of the senate of the Queen's University who have done me the honour to elect me their representative, to assume that, although elected as their representative, they desire no exclusive adherence to special interests, but wish to have carried out whatever general measures are for the public good, and for the sustenance of the position and acquirements of the medical profession; for I am sure they feel as I do, that if the position and knowledge of the medical profession be not sustained, the community will be the greater sufferer of the two.

The social position of the profession, and the estimation with which its members are to be regarded by the well-informed with whom they are associated in society, depend on the good general education and professional skill evinced by them. These can only be secured for the good of the public by such legislation as will prevent the entrance into it of the ignorant and incompetent, and hence good legislation is inseparably connected with the position of our profession, and becomes a most important question for our consideration. For this reason, to some points in forthcoming legislation I shall now take the liberty of asking your attention. I am greatly strengthened in taking this line by the observations of our President yesterday in his opening address, received by you with acclamation, when with that emphatic philosophic earnestness peculiarly his own, he declared his conviction that the general education of young men going into our profession should not be inferior to that of the kindred professions—the Church and the Bar. It is almost to a day nine years since the Medical Act of 1858 received the royal assent, and I cannot say, and I believe many will unite with me in thinking, that the results have not been such as to satisfy us either as to the education or protection of the profession. Has the standard of general education been raised? I fear the answer must be in the negative. For a period, varying from one to two hundred years, or more, since their respective foundations, the University of Dublin, the King and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and the Apothecaries Hall of Ireland, required a knowledge of Greek as a necessary part of the examination of candidates for their respective degrees or licences; and there is not a man who knows anything of the nature of our studies that will not say Greek should be a component in the education of every member of our profession; yet one of the first acts of the Medical Council under the Medical Act was to declare that a knowledge of Greek was not necessary, and it was only after a long contest I succeeded, as a compromise, in getting a resolution passed that it should be required after 1869. In the proceedings of this year, it has been further resolved that botany be also excluded from the list of subjects for examination. It is idle to say that this only refers to a minimum of education. A minimum thus put forward is a sufficiency, and will be regarded as such by students and by licensing bodies. The tendency, then, I am sorry to say, appears to be to bring down the education to the lowest level, not to raise it to a higher. The preliminary education, moreover, of our students in general education, instead of being supervised by any one responsible body, is left almost to chance, for no less than eighteen bodies have the power of examining in art and science students going to the medical profession, and giving certificates, some in the United Kingdom, some in Canada, some in Tasmania, that such students are sufficiently educated in general acquirements to enter on the study of medicine. I think it must be self-evident to every practical mind that such a system can never be depended on to ensure an adequate preliminary education. The several licensing bodies have no means whatever of knowing how those preliminary examinations have been conducted, nor often even the subjects of examination. These may change from year to year. Indeed, it was only after some time it was discovered that some of the bodies whose certificates of preliminary examination were recognised, did not make even Latin a necessary part of the examination.

It is stated in report of Committee in minutes of General Medical Council of June 5th, 1867, “that the visitors of such examinations give in most cases a satisfactory report of the manner in which the examinations in general education are conducted.” But if we look at the report from the Navy Board of the examination of candidates for direct commissions, we find such observations as these on education. Opposite the number of one candidate is this observation: “Utterly failed in preliminary examination. Opposite the number of another: “Failed in classical examination, declined to attempt to translate, and failed to write a prescription.” Nor must these be viewed as isolated instances. Each candidate rejected for ignorance represents a group of others equally ignorant

and incompetent, who have passed some of our licensing bodies, are now on the registry as "duly qualified practitioners," and probably in possession of appointments throughout the country, bringing on themselves and the profession the contempt of all well-educated persons with whom they are necessarily brought into relation in social life, and practising medicine to the hazard and probably the loss of human lives. The course which has been adopted of deputing to other bodies, far asunder and irresponsible, the examination of young men destined for our profession, is a great anomaly. The Horse Guards and Admiralty do not recognize certificates of education from other bodies. They know what they want, and they have their own examination to test it. The Civil Service examines for itself; but any examination, by almost anyone, or anywhere, is to be deemed sufficient for us.

