difficulty above-named, and also prevent the alarm created in the patient's mind at having a plug drawn into the posterior nares through the mouth. With this view Messrs. Weiss have had made for me an india-rubber nasal bag of a pyramidal form. The lesser end being drawn into a small tube, the larger end can be introduced into the anterior nares, folded round a metal director and passed beyond the posterior nares. The director can now be withdrawn and the bag dilated with either air or iced water by means of a syringe; a ligature being placed round the end of the tube, the syringe can now be detached, and traction being applied to the end of the tube, the nasal-bag plug can be drawn forwards so as to plug the posterior nares. In order that this may be done effectually, an inelastic band is let into the fabric of the tube and bag, so that good traction may be used without the material of the tube or bag becoming elongated or stretched. By this means I believe very firm pressure may be made against the walls of the nares, and so effectually plug the latter. In applying this bag I intend to cover it with an outer bag of lint which has been soaked (and afterwards dried) in a strong solution of tannin, alum, matico, or perchloride of iron.

The nasal-bag plugs should be made in three sizes. There is figured in Messrs. Weiss's catalogue an instrument for epistaxis, invented by Martin P. Ange, which consists of a loose bladder or bag to be filled with water; I am not aware that this instrument has been largely adopted or found successful.

Should any of my professional brethren think fit to make a trial of these nasal bag-plugs (which can be procured from Messrs. Weiss), I shall feel much obliged by their publishing the result.

The nasal-bag plugs are inexpensive, and can be dilated by an ordinary brass ear-syringe. The tube can be either ligatured or fitted with a stop-cock, but the ligature is the most simple and least expensive, and answers all purposes. A metal director is supplied with the nasal-bag plugs.

I must add that I was aided by, and followed out in some measure, the form of uterine dilators invented by Dr. Barnes, and figured in Weiss's catalogue.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Brighton, Dec. 24th, 1872. R. P. B. TAAFFE, M.D., F.R.C.S.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS AS OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In reading over your "Annotations" in to-day's LANCET, I should infer that you are an advocate for the appointment of Poor-law medical officers to the post of medical officer of health, but I think you will agree with me that the indiscriminate appointment of such Poor-law officers will, to a certain extent, nullify the intentions of the Act.

I will relate what has just occurred in my neighbourhood. A private notice was sent to each of the guardians to attend at the board-room on a certain day "to take into consideration the best means of carrying out the new Medical Act," no mention being made of any intention of appointing a medical officer of health on that day.

The guardians talked it over, and there and then, without any voting, appointed the five district medical officers of the union officers of health to their respective districts, and they were each informed by letter that they had been so appointed, subject to the approval of the Local Government Board, and that a certain amount would be added to their salaries, varying from £10 to £30.

I think they honestly deserve the addition to their salaries for past services, three having already grown grey in the cause, their average ages being, I believe, nearer sixty-five than sixty. I think you will agree with me that it can hardly be expected that men of the old school can sufficiently appreciate the advantages to be derived from the modern researches of science so as to fully carry out the intentions of the Medical Act of the present day.

Would it not have been better if the guardians had communicated with the Local Government Board, according to the directions, and then given the younger medical men of the neighbourhood a chance of applying for the whole or part of the districts at the price fixed for the present medical

officers? The respective merits of the applicants might then have been duly considered.

A few remarks from you on this subject in the next number of THE LANCET will greatly oblige.

Yours faithfully,

ONE OF THE NEW SCHOOL.

Midland Counties, December 21st, 1872.

* * Our correspondent is right in supposing that we do not advocate the indiscriminate appointment of district medical officers as medical officers of health. Boards of guardians who do not confer first with the Local Government Board are most unwise.—ED. L.

ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention has only just been called to a notice in THE LANCET of December 21st, of my letter to the governors of St. George's Hospital, in which I am represented as "urging the practical abolition of the out-patient department of the hospital." Whoever will take the trouble of reading my pamphlet attentively, will see that there is a complete misrepresentation of its purport. My object, as there set forth, is not to abolish the out-patient department, but to confine it, as a dispenser of charity, to its legitimate use—the relief of the necessitous poor, as distinguished from the miscellaneous crowd of intruders who now find admittance there. I have suggested a very simple means by which this discrimination may be made. All that is wanted is the will to employ it; and I have pointed out how this too may be supplied if the subscribers will only do their duty, and apply the needful pressure to their agents, the governing bodies. Without this I have no hope of any amendment.

