resolved,—“That a petition be presented to Parliament, praying the legislature to pass an Act embodying the principles alluded to in the previous resolutions, and that the members of the medical profession, the poor-law medical staff more especially, and all others interested in behalf of the sick poor in improving the present system of poor-law medical relief, be requested to use their utmost personal influence with members of Parliament for the attainment of this object.”

Moved by WILLIAM CANTRELL, Esq., Wirksworth, Derby, seconded by — SODEN, Esq., late of Bath,—“That a committee shall still be maintained, for which purpose the following gentlemen be re-appointed, with power to add to their number:—

Thomas Hodgkin, M.D., *Chairman*, Lower Brook-street, Grosvenor-square.

Thomas Martin, Esq., *Treasurer*, Reigate.

Charles F. J. Lord, Esq., *Honorary Secretary*, Hampstead.

Adolphus Barnett, Esq., Limehouse; John Liddle, Esq., Alie-place, Goodman's fields; William Lobb, Esq., Aldersgate-street; George Ross, Esq., Farringdon-street; Josh. Thomas Mitchell, Esq., Kennington; James F. Vallance, Esq., Stratford; Edward White, Esq., Lamb's Conduit-street; James Heygate, Esq., M.D., Derby; Peter Martin, Esq., Reigate; Edwd. Boulger, Esq., Blechingley; Geo. Bottomley, Esq., Croydon; Wm. Cantrell, Esq., Wirksworth, Derby; Edwd. Daniell, Esq., Newport Pagnell; Alfred Ebsworth, Esq., Bulwell, Notts; John Burton, Esq., M.D., Walsall, Stafford; Thos. Parker, Esq., Woburn, Beds; Rd. Thos. Tasker, Esq., Melbourne, Derby; Hy. W. Livett, Esq., Wells, Somerset; John A. Pearson, Esq., Woolton, Liverpool; Jas. Stedman, Esq., Guildford; Thos. H. Smith, Esq., St. Mary's Cray; and that it is essentially necessary that a more liberal contribution be so solicited from the Poor Law Medical Staff, and the profession generally, to sustain the objects of the Convention, otherwise it will be impossible for the Committee to continue their exertions.”

Moved by C. M. THOMPSON, Esq., of Westerham, seconded by JAS. STEDMAN, Esq., Guildford, and resolved,—“That this convention publicly records its sense of obligation to the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, the Society of Apothecaries, and very prominently to the National Institute of Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery, and the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, as also to the medical and general press, for the support which all have rendered to the poor-law medical officers and the sick poor, a continuation of which co-operation and advocacy is earnestly requested, until the objects of the convention shall be happily realized.”

Moved by JAMES VALLANCE, Esq., Stratford, seconded by Dr. BARNETT, and resolved,—“That the thanks of this meeting are eminently due, and are hereby given, to its eminent chairman, (Lord Ashley,) for his unceasing efforts to benefit the sick poor. And having full confidence in his lordship as to his desire to see justice done to medical officers of unions, this meeting earnestly requests his lordship to kindly undertake the advocacy of the cause of the sick poor and of the poor-law medical officers, in Parliament or otherwise, in such manner as to his lordship may seem most advisable, in order to obtain a final adjustment of the long-agitated question of poor-law medical relief.”

Moved by WILLIAM LOBB, Esq., seconded by C. F. LORD, Esq., and resolved,—“That the thanks of this meeting are eminently due, and are hereby given, to Dr. Hodgkin, for his urbane and able conduct in the chair of the committee, and for his long advocacy of the cause of the poor-law medical staff.”

Mr. WYLD, M.P., addressed the meeting on the topics embraced by the resolutions, and proposed a motion for the total reform of the profession, but which, not having been submitted to the committee previous to the meeting, was not put from the chair.

Correspondence.

“Audi alteram partem.”

CALOMEL IN CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A paper on the cholera at Tooting appeared in THE LANCET of last week. Speaking of the advantages of small and often-repeated doses of calomel in that disease, the following paragraph occurs—“So as to allow its being taken into the system.” This view I have given as Dr Ayre's, but I find I have mistaken his theory. That gentleman refers the action

of calomel to the stomach primarily, thence by sympathy to the liver. As to the *modus operandi* of small and frequently-repeated doses of calomel I will not venture an opinion; however, it is certainly the remedy, when combined with opium, in which I place the greatest confidence, and, had it not been for the very great paucity of nurses in the establishment at Tooting, which precluded the possibility, I should have carried out Dr. Ayre's plan of treatment more fully, when I have no doubt the result would have been more satisfactory.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Judd-street, Feb. 14, 1849.

W. H. POPHAM.

NAVY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a letter (signed “Navy Medical Department”) in THE LANCET of Jan. 20th, are some remarks on the unjustly low salary paid to the naval medical director-general, who receives only £1000 a year, and does six or seven times more duty than the army medical director-general, who receives £2150 a year. Your correspondent might also have alluded to the medical director-general of the ordnance, who receives £1095 a year, and has under him only about forty-five medical officers on full-pay. The number of full-pay naval medical officers must be nine or ten times more than the above, and notwithstanding this, the head of the department gets a smaller salary than the ordnance medical director-general. Any comment on such injustice is unnecessary.

