ing promptly for payment of their fees. By a recent statute, boards of guardians are empowered to pay all debts and claims due from them within three months of the half year in which they are incurred, but *not afterwards*. The Poor-law Board can, indeed, by an order extend the time, but not beyond twelve months from the date of the debt.

In consequence of their neglecting to attend to this provision, medical officers are constantly losing their fees for vaccination and for operations, which fall within the description of those for which special fees are payable. They delay making their claims until long after the time when the Poor-law Board can render any aid. As a general practical rule, I recommend that the account of all ordinary extra fees should be regularly sent in to the guardians at the close of the quarter in which they accrue, and that the claim for every extraordinary service should be made as soon as that service is rendered. The demand can be at once considered and investigated, and, if legally due, forthwith discharged. Prompt payment is generally so acceptable, that I think those members of the medical profession who have relations of business with boards of guardians, will find a great benefit result from this statute, though many are suffering from the consequences of the enactment at present.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Regent's-park, Feb. 1862.

W. G. LUMLEY.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL REFORM ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg permission, through the medium of your journal, to inform the Poor-law medical officers that in the House of Commons on Thursday, the 6th inst., Mr. Villiers gave notice "that on Friday next he would move the reappointment of the Committee on the Administration of the Poor Law." It therefore becomes our duty to prepare for the approaching legislation on the medical relief of the poor. The Select Committee will probably recommend, in general terms, the course they think should be adopted; and then the Poor-law Board, on the part of Government, will most likely introduce a Bill, which it is not improbable may be very different from that which we desire. We therefore ought to follow the course pursued by the Coroners on a recent occasion, and have a Bill of our own, and run it against that of the Poor-law Board, should we not approve of theirs, and trust to our influence with the members of the Legislature to get that measure adopted which will be most beneficial to the interests of the nation. But without money it is impossible for this course to be pursued. At the commencement of last year the Association had a balance in hand of £9 18s. 2d.; and I have since received—students' balance, £11 14s. 6d.; and subscriptions as follow: one of £5, seven of £1 1s. each, eleven of £1 each, three of 15s. each, four of 10s. 6d. each, fifty-two of 10s. each, one of 7s. 6d., six of 7s. each, thirty-seven of 5s. each, and three of 2s. 6d. each; balance overdrawn, 14s. 8d.: making a total of £88 3s. 4d. The expenditure was: printing, £34 3s.; stationery and books, £5 12s. 8d.; postage, £4 6s. 4d.; advertisements, chest for papers, clerks for assistance, local secretaries, expenses of meetings, &c. &c., £44 1s. 4d.: total, £88 3s. 4d. Within the last few days I have received one guinea from Dr. Brown of Rochester, being his seventh subscription of a like amount. This gentleman is not a Poor-law medical officer, and therefore deserves our warmest thanks for the great interest he has always taken in our welfare. Mr. Grimbley of Banbury, and Mr. Sanders of Gravesend, have also sent me their annual subscriptions, one sovereign each. These sums, with one guinea as my own subscription, and ten shillings each from Mr. Mallani and Mr. Elkington, are all that we have to start with on our parliamentary campaign; but I have little doubt, now that I have named the subject, that the friends of Poor-law medical reform will freely respond to my call, and thus enable the Association to bring its labours to a successful issue.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Royal-terrace, Weymouth, Feb. 1862.

RICHARD GRIFFIN.

ON THE CONDITION OF THE MOUTH IN IDIOCY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Ballard, while admitting the accuracy of my published observations on the mouths of idiots, has thought it his duty to lay claim to having directed my attention to the sub-

ject, and to charge me with having purposely omitted allusion to some statements of his in order to avoid the mention of his suggestions in the matter.

I should probably have noticed Mr. Ballard's statements had they fallen within the scope of my paper, and have acknowledged assistance from him if I could have done so truthfully.

My article professed to deal with matters of fact in reference to a specific subject, and not to theories of any kind relating to the etiology of idiocy.

As to Mr. Ballard's directing my attention to the question, the following statement of the case will show that he is not correct. In the autumn of 1855 I commenced a series of observations on the deviations from normal structure and function of the various organs in idiots. In the summer of 1860 my observations were directed, in turn, to the mouth; and the notes were made at my dictation by Mr. A. Brown of more than 150 cases. These observations were resumed in the summer of the following year. In October, 1860, I visited the continent, and on my return found, amongst others, an entry in the visitors' book by Mr. Ballard, dated Oct. 13th, 1860. Up to that time, not only was I unacquainted with Mr. Ballard's views—I was even ignorant of that gentleman's existence. Seeing that I was absent at the time, Mr. Ballard's statement, that on his visit to Earlswood he "entered into a full explanation of his views and observations," &c., is, to say the least, disingenuous.

Amongst the letters awaiting my return I found one from Mr. Ballard, accompanying a copy of his work on "Fruitless Sucking," asking me to furnish him with the notes of my patients, and to allow him to bring a dentist to Earlswood on Sundays to take casts of their mouths, &c. I informed him, as politely as I could, that I was already engaged in a similar inquiry, and for various reasons could not comply with his request.

I may state that the words "the past year" should have been, strictly speaking, "past years." I merely wished to indicate that the observations were not made in reference to a recent legal investigation.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

J. LANGDON H. DOWN, M.D. Lond.

Earlswood, Redhill, Feb. 1862.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having seen a letter from Mr. Ballard in THE LANCET of the 8th inst. on the "Condition of the Mouth in Idiocy," I beg to say that I assisted Dr. Down while making observations on the mouths of patients at Earlswood in the summer of 1860; and as Mr. Ballard's visit did not take place until the month of October in that year, he must therefore be in error in supposing that he was the cause of directing Dr. Down's attention to the subject.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Westminster Hospital, Feb. 1862.

A. BROWN.

PROFESSIONAL CHARGES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The case of Jackson v. Gee, which has attracted considerable attention throughout the profession, seems one from which we may expect a general benefit to ensue; will you therefore permit me to aid this issue by the following observations.

The facts are these: One surgeon tries to recover that which in his estimation is a just debt arising from a fair rate of professional charging. Two others, of much longer standing, but nevertheless with no more professional status attaching to them, undertake—on oath be it observed—to declare the charge to be exorbitant; and through their instrumentality the judge is induced to dock the bill to what he and they consider a just amount. Dividing the plaintiff's bill by the number of visits, interviews, "consultations," "advices," or even teas out and teas in if you like, the charge appears to be considerably under 5s. for each item entered in the account. But this charge includes advice, medicine, and instruments, likewise surgical appliances, and the cost of the "doctor's boy's" keep, who is found always to gauge his appetite exactly in the inverse ratio to his weekly stipend.

Now who is the "cheap doctor"—Messrs. Crossley and Lilley, who find no physic and feed no medicine boy, and yet charge 3s. 6d. every time they see a patient; or Mr. Jackson, who finds everything above enumerated, and contents himself with a charge of 4s. 10d.? Is the difference more than a patient would be called upon to pay a counter-quacking druggist?—