mechanically, but it struck me that possibly the mere mechanical irritation of the frame in a very neurotic child might suffice. I therefore reluctantly ordered the glasses to be given up for a time, as there seemed every chance of an irremediable habit being established. He accordingly dropped their use entirely for some months with the result that the facial contortions ceased entirely except when the spectacles were put on again experimentally. I have just heard that they still return when he wears his glasses (which he does for near work), though not so badly as before. I was able to watch the boy closely myself, and I think there can be no doubt about the sequence of cause and effect in this case; it makes a very awkward dilemma where the defect of vision is a serious one, but a good deal has to be sacrificed to prevent the establishment of a habit which in after years is probably incurable, is very unpleasant to the patient's friends, and annoying to himself.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

E. HOBHOUSE, M.D. Oxon., M.R.C.P. Lond.

Brighton, March 14th.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Some little time ago the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England framed a series of regulations under which meetings of Members might be held at the College. The chief of these regulations are: 1. These meetings will be for consultative purposes only, and can have no official or corporate character or efficacy. 2. Meetings shall be summoned by the Council at such times and for such objects as may by the Council be thought desirable either with or without a requisition from the Members. 3. Such requisition must be signed by at least thirty Members and contain a statement of the objects for which the meeting is requested.

No meeting has hitherto been called under these regulations, but the committee of the Society of Members, in view of the unfavourable circumstances surrounding the recent poll of the Fellows, decided to apply for such a meeting. Accordingly, the following requisition was drawn up and signed by thirty Members:—

"To the President and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

"GENTLEMEN,—We, the undersigned Members of the College, hereby very respectfully request you to call a meeting of Members at an early date, in accordance with your regulations, in order that the Members may have an opportunity of consulting together upon the following matters:—1. The results and validity of the recent poll of the Fellows. 2. A proposal urging the Council to take a similar poll of the Members on the question of representation. 3. The validity of the present mode of appointment of the representative of the College on the General Medical Council. 4. The refusal of the Council to carry out the by-laws of the College in the case of Mr. R. B. Anderson. Motions on these subjects will be submitted on receipt of information that the meeting will be held."

This requisition came before the Council on Thursday last and was refused, the secretary being instructed to state "that the Council does not think it desirable that such a meeting should be held."

Now, Sirs, while I fully admit that the refusal of a meeting is within the discretion of the Council under the above regulations, I venture to think that the Council has made a mistake in so acting on this occasion. If a temperately worded request stating objects which are recognised as reasonable and important by many Members of the College is to be refused simply because the majority of the Council does not agree with these objects, then I submit that the regulations are absurd and had better be rescinded in so far as they relate to meetings called by Members, since they will never be acted upon. Further, the result of this attempt to stifle discussion within the College must certainly be to drive the Members into acts of open hostility without its walls. There are frequent occasions when, in spite of its claim to be "a purely scientific body," the Council is brought into contact with "the State, the profession, and the public." One of these arose two years ago in connexion with the amended by-laws, when the result of the Members' interposition was that the Home Secretary refused to sanction the by-laws in the form desired by the Council. A conflict of opinion has now occurred between the Council and another department of the Government, and if the Members are again found in the enemy's camp is it to be wondered at since they are so persistently

turned out of their own? The result in this case will be more serious to the College than in the last, and the Members, who have the welfare of the institution as much at heart as the Council, would be gladly spared any intervention. The obstinate refusal of the Council, backed up by a *minority* of the Fellows, to grant the Members a share in the management of what is by charter their own property leaves the latter, however, no alternative but opposition at any and every opportunity.

I am, Sirs, faithfully yours,

March 15th, 1897.

W. G. DICKINSON.

EXCISION OF THE KNEE-JOINT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been interested in reading Mr. C. B. Lockwood's paper entitled "A Review of the Operation for Excision of the Knee, together with an Account of a New Procedure—Osteoplastic Excision of the Knee." It is, I believe, quite twenty years since Dr. Fenwick of Montreal was in Liverpool and showed us photographs of a large number of cases in which he had excised the joint, using his curved section of the bone. The results were excellent, and I adopted his method as soon as I obtained a hospital appointment; but very shortly changed it for a wedge-shaped section, which I have carried out for at least fifteen years. The wedge is not cut in the same way or based on the same principles as those advocated by Mr. Lockwood, but attains, I think, at least equally good results. The femur is cut into a wedge by removing slices from the condyles anteriorly and posteriorly, which include the whole of the articular cartilage, but leave the epiphyseal cartilage intact. A corresponding notch in the head of the tibia also removes all the articular cartilage with a very small portion out of the centre of the epiphyseal cartilage. The nature of the wedge of course renders antero-posterior displacement and rotation out of the question, and usually so firmly locks the bones that a special splint is unnecessary. I fail to see the particular importance in retaining the ligaments when the operation temporarily fixes the parts and the subsequent ankylosis renders them unnecessary; but, of course, the retention of the muscular attachments is a different matter, and I agree with Mr. Lockwood that the continuity of the extensor tendon with its insertion through the ligamentum patellæ should be restored as perfectly as possible.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Liverpool, March 15th, 1897.

F. T. PAUL.

"THE ETIOLOGY OF BERI-BERI."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I observe in THE LANCET of March 6th a letter from Mr. J. Tertius Clarke with reference to the epidemics of beri-beri in this asylum, suggesting that the outbreaks were due possibly to tin poisoning. I do not see how this could have been the case, as the water-pipes are of iron and the ordinary amalgam used for such purpose throughout the city. Cooking utensils are not tin-lined either, and, generally speaking, this metal is very little used in the institution. It would be of interest to know if Mr. Clarke's patients have been living in the neighbourhood of a tin-producing district.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

J. O'CONOR DONELAN,

Acting Medical Superintendent, Richmond Asylum.

Dublin, March 11th, 1897.

"A SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY!!"

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In an annotation in THE LANCET of March 13th dealing with my letter to the Prince of Wales on the subject of vivisection you say that to cut up animals alive without the pretence of anæsthetics in the laboratories attached to the London hospitals would be a wholly illegal proceeding, and you ask why we, who would protect animals from torture, do not attempt to get those who do these illegal acts convicted. My answer is that these acts, unfortunately, are not illegal. You must surely be perfectly well aware that attached to these laboratories are persons holding licences that exempt them from the necessity of using any anæsthetics whatever; and my legal training, to which you are good enough to