I am, Sir, your obliged servant,

February, 1849.

NAVAL MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

ON NEW ANÆSTHETIC AGENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Though my paper “On Anæsthesia, and the Agents by which it may be Produced” will appear in the forthcoming part of the next volume of the *Transactions of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association*, now in the press, yet as some little time will necessarily elapse before it can be published, it may not be improper, nor without interest, to state, that amongst the many substances upon which I have experimented, there are two which are most worthy of attention, as of easy practical application.

The one which was amongst the earliest I tried, is common coal gas. It is a safe, manageable, and effective anæsthetic, and very cheap, as everybody knows; though the smell is at first unpleasant, it is inhaled without difficulty or repugnance.

The second is a substance which I have more recently discovered, and if my anticipations be well founded, it will be found to be the best agent yet mentioned, and will, I think, supersede those now employed.

I believe it to be possessed of all the good properties of chloroform, and in a great degree free from those which are objectionable. It is equally pleasant, potent, and speedy in its action. The anæsthesia produced by it may be rendered as profound and as prolonged as may be wished. While a smaller quantity of it than of chloroform, will produce a sufficient degree of insensibility, a larger quantity may be given with impunity. The state of collapse is not so great. The animal may be recovered from a more dead-like condition than where this is induced by chloroform; at the same time the process of recovery is more rapid, and it is unattended by any of those distressing symptoms so often witnessed in animals rallying from a large dose of chloroform.

The substance is the chloride of olefiant gas, as named in “Fownes' Manual;” the hydrochlorate of chloride of acetylene, or oil of olefiant gas, in the eighth edition of “Turner's Chemistry,” and formerly called Dutch oil, or oil of the Dutch chemists.

In appearance and smell it is not very dissimilar from chloroform, but in composition it differs most materially. Chloroform is composed of two atoms of carbon, one of hydrogen, and three of chlorine, with a boiling point of 140°, the specific gravity of the liquid being 1.480, of the vapour, 4.2; while the chloride of olefiant gas is composed of four atoms of carbon, four of hydrogen, and one of chlorine; its boiling point is 180°, the specific gravity of the liquid, 1.247; of the vapour, 3.4484; constituting differences which are very important, and sufficient, I believe, to explain the facts of its superiority.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Leeds, Feb. 12, 1849.

THOMAS NUNNELEY.

NOTE ON A CASE IN DR. WALSHE'S LECTURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention having been directed to the letter of an anonymous correspondent in the last number of your journal,

styling himself "Observer," in which he begs to correct certain errors in the history of one of the patients, whose case was the subject of a clinical lecture by Professor Walshe, I trust I may be allowed (as the report of that case was drawn up by me) to offer a few words in reply.

The statements put forth in the history of the case were made by the patient herself, and are just as likely to be correct as any history which she might tender to "Observer." If your correspondent has had opportunity, from personal observation and knowledge of her domestic affairs, of verifying the affirmations he has made, then I certainly give him credit for being possessed of more information concerning her private, domestic, and hygienic conditions than we were during her sojourn in this hospital. The corrections made in the letter of "Observer" stand thus:—"That the person's habits were not regular; that she was frequently and constantly (even to within a short time of her second admission to this hospital) exposed to inclemency of weather, and to privations, at times, of sleep, and proper diet." How could she be frequently and constantly exposed at the same time to inclemency of weather? And if constantly exposed, would she not have been out at all times, night and day? And, moreover, would not inclemency of weather be a condition which constantly existed, (fortunately not the case,) seeing that she was constantly exposed to it. As regards the patient being a Berlin wool-worker, (which occupation she alleged to us she had followed for six years, and in the exercise of which we frequently saw her, whilst sitting up in bed,) this is mentioned by "Observer" as being an error; if so, why does he not correct it? I cannot think, with him, that the facts, as disclosed in his letter, have any bearing "on the termination of the disease."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
University College Hospital, Feb. 20, 1849. WM. TIDMAS.

THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND PARISH SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR—Although I entirely agree with you in your view of the constitution of the General Board of Health, and believe that had medical men occupied the places filled by two noblemen and a lawyer, the "notifications" would have exhibited a far more sensible and consistent character, yet my object in the few remarks I now take the liberty of offering, have reference particularly to the fresh labours so coolly recommended to be thrown by the General Board upon the already overburdened poor law medical officer.