In another point also you have not treated me quite fairly in representing me as "having a grievance" against the Board in not finding a seconder to my proposals, as if I had complained of this in my letter as a personal affront. A grievance in one sense it certainly is, as the abuse which I seek to put down is a grievance to me and to all who regard it as I do, but in no other sense. I proposed my resolutions as a matter of public business in which I had no personal interest whatever, and as such, I have no doubt, the Board refused to entertain them. That refusal being the occasion and ground of my appeal to the subscribers, a simple narrative of what passed at the Board meeting was unavoidable. On no other account should I have thought it worth while to allude to or take any notice of it. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Stratton-street, Dec. 31st, 1872.

S. J. PHILLIPS JODRELL.

* * We beg leave to assure Mr. Jodrell that we read his pamphlet very attentively indeed, and we venture to suspect that the "misrepresentation of its purport" may possibly be in the pamphlet itself, rather than in the criticism that it suggested. It is not every writer who has mastered the difficult art of saying only what he means. But we join issue with Mr. Jodrell altogether when he describes the out-patient department of a hospital as being intended for "the relief of the necessitous poor." The "necessitous poor," when ill, and yet able to be out-patients, should be relieved at a Poor-law Dispensary, where a power would exist of giving alms or nourishment as well as medicine. The out-patients of a hospital must be above the condition commonly called "necessitous," or the skill and attention of the staff will be entirely thrown away.—ED. L.

SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I can scarcely take credit for all you are good enough to say for this Society. Our funds were too low, and, being in debt, the committee could not take upon themselves the sole responsibility of expensive proceedings against these so-called medical men. We took counsel's opinion, but the expenses were undertaken by two gentle-

men who have disinterestedly come forward to indemnify all the expenses, and, as solicitor to the Society for the Suppression of Vice, I have undertaken the prosecutions. If we are adequately supported by the public, we shall clear the country of these pests to society. Permit me, therefore, through your columns, to lay our case before your readers, and beg that they will lend us their aid by their subscriptions to defray the necessary heavy expense of prosecuting these quack doctors.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

C. H. COLLETTE, Secretary.

Society's Chambers, 23, Lincoln's-inn-fields.

ETHER v. CHLOROFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In going over my notes of Sir J. Y. Simpson's Lectures on Midwifery, I found the following, *apropos* of the renewed controversy, ether v. chloroform:—"When ether is given in labour, the odour of the ether is easily smelt in the child's breath after delivery. Chloroform, on the contrary, does not pass the placenta." From this it may be deducted that ether is dangerous to the life of the child. Has it been found so?—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

W. MACFIE CAMPBELL, M.B. Ed.

Liverpool, Dec. 24th, 1872.

Obituary.

JAMES STARTIN, F.R.C.S.

THE profession has lost, by the death of Mr. Startin, one of its most active members and most renowned specialists. The fame of the deceased as a dermatologist was widely spread, and his *clientèle* was certainly never surpassed in numbers by that of any other surgeon of the day. The late Mr. Startin was the eldest son of James Startin, Esq., merchant and banker of Birmingham, and he was born, we believe, in the year 1806, at Mosely, and received his early education at the Free Grammar School of that place. When at school James Startin showed much taste for mechanical work, and this led his parents to shape his studies with a view to his becoming eventually a civil engineer. That he became a medical man is probably in great measure due to a mere accident which happened, and which turned him into dresser and half nurse to attend upon a "chum" who was burnt. At any rate he did not follow out the idea of becoming a civil engineer, but was apprenticed to the firm of Messrs. Whitley and Chawner, of Atherstone. The latter, who was fresh from Edinburgh, fitted up a laboratory and dissecting-room for his pupils to work in at leisure times, and in this very laboratory the process used for stiffening felt hats was discovered, and its virtues first brought to light by Startin. Startin was next found as a dresser at the Birmingham Hospital under the late Mr. Hodgson. It was here that Startin first met Richard Partridge. His next move was to London. He entered at St. Bartholomew's, with a special introduction to Abernethy, and became a favourite of this celebrated man. Startin for a short time succeeded Partridge as the dissector for the lectures of Abernethy, and it was at Bartholomew's that he and Professor Owen, McWhinnie, and others commenced a friendship which was as lasting as it was firm. He seems to have spent about two seasons in town on this occasion. But as he was not old enough to pass the College and Hall, he returned to Birmingham, and to his old duties, whence he was called by an engagement with a Mr. Adams, of Walsall, to take charge of a large colliery until he should be old enough to qualify. Curiously enough, it was here that he became intimately acquainted with the disease from which he died—viz., calculus of the renal organs, which was very prevalent in the neighbourhood, and he often performed lithotomy. He remained with Mr. Adams more than a year, and then returned to London, becoming a pupil of Mr. Vincent at St. Bartholomew's, and attending Dr. Clutterbuck's class in Medicine, Sir Charles Bell's in Surgery, and Quain's in Anatomy. Mr. Startin now passed

