How this acts, whether from its extrigent tonic effect, or the chemical changes it may cause in the stomach, or both, is not easy to determine; but its beneficial influence in several cases, and in this one of the worst I ever saw, its effect was almost magical.

It is at least worth a trial from our country friend, and I sincerely trust it may be with benefit.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Liverpool, Nov. 1848. ONE OF YOUR CONSTANT READERS.

PROPOSAL FOR A DECIMAL PHARMACOPŒIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to propose, through your columns, the institution, in these realms, of a national decimal pharmacopœia; or a pharmacopœia having the authority of the Royal College of Physicians and of the Government, in which all energetic or dangerous medicines shall be so compounded, that ten minims or ten grains shall be the medium dose for an adult.

It is proposed that hydrocyanic acid and strychnine, for example, be so diluted, that ten minims of the liquid containing the former, and ten grains of the powder containing the latter, shall be a safe dose in general; that dose being of course augmented or diminished in practice according to the experience of the prescriber.

It will be a question for the chemists, by what materials this dilution shall be effected.

It is the suggestion only which I beg to make on this occasion, which I seize, to request the co-operation of the members of the profession at large.

I wrote, many months ago, to engage the aid of a relative of mine in thus revising the pharmacopœia, and I hope, ere long, to lay before you the result of his labours.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
London, Nov. 19, 1848. MARSHALL HALL.

A BULLET SWALLOWED.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was sent for yesterday (Nov. 26th,) to see a child, aged five years, who had swallowed a musket-bullet, and weighing one of three that were left, I found it nearly an ounce in weight.

It being a case I had never met with during a practice of more than thirty years, I hardly knew what to do, otherwise than recommend all acids or acidulated substances to be avoided, and to keep the child upon thick farinaceous diet. This morning considerable distress has arisen, and diarrhœa with tenesmus, and to such extent as to force down the anus, giving me some trouble before it could be returned. Now, marbles, dumps, and many other extraneous substances, I have known to be swallowed, and gradually pass by stool, but a round body, of such specific gravity as lead, would not so readily be pushed towards the pylorus by the usual action of the stomach.

Has any one of your numerous readers met with such a case? If so, I should feel much obliged if he would mention the result. The child was nearly choked in the act of swallowing, but on an effort the ball slipped down the œsophagus, and then into the stomach.

Twickenham, Nov. 27, 1848.

Yours, faithfully,
T. LITCHFIELD.

AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION ON THE BANKS OF THE SERPENTINE.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

In late numbers of THE LANCET has been fully exposed the nature of a nuisance too long tolerated by the Commissioners of the Woods and Forests, and which now receives the tacit sanction of its legitimate descendant, the Board of Health. This said "Board" orders the cleansing of cesspools and smaller receptacles of filth, but leaves undisturbed the greater laboratories where similar elements of disease are generated, perhaps because these two boards have a relation to each other, in the person of Lord Carlisle, alike the President of both, but at any rate presenting a new exemplification of the remark, that laws are like cobwebs, and catch only little flies, while large ones break through them.

Now it might easily be supposed that, vexed at the College of Physicians having shown the fallacies of their verbose and clumsy instructions relative to the cholera, and annoyed at the mud of the "pools of pestilence" being stirred up

around them, the members of both boards might give each other a rendezvous on the banks of the Serpentine, (a deserted spot, where they would not be overheard,) and where might occur the following

SCENE.

Hyde-park. In the centre, the Serpentine; its stagnant waters covered with something like "green pea soup." Enter on one side, two of the three "Foresters" of England, dressed in Lincoln green. Enter on the other side, the three anti-vegetable quacks of Gwydir House, borrowing, for this occasion, the physician's dress of the last century—viz., a suit of black, the staff of dignity, the box wherefrom to throw snuff in their own nostrils, and dust in the eyes of others, wigs big with the fate of vegetable buyers and eaters. The most important of these three wears fragments of the different dresses of his different offices. With him is a little man, a real doctor, and only medical appendix of the Board of Health.—N.B. Stage-lights full on.

LORD CARLISLE.—Where are the people gone? It is quite painful to see the Parks so thinned of late; what does it mean?

CHADWICK.—The doctors have done it all. I was not secretary to the three kings for nothing. I never liked the doctors, and I showed it too. It is all their doing, I am sure. They must always be finding fault, and sticking their *Lancets* into our ribs.

SOUTHWOOD SMITH.—The profession ought certainly to be more prudent in the present *cholera crisis*; for as I told them in your instructions, "*fear weakens the bowels of man.*"

LORD CARLISLE, (innocently).—But why blame me? How can I know more about the Serpentine than I do about health?

CHADWICK.—They can say nothing to me, for I do not allow my children to walk near the Serpentine; but I do not see why mothers should not be allowed to send their children "to feed the ducks," as some doctor said, in a rather droll letter to *The Times*.

SOUTHWOOD SMITH.—Ah! that doctor says "he has got an eye to the sources of disease."

CHADWICK.—And an eye to business too. He owns that there exists a source of disease "beneath the water," yet he still sends the children there.

SOUTHWOOD SMITH.—You forget that he also tells us that he lives "hard by," and has time to walk daily round the Serpentine.

CHADWICK.—He is tired of walking, and wants to practise, so he sends the children to the source of disease. Ah! Smith, you doctors are a sad set!

LORD CARLISLE.—What were you saying about *The Times*?

SOUTHWOOD SMITH.—My lord, we were talking of a letter in *The Times*, said to be written by a doctor, (but I don't believe it,) and signed "EUEXIA."

FORESTER MILNE.—He over-acted his part. He said that there were no fish; but your lordship knows that when we cleaned out the Kensington end of the Serpentine we found a vast number of eels, and there are roach, bream, and carp, in abundance.

LORD CARLISLE.—I thought the "doctor" would help me out of the scrape, but it wont do. But you say, Chadwick, that there is no great harm in the Serpentine.

CHADWICK.—I will not positively assert that it is not a nuisance, (for I am still a lawyer, though I wear these professional weeds;) but we all know, my lords, that it has been wisely allowed that nuisances should exist. No nuisances! Why, then, no boards, no commissioners—nothing. "Othello's occupation's gone." Surely, Smith, you wont be for suppressing the Serpentine.

SOUTHWOOD SMITH, (as if lecturing on physiology).—My lords and gentlemen, as a doctor talking to doctors, I must own that from ten to fifteen feet of putrid mud, in some places only covered by eighteen inches of water, is a lamentable nuisance; still now, talking to you, and as the medical member of such a board, I need not be over-nice, and will so far agree with you that there is no great harm in it. It is not worse than to deliberately place a manufactory of contagion, such as a *Fever Hospital*, in the centre of Islington, and that is what I did! The constitution of man, my lords, is so elastic—can bear so much, and if Lord Carlisle likes the Serpentine as it is, then why should we have the trouble of making it as it ought to be?

CHADWICK.—You think because you are the only doctor among us that you will frighten us; but I have read Stahl, my lords, and other physicky books, (hard names I can't remember,) and I can prove that the *vis medicatrix* will enable man to bear anything in the shape of a nuisance; they are just the right things to prove his strength.