I have before me the Rules of the Society of the Attorneys and Solicitors of Ireland of last year (1866), incorporated by royal charter, and signed by the names of men whose judgment must command respect: the Right Hon. F. Blackburne, the Right Hon. Chief Justice Monahan, and the Right Hon. Chief Baron Pigot. To enter the profession of a solicitor it is necessary that, before commencing his professional studies, the candidate, unless he has graduated in arts at Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, Durham, London University, or the Queen's University in Ireland, shall pass an examination in Latin, an examination in history, in arithmetic, in bookkeeping, in geography, in English composition and dictation; and after November, 1867, that logic be added to the above courses, and the examination alone is recognised—that is, conducted by an examining body, the president and vice-presidents and members of Council, with a special examiner appointed by the Council. There is no entrusting here to peripatetic and irresponsible bodies scattered over the world the examination of young men going to the profession of a solicitor. Look at this simple and efficient mode of procedure of preliminary examination by a body that know precisely what they want, compared with our present system of entrusting the examination of our students to eighteen or more educational bodies profoundly ignorant of, and profoundly indifferent to, what our students require, and say which system is the better. Can we hesitate for a moment in coming to the conclusion that for students entering the study of medicine there should be one uniform and sufficient preliminary examination, and that such examination should be under the control of a central authority in each division of the United Kingdom, defining what is wanted, and what the examination should be.

The army authorities do not receive as evidence of proficiency in general education the certificate of any one of the eighteen or twenty educational bodies in the United Kingdom. We began with nine; we have now arrived at eighteen, including the reception of certificates from Canada to Tasmania; the list is increasing yearly, and the greater the number necessarily the lower the standard. The Navy Board examines for itself; the Civil Service examines for itself; the several Universities examine for themselves. There is no parallel instance that I know of similar to our system of taking certificates from almost every body; and the result is seen in the lamentable result shown forth in the army and navy returns of rejections, where we find candidates rejected for ignorance of the simplest branches of preliminary education. It appears to me to be worse than useless to proceed still in this way. It is evident that, under the present system, young men get into our profession who could not pass an examination for the place of a letter-carrier. What is to be done to remedy this sad state of things? Two courses occur to me: one would be to require that every young man, before he gets his degree, should have passed through a university course in arts.

This, I fear, would be found impracticable, however desirable. The other is, that in each division of the United Kingdom there should be a board of examiners, and that all young men, except those going through a course of arts or science in a university, should be obliged to have undergone an examination in general education before such board, either before the commencement of professional education, or within the first two years of medical study. This second plan would, I believe, be practicable and efficient. The principle on which I have ventured to deal with the subject of general education and examination applies similarly to the other great division—that of professional education. The same evils exist. We have in the United Kingdom nineteen licensing bodies, conferring no less than thirty separate licenses and fifty-three titles. The result is necessarily a downward tendency in competition. Wherever there is a great number of universities or licensing bodies with diplomas in the market, the competition must be downwards. It is notorious that students know as well in regard to their diplomas, as buyers do in regard to the articles of purchase, where they will get what they want on the easiest terms; they go there, and become the possessors of what they want—diplomas, it matters not good or bad, for the legal brand, in the form of a registry, declares, under Act of Parliament, that all are equal. The sad state of ignorance engendered by the downward com-

petition has obliged the army and naval authorities to examine for themselves, for they cannot place reliance on the diplomas of our numerous licensing bodies, and could not, on the faith of the diplomas issued by them, entrust to their holders the lives of our soldiers and sailors. It appears to me that if our system be not altered, the civil authorities of the country must ignore all our licensing bodies, and, like the army and navy authorities, institute an examination for themselves. I should deeply regret to see this, but to this I fear it must come unless we bestir ourselves.

The General Medical Council has seen the evils I have pointed out, and has attempted to deal with them in two ways—both, I fear, ineffectual. The one is by issuing "recommendations", or, as they are sometimes erroneously called, "regulations", as to education and examination; the other, by "visitations of examinations". I will glance briefly at both. "Recommendations", as they are termed, are useless; for the Council has not the power, and, although nine years have now elapsed, has never ventured to attempt, to enforce them; while Universities and Colleges have fallen in with them, or disregarded them, just as they thought fit. It seems to me as if the General Medical Council instinctively felt it could never enforce its ordinances, or bring any of the licensing bodies before the Privy Council; for it has always taken care to designate them "recommendations". No one can be tried or punished for disregarding a "recommendation". A "recommendation" is merely an expression of approval; it is not an "order" or "regulation". If the Board of this University were to issue a "recommendation" that the students were to assemble in this hall at ten o'clock every morning, that would be merely commending it to them for their approbation. The Board could not summon them or punish them for not doing it. Yet this is just what the General Council has done. It has worded its ordinances in such a way that it has tied up its own hands; so that we may consider as mere idle talk the threats that, if such or such a body do not conform to such "recommendation", it will be summoned to appear before the Privy Council, and deprived of its power to issue diplomas.

