Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE NEW PROJECT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Medical Protection Office, 43, Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London, August 22nd, 1848.

SIR,—As solicitor to Mr. F. W. Brearey, general manager of the Medical Protection Office, my attention has been drawn to your number of the 19th of August, wherein you insert an anonymous letter, signed "One not to be Caught," reflecting on the Medical Protection Office, and asking a series of questions, which I have no doubt will be answered by the highly respectable party to whom they are addressed.

As regards the objects of the office and the probability of its success, time alone will prove it; but why the medical profession should not have a protection office, as well as merchants, bankers, and tradesmen, and why some of your professional correspondents should feel angry at such a society being formed, when it is optional with them whether they support it or not, and why "an appeal for subscriptions for benevolent purposes should be deemed piteous," I am at a loss to conceive. At all events, no medical man need patronize the office unless he deems its object praiseworthy; and I am happy to inform you, that whatever "One not to be Caught" (*who doubtless feels very angry at that portion of the project which is directed against illegal practitioners*) may think of it, many of the most respectable of the profession have afforded it their most unqualified approbation and support. Trusting to your known sense of justice to insert this, I have the honour to be,

Your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM V. EYRE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It has rejoiced me much that you have inserted the letter signed "One not to be Caught," respecting the new scheme for raising the wind. I am glad such a letter has been published, because it is certain that the questions which your correspondent has addressed to that highly respectable gentleman, Mr. John Propert, will be fully and completely answered, and thus that the whole truth regarding this, to me, incomprehensible project, will be made plain to the profession. In Heaven's name, if we have any benefactors, let us know who they are, that we may be grateful to them; but if there are any schemers, whether belonging to the profession or not, who want to dip their hands deeply into our pockets, they also ought to be known, as well as their objects. What, in Heaven's name, has induced Captain Trapaud (Trap-Oh!) unattached, to interfere in our behalf? It appears to me to be obvious, that we are not thought to be quite so poor as we are stupid. However, I will not say more, as I long to see the answer of Mr. Propert in THE LANCET of next Saturday.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ANOTHER NOT TO BE CAUGHT.

* * We regret to state, that up to the time of our going to press we have received no reply from Mr. Propert to the questions which were propounded to him in THE LANCET of last week; and anything more vague and unsatisfactory than the letter of Mr. Eyre, published above, could not well be written. This gentleman, however, states that he has no doubt the questions will be answered by the highly respectable party to whom they are addressed. It is probable, therefore, that we shall receive a communication from Mr. Propert before the next number of THE LANCET issues from the press.—ED. L.

TREATMENT OF CHOLERA BY CARBON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Perceiving that the (in my opinion) highly suggestive communication of Mr. Ritson, inserted in your LANCET of the 5th inst., and headed "Cholera—Preventive Qualities of Carbonic Acid Gas and Charcoal," has not in to-day's number elicited any observation, either from the editorial we, or from any of the gifted contributors to your excellent journal, I am induced to request a brief space for a few remarks thereon.

Mr. Ritson states, that "in the territory of Marsala, in Sicily, that city containing a population of about 24,000 persons, surrounded by a large tract of country producing a large quantity of wine, that is kept in open casks, which

evolves a large quantity of carbonic acid gas, only sixteen deaths from cholera occurred in the whole district; whilst the city of Trapani, only eighteen miles distant, lost nearly a fourth of its population," &c.

This opinion entertained by Mr. Ritson, that the immunity from cholera enjoyed by the Marsalians was due to the carbonic acid gas evolved from their open wine casks, is, I think, erroneous. Should, however, this theory be admitted, then all densely populated districts would be exempt from cholera, and the best preventive to that fearful scourge would be to sleep three or more in a bed, and to reside in crowded habitations and cities, where, of course, under such conditions, an abundance of the carbonic acid would be evolved. Whether under such treatment the disease or the remedy would prove most fatal, a peep into the history of "the black hole of Calcutta" would probably enable us to decide. We must look for some other cause to account for the comparative non-intrusion of cholera into Marsala.

