effect that nearly half of the people of London sought (and obtained) medical and surgical aid at some one or other of the metropolitan hospitals and dispensaries in a single year had made a considerable call upon their imaginations; but there was a remarkable unanimity amongst them, and the higher critics would have no difficulty in tracing their accounts to a single source—namely, *The Hospital Sunday Supplement*. To this are appended tables for 1894 which, although St. Bartholomew's and St. Thomas's Hospitals and one or two other places are excluded, make it appear that 1,383,634 *distinct patients were treated* in that year at those institutions whose names are given. In the earlier part of the document, which refers to 1893, special mention is made that one out of every two men was treated thus in London, but in this case the endowed hospitals are included. And we are to believe this, knowing all the time that the pauper population is otherwise provided for, that our soldiers and policemen have their own staffs of medical men &c., and that many other bodies are similarly situated. These rarely figure in our hospital returns. Of course, one cause (easy to detect) of the apparent exaggeration is the author's restriction to London of the population from which the patients are drawn. But the great majority come from this restricted area, and the only other explanation at all feasible is that in many instances the daily returns of out-patients were added together for the year.

There is no doubt, however, that throughout England there has been a growing tendency on the part of the population to betake itself to hospitals in case of sickness or injury. There is an instructive passage in the Registrar-General's Census Report for 1891, vol. iv., p. 77: "The patients enumerated in hospitals were 7619 in 1851, 10,414 in 1861, 19,585 in 1871, 24,087 in 1881, and 27,579 in 1891. The proportion of these patients to 100,000 of the population was 42 in 1851, 52 in 1861, 86 in 1871, 93 in 1881, and finally 95 in 1891. It must not be supposed that this continuous increase implies a corresponding increase of sickness. The proportion of hospital patients to population is a measure rather of the amount of hospital accommodation than of the amount of sickness." In fact, hospital accommodation is at present (and will be for some time to come) quite equal to the needs of those who are the proper recipients of it. But its recent enormous extension has had a pauperising effect upon the community, and in these days many obtain aid at hospitals who ought to be heartily ashamed of so doing.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Kingston-on-Thames, June 26th, 1895.

D. BIDDLE.

* * Mr. Biddle refers to the supplement issued by a contemporary. THE LANCET Hospital Sunday Fund Supplement (June 8th, 1895) shows in a statistical table of the hospital work in London during the year 1894 that 1,565,978 out-patients paid visits to twenty-seven "general hospitals" (using the term as employed by the Council of the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund). A further number of visits—118,470—to cover possible omissions were estimated to have taken place, making in all 1,684,448. It is distinctly stated in a note to this table, with a view to obviating a source of serious error, that "*the figures referring to out-patients in these tables represent the number of VISITS paid by out-patients—not the NUMBER of out-patients.*"—ED. L.

THE "INDEX MEDICUS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—Mr. George S. Davis, the enterprising enthusiast who, since January, 1885, has at very heavy loss maintained that most valuable aid to all working medical men, the "Index Medicus," announces that he does not see his way any longer to continue losing 2000 dollars a year for the sake of the profession. It will be remembered by many that in 1893 Mr. Davies intimated that unless more subscriptions came in he would be obliged to discontinue the publication; and it was hoped that the many members of the profession in this country who have obtained invaluable help from the Index would have felt it their duty as well as their interest to have subscribed liberally enough to have enabled Mr. Davis to persevere with his great public service. This hope has not been realised. The Index has become absolutely indispensable, and the loss of it means that in reference-hunting we shall

have to remember twenty or thirty different sources of information and search through all of them, instead of, as hitherto, finding everything in the clearly printed pages of the monthly Index.

I have written to Dr. Billings, whose marvellous power for organising Index work is well known, urging him to take steps to have the Index carried on on a non-commercial footing, and to endeavour to obtain subscriptions from scientific societies and scientific workers for its maintenance; and I should be glad to know what measure of support might be expected in this country for such a scheme. If £400 a year could be guaranteed from this country the Index could be continued; and I think it will be a shame to English medicine, which has derived so much benefit for the last fifteen years from this great American enterprise, if such a small sum should not be forthcoming. Every medical society should regard it as a duty to subscribe at least two guineas to maintain the Index, and the rest should be easily made up by the subscriptions of medical men who would be glad to have this important aid at their elbow. I should be grateful to hear from those willing to support the Index by an annual subscription, and will forward their offers to Dr. Billings, who, I feel sure, will not allow the Index to be lost without a struggle.—I am, Sirs, very faithfully yours,

J. Y. W. MACALISTER,

Resident Librarian of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society.
Hanover-square, W., June 25th, 1895.

