Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

UTERINE HÆMORRHAGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The admirable reply which Dr. Tyler Smith gave to Mr. Bainbridge's criticisms in the last number of your journal leaves me but little to say. Nevertheless, it would be a dereliction of duty on my part, were the subject to be passed over in silence.

Mr. Bainbridge certainly laboured under the disadvantages of having to comprehend the case which he criticised through the medium of the press; but this should, I think, have rendered him very careful of the terms which he used. In presuming that two hours were allowed to be occupied by the application of the ordinary remedies to arrest uterine hæmorrhage, before more prompt and decided measures were resorted to, he is certainly not complimentary either to Mr. Sewell or myself, and surely never could, in reason, have presumed such a supposition to be applicable to Dr. Tyler Smith. About ten minutes only were occupied in employing the cold douche, and administering brandy, ergot, &c., and the loss of blood during that time was not very alarming. Would Mr. Bainbridge advise that in every case of hæmorrhage after labour the hand should be *immediately* introduced into the uterus? If so, it would often be needlessly and mischievously done. As to plugging the vagina.—a remedy which truly gives but a blind chance of life,—it was totally inapplicable to this case. The womb would probably have filled before any coagulation took place at the mouths of the bleeding vessels, and the patient would probably have been dead.

This case differed from all others which I have seen, in the complete insensibility of the uterus to every stimulus, until the injection of iced water was happily applied.

I shall only add, that the patient, who is nearly related to me, owes her life, as I believe, to the prompt and skilful manner in which Dr. Tyler Smith conducted the most complicated and dangerous case of uterine hæmorrhage that has ever come under my notice.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

London-road, July, 1849. WILLIAM MUTRIE FAIRBROTHER, M.D.

THE "ISLINGTON MATERNITY"—BLACK-SHEEP CHARITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On having my attention drawn to a communication, in your journal of last week, signed by "An Old Practitioner," my first intention was to treat the matter with silent contempt; but on second thoughts I was induced to adopt a different plan, from the consideration that such a course might possibly be misinterpreted by my professional brethren, and my silence be looked on, by some, as a tacit acknowledgment of the truth of the statements contained in that letter. As far as I myself am concerned, I shall preserve the strictest silence, for I would not condescend to bandy words with an anonymous correspondent; but I consider that I should be wanting in my duty were I to suffer that excellent institution to which I have the honour to be attached to lie under an accusation at once absurd, unjust, and malicious, without an attempt to rescue it.

In order to show the "Old Practitioner" that such an institution as the Islington Maternity Charity really does exist, (for he feigns ignorance of the fact,) I forward to you a list of the names of the members of the committee, together with the names of the officers connected with it, in order for publication. In addition, I beg to state, that last year nearly two hundred lying-in patients were admitted, and that numerous applicants were refused letters, on account of the funds of the charity not being sufficient to defray the expense of a larger number of patients. And although five shillings is all that is required to be paid by the poor women themselves, the treasurer is authorized to make it up to a sum, regulated by the amount of subscriptions in his hands, not to exceed one guinea for each case.

Thus, Sir, you will see the "Old Practitioner's" assertion, that no such charity exists, is altogether false, and without foundation.

What can have excited the "Old Practitioner's" wrath, I know not, unless it be that some poor women, from whom he used to get ten shillings, now find that they can have just as good attendance for half the sum.

With respect to the handbills reprinted in your journal, I can only say that they were circulated by order of the committee, and not, as the "Old Practitioner" politely observes, "for the sake of fishing for midwifery practice."

I think your correspondent's practice cannot be of the best description, since he sees so many of these circulars; for the parties who distribute them have strict orders to go only into the worst localities, and give them to the poorest of the poor. The sole object of the institution is to procure adequate medical attendance upon poor lying-in women, who would otherwise be compelled to employ ignorant midwives.

The next time your correspondent favours you with a communication, let him screw up what courage he has, and give you his name; and not act, as he has done in this instance, the part of a coward. As for my colleague, Dr. Humble, I am certain that his professional attainments are so well known and justly appreciated, that he has nothing to fear from this anonymous correspondent.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

RICHARD H. COURTENAY, L.R.C.S.I. &c.,
Surgeon-Accoucheur to the Islington
Maternity Charity.

Barnsbury-street, Islington,
July 30, 1849.

* * * Here follows a list of the "Committee of Management," containing the names and addresses of six non-professional "Esquires," whom we have every reason for presuming to be most highly respectable and benevolent gentlemen; and the names of the two medical accoucheurs, Dr. Humble and Mr. Courtenay; the secretary, the treasurer, and Mr. D. Brumham, the respected "collector." Some very superfluous remarks we have thought proper to delete.—ED. L.

Re RAYNER v. ETON BOARD OF GUARDIANS.*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—My letter, published in THE LANCET of the 30th ult., has already informed you, that at the trial on the 19th of June, the defendants' counsel, in addressing the jury, assured them that the defendants would be perfectly satisfied with their verdict; nevertheless, application was made on Tuesday, the 17th instant, at the County Court held on that day, for a new trial, on the ground that I had omitted to prove the pauperism of the parties whom I attended, and for which I charged and sued the guardians; and therefore, that the verdict was against evidence, and contrary to the direction of the judge. The result of that application was, that leave was granted for a new trial, which will take place at the County Court here on the 9th of August next. Thus I shall have been before the court four times. I need not remind you of the harassing and vexatious nature of this defence, or the great expense contingent upon these repeated trials, and that but few would encounter this array of bad feeling, and what appears to me to be persecution. It is a principle I am endeavouring to uphold, and I hope I shall again succeed—at all events I shall apprise you of the result, be it successful or not.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Uxbridge, July, 1849.

WILLIAM RAYNER.

THE ALDERSGATE DISPENSARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—When abuses take place at public institutions, they are never reformed until some public notice is directed towards their management. This is a sufficient inducement for me to bring before the notice of the readers of THE LANCET the state of the Aldersgate-street Dispensary, which is provided with three surgeons and one assistant-surgeon. Of the three, two very frequently neglect seeing their patients, and the third is such a constant absentee from his duty, that his name is hardly known, owing to his residence at the West End, and his office is filled by a general practitioner residing somewhere about Goswell-street, and who, however well calculated to fulfil all the duties of the surgeon's place, yet is not recognised at the Dispensary. The remainder of the work is done, I believe, by the apothecary and his assistant. The physicians are more constant in their attendance, but I would call the attention of the profession to the great anomaly of the assistant-physician of a public institution being in general practice, and keeping an open shop or surgery in the city. Hoping that this notice may be of some use, either in inducing the gentlemen to fulfil their duty, or resign their appointments, either of which alternatives would be only an act of justice to the public,

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
ONE WHO FEELS AN INTEREST IN THE DISPENSARY.

July, 1849.