forming home circles of our own, it may help you to understand the feelings with which we see ourselves deprived of that substitute for a home which regimental connexions have, to a certain extent, supplied. We find ourselves in middle age suddenly isolated, mere units amongst bodies of men who are themselves bound together by those ties which regimental associations create. Although the case of the surgeons suddenly and arbitrarily removed from their regiments at first sight seems the hardest, the majority of the surgeon-majors are in as bad a plight. Every surgeon-major who joined a regiment five years ago finds after his name in the Army List the date of his being attached to his regiment the same as that of his first appointment. Consequently, under the terms of the Warrant he holds his position only from day to day, his five years having already expired. Should his regiment move from a foreign to a home station, from a bad to a good, from an unhealthy to a healthy station, he may be at any time removed to make way for a man of whose merits the authorities at Whitehall-yard have become convinced by the constant opportunities he has been able to afford them of personally judging of his good qualities. Thus, almost every member of the department under the rank of a deputy surgeon-general is thrown into a state of doubt and uncertainty as to his future. His regiment has gone, and with it his home; his position is lowered, his plans for the future are upset, his faith in Royal Warrants and his confidence in the Government which contracted with him for his services are all gone, and it will be well if all zeal for the service, all interest in his profession, and all care for the conscientious performance of his duties, do not go too. No one who really knows how matters have hitherto gone feels the slightest belief in the pretence of foreign service being more nearly equalised under the new scheme. Who have usually been appointed to regiments lately arrived from abroad? Who but men who have established their right to stay at home by shirking all foreign service? Look at Netley, and then say what likelihood there is of even that amount of benefit being derived from this disastrous Warrant? Can it be possible, Sir, for anyone to express approval of the vigour shown by Mr. Alexander in exercising his power of selection for promotion? Every friend to his memory should most carefully eschew all reference to a subject concerning which few of the older members of the department can speak, or even think, without the greatest bitterness, even after this lapse of time. To appear as a reformer, and then promote a batch of your personal friends over scores of as good or better men! For heaven's sake rather give us King Log than King Stork! Not content with inflicting upon us one injury after another in this lamentable Warrant, we are favoured with an additional one, in which one new duty after another is laid upon our wretched backs. Can we not do something more than simply wait for new inflictions? Would it not be possible to revive the organisation in the medical schools which worked so favourably on behalf of the navy? Surely we are not utterly without friends. I hope, Sir, that at least you will aid us in obtaining redress; and no journal has hitherto been so successful as THE LANCET in carrying to a happy issue any cause that it has espoused with vigour.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

April 22nd, 1873.

AN ARMY SURGEON.

INSTRUMENTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit us to reply to the criticisms on our eye instruments contained in your last week's issue. The writer states the patterns shown by us are obsolete. We are unable to see how that is possible, considering the fact that we export largely and have at the present moment orders in hand from practitioners of much experience for instruments of precisely the same patterns.

It must be remembered the whole of the profession is not of the same opinion as to the exact size of the blades of ophthalmic instruments, which is a matter of choice, and in executing orders we are acting not on our own designs, but according to those of our customers; and, so long as the demand exists, we are not to be censured for exhibiting

patterns which are generally accepted by those competent to judge. By what standard, may we ask, does the writer wish us to regulate the size of the blade of any ophthalmic instrument? His opinion is no doubt a good one, and it is not more difficult for us to make instruments after his choice than after that of others, but we must first have the demand. In reference to the statement that one firm enjoys almost a monopoly in the sale of such instruments, we are pleased to state it is not so: we are fortunate in having a fair share of patronage; and that we execute the orders given us to the satisfaction of our customers and in a style surpassed by none that patronage is the best proof.

Yours obediently,

EVANS AND WORMULL,

Dowgate-hill, E.C., April, 1873.

Surgical Instrument Makers.

