out a delay of which the pressing necessity of the case scarcely admits. The most important measure is a house-to-house visitation; and this is being carried out now under the superintendence of the Health Officers of parishes, and of special superintendents of vaccination acting under their direction.

ANIMAL PHYSIOLOGY.

WE have long, and not altogether unsuccessfully, advocated the introduction of animal physiology in the higher forms of schools, and in the curricula of universities, as an essential element in the education of all intelligent men. The new degrees in Science of the University of London will, no doubt, directly and powerfully encourage the study. We receive with satisfaction an authoritative endorsement of these views by Sir Benjamin Brodie from the presidential chair of the Royal Society:—

“Is there anyone in any situation of life to whom it would not be a benefit to know something of animal physiology, of the functions of his own body, and of the influence which his bodily condition exercises over those moral and intellectual faculties by which he is distinguished from the rest of the animal creation? If it did not teach him how to cure disease, it might be useful for him to know how far disease may cure itself, and what are the limits of nature in this respect. To man, looking at him as an individual, there is no art so important as that of understanding and managing himself—an art so simply and well expressed by the two significant words which were inscribed over the heathen oracle of Delphi. To correct bad habits, when once acquired, is no easy task. A strong sense and a strong will, such as only a limited number of persons possess, are necessary for the purpose. But it would go far towards preventing the acquirement of such habits, if young persons during the time of their education were made to understand the ill consequences to which they must inevitably lead, and how, eventually, the body must suffer and the mind be stupefied and degraded, not by the reasonable indulgence, but by the abuse of the animal instincts.”

THE MEDICAL ACT.

A LATE interpretation of the Medical Act by Mr. Mansfield, late stipendiary magistrate for the borough of Liverpool, raises a fresh difficulty in the prosecution of quacks and pretenders under that Act. In an action by the Liverpool Medical Registration Association against a person named Hamilton, it was proved that the defendant had signed a medical certificate of the cause of death, adding to his name the title “Surgeon of the College of Boston, U.S.,” and also that he had acted as a surgeon by visiting and giving medicine, &c., for which he was paid. These facts were not contradicted; nevertheless, Mr. Mansfield dismissed the case, on the ground that the defendant did not allege that he was registered under the Act, but, on the contrary, that he had guarded himself against such an assumption by the addition of the title “College of Boston.” If Mr. Mansfield’s interpretation of the Act be correct, and his decision sound, the Medical Act becomes a dead letter, since it will be extremely easy for all unqualified persons thus to assume the title of “surgeon,” and, nevertheless, to shield themselves by the addition of the name of an imaginary and far-distant College. This decision is, however, adverse, we think, to others already given, as at Bristol, where a similar pretence was made, and adverse also to the common sense interpretation of the Act. It is the word “surgeon” of which the false assumption is penal, and the addition of the name College of Boston does not at all wipe off the fraud, or bear upon the face of it non-pretence of registration; since, if such a College really existed in any legal sense, the degree might be registered as those of other foreign Universities and Colleges have been registered. It is true that only uneducated and ill-informed persons are likely to be deceived by so clumsy an imposition; but these are the persons amongst whom the quacks chiefly practise, and whom they successfully labour to deceive.

We trust that the appeal against Mr. Mansfield’s decision will be vigorously prosecuted. If the decision be not reversed, it will be necessary to obtain an amendment of the Act during the next session for such purposes.

HOW TO POISON CORRESPONDENTS.

THE state of mind belonging to the modest and highly informed individuals who undertake to furnish medical replies to invalid querists affords a curious subject for speculation. Assuming such utterances to be responsive to questions actually addressed,—which in some instances they are, and in more are not,—the notions of responsibility attaching to medical advice must be singularly cloudy in the minds of those who thus print *ex cathedra* directions for the sick, upon the ridiculously imperfect data afforded by the crude, unreliable, and incorrect statements of ailing correspondents. The almost inevitable dangers of misconception—the probable accidents from misapplication of the remedies—the almost certainty that the character of the affections described will undergo unforeseen modification—are considerations that should deter all conscientious persons from undertaking so difficult and so dubious a task. Occasionally, accidents of the most unexpected kind will occur to increase the innate dangers of such public prescriptions. Thus our attention has been called to page 32 of a late number of *Reynolds’ Miscellany*, where we find the following remedy advised for palpitation of the heart:—

“PALPITATION OF THE HEART.—When this arises from nervous irritability, take the following draught: Tincture of foxglove, *ten drachms* (!); camphor julep, ten drachms; tincture of calumbo, one drachm. Mix.”