The issuing of "recommendations" being thus a failure, another step has been taken, which is called "the visitation of examinations", both preliminary and professional, undertaken in order to ensure that examinations are sufficiently strict. The visitation of preliminary examinations is simply impossible, as the preliminary examinations may be held at uncertain times, and in all parts of the United Kingdom and our colonies, from America to Australia. We now come to the visitation of professional examinations, which it is supposed is to be an efficient supervision over nineteen licensing bodies in the United Kingdom, thirty different diplomas, and fifty-three titles. Believing that such visitation would be only a screen to conceal defects, and not an exposure of them, I felt myself constrained from the outset not to take any part in them. I will not trespass on you here with my reasons. I think it is only necessary on the present occasion to observe that visitations of examinations cannot command confidence, from this radical defect, that the several licensing corporations, through their representatives, report upon one another. Twenty-four members—for that is the number of the General Medical Council—either representing or intimately connected with nineteen licensing bodies, admit that these nineteen licensing bodies are not what they ought to be, that they stand in need of inspection; and they proceed to carry it out. How? By inspecting one another. A inspects B's establishment, and B inspects A's, and thus round the whole twenty-four letters of the alphabet; and then they report upon one another reciprocally, as a distinguished member of the Council and of this Association has well observed, with a general interchange of courtesies. What would be thought of a report from twenty-four members of the House of Commons, inspecting and reporting to themselves on the suspected purity of one another's constituents? For not taking a part in the inspection, I have been denounced by a portion of the press and in another place as an "obstructive" to the progress of professional improvement. There are two kinds of recognised obstructives: one who openly obstructs a good measure, and another who obstructs a bad measure. But there is a third kind of obstructive to progress, worse than either of the other two: he who pretends to be ardent in progress, but has at heart no desire for it. There is an incident related in one of our popular sea-stories, of the mate of a cutter who imposed upon the simple minds of his crew by showing a great press of sail aloft, and, with loud trumpeting on deck, calling on all about him to admire how he carried on to forward the good ship on her way; but all the time he cunningly trailed a sail along under the lee-quarter, so that the good ship could make no way. I believe we have, among the most vehement supporters of visitations of examinations, such obstructives to deal with—seeming to carry on, but secretly taking care that no progress is made; for their object is, that we should remain stationary. Visitation of examinations is the sail under the lee. We must not let ourselves be

blinded to admit, when a new Medical Bill is before the House, that the present system can ever be made efficient.

In the amended Bill that has been put forward by the Council there is one clause that I make no apology for bringing under earnest attention. It is that the General Medical Council shall have a power to admit *without examination* to the registry, and thus make them eligible for all appointments in the United Kingdom, the holders of foreign diplomas equally with our own graduates and licentiates, on satisfactory evidence being laid before it that those degrees or licenses have been granted after a sufficient course of study and examination. The proposed clause will be found in the minutes of the General Medical Council of June 5 of this year. I hope the whole profession will seriously consider this proposed clause, and will unite with me in resisting it, not merely for their own sake, but for the public good. It is notorious that both in Germany and in America there are universities that sell their diplomas, just as they sell beer or Indian corn, to all who can afford to pay for them. Most of my hearers have probably seen the manifesto of the university of Erlangen, in which they stigmatise the statement I made to this effect in the Council as "void of foundation in all its particulars," and my reply, both published in the JOURNAL of this Association of July 20th. In that reply I adduced instances of four German universities, in which I shewed proof, by documentary evidence, that they conferred degrees *in absentia*; and that so low are their degrees held in their own country, that their diplomas did not enable the holders to practise there. I have received other evidence since. A gentleman connected with the medical and literary press of London has placed a document in my hands, in which he certifies that an American agent called on him this present year with diplomas duly signed and sealed by one of the American colleges nine or ten years old; that he could have a supply fifteen years old if required; and that he had a variety in stock, price £20, and would allow a discount off as it was a matter of business. This gentleman is quite ready at any time to verify this memorandum, and to give his name.

I have within the last week received letters from two members of the profession, one of them a president of one of our Branch Associations, in which he encloses to me a communication from an agent in Glasgow, in reply to a communication for the purchase of a foreign diploma, and I am sorry to say he is an M.D. of one of our universities. The letter is so characteristic that I shall make no apology for reading it at length:

"Ewing Place, Glasgow, 24 July, 1867.

