Correspondence.

"Eaudi alteram partem."

CREMATION v. BURIAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—It appears to me that the adoption of cremation can only be defended when it has been more clearly proved than it has as yet that the present mode of burial is necessarily unhealthy.

Setting aside all religious considerations, and looking at the matter from a purely sanitary point of view, is it so certain that the change will be for the better, as maintained by some? Remembering that it is one that would apply to every town and village throughout the land, what would the practical working of it be? Is it proposed that the machinery for cremation should be provided in every parish where a burying-ground is in use now, or that it should be confined to towns only, as centres for the surrounding villages? If the former, would not the difficulty of supplying what was necessary (and guarding against its abuse) be well-nigh insuperable? If the latter, would not the risk of health of moving so many dead bodies be greater than any incurred now? Granted that our present mode of burial is not always free from objections on the ground of health, yet I maintain that the remedy is to be found, not in ceasing to commit the body to the ground in its natural state, but in having stricter regulations (in all cases) with regard to the time and manner of burial, and the construction of the graves. I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Wallingford, Berks, June 1st, 1874.

EDWARD HOBNE.

* * * It is a mistake to imagine that anyone has advocated any system of cremation with the idea of the practice being enforced, or that it should be by any means universally applied, at all events until it has been fully tried on a moderate scale. Supposing it to be applicable to a large town, it does not follow that it should be adopted for a village. The same may be said of many modern improvements, such as the use of gas, of drinking fountains, fire brigades, free public libraries, &c., which at present many a village must dispense with. Then, apart from its undoubted superiority to burial from a sanitary point of view, cremation has many adherents from the side of sentiment. The supporters of the present burial system seem to fancy that they possess a monopoly of the "sentimental" support. On the contrary, there are numbers of people—to a certain extent weak and foolish, no doubt—to whom the idea of lying in a cold, damp grave, to undergo for fifteen or twenty years a process of loathsome decay, is incalculably horrible. They prefer the short and certain process by which pure ashes are attained, "without offence to any," in an hour.

It is a pardonable weakness perhaps, but while people who cherish sentiment exist, let so simple and natural an idea be realised, especially as it effectually rids us of a certain social evil. Granted that our present mode of burial is not always free from objections on the ground of health, yet I maintain that the remedy is to be found, not in ceasing to commit the body to the ground in its natural state, but in having stricter regulations (in all cases) with regard to the time and manner of burial, and the construction of the graves.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

F. A. TURTON, Surgeon-Major.

Bull Point, near Devonport, June 2nd, 1874.

EXCISION OF THE SCAPULA AND PART OF THE CLAVICLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—In justice to one of the most expert surgeons in the Indian medical service, Mr. J. C. Whishaw, I must ask you to allow me to state that I saw him remove in the civil hospital in Fyzabad in 1862 a large encephaloma which not only covered the scapular region but extended over the shoulder-joint to the clavicle. He not only excised the whole scapula, but a part of the clavicle and the entire arm.

The patient was a male subject, aged about eight years, and of a weakly habit of body. The operation was most carefully performed, and success was the result. I saw the lad several months after the removal of the tumour looking remarkably well. As Mr. Whishaw is at present civil surgeon of Lucknow, and will not read Mr. Jeaffreson's very interesting case detailed in your issue of May 20th for some weeks to come, I enclose these brief particulars for publication, and to enable Mr. Jeaffreson, if he desires it, to correspond with Mr. Whishaw direct, as from him a full and detailed report of his case can, I have no doubt, be obtained.

Assistant-Surgeon F. T. McCarthy was, with myself, his assistant at the operation.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

F. A. TURTON, Surgeon-Major.

Bull Point, near Devonport, June 3rd, 1874.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From our own Correspondent.)

The visit of Dr. Buchanan, of which you gave notice in last Saturday's LANCET, has taken place, and, at the instance of the Local Government Board, he has made inquiry into the cause of the present epidemic of small-pox in Birmingham. He visited the small-pox wards of the workhouse, several of the vaccination stations, and some of the sites proposed to the Town Council as eligible for an infectious diseases hospital. From these inquiries, and also from repeated conferences with the medical officer of health, Dr. Hill, and the vaccination officer, Dr. Robinson, we may expect shortly a full report from Dr. Buchanan as to the causes of the epidemic, and as to other sanitary matters connected with the town. At present the views of Dr. Buchanan can only be gathered from what he told the Dispensary and Vaccination Committee of the Board of Guardians. He spoke favourably of the accommodation provided at the special hospital of the workhouse for 115 patients, and he