of which condemns an experiment detailed by me in *THE LANCET* of the 15th January last, as well as the inferences thence drawn.

After stating that he has himself witnessed the experiment, he says that he "did not draw the same inference—that electricity is thus seen to possess weight." This was the case with myself for many years; but when I had arrived by other means at the fact of the materiality of the fluid, a subject illustrated in the works referred to in my former communication, I found the inference easy and natural.

It is probable that if the electric fluid gravitates towards the earth by virtue of its own weight, it must be specifically heavier than atmospheric air, since the experiment is conducted in this medium. But it must be observed that pyrogen is subject to so many influences, that it will be found most difficult to settle this point. I will agree with "Vidimus" so far as this, that it must possess weight, and to the neglect of this consideration may be attributed some, at least, of the loss that is so frequently observed in chemical experiments, even when carried on with the greatest exactness.

But I cannot at all agree with the inference which he seems to draw from the experiment of suspending a jar over a conductor, that if the fluid is heavier than atmospheric air, it ought not to ascend into the jar; for pyrogen is acted upon and most commonly governed by more potent laws than those of gravity, for with it the principle of repulsion in its particles is constant, owing to which they continually endeavour to diffuse themselves over a surface or body. "Vidimus" does not appear to apprehend the point of the experiment on which particular stress is laid, and from which the inferences are drawn. I do not consider that the fluid descends into a Leyden jar by the force of gravity, but that this force is developed in my experiment by the fluid when it is in the jar, and that the projection and curved forms of the pyrogenic streams at B and A (see p. 70) are as much due to this influence as those of a stream of water flowing from a spout.

"Vidimus" says, "the experiment altogether is, in fact, a fallacy; for when the electric equilibrium is disturbed, or (in my opinion) when latent electricity is decomposed, the great tendency is for that equilibrium to be again restored, or the separate elements of positive and negative, or vitreous and resinous electricity to reunite and become latent."

With this principle, that when the equilibrium of the fluid is disturbed, it seeks the readiest means of regaining its original state, I, of course, agree, for it is one of the first principles of electrical science; but I am quite at issue with your correspondent as to the experiment being a fallacy. My only fear was, that it might not answer with others; but, as "Vidimus" has witnessed it, my fears on that head are set at rest. It seems quite adverse to the spirit of experimental philosophy to view any experiment as a fallacy that yields a positive result, notwithstanding this may be entirely adverse to previous conclusions. In the present instance, however, it is not so; it merely reveals a new law which governs the fluid to a certain extent. I differ also with what is said in continuation:—"In the struggle to effect this equilibrium or reunion are the appearances described by Mr. Lake observed, and they can be modified according as difficulties are presented, or facilities afforded for its accomplishment." "Vidimus" ought to show the grounds upon which he makes this assertion; for in my experiment there are no difficulties to the fluid recovering its equilibrium; on the contrary, there is every facility; but instead of its taking the shortest, the easiest, the most direct road to the outer coating of the jar,—namely, along the surface of the glass at A, and the line E C at B,—it is projected, and, on the theory of two fluids, instead of the positive seeking the negative, it appears to be striving to avoid it, except when the jar discharges itself at E C in the ordinary way, as frequently happens during the experiment.

"Vidimus" does not think "pyrogen" a proper name for the electric fluid. I leave this point entirely to the scientific world. In proposing it, I had in view the discoveries of Oersted and others, and the probability that it might be found appropriate, for what appears to be the one agent that produces the various phenomena of galvanism, electricity, magnetism, heat, and light. Had "Vidimus" read the papers to which I referred in my former communication, I scarcely think he could have offered any objection to electricity or pyrogen being viewed as a *begetter* of fire.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN JOSEPH LAKE.

Royal Laboratory, Portsmouth, Feb. 1848.

