the surgeons of the British army and navy, who have to tend the sick, and to succour the wounded under every variety of circumstance, and in every variety of climate from Indus to the Pole?

I shall not presume to detain you, Sir, by entering again upon this subject at any length; but it has been forced upon my attention within these few weeks by a visit to the great Naval Hospital at Plymouth. From what I have seen of our hospital establishments both at home and abroad, in temperate and in tropical climates, I confidently assert that no country ever possessed the varied, the extensive, the unbounded field which England and her colonies afford for the improvement of military and naval medicine. That much might be done, at a very trifling expense, for the more advantageous cultivation of this field, I assert with equal confidence. It has been well said by an intelligent and talented pupil of mine, that "the sanitary condition and sanitary regulations of a large town form a study of themselves;" and this may be said, *à fortiori*, of the sanitary condition and sanitary regulations of the army and the fleet.

There are, in a recent number of the *United Service Magazine*, some valuable suggestions for the cultivation of military medical literature, but the first and great *desideratum* is the means of making more generally known to the rising generation of army and navy surgeons, the literature which we already possess. My position gives me some opportunity of forming a correct judgment upon this point, and I venture to affirm that the extent of our military medical writings, and the information which they contain, are far from being generally known. The chair which I occupy stands alone, the only endowment in the medical schools of the kingdom, of which the proper object is, to direct the attention of young surgeons educating for the service of her Majesty, or of the Honourable East India Company, to those topics connected with the selection, the equipment, the dieting, and lodgment of soldiers, which experience has shown to be of such paramount importance in preserving their health; to all that is embraced in military and naval hygiene; and to the construction and interior economy of our hospitals, particularly those regimental establishments in which the British army so pre-eminently surpasses all others.

I have long advocated the necessity of special courses of instruction in each of the metropolitan schools—in London and Dublin as well as Edinburgh—to prepare men for the special duties of the service; and nothing would mark those specialities more effectually and more advantageously, than a share of those military honours at which you point. To render them of value, however, a rigid discrimination must be exercised in their distribution; they must be exclusively reserved for those who have earned them by superior energy and efficiency in the field, or who, at the risk of health and life, may have successfully contended against the inroads of disease in a distant and deadly clime.

One of the most important results which I should expect from the distribution of these honours, would be to encourage the medical officers of the public service in the faithful discharge of those varied and important duties which they owe to the British soldier and seaman, who are doubly exposed to the perils of war from the hazard of battle, and the influence of noxious climates. These rewards would tend to concentrate the attention of army and navy surgeons upon pursuits peculiarly their own, upon those departments of study and those fields of practice in which they, and they only, can possibly excel. The man who enters the public service with the education of a surgeon and the spirit of a soldier, should be attached to it by the prospect of those military honours which you, a soldier by profession, conversant with the true interests of the service, are so generously prepared to share with him.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

GEORGE BALLINGALL.

To Major-General Sir De Lacy Evans, K.C.B.

THE CONVENTION OF POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS AND THE MEDICAL CORPORATIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am desired by the committee to request the favour of your publishing, in the next number of THE LANCET, the following copy of a letter addressed to the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons and the Apothecaries' Society, together with the answers received from those bodies in reply to that communication.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

August, 1849.

CHARLES F. J. LORD, *Hon. Sec.*

(COPY.)

4, Hanover-square, July 27, 1849.

GENTLEMEN,—Remembering the courteous reception given, last year, by you, to the deputation, and the assurance of sympathy and promises of co-operation with which they were favoured, the committee feel that they would be blamable if they did not now point out the manner in which your influence may be beneficially exercised in their behalf.

A second deputation from the committee having been received recently by the president of the poor-law board, the committee are of opinion that the general interests of the union surgeons may be advanced by your college memorializing the poor-law board, and petitioning the houses of parliament in favour of an improved system of medical relief to the sick poor.

The plan submitted last year, as suggestions to Sir George Grey, is by no means binding in detail, although the three grand features of it are still held by the committee to be as essential to the best interests of the sick poor as they are to the just position and equitable, though modest, requital of the poor-law medical officers. These, as set forth in a recent petition to parliament, adopted and extensively signed at a large meeting, presided over by Lord Ashley, consist—

1st. In permanence of appointment during the capability and good conduct of the medical officer.

2nd. In payment proportioned to the extent and character of his duties.

3rd. In responsibility to professional authority through a medical board.

The committee hereby beg the favour of your applying to the poor-law board and to parliament in favour of these principles, as a step conducive to the interests of the sick poor, of the profession generally, (the union medical officers more especially,) and of society at large.—We have the honour to be, gentlemen, yours, very respectfully,

THOMAS HODGKIN, M.D., *Chairman.*

CHARLES F. J. LORD, *Hon. Sec.*

To the President and Censors of the
Royal College of Physicians.

