

The nursing of the sick in private practice as well as in hospitals was left to women of a type which is scarcely caricatured by Dickens in his *Sairey Gamp* and *Betsy Prig*. In the matter of sanitation darkness was upon the face of the deep. Few physicians had given attention to the means of preventing disease, and by the profession as well as by the people plagues and pestilences were looked upon as something mysterious and altogether beyond man's control. It was not until some time after the beginning of the Queen's reign that the idea of checking the spread of disease and bettering the health of the people by legislation took practical shape.

OUR PROFESSIONAL FORBEARS.

The practitioners of medicine in 1837 were, for the most part, of a type that is now utterly extinct. If many of the physicians, such as Sir Henry Hallford, Sir Henry Holland, and Dr. John Elliotson (Thackeray's "Dr. Goodenough") were men of high culture and considerable practical knowledge of disease, the majority of them appear to have been little better than pompous pedants. The surgeons were, as a class, rough in manner as well as in speech. Dr. Wilks gives a graphic picture of them in his article in the present number of *The Practitioner* (see p. 586). It would be impossible at the present day for a hospital surgeon to exhibit the skull of an ape in the operating theatre with the object of suggesting a resemblance between the cranial conformation of the animal and that of a colleague, as Liston is said to have done behind the back of Syme when he was lecturing. Operators of the type of "Mr. Slasher" are as much things of the past as the amputating knife like a sword which Professor Lizars used to flourish. The medical student of the present day is almost as different from the Bob Sawyers and the Ben Allens of the Thirties as a High Church priest is from Parson Thwackum.

In justice to our professional forbears, it must be remembered that they had not the manifold advantages which we at the present day enjoy. The ancillary sciences were little cultivated, and hardly any means of research were available. The practice of medicine, as distinguished from "physic," was just emerging from the condition of a trade. Only twenty years before the Queen's accession very few general practitioners had any diploma or technical qualification whatever. Teaching, where it was to be had at all, was for the most part more ornamental than useful. Examinations were a farce. Of the educative and stimulating influences so abundant at the present day there were few. There were but three medical societies of any