Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE EBBW VALE WORKMEN'S MEDICAL SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—I have to acknowledge your courtesy in publishing my letter of Dec. 15th in your last issue and also to express regret if I implied that the matter commented upon was in one of your leading articles; it was not, but it appeared in the report of your Special Commissioner.

In response to your suggestion I have obtained from one of the leading practitioners on the panel a statement of their terms of remuneration which are as follows: (1) The capitation fees as granted by the Monmouthshire Insurance Committee; (2) the sum of 13s. per annum for the dependents of married men only; (3) the sum of 4s. per annum for those working between the ages of 14 and 16; (4) half a guinea for midwifery (paid by the patient).

That is to say, for every married contributor the doctor receives £1 per annum, while for single contributors he takes the full capitation fee, and for boys under 16 the sum of 4s. per annum. Widows and orphans of previous contributors are entitled free to all the benefits of the institution. All drugs and dressings are supplied by the society.

Your Special Commissioner states that during the last "great strike"—I am not quite certain as to which strike alludes—the doctors in Monmouthshire and South Wales did not receive a penny. Again, I cannot answer for other districts, but of my own knowledge during the coal strike of some six weeks' duration in the spring of 1912 all salaries were paid punctually and fully by the Ebbw Vale Workmen's Doctors Fund. And again, during some five or six months in the autumn and winter of the preceding year, when the Ebbw Vale Works were "shut down"—the works as distinct from the collieries—and the income of the fund being in consequence greatly diminished—not a doctor or an official had to wait for or go short of a penny! Moreover, in the strike in 1898, which lasted some six months, 75 per cent. of all salaries were paid by the fund.

It is worth noting, too, that under the present constitution of the committee of the Ebbw Vale Workmen's Medical Society the "panel" practitioners have direct representation on that committee when any financial matters are under discussion at its usual monthly meetings.

It is a matter for comment that while other societies are violating these "fundamental" principles without any notice of such violation being taken by the British Medical Association, the Ebbw Vale Medical Society—whichever may have been in the right in the controversy between the old Ebbw Vale Workmen's Doctors' Fund and the Association—should still remain under the public ban, nominal or otherwise, of an Association which was formed which would be capable of administering the affairs of the medical profession. Having seen the completion of the machinery, I advocated the appointment of a secretary who possessed administrative experience, and preferably some legal experience in addition. It was decided, however, to appoint a man who had no such experience and to retain the subscription, which in my opinion was inadequate for the work which was to be performed.

With the appearance of the National Insurance Act we have witnessed a complete fiasco. The democratic constitution provided for the British Medical Association has failed to produce administrators of sufficient capacity, and the reputation of the medical profession has sunk. Two types of government have failed, and it has therefore
occurred to me that a blend might produce more encouraging results. A council nominated by the Royal Colleges is statutory bodies which were always consulted by Government departments when they required information relative to public business connected with medical affairs. These Colleges have failed conspicuously in filling the place which was assigned to them, and it appears reasonable that the Provincial Committee responsibility for a proportion of the interest chargeable on the contributions and their students from the combination would more than compensate for any slight increase in fees due to the interest in question, when he gave his cordial approval to the joint scheme. On account of the capital sums involved five-sevenths of the total accommodation will be allocated to the Provincial Committee and two-sevenths to the University.

**Appointment of Medical Specialists.**

At a meeting of the Dundee School Board held lately the following were appointed in connexion with the treatment of the children:—


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**Hostels for Edinburgh Women Students.**

An interview has taken place between representatives of the Scottish Education Department and Provincial Committee and the Edinburgh Association for the Provision of Hostels for Women Students, a report of which will be submitted to the Edinburgh Provincial Committee for the Training of Teachers. It states that Sir John Struthers, the secretary of the Scottish Education Department, has asked for a conference mainly in connexion with the financing of the scheme. Whereas the Provincial Committee's contribution to capital expenditure would be made in full directly from their funds, the contribution made on behalf of the University would be in the form of a loan from the Carnegie trustees, bearing interest, so that under the scheme proposed the interest would be borne by the whole body of students in residence, an arrangement which would have the effect of placing upon the students under the Provincial Committee responsibility for a proportion of the interest chargeable on the contributions made solely for University students. It was explained to Sir John Struthers that the advantages accruing to the Provincial Committee and their students from the combination would more than compensate for any slight increase in fees due to the interest in question, when he gave his cordial approval to the joint scheme. On account of the capital sums involved five-sevenths of the total accommodation will be allocated to the Provincial Committee and two-sevenths to the University.

**Home and Foreign Notes.**

**Scotland.**

Edinburgh University Graduation Ceremony.

There was the largest winter graduation which has ever taken place at the ceremony in the M'Ewan Hall on Dec. 17th, when Principal Sir William Turner conferred the degrees, 18 candidates receiving the degree of Doctor of Medicine, 1 the degree of Doctor of Science, 77 the degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, and 3 the degree of Bachelor of Science. Principal Turner, in his address, described the list as a highly representative one, both as regarded the inclusion of the two sexes and as regarding the source from which the graduates came, for there was a strong representation from India, Africa, Australasia, and the West Indies, while the continent of Europe had also made contributions to their work. Prior to the ceremony a programme of music was performed on the grand organ by Mr. Collinson, organist to the University.

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**Ireland.**

**The Certification Question.**

Medical opinion in Ireland is divided at present as to the best system of certification of insured persons, assuming that the terms agreeable to the profession can be arranged between the Commissioners and the Irish Medical Committee. Many medical men, and particularly those engaged in the Poor-law service, think that a panel for certification such as is at present working in several areas will furnish the most satisfactory arrangement. On the other hand, the working of the panel has caused dissatisfaction to many of the Approved Societies, and much evidence in connexion of it was given before the committee of inquiry appointed by the Insurance Commissioners. The only alternative to the panel is a pooling system by which arrangements for certification would be made somewhat on the model of the arrangements for medical benefit at present in force in Manchester. Under a pooling scheme the entire sum available for certification in a given area would be divided among all practitioners who certified in proportion to the number of certificates signed by each. This scheme, if fairly worked, would be equitable while settling the problem of paying for the certificates of hospital patients. The pooling scheme requires safeguards to prevent too free issuing of certificates, but if the Local Medical Committees were the administrators the check of professional opinion would have considerable effect, as it would be to the interest of the local profession as a whole to prevent the giving of loose certificates. As between a panel and a pooling scheme, it might be arranged that the profession in each area should exercise a reasonably terminable option. It is to be hoped that some arrangement may be made within the next few weeks so that the entire grant promised for next year by Mr. Lloyd George may be made available.

**British Dental Association: Irish Branch.**

The annual general meeting of the British Dental Association was held last week in the Royal College of Surgeons, the President, Mr. Kevin E. O'Duffy, in the chair. The roll of membership showed an increase during the year. Mr. T. J. Rea, of Belfast, was elected president for the ensuing year. In the evening the annual dinner was held in the Shelbourne Hotel, the Lord Lieutenant being present.