CASE.—On the 10th instant, Mrs. N., a married woman, of a delicate frame, aged 23, who had always enjoyed pretty good health, was taken in labour with her first child. On the 11th, after the pains had lasted 24 hours, the os uteri was found, on examination, to be dilated to the size of a half-crown piece, the membranes protruding, and the head presenting, the strength of the patient being at the same time greatly exhausted. Notwithstanding that some slight stimulants were administered, and gentle friction repeatedly applied to the abdomen, the contractions of the uterus were still incapable of advancing labour, the exhaustion at the same time continuing to increase. After this state had existed three hours, 20 minims of Battley's solution of the ergot of rye were administered, without, however, producing any effect. In half an hour more the same dose was repeated, but still to no purpose. After waiting two hours longer, without the condition of the patient being altered in any other respect than that the exhaustion had increased, the following was prescribed:—

R *Powder of the ergot of rye*, 1 scruple;

Solution of the ergot of rye, 15 minims.

To be taken in tea.

In about 25 minutes after which a succession of violent contractions of the uterus ensued, accompanied in the intervals by hæmorrhage, which increased in quantity after each pain. The loss of blood being considerable, it was deemed necessary to hasten the birth of the child, which was done by means of the forceps, whereby the head was brought down into the lower part of the vagina, a bandage being at the same time firmly applied round the abdomen of the mother. The hæmorrhage now ceased, the further escape of blood from the vagina being prevented by the head of the child acting as a plug. After the head had been brought into the outlet of the pelvis the forceps were retracted, when the uterus contracted sufficiently to complete the act of parturition at three o'clock P.M., the head presenting in the second position. Scarcely any loss of blood attended the extraction of the placenta, which was removed about 20 minutes after the birth of the child. Both mother and child are doing exceedingly well.

SANATORIUMS, LISSON-GROVE ASYLUMS, AND DISPENSARIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I have perused with much pleasure your remarks on the hypocritical scheme of the "Sanatorium," the details of which abound in magnificent advantages which are to accrue to those who are silly enough to embark capital in such an undertaking, and hold out the "inestimable blessings" that will be the lot of those who intrust their

diseases to the care of the proposers of this knight-errant speculation. Has not this scheme already been tried, and signally failed; and was the prosperity of the "Asylum for the Recovery of Health," in Lisson-grove, such that shareholders can be found for a new partnership of the same kind? Alas! no such fortune attended it, for, after lingering on for a number of years in miserable decrepitude, it at last went off in colliquative diarrhoea, and the house and grounds, and the porringers, pots, and pans, were sold for a third of their value. Heartily sick of the concern were the proprietors. From what cause is this attempt made to revive the dead Sanatorium? It is mere dissimulation to use the names of Charity and Religion to induce the good-hearted and unwary to adopt this interested plan. If those respectable men, bankers' and merchants' clerks, felt that they laboured under the want of medical aid more pressing than other people, and had called on the profession to give them cheap physic, then, indeed, a case would exist for our interference. But, as a body, the clerks of London are much better off than the great majority of their fellows. Perhaps that is the very thing for the few pseudo-Samaritans, who wish to have the clerks under their especial protection. Philanthropy has less to do with the proposal, than the desire to extend the private interests and reputation of the projectors of such institutions. It is usual with them to calculate thus:—"If this scheme be successful, we shall have the advantage of adding to our names the title of Surgeon or Physician to the Royal Asylum for Bankers' Clerks." Attend the clerk *now*; the *master* stands in perspective. Such, in my opinion, is the ultimate view of the speculation.

A question of great importance arises out of this subject. Are Hospitals and Dispensaries really and invariably useful to society? I contend that a portion of positive evil is connected with them, inasmuch as that they hold out a bonus to improvidence in the poorer walks of life. An instance, among many, in illustration, has recently passed under my observation. The husband of a Mrs. Francis, on Saturday last, requested that I would have the kindness to visit her, as he considered that she was dying. I accordingly proceeded to their dwelling, which is situated in Britannia-gardens, Moore-street, Bryanston-square. It was truly a wretched hovel; the walls were black, and dripping with water; there was no fire-place in it, and the windows were broken. The bed on which she lay was a filthy truckle, without sheets, and only covered with a ragged rug. On inquiry, I was informed that she was visited once in two days by some one of the medical officers of the Western General Dispensary, and her disease was stated to be typhus, which, by the by, was, in reality,