* * The standards of size and shape for eye instruments are two in number: first, the dimensions laid down, as in the case of Graefe's or Weber's knives, by the surgeons by whom the instruments were designed for the fulfilment of some special purpose; secondly, the dimensions actually employed by those operators who have the largest experience and the highest reputation in the present day. It was upon such standards that our comments were founded, and if the instruments exhibited are actually in demand, we can only express regret that those who purchase them do not make themselves acquainted with patterns which are better calculated to fulfil the requirements of the surgeon. With regard to Messrs. Weiss, the reference to them seemed necessary, because an exhibition of instruments to which they do not contribute is like the play of "Hamlet" without the principal character, and would be very likely to mislead foreign surgeons with regard to the forms and sizes actually employed by the majority of English operators. The word "obsolete" is applicable, of course, only to a certain number of the instruments exhibited, such, for example, as Daviel's scissors, which were formerly employed to enlarge a small section in the now almost abandoned "flap extraction" of cataract.—ED. L.

SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF MEDICAL MEN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—With your permission, I wish to bring publicly before the profession a matter which has for some time been upon my mind. There is in existence a most valuable Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men, but unfortunately this Society limits its privileges and advantages only to residents either in Middlesex or the London postal district. Now, surely this is a mistake, for are there not many provincial practitioners who would gladly subscribe to its funds, so that, should necessity compel, their widows and orphans might reap the same care and aid as those of their brethren in the great metropolis? I sincerely trust that the governors will take the question most earnestly into their consideration, and, if necessary, call a special meeting to discuss it; and I further trust that you will not only oblige me by giving this communication a prominent position in your paper, but also by writing a strong article upon it, as your powerful pen will do far more in the matter than my single letter.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

April, 1873.

A PROVINCIAL PRACTITIONER.

HOSPITAL OUT-PATIENT REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On reading THE LANCET of Saturday, the 19th inst., I was much surprised at the tone of the article on "Hospital Out-patient Reform." Everyone, I believe, knows that the out-patient department at the hospitals, as at present conducted, is greatly abused, and that some reform is required. I know myself of a large number of well-to-do people who are quite able to pay the usual fees of practitioners, but who are in the constant habit of at-

tending the out-patient room. The Hospital Out-patient Reform Association believe that by giving prescriptions alone to the patients it would tend to make them consult their own medical attendant, as a large number simply go to the hospital for the medicine alone; and as the poorest class of patients are already well provided for by the Poor-law Medical Board and otherwise, no great amount of harm will be done. However, as reform is universally acknowledged to be required, I think it would be wiser on the part of the Editor of THE LANCET to suggest some means of remedying the evil rather than of making ridicule of those already proposed.—Your obedient servant,

JOHN R. RICHARDS, L.R.C.P. Lond., M.R.C.S.

12, Cassland-grove, South Hackney, N.E., April 22nd, 1873.

* * Mr. Richards is thanked for his interesting communication, which excites the most lively regret that the editorship of THE LANCET should be in our unworthy hands, and not in those of a censor who so kindly volunteers to show us a "wiser" course than that which, in our unwisdom, we have adopted. We may be excused for pointing out to our critic that words have meanings; and hence that propositions, the truth of which we altogether deny, cannot be "universally" acknowledged. Our correspondent, however, is in a position to settle the question on which we differ. He tells us that he himself "knows of a large number of well-to-do people, who are quite able to pay the usual fees of practitioners, but who are in the constant habit of attending the out-patient room." The italics are ours; and the only persons we have ever met with to whom the statement would apply are the assistant-physicians and assistant-surgeons of hospitals. They hardly amount to a "large number," but we hope they are "quite able" to pay the fees referred to, and we know that they are in the "constant habit" of attending as alleged. Let Mr. Richards give his facts in a more definite form. We do not want a "large number" of such cases as he describes, but would be content with twenty; in which full particulars were given of the amount of income, the social position, the number and costliness of children or other dependent persons, and the amount of money actually spent on private practitioners before hospital aid was obtained. We do not look upon the alleged grievances as resting upon a foundation which is sufficient to justify the present outcry. We are quite open to conviction; but we require better evidence than a collection of "he said" and "they said." If Mr. Richards can support his opening by adequate proof, we will recant the error of our ways, and will join our forces to those of the Hospital Out-patient Reform Association.—ED. L.