The importance of the following passage is my apology for again presenting it to your readers. "The almost total exemption of the porters and other labourers engaged in discharging and storing the cargoes of vessels laden with charcoal at Malta from attacks of cholera was particularly observed; at Palermo, the comparative freedom from this disease of the same class of people was also a subject of observation; and the same fact was noticed at all the other large ports of the Mediterranean, where charcoal principally is used for fuel," &c. When, in addition to and in connexion with the above-mentioned facts, we consider the enormous capacity charcoal possesses of absorbing gases, and when we know that the stench or gases arising from putrid animal and vegetable substances are readily absorbable by charcoal, and further decomposition arrested, then I say, that taking all these facts in connexion with each other, the conclusion which irresistibly forces itself upon my mind is, that charcoal has the property of absorbing the choleric virus. This inference granted, or even being deemed probable, the preventive treatment will, in addition to other modes already made public, be the administration of charcoal internally, and the presentation of large surfaces of it to the atmosphere out of doors and in doors. Dr. Ure mentions, in his "Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures, and Mines," that workmen employed in manufacturing coke are generally remarkably healthy.

In the treatment of an attack of cholera, charcoal should be administered by the mouth, and suspended in enemata of gruel &c.

If the conclusion arrived at from the facts given by Mr. Ritson should prove to be legitimate, then the profession and the public are much indebted to that gentleman.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. PRICE EVANS, Surgeon.

Mile-end, near Swansea, August 14th, 1848.

P.S.—It is essential that the charcoal be fresh, and the powder kept in accurately stoppered bottles. Also, the suggestion of Mr. Ritson, that water for drinking should be filtered through charcoal, is important.

* * The administration of carbon in cholera has been also recommended by Dr. Parkin, whose pamphlet we reviewed in the same number which contained the communication of Mr. Ritson. We refer our correspondent to p. 156.—ED. L.

POOR-LAW UNION MEDICAL CONTRACTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I should feel obliged by your inserting the following observations in your widely-circulated journal, should you deem them worthy of attention.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Blythe Cottage, Coleshill, Warwickshire.

J. DAVIES, M.D.

Every one must admit that the medical attendance upon the sick poor forms a most important branch of parochial government. Having been professionally engaged in attending upon the poor for upwards of forty years, and having had ample opportunities of witnessing the workings of the past and present poor-law, will, I trust, be deemed a sufficient apology for my offering a few observations on the subject.

From the various remarks which have from time to time appeared, it is manifest the present system of affording medical relief is very defective. In the first place, the medical districts are much too large, especially in the country; too many parishes are united into one district; consequently a medical man is obliged to take all or none; and to my certain

knowledge, in very many instances the poor have to send a distance of five or six miles before they can obtain medical relief, which must be admitted to be equally bad for them and the medical officer. And again: I never come in contact with a poor-law medical officer who does not complain of the paltry remuneration which he receives for his services. I cannot but think, if the contract system were abolished, and the *per case* system adopted, it would be more satisfactory to all parties, and the poor would be better attended to. Provided the latter system was adopted, I do not see the necessity of confining the medical attendance of the poor to two or three medical men, which is too frequently the case in very large unions. In the event of the case system being adopted, I cannot see the objection of allowing *every legally-qualified medical man* residing within the district, or contiguous to it, *the opportunity of attending the poor* in his own immediate neighbourhood, provided he thought proper to take charge of them, *in which case the poor would be allowed to select their own medical attendant.* If such a system were carried out, I think that the poor would be better attended than they are at the present time, and it would be more satisfactory to the medical men.

Perhaps there are some persons who may think that the difficulty of carrying it out would be so very great that it could not be accomplished. I must confess I do not see the difficulty of the case, as each person connected with the union who was empowered to give an order for medical relief might be furnished with relief tickets, *having the names of the different medical officers printed thereon.* *The poor would have the option of selecting any one of the medical officers they might think proper;* and each medical officer might be furnished with loose sheets, for the purpose of making the medical returns, which he should be compelled to send to the relieving-officer weekly, or at such other stated periods as might be thought necessary, and which return might be copied into one general book, for the inspection of the guardians. At the end of every quarter or half-year the medical officers might send in their accounts, together with the relief-tickets which had come to their hands, and be paid according to the number of cases which they had attended.

The foregoing system is intended to apply to the rural districts. How far it might be thought advisable to extend it to large manufacturing towns, I confess myself incapable of forming an opinion.

NEWLY-DISCOVERED GLAND IN THE HUMAN SUBJECT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—About three weeks since, when engaged in examining the large sudoriferous glands which occur in the region of the axilla, I noticed, in connexion with those glands, a form of tubular gland which I believe to have been hitherto undescribed. It is distinguished from the well-known sudoriferous gland in the smaller calibre of its tubes, and in the presence, in the walls of these, of innumerable nuclei, clearly shown by the action of acetic acid.

There is good reason to suppose that the odorous matter which characterizes the region of the human axilla is secreted by the gland thus briefly noticed.

