should buy them. Is my view of your meaning correct? We, Sirs, have escaped from the slavery, the hard work and the bad pay which were ours as assistants to medical men to comparative freedom, comparative ease and comparative affluence. The working classes were oppressed by our oppressors, for if they sought cheap dispensaries they were given cheap and even worthless drugs; and if they joined clubs they were no better off in this respect, and were bullied into the bargain. We united our forces; their pence provide us with a competency; they buy us drugs and supply us with all other essentials; and we laugh at our former masters. Of course the latter are not satisfied. Not only have their slaves escaped them, but they have taken off what the masters regard as their private property, their *matériel*, and both reduce their income directly, and by reducing competition raise the salaries of assistants. That line of action which causes them loss they naturally consider low and disgraceful, and they will do their utmost to put down the associations and to force us to serve them as of old. A great victory has been theirs of late, for they have won over—we say it with deep emotion—the Editors of THE LANCET to their way of thinking. We feel it much. You threw open your columns to us last summer, and metaphorically saw fair play while we conquered. Our opponents either remained silent voluntarily or, becoming unparliamentary under the sting of defeat, were refused publication. Now you seem to have forgotten all this, and publish the astonishing announcement that we hold an indefensible position!

A step further is to be taken, you say, and the subject brought again before the General Medical Council. Well, what reason have we for thinking that this body is less wise now than it was last May, when it decided that it was “not their business”? Does anyone fancy these gentlemen are foolish enough to enter on a hopeless contest with the democracy of this country? As well might a porcelain vase expect to collide victoriously with an iron cauldron as the General Medical Council to reduce to their former, or even keep in their present, position those “mechanics and tradesmen” whom you seem to value so little. When Mrs. Partington’s mop avails against the tide then will the Medical Defence Union subdue the people, but till then the members of the Union would find throwing stones at the moon a more remunerative occupation than attacking such deservedly popular institutions as the Medical Aid Associations.

I must apologise for the length of this letter, which is due to the length of your article against us.

I am, Sirs, yours sincerely,

Oct. 18th, 1892.

VERAX.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Leslie Phillips, in his paper about Medical Aid Associations, takes an entirely one-sided view as to the small fee the doctor receives for his work. As a matter of fact the drudgery of a club practice, at least in the provinces, is not done by the doctor himself, but by his unfortunate assistant, who in nine cases out of ten is unqualified. By your kindness I have before now expressed my views against the hateful practice of putting unqualified men in charge of surgeries; but I am not going to ignore the proper unqualified man, if I may be allowed to so call him—I mean one who has passed all but his final, but for some reason cannot qualify. I contend that qualified men cannot and will not do the same amount of drudgery work as the unqualified. The major portion of a club and dispensary practice does not require a qualified man, as it consists in treating nothing particular, but almost entirely a class of chronic hypochondriacal females who really visit the surgery for a gossip with the doctor, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a bottle of Epsom salts and burnt sugar will cure all of them. I can assure you, Sirs, in a practice like the above an M.B. Lond. or F.R.C.S. Eng. would simply be lost. He would have no opportunity of utilising his superior knowledge. My predecessor was an unqualified man, but with no medical education whatever. He had not even passed a preliminary examination and had never been inside any hospital or infirmary attached to any university; in fact, he professed to be quite ignorant of the names of any of the bones of the body, and even of any of the diseases he treated. Yet for a period of nearly ten years he had charge of a surgery, attended midwifery, performed vaccinations, visited the people’s homes and prescribed at the surgery. I confess I cannot do the same amount of work as this person, nor am I ashamed to say that I cannot diagnose the cases so quickly as he did, nor talk so

professionally as did my predecessor to the patients. Without a doctor the Medical Aid Association could not exist, and if Dr. Leslie Phillips could infuse into doctors a feeling of unanimity to refuse to accept the medical officership of these Medical Aid Associations, then some good would result. But in these days of competition and the multiplying of quack remedies what one doctor would refuse fifty are ready to accept. My principal has actually a dispensary charging the modest sum of a halfpenny a week for children up to the age of fourteen and one penny for adults. These sums include visits and medicine and appliances in case of accidents. Out of these deduct commission for collector, price of labels, corks and physic, then see what is left for the doctor. By these clubs and dispensaries I assert more work is put on the doctor for but a small fee, and the people are able to spend more in drink. This is the case in the town I am in now, and I am sure there are many who could corroborate me. Thanking you in anticipation,

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Oct. 17th, 1892.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with much interest your article in last Saturday’s issue. I trust the resident medical officers of the various associations will now put forward all their exertions to emancipate themselves from the yoke of thralldom which they have been long labouring under and will loyally come forward and assist their brethren in exposing the iniquitous system of “sweating” which is no doubt being carried on with impunity in the greater number of these associations. All information should be addressed to Dr. Leslie Phillips without delay, which of course will be regarded as confidential. It is to be hoped also that the general practitioners will be fully alive to their own interests and communicate also all information bearing on the grievances they suffer from the working of Medical Aid Associations, and the injury they are causing both to the profession and the general public.