Royal College of Physicians, July 3, 1849.

SIR,—Your letter of the 27th ult., addressed to the president and censors of the Royal College of Physicians, has been laid before their board; and in reply to it, I am directed to state to you that their board has already petitioned the House of Commons in favour of the suggestions made at the meeting which was presided over by Lord Ashley.—I have the honour to be, Sir, yours very respectfully,

FRANCIS HAWKINS, M.D., *Registrar.*

To the Chairman of the Committee of
Poor-law Medical Officers.

Royal College of Surgeons of England,
August 3, 1849.

SIR,—I am desired by the council of this college to express their unchanged desire to promote the interests of the poor-law medical officers.

At the same time, the council feel considerable difficulty in complying with the wishes of the convention, that this college should memorialize the poor-law board, and petition both houses of parliament; and this in consequence of the probability, should former precedents be adopted, of the case of the poor-law medical officers being referred to this college for their opinion.

The convention will be pleased also to bear in mind, that the council of this college, in making any such representation to the poor-law board and to the legislature as might effectually support the claims of the union surgeons, would be expected to found their application, not on evidence furnished by the parties aggrieved, which would be considered an *ex parte* statement, but on the actual knowledge by the council of facts, which they, unfortunately, have not the means of ascertaining.

The council are prepared, indeed, to view favourably the adoption of the three grand features of the plan submitted to Secretary Sir George Grey—viz.,

1st. In permanence of appointment during the capability and good conduct of the medical officer.

2nd. In payment proportioned to the extent and character of his duties.

3rd. In responsibility to professional authority through a medical board.

The council beg to remark, however, with respect to the third proposal, that they are not prepared to recommend a "medical board" until informed of the proposed constitution thereof.

And that, on the whole, they believe the most satisfactory arrangement to all parties would be, the appointment of a medical inspector in each district, under the charge of an assistant poor-law commissioner.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your most obedient servant,

To Dr. Hodgkin.

EDMUND BELFOUR, Sec.

Apothecaries' Hall, July 13, 1849.

SIR,—I am directed by the master and wardens of the Society of Apothecaries, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 27th ult., which they have only to-day had an opportunity of laying before the committee of the Society. The master and wardens will thank you to favour them with a copy of the petition to parliament to which you refer in your letter, and with a statement of any plan which the convention may have matured, with the view of carrying out the principles laid down in that petition into practical operation.

With this information before them, the Society will be happy to take the subject into their further consideration.

Will you, at the same time, be good enough to state what communication has taken place between the convention and the other medical corporations, as it is obviously desirable that they should act in harmony on this subject.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

ROBERT B. UPTON,
Clerk to the Society.

To C. F. J. Lord, Esq.

DR. AYRE'S TREATMENT OF CHOLERA.

[LETTER FROM DR. AYRE.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I feel it to be a real humiliation to have to engage, however partially, in the task of rebutting the gross mis-statements of your correspondent, Mr. John Hare Gibson; and it is only in obedience to the claims of truth, and from considerations of public duty, that I can be induced to bestow upon them this temporary notice. In doing so, I shall wholly pass by, unheeded, the personalities with which his letter abounds, and advert only to those points in it which concern my plan of treating cholera, and the character of two of my colleagues, whose probity and honour he has brought into question. Thus he states that two of the medical gentlemen associated with me—and referring, in the statement, to Mr. William Day and to Mr. Henry Gibson—"have avowed that they only treat their *pauper* patients after Dr. Ayre's plan, and that they treat their private patients in a different and more successful manner;" and further on in his letter he adds, "I would call upon two of the medical staff, who are known to be men of probity and honour, to come forward, and with an independence which becomes members of a liberal profession, frankly state what are the results of their more recent experience, and I doubt not they will tell you that so little faith have they in Dr. Ayre's plan, that in private practice they adopt another."

Such is the hardy declaration of Mr. John Hare Gibson, and such is his notion of probity and honour in medical men, that he can in the same sentence declare that my two colleagues can be at once men of probity and honour, and employ for the poor a treatment far less successful than that which they employ for the rich. And is this Mr. John Hare Gibson's estimate of probity and honour among medical men? and is this his mode of commending and exhibiting it? Now, to my plain understanding of the meaning of probity and honour, the rule—the constant and undeviating rule—pursued by men of integrity, is to exercise their utmost skill for their patients, irrespective of rank; and yet, without any motive on their part to conceal from me the knowledge of their having a better method of treatment, and without being under any obligation, either personal or professional, to employ a plan they disapproved, he in effect declares "that two of the medical staff, well known for their probity and honour," meanly concealed from me their better and more successful method of treatment, and by using my plan of treatment for the poor, succeeded in keeping me ignorant of their own better method; and having carried on the deception for a month, he calls upon them to reveal their secret, and give the world the benefit of the truth.