"DEFECTS OF VISION AND ACCIDENTS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—The able letter of your Indian correspondent, Mr. J. Stuart Brooke, is interesting and timely, and it is to be hoped will receive the attention here it merits. The detection of the man with the artificial eye on board of the Cunarder in the early seventies led to the examination of all men detailed for look-out duty with reference to short sight, colour and night blindness; and I know that to-day, in the same service across the Atlantic, this testing is still continued with the addition of taking notice of the competency of hearing, a keen sense of which is most important in fog. There is no railroad track across the ocean, hence the more need that these floating villages should have sentinels wide-awake and effective. It may seem somewhat a large order to say that the only uniform and practical remedy for the prevention of these disasters at sea consists in the appointment under the President of the Board of Trade of a principal medical adviser. This official, who should be a man of practical knowledge and of administrative ability, would relieve the President of all technical work and guarantee to the public that, so far as he was concerned, efficiency was the rule of the road afloat as well as ashore. Nor would his office end here. He would be the recipient of the medical logs of the different steamers. Here facts could be sifted and tabulated, to the utilisation of the field of marine hygiene that has long lain waste; and, *per contra*, the fads and fancies of enthusiasts with regard to medical matters at sea, remedies, and what not would receive their just estimate and be utilised for what they were worth. Some of your readers will recognise the necessity of these remarks. Sirs, it is needless to trouble your space further than to say simply that the public and the profession look to you that the suggestions of the expert deputations of Feb. 1st last will not pass away without some practical results.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Sussex-place, Southampton, June 24th, 1895. R. A. CALDWELL.

"RAPID DILATATION OF THE UTERUS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—In his Note on Some Aids to Rapid Dilatation of the Uterus Dr. Amand Routh recommends, in certain cases, the preliminary use of a glycerine tampon. It may be interesting to some of your readers to hear that during the last two years I have found the use of a glycerine tampon very serviceable in midwifery practice when the pains are inefficient, the vagina "dry," or the cervix "rigid." It seems to me that such a tampon is needed in cases in which it has been thought necessary to use an astringent antiseptic before delivery, and it is much more convenient than iodoform &c.

Two ounces of glycerine containing one drachm of borax and one drachm of boracic acid are easily carried, with sufficient perchloride wool to make a few tampons; and I believe it is worth its place in any midwifery bag. It usually acts in half an hour or less.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,
Conisborough, June 22nd, 1895. ROBERT CRAIK.

"EPSOM COLLEGE."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I, as an old Epsomian, be allowed to protest against the frequency of the appearance in your columns of the title "Royal Medical Benevolent College" with reference to the above public school? A few weeks ago in a leading article in the *Standard* it appeared that "the Royal Medical Benevolent College was not one of the best-known public schools," and the writer goes on to suggest that this may partly be accounted for by the use of the above-named title. It altogether deceives the general public with regard to the main object of the College—that of giving a good general education to all irrespectively of class distinctions. That it does refer to the system whereby a bare 20 per cent. of the scholars receive a free education no one will venture to deny, but that it should have the power to conceal from the public the fact that 80 per cent. of the scholars are treated and educated identically as at any other public school seems a pity—not to say a mistake. Further, I believe that the title no longer *legally* exists. A little more than a year ago the title (which for the school in its early days was well suited, but for which in its present circumstances it is entirely unfit) was annulled by Act of Parliament. It is, in fact, the old cry, *Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis*.

Amongst the other public schools we have ranked as Epsom College for many years, and it is this title which will always appeal most lovingly to her sons, both past and present, and whose honour it will be their care to uphold. Some twenty years ago an old boy of distinction, in a long letter to the school magazine, pointed out the harm that was likely to arise from the retention of the old misleading title, and urged the then present members to do their utmost to secure the sole recognition of the other title, "Epsom College." As far as the school itself is concerned their efforts have been crowned with success, but unless we are able to enlist THE LANCET on our side (and after that the daily papers are bound to follow) that success, we fear, must to a great extent be stultified. It is with no desire to belittle or decry the charitable work which the school so magnificently performs that this letter has been written, but rather that it may be further aided in its work by being known in its true colours. There is a strong feeling in the school on this point, and therefore I trust that this letter may not be considered as encroaching too much upon your available space.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

June 25th, 1895.

