putrefaction from our wounds, and that we are consequently able to undertake with confidence operative procedures which, without efficient antiseptic measures, would be simply homicidal; while the grand fact of perfect immunity from pyæmia and hospital gangrene remains in its integrity in my crowded wards.

Why it is that Mr. Wood should have obtained results so widely different I must leave your readers to infer, merely remarking that, of the many strangers who have witnessed my practice since his address was given, not one appears to have had any hesitation in arriving at the true explanation.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Edinburgh, August 30th, 1873.

JOSEPH LISTER.

NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your impression of the 9th ultimo contained a powerful and sympathetic letter from Sir Dominic Corrigan on the resignation of some young naval surgeons, and on the procedure adopted by the Admiralty in their case. As might have been expected, this letter has drawn forth others, which have discussed the legality, expediency, and even absurdity of the conduct of the Admiralty. All of them treat the subject from the civil side; will you permit me to add a few remarks from a naval point of view?

The *legality* of forcing these gentlemen to serve is easily disposed of. *Unless actually employed*, the Admiralty cannot compel any officer to take up an appointment. Any candidate, therefore, who has completed his course at Netley can legally demand his discharge *before* he is appointed to a ship. The late assumptions of the Admiralty have evoked this clear enunciation of a bare fact. I am not, however, concerned at present with this point of the case, but with others. I ask—

1st. Is it politic of the Admiralty at the present juncture to offend the medical schools of Ireland? Their lordships cannot surely forget their peculiar obligations to these schools for so generously supplying the service for some time past, or their present close connexion with it, or the very recent fact that 80 per cent. of all the surgeons last gazetted to commissions came from these schools, including 50 per cent. from Dublin alone. The scant courtesy of Mr. Goschen's replies to Sir Dominic in the House of Commons, and his colleagues' treatment of the young members of their schools—two most sensitive media—will soon produce apparent results.

2nd. Why cannot the Admiralty manage such affairs as men of business and common sense manage theirs? When serving in China ten or twelve years ago, the following story regarding a large Ocean Company was current there. One of their medical officers, fresh from home, saw an eligible but immediate opening in a port, and obtained his discharge then and there. He thanked the Company in appropriate terms for the boon obtained, and considered it his duty to enclose an order for the amount of his passage-money. The Company, in a most courteous reply, returned his check, but wished him every success, and expressed their gratification at hearing of his and any similar successes. Contrast this with the Board of Admiralty threatening arrest, as deserters, in the public streets, by the police! Not a shadow of doubt crosses my mind that each of their gallant lordships, on suitable occasions, has despatched numerous masters-at-arms and all the myrmidons these functionaries could muster, to apprehend, *vi et armis*, as numerous gangs of deserters who had absconded from their ships, and to perform other like heroic acts. But then they were ocean swells. Now they compose a sedate board located within the cool portals of Whitehall, within convenient hail of the cooler Palace of Westminster, as they will probably discover when Parliament meets. Meanwhile, Sir Dominic's and the other letters may be safely recommended as a useful vade-mecum to all who are disposed either to join or to resign H.M. naval service.

Finally, when their lordships deliberately accept the resignation of any medical officer, it is to be hoped that, to prevent misconceptions, they will continue calm long enough to direct that such officer's name may appear under its

proper heading, and that it be *not* consigned to the next obituary. The name of Dr. Henry N. MacLaurin in the Navy List of March 20th last shows that this hint is not altogether unnecessary. Had I not some knowledge of the circumstances connected with the resignation of this talented officer, who is now in a lucrative practice at the Antipodes, I should charitably have supposed that this was only a clerical error.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. K. ORD, M.D. Edin., R.N., &c.

Lewisham, S.E., Sept. 1st, 1873.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Besides the question so well ventilated by Sir D. Corrigan, as to the very impolitic refusal of the Admiralty to allow surgeons of the navy to leave the service, I beg, if not taking up too much of your valuable space, to suggest to him one or two others.

Their lordships, I am given to understand, persistently decline to allow staff-surgeons of twenty years' service to retire on a commuted pay, although once promised it.

They have, at the same time, fixed the number of staff-surgeons, first and second class, at 210.