And does Mr. John Hare Gibson really believe that men "well known for their probity and honour" could thus act; or does he indeed think that any one gifted with the least understanding can agree with him; or that any honourable man will take his estimate of probity and honour as the rule for his conduct? But the two gentlemen of the medical staff whose character he so traduces, *have avowed to me, to my friend Dr. Archibald, and many others, that they had uniformly pursued my plan of*

treatment on every patient in cholera that came under their care, and that so far from treating their private patients in a manner different from that they used on the poor, they never had had, before his letter was written, a private patient to treat. It is quite true that, with a full liberty to pursue what practice they pleased, one of them first tried the opiate and stimulant treatment, and lost every patient under it, when, at my earnest entreaty, he adopted my method: and he and his two colleagues have assured me that in no one instance have they tried, or wished to try, any other; that so far from regarding it as a failure, they have been constant in their praise of it, and have many times expressed to me and others their admiration of its power, and their astonishment at its results, declaring that it is destined to be adopted through this and other countries, and will save the lives of thousands. Indeed, scarcely an hour is passing through the day in which they are not witnesses to and rejoicing in the success of the treatment; and at the moment I am now writing, a patient (Andrew, of Mariner's-court, Blackfriargate) has just been restored from the most profound collapse, and whom all my colleagues visited and entirely despaired of. She was first seen on the morning of the 11th, at ten A.M., by Mr. Day and his assistant, when she was pulseless, with cold and damp surface, and with every other symptom of extreme collapse. She was of drunken habits, and had been drunk the previous night, and had been attacked at five A.M. A pill containing two grains of calomel was given in a teaspoonful of water every ten minutes, and nothing else, auxiliary or otherwise, was either done for, or given to her. I saw her at two P.M., and after the treatment had been steadily pursued for three hours, when she was still pulseless and in full collapse. I had only to order the treatment to be steadily continued, and with a view to ensure a minute attention to it, I annexed to the order the promise of a shilling to the nurse, as her extra reward, if the patient recovered. My succeeding visits to the patient were at four, six, and nine, and the last at midnight. She remained pulseless until six P.M., when the pulse could be just slightly discerned. Up to four o'clock she had taken the calomel alone, when, upon learning that she had been drunk the night before, I left thirty drops of laudanum to be added to thirty tea-spoonfuls of water. Mr. Day and his assistant, Mr. Robinson, had seen her at intervals, and at nine P.M. I visited her in company with my three colleagues, when I found the pulse returned, though still very feeble, and the limbs still cold and damp. There was, however, a palpable improvement, so that I ordered a one-grain pill only, to be given every fifteen minutes; and at midnight, when I paid my last visit, the skin had acquired nearly its natural heat, and I was enabled to pronounce my patient saved. In the morning, at my visit at seven, I found her with no other ailment than a sense of weakness; the secretion of the kidneys was restored after seventy-two hours suppression. On the fourth day she was removed to the Vagrant Office, where I have seen her this morning free from all complaint, and with the slightest possible tenderness of the gums. This case is only one among the many that we have all seen and treated, and cured, by the plan which Mr. John Hare Gibson proclaims to be a failure, and which he calls upon my colleagues to confirm. The call, however, would be in vain, for if, contrary to what is deserved, they were to condescend to give him a reply, it would be to say, that as men having a just notion of what is right, they totally disclaim all participation in the views he entertains of what is due from men of probity and honour; that the exercise of their skill is as fully due to the poor when under their care as to the wealthy; that, having witnessed the very great and, to them, unexpected success of the treatment, they could not—they dared not—abandon it; and it is little to affirm, that did Mr. John Hare Gibson, instead of writing against the author of the treatment, apply himself to witness and understand it, it would not be too much to hope that he, having once tried it, would not have the moral courage to forsake it for any other.

I regret that the pressure of my professional engagements has prevented me from noticing and correcting some errors of omission in my last letter; and that I have wasted my little leisure upon matters so personal to myself, and on subjects that merited so little of my notice or that of your readers. To those of my professional brethren who shall adopt my treatment, I would here give my parting advice; abstain from all stimulants; use opiates sparingly; give none to children; and persevere continuously in the treatment so long as the patient is capable of swallowing. Never despair of final success, nor be impatient of its tardy approach.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Hull, August 15, 1849.

JOSEPH AYRE, M.D.