Allow me first to state what I now have to do, so that your readers may form an opinion as to the probability of my finding leisure for additional work. I am sole medical officer to a town possessing from 8000 to 9000 inhabitants. My salary is 90*l.* per annum, with no extras whatever, except for vaccination. My remuneration last year amounted, per case, to the enormous sum of 2*s.* 6½*d.* This year I have had my hands so full as to be almost worried to death. For the last six weeks I have had an average of from 50 to 70 pauper patients *per day* to visit and dispense for; and at no time during the past four months have I had under my daily care less than 30 pauper cases. From 7 A.M. to 11 P.M. I am obliged to toil at my thankless office, and as I have also a great deal of night-work, I can truly say that I scarcely know what the word "rest" means. From the moment when I rise from my bed to that when I again sink down upon it, fagged out, I do not know an instant I can call my own. Books I have, but cannot read them; wife and children, too, but, except on an occasional Sunday, I have no leisure for relaxation in the domestic circle. I question whether any mechanic in England works harder than I do, and I am quite sure that no journeyman labourer gets worse or so ill paid. I find that my salary this year will yield to me about 1*s.* 9*d.* per case, or about half of the actual cost of drugs for every patient treated at our City infirmary. As for time, trouble, and skill, boards of guardians care nothing about them; all they want is, that the work be done, and done well; they never for a moment consider how hard it is for the medical man, and how vicious in principle, with respect to the poor under his charge, that his interest should be placed in direct opposition to the generous performance of his duties.

Having now shown what, and how onerous, are my official responsibilities, and how I am rewarded for undertaking them, I leave the reader to imagine how grateful I feel to the General Board of Health for recommending the district medical officer as the most fit and proper person to see to the carrying out of their orders under the direction of the board of guardians, whilst they leave to the last-named munificent class of men the option of increasing my pay. In my case, in answer to my application (like Oliver Twist's) "for more," I received a gentlemanly and de-

cided "no," accompanied with the contradictory kind of intimation, that I had hitherto given great satisfaction, by way of a complimentary salve to an unjust denial of a most just claim!

In the "second notification" of the Board of Health, the following passage occurs: "It appeared to the General Board of Health to be absolutely necessary in the present emergency to concentrate responsibility on the medical officers, and to entrust them with discretionary powers, because the rapidity of the course of cholera will not allow them to wait for direction from the guardians at their weekly meetings; and seeing the many and arduous duties that devolve upon the medical officers, the General Board of Health cannot but express a hope that the remuneration of these officers will be more proportionate to the value of the services required of them, than it was upon the former occasion." Now, all this may appear to the ordinary observer as satisfactory to those interested in the matter, as it is no doubt well meant; but I, who have had practical experience of boards of guardians, know very well that not one poor-law medical officer in a hundred will reap any benefit from the above kind but futile recommendation. The fact is, that the Board of Health stands in too much fear of the boards of guardians, and does not boldly do its duty. Although it is suggested that additional medical assistance *may* be had recourse to, it is nowhere laid down as an imperative obligation, even when urgently required, that it shall and must be obtained at a fair price, according to the services rendered. It certainly does appear to me that there exists on both sides a most ungenerous intention of taking advantage of the poor-law doctor's position in order to get their work done for nothing.

Should the cholera unfortunately pay my native town a visit, I shall be expected, over and above my usual duties, to direct my attention to the sanitary condition of every part of it; I must report upon its cleanliness, its special nuisances, the existence of any contagious diseases, and the nature of the localities visited by them; I must personally (at any rate, I can be called upon to do so) superintend the cleaning out of large sewers, ditches, and cess-pools; I must see to the removal of the sick in certain cases, and to the separation from them of the healthy; and I must attend to the effectual cleansing and whitewashing of infected districts and houses. Add to this catalogue, that I am, when thought advisable, to give directions as to the interment of the body, and of course to ascertain that those directions are obeyed.

Now, Mr. Editor, I am not an ubiquitous animal, and it really is physically impossible that any man in my situation should obey all the orders issued. I ask any man of common sense if it be possible (putting aside all question of fair dealing towards medical men as a thing never for a moment entering into the imagination of a board of guardians) that under such circumstances the poor entrusted to my charge can be properly attended to and comforted.

I have now been for very many years a poor-law medical officer; and although I have not made one penny by my office, I have persevered in the fulfilment of my duty conscientiously, if not cheerfully, in the hope that better days might come, when my appointment would be worth retaining. This last imposition, however, is, considering all I have borne as yet patiently, rather too much to submit to quietly and without protest; it is just the additional weight that will serve to break the camel's back. I have been more than once upon the point of sending in my resignation to the board of guardians, or of directly refusing to perform duties not entered in my bond. In either case I should be the sufferer, for besides the loss of my appointment, the good-natured public, upon whose favour my livelihood depends, would be but too ready to discover that the doctor, as he grows old, is also growing more careful of himself and less charitable to others. It is quite apparent to me, as it must be to every medical practitioner, that the only plan, uniting justice to the medical man, and protection to the public in the hour of danger, is that of appointing an "officer of health," specially responsible for the carrying out of the rules and regulations issued by the General Board of Health.

So far as poor-law medical officers are concerned, their fate may be summed up in these few words, "Plenty of work and no pay."

I have the honour to be, Mr. Editor, your grateful servant,
A PARISH DOCTOR.

THE HOUNSLOW INQUEST, AND THE LATE ACTION AT WESTMINSTER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having been examined, at the recent trial in the Exchequer, relative to the opinion given by Mr. Erasmus Wilson respecting the death of White, (of Hounslow flogging notoriety,) and with whose opinion I coincided, I have to request you will