I remain, very faithfully yours,

Notting-hill, August 19, 1848.

ARTHUR HILL HASSALL.

ON A PASSAGE IN GREGORY'S CONSPECTUS; AND ON PAROCHIAL PRACTICE IN THE COUNTRY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

"Strange that such difference should be
'Twixt tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee!"

SIR,—In your number of the 29th of July, "Philologist" desires to be informed which of the two translations he has quoted, of a passage in Gregory's "Conspectus Medicinæ," is the right one. The repetition of the word "vis," in the passage, clearly denotes that the force applied to the eyes only is referred to in opposition to that applied to the head; consequently, the last translation is the correct one. The word "infectur," if meant to be derived from the verb "inficio," would be a barbarism. I take it that the proper word is "infertur." I am not an admirer of Anglo-Latin productions, and the specimen referred to by your correspondent is not in favour of medical Latin, the construction of the sentence being twice tautologous. I have never read Gregory's "Conspectus," and, please God, I never will; nevertheless, his meaning is obvious, although the intelligence it conveys is worth nothing.

Now that I am writing to you, I wish to ease my biliary

ducts of an accumulation which has been fermenting there for years. When I first began to practise, it was my intention to confine myself to surgery alone. Finding this a long road to profit, I practised in the country; not being an apothecary, but having a certificate of six years' attendance at one of the largest London hospitals. I was appointed soon after to the place of parochial surgeon to a district containing 10,000 souls, by the poor-law commissioners themselves, and held the situation for two years, I trust, with credit. These geniuses then passed a resolution that every parochial surgeon should be both a surgeon and an apothecary. For the last ten years, therefore, my endeavours to learn my profession in the best school have deprived me of the right to hold an appointment to which a five years' attendance behind an apothecary's counter would have entitled me. Is this flagrant absurdity to be allowed to go on any longer.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

A SURGEON.

MEDICAL FEES AT ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In consequence of an application having been made to me by the secretary of the North of England Insurance Company, requesting me to answer the usual questions respecting the life &c. of one of my patients, the following correspondence took place. Finding the company unwilling to pay me for my services, I recommended my patient to apply to an office where the just claims of medical men are recognised: he at once adopted my recommendation. If this principle were generally acted upon, the profession would not long, I apprehend, have to complain of this gross injustice.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

Soho-street, Liverpool, August, 1848.

FREDERICK CRIPPS.

To Messrs. Walker and Bird, Agents to the North of England Insurance Company.

GENTLEMEN,—As my time and advice constitute my "stock in trade," I cannot, having nothing else to depend upon, afford to dispose of them without remuneration; if I did so, starvation must soon be the result. By enclosing the usual consultation fee, I shall be happy to afford you that information with regard to the value of the life of Mr. —, which, from your queries, is obviously for *your* benefit and *your* protection.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

Soho-street, Liverpool, August 9th.

FREDERICK CRIPPS.

Mr. CRIPPS. Sir,—As the company invariably fees its own medical officer, they cannot recognise your claim to be fee'd also by them, it being considered that when the assured's medical attendant is applied to for information, in making his report he acts on behalf of his patient.

We are, Sir, yours obediently,

WALKER & BIRD.

North of England Insurance Office, August 9th, 1848.

MESSRS. WALKER & BIRD. Gentlemen,—In answer to yours of this morning, I beg to observe that I have nothing to do with your employing "your own medical officer;" if you choose to do so, and fee him, well and good; but that does not compensate me for my trouble and loss of time; I therefore, as I intimated in my former note, must decline, according to the modest request of the company, that I should work for nothing.—I remain, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

Soho-street, August 9th, 1848.

FREDERICK CRIPPS.

REMUNERATION TO MEDICAL WITNESSES FOR ATTENDANCE IN CRIMINAL COURTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Knowing your constant anxiety to remove every abuse which exists in our profession, may I enlist your services to assist in remedying one of the many grievances by which we are oppressed; I refer to the utter want of consideration on the part of the law authorities, for the time, labour, and importance of medical men, when called upon to attend and give evidence in criminal courts.

It is an axiom, that "a labourer is worthy of his hire," but it does not appear to hold good in this particular case. For instance, a surgeon may be called before two magistrates to give evidence on some important and serious case, involving the life of the prisoner, the safety of the public at large, and his own professional reputation. After giving his evidence, he is bound over in heavy recognizance to appear at the next sessions or assizes, as the case may be. Well, after being thus detained, perhaps for hours, what does he get? Why, fre-