Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE

COLLEGE OF SURGEONS: VOTING BY PROXY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I enclose a copy of a memorial to the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons which, in two days last week, obtained the signatures of 135 Fellows resident in the provinces. In so short a time it was quite impossible to apply to every one. The hon. secretaries of the several branches did well to obtain so many signatures.

I shall feel obliged if you will insert this note, as well as the memorial, in your next number; and I beg of those Fellows who have not already signed it to do so, and forward it *without delay* to the College, to the care of Mr. Paget, of Leicester. The decision upon the question has been postponed until next Thursday week.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Newhall-street, Birmingham,
Nov. 13th, 1865.

T. WATKIN WILLIAMS,
General Secretary to the British
Medical Association.

To the President, Vice-Presidents, and Members of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

The memorial of certain Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England resident in the provinces

Sheweth,—That your memorialists are desirous of bringing before you the general dissatisfaction of the Fellows of your College resident in the provinces at the mode of electing your Council.

That the privilege of electing members of the Council is vested by the charter in the Fellows generally, without any personal distinction whatever, and that this is the chief or sole function of the Fellows in relation to the College; but the personal attendance required virtually deprives a large portion of those Fellows resident at a distance from London of their privilege, and makes the Council the representative body, not of the Fellows generally, but of a limited number only.

That your memorialists therefore earnestly request that you will be pleased to obtain a new or supplementary charter, in order to render it lawful for the election of Councillors to be conducted by means of voting papers, which may be filled up by non-resident electors, after some such plan as that prescribed for the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in their election of members of Parliament.

SCIENCE-TEACHING AT CAMBRIDGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A good deal has been written in your columns on the study of Natural Science in this University. May I ask you to permit me to inform your readers how the sciences of Chemistry and Comparative Anatomy are taught in Downing College, a foundation specially intended for the encouragement of Natural Science. Once a week one of the Fellows of the College meets his pupils in the lecture-room, and gives them some eight or ten questions to be answered in writing—the questions being taken from Miller's "Organic Chemistry." The answers, which are always fragmentary, are given to the "Fellow" at the close of an hour, during which period he has either left the room, or sat unoccupied in his lecturer's chair. The same performance is repeated on one other day in the week; with this difference, the questions set are taken from Carpenter's "Comparative Physiology." These proceedings, Sir, are styled *lectures* on Natural Science; and for the benefit of them each student of Natural Science in the College pays £6 4s. per term. Not a single word is offered in explanation of any of the less intelligible phenomena dealt with; not a specimen is exhibited, or an experiment performed, although the College has a chemical laboratory of its own, and ample funds for the purchase of any necessary typical specimens.

Is it to be wondered at that Natural Science is a subject for ridicule and contempt in the Colleges of this University when the lecturer on Natural Science in Downing College (though a medical man, a physician in full practice) consents to receive the fees of undergraduates for the title of lecturer, simply for sitting during two hours in each week and staring at his pupils? If, Sir, there were any real wish to cultivate the study of Nature in this University, such a mockery as these lectures could not go on; nor would the man who was senior in the Natural Science Tripos, after taking high mathematical honours, be ousted of his *promised* Fellowship, and pooh-poohed as "*only* a Natural Science man" in Downing, the very College which was founded for the purpose of encouraging the studies in which he has distinguished himself.

It is but fair to the large body of students who read your journal that these facts should be made known, in order that their eyes may be opened in case of their proceeding to this University. There is much else which I might enter into, but your space I know is otherwise occupied.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

November, 1865.

A CAMBRIDGE MEDICAL STUDENT.

P.S.—I may mention that among the entries this year at Downing there is *not one* Natural Science or Medical student.

ON THE NUTRITIVE VALUE OF "EXTRACTUM CARNIS."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having taken part in the discussion relative to the nutritive value of Liebig's Extract of Beef, I desire to make, in consequence of the fresh communication of the learned Baron, a few additional observations; but first, Sir, let me congratulate you upon the important results which have emanated from the free ventilation of the subject in your influential columns.

The position now assumed by the Baron as to the nutritive qualities of his Extract is surely very different from that first put forward by himself and his followers. He would now, I believe, scarcely affirm that "*one pound* boiled with a few slices of bread, potatoes, and a little salt, is sufficient to make broth for 128 men in the field, and of a strength which is *not* to be obtained in the best hotels," or that the same quantity contains all the nutritive properties of thirty-two pounds of lean fresh beef. Indeed, we have now his distinct admission that his Extract is free from fibrin, albumen, and gelatine (which Liebig calls "*glue*"), and fat. It being destitute of these, the principal constituents of meat, it follows as a necessary consequence that one pound of the Extract could not by any possibility represent anything like thirty-two pounds of lean fresh beef; it contains, in fact, as has already been shown by Dr. Hassall, an amount of nitrogen equal to less than three pounds of raw beef; and, further, there is good reason to believe that much of even this nitrogen does not exist in a form available for nutrition, as, for example, that entering into the constitution of the creatine, creatinine, and sarcosine.

Liebig now states that his Extract agrees in its composition with the constituents of beef-tea; but even this statement must be received with certain limitations. Well-prepared and unstrained beef-tea contains a large amount of albumen, whilst even gelatine and a little fat are present in strained beef-tea, from all of which, however, the beverage resulting from the solution of Liebig's Extract is free.

With the above explanation, Liebig's Extract may, indeed, be compared with the solid constituents contained in clear beef-tea. We have then now to inquire what is the nutritive value of beef-tea?—and in obtaining a satisfactory answer to that question the real position of Liebig's Extract as a nutrient will be also determined. Now it has been shown by Dr. Hassall, in the communication which you have already published, that beef-tea, even when well made, using one pound of beef to a pint of water, furnishes exceedingly little soluble matter of any kind; and that at least eleven pints made from eleven pounds of lean fresh beef would be required to furnish an amount of nitrogenous material sufficient for the daily support of a man of even average size and health. I repeat, therefore, with Dr. Hassall, that beef-tea, and still more Liebig's Extract of Beef, although furnishing beverages refreshing and