Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE EXAMINATIONS AT THE LONDON COLLEGES.

To the Editors of the Lancet.

Sirs,—When it was decided that the medical student's course of study should extend over five years, hopes were entertained that, whatever else might happen, the two London Colleges would at last take care to bring the clinical part of their examinations up to a high standard of efficiency. It must be with feelings of surprise and disappointment that those who cherished this hope now find, how trivial, when compared with the high importance of the subject, is the place given to the clinical examinations in the most recent proposals of the delegates, to whom the Colleges have entrusted the consideration of the arrangements of the examinations. Here is the proposal of the delegates in their own words:

"That the time of the clinical part of the examination in each subject (medicine and surgery) be extended to thirty minutes."

"Extended to thirty minutes! What must this examination have been when it did not cover even thirty minutes! Will anyone have the courage to say, that within the space of thirty minutes a medical student can be examined clinically in such a way as to give him a fair chance of showing what he knows of clinical medicine or of clinical surgery? To make such an examination what it ought to be, the student should be invited to enter the ward of a hospital, and there, with abundance of time at his disposal, should be asked to give the examiners an insight into what he knows of the conditions of disease shown in the cases in the ward. Were such a systematic method of clinical examination as is here indicated adopted by the two Colleges and thoroughly carried out by them, it would soon be admitted on all hands that men who went into practice with the qualifications of the daily duties of the medical practitioner as newly qualified men could be.

In these days, when examinations are believed to play so important a part in barring the entrance to professional life against all means let them go anywhere than to our Colleges. Meanwhile, however, we shall have to reckon with public opinion, which year by year is being more emphatically expressed in favour of medical women, and probably the only people who can really congratulate themselves are some of our Northern friends who see more grist brought to their mills by the action of their less enlightened London brethren. But, say the opponents of the women, by all means let them go anywhere else than to our Colleges. Meanwhile, however, we shall have to reckon with public opinion, which year by year is being more emphatically expressed in favour of medical women, and probably the only people who can really congratulate themselves are some of our Northern friends who see more grist brought to their mills by the action of their less enlightened London brethren. But, say the opponents of the women, by all means let them go anywhere else than to our Colleges.

In these days, when examinations are believed to play so important a part in barring the entrance to professional life, the increasing number of young men, a very important and significant discovery has been made. I have spoken to several examiners at large experience with a view to ascertaining whether or not they are agreed in accepting it as a fact that there are men who have a special aptitude for passing examinations, and who, nevertheless, show less than ordinary ability in efficiently dealing with the affairs that make up the work of the practitioner of medicine. This is the discovery which, I say, has been made, or at all events emphasised, by the outcome of examinations; and I do not remember that any one of the examiners with whom I discussed the matter denied the truth of this discovery, or contradicted the assertion that no examination scheme has yet been devised which can trust to keep incompetent men out of the medical profession. I do not say that the system of clinical examination indicated in this letter would keep incompetent men out of our profession, but I do say it would be vastly more efficient for this purpose than the mass of paper work which now forms the bulk of the final examinations for the qualifications of the Colleges. Not the least of the advantages of a clinical examination, properly conducted on the lines mentioned above, is that it would be impossible to "cran" students for such an examination.

Objection may be taken to the scheme here suggested on three grounds. In the first place, it may be said that sufficient time could not be given by the examiners for the thorough carrying out of such a scheme. A second objection might be, that the extent of the most important cases would be too large. And, lastly, it might be asked, Where is a sufficient number of examiners to be found? There are to be found among the Fellows of the two Colleges plenty of men perfectly well qualified, and able and willing to give the time necessary for the efficient carrying out of such a clinical examination as is here outlined; and I should be greatly surprised if the question of fees, when it came to be looked at closely, were to prove an insuperable obstacle.

I know there are men of the highest standing in the profession of medicine who are entirely at one with me in the views I have here expressed, and I venture to hope that they and others will not allow this matter to drop until clinical examinations are made, as I contend they ought to be, the most important and the most thorough of the tests to which medical students have to submit themselves.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

G. A. Heron.

"The Admission of Women to the Royal Colleges of Physicians of London and Surgeons of England."

To the Editors of the Lancet.

Sirs,—Many of the arguments brought against the admission of women to the London Colleges shew very plainly that those who advance them have no acquaintance whatever with medical women and no knowledge of the extent to which the movement in their favour has progressed during the last few years. Mr. Truman tells us that the profession owes a debt of gratitude to the London Colleges for their verdict; it is difficult to see why. If their decision had involved the exclusion from further examination of women who dislike the competition of Scotch M.D.'s note the fact), and probably the only people who can really congratulate themselves are some of our Northern friends who see more grist brought to their mills by the action of their less enlightened London brethren. But, say the opponents of the women, by all means let them go anywhere else than to our Colleges. Meanwhile, however, we shall have to reckon with public opinion, which year by year is being more emphatically expressed in favour of medical women and surgical. And yet—let us hope in ignorance of all this—we are told that women faint at the sight of blood and surgical. This is the discovery which, I say, has been made, or at all events emphasised, by the outcome of examinations; and I do not remember that any one of the examiners with whom I discussed the matter denied the truth of this discovery, or contradicted the assertion that no examination scheme has yet been devised which can