cord will inevitably destroy the charitable usefulness of the institution, and the mark of disgrace will be stamped upon all who continue their connexion with it.

Throughout this painful discussion, we have been anxious not to prejudge the case. We have endeavoured to preserve the strictest impartiality. As an appeal which cannot be without result is now made to the Committee, we still think it premature to give expression to any opinion we may have formed as to the merits of the case; but we cannot avoid remarking upon that sentence in Dr. T. L. BLUNDELL's letter in which he asserts that the charges against him are brought forward "solely to gratify personal spite." The next question at issue, and that which must be determined, is of a public character; it is a question of fact: it is the question, whether or not Dr. T. L. BLUNDELL did offer for an increase of salary to supplant his colleagues in office. The medical profession will not readily believe that seven gentlemen came to the determination to resign appointments they had held for many years, but which it appeared to them they could no longer hold with honour, in order to gratify "personal spite;" nor will the medical profession easily acquit those members of their body who have succeeded to the posts indignantly vacated by Mr. PYE SMITH, Dr. BURCHELL, Messrs. GEORGE WEST, BOWER, MATHEW, VANDENBERGH, and HALFORD, if they do not vindicate their own conduct by pursuing the matter to its full conclusion, whether that conclusion point to their own resignation, or to that of the senior physician who is at present their official representative.

It will be seen by an advertisement published this week in another part of our journal, that a meeting of medical practitioners favourable to the enactment of the "Great Medical Reform Bill" is to take place at the Freemasons' Tavern, on Friday evening next, the 3rd of March, at eight o'clock. The meeting is convened by the Reform Committee of the Council of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association.

THE NEW EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY.

The Third Annual General Meeting of the above Company, convened by notice and advertisement, was held at the chief offices of the Company, 449, Strand, London, on Thursday, February 16th, 1854. There was a very numerous attendance of the share and policy-holders on the occasion, including also the Directors and Auditors of the Company.

On the motion of Mr. WAKLEY, Sir CHARLES HASTINGS was unanimously called to the chair.

The Chairman opened the proceedings by saying that he would first call upon the Secretary to read the advertisement convening the meeting, and also the Report and statement of accounts prepared by the Directors.

Mr. Thompson, the Secretary, then read the following Report:—

THE Directors of the NEW EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY, in presenting their Third Annual Report to the Policy and Shareholders, are able to refer with feelings of pride and satisfaction to the proceedings of the past years, and to the general position and prospects of the Company.

Between the 1st of January and the 31st of December, 1853, the Directors received FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE proposals to insure the sum of ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY POUNDS. Arising out of this number of proposals, THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT policies have been issued, assuring the sum of ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND THIRTY POUNDS. The remaining proposals, for assuring FORTY-SEVEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY POUNDS, were

either declined by the Directors, or were not completed at the end of the year. The Annual premiums payable upon the THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY-EIGHT policies issued in 1853 amounted to FIVE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN POUNDS.

The progress of the Company from its commencement to the present time, is shown at a glance in the subjoined Table:—

	Number of Policies issued.	Sums Assured.	Annual Premiums.
		£	£ s. d.
1851	301	98,500	3439 0 1
1852	677	278,855	10,608 12 2
1853	1025	413,785	15,836 3 6

The number of proposals received by the Directors was greater in the last than in either of the preceding two years.

During the *two years and eleven months* elapsing between the complete registration of the Company on the 1st of February, 1851, to the 31st of December, 1853, the business transacted by the Directors has been as follows:—

The total number of Policies issued is ONE THOUSAND AND TWENTY-FIVE, assuring FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE POUNDS; and the amount of Premiums, FIFTEEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIX POUNDS, THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE. The total number remaining in force at the close of the third year was NINE HUNDRED AND FIVE, assuring THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY-EIGHT THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY POUNDS: the annual premiums receivable thereon amount to THIRTEEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE POUNDS, FIFTEEN SHILLINGS, AND EIGHTPENCE.

The claims paid from the commencement of the Company up to the 31st of December, 1853, amounted to THREE THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THREE POUNDS.

The Local Board at Worcester, established under the auspices of Sir CHARLES HASTINGS, the Chairman of the Metropolitan Board, promises to become a valuable means of extending the operations of the Company in that locality.

