Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE MANUFACTURE OF DRUNKARDS AND DRUGGARDS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In common, doubtless, with the profession in this country generally I have received an invitation to take debentures in a certain company who are pushing two wine compounds. You, Sirs, have raised your voice against this scheme of inducing medical men to become pecuniarily interested in the sale of special preparations, and I had hoped your strictures would have prevented a repetition of the attempt—at any rate, by the same offender.

I must confess to a feeling of humiliation when I read that 6000 testimonials have been received in favour of these two drinks. Certainly it would appear that gratitude is a feeling easily provoked in the profession by a liberal supply of samples. Is it not true that the whole question of the use of medicated wines was discussed? Why should malt, iron, coca, and bark have their "wines"? The answer should be, not that it is necessary for these foods or drugs to be given with wine, but because the public are glad of any excuse for taking stimulants or narcotics. Under the cloak of "tonic and dietetic" wine compounds many people are led into the habit of secret drinking. And what shall we say if the profession by testimonial giving and prescribing help on this undesirable state of things? Surely when wine is needed we can order it in whatever kind and amount we think fit and the drugs in a separate prescription. Why jumble them up together? There can be no doubt that immense injury accrues to the community by the reckless use of coca, malt, and other made-up wines for the road to the habitual use of actual narcotics from drugged wine-taking is as easy as it is fascinating. It would be well-nigh impossible to obtain a trustworthy account of the manner in which the slaves to narcotics were led into their bondage, but the bare possibility that we may, by prescribing these compounds, forge the first link of a chain that will later bind the victim down should make us realise our responsibility. A chemist who was formerly one of a large staff of dispensers at one of the well-known coöperative stores gave me a startling account of the enormous sale there of narcotic drugs, especially to women. Some of the customers had weekly supplies, such as three dozen $\frac{1}{2}$ gr. of morphia in packets the size of a postage stamp, 90 $\frac{1}{2}$ gr. ext. opii pills, and another twenty-four sulphonal powders. One lady had periodically liq. morph. hypoderm. $\frac{3}{4}$ ii. What, then, should be the attitude of the profession in this matter? 1. That we should strictly refuse to have any commercial interest in the class of preparations here referred to. 2. That we should prescribe wine and drugs separately and in specified quantities. 3. That in prescribing narcotics we should order them in such a form as to make it difficult for the patient to obtain the drug in large quantities. I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Weymouth-street, W., Jan. 17th, 1896. CHAS. W. CHAPMAN.

"WHAT IS A 'NATURAL LABOUR'?"

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The letter of Dr. Fraser upon this subject should not pass unchallenged. Ten days before the meeting at which he had occasion to speak he had, alike with all the other members of the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch of the British Medical Association, a printed copy of the Midwifery Nurses Bill and the amendments which were to be submitted to that meeting. These amendments were considered and adopted by the council immediately before the branch meeting, and the President distinctly stated this before the discussion upon the Bill and the amendments was entered upon, carefully indicating that the Bill as it then stood included those amendments—in fact, as far as the council was concerned, they were a part of it. Amongst Mr. Horace Jefferies' series of amendments was one amplifying the definition, inasmuch as the system of medical control was definitely indicated by the adoption of regulations, restrictions, instructions, and method of medical

control and supervision embodied in an appendix to the Bill, so that the definition before the meeting was: "In this Act the term midwifery nurse means a woman who attends cases of natural labour and afterwards tends the mother and child during the lying-in period, under the rules, regulations, and medical control or supervision set forth in this Act and the Appendix thereto, and any amendments of or additions to such Appendix which may be from time to time laid down by the Midwifery Nurses Board."

Your correspondent avoids any reference to this amendment. Dr. Fraser also had a copy of the appendix containing these restrictions and regulations. The following are examples of the conditions in which it is imperative that the midwifery nurse should call in a medical man:—In all cases of ruptured perineum as soon as it occurs. If the placenta is not expelled in an hour after the birth of the child, even if no bleeding has occurred. In the apparently dead new-born child. In presentation of hands, feet, or when the cord presents with the head. If the patient or her relations wish for a medical man, even if the midwife does not see any abnormal symptoms, she is not to object. She must bring before the notice of the coroner every case of still birth, no matter at what period of development. Surely it is of no moment whether you speak of natural labour or not, seeing that the duty of determining what this is is entirely removed from the discretion of the midwifery nurse, nor for the matter of that does it signify whether she be called a midwife, nurse-midwife, or midwifery-nurse, her duties are laid down in this Bill and its Appendix with such scrupulous definiteness.

Now Dr. Fraser persisted in reading a long written speech with which, and the valuable legal opinion, he came armed, neither of which were in the least applicable to the Bill under discussion. This speech was made in support of an amendment to the Bill proposed by Mr. R. H. Wolstenholme, in which objection was taken *inter alia* to one clause because it "failed to sufficiently protect the rights of registered medical practitioners." I quite admit that it would have been a difficult task for Dr. Fraser to address himself to the altered conditions at so short a notice, because his prepared speech showed clearly that he had disregarded the amendments of which he had warning, especially seeing that he took for the text of his speech a report drawn up by three gentlemen constituting the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the Medical Guild. As to the worthlessness of the term "natural labour," Dr. Fraser would wish us to regard him as the first to have seen through the faultiness of the perplexing definitions of this term to be found in the various text-books. The absurdity of applying to a firm of solicitors for a definition of a phrase upon which the medical profession cannot agree is clearly pointed out in the reply he received from Messrs. Boote and Edgar, who point out that the "legal significance" must be decided upon the evidence of medical experts.

Allow me to make reference to another clause of Dr. Fraser's text. He asked the meeting to condemn section 1 of Clause 3 because it only prevents the assumption of "titles." An amendment of my own, which was also adopted by the Council, makes it penal for any midwife to practise without being registered under this Act. The position Dr. Fraser had placed himself in was effectively exposed by Dr. Woodcock and Dr. Ritchie, and the amendment which he had supported was rejected by an overwhelming majority.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Old Trafford, Jan. 21st, 1896. JAMES BRASSEY BRIERLEY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The Lancashire and Cheshire Branch of the British Medical Association has adopted a draft Midwifery Nurses Bill in which the term "natural labour" occurs three times, but in which there is not the slightest attempt at a definition of that term. The official defenders of the Bill (especially Dr. Brierley of Manchester) now maintain that this expression has "no meaning whatsoever" and "no value whatever." If this be the case, why was it inserted in the Bill at all, and why did not one of them move its deletion? Can it be possible that it was only inserted as a "placebo," to give the profession a feeling of security, however false? If the phrase has no meaning let it be deleted; if it has a meaning let it be clearly defined. The supporters of the Bill appear to derive great satisfaction from the amendments proposed by Mr. Jefferies and accepted at the last moment by the Council. The fact that they were