the Hall and College. He then went as an assistant to Dr. Davis, of Coleshill, Warwickshire, and soon afterwards, after a severe competitive contest against four rivals, was chosen resident surgeon to the Birmingham Town Infirmary, which post he held for three years, until a vacancy occurred in the house-surgeoncy of the Birmingham General Hospital, when he offered himself as candidate, and beat Professor Owen in the fight for the post. Two years later he went into practice for himself at Warwick. His practice increased steadily, and he married a lady of position, so that all anxiety on the score of success seemed at an end. Unhappily, he became a shareholder in a local bank, and it is said the ink of his signature to the deed of settlement had scarcely dried before the bank stopped, and he, with some twenty others, had lost their all, and, as the law stood at the time, were at the mercy of the creditors. His wife's fortune was involved in the transaction. Mr. Startin, getting together what little of his property he could, sold his practice, and left for the continent. He was there two or three years, and devoted himself to the study of skin diseases at St. Louis, in Paris, and also at Montpellier. He took a trip to Algeria with the French army of occupation before returning, when he concocted measures for the establishment of a hospital for diseases of the skin, but his project was not carried into effect till the end of 1841. The result exceeded his most sanguine anticipations, particularly as the benefits it conferred attracted the attention of H.R.H. the late Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge. The late Samuel Gurney also took Mr. Startin warmly by the hand, and befriended him in every way. Of late years Mr. Startin's consulting-room had been filled to overflowing, and his income from practice must have been very large.

Mr. Startin cannot be said to have been a scientific worker, or to have advanced the science of dermatology. He wrote but little, and never published a single book. He once delivered a course of thirty-six lectures, which were printed in a contemporary. A number of isolated short papers from his pen will be found in the different journals, almost invariably having reference to the discovery of some new appliance or drug. The invention of an improved method of felting hats is an achievement which may be put by the side of Mr. Syme's discovery of waterproofing. Subsequently we have the introduction of glycerine into medical use, a contrivance for the treatment of *nævi*, the elastic spiral bandage, and the stearine apparatus.

If we attempt to estimate Mr. Startin's professional character and work, we must state in the first place that his mind was eminently practical in its turn. He cared little for speculation or for theory, nor, perhaps, much even for clinical knowledge itself, if it could not be made directly useful. He believed in curing people of their maladies, and in this object he was successful to a very unusual extent. From this steady attention to one point, without allowing his energy to be dissipated by work in other directions, he attained great dexterity in therapeutical combinations, and his memory was brimful of details of plans of treatment by which certain cases had been cured. Even in this department a degree of carelessness as to science, if he could attain his end, was apparent. He was greedy of results. We would not willingly wrong the memory of an ardent lover of the gun, but in his consulting-room Mr. Startin was a pot-hunter rather than a true sportsman. His main determination was that the game should not escape, and with this object he often loaded very heavily. His prescriptions were long and complex. As a necessary result of this kind of work, the greater part of his skill and knowledge have been buried with him. Students found it difficult to learn from him, for it was not always to be safely assumed that the remedy to which he attributed the result was the most important one which had amongst many been employed. Nevertheless, at one time, when he was in his prime, a diligent class was usually to be found in the Blackfriars out-patient room.

Mr. Startin was a social, genial, kind-hearted man. He was very fond of country pursuits, and for the last twenty years was never without a country residence, to which he usually devoted two days of the week. Here he entertained his friends, and that in no stinted fashion. His practice during many years had no limit, excepting what he himself imposed. His custom was to begin about ten, and continue till four, and he would often see from forty to fifty patients within these hours. In his consulting-room, except to