"MY DEAR SIR,—After having had the pleasure of your note of the 6th inst., I write you in direct course. I stated in terms of my said letter that no university but that of the State of Pennsylvania gave degrees of Medical Doctor *in absentia*, the cost being £32 12., and in full of all demands and delivered free. I also stated in terms of my said note that the university of Giessen of Hesse Darmstadt gave degrees of M.D. for £22 paid there, and £15 10s. sterling paid here, and also in full of all demands. In either case I will cheerfully assist you or your friend in obtaining the object in view. As I have four new degrees to get at Pennsylvania next week, and other four at Giessen also, please send me £32 12s. for the Pennsylvania degree, or £15 10s. in part of the Giessen degree, and I will send all the requisites to you in course.

"I am, my dear Sir, very truly yours, M.D."

To give this epistle due dignity, there is inserted on the envelope—"On Her Majesty's Service." It is scarcely necessary to observe that I have in my possession the documents and the names. It is further to be observed with regard to some of the German universities that the same university gives two kinds of degrees—one on a *viva voce* examination, the other *in absentia*. This is abuse enough, but there is another ingenious subdivision of the *viva voce* examination. To any one of honest intelligence the phrase *viva voce* examination would convey that the candidate presented himself at the seat of the university, and was examined there by its authorities. Not at all; for in one of the documents in my hands the applicant, residing within this kingdom, was referred for the *viva voce* examination—to whom do you suppose? to one of their own graduates in the neighbourhood of the applicant, and the applicant was informed that on passing such *viva voce* examination and payment of £32 he was to have the degree.

It seems to me inexplicable in consistency on the part of our General Medical Council to institute visitations of examinations over our own Universities and Colleges of Physicians, and yet to propose to dispense with such in the case of the foreign universities, merely requiring evidence to be laid before them as to the course of study and examination required. Converted into plain words, it is this: We will not be content with any evidence or any statement from the universities of the United Kingdom, from our own universities; we will not rely upon those who vouch for you, nor trust your own statements; we will judge for ourselves; we will visit you and sit by at your examination; but, turning to the German universities, the Council say: We will not put you in the

same category as the universities of our own country of Great Britain and Ireland; we can rely upon the testimonials you forward to us; we can believe what you say; and we will place your degrees on our registry without visiting your examinations. One of the most extraordinary arguments I ever heard in support of admitting foreign diplomas without examination was the introduction of the principles of free trade into the debate. The argument was, that, by thus freely admitting such foreign degrees, there would be at length reciprocity, and those foreign states would admit ours, and thus, by our good and generous example, there would be a free interchange of degrees, as there is of all the other commodities of trade between states. It seemed strange to me that the advocates of this extraordinary proposition do not propose what would have been a simpler mode of extending to our profession the principles of free trade; viz., by abolishing all restrictions whatever, all degrees and licences, all education and examination, until at last, as Mr. Gladstone (in his celebrated free trade speech at Paris) said of custom-houses, all universities and colleges would be only remembered as things of the past. As to procuring evidence before recognition that such and such foreign universities had abandoned their evil ways and instituted sufficient courses of study and examination, there would never be any difficulty in procuring testimonials. We all know that testimonials can be had as plentiful as blackberries, for anything, from a South Sea bubble to Solomon's spectacles. Even if we had the most satisfactory assurances that there would not be an abuse this year, we could have no sufficient guarantee that it would not occur next year. Let foreign diplomas be once put on our Register, under sanction of law as proposed, and they could never be removed, so great would be the legal difficulties in the way. I believe I am not wrong in saying that the holder of a foreign diploma from a university once recognised, could apply for a *mandamus* obliging the Council to show cause for such removal; and, as neither foreign universities nor holders of their diplomas would voluntarily criminate themselves, and as a foreign university could not be brought into a court of law in this country, the General Medical Council would be powerless. Another argument I have heard advanced in favour of the admission of foreign diplomas is, that there was a power to place foreign diplomas on the Register in the Act of 1858, and that the new clause was only continuing such a power. I cannot think this argument of any value. The power in the first Medical Act of 1858 to admit such diplomas was merely an act of grace, in accordance with the spirit and wording of every new regulating Act, that its restrictions should not have a retrospective action. For instance, in the Apothecaries' Act of Ireland in 1791, of England in 1815, in the charters of the College of Surgeons of Ireland and also in England in 1800, it was provided that persons practising from usage as apothecaries or surgeons at the passing of the respective Acts or Charters should be legally recognised in the new Act. In like manner, in the Medical Charities Act of Ireland of 1850, it was provided that all persons holding dispensaries in Ireland at the time of the passing of the Act, though not possessing any professional qualification whatever, should be recognised as "duly qualified" and placed on the Register. But this power, or right, ceased very properly within one year after the passing of the Act; and such persons could not now be registered or recognised as qualified to hold appointments. A similar power was given under the Medical Act of 1858, to protect the rights of holders of foreign diplomas then resident and practising; but it never was the intention in this Act, any more than in the previous ones I have named, to continue such recognition. The protection was a mere act of grace in all the cases, and the very introduction of it, with limitation, was in itself proof that it never was intended to introduce it anew.