I request Sir Dominic's attention to the fact that out of that number about 54 are on half-pay.

If he would kindly condescend, on the reassembling of Parliament, to call for a return of the difference between the half-pay of these enforcedly idle medical men and the pay they would receive if allowed to retire, perhaps it might be found that a saving of the public money would be effected by allowing them to go, or a large moiety of them.

It might also possibly be found that the feeling of being allowed to retire with a moderate allowance at an earlier age, instead of being bound hand and foot till sixty, would immediately cause a considerable increase of candidates, and that the absence of a large reserve on half pay would be thus remedied in the event of any sudden emergency.

Would Sir Dominic be kind enough also to inquire the weighty reasons which induced my Lords, in giving a new nomenclature to the medical officers of the navy, to bestow upon them the cast-off names of the army? Also for what grave defect they are at the end of their career in the service placed on a lower scale of retiring pay than the other officers of the navy with whom they are, in other respects, somewhat ostentatiously classed?

Should he be told, as no doubt he will be, that those other officers have no such promotions in their ranks as those to inspectors and deputy-inspectors, will he kindly inquire how many such promotions are annually made, and whether they are open to everyone, as is the case with the increased retirement?

If told, as he may be, that in the army the retirement is even less, will he then ask for information as to whether promotions are not greater, and whether they do not finish their service at a much earlier age, and have in the meantime more full pay, and less half pay, in the sister service?

I am sure, Sir, that the great Dublin physician will earn for himself a still greater name, and the thanks of the medical service, if he steadily follows out what he has so well begun.

With thanks for your own steady advocacy of the right,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Aug. 19th, 1873.

R. N.

A DELICATE OFFICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your Medical Annotations last week you refer to the Essex Provident Society appointing a medical referee to the Chelmsford district.

This Society numbers something like twenty districts, and in each district a medical referee is appointed by the local committee. The office is, doubtless, of a very delicate nature, and the referee, to keep out of hot water, will require to step very cautiously. In some of the districts the referee is not debarred from attending the members in sickness. In the Halstead district, for example, there are two medical firms, each having about the same number of members of the club to attend in sickness. One of these medical gentlemen has been appointed the medical referee, at a

salary of £20 per annum, and he is still allowed to attend in cases of sickness. The other medical man, who has been ten years longer in practice, takes exception to this young gentleman being allowed to ride over him, and visit his patients for the purpose of signing certificates, &c., for the payment of sick members. Consequently, the senior medical man throws up his patients, and the medical referee not only attends all the patients, but is paid a salary to be medical referee to his own cases.

It is doubtful whether this new scheme will work well, as senior practitioners will not be interfered with by their junior brethren. I should like to hear more of this new "delicate office" from other surgeons who are interested in the various branches of the Essex Provident Society.

Yours truly,

August, 1873.

VERAX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am glad to see, in your last issue, that you have taken notice of the late appointment of a medical referee to the Chelmsford district of the Essex Provident Society. It is indeed "a delicate office," far too delicate for the successful manipulation of any earth-born mortal if he is to carry out the instructions of the society.

A medical referee may be a very useful, and in fact is a very necessary officer to this important society; but the present plan of a medical referee, and the rules laid down for his guidance, must prove vexatious to the sick members and their medical attendants, and will, if persisted in, tend to the utter annihilation of the society, which is just now anything but popular, owing to some late very sweeping modifications in its financial arrangements.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

ARTHUR GOODCHILD.

Little Waltham, Chelmsford, August 30th.

ANÆSTHETIC TRAVELLING.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—*Apropos* of your remarks on anæsthetic travelling, called forth by Dr. Squarey's letter on the subject, perhaps the following account of a more extended journey than that narrated by my colleague may be interesting, as showing the ease with which such can be accomplished.

About five years ago I accompanied a patient of my father's, a highly nervous lady, to Boulogne, during nearly the whole of which journey she was under the influence of the tetrachloride of carbon. I commenced the administration in the railway, intermitted it during the change on to the steamer, kept it up during the passage, which entirely prevented any sea-sickness, and the patient did not recover consciousness until she was in her bed at Boulogne. Five or six weeks afterwards I went over to Boulogne and brought her back the whole way under the same anæsthetic, to her manifest great advantage. I can, therefore, confidently recommend anæsthesia, both as a means of conveying hyperæsthetic patients in their journeys, and also as a preventive of sea-sickness. I also think that the tetrachloride of carbon is a better agent for such work than chloroform, as it is less depressing, and requires a less quantity to produce the same effect, which is a point to be considered in a prolonged administration.

