

of these papers is to describe certain phenomena which are occasionally to be observed during the progress of disease of the nervous centres; and he divides into two groups the joint affections which respectively occur during the progress of locomotor ataxy, and in hemiplegia dependent on disease of one of the cerebral hemispheres.¹

ENGLISH DEGREES FOR ENGLISH STUDENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Not only practitioners and students, but all patriotic Englishmen, must agree with the remarks in your leading article of November 1st on the continuous exodus of English medical students from their native schools. This is a matter with which pecuniary considerations have absolutely nothing to do, as at the present day the necessary expenses of medical education vary little on either side of the Tweed, and the fee for the double degree of M.D., M.S., in the North is about the same as that for the usual double qualification in London. I brought this subject forward at the meeting of the Royal College of Surgeons in March last, and then drew attention to the rapid decadence of the English schools of medicine. There is no doubt whatever as to the cause of this. The real explanation, as I then pointed out, is the fact to which you allude, that “no more learning is needed and no greater effort demanded to obtain a diploma of doctor of medicine in other places than is required in London and most of the English schools to obtain a mere licence to practise.” This is, indeed, an understatement of the facts, for in all that concerns medical knowledge and experience much more is demanded of a candidate for the English licence than of a candidate for a Scotch degree, as may be seen by anyone who will compare the regulations of the examining bodies.

A glance at the Medical Directory will show that about 2000 practitioners suffice for the medical requirements of the whole of Scotland, whilst there are more than twice that number in active practice in London alone, and six times the number in addition in the English provinces. But at the medical schools in Scotland there are probably twice as many students as at all the medical schools in London; a considerable proportion moreover of those entering at the London schools find out afterwards the mistake they have made, and go off after one, two, or three years to other schools where their labours will be more fitly rewarded. The result is that the English licentiate is everywhere thrust aside by the Scotch graduate, and elbowed out of office, employment, and profit; every honorary medical appointment is closed to him by the universal rule admitting only graduates, and he is necessarily relegated to a secondary rank, and is thus and thus only prevented from rising to such a professional position as he might otherwise attain, and to which his qualifications and abilities would give him an indisputable right. There is an easy and natural remedy for this state of things without calling upon the London or any of the other universities to lower its standard, and without adding to the excessive number of licensing bodies already existing. At the meeting to which I have referred I proposed that the two Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons should be amalgamated into one great Royal College of Medicine, to be endowed with the power of granting the degrees of M.D. and M.S.² (see the report in your issue of March 29th). There is no need to call the United College a University, nor would there be any advantage in doing so. There is nothing either novel or incongruous in a college granting degrees; various instances might be cited from both ancient and modern times, but it will suffice to mention the University of Edinburgh, which was only spoken of as a college for more than a century after its foundation, and which, as Sir Alexander Grant says, “never did and never could become a university in the mediæval sense of the term.” Oxford, and Trinity College, Dublin, are now the only universities requiring the B.A. to be taken previously to the M.D., so that as far as medicine is concerned the College of Physicians is practically on exactly the same footing as any of the other universities—it prescribes a curriculum, conducts

an examination in, and grants a diploma for, medicine, which is a licence to practise. The moment a university medical degree is dissociated from an Arts degree, and allowed to become a licence to practise, it ceases as such to be anything more, and the whole of its value as a higher title will depend on the character and standard of the particular curriculum and examinations of which it is the end and aim. It cannot surely be difficult for a committee of both Colleges to prepare a scheme of complete union which shall be satisfactory to the English profession. The mere conjunction of the Colleges for examination purposes will not retain students at the London Schools nor make the London qualification more attractive; and if the fees remain exactly as in the separated Colleges, there can be no conceivable advantage to the English student in a mere conjoint board at all. Although the question of expense enters very little into this question of the driving away of students from the London schools, yet so large fees being charged for primary examinations must rather deter than attract students, and one sees no reason why either College should now charge ten guineas for exactly the same examination that each before charged five guineas for; it would have been far better to continue to charge five guineas for each primary examination and twenty-five guineas for the double pass examination; but a little more liberality in this matter of fees would disarm much opposition to the scheme, and would probably result rather in a gain than a loss in a pecuniary sense.

The present is a great opportunity. On the boldness or hesitation of those who influence the affairs of our two Royal Colleges depends the continuance of the success of our English Schools of Medicine—depends probably the future existence of the Colleges themselves.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

WILLIAM HICKMAN.

Dorset-square, N.W., Nov. 10th, 1884.

“OVER-PRESSURE IN SCHOOLS.”

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of Nov. 15th there is a leader on the above subject. Your remarks are well timed and essentially to the point, and I believe that there are few members of our profession who will be found to disagree with their general tenour. The subject is one of vital importance to the future well-being of the nation, and it is a subject, moreover, in the settlement of which the medical profession is peculiarly concerned, for it is impossible, in my opinion, for anyone who has made the nature of disease a study and its treatment a practice, to remain in ignorance of the fact that the present system of education is being maintained at a ruinous, and to the general public, almost inexplicable expense. The expense is not a monetary one, but consists in the wasted energies and premature deaths of children, who, in other and more reasonable circumstances, might have lived long and useful lives. To the members of our profession whose daily work brings constantly under observation the relations which the various parts of the human frame bear to one another during life the difficulties which at present roughen the educational road are easily apparent; but it is otherwise with the general, and, as a rule, unthinking mass of the population. The average parent desires that his children shall be educated as speedily, as cheaply, and as thoroughly as possible; and he naturally regards with favour a system of education which endeavours to make up for lack of time by an increased amount of material, and it is with feelings of pride that such a parent will tell admiring friends that his boy of ten is almost fit to leave school, and has his head stored with a wonderful amount of learning. The boy often begins to fag and to fall into a state of ill-health which is misunderstood by both parent and schoolmaster, and the educational mill is allowed to grind into dust all the fair promises of early boyhood, and upon the very threshold of life this prodigy of youthful learning falls. His brain, over-driven and exhausted, is like a jaded horse, dull and irresponsive at a time when its best efforts are required, and his body, neglected and forgotten, fails with sad and ominous frequency in the performance of its duties; and, in a word, a wasted life is the result, the inevitable result, of a premature and excessive demand upon the higher functions of the human frame. This is, perhaps, a somewhat gloomy picture, but if we consider for a moment the delicate and easily disturbed organism over which the relentless educational Juggernaut is driven, the reason for

¹ THE LANCET, Jan. 28th, 1871, p. 117.

² To the title “Royal College of Medicine,” the words “and of Physicians and Surgeons of England” could be added as a secondary title if thought desirable, to satisfy the scruples of some who might regret to part with these time-honoured designations.