I remain, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Oct. 18th, 1892.

A MEDICAL AID OFFICER.

EXPERIMENTS ON ANIMALS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Whether it was wise for the Church Congress to discuss the subject of animal experimentation or not it would be useless to enter into. The majority of the subjects-committee determined that such discussion should take place, and, this being the case, it was right that the best exponents of the two sides should be selected. For my own part, I believe that the meeting has done a great deal of good, for the experimental research has rarely or ever before had such a public hearing. The anti-vivisectionists, through an active and well-organised association, are working systematically throughout the country. At the Church Congress Art Exhibition a stall was erected for the distribution of their literature, and tracts were freely circulated even at the doors of the great Congress Hall. It seems to me that it is incumbent upon the members of the profession to be educated in this matter, and there should be some quick and sure way of imparting knowledge to those who wish to speak or write on this subject. It is useless for a man, unless he is well prepared with the subject and is an apt and ready speaker, to get up at an ordinary anti-vivisectionists’ meeting. The speakers chosen are men well versed in the way of dealing with the gentler sex and with men of illogical minds. I believe that in no town in England at a public meeting, were the profession well represented, would the anti-vivisectionists carry the majority with them. The general public want to know the truth on this subject, but so far they have had only the opportunity of hearing one side.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Folkestone, Oct. 17th, 1892.

W. J. TYSON.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION OF ETHICS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Will you kindly allow me a small space in your columns to call the attention of the medical profession to a question of principle involved in an inquiry which, I believe, is about to be entered upon by a subcommittee of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association; and may I beg for an expression of your own opinion and the opinions of con-

sultants throughout the country who may consider it worth while to give the matter a moment's consideration? About the beginning of this year a gentleman called upon me and asked me if I would see a case with him in consultation. He gave me his name and address and I met him as proposed. I had vaguely heard that the practitioner in question had started in a somewhat humble way by keeping a dispensary; and I had some dim recollection of a complaint that one of our leading consultants here had met him in consultation. Having heard of these things, I had to decide before going to the consultation on what principle I must proceed. I found from the Register that the practitioner in question was a qualified member of the medical profession; I had never heard that his professional conduct had been publicly called in question; and there was no reason in our personal relations why I should refuse to meet him. I had also to remember that possibly the interests of a patient were involved. Some weeks afterwards I received a letter from a general practitioner residing in the same district as the gentleman whom I had met in consultation inquiring if I was aware of his neighbour's character and the opinion entertained regarding him by other members of the profession in their district of the city. Believing my correspondent to be friendly, I explained the grounds on which I had to decide the question of meeting such practitioners in consultation, and I had little doubt at the time that I was addressing a reasonable man. The next incident was a letter from my correspondent, containing a veiled threat to deprive me of any consultations that he could influence if I did not promise to decline to meet his neighbour in consultation in the future. I need not say what I replied to that letter. Yesterday I attended a meeting of the committee of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association in my capacity of member of that committee, and to my surprise I was asked by one of the secretaries if I had any explanation to offer regarding my "case." I then learned that my former correspondent had brought a formal complaint against myself on the ground of the consultation referred to, and that I was in the position of defendant in connexion with some supposed breach of medical etiquette. That the committee of this Association are really serious seems to me to be proved by the fact that they have already, at the instance of the secretaries, nominated a subcommittee to try the case.

