Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

DR. ROBERT LEE AND DR. PROTHEROE SMITH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having given, in your paper of the 15th ult., a full explanation of the case of Mrs. S. as far as it came under my observation and treatment, and my account having been corroborated by the testimony of two professional gentlemen,—Mr. Scott and Mr. Moon,—it is not my intention to enter into the controversial correspondence which Dr. Lee invites in his letter, published in your journal of June 22d ult., feeling satisfied, from Dr. Lee's mode of dealing with the subject, and from the tenour of his remarks, that a controversy between us would be attended with no beneficial results.

Without wishing to enter into further discussion of the history of the case, there was one matter put forward by Dr. R. Lee in his letter in THE LANCET of June the 22nd, as to which (although I was not invited to be present at the post-mortem examination) the facts could happily, even now, be ascertained. Dr. Lee states, "if the grooved needle was passed in the direction stated by Dr. P. Smith, 'about midway between the os uteri and bladder,' the preparation now in the museum of St. George's Hospital demonstrates, that to reach the abscess, its point must have been driven through the anterior wall of the vagina, thence onward between the cervix uteri and bladder, probably wounding the coats of the latter, to the body of the uterus, and then through the anterior wall of the uterus and fibrous tumour. A grooved needle, to reach such a destination, must have been many inches in length." Having made application at the museum of St. George's Hospital, I was informed the preparation was not there. Permission was then asked by a professional friend to examine it at Dr. Lee's house, where I was told it was to be found, but Dr. Lee declined to exhibit it.

With regard to the correspondence which Dr. Lee published in your journal of the 22nd of June ult., there have been suppressions and alterations of passages of his letters to me. I therefore subjoin correct copies of these letters *in extenso*, putting the suppressed and altered passages in italics.

4, Savile-row, 19th April, 1850.

DEAR SIR,—*I am anxious to know in what condition you found the uterus of Mrs. S., when she first came under you, about three weeks ago, and what treatment you adopted. She had occasionally been seen by me during the last six or seven years, and I wish to give a full report of her case, and of the appearances which the uterus presented this day on examining it.*

I am, dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

To Dr. Protheroe Smith.

ROBERT LEE.

4, Savile-row, 27th April, 1850.

DEAR SIR,—I found a fibrous tumour of considerable size in the anterior wall of the uterus, in the centre of which was an abscess. The anterior lip of the os uteri was in a remarkably livid state, and the whole lining membrane of the uterus intensely red and inflamed. I am, dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

To Dr. Smith.

R. LEE.

I have only to say that this correspondence did not for a moment lead me to suppose that my practice and treatment of the case were to be the subject of animadversion at a public meeting of the profession. Every one reading the correspondence must see that no word or hint of censure is to be found in it, and yet Dr. Lee must at that time have known all the circumstances upon which, without further communication with me, he founded his public accusation. I subjoin, without comment, the letter I wrote to Dr. Lee upon the appearance of the abstract of his paper in your columns, and his reply.

25, Park Street, Grosvenor Square, June 10, 1850.

DEAR SIR,—I request you will be good enough to inform me, whether THE LANCET of Saturday, June 8th ult., contains a correct report of your supplemental paper, read at the meeting of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, on Tuesday, May 28th ult. I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

To Dr. Robert Lee.

PROTHEROE SMITH.

4, Savile-row, 10th June, 1850.

DEAR SIR,—The secretary of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society is the only person I believe authorized to give an answer to your question. I am, dear Sir, very faithfully yours,

To Dr. Protheroe Smith.

ROBERT LEE.

Allow me to say, in conclusion, that I know nothing whatever of the case to which Dr. Lee alludes at the end of his letter, and the publication of which, he says, the Council of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society were requested to suppress.

I am Sir, your obedient servant,

Park-street, Grosvenor-square, July 3, 1850. PROTHEROE SMITH.

THE NEW MIDDLESEX LUNATIC ASYLUM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The profession particularly, and the public generally, are much indebted to you for so nobly advocating their interests on all occasions; and in regard to the Colney-Hatch appointments, I am glad to observe, from your able journal of the 25th of last month, that you have not been behindhand.

I am induced to renew the subject, only because I do not think you have gone quite minutely enough into the matter, and because I know how necessary it is that the persons selected to undertake the superintendence of a lunatic hospital should not only be experienced in the economy and management, but likewise be conversant with the best mode of constructing asylums, and thoroughly acquainted with the phenomena of mental disease, and the treatment of the insane; which latter can only be acquired by long residence in an institution devoted to that purpose. In the case of Colney-Hatch, these are more especially desirable, as it is a new institution, and will be, I understand, when completed, one of the most perfect in the kingdom. Is it not then necessary that the individuals appointed to superintend it should possess the above qualifications? And at what rate? Only 200*l.* per annum!! Why did not the justices make it 300*l.* or 400*l.*, and in this way have induced Drs. Begley and Hitchman to have become candidates—gentlemen pre-eminently qualified for such a charge, and who are, moreover, personally known to the justices, as well as to all who are engaged in the management of lunatic hospitals.

It looks as if the justices had friends of their own to nominate. God grant that this may not be the case, and that they may look to an acquaintance, both practically and theoretically, with the subject, "and elect men who are likely to elevate the character of the institution." I do most earnestly hope, for the credit of the justices themselves—for the honour of the institution, that the persons selected may be men of this description, *not mere pupils*, who have walked the wards of an asylum, and heard a few lectures on insanity. Where, I ask, would such men be placed in a month? Not only the patients, but the attendants, would ridicule them, and their position be rendered too hot to hold them; but the asylum would suffer, and in a marked degree.

That the justices may be guided by qualifications only, and elect those who are interested in the subject, and likely to remain some time, and not persons whose only object is to make the institution a stepping-stone to something else, is the prayer of

Your obedient servant,

York, June 19, 1850.

AN OBSERVER.

THE "PRIZE ESSAY" ON TEETOTAL TEMPERANCE.

FACTS OPPOSED TO THEORY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have recently read Dr. Carpenter's essay on the "Nature, Effects, and Uses of Alcohol," and as I am author of one of the rejected essays, I trust you will give me space to say a few words in reference to a part of the essayist's remarks. I may remark, *in limine*, that he recommends total abstinence in all cases, as he has discovered, from the written testimony of others and his own personal experience, that excessive, or even the moderate use of alcoholic drinks is injurious to a sound mind as well as a sound body in the common exigencies of life. This is saying a great deal, if not a great deal too much; and more than I think is justifiable. Putting all theory aside, I will direct attention to a few facts. At page 177, par. 147, Dr. Carpenter says, "A man previously in the enjoyment of vigorous health, and not accustomed to depend upon alcoholic stimulants, will derive all the protection he can require, from taking his first solid meal before he exposes himself to the cold, damp, or pestilential misasmata, whose influence is to be resisted; and the moderate use of hot tea, coffee, or cocoa, will help to diffuse a genial warmth through his body, which is more enduring than that which results from the ingestion of spirituous liquors," &c. I must refer you for the rest of the paragraph to the book itself.

For proof of the utility of alcoholic liquors, I think I might with safety refer to the night-soil men of our own dirty and disease-engendering towns. All these men are constantly exposed to effluvia of the most deadly nature, yet if you seek their testimony, they will tell you that they have pursued