It is a cure in the same sense that the dagger and the bowl are a cure for all worldly ills. But those who might be troubled with that palpitation should consider, before committing themselves to this draught, whether they are prepared satisfactorily to answer all those terrible questions with which Hamlet puzzled himself, and which have daunted successive aspirants for more than earthly repose.

There is enough of digitalis here to poison at least six people. It is earnestly to be hoped that no palpitating reader of the *Miscellany* has by this agency been lulled into eternal peace. It is sufficient for us to note the fault—a printer’s error, doubtless—and to express a modest wish that, if the medical oracle of the *Miscellany* will not consent, as we would suggest, to be altogether dumb to his suppliants, he should, at least, be very careful to correct the press, and avoid such fatal errata.

Correspondence.

“Audi alteram partem.”

JOHN HUNTER’S MS. ON GEOLOGY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I should have been reluctant, if I had not had pledge to fulfil, in asking you to give to the enclosed correspondence a space in your columns which otherwise would be occupied by more useful and edifying matter.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sheen Lodge, Richmond-park,
Jan. 12th, 1860.

RICHARD OWEN.

To the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—In the volume containing the Hunterian manuscript “On Geology,” of which a copy was transmitted to me on the 23rd instant by direction of the President, the Council, in their Preface, have published the following statement:—

“This Introduction, on which Mr. Hunter had bestowed so much thought and labour, to within a short time of his death, re-

vising and correcting it from time to time, was not prefixed, as he had intended, to the Catalogue of his Collection of Fossils, and is neither mentioned nor alluded to in either of the three volumes of the 'Descriptive Catalogue of the Fossil Organic Remains' in the College Museum, published respectively in 1845, 1854, and 1856. It is greatly to be regretted that it was not brought under the notice, either of the Museum Committee, or of the Council of the College. The attention of the Council was, however, unexpectedly drawn to it in 1856, when it was read from the chair by the then Hunterian Professor."

Now, this involves a grave charge against me. As it is generally known that I was that Professor, and at the same time Curator of your Museum, to whom, as is recorded in your minutes, you had confided the preparation of the first two and part of the third, of the volumes of the Catalogue referred to, it will be as generally inferred and believed that I have been guilty of the breach of trust implied in the above allegation.

It ought to be in the memory of members of the Museum Committee, and on the minutes of a meeting, at which the late Mr. Guthrie was present, that I mentioned in, I believe, the month of February, 1855, the propriety of publishing the manuscript in question in the concluding volume of the Catalogue of Fossils, then in course of preparation. Mr. Guthrie, on my replying to his questions, that the manuscript did not contain any descriptions of the specimens, and would require certain annotations, objected to the consideration of its publication at that time, as an element of delay, stating that what was then imperatively wanted was the completion of the Catalogue of the Specimens. Believing that the Museum Committee had not rightly appreciated my explanation of the nature and value of this manuscript, I thought it my duty to make it the subject of the Introductory Lectures to my Hunterian Course on Fossil Remains of the year 1855. Those lectures were delivered in the theatre of the College on the 6th, 8th, and 10th of March, 1855. I enclose a copy of the "Synopsis," published by the College, of those lectures, a duplicate of which will be found, with the other printed collegiate documents, in the archives of the College.

The charge against me, as the Hunterian Professor and the Curator of the Museum, to whom had been confided the preparation of the Catalogue of Fossils, of having failed to bring under the notice of the Museum Committee or Council of the College the existence of the Hunterian manuscript on Fossils until the year 1856, and by implication, when it was too late to append it to the final volume of the Catalogue printed in that year, is chiefly based upon the substitution by the Council, in their Preface, of a wrong date—viz., 1856—for the true date, 1855, when I read the manuscript in question from the Hunterian chair.

The minutes and Council for the year 1855 will show the fact and date of the resolution of the Council to suspend the lectures for the year 1856.

I therefore call upon you, the President and Council of the College of Surgeons, after you have assured yourselves of the accuracy of the date of the public lectures in which your attention was fully and emphatically drawn to the Hunterian manuscript in question, to publicly acknowledge the inaccuracy of the grounds of your published charge, and to exonerate me from the grave consequences of such alleged breach of confidence and duty as attaches to me in the said allegation in this Preface, prefixed by your sanction and authority to the work entitled "Observations and Reflections on Geology," by John Hunter, F.R.S. (4to, London, 1859).

