Correspondence.

"TWO SETS OF CONVICTIONS."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If the orthodox practitioners of medicine had settled convictions on some theory of the treatment of disease, such as some of the "pure and simple" followers of Hahnemann profess to have—if one school of practitioners were uniformly to treat disease on the principle, say of *contraria contrariis curantur*, and another on the principle of *similia similibus*—there would then be no obstacle in the way of appreciating the value of your editorial remarks in this day's LANCET on professional ethics. Seeing, however, that the orthodox practitioner of medicine has no such settled conviction, and that in his treatment of disease he often uses remedies in a way that certainly cannot be explained by the rule of contraries—e.g., the use of small doses of ipecacuanha in the treatment of vomiting (Ringer), of small doses of Dover's powder or of picrotoxin in morbid sweating (Murrell), of small doses of arsenic in gastro-enteric inflammation (Ringer), &c.; and seeing, moreover, that there are now very few homœopaths who adhere scrupulously to the so-called law of *similia similibus* to the neglect of arts learnt by experience—seeing all this, the edge of your remarks is blunted.

Your strictures would have been sharp-edged enough forty or fifty years ago, when the dividing line between orthodox medicine and homœopathy was clear and plain; but now when not even Sir W. Gull himself has, I suppose, any settled conviction on the theory of the treatment of disease, would it not be better, because more in harmony with the present condition of parties in medicine, to try to open one's eyes to view the large common ground that there is for the homœopathist and the ordinary practitioner of medicine?

I am, Sir, yours truly,

F. FLINT, M.D.

Scarborough, April 30th, 1881.

* * Our correspondent has wholly misread the article to which he refers if he does not understand that we equally denounce *similia similibus curantur* and *contraria contrariis curantur*. They are both mere superficial statements of mere surface appearances. The causes of the effects produced underlie these alleged *methods* of action; and scientific inquiry at once reveals the fallacy of the deductions drawn from insufficient and misunderstood data. Neither ipecacuanha, Dover's powder, nor picrotoxin acts homœopathically or allopathically; the action is in each case strictly in accordance with the known laws of therapy. Dr. Flint as a "homœopathist" naturally takes a one-sided view. We are against *all* one-sided views. If there were such a system as "allopathy"—which there is not, and never was,—we should condemn it as we do "homœopathy." Scientific medicine is rational medicine, and knows nothing of systems.—ED. L.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Is it not a very significant circumstance that when the leading so-called "homœopath" of London seeks a consultant whose opinion is considered worth anything he cannot find one in the homœopathic ranks? And this for the simple and sufficient reason that not one physician or surgeon in the front rank of the profession is to be found among the homœopaths.

Sir W. Jenner deserves the thanks of the whole profession for the manly way in which he has acted in this matter; and I make bold to say he has the whole provincial profession, at any rate, with him.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Hanley, Staffordshire, April 16th, 1881.

W. D. SPANTON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you grant me space for a few words on the now once more prominent question of consulting with homœopaths, a question which all who look upon our profession as a trust rather than a trade must deem of important moment. It

seems imperative that no uncertain voice should be heard on this matter, and that the profession should be able to give a good reason to itself and to the public for the line of conduct which it intends to pursue.

Some explanation to the public, I think, is still needed on this question, lest the good custom approved by our College of Physicians of refusing to consult with homœopaths be misunderstood, or regarded as the outcome of mere class punctiliousness, or of narrow professional etiquette. Why do most of us refuse to meet the homœopaths? That a doctor of the so-called "orthodox" school cannot meet a homœopath in consultation is surely not only because they differ in the matter of *treatment*. On any one given case it is possible that two "orthodox" practitioners might differ in treatment almost as widely as both of them would from a homœopath. But scientific and honest students of medicine as represented, we would hope, by the Fellows of our College, believe that the plausible and flimsy system called homœopathy, like all other "systems" of treatment, is delusive, and that a "consultation" with a believer therein is a contradiction in terms, a moral and scientific solecism. Such a consultation is not a question of advisability; it is impossible; there is no common standpoint. Hence I would submit, with all deference to the distinguished men who have approved of Dr. Quain's action in the instance of Lord Beaconsfield's illness, that Dr. Quain's plea that the practitioner in attendance was not treating his patient homœopathically does not touch the real point at issue. There may be no reason why any physician should not have seen Lord Beaconsfield, or *any other person*, and treated him independently, whether the homœopathic doctor was nominally dismissed or not; but on the permissibility of any such "consultations" as have lately been reported in the daily papers I feel, in common, I think, with the vast majority of the Fellows of that College of Physicians whose chief and most admirable function perhaps is to keep up that high standard of professional truth and honour, which, as so ably contended yesterday by our late president, is its proper boast, that Sir William Jenner acted in the only right manner when he refused to consult with Dr. Kidd as a professional colleague. Doubtless, Sir William Jenner must have felt deeply the gravity of his decision in this case, but did he not speak almost the last word in this controversy, when in his trenchant and pregnant remarks on the subject he said that if Dr. Quain's conduct met with the approval of the College, his own action deserved its censure? As a member of a profession which ought to be more respected than it is, and as a Fellow, though a very junior one, of a College which is laudably jealous of its high position, I would add my small tribute of gratitude to the President of that College for his fearless action and outspoken expressions on this undeniably important question.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Upper Berkeley-street, W., April 12th, 1881.

H. DONKIN.

THE OLD UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR MEDICAL DEGREES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—By the courtesy of the author I have been favoured with a copy of the able and eloquent address delivered by Dr. Morgan last February at Owens College. The interest in the subject and its importance are shown by your leader of April 9th, and I therefore, with your permission, shall be glad to make a few observations upon it.

In the first place, let me say how heartily I sympathise with Dr. Morgan in his grievance that the Victoria University should be debarred the power of conferring medical degrees. With a governing body and a professoriate, including among its members some of the most eminent men in the country, the new university was not likely to enter into a degrading competition with other licensing bodies for the sale of its diplomas; the strong opposition of those who feared such a result could have no real ground for existence, and when the authorities maintained that the degree would be given only when there had been both a sound training in arts and a very high standard of professional attainment, some other motive for the opposition must have been at work, which, if, as has been hinted, it was simple jealousy, was unworthy of the members of a liberal profession. I cordially hope this defect in the charter will soon be remedied, and whilst the General Medical Council is