Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

NITRATE OF SILVER IN ULCERATION OF THE LARYNX AND TRACHEA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As the question as to whom the merit of suggesting the application of nitrate of silver to ulcerations of the larynx and trachea is again mooted, may I be permitted to refer to the statement made by me at the annual meeting of the Eastern Branch of the Provincial Medical Association, held at Hadleigh, in the year 1849?

The facts are simply these:—The suggestion was made by me, and first carried into operation by the late Sir Charles Bell. In confirmation of this statement, may I require you to insert an extract from a letter addressed to me by the late Dr. Mann Burrows, the Editor of the *London Medical Repository*.

"Feb. 10, 1816.

"SIR.—Permit me to offer you some apology for the omission in the *Repository* of a very excellent paper of yours, which I received as long since as last August. It was intended for insertion in September, but it was mislaid, and two or three other papers with it. Luckily this paper is recovered, and in time for our next number, in which it shall appear. Accept my thanks for the favour. Indeed, it is altogether so valuable a communication that, if it had not been recorded, we should have sustained a double loss: the character which such papers must confer on the *Repository*, and the offending a correspondent so intelligent, whose future communications we hope for, and shall be happy to receive.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
(Signed) "G. M. BURROWS."

These papers were afterwards republished in my "Compendium of Medical Practice," and, I believe, will be found to furnish a fuller description of this formidable disease than any which preceded them. It is not, however, to urge my claim to an original suggestion that I now address you, but under the hope of seeing that suggestion *liberally* carried out. The nitrate of silver, to be effectual, must, I feel persuaded, be applied in substance, not in solution. This can only be done, when the disease is below the larynx, by a direct opening into the trachea; and the simple, the beautiful, the "nearly bloodless" process, described by Dr. Marshall Hall in THE LANCET of June 17, has divested the operation of all its difficulties and of all its terrors.

That Dr. Marshall Hall may long maintain that proud eminence to which his industry, his genius, and his consummate talents have exalted him, is the warmest wish and earnest prayer of

Yours, very respectfully,
JAMES BEDINGFIELD.

Longville-house, Needham-market, Suffolk, June, 1854.

THE PLYMOUTH UNION MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Union surgeons must blame themselves if they do not take advantage of the present Parliamentary Commission.

I think the Plymouth Union medical officers could furnish a statement, almost unparalleled, as to paltriness of remuneration, excessive amount of work, and indifference and carelessness, on the part of the authorities, to the comfort and medical attendance on the poor. One district, I believe, had seven successive medical officers in five years, who gave it up, after longer or shorter intervals, in disgust. The salary is a guinea and twopence a-week, or £55 a-year. Three or four years since the then surgeon had 1200 cases in a-year, and, consequently, must have had an average of twenty-three or twenty-four new cases every week, which, with preceding cases, made his weekly returns about 100. The guinea and twopence a-week divided among this 100, gives the liberal amount of *twopence-halfpenny* per week for each patient. A subscriber of a guinea to the dispensary has *six* notes of recommendation; in other words, each dispensary patient costs three shillings and sixpence, the medical attendance being gratis; moreover, the note is not available for more than a month, so that a party with a tedious illness is required to get a fresh note for each month of illness. But, in many of the cases, the attend-

ance is for a much shorter time, so that the notes do not, probably, represent, on the average, more than a week or fortnight's sickness.

Here is surely a remarkable difference; in the one case the surgeon is ostensibly paid for his work, medicines, time, &c.; and the other, gratuitous, except the cost of the medicines, and the salaries of the dispenser, matron, &c., and yet the latter costs many times as much again as the former.

One of two things must result—the parish surgeon must be greatly underpaid, or the dispensary funds must be greatly abused.

I could enlarge on this to several pages of THE LANCET, but would leave a further statement to one or other of the district surgeons, who may be supposed more conversant with the evils of the present state of things, than one who has had nothing to do with a district.

I am, yours, &c.,

Plymouth, June, 1854.

VERITAS.

P.S.—We have quite a plague of small-pox here, owing to the inefficient carrying out of vaccination, for which the guardians are solely responsible. In one little street in Millbay, I learn that near twenty cases of that disease have occurred in the last month, and several deaths; other parts of Plymouth are, I believe, just as bad.

DIET OF LUNATIC PATIENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having been much struck, lately, with the effects of change of diet in one or two nervous imbecile patients, it has led me to reflect that there must be many persons of a similar class at present incarcerated in lunatic asylums who would soon improve if simple, plain, nourishing, diet was administered to them. One case I had, lately, presenting symptoms of great cerebral irritation, resisted all means of treatment by sedatives, &c., until I changed his diet for oatmeal-porridge and milk for breakfast, and a full allowance of meat, vegetables, and broth, for dinner, allowing plenty of exercise at the same time, and the society of friends.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

JOHN C. RICHARDSON, M.R.C.S.E., L.S.A.

Galway, June, 1854.

THE COUNCIL OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM, AND THE NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your number for June 17, I perceived, with pity and contempt combined, a notice of the abject pusillanimity of the Council of Queen's College, Birmingham, in applying to the Board of Admiralty for a triennial assistant-surgeon, in the present humiliating condition of the naval medical service.

Calculating on such men, who thus rate their services and estimate their position actually lower than does the captain's steward on board a man-of-war, well may the Board of Admiralty "hope shortly to be in a position to provide for the gun-boats assistant-surgeons," fitted to bear the impress of the greatest professional humiliation, not only that of accepting, but even, cap in hand, suing for the *honoured appointment* of naval assistant-surgeon,—doubtless fresh moulded from this "Brummagem" metal!—that, too, at a time when the true state of affairs has been brought to light, and disapprobation thereof emphatically expressed by the petitions to Parliament from most of the medical colleges and schools in the kingdom.

The naval executive is unfortunately too ready to grasp at such a despicable weakness, exceptional though it be, and unscrupulously to argue a *particulari ad universale*, that it is thus evident, that medical men consider their position aboard ship as being everything that it ought to be, and that they can have plenty of qualified candidates *to do any dirty work, on any dirty terms*, for the royal navy.

Yours, &c.,
"MEDICUS."

June, 1854.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The attention of the directors of the Metropolitan Counties and General Life Assurance Society having been called to a letter signed "B. G.," published in your journal of the 17th instant, containing an accusation against that office,