I remain, Sir, yours very faithfully,

St. Andrews, September 2nd, 1873.

HEYWOOD SMITH.

PRACTICAL WORKING OF AN IRISH DISPENSARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following instance of the practical working of an Irish dispensary has been brought under my notice since my arrival a few days ago in county Limerick.

A patient was duly certified as being a proper case to be taken into the fever ward of the dispensary, which, however, was some ten Irish miles distant. A carriage was sent from the dispensary for the patient. The driver and the patient found it necessary once and again to take something comforting on the road. As bad luck would have it, the road divided about half way between the patient's home and the town in which the dispensary was situated, and it

happened that neither the horse nor the driver recollected the way they had come, and took the wrong route. After a time they arrived at a town which proved not to be the one they wanted, and it was then discovered that they had missed their way. The patient considered this as an indication from the souls of his departed forefathers that he ought not to go into the dispensary, and walked back to his own home, a distance of seven Irish miles.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

August 23, 1873.

H. L.

AUTUMN MANŒUVRES AT CANNOCK CHASE.

(From our own Correspondent.)

NOTWITHSTANDING the persistent rain, the programme of the Manœuvres is being worked out. Up to the end of last week the 1st Division returned at the conclusion of each day's instruction to its standing camp, but on Monday morning moved to a position within a couple of miles of Stafford, with the intention of fighting its way back during the present week to its original camp ground.

The amount of physical exertion required of the men has not been excessive, but their condition has been rendered very miserable by heavy and repeated wettings. The most striking peculiarity under such circumstances is the care with which the great-coat is preserved neatly folded and strapped either upon the knapsack or above the valise, while the rest of the man's clothes are being thoroughly soaked. Whether lying down for hours in reserve, or slowly advancing as skirmishers, still the men made no use of their coats. For the neglect of so obvious a protection there must of course be reasons, and they are these:—The difficulty of extracting the coat from its position, the trouble of refolding and replacing it when wet and not further needed, and the desire of keeping it dry to sleep in. Thus the great-coat virtually becomes an ornament by day and a partially damp bed-gown at night, and the question even arises whether it be not the wisest plan. Yet the possibility of such alternatives shows a serious deficiency in the soldier's equipment. The issue of a light waterproof cape, in which the present great-coat, lessened in weight by the removal of its cape, might be enclosed, would be an evident improvement. By means of this a man crouching might, when not in motion, completely shelter himself, and still retain his great-coat for purposes of warmth. It is said that a movable cloth cape is attached to the newest pattern of great-coat, and that this, which would of course be of little use to cover the projection of the old knapsack, can be worn separately, and made to protect the bodies of those fortunate enough to be provided with the valise. This, however, is of no advantage to the large proportion of the army who are still equipped after the manner of their forefathers.

It is also to be wondered at that so little benefit should have as yet accrued to the soldier from the various improvements in waterproof materials. Probably many cunning devices do exist as "sealed patterns," but that is poor consolation to the dripping private.

An accidental but rather serious oversight seems to have been generally committed with regard to the soldier's under-clothing, in allowing so many to provide themselves with calico instead of flannel shirts. The risk of such material next the skin during exposure to cold and wet is apparent. The men procure these out of store in consequence of their cheapness; and here arises another consideration which has been repeatedly urged by the press, and ought not to be overlooked—viz., the hardship to the men of being compelled to hack out their clothing at Autumn Manœuvres, and then to renew the kits at their own expense, while receiving no compensation whatever for such artificial service. This excites considerable murmuring in the ranks, more especially as the idea gains ground that these Manœuvres have been instituted more for the instruction of general officers and for testing the capabilities of various departments than for the education of the individual soldier.

The means of ablution provided is very inadequate, consisting of one leather bucket to each tent—i.e., to every fifteen men; and this utensil has to perform the double