The Directors are constantly receiving substantial proofs of the estimation in which the just principles of the NEW EQUITABLE LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY are held by the medical profession. The relations which exist between the medical profession and the NEW EQUITABLE, are, and will continue to be, those of mutual support and benefit. The Directors are proud to acknowledge that the greater portion of the shares of the Company are held by medical practitioners; that it is to medical men of every class and party they chiefly owe the introduction of the great extent of business transacted by the Company since its formation; and that, in consequence of the cordial co-operation of the profession throughout the kingdom, a large number of respectable and influential Agents have been appointed, at a less expense than was probably ever before incurred by any Assurance Company; at the same time, the beneficial influence of the NEW EQUITABLE on the profession has been strongly marked.

This Company first established the full recognition of the importance of medical testimony as the basis of all Life Assurance operations.

By the system adopted in the proceedings of the NEW EQUITABLE, the medical attendants of Proposers are recognised as the confidential advisers of the Board.

The result of the example set by the NEW EQUITABLE has already had a great effect in producing an entire reform in the old practice of Life Assurance Offices towards medical men. No new company now issues its prospectus without a recognition of the claims of the members of the medical profession to remuneration for the time and skill they devote as acting parties in concluding all safe Life Assurance transactions. Among the old-established companies, accessions to the principle of doing justice to medical men, are constantly being made, so that in a few years the offices that refuse them remuneration for their reports will be in a very small minority. Ultimately, the Directors have no doubt that this Company, by the influence of its principle, its example, and its success, will achieve the merit of settling for ever the long agitated question of medical fees in reference to Life Assurance.

The Directors have the best proof that their exertions are not undervalued by the profession, in the fact that no other

office that ever appealed to medical interests attained such success as that which has attended the NEW EQUITABLE in the same space of time. And on every ground, they are able to congratulate the Policy and Shareholders, as well as the medical profession, upon the continued prosperity of the Company.

(Signed) CHARLES HASTINGS, M.D., Chairman.

RETIREMENT AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS.

The following gentlemen retire from the direction by rotation, and are eligible and candidates for re-election:—

Sir Charles Hastings, M.D., D.C.L.
Samuel Richards, M.D.
Thomas Wakley, Esq.

RETIREMENT AND ELECTION OF AUDITORS.

The retiring Auditors and Candidates for re-election are—

R. H. Parkinson, Esq.
C. R. Rowland, Esq.

* * *The Shareholders are informed that Interest, at the rate of Five per Cent. per Annum, is now receivable at the Office upon the paid-up Capital of the Company.*

The CHAIRMAN, in moving that the Report be adopted, said that it had been of old remarked that brevity was the soul of wit, and therefore he would not occupy their time by any lengthened observations of his own on the Report which they had just heard read to them; for if its simple and eloquent language failed to convince them of the flourishing condition of the Company, any observations made by him would be altogether inadequate to produce that effect. It must be evident to them all that the very large number of policies issued by the Company during less than the first three years of its existence, showed an extent of prosperity and business wholly unprecedented for a young office, which even equalled that of the oldest Life Assurance Companies, and with every prospect of being permanent, thereby securing and extending the welfare of the establishment. When the New Equitable Company started into existence the Directors at once appealed to a sense of justice in the public as regarded the medical profession, and the great value of medical advice in matters of Life Assurance; and that appeal had been responded to by proofs the most convincing and satisfactory, both to the profession and the public at large, which established at once the truth of the principle that the experience of the medical profession was the right one, as giving a basis for the safe and equitable conduct of life assurance. (Hear, hear.) They had further received an answer, the most unequivocal and decisive, which declared that the establishment of that Company was highly conducive to the benefit of the profession, in asserting the right of medical men to the payment of proper fees for their opinions. They must remember that previous to the formation of that Company the old life assurance offices almost repudiated the idea that medical testimony was of any value in matters connected with life assurance; and, in fact, they thought so little of it, that they did not deem it to be worth a fee. The New Equitable Office had done away with that system altogether. The Directors had proclaimed, that if medical men furnished their testimony they were entitled to a liberal remuneration for so doing. (Hear, hear.) He would only further remark that in conducting the business of the Company economy had been strictly attended to by the Directors, so far as they thought was for the safety of the office, and at the same time consistent with their position and advantages. The Directors were always willing to listen to the suggestions of any shareholders which might be for the benefit of the Company, reserving, however, to themselves the propriety of acting on such suggestions. He (the Chairman) would now beg leave to move that the Report be received and adopted, and circulated, so that the vastly increasing importance of the Company might be made fully known to the profession and the public.