THE ROYAL VICTORIA DISPENSARY, NORTHAMPTON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am an occasional looker-on at the Northampton General Hospital. A few days since I happened to be present in one of the out-patient rooms while the patients were being seen. Among them came an unfortunate boy, the subject of scrofula and consumption. He was accompanied by his grandmother, who stated that this poor lad had been entered at the Royal Victoria Dispensary, and the usual contribution paid; that subsequently he was attended by an assistant to one of the medical officers of that institution, who, finding that the case was a bad one, and likely to require a considerable amount of attendance, stated that "his was not a proper case for the dispensary." This opinion was confirmed by the senior. The money was returned, and the grandmother informed that he could not be received as a patient of the dispensary. He was then taken to the infirmary, where, it is needless to say, he is receiving every attention at the hands of his unpaid doctor.

In my ignorance I have always imagined that the Provident Dispensary was intended to supply medical attendance and medicines to the sick and indigent poor, either at the

institution or their own homes, at the smallest possible cost, without destroying their independence. After this I shall begin to think that it has for its main object the raising a large sum of money at the expense of all the medical men in the town, to be divided among a favoured few, who, in return, perform as little service as can be decently managed, and that principally rendered by substitutes.

I see the term "assistants" is objected to by Mr. Becke, the secretary, in his letter published in this week's LANCET, and is stated to be "inaccurate." How will the public at Northampton and the profession receive this assertion? I should also like to know if the above case would have been refused membership if the boy was possessed of a vote for the borough?

I can fully substantiate the truth of this case, and remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

April, 1873.

JUSTITIA.

P.S.—I enclose my card and address.

THE TREATMENT OF DRUNKARDS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have found nitrate of silver in small doses early in the morning to be of great use in the medical treatment of chronic alcoholism. I have also found capsicum to be of much value, given both as medicine and as a condiment.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Dunmore, April, 1873.

D. THORNTON, Staff-Surgeon.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE amalgamation of the clinical practice of the two large hospitals of Birmingham for the benefit of the students of Queen's College is at last an accomplished fact. The students will now have the opportunity of attending a *clientèle* of nearly four hundred beds on payment of a common fee; and all the resident clinical appointments, both of the General and Queen's Hospitals will be, after competitive examination, awarded by a clinical board composed of three representatives from the staff of each hospital, together with Dr. Bell Fletcher, the senior physician of the General Hospital, as co-optative chairman. Three medical, three surgical, and one obstetric, appointments, each tenable for six months, will be open for competition in May. This substitution of union for rivalry between the two hospitals has long been felt to be a desideratum by the medical profession in this town, and will doubtless be the means of bringing to the Birmingham School of Medicine a large accession of students, who would otherwise have been sent by their parents or guardians, as formerly, to the metropolis.

The sum of £4200 has been distributed as follows among the medical charities of Birmingham as the result of the Hospital Saturday. It will be seen that all are included in the list, from the largest to the smallest, though naturally the larger hospitals absorb the lion's share:—General Hospital, £1618 13s. 7d.; Queen's Hospital, £1072 5s. 3d.; General Dispensary, £417 1s. 2d.; Children's Hospital, £349 0s. 5d.; Eye Hospital, £226 7s. 7d.; Women's Hospital, £129 15s. 7d.; Birmingham Sanatorium, £120 2s. 5d.; Homœopathic Hospital, £113 8s. 0d.; Lying-in Charity, £80 4s. 5d.; Orthopædic Hospital, £51 4s. 10d.; Ear and Throat Infirmary, £18 1s. 2d.; Dental Dispensary, £3 15s. 7d. On the evening when the division of this sum was made between the various charities, the Mayor presided at a special meeting called for the purpose of raising a testimonial to Mr. Gamgee for his recent valuable services in connexion with this movement. An influential committee was formed for the purpose, and £200 were at once subscribed towards it.

The new sanatorium, recently erected at Blackwell, will be opened on Wednesday by Sir John Pakington. The building has been furnished to accommodate fifty patients, twenty-five of each sex. It is beautifully situated on the southern slope of the Bromsgrove Lickey Hills, and will prove a valuable help to the hospitals, and also to the convalescent poor of Birmingham generally.

April 14th, 1873.