I must add that, if, according to the spirit of our English procedures, the nature of the charge reflecting upon your Hunterian Professor, and your officer entrusted with the preparation of the Catalogue in question, had been submitted to me prior to the infliction of the official publication of such charge, I should have been able to furnish the Council with the proofs above cited, which would have shown that I had drawn their attention to the Hunterian manuscript on Fossils more than a year before the last volume of their Catalogue of Fossils was published.

I rely upon the honour of the Council to do me promptly the justice I now demand; for you must be aware that meanwhile I am subject to the invidious insinuations which may be based upon a statement involving a charge preferred by so important a professional and social body—in a public allegation, moreover, contradicted by the actual facts, which might have been known to you on the most cursory inquiry, and which are patent upon the face of a published document emanating from the Council itself. I am, &c.,

(Signed) RICHARD OWEN.

Sheen Lodge, Richmond-park, Dec. 29th, 1859.

I again wrote to the Council, on the 2nd of January, urging a speedy reply.

Lincoln's-inn-fields, W.C., Jan. 9th, 1860.

SIR,—The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England have had under their consideration your letters of the 29th December and 2nd January, drawing their attention to a passage in the Preface to the proposed publication of the Hunterian Manuscript on Geology, which you consider to involve injurious reflections upon you, and calling upon them, after assuring themselves of the accuracy of the dates to which you refer, to publicly acknowledge the inaccuracy of the grounds of the charge of breach of confidence and duty on your part which you conceive the Preface to allege against you.

In consequence of your letters, inquiry has been made, and the Council find that the date of your lectures as Hunterian Professor is, as you mention, inaccurately referred to in the Preface, and that the actual date was 1855, not 1856.

The Council therefore consider it to be due to you, as well as to themselves, to express their regret that such a mistake should have occurred, and to withdraw all imputations which the passage in question can be considered to cast upon you. They have also directed that the passage be expunged, and the Preface reprinted without it.

I beg to add that there is no such minute of the Museum Committee as you suppose, and that neither of the living members of the Committee have any recollection of your having suggested to them the propriety of publishing the Manuscript.

Professor Owen, &c. &c. &c.

EDM. BELFOUR, *Secretary*.

DEGREES OF BACHELOR AND DOCTOR OF SCIENCE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The Senate of the University of London having recently instituted, in accordance with representations made to it by many of the most eminent men of science in this country, the degrees of Bachelor and Doctor of Science, I beg to forward you a copy of the regulations relating to these degrees; and shall be glad if you can draw the attention of the public, through your columns, not only to the fact that such degrees may now be obtained, but also to the general conditions on which they will be granted. It is provided by these regulations that the acquirements of the candidate shall in the first place be tested by the Matriculation Examination, which candidates for the other degrees conferred by the University are required to pass before entering on their special courses of study;—that the degree of *Bachelor* of Science shall take rank with that of Bachelor of Arts, being conferred (like it) after two consecutive examinations at an interval of a year from each other and from the Matriculation Examination, and attesting the general knowledge acquired by the graduate of the fundamental principles and most important facts of the chief divisions of science;—and that the degree of *Doctor* of Science shall be conferred only upon such candidates as have not merely given evidence of general scientific attainment, but have shown themselves to possess a very high proficiency, both theoretical and practical, in some one branch of scientific knowledge.

In following the course of study required as a preparation for these degrees, candidates are left to their own free choice, both as to locality and as to instructors; and it might be well if you would take the opportunity of informing the public, that by the new Charter recently granted to the University, candidates for its degrees in *Arts* now enjoy the same liberty (as you will see by the Regulations of which I enclose a copy), so that these degrees also are now open to everyone who can stand the test of the successive examinations to which candidates for them are subjected.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM B. CARPENTER, M.D., F.R.S.,
Registrar.

University of London, Jan. 1860.

* * We publish the above letter with much satisfaction. Before the scheme of the Senate was promulgated in its present complete form we drew attention to the subject. We shall not fail to recur to it on an early occasion.—ED. L.

QUALIFICATIONS OF POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In last Saturday's number of THE LANCET, there is given a reprint of documents lately issued by the Poor-law Board, including a list of the licensing bodies whose diplomas are to be