no line or a single syllable of that Bill has ever been discussed either in the Council or in the meetings by the Fellows of the Society, and, further, the unseemliness of allowing the Legislature and community to be led to the belief that the Obstetrical Society was in its favour; under these circumstances I have invited the Council to call a meeting of the Fellows in order that the Bill might be discussed, supporting this with a request signed by three Fellