tradition plays some part in the value attaching to this substance, so far we have no substitute of quite equal value.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

L. A. PARRY, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.S. Eng.,

Hon. Assistant Surgeon, Royal Alexandra Hospital
for Sick Children, Brighton.

Hove, Sussex, Feb. 12th, 1904.

CHLORETONE IN SEA-SICKNESS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Mr. L. E. Ellis will find, I think, that chloretone is far more successful with women than with men. I have just had a letter from a lady from Marseilles: "Thank you a thousand times for the 'cure' It is a grand success. As you know, I am not a good sailor, but I have not been sick at all and we really had a pretty bad time. Out of 43 ladies only one besides myself put in an appearance at breakfast. About an hour after we left Plymouth I felt queer and took one capsule and after that one night and morning." On the other hand, I have heard of its failure with men. I believe that it is efficacious only in sea sickness of nervous origin, with cold extremities, giddiness, and horrible depression. It seems to be useless in stomach sea-sickness where the chief symptom is the vomiting of frothy mucus and where the nervous symptoms seem to be only secondary to the sickness. Men suffer much more from the latter than the former kind.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Silverton, Feb. 15th, 1904. O. CLAYTON JONES, M.B. Oxon.

THE PROPOSAL TO PROHIBIT MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS FROM DISPENSING.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—One of the objections to writing prescriptions as opposed to giving medicines is that patients sometimes hand them over to friends of theirs who are supposed to be suffering from the same disease, which may be, however, an entirely different one. Even if the malady really be known to be the same, two people would probably receive from a physician at any rate not exactly the same treatment. A great many people, however, are not aware that subtle distinctions have to be made, and hence much mischief may, even with the best intentions, be produced. Sometimes, too, people who assume some of the duties of a medical man may from prescriptions gain a confidence which, though really misplaced, may yet lead them to act to the disadvantage of both the public and the medical profession in other ways.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Grimsby, Feb. 10th, 1904. GEORGE GRESSWELL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I say in reference to the letter by "A Chemist and Druggist" in THE LANCET of Feb. 13th, p. 464, that, although what he says as to quack medicines is true and wise, he is altogether mistaken in supposing that "the prescribing chemist, speaking broadly, is non-existent." Let him try the experiment next time he takes a holiday of going into the nearest druggist's shop and asking for a bottle of medicine to relieve some simple symptoms. Scores of my friends have told me that they often get medicine in that way when from home, for it is cheaper and more convenient than going to a medical man, and that on no occasion have they ever been refused. I used to practise in a town of 10,000 inhabitants and there the commonest introduction to a statement of symptoms was: "I went to the chemist, but the medicine he gave me has not done much good, and I thought it better not to let it go on any longer so I have come to you." The public would be most indignant if any attempt was made to prohibit druggists from prescribing for simple ailments. A man with an attack of diarrhoea will not go to a medical man, as a rule, if he knows that from there he will have to go on to the druggist. He will go to the druggist first and, if not cured, will then go to the medical man. I believe this is the rule all the country over and I am sure that it is useless to alter it by Act of Parliament. It is no use legislating for an ideal social state. Human nature must be taken as it is.

I am very glad to hear from Mr. J. Smith Whitaker that this dispensing clause is not the handiwork of the medico-political committee of the British Medical Association. One can understand an individual member practising in the Central

London division showing such a complete ignorance of the conditions of country practice. I think he would show more wisdom if he altered his suggested clause so as to make it apply only to the kind of practice he is conversant with. As it stands it would deprive thousands of hard-working medical practitioners of their means of livelihood, for it would reduce their incomes below a living wage. I hope the Central London division will understand this and at once reject the suggested clause and so set at rest the minds of so many of their anxious brethren. My experience is that the medical profession takes a higher social position in the country than it does in the town and that therefore country practitioners can be safely trusted, without compulsion, to avoid what is derogatory, wanting in tone, or even vulgar.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 15th, 1904.

