Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

CHAIR OF MATERIA MEDICA AT KING'S COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Allow me to correct a mis-statement which appeared in one of your leading articles last week. You say that "the recent appointment of Dr. George Johnson to the Chair of Materia Medica at King's College has created considerable surprise."

As an old student of King's College, and one who is intimate with very many of those who have been, or are at present pupils of this school, I beg to contradict the assertion, and to state, that not only was he the man whom all expected would be selected to fill the vacant Chair of Materia Medica, but that his election to the post has given universal satisfaction.

In answer to the latter question in your article, in which you ask, "What are Dr. G. Johnson's claims to the appointment he has just received, in comparison with Dr. Headland's?" I would refer not only to his position in the profession, but specially to his having been selected, in 1853, to deliver a course of lectures at the College of Physicians on Therapeutics and Pathology.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Park-street, Grosvenor-square, April, 1857.

GEO. LAWSON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—From the tenour of a leading article in your last week's number, it might be supposed that the surprise you express at Dr. G. Johnson's appointment to the chair of Materia Medica, in King's College, was universal. Such, at least, is not the case amongst the students of the College itself, to whom no appointment could have been more welcome; and, indeed, it gave great satisfaction to every one connected with the College.

There is no doubt that the best judges of lectures are those who hear them; and I can assure you, that those who have had the privilege already of attending Dr. Johnson's clinical and other lectures, congratulate themselves on the prospect of having by far the most important part of materia medica, therapeutics, properly taught in the College by a professor unexcelled in his knowledge of the subject; and who was selected by the College of Physicians to give a course of lectures on this very subject before them.

Again: you do Dr. Johnson injustice regarding the cholera controversy. That the matter was discussed in the papers was not Dr. Johnson's fault; it rested with those who copied it from the *medical journals*. That Dr. Johnson's explanation of the pathology of cholera is correct is acknowledged by many of the first men in the profession, and I believe by everyone capable of judging who has taken the trouble to understand it.

What you say of Dr. Johnson's renal pathology is not easy to comprehend; but I should think you would not undertake to deny what the whole medical world acknowledges—viz., that to him the credit is due of having elucidated the subject of kidney disease, which, before his researches, exhibited nothing but chaotic confusion.

Trusting you will give insertion to this letter,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

King's College Hospital, April, 1857.
GEO. W. LAWRENCE, M.R.C.S., &c.

* * In publishing these letters, we can only state that our opinions remain unchanged. We still adhere to the conviction that the right man has not been put into the right place.—[Ed. L.]

PERINEAL OPERATION IN PROLAPSUS UTERI.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your "Mirror of Hospital Practice" was recently reported (with all the conciseness and correctness which distinguishes that department of your journal) a case of plastic operation for the cure of lacerated perinaeum performed by Mr. Fergusson. In subsequently referring to the history and peculiarities of the operation, he was pleased to mention my name in a very flattering manner.

Mr. Baker Brown has communicated to a contemporary a

letter referring to your report of this case, wherein he somewhat unnecessarily introduces my name. The letter is written for the purpose of making certain extravagant claims to the operation in question. His direct personal reference to myself compels me unwillingly to disclose the grounds on which these pretensions are founded.

1. Mr. Brown asserts "he was the first English surgeon who performed the operation and brought it under the notice of the profession."

That this is a very great error is capable of easy demonstration. On the 6th of November, 1838, Mr. Davidson did the operation, anticipating Mr. Brown even to minute shades of subsequent treatment. Other cases there also are on record, but this one I mention as it may be referred to on the selfsame page of Churchill's "Diseases of Women" from which Mr. Brown quotes Noel in his work. Mr. Brown's first operation was in August, 1851.

2. Mr. Brown writes that "when he first performed the operation, many" (that is, five and a half) "years ago, he did not know any person in the world had done it."

Funk first operated on March 2nd, 1832, and succeeded perfectly. The patient subsequently married. Now if, in 1854, Mr. Brown had never heard of Fricke's name (whose operations are, moreover, mentioned in Churchill's work, quoted by Mr. Brown), then he must have somewhat inefficiently performed the task undertaken in his book (v. 12), of giving "a surgical history of the subject;" for to ignore the name of Funk in relation with this branch of surgery resembles the omission of the names of Brodie and Fergusson from a history of British surgery in general.

3. Mr. Brown assures us that only "after he brought out his work he learnt that Dr. Funk, of Hamburg, had performed a similar operation; and subsequently Dr. Savage informed him that it had been done more effectually by Dr. Geddes; though he previously knew nothing of these two."

Dr. Geddes has recorded four cases at least, all of which succeeded perfectly. His method is (as I told Mr. Brown) the most effectual one I ever heard of. Dr. Geddes' first case occurred on July 8th, 1839,* twelve years before Mr. Brown's first operation.

4. Mr. Brown asserts that "this operation had been performed and recognised, amongst others, by Dr. Savage himself."

I have certainly performed the operation, and with all the success mentioned by Dr. Fergusson. I have been long acquainted with its history, of which the particulars here recorded will prove how far I was likely to recognise Mr. Brown as the originator of the operation.

2. Mr. Brown observes—"Few cases require so complete a closure of the vagina as appears to have been done in the two cases operated on by Mr. Fergusson, as it renders impossible impregnation or delivery; whereas after his (Mr. Brown's) plan both can take place without detriment."

Without alluding to the questionable modesty of this bold criticism, I may simply mention that Mr. Fergusson's cases are doing well in every respect, and that I have myself operated on seventeen cases in precisely the same manner. Most of these have been long well, and entirely free from the sexual disabilities Mr. Brown so boldly ascribes as the necessary results of the operation. Mr. Brown's insinuations against Mr. Fergusson's surgery in the matter, as contrasting with his own, require no special comments from me.

I beg to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY SAVAGE, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.S.,

Senior Physician to the Samaritan Free Hospital for Women.
Gloucester-place, Portman-square, April 10th, 1857.

ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Whilst warmly thanking you for the impartiality with which you have opened your columns to both parties in this controversy, I hope to be excused, as honorary secretary to the dissentient governors, for adverting to some inaccuracies, both of fact and of reasoning, which are contained in your report of the late extraordinary general meeting.

With a view to the economy of space, and as the report must be fresh in the recollection of your readers, I will, without making quotations, animadvert on those points to which I have alluded.

Instead of the discovery that the sum of £30 per exhibitor

* Quoted in Braithwaite's Retrospect, v. iii., art. 39, and fully detailed in the American Journal of Medical Science.