

## CULTIVATION OF SCIENCE

BY THE  
PROFESSORS OF MEDICINE AND  
LAW.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I feel no hesitation whatever in making this call upon you. You or your contributors have sailed somewhat out of your latitude, and I, though one of the uninitiated, may be permitted the same license. I throw myself (for publication) on the liberality of THE LANCET, which has been so often boasted as the champion of the utmost freedom, and as affording an open field for the most unlimited discussion, and which, I am bound to add, has often acted up to its professions, unlike some other liberals, whose deeds by no means square with their declared sentiments.

In an article professing to treat of the last meeting of the *British Association*, you introduce a long, elaborate, and severe attack on the education, degree of knowledge, and state of mind, of the members generally, of what has hitherto been esteemed the first of the liberal professions. There is some foundation, I admit, for your criticism, but whether it justifies the extent to which your correspondent has gone, and his speculations thereupon, is another question, upon which I do not feel inclined to enter at present; admitting however the evil to exist, as it does, without question, to a certain extent, the remedy of it is one of the many advantages which I am sanguine enough to expect will arise from that glorious instrument of good, the *British Association*. Your philosophical correspondent, for such his effusion bespeaks him, has the candour to acknowledge also, that amongst the members of the medical profession who rejoice in the appellation, "par excellence," of "*the faculty*," (a *soubriquet*, which in very many instances I am sorry to say might justify the smile of scepticism, if not of ridicule,) there exists an evil of a very similar nature, if not identical in kind and degree.

When things are carried on in such a candid and philosophical spirit—where the object is to discover the defects and evils of our system,—not from a malignant desire to hold them up to public reprobation and odium, but that we may know them, and, knowing, turn our attention to the cure, and so indulge the high office of increasing human knowledge, and, of consequence, extending human happiness,—no man can or ought to feel offence at the conclusions

come to, even though they should touch him on a tender point. For my own part, I take all in the most perfect good-humour; I admit the evil and deplore it, not merely on its own account, and its effects upon the profession of the bar, but for its reflected operation on medical science, a matter which obviously concerns more nearly the public good.

From very many causes not necessary to be gone into at present, the profession of the bar forms a most important, perhaps the chief, element of society in Dublin. Its members are, of consequence not only the patrons and employers of the medical profession, but the artificers of medical reputation also, for their opinion gives considerable tone to that of the community: they are, as it were, the impanelled jury, who are to pronounce their verdict before God and their country, while each medical man, in his *game of life*, may be looked upon in the light of an *advocate* (his own advocate), and the question at issue is medical reputation. Thus medical men are at once placed in the position, not of seekers after truth and justice, but of mere *advocates*, whose only object is the interest of their clients, their own interest in their dexterous pleading, to forward which it is not unlikely they will sometimes forget the objects of true philosophy, and rest contented with what will fulfil all their ends as well, and is obtained with far less labour, viz., the *mere character* for science. It too often happens in other suits, (it must and frequently does occur in this, where there is no presiding judge, firm in purpose, dispassionate in conduct, clear and unbiassed in intellect, to direct the astonished jury, and strike the balance between advocacy and equity,) that the most powerful and adroit advocate carries a triumphant verdict at the expense of truth and justice,—an evil which we must continue to meet daily, so long as the juries whom we have imagined, have to pronounce on questions of which they have no adequate knowledge, as the argument admits, or are destitute of the assistance of constitutional judges. It may be said, that the medical corporations complete the deficiency of the supposed analogy: they *ought* and perhaps *might*, but for their universally admitted corrupt condition; in fact I believe I am quite safe in saying, that managed as they now are, they are pretty generally allowed to throw their weight into the opposite scale, contributing to forward the interests of the noisy and dexterous pretender, rather than those of the grave, learned, and modest philosopher.

This is a great, a crying evil: it is not that the medical profession must be injured as a calling; it is not that individual

merit goes unrewarded, and sees with sorrow and vexation its honours borne away by undeservers: this might be endured; but it must be quite evident that such a system wars against medical philosophy, and of course nullifies and destroys all the innumerable public benefits that must result from the due cultivation of medical science. And here, if I am to be candid, I must declare that this is not mere speculation, but that the system *has* produced the very fruits which reason and argument would lead one to expect. Medical science is not generally cultivated here; there are but few medical philosophers, in the true sense of the term, in Dublin; nor can it be otherwise, so long as they have no independent and discriminating tribunal, before which to lay their claims, and from which to receive their well-merited reward.

No doubt, to the unspeakable honour of human nature, there ever will be in this as in other callings, some few, who, even in silence and solitude, and among the most disheartening difficulties, will travel the rugged uphill path of science, urged by no other stimulus but the love of truth, seeking no other reward than that which results from the nobleness of their pursuit; but the number of these must necessarily be small; to swell the little chosen band to a multitude you must add the stimulus of self-interest, you must distribute, as rewards, this world's goods and honours; and this upon the judgment of an honest and a competent tribunal.

But if we are deficient in medical philosophers, as all must admit who mean any thing more by the term than a mere knowledge of human, with perhaps a sprinkling of comparative anatomy, a certain acquaintance with disease,—which, however connected with reasoning in theory, is assuredly empiricism in practice,—together with a quantum sufficit of chemistry, and perhaps a sprinkling of botany, for such constitute the medical man very generally, we are by no means stinted in a supply of persons who are quite alive to the value of a character for science, and who leave no arts unemployed to obtain “the consummation devoutly to be wished.” These persons, men of small minds and less acquirements, who feel no regard for philosophical truth, who care not a button for all the science in the world, who merely trade upon “character,” are to be found obtruding every where. Their reputation is to be made, and they never stop pushing and driving and manœuvring until they gain their ends, to wit, the exclusion of all competitors, the management and *patronage* of whatever body they thus take by storm, a reputation for science, and a con-

sequent improvement in practice. These individuals contribute but little themselves to extend the boundaries of knowledge, while they operate as a great bar to its furtherance by others: a vicious system has called them into existence, and they gratefully improve upon that system, by banishing, in a measure, all genuine philosophers whether medical or otherwise from the field. This likewise is an evil of great magnitude, which I trust will be much alleviated, if not entirely eradicated, by the British Association.