PAGANUS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The thorny question of dispensing by medical men in general practice cannot, it is evident, be settled on similar lines for those in town and country and for those who do and those who do not employ an assistant. Nor can it be dealt with apart from the regulation of prescribing by druggists on stricter lines than at present. To most practitioners dispensing is not so much *infra dig.* as simply an unpleasant and time absorbing nuisance. To the younger men it is often their one way of learning to prescribe. In very many cases the patients regard the fee as paid not so much for the advice as for the physic, and therefore many medical men are compelled against their better will to give medicine when it is not strictly necessary, and yet—undignified as such procedure is—how many of those who complain that their vested interests would be endangered by the restriction of dispensing will have the courage to demand payment for skill and knowledge rather than for mere physic? It must surely have often occurred to the conscientious general practitioner that reform on concerted lines was required and that if not otherwise, then even at the cost of abolishing dispensing altogether wherever a competent druggist is available. In a word, the undignified thing about dispensing is that it has come to put us in that false relation with our patients. We are obliged in self-defence or self-regard to "pile on physic" *per fas atque per nefas*.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 8th, 1904.

VERITAS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With reference to the proposed additional clause to the Medical Acts Amendment Bill to prevent medical men from dispensing their own medicines except in special circumstances, I beg to offer my views on the matter. I may say that I am a country practitioner with clubs and I dispense my own medicines. I do not think any of your correspondents have tried to get to the root of the matter and to ask themselves what there is in the present system of dispensing our own medicines which is so wrong as to make some of us consider that the only remedy is to stop the medical profession from dispensing as far as it is possible to do so. What, then, is the object of the proposal? and out of this necessarily arises a second question—What alternative system is to be proposed? The first question may be answered to the point as follows: To prevent unscrupulous men from treating their patients simply by giving a bottle of medicine without having made any attempt to form an accurate diagnosis and, moreover, charging exorbitantly for services rendered thereby. That is the evil that unquestionably exists and equally unquestionably we should attempt to drive it out of our honourable profession. The result is injurious to the public and to the profession. Who amongst us has not seen a case admitted to any of the large hospitals in a condition aggravated by the neglect of the medical attendant? And who amongst us does not see the harm that is daily being done to our profession by practitioners running cheap dispensaries which only pay by the number of bottles of medicine that are dispensed, and by the unprofessional attitude of men in the matter of clubs, which is well illustrated in your article in THE LANCET of Feb. 13th on the Battle of the Clubs at Southampton? But, it will be asked, how are you going to stop this evil, by preventing medical men from dispensing their own medicines? The probability is that you will create a worse evil by driving the patient, who at present consults you and who can only afford a small fee, to consult the

druggist who has no business to try to make a diagnosis. The answer to this question is, of course, the answer to my second question as to what alternative to the present system is proposed and I am not so foolish as to think that I have got a cut-and-dried remedy. We must have the views of men conversant with the matter, as to the conditions existing in countries where medical men do not dispense, and in this respect I consider Dr. D. W. Samways's communication the most valuable one THE LANCET has yet received. If this proposal, which is to raise the standard of the profession and to protect the public, is to have its effect there must be a simultaneous proposal to prevent druggists from supplying medicines without a prescription and some system of endorsement by a medical practitioner of a prescription which has been already dispensed a given number of times. The present uncontrolled sale of patent and proprietary medicines must also be stopped. The difficulties of such a system are, of course, only too obvious and the only alternative seems to be to fight with the weapons which are being used against us and to establish a trade union, or else to leave matters as they are and to trust to the moral education of the practitioner to bring about a remedy. This latter alternative, I think, is the only feasible one, and I may add with reference thereto that I consider the present tendency to minimise the value of a good general education to a medical man, as may be exemplified by the professional privileges allowed at the universities, is the root of the evil.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 13th, 1904.

ARZT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A great deal has been written and will probably be written on this most momentous question of dispensing. But so far surely all your correspondents have lost sight of a very important matter, not so much the advantages or disadvantages of dispensing as the advantages that are given to the prescribing druggist and quack. Until these two are put down, and only then, will, I think, it be possible—or shall I say fair—to stop medical men from dispensing. If dispensing practitioners are stopped now thousands of pounds will go into the pockets of these illegitimate trades and the legitimate one will perforce go to the wall, forsooth because a certain body of men think they will raise the status of the profession. Surely it is the man who makes his position; you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Why, I ask, is it more *infra dig.* to dispense one's own medicines than for a clergyman to write his own sermons or a lawyer to write briefs for his counsel? It is part of their livelihood, so anything appertaining to medicine is part of ours. Some of your correspondents' ideas are wide of the issue, and one in particular shows a want of knowledge when he suggests that no medical man should be allowed to attend a friendly society under 5s. per member per annum and the society to find everything else. I believe most friendly societies pay 4s. per member per annum, everything included. I am afraid he is woefully ignorant of the working man if he thinks he will get him to pay more and receive less than he now does. I dispense my own medicines, as do my other brother practitioners in this town, and yet every market day we are exposed to the insults of a quack who has a stand in the market and dispenses medicines without let or hindrance. Where is this noble body of men who allow this to continue openly? Their one object seems to be to enrich this class and to starve out many who have spent both time and money on their education.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 7th, 1904.