O. E.

* * The council of the Royal Medical Benevolent College at Epsom are, we know, more than willing to omit the word "benevolent" from the title of the College; but as long as they are compelled to solicit subscriptions and donations to carry on the benevolent side of their work, so long must the epithet remain. The points our correspondent raises are all well appreciated by the governing body, and they have obtained powers under their new Act to alter the name *when they are in a position to do so*; but at present the correct designation of "Epsom College" is the one to which our correspondent takes exception. We, like the council of the College, are sincerely desirous of seeing the necessity for the epithet removed and jealous for the position of the school as one of the great schools of England, so that we are happy to print our correspondent's views.—ED. L.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Extension of the Royal Infirmary.

THIS question is still under discussion. In March last a special or grand committee was formed composed of an equal

number of members of the board and of trustees who were not members. Several meetings have been held, and the last, at which there was a full attendance, occurred on the 17th inst. A long discussion took place on the proposals for rebuilding on the present site, for altering and enlarging the present building, and for the erection of a new hospital in the suburbs. As to adapting the present building, it was pointed out that considerable space is devoted to the nurses, who, about 100 in number, live and sleep on the premises. It was urged that if they were accommodated outside, this space would be gained and it would be better for the nurses. Another suggestion was that the washing might be done outside and the space now occupied by the laundry be utilised for patients. It was also recommended that the out-patient department should be removed to premises to be taken for the purpose near at hand. All these suggestions have been before the board at various times since 1890. They were received with some favour, but doubts were expressed as to whether they would, if carried out, meet the requirements of the case. In the end, on the motion of Sir W. Houldsworth, M.P., a subcommittee was appointed to take these proposals and all the other schemes for achieving the object in view into consideration and report to the general committee. It is said that the subcommittee "will thrash out all the details, and it is hoped that when they present their report the general committee may be able to come to a unanimous decision." The difficulty is to increase the accommodation of the infirmary without further encroachment on the open space in which it stands, but it can no doubt be done if the present building is pulled down—which is the best thing to do—and the nurses, the out-patient department, and the laundry are taken outside the infirmary grounds. It would be a great pity to patch up and attempt to modernise the present building, and would only lead to disappointment.

Death of Professor W. C. Williamson, M.R.C.S., LL.D., F.R.S.

Professor Williamson's death, which took place recently at Clapham Common, will be regretted by many here as well as by a large circle of scientific friends. Though his association with Manchester was much broken when he gave up active work at Owens College in 1892—receiving on his retirement the title of Emeritus Professor of Botany—he may be claimed as one of those who by their scientific eminence have shed lustre on this city of manufacturers. His father had for many years been greatly interested in zoology, botany, and geology, and in 1838, when young Williamson was about two-and-twenty, became curator of the Scarborough Museum. In his own home, therefore, as it has been said, he "breathed an atmosphere of scientific research." He was apprenticed to a medical man in his native town and began the study of medicine, but kept up his geological pursuits, as shown by three early memoirs on "The Vertical Distribution of the Organic Remains of the Yorkshire Coast." In 1835 he became the curator of the Manchester Natural History Museum, but must have continued his medical work, since his qualifications of M.R.C.S. Eng. and L.S.A. date from 1840. He was long known in Manchester as a general practitioner, though never giving up his scientific pursuits, and devoted special attention to diseases of the ear, which he had studied on the Continent. The Manchester Ear Institution owes its origin to his energy and enthusiasm, and for ten years he was an active member of the staff. On the foundation of Owens College Mr. Williamson was appointed its first Professor of Biology and Geology. Such a field of work was too much for any one man to cover, and first the teaching of geology, and then of zoology, fell into other hands, the former being now taught by Professor Boyd Dawkins and the latter by Professor Hickson, Mr. Williamson retaining the chair of Botany. Papers on the Scales and Bones of Fossil Fishes led to his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a series of memoirs on the Carboniferous Plants of Lancashire and Yorkshire gained him the Royal Medal of the Society, whilst the Wollaston Gold Medal was awarded him by the Geological Society in 1890. He was specially skilled in the patient grinding of coal sections, so as to become beautifully transparent and instructive objects for the microscope. The University of Edinburgh conferred on him the degree of LL.D., and he was an honorary member of the Swedish Academy of Science, as well as of those of Göttingen and Geneva. He took an active interest in the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, and was President for the year 1884-5. After retiring to Clapham he began a new series of memoirs for the Royal Society in