There are in this city a knot of doctors and surgeons, whom it would be easy to point out, who are most offensive in this respect; they are to be found in all places of scientific resort; they monopolize to themselves all character for science and knowledge; are most loud in their own praise; and (to believe themselves) concentrate in their own persons all that has flourished in the brilliant series from Esculapius and Hippocrates to Bichat and Cuvier inclusive; and yet it would be an easy matter, even for one uninitiated, to demonstrate their complete shallowness on whatever topic they might select as that on which they are best calculated to shine. A competent and unflinching tribunal is now brought to their doors; these would-be philosophers, these tradesmen in science, will now be reduced to their proper dimensions, or forced in good faith to become what they have too long pretended. and, on very easy and profitable terms, passed for. Too long have they played the triton among the minnows, to the great detriment of science, and the grief of all true philosophers. It will now be seen whether they deserve an honourable appellation, even among that limited section which their doings have not tended to raise much in the estimation of the cultivators of knowledge in general. Did the British Association promise nothing more than this purgation, it would deserve the gratitude and support of all true Irishmen.

Though perfectly assured of the truth of these sentiments, I should not nevertheless have ventured on their expression, were they not sanctioned by the opinions, come to with sorrow of several grave and learned members of the medical profession, admirable alike for their original gift of mind, extensive acquirements, and liberal and refined tastes, who sacrifice all narrow prejudices and bigoted feeling to general principle, the extension of human knowledge, and the increase of human happiness. The conclusion I would come to is this, that there are among the other liberal professions as many genuine cultivators of philosophy, as many searchers after truth

for truth's sake, as many ardent admirers of science, as many workmen willing and anxious to extend the bounds of human knowledge and human happiness, as are to be found adorning the followers of the healing art; but that not finding it their interest to gain such character among the public, they are more modest in their bearing, more moderate in their pretensions, less obtrusive in their character, while they are animated with a more liberal and refined taste, the unerring consequence of a more extensive acquaintance with literature, history, and dialectics, and possess a more general knowledge of physics and mathematics, which, strange to say, are entirely neglected, as I am informed, in medical education, except amongst those who have taken a university degree, which forms but a small portion of the profession.

I hope I shall not be supposed to be impelled in these remarks by anything so contemptible as the sectarian prejudice that might animate one profession against another; such a feeling would indeed be unworthy of any one laying claim to the character of philosophical reformer, and capable of lifting his eyes from the narrow schemes of paltry party and vulgar faction, to the broad, the unbounded field of general improvement and general utility. No one holds in higher estimation than I do the medical section of philosophy; it is most noble, most comprehensive in its grasp, most useful in its results and objects, and affords the widest and most interesting field for the greatest genius; none is more anxious than I am to see it established on its proper foundation; but we must all confess that, from its peculiar nature, it is most apt to be infested with ignorant quacks and designing pretenders, who would "deceive even the elect." My object has been simply truth. I have not made mere accusations with a view to condemn, but I have stated facts, and traced them to their causes, with a view to reform. I wish the case to be stated truly, and on the broad principle contained in the line with which I conclude;

"Homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto."

LEX.

Dublin, Sept. 3, 1835.

## DR. CLANNY'S SAFETY-LAMP.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR, — If I was astonished at the incorrect communication inserted in the Medical Gazette for the 8th of August, I was still more so when I read the Editor's comments inserted at the same time with my reply in the following number of that journal. Be it known that I never intended in my reply to identify the Editor of the Medical Gazette with *that* report, as I considered and do still consider it to be the production of those concerned in uprearing a well-puffed safety-lamp. I acknowledge that when more at leisure than at the moment when I wrote my reply, I found that this "one-sided report" was given by way of "Leader" in the said number.

I did not expect that the Editor of the Medical Gazette would have showed such virulence of disposition towards me. So many years having elapsed since the *cholera-machia*, I vainly thought I might have escaped such unjust animadversion. I certainly was indignant at the trick played upon me by J. Roberts, and shall so continue to the last moment of my existence.

In this "Leader" when giving an outline description of my new safety-lamp, we find the following words:—"In this sort of lamp a wire run across the gauze, from side to side, which fuses when 'strongly' heated by the flame within, &c." Now this is not the fact, for the piece of wire is so fine in texture, that the weakest light-giving flame fuses it, as J. Roberts would readily understand from my printed evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons, and also from the said safety-lamp being so frequently before his eyes at the Committee-room. As to the courteous Editor's hint of my "making my reply an advertisement for matters *behind the scenes*," I deny it *in toto*, as I never showed or intended to show the communication to any person whatever, only intending that the "bane and antidote" should follow each other. And as to the equally civil remark, viz., "A bit of silly impertinence at the end, we took leave to strike out," I beg leave to make known, and now give the words "struck out," as nearly as my memory permits;—"I rejoice that I have seen and been enabled, before I leave town, to show these persons up, in their proper colours!" As the Editor took the cap for his own wearing, I am not surprised that he kept this paragraph out of his conservative