IN RECTO FIDES.

LEPROSY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been asked to prepare a paper for the Dermatological Congress which takes place at Berlin next September, the subject given to me being British India—the Condition of the Spread of, and Fight against, Leprosy since the First International Conference in 1897, the heads under which I am to write being the following:—

1. *Statistics*—(a) According to official reports (Government); and (b) asylums, colonies (mission). What kind of asylum—ex and age of inmates.

2. *Methods employed to fight leprosy between 1897 and 1903 (inclusive)*.—(a) Laws of Government; and (b) activity of Government or of private societies for the suppression of

leprosy, municipalities or parishes, &c. (1) Number of asylums or colonies; (2) number of places; (3) how the patients get about; (4) occupation of lepers in asylums; and (5) conveying of lepers by train, steamer, &c.

3. *The condition of lepers in infirmaries and surgery wards.*

As I am anxious to have the paper as accurate as possible it will be a great favour if any of your readers who have information on the above points and for the period indicated will kindly communicate with me.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

WELLESLEY C. BAILEY,

Secretary and Superintendent,

Mission to Lepers in India and the East.

17, Greenhill-place, Edinburgh, Feb. 11th, 1904.

THE METROPOLITAN ASYLUMS BOARD AND ITS ASSISTANT MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Permit me to express my approval of the strictures you have recently passed upon the treatment which certain of the assistant medical officers of the Metropolitan Asylums Board have received. I myself have an unpleasant recollection of the cavalier methods of the Board. At a time when they (wrongly) anticipated an increase in infectious diseases I was appointed one of four assistant medical officers out of 11 selected candidates but was kept waiting six weeks before allocation to a fever hospital and then only after initiating a lengthy correspondence with the Board. I was accommodated with a box-room for a bedroom, devoid of fireplace, unhygienic, and eminently uncomfortable. A few weeks afterwards I was requested, through the medical superintendent, to take up lunacy work in one of the asylums of the Board, his inducement being "that if I considered the Board the Board would consider me." I consented to do so temporarily but heard nothing further, not even as to whether the Board approved of my decision or not.

Shortly afterwards, during the renovation of the official block, I was asked, along with other assistant medical officers, to sleep in a ward which a few weeks before had been used for the accommodation of enteric fever patients. I declined, as I much objected to sleep in any such ward whatever the method of disinfection, but was quite willing to put up with the most primitive accommodation anywhere in the official block. This was most ungraciously assented to and only on condition that I rose every morning at 6.30 to admit workmen to my room, but no workmen, until fully ten days had elapsed, availed themselves of the extra hours. The light in my room was cut off and no substitute was furnished. A few days later the sub-committee intimated to me that it did not find itself in the position of recommending the hospitals committee to confirm me in my appointment and the committee would be asked to terminate it *nine days after the receipt of its letter*. I, however, insisted upon giving a month's notice. The action of the Board very seriously modified my plans for the future and necessitated a most serious curtailment of research work I was engaged in during my leisure.

This bare statement of facts indicates what the Board is capable of doing in the way of considering an assistant medical officer who was ready and willing to consider the Board.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 15th, 1904.

EX-A.M.O.

THE INQUEST ON WHITAKER WRIGHT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I observe that there is still a dropping fire of remarks on the trial of the late Whitaker Wright and on the subsequent coroner's inquest, and yet what seems to me by far the most important oversight in the latter has apparently passed without any commentary either in THE LANCET or elsewhere. Was it not a matter of clear duty in conducting this inquest to inquire minutely and even suspiciously as to how the suicide became possessed of the poison by which he made away with himself? Admitting as was suggested by the coroner to a witness, that Whitaker Wright was familiar with cyanide of potassium as employed in the arts and that he may have had unusual opportunities thereby for the possession of it, is it not the case that under a very strict