The French law is a very fair one, and it was on it that I modelled my amendment of June 5th of this year, with regard to the admission of foreign diplomas, at the last meeting of Council. It was to this effect: that the holder of a foreign diploma, desirous of being placed on the Register, should be entitled on such diploma to present himself for examination to some one of our licensing bodies; and, on passing its examination and obtaining its diploma, to have his name placed on the Register. It was urged against this, that all the licensing bodies might enter into a conspiracy, like a trades union, to deny him an examination; and I therefore, although I thought the objection groundless, introduced an addition that, in the event of licensing bodies refusing him an examination, it would then be lawful for the General Medical Council to exercise their discretion in registering him. This is the present law in France. It is liberal towards men educated in foreign countries, while it protects the people from ignorant practitioners. The Faculty of Medicine in France says to every foreign physician desirous of practising there, "We cannot enter into the merits of foreign Universities, their shortcomings, or their sufficiencies. We will not, however, subject you, the holder of a foreign diploma, to undergo the four years of education we require from students; but we will require evidence that

you may be trusted, equally with our own physicians and surgeons, with the care of life; and the only evidence we can rely upon is examination, and to that you must submit." If we in the United Kingdom go beyond this, we shall let loose upon the public ignorance and imposition. It has been said that Government desired to have foreign diplomas recognised without examination; and that they would not take up the proposed amended Bill without such a clause being sent up from the Medical Council with its approval. In this country, the Government of to-day may not be the Government of to-morrow; and therefore the opinion of one Government is not that of another. But, whatever party might be in power, I cannot think that any Government or any Secretary of State, when aware of the true nature of foreign diplomas—of the facts I have adduced to-day—would support the proposition of admitting foreign diplomas without examination; but, were it even otherwise, I believe it would be better to have no amended Bill at all, than a Bill with such a clause. I would go further, and say, better for the public to have the Medical Act of 1858 rescinded altogether, and the registering abolished, leaving it, as before, to the public to judge for themselves of qualifications, than have those foreign diplomas legally placed beside our own. Under any circumstances, let us not be parties to treat as trifles the lives of our fellow-creatures. Let not ours be the hands to fix the stamp of true gold on German silver or American greenback; and I am sure, in so acting, we shall have the support of all well-educated Germans and Americans. Much is talked of amending Clause 40 of the present Act, so as to give greater protection to the rights of qualified practitioners; but of what use would such protection be, if, while we make that clause more stringent, we open another and a wider door for the entrance of the purchasers of foreign diplomas? I have dwelt thus long on the proposed admission of foreign diplomas, because I think the question of vital importance, and equally concerning the public and ourselves.

I now come to another point which I consider of great importance in the introduction of an amended Bill, and that is the constitution of the General Medical Council itself; and I think it argues much for the supineness or the good nature of the profession in the United Kingdom that they have borne with its present constitution so long. I believe we all recognise this principle in our constitution, that there should be no taxation without representation. But who pays the taxation that supports the Council? You do; the whole profession that I see around me. The bodies that send their representatives to the General Council pay not one shilling towards it. By whom are the Council elected? Not by you; not one of the whole Council is your member. The Council are no more representatives of the profession than would the members of the House of Commons be representatives of the people if they were elected by the several corporations throughout the kingdom. If members of the House of Commons were elected in Dublin, London, and Edinburgh, by the respective lord mayors and corporations, they would surely not be representatives of these cities or of the people. The members of the General Medical Council, with the exception of a very small proportion nominated by the Crown, are the representatives of medical corporations, but not of the profession. These corporations keep the tollgates through which candidates are to pass, and they receive the fees for graduation; but, except on some very rare occasions, take no further interest in the profession. In the Queen's University, Convocation—that is, the graduates who have taken out degrees and are engaged afterwards in the battle of life in their several professions—are entitled to elect one-fourth of the whole number on the Senate or governing body. In the London University, Convocation elects half the Senate; for, on every second vacancy, it sends forward three names, out of which the Crown cannot travel. Such members are of the greatest importance, for they bring to the Senate or governing body the best of all knowledge—the *knowledge of experience*, the knowledge of what has been done, and of what is still required and yet remains to be done. It brings into the Senate the practical experience of the graduates from every phase of life. However estimable may be the members sent up by medical corporations as at present, however willing they are to do all in their power, they do not draw their knowledge from a sufficiently wide field. There can be no difficulty in introducing this element of representation. The voting-papers, as used at present in University elections, furnish the means. The registry gives the names and addresses of those entitled to vote, just as the calendar of an University gives its list of voters; and thus the members of the profession in England, Scotland, and Ireland could each without difficulty elect the number of representatives allotted to each; and those representatives of the profession, in direct communication with the whole working body of the profession, would bring into the General Medical Council a stock and a kind of information the Council cannot command under its present constitution.

