practitioners would be duly recognised, and by a properly defined title be placed amongst the medical institutions of this enlightened country.

(Signed) R. R. PENNINGTON, President.

Correspondence.

LETTER FROM DR. C. J. B. WILLIAMS TO DR. WATSON.

DR. WILLIAMS would be obliged if the Editor of *THE LANCET* would insert the accompanying letter in the next number of *THE LANCET*.

Holles-street, Cavendish-square, Dec. 27, 1847.

DEAR DR. WATSON—I assure you that I much regret that my letter in *THE LANCET* has appeared to be unjust to you or Dr. Forbes, and I am most willing to retract any expressions which may have wronged you.

On a re-perusal of my letter, I cannot perceive that there is any allusion to you, direct or indirect, except in one sentence, and this I would willingly retract, even had your explanation not proved the information contained in it to be incorrect. The paragraph is quite detached, and may be well suppressed without impairing the sense of the rest of the narrative, which, when separated from it, will not, I trust, be liable to misinterpretation: it is as follows:—

"After this, I did not see him professionally, as he placed himself under the care of physicians, who, both before and after this period, found no physical signs of disease, and who therefore took a more favourable view of the case than I did."

I repeat that I fully retract these expressions; but I may be allowed to mention, in apology for my having used them, that, so far as related to the physicians, they implied nothing beyond what had already appeared in *THE LANCET* of the week preceding the publication of my letter, and had been repeated in many of the public prints. Thus, in the report of Mr. Liston's illness, by his assistant, Mr. Cadge, it is stated "that nothing morbid either in the lungs or circulation was detected;"—and, "in the absence of all physical signs of such a lesion" (aneurism) "a favourable view was taken of the disease." Again, so lately as the report of Dec. 3rd, it is mentioned that "the physical signs were still obscure," &c. These reports corresponded with an impression generally abroad, with which I became the more acquainted from my position, as Mr. Liston's colleague, especially directing inquiries to me. And no one seems to have been more completely under this erroneous impression than the patient himself, who, doubtless, blinded by his hopes, and disregarding what both you and I had told him, expressed to several individuals, whom I could name, his satisfaction that auscultation had discovered no disease in his chest.

That I should have been under the same mistaken impression with regard to your examinations, will appear less strange when you recollect that—although the colleague of the patient, the physician whose aid had been first sought, and who had subsequently twice examined him, and detected positive indications of disease—I was neither summoned to any of the consultations on the case, nor personally referred to by those in attendance, for any information or suggestion which possibly I might have been able to supply; therefore I remained in ignorance of the real results of your examinations; and concluding the published report to be correct, I unfortunately adverted to it in the obnoxious sentence which it is the chief object of this letter to cancel.

The rest of my letter is entirely free from allusion to any subject but the case of the patient, with the diagnostic and practical inferences which I made when he consulted me. I do not feel that the general tenour of the letter at any time deserved the personal interpretation which you have attached to it, and which has led you to propose to me a series of questions severely reflecting on my conduct. At all events, my retraction of the only sentence which is personal, will, I trust, leave the communication as it was intended to be, one of a simply scientific character, penned with the especial intention of describing the signs which I had detected in an obscure case of disease, and of vindicating the credit of physical diagnosis. Nor can it be said to have been altogether unsuccessful in accomplishing these objects, if we regard, not merely its own contents, but also the particulars which it has elicited from your pen, which are the more valuable from the longer and more frequent opportunities which you had of investigating the disease.—I remain, yours faithfully,

C. J. B. WILLIAMS.

MORTALITY OF POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Lords Commissioners of her Majesty's Treasury.

The Memorial of the Board of Guardians of the Bolton Union, in the county of Lancaster, sheweth,—

That your memorialists, in the month of March last, appointed Mr. Richard Robinson and Mr. William Hatton to the offices of medical officers of the town of Great Bolton, in the said union, for the year ending March, 1848, which appointments were sanctioned and confirmed by the poor-law commissioners.

That the said Richard Robinson and William Hatton from the time of their said appointment devoted themselves faithfully and zealously in the discharge of their duties, and in the course of their attendance on the sick poor they contracted an epidemic fever, of which they died—the said Richard Robinson on the 18th of July last, leaving a widow and two young children, and the said William Hatton on the 31st of August last, leaving a widow, all of whom are inadequately provided for.

That your memorialists are of opinion, that in the present defective sanitary state of our country, no medical man can attend the poorer classes without the constant risk of his own life; and that it is essentially necessary for securing such attendance, and to stimulate others to the like exertions, that the services of those who face the danger, and die in discharge of their duty, should not pass unnoticed.

That believing her Majesty's Government have the power to mitigate the loss which has been sustained, your memorialists beg leave respectfully to submit for consideration the cases of their deceased officers, as exemplifying the necessity of a public provision being made for the widows and children of those who fall victims to such important public services.

And your memorialists will ever pray, &c.

Passed under the common seal of the Board of Guardians of the Bolton Union, at a meeting held at the Board-room, Acres Field, Bolton, the 22nd day of September, 1847.

PETER DITCHFIELD, Presiding Chairman.

NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I deem it my duty to contradict assertions made in certain letters that have appeared in your influential journal, advocating the claims of assistant-surgeons R.N. to ward-room rank &c.

The writers of these letters state, that the only obstacle they have to contend with is executive prejudice.

This statement is incorrect, and without foundation. There are, I admit, a few captains and commanders in the service, who are opposed to their being admitted to the ward-room; but the great majority are either neutral or in favour of it; and I have reason to believe that the Lords of the Admiralty are not averse to the measure.

What, then, retards the final settlement of this *res vexata*? I shall answer, and challenge contradiction. The whole body of naval surgeons, almost without exception, are opposed to their junior, though probably equally well qualified, brethren being placed on the footing of messmates, conceiving that such close intimacy would render them less obedient to their orders &c.

This reply I had from several surgeons with whom I conversed on the subject, from whom I also learned that Sir W. Burnett, the medical director-general, is decidedly opposed to any change being made in the present position of the assistant-surgeons.

My object is not, in any degree, to prejudice the claims of these gentlemen; their justice no impartial mind can deny, and their grievances must, ere long, be redressed; I only wish to remove from my class an unmerited reproach, and to fix it where alone it exists.

In conclusion, let me advise them, in all their subsequent letters, to avoid all disparaging comparisons with the junior branches of the executive.—Insertion of these remarks will much oblige,

December, 1847.

A CAPTAIN, R.N.

PLACENTA PRÆVIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR—As a constant subscriber, I beg to forward you the following case. On Sunday, January 3rd, 1847, early in the morning, I was called to attend upon Mrs. M—, at Framsdan, Suffolk, 38 years of age, in labour with her third child.