If you open your columns to the discussion of the principle involved in this matter I shall ask you to permit me on a future occasion to say something about the judicial functions of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association. I will only say now that it is well known that their committee sought legal advice on the question of framing a "black list" and of prosecuting some member of the medical profession who was accused of underselling his neighbours by means of a dispensary, but that on economical grounds they decided not to proceed. I should also add that the deliberations of the subcommittees are supposed to be secret, and their conclusions are stated without reason assigned. Consequently one result of most of their inquiries is the spread of injurious gossip about somebody, originating in obscure hints from the irresponsible who sit in judgment. One obvious question arising from this case is—Who is to be the inquisitor? If the consultant, how far is he to go in his inquisition as to the character and professional position of qualified members of the medical profession whom he is asked to meet? And that inquisition would also involve the question of when a member of the profession who commenced practice in a humble, perhaps dubiously ethical, fashion becomes whitewashed and a respectable person whom anyone might be proud to meet in consultation. I do not think the answer to these questions far to seek; and but for the existence of a committee of a Medico-Ethical Association which plays at performing judicial functions, I do not think it would have ever arisen; but the matter is to me a real source of worry and annoyance, and I shall be grateful to you if you will insert this letter and either give expression to your own opinion of the matter, or permit any consulting members of the profession who may think it worth while to state their opinion on the principles involved.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Manchester, Oct. 15th, 1892. W. J. SINCLAIR, M.D. Aberd.

"THE TREATMENT OF MYXŒDEMA."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As your annotation on the above subject in THE LANCET of Oct. 15th is apt to convey the impression that hyroid juice is difficult to obtain, and that it is dangerous

to give it by the hypodermic method, I wish to point out that this is not really the case. For the benefit of those who may wish to treat cases of myxœdema with thyroid juice I may mention that Messrs. Brady and Martin of Newcastle prepare an extract of the thyroid glands of freshly killed sheep in the manner described by me.¹ This extract, which consists of equal parts of thyroid juice, glycerine and 0.5 per cent. solution of carbolic acid, is prepared each week, and I am informed by the manufacturers that it is at present being employed in the treatment of some forty cases of myxœdema. Sufficient evidence has now been brought forward to show that thyroid juice can remove the symptoms of myxœdema. This was clearly shown in the discussion which took place on this subject at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Nottingham last July. It is remarkable how small a quantity of the thyroid juice can accomplish this. A gentleman who was recently under my care with typical symptoms of myxœdema had three drachms of thyroid extract—which are equivalent to the amount of juice contained in two whole thyroid glands—injected in the course of six weeks, when all the symptoms had practically disappeared. There can be no doubt about the efficiency of the remedy; but more extended observations are necessary to enable us to determine the most suitable dosage and the best means of administering it. Formerly I injected as much as twenty-five minims of the extract at a time, but now find that it is better not to give more than fifteen minims in a single dose. This dose of the fresh extract may be given twice a week, and if injected slowly in a part where the skin is loose and not exposed to pressure, with proper antiseptic precautions, unpleasant results rarely follow. The advantages of the hypodermic method are considerable. It is easily carried out, and only requires to be repeated twice a week at first, and afterwards an injection once a week or once a fortnight will maintain the patient in the improved condition. The main object of the treatment is to introduce the secretion of the thyroid gland into the circulation of the patient slowly and in as natural a condition as possible, and this end is attained by the hypodermic method.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,
Newcastle-on-Tyne, Oct. 19th, 1892. GEORGE R. MURRAY.

"REMOVAL OF LEAD FROM THE EAR BY THE USE OF METALLIC MERCURY."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am not unprepared for the criticism of Mr. Ryan and Dr. Barrett in your issue of Oct. 14th. Several chemists have already expressed their surprise that "quicksilver" should have acted in the way I described. The statement of my critics that the syringe was not used prior to the employment of the mercury is "an inference, not a fact." We in this country well know the utility of syringing in cases of foreign body in the ear. In the present case syringes with nozzles of different curvatures were several times applied, with the head of the patient in different positions, quite unavailingly. Yet it is a significant consideration that in the first employment of the syringe after the mercurial application the piece of metal escaped with ease. As over six weeks had elapsed since the primary injury and the patient had been most judiciously treated, inflammatory swelling had subsided, and no rational person who saw the firm impaction of this piece of metal could have attributed it to inflammatory swelling. The piece of lead I used for my preliminary experiment was that thin short lead used to wrap round fishing lines. I have no means here of ascertaining its actual composition, but as the mercury rendered it brittle it was doubtless an alloy and not pure lead. The experiment was a rough one indeed and lacking in scientific accuracy, but it afforded me a hint which the extreme urgency of the case compelled me to at once act upon. I believe that the firm impaction of the metal was largely due to fine processes of it passing into the anatomical foramina and canals. After the quicksilver had been some hours in the ear the patient noticed it running into his throat, as though the mercury had diminished the size of the prolongation of metal in the Eustachian tube. It is possible, too, that the fine processes may have been chemically altered by prolonged contact with the gases and salts of the serum and pus at the temperature of nearly 100° F. I do not gather that my critics observed this

¹ Brit. Med. Jour., Oct. 10th, 1891.