I have long thought of this alteration in the constitution of the Council, and it is because long thinking has strengthened the conviction of its

necessity in my mind that I have taken this opportunity of bringing it before you. I heard it said here yesterday in debate that if additional members were added, the number on the Medical Council and the expense would be too great. As to the expense, I think that should be borne by the parties who send representatives. Let the Crown and the corporations pay for theirs. You now pay for all. As to number, I quite concur in the view that the number is already too great; but instead of all members of Branch Councils being also members of General Council, let the General Council be composed of delegates sent by the Branch Councils, as faculties in universities send delegates to constitute a central board, and the number will then be not half its present amount. I would rather not have any legislation for some time than have the patchwork legislation that has been going on. We have already had five acts passed since 1858. We are tiring the House of Commons; let us not go forward again with another patchwork bill, but with a broad and well-considered measure. How is this to be done, is the next question. Two ways present themselves; one is that a draft of an amended bill should be drawn up, as on former occasions, and that every corporation or university, every General and Branch Association, should press its own amendments during its progress through the House. I am not in favour of this. It was thus the present Medical Act was passed in such a shape that one of our most learned judges has declared in open court that it must have been drawn up by some one who knew nothing of law, and that neither judge nor lawyer could understand it. Votes of members would be obtained in support of this clause or that, not on its own merits, but on the influence brought to bear upon members; and members themselves might support or reject an amendment influenced by partial representation, or even by considerations of support to be obtained at some coming election. We should "meet again"—

"In thunder, lightning, and in rain."

Again stand round the cauldron with

"Double, double, toil and trouble."

Another way, and I am in favour of it, is that a Royal Commission should issue to report upon the present state of the law in regard to medical education and qualification, and that legislation should be founded on its report. I should much prefer a royal commission consisting of members of the medical profession and of men of scientific acquirements, to a Select Committee of the House of Commons; for the members of a royal commission would almost certainly be persons possessed of knowledge out of the profession, and they would have the assistance of some members of the profession, as members of it; while members of the House of Commons, appointed on a Select Committee, might possess very little, if any, knowledge whatever on the subject. However, either might answer, and the advantage of such previous step would be that we should be able to know and to consider fully the various views put forward previously to the introduction of a bill. Were such a commission or committee appointed, its labours would be light and short if each corporate body or association, or several together, should they agree, would lay their views, in form of a document, before the commission, which would then, like a brief, furnish the text for the examination of witnesses in support or against the views put forward. As far as I have been able to bestow attention on details, the changes I should like to see effected would be these,—

1. That the General Medical Council should be altered so far as to allow a certain proportion of its members to be representatives from the members of the profession resident in England, in Scotland, and Ireland, each division of the United Kingdom furnishing its proportion to the Council, as at present.
2. That this Central Council would perform all duties as at present, and be a court of appeal from the Branch Councils.
3. That the Central Council should have power to lay down, subject to the approbation of the Secretary of State, a code of regulations, both as to preliminary and professional examination, and that all graduates and holders of licenses or degrees from our several corporate bodies should be subject to such examination before being permitted to hold any public appointment, supported wholly or in part by public grant. I would exempt, as the regulations of the attorneys and solicitors, etc., do, graduates in arts of universities from the preliminary examination; and I would not give the Central Council any power to lay down any code of education. I would leave to the several licensing bodies full privilege to suit education to the circumstance of each division of the kingdom.

