Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

EPSOM COLLEGE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The governing body of Epsom College have lately been confronted by a new difficulty. Boys who from their lack of means have been educated as foundationers, free of all cost, have by ability and industry worked their way to the head of the school, and have won honours at Oxford and Cambridge. In more than one instance the difficulty of the friends finding money to enable the student to take up his exhibition or scholarship has been very great; and quite lately a mathematical exhibition had to be resigned because funds could not be found for the maintenance of the winner to begin his university career. I need not point out what a bitter disappointment it is to a young man of ability, who has proved his mental worth at school and in the keener contest for university distinction, to find himself barred at the outset of his life by poverty. Our experience would lead us to believe that a very moderate amount for the first few terms would clear away all difficulties, for our boys are taught the necessity of self-help as a part of their school training, and we find they practise it. Our struggle is hard to enable us to continue to teach and to support fifty foundation scholars. That these lads are well taught and cared for is proved by their earnest work and their intellectual successes.

May we not ask the aid of those who sympathise with such lads to enable us to raise a small fund to which we might go in case of need, to help on a deserving student and to give him the opportunity of taking up well-won honours, and to enable him to start on his university career with all its untold possibilities in the future. Any money subscribed shall be most carefully expended, and shall be given only to such of our foundation scholars who have proved their worth and really need aid to secure them the advantages of university training. Within the past twelve months our students have just scored their sixth university honour. Gill, who so lately won a mathematical exhibition at Magdalen College, Cambridge, has now gained a mathematical scholarship at Jesus College, Oxford, and Wood has gained a history exhibition of £30 at Saint Catherine's, Cambridge.

We appeal with confidence for aid, and any contributions sent to me for this purpose I shall most gratefully acknowledge.

I am, Sirs, your faithful servant,

May 10th, 1897.

C. HOLMAN, M.D., Treasurer.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With the return of May there comes a distressing catalogue of poverty in the list of candidates for foundation scholars and pensioners in connexion with the above College. For some weeks past cards from individual cases have been arriving, and subscribers cannot be too thankful for the assistance the selection committee gives them in filling in the votes for the most deserving cases. On looking over the lists I find there are forty-two candidates for foundation scholarships (*six* vacancies), twenty-seven for the pensionership (*one* vacancy), and sixteen for the Morgan annuity (*one* vacancy); in all, sixty-five candidates for eight vacancies. On further analysing the list I find but two stated as life governors, one "subscribed a few years," one "many years," one two years, and three who had given donations—nine in all who, during their lifetime, had taken any interest in the institution.

Surely it is time that the claims of this fund should be more generally recognised by the profession, and in the spirit of the old phrase "charity begins at home," I would suggest that an appeal be made for a Jubilee donation of at least 1s. from every member of the profession, the sum so collected to be divided between the unsuccessful candidates. The opportunity thus created for making a strong appeal to the profession might be utilised for increasing the number of annual subscribers. It would, I think, be a strong incentive to men to subscribe if the fact of their having done so carried with it a claim to participation in the benefits of the charity proportionate with the amount of money given, the question of eligibility being, of course, gone into equally in

all cases. Suppose that, among the candidates for the six vacancies for the foundation, there were two whose fathers had subscribed for ten years or upwards, I would have them elected at once, and let the remainder go to the poll. The widows of the more provident husbands would thus be spared the humiliation and expense of an election. It is no doubt true that those who subscribe are the least likely to require assistance, but the plan suggested, or some modification of it, might attract many who would not otherwise subscribe.

I am, Sirs, your faithfully,

Weymouth-street, W., May 10th, 1897. CHAS. W. CHAPMAN.

P.S.—Should the proposed collection be a success a substantial balance could be given to the College.

PSITTACOSIS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of May 1st I notice a report from your correspondent in Rome *re* the above, and think you will, perhaps, permit me to make a few observations thereon, as I have exceptional opportunities of observing parrots both dead and alive. Of the former, I have examined some hundreds, of all sorts and sizes, and am unable to confirm your correspondent's assertion as to their peculiar susceptibility to tuberculosis, a complaint of which I have rarely found evidence in the subjects that have been brought under my notice. The principal cause of the enormous mortality that undoubtedly exists among newly imported parrots is due to septic fever more akin to typhus than to typhoid fever; it is communicable by inoculation to pigeons, poultry, and to other domestic birds and animals, but is not by infection only. At the same time the germs of the complaint are most persistent and cling to a cage, or even to a room or part of a room, where a bird has died for months and years, so that the next bird, no matter how healthy when introduced, immediately contracts the disease and succumbs in from three to six weeks, never, as far as my experience goes, surviving the latter period.

Ordinary methods of disinfection are useless, the only reliable plan of purifying a cage being to expose it to the action of concentrated steam in a properly constructed disinfecting apparatus of the Washington Lyon type, after passing through which a previously infected cage is perfectly safe. I have no evidence of this septic fever having been communicated to human beings, or, except by direct inoculation, to any other animals but those of the parrot tribe, and of these only to the species that come from the Gold Coast and adjacent parts of Africa, which alone seem liable to contract it, the principal victims being the ordinary grey parrot, the *Pœœcephali*, and the *Agapornes*; the Amazons and other American, as well as the Australian, parrots do not appear to be susceptible.

I cannot call to mind, or find any record in my notebook of, a case of tuberculosis occurring in any of the African parrots, and but a very few in parrots coming from America. The last case I met with was one the other day in a large blue-fronted Amazon parrot which had lived for two years in its owner's possession and had been, she asserted, cheerful to the last. It was greatly emaciated, but in very fair plumage, and I found deposits of tubercle, not only in the lungs, but in the liver, and more particularly in the spleen, and the meninges of the brain were also slightly affected. Bronchial trouble, generally terminating in pneumonia, is not at all uncommon among pet parrots and has its origin in the singularly injudicious manner in which the poor creatures are too often treated by their owners, who pamper them with all sorts of unnatural "delicacies" which the birds can scarcely, or not at all, digest, and expose them to draughts and to great and sudden fluctuations of temperature, so that the wonder is, not that some parrots contract pneumonia and bronchitis, but that any escape.

Another practice—very common, too—is to cover the cage of a parrot over very closely at night with a rug, or a blanket, or some thick material or other, that effectually precludes all circulation of air and necessary ventilation, forcing the bird to breathe an atmosphere not only exhausted of its oxygen, but tainted with the exhalations from the bottom of the cage, too often foul, but from the body of the bird itself, so that towards morning the poor creature is in a veritable vapour bath. Then comes the parlour-maid, sweeps, raises dust, throws doors and windows open, whips the cover off the cage, and exposes the bird to a chill. That is the explanation, in ninety-nine