FREE TRADE IN QUACKERY.—REMARKS ON SIR BENJAMIN BRODIE'S EVIDENCE BEFORE THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION COMMITTEE.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—The profession, already acquainted by hearsay with Sir Benjamin Brodie's opinion on medical protection, were for the

most part ignorant of the reasoning by which those opinions were supported. The publication of Sir Benjamin's evidence before the Parliamentary Committee reveals to the profession and the public the arguments by which the anti-protectionists defend their position. Sir Benjamin says—

"I would not put a penalty on private practice, but I would put a penalty on public practice without a licence. In the first place, I think it is unjust to prevent my consulting anybody I please. It is not unjust to prevent a public institution doing so, because although I may fling my own money into the streets, I must not fling the money of a public institution into the streets."

Now it is undoubtedly the duty of the state to defend an individual even against himself; but, granting (which I am not prepared to do) that a man has a right to endanger his own life by employing a quack, has he a right to allow the quack to poison his wife?—has he a right to be the indirect means of destroying his children through employing a quack?

Sir Benjamin next says (Q. 2129)—"I think I have a right to do what I like with my own person, but if I have any power of appointing a person to attend a third party, I do not think I have a right to send my quack doctor for that purpose."

Now Sir Benjamin must be well aware, that in four cases out of five the medical attendant is called in, not by the patient, but by the head of the family; thus, according to his own rule, the quack may be called in to attend a third party—which he admits should be forbidden.

The honourable baronet next proceeds to draw a parallel between a surgeon and a solicitor, saying, that a man may employ any person he pleases to act as his solicitor out of court. This is not correct. In the first place, any man may *not* act as a solicitor for another, using his own name; and, secondly, any document which requires legal attestation must be signed by a qualified solicitor; and in the case put by Sir James Graham, of calling in your tailor to make your will, the man does not profess to be a solicitor, but a tailor.

The free-trade arguments are twisted into absurdities to suit this case. A free trade in corn does not mean that flour, and chalk purporting to be flour, are to be admitted into the same market on equal terms. If I choose to take a piece of stamped pewter in preference to a shilling, it surely can be no reason why the state should not punish coiners of spurious money.

The public are not better judges of medical skill than they are assayers of metals, and it is assuredly the duty of the state not only to stamp the true coin, as well medical as metallic, but also to punish both the coiner and the quack. And what would be the effect of removing all restrictions on private practice? The medical officers of public institutions would stand in proud pre-eminence above the great body of the profession, which would form a vast chaotic mass of licensed and unlicensed men, surgeons, tailors, quacks, &c.

"Ambubaiarum collegia, pharmacopolæ,
Mendici, mimi, balatrones, hoc genus omne,"

whose insecure and undefined position would effectually prevent any man of fair abilities and moderate means from enlisting amongst them as a competitor for public favour.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, Feb. 1848.

A. WOLFF, Surgeon.

Medical News.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.—The following gentlemen having undergone the necessary examinations for the diploma, were admitted members of the College, at the meeting of the Court of Examiners, on the 3rd instant—viz., Messrs. Joseph Henry Bennett, Wakefield, Yorkshire; Randle Turton, Wolverhampton; John Walrond Cleave, Totness, Devon; Thomas Robert Bunbury Isaac, East India Company's Service; Edward Fitzwilliam Sankey, Dover; Everitt Benjamin Gaylard, Blackheath; George Dunn, Southmolton, Devon; Joseph Langley Vowe Gregory, Riseldy, Bedfordshire; George Houseman Macnamara, Uxbridge; and John Grant Wilson, Bristol.

APOTHECARIES' HALL.—Names of gentlemen who passed their examination in the science and practice of medicine, and received certificates to practise, on Thursday, March 2nd, 1848:—Edward Fitzwilliam Sankey, Dover; Arthur Robert Pedgrift, Loddon; John Evans, Sunderland; Richard Marley.

NAVAL SURGEONS.—At the last meeting of the Court of Examiners of the Royal College of Surgeons, Messrs. William McMahon and Adam Gordon passed their examinations for Naval Surgeons. These gentlemen had previously been admitted members of the College, the diploma of the former bearing date August 14th, 1840, and that of the latter, August 6th, 1841.