of discussing it. Mr. Marsh's plea was a perfectly reasonable one, that our agenda paper was already very full. At the end of the meeting a requisition was presented to the Council, and a special meeting arranged for at which the whole question will be discussed. May I conclude by saying that I have received official intimations to the effect that the resolution in support of the principles of the Bill, which we hope will soon be presented to the House of Commons, has been accepted already by the following medical societies: the Bristol Medico-Ethical Society, the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association, the Sunderland and North Durham Medical Society, the Fylde Medical Society, the York Medical Society, and the Leicester Medical Society.—I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

The Crescent, Birmingham, March 25th, 1889. LAWSON TAIT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—We desire, through the medium of your valuable journal, to appeal to all those Members of the College who signed our petition to the Privy Council in 1887 to come forward now and assist us in the action we are taking on their behalf and on that of all the Members of the College. As your readers are aware, Lord Randolph Churchill will soon endeavour to get a Bill passed through Parliament to restore to the Members the rights which they enjoyed before the reconstitution of the College in 1850. Some slight delay has occurred owing to his lordship's advice that the Draft Bill be reduced to some half a dozen clauses. This is now being effected by counsel, and as soon as the new Draft is ready a copy will be sent to your office. It must be understood, of course, that such a Bill as this is necessarily drafted on the broadest lines, but for our own parts and that of a large number of Members we must say that any reasonable amendment or modification will be gladly accepted by us, and, we may confidently hope, by our supporters in Parliament. It is in view partly of Parliamentary expenses and partly of the legal costs in which our Chancery action will involve us—an action taken by us in order to relieve the *whole* body of Members of pains and penalties that we consider to be unjust and an anachronism—that we now approach the signatories of the petition of 1887, and in fact *all* the Members of the College, to ask them to contribute to a fund to be called "The M.R.C.S. Fund," of which Mr. C. M. Jessop, of 8, Sutherland avenue, W., has consented to be treasurer. Donations and guarantees are already coming in, but we think that but few Members of the College will grudge sending contributions of sums from 5s. upwards, according to their means.—We are, Sirs, your obedient servants,

WARWICK C. STEELE,

1, Florence-ter., Ealing, W.,

WM. ASHTON ELLIS,

14, Grosvenor-road, S.W.,

March 26th, 1889.

Hon. Secs.,
Assoc. M.R.C.S.

P.S.—An objection has been privately conveyed to us by a member of the Council that in our letter published in your issue of March 9th we incorrectly described the meeting of Feb. 28th as convened and held at the College. "Convened" it certainly was, as no one must know better than the Council, who asked us to show cause why we should not be punished for the convention. "Held" it also was, in the sense that the Members assembled in front of their own gates—which was as far as the Council would permit them to get—and then adjourned, as stated in our letter referred to, to the Holborn Restaurant.

MR. JESSOP presents his compliments to the Editors of THE LANCET, and begs to forward the following additional supporters of the guarantee fund of the Association of Members of the Royal College of Surgeons:—

Wm. Carter ...	£10 10 0	M. E. Briggs ...	£5 5 0
Jabez Hogg ...	5 5 0	T. S. Downe ...	5 5 0
W. A. Elliston ...	5 5 0	W. Donald Small-	
J. Wallis Mason ...	5 5 0	piece ...	5 5 0

98, Sutherland-avenue, Maida-vale, March 27th, 1889.

THE DEFENCE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The views of your correspondents on this important question have been many and various. In the "multitude of counsellors" there is said to be safety. There is also,

however, a danger of main issues being obscured. The profession needs defence against something; that seems to be admitted; but against what? Firstly, it needs defending from the abuse of medical charity in hospitals and dispensaries, by a stricter investigation into the circumstances of patients. Secondly, it needs defending from the abuse of the provident system, in the forms of provident dispensaries, medical associations of friendly societies, and clubs. Thirdly, it needs defending from itself. By a curious mixture of genuine charity and self-seeking advertisement it has come to pass that it is customary for medical men to work for nothing, or next to nothing, in many instances. The organised charity of our hospitals no more needs defence than the individual charity of so many doctors, but it is a thousand pities that this should degenerate on one side into a method of advertising, on the other into imposition. The first two points I have noticed are really the practical ones. The third is to some extent included in them, and where it is not so is a matter of ethical significance chiefly to the individual.

It is a fact that medical men are suffering in many localities by the abuse of charities, and the abuse of provident or semi-provident institutions. Is it possible that THE LANCET may sometime institute a commission to inquire into these matters? THE LANCET has done good work for the public by the investigation of abuses, and I would be the last to place our professional status before the public good. Still, this question is *our own*, and in its place deserves inquiry with a view to reform. Some despair, and say that the only cure for the present state of things is a limitation of entrances to the profession. I do not despair while we have a free and enlightened medical press, for the evil has only to be *recognised* by a majority of the members of our profession. Once let it be seen how gross is the imposition, and steps will at once be taken to regulate public institutions in such a way that they shall not interfere with our legitimate interests, and such steps will also be for the good and self-respect of the people who now abuse medical charity, and beat down to a vanishing point the value of medical service.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

Loughborough, March 16th, 1889.

J. B. PIKE.

INFECTION AND FREE LIBRARIES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The committee of the Portsmouth Corporation appointed to manage the Portsmouth Public Library have realised the danger of spreading infectious disease by means of books borrowed from the lending library, if such books are infected. By means of the compulsory notification of disease, measures are taken in order to prevent any infected books gaining admittance to the library. As soon as a case is reported to me, a form (enclosed) is filled up and sent to the librarian stating that there is a case of infectious disease at a certain house. If a borrower from the library lives there, no more books are issued to him until a certificate is sent to the librarian that the authority has efficiently disinfected the house. And should there be a book at the house on the outbreak of the disease, that book is disinfected by the authority before it is returned to the library. But in the case of small-pox, scarlet fever, and diphtheria the book is sent to the infectious diseases hospital for the use of the patients there. Measles is not compulsorily reported, but the same method is carried out in all cases which come under my knowledge. By these means it is hoped that infected books are prevented from gaining admittance to the library to infect other books and spread disease broadcast. It is to be regretted that some such measures cannot be taken in private libraries.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

B. H. MUMBY, M.D.,

Portsmouth, March 26th, 1889.

Medical Officer of Health.

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE.—The meeting of the Association will take place this year at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 11th, and two succeeding days, and Monday and Tuesday of the following week. Excursions are being arranged for Saturday, Sept. 14th, and Thursday, the 19th. The president will be Professor W. H. Flower, F.R.S. The Section of Biology will be presided over by Dr. Burdon-Sanderson, F.R.S., that of Anthropology by Sir Wm. Turner, F.R.S., and that of Chemistry by Sir I. L. Bell, F.R.S.