Dr. Bainbridge (shareholder) seconded the motion with great pleasure. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Goddard asked what was the amount of the new premiums in the year just ended.

The Secretary replied that they amounted to £5227 11s. 4d. (Hear, hear, hear.)

Sir C. Hastings having vacated the chair, and Mr. Beaman been appointed as his successor, after a brief congratulatory discussion, and the usual votes of thanks had been passed, the business of the day was brought to a highly satisfactory conclusion.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE ALLEGED POISONING AT CROYDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your leading article upon the death of the Atlee family at Waddington would certainly appear to infer that great blame must be attached to the medical testimony given at the adjourned inquest. I beg to forward you an account of the post-mortem appearances observed by myself when assisting Mr. Westall to make the examination. I then knew nothing of the previous history, except the fact that the child had been ill nine or ten days. No detailed account of the symptoms could be obtained; Mr. Hubert, the medical officer in attendance, informing me that he was not able to obtain any definite account because of the ignorance and stupidity of those about the patient. There was therefore nothing to guide the examiner as to what he might expect to find, and I heard scarcely more than a suspicion of poison.

As a medical man, I fully concur with Mr. Westall in the evidence he gave at the inquest, which evidence you have printed in italics. I believe no man acquainted with the pathology of typhoid fever and arsenical poisoning could have given any other; and I defy Mr. Bottomley or any one else to say that the post-mortem appearances were not those of typhoid fever in a weakened frame, rather than those of arsenical poisoning.

You, Sir, have nothing to do with Mr. Bottomley's motives for thus endeavouring to injure a professional neighbour; but I am surprised that you did not, at the same time you wrote a leading article, publish Professor Taylor's report also *in extenso*. That report would have explained what you have thought proper to print in italics, thus directing attention to Mr. Westall's evidence almost exclusively. I concur with you in thinking that the remaining bodies ought to be examined chemically, for I am perfectly convinced, from what I have since made out, that it is morally impossible for the woman to have poisoned herself intentionally, and I have not the least hesitation in saying that she did not poison the child I assisted Mr. Westall to examine.

It is a point worth the attention of all medical jurists, and I hope it may not be allowed to rest where it is. If the family have really died from the effects of arsenic, then are the cases unique, and ought to be placed on permanent record. A request was made by Mr. Hubert at the last inquest that the other bodies should be examined; this request, however, was not acceded to by the coroner and jury. You have stated that Mr. Bottomley attended on the part of the Crown; let me observe that Mr. Bottomley received no order whatever to attend the inquest. With these remarks, I beg to lay before you the post-mortem report, which is as follows:—

The body was that of a female about ten years of age then, well formed, and without any external signs of disease. The head was not examined, because it was considered that the abdominal appearances would account for death. On cutting through the integuments along the middle line of the body a great absence of fat was observed. The chest appeared perfectly healthy; the lungs were crepitant throughout, and without any appearance of congestion whatever, except at the posterior and inferior part, where there was a small amount of post mortem redness; otherwise the structure of the lung was exceedingly pale. The heart was pale, firmly contracted, and except a very small clot in the right auricle was completely empty. The large veins of the thorax contained a very small quantity of fluid blood. The pericardium was perfectly healthy, and scarcely more than moistened with fluid. On opening the abdomen the first thing remarked was the great absence of fat, and the great paleness of the liver and upper part of the intestinal canal, as seen through the peritoneal coat. The liver was removed, and on cutting through the inferior vena cava scarcely any blood flowed from that large venous trunk; the gall-bladder was completely distended with bile. The intestines and stomach were then altogether removed, the latter being tied at its cardiac extremity, and again at the pylorus; it was then divided from the rest of the alimentary canal, and laid on one side. The mesenteric glands were observed to be slightly increased in size. On tracing the interior of the intestine from above downwards the duodenum was seen to be perfectly pale and healthy without the least streak of redness whatever; the descending portion was rather stained with bile, from transudation through the coats of the gall-bladder,