pure peritonitis. She was four months pregnant; I found her lying on her side, with her knees bent towards the abdomen; the countenance and skin of the body dark, cold, and dry; her tongue of a raspberry colour, with a black patch running down the sides; the eyes sunken, but glistening, and expressive of acute pain. She screamed when the hand was even laid gently on the abdomen, and moaned incessantly. I instantly had her bowels fomented with hot water and turpentine. The remedies, calomel and opium, in large doses, cayenne pepper and camphor; with salines, to allay the vomiting of a black glairy fluid, which also passed involuntary from her bowels; hot bricks were applied to her feet, with fried salt, in stockings, between the thighs, and to the loins; hot gin and water also were ordered, *ad libitum*. I again saw her twice on that night, and at one o'clock on Sunday morning. Her pulse had then risen. Before, it was thready, sharp, and weak. And the body was warm, and more comfortable to the feel. At eleven o'clock on the same day she was to all appearance much better, and grateful for the attention she had received. Her legs were straight, and she could turn with ease on all sides. In the evening, the same, and I had sanguine hopes that a favourable issue would attend my exertions. At half-past six on Monday morning, I was called up to see her. She evidently had retrograded. This arose from the meddlesome interference of an old female gossip, who had put her veto on the turpentine stupes. On examination, I found faint contractions of the uterus; I called again at one o'clock, and at four in the afternoon; she had aborted; I still persisted in the use of stimuli; at eight o'clock in the evening she evidently was sinking, and, intelligent to the last, died in the night-time.

Now, here is a case which showed great moral turpitude, and downright neglect. The patient, according to their own account, was labouring under a disease which required much greater attention than a visit made once in two days. Yet the first medical attendants, from Friday until now, have not crossed the threshold of this woman's door. So much for Dispensaries! Now as to the improvidence of the parties. The husband of this woman was in constant work, at 20s. a week. She acted as a laundress, and, according to her sister's account, gained on an average 12s. a week. Thus, their united earnings, if properly managed, might have kept them in comparative comfort. But if the labouring classes have every day presented to their notice "medical charities," of one sort or another, in time they lose all independence of character, which a mistaken public deteriorate by every means, while cunning projectors make a tool of them for their own interested purposes.

I have now lying before me another of these hypocritical schemes, entitled, "Pros-

pectus of the London Dispensary for Diseases of the Lungs," with the quotation underneath of, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." The programme commences with an awful account of the number of deaths, which are the result of consumption in London and its environs; but now may London clap its hands with joy, and the stones chip edges in merry dance, for no more will their backs creak with heavy hearses in front, and chuckling heirs in coaches behind; undertakers will have to wear their own crape; the mutes, that looked so sily sad, may turn their guilt-headed batons into paste pins. Their occupation's gone! A new constellation has left its sphere, and kindly come amongst us, in the form of a Dr. Sheriffs, to "cure consumption in every case," as he declares that he can. Yes, *cured*, and no mistake. He intimates that he is the only physician in London who understands, and restricts his attention to, consumption. Modest man! We must be cautious for the future, and not arrogantly put the question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth;" for, on the contrary, Dr. Sheriffs is from Edinburgh, and, what is more, was, he tells us, lecturer in the college there. I myself belong to that college, and I never had the pleasure of studying under the feet of this venerable Gamaliel; but perhaps, as the Scotch say, "a glamour o'er my e'en" prevented my seeing him. However, that he possesses *tact*, I must allow, for he has been clever enough to get a lord, a silly Mecænas, to act as chairman of his embryo hospital. I wonder if "he that giveth," lends to *this* lord. Amongst his committee, I find a Dr. Prophit, and a Rev. Mr. Burnes. Perhaps the former will oblige his colleagues, and justify his name, by foretelling the fate of the Lungs' Sanatorium. Besides these, it is somewhat humiliating to behold the names of Dr. Scudamore and Mr. Partridge in the list of this contemptable concern. Perhaps Dr. Scudamore considers that, at best, it is a *gouty* hobbling thing, and Mr. Partridge will fly into cover, as soon as a good shot approaches him, lest he lose some fair feathers in the eyes of the profession. With respect, I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN GRAY.

7, Upper George-street, Bryanston-square, Nov. 14, 1839.

PHYSIOLOGY OF MUSCULAR ACTION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Having received from a talented physician, resident in one of our northern county towns, a letter in which he requested some explanations regarding my views of the physiology of muscular action, lately published in *THE LANCET*, I feel myself