4. That the Branch Councils should appoint a board of examination for each division of the kingdom, and give to each candidate who passed a certificate to that effect.

This would extend to the public and to the sick poor of our country the same protection against ignorance and incompetency that is at present afforded to our soldiers and sailors by the regulations of the army and navy authorities. Its effect on our licensing bodies would be bene-

ficial. There would then be a competition among them; not, as at present, to lower the standard of education and examination in order to sell their diplomas; but a competition among them to raise their standard, so that candidates, who would afterwards have to undergo the test examination, would seek the body that, by affording high education and examination, insured to its graduates or licentiates the best security for passing the test examination.

The good effects I should hope to see from such a plan as I have sketched would be, first, the advantage to the public of having well educated practitioners for the medical care of all classes, poor and rich; secondly, benefit to the profession itself by the exclusion of ignorant and incompetent persons, who, now, entering into competition for public appointments with the well informed, lower the rate of payment for all. Such persons would henceforward find their own level in other pursuits requiring less education and less knowledge than ours.

I am not wedded to details. I see the present state of the law is injurious to the profession and to the public. I give you the thoughts that have arisen in my mind, after some years of close attention to the working of the present laws. I feel how important it is that the next session of Parliament should not come upon us unprepared. My views may be wrong in some particulars, or in all, but I shall be well satisfied if the observations I have made here to-day awake your attention to the subject, for then from you will come a brighter light to guide us on our way. Mainly to you, and to our own Irish Association in conjunction with you, I now look for the intelligence and energy that will bring forth a measure good for the public and good for the profession, for the true interests of both are and ought ever to be identical.

REMARKS ON THE NEW FRENCH CODEX.*

By J. BIRKBECK NEVINS, M.D.Lond.

Lecturer on Materia Medica at the Royal Infirmary School of Medicine, Liverpool.

THE previous remarks on this work referred to the materia medica of the *Codex*, and the simple preparations contained in it. The following will relate to the compounds which have received the stamp of official recognition. It is doubtful, however, whether admission into the *Codex* implies of itself approbation; for, in the preface, a kind of apology for some of the preparations appears to be intended by the remark that "the *Codex*—the guardian of tradition—reproduces ancient empirical prescriptions, to which custom has assigned a place, as well as the most recent acquisitions from chemistry, and also the active principles of plants, etc."

The most striking feature of the compound preparations is their great complexity, the number of ingredients that enter into them, and their discordant composition in some instances. The most notorious example of this is the old-fashioned Theriaca, which consists of 61 ingredients, of the following characters: 1 drastic purgative, and 2 mild ones; 3 astringents; 3 turpentine, and 2 emmenagogues; 1 nauseating, and 9 bitter expectorants; 9 antispasmodics, and 1 opiate; 28 carminatives, aromatics, tonics, and stimulants; dried vipers; and sherry wine. It would, however, be very unfair to represent this as an average sample of the compounds in the *Codex*; for it is generally evident at a glance what is the prevailing character of the ingredients, though their number is much greater than we are accustomed to. In turning over the pages at random, and counting the ingredients as the formulæ presented themselves, there were 19, 11, 8, 9, 12, 5, 7, 6, 8, 11, in the different formulæ counted.

The large number of comparatively mild forms of medicine, such as Tisanes and Syrups, and their dilute condition, is an important feature in the *Codex*; for, whilst our Infusions and Decoctions, which correspond most nearly with the Tisanes, generally contain from half an ounce to an ounce of the active ingredient in the pint of water, the corresponding Tisane (e.g., gentian) contains only about forty grains to the pint, and that of senega contains a drachm and a half only to the pint. Our own list of Syrups consists of fifteen only, whilst there are about a hundred in the *Codex*; and, whilst our own list contains six or eight for the sake of their colour or flavour alone, the *Codex* contains about a score, including raspberry vinegar, syrup of red currants, of peach-flowers, orange-flowers, red poppy, and the like. Many of the remainder contain potent drugs, which we exclude on principle from a class of medicines so liable as Syrups to be taken incautiously. These are, prussic acid; the salts of morphia; strychnia; digitalis; belladonna; henbane, and even aconite. The proportion, however, of these active ingredients is so small, that the usual dose of each syrup is a tablespoonful; so that the risk of taking an over-dose is not very great.

The alcoholic preparations are puzzling from their number and the numerous titles given to them, which closely resemble each other.

* Continued from page 766 of last volume.

