

THE CANADIAN MEDICAL TIMES.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF
MEDICAL SCIENCE, NEWS, AND POLITICS

KINGSTON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1873.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Communications and reports solicited. Correspondents must accompany letters, if intended to be printed anonymously, with their proper signature, as a guarantee of good faith.

TERMS OF PUBLICATION.

THE MEDICAL TIMES is supplied six months for ONE DOLLAR. Address orders and remittances to JAMES NISBET, M.D., Kingston.

POSTAGE ON THE MEDICAL TIMES.—The rate of postage on the Medical Times is Five Cents per quarter.

A beautiful set of pathologico-histological preparations by Dr. Otto Barth, of Leipsic, were exhibited at the meeting of the British Medical Association. The specimens consisted of admirably cut sections, large enough to show structure with the naked eye, but admitting also of microscopic examination. A portion of healthy tissue is included when possible, for the sake of comparison with the diseased tissue; and it is stated that such specimens are found to be of great use in Germany for teaching purposes. Their value for this end may readily be conceived. The Germans are good students and good teachers, and it is little wonder that original research advances so rapidly among them when we consider the means so carefully adopted to advance scientific education in their country.

It may be debated whether the large extent to which gratuitous medical advice is tendered is not an honour or a drawback to the profession. One hearty grumbler writes to a London medical journal, complaining of the hospital returns paraded in the newspapers as preposterous, and exhibiting the extent of injury done to the medical profession by such wholesale gratuitous relief. He writes:—"In this day's *Standard*, August 26th, it is declared that at the British Hospital for Diseases of the Skin 285 patients were relieved during the week ending August 23rd. At the foot of the same page we read: 'Metropolitan Free Hospital, Devonshire Square, City. The aggregate number of patients relieved during the week ending August 23rd was—medical, 1156; surgical, 819; total, 1975; of which 902 were new cases.' What a robbery of the medical profession is here announced. What would the brewers say if the same number of people had been supplied with beer for which they were not paid? What would the lawyers say if the same amount of legal advice had been given without being paid for? Here we find at two institutions alone 2260 persons treated gratuitously, who could be, as the lawyers say, 'assisted by friends' if they could not immediately find funds for themselves to pay the doctor. During the year of fifty-two weeks, taking the payment for each of those persons at the very low sum of one shilling per week, £5876 might be realized. They spend much more than that in beer, and they and their friends mulct the medical profession to that extent at least. There is something radically wrong about this indiscriminate medical charity; it is a shameful robbery perpetrated upon the

medical world, and it behoves doctors of every grade to attend to it; it is a barefaced and increasing evil."

It is to the interest of medical men to take care that medical charity is not abused, or rather that it is abused as little as possible; but considerations of benevolence and humanity as well as considerations directly affecting certain important professional interests, such as the medical education of both students and practitioners, forbid the setting up of any crusade against hospitals by medical men as a body. There is no doubt, at times, and to a greater or lesser extent, a want of discrimination in the admission of patients to hospital. Too many who are able to pay are admitted to free treatment or receive free advice and medicine as outpatients. In a large city, like the English metropolis, where general and special hospitals abound, the working members of the medical profession cannot but feel that these hospitals rob them of income, and it is not surprising that they should complain. But if they were in a country destitute of such hospital advantages, the other side of the question might be presented to them. They might then find themselves troubled with the care of pauper patients, or find their income diminished by a class of persons who seek every chance to impose upon the general kindness of medical men.

SIR DOMINIC CORRIGAN ON THE
MEDICAL PROFESSION.

The following observations are taken from an address delivered by Sir Dominic Corrigan, M.D., M.P., before the students of St. Mary's Hospital, London:—

A consideration that has always been uppermost in my mind is that we have ever this proud consolation in our profession, that we are *searchers after truth*. We are not trammelled by any party net, nor controlled by any other consideration than this—that our object is to find out what is true, and our only vocation, to practise it.

The Churchman is not thus free. He must be a churchman all his life, and, as a true churchman, he must extinguish all glimmerings of doubt that may flicker before him, and advocate the doctrines and discipline of the particular church to which he belongs.

The churchman is not free in mind as we are.

The Lawyer is an advocate. He is bound by law and ethics to advocate the cause of the client who commits to his advocacy life or property, whatever he may think ought to be the verdict. He is not at liberty to examine the several sides of any question, to determine what shall be his own view, and to act upon it.

The lawyer is not free in mind as we are.

The Soldier is bound by his duty to follow and obey the commands of his superiors, without inquiring into the justice or wisdom of the command.

The soldier is not free in mind as we are.

And as for the Politician, I will not be hard on him, for I have a brother feeling for him; but the politician and the statesman must often temporise, or even abandon what he knows to be right, in order to attain what he thinks is *practicable*.

The politician is not free as we are.

We are free from all bias, from all influences; free to seek out what is right and true in our profession, and to practise it. We may, like all other human beings, err in judgment, but we need not fall into error under the influences that sway other professions. This I have always felt as a proud reflection, even in the midst of early struggles, and throughout professional labours; and I am confident it will ever be to you, my young friends, the same.

I remember in my own early life a little incident that I may be excused for mentioning, as it exemplifies how unrestrained we are in our efforts after truth, and how little we have to fear in acknowledging our errors. In 1835 the first meeting of the British Association took place in Dublin. The physiology of the heart just then engaged much attention. Some previous contributions of mine had attracted a little notice, and I was invited to be one of a committee to investigate the subject. I did not accept the invitation, but on the first day of meeting of the Physiological Section I at once stated that the view I had put forward was erroneous, and arose from the mistake into which I fell of experimenting on the hearts of cold-blooded animals, fishes and reptiles, and arguing from them to the heart of man and warm-blooded animals. And how was my avowal received? By passing a vote of thanks to me for my communication. I do not know any other profession in which a similar avowal of error could have been as safely made and would have been as well received. Popular biographers and second-rate writers are fond of representing us as a jealous profession; we are not so. The story is again and again repeated that Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, was hunted out of practice by the jealousy and envy of his professional brethren. There never was a more unfounded calumny. In 1607, when he was only twenty-nine years of age, he was elected a Fellow of the College of Physicians in London, eight years afterwards was appointed Professor of Anatomy to the College, and during his life-time the College erected a marble statue of him in their hall, with an inscription commemorative of his immortal discoveries and works.

PETTENKOFER ON BEEF EXTRACT.

In a letter to Joseph Bennert, of Antwerp, Pettenkofer enters into an elaborate exposition, or rather vindication, of Liebig's extract. Like all alimentary novelties, that renowned preparation has had to fight its way into popular acceptance through at least two initial prejudices: first, a suspicion as to its wholesomeness, to use no stronger phrase; next, a scepticism as to its possessing any specific virtue whatever. Both these barriers the extractum carnis has at length surmounted, though three-and-twenty years have elapsed since its discoverer first produced it in the royal laboratory at Munich. How little its assailants understood the object of their attack may be inferred from the charges they brought against it. "The extract," said they, "containing as it does neither albuminoids, nor fats nor hy-