Alcools, or medicines obtained by the action of alcohol on various substances, chiefly vegetable; *Alcoolats*, or what we generally term "spirits", viz., preparations obtained by distilling spirits from various substances, such as mint, lavender, etc., containing a volatile principle; and *Alcoolatures*, the term employed when fresh plants are employed for making *Alcools*,—are so much alike in sound, and in their derivation from alcohol, as to possess no distinctive characters in their names for the British physician. Amongst the *Alcoolats* is included "eau de Cologne" under its ordinary name.

Another well-known substance, "Cold Cream", is also introduced by its popular title into the *Codex*; and Court Plaster also has its place amongst the "Sparadraps", but it is under such a variety of names that it is at first difficult to recognise its identity. "Sparadraps de Colle de Poisson", "Taffetas d'Angleterre", and "Sericum Anglicum", do not at once recall this familiar substance to the mind.

Throughout the *Codex*, we meet with what is really a characteristic feature; viz., the constant introduction of formulæ under the names of their proposers, without any indication in their title as to their composition. Thus we have "Sydenham's White Decoction"; "Weiss' Whey"; "Tisane Royale"; "Sydenham's Laudanum"; "Rousseau's Laudanum"; "Fioravanti's Balsam", which contains seventeen different resins and other ingredients; "Pills of Bontius"; "Dinner Pills"; "Regent's Pomatum"; "Dessault's Pomatum"; and so on. In some cases, there is a synonyme which gives a hint as to the composition; but this is decidedly the exception, rather than the rule.

Under the article "Pills", the *Codex* has adopted the plan which is said to have been proposed for adoption in our own *Pharmacopæia*, but rejected by the Committee. It has ordered the weight of each pill in nearly every instance; and this is generally less than what we are accustomed to prescribe; for the large majority are under four grains in weight, whilst ours frequently, even if they do not generally, exceed this standard. They are also very frequently directed to be silvered; and to be covered with a gelatinous or resinous solution, which, when dry, will protect them from the air. The great care and minuteness of the directions for this purpose are best illustrated in the Pills of Protoxide of Iron, the formula and instructions for making them occupying an entire page of the work. After the mass has been made, it is to be divided into so many pills, which are immediately to be shaken up in iron filings reduced to an impalpable powder: and they are then to be covered by a saturated solution of mastic and balsam of tolu in ether. Lastly, they are to be dried, and kept in bottles hermetically sealed. From the weight and composition of these pills, we derive something like an authoritative opinion as to the doses to be employed in France; and, estimated by this test, we find that gr. 14 of aloes, gr. 3-4ths of cambo, gr. 1-14th of arsenious acid, gr. 1-7th of muriate of morphia, gr. 3-4ths of iodide of iron, gr. 1-7th of corrosive sublimate, and gr. 1-3rd of extract of opium, are the doses for French prescriptions.

Amongst the Pills is a formula which is ordered to be kept in all shops, that might be usefully introduced into our own *Pharmacopæia*; viz., Compound Hyoscyamus and Valerian Pill. It contains equal parts of extract of hyoscyamus, extract of valerian, and oxide of zinc—a combination which at present we could not obtain, as the *British Pharmacopæia* does not possess an alcoholic extract of valerian, which is a preparation held in favour in the *Codex*.

Our remarks would extend too far, if the whole work were analysed in a similar manner to the above; and we must, therefore, content ourselves with observing that the "Sucs" of the *Codex* do not at all resemble the "Succi" of the *British Pharmacopæia*. They are merely the juices of various succulent fruits, etc., pressed out and filtered through paper for the subsequent formation of such preparations as Raspberry Vinegar, Syrup of Lemons, Syrup of Cherries, of Horseradish, and the like.

The Artificial Mineral Waters require a passing comment, to observe that they do not profess to be more than a rough imitation of the natural ones; for no Iodides or Bromides are introduced into any of the Artificial Waters, even though they may be known to be present in the natural ones, because "the *Codex* contains several preparations for the administration of these active medicines with greater security and in more accurate doses than can be attained in such compounds as mineral waters, which are taken *ad libitum*."

With a few comments upon preparations having nearly the same names that we are familiar with, but differing so much in strength or composition as to require notice, we shall conclude our remarks on the French *Codex*.

Laudanum is twice introduced by name into the *Codex*; and there is also a Tincture of Extract of Opium. But none of them correspond with our tinctures; for they contain respectively one-seventh, one-eighth, and one-fourth of their weight of opium, instead of the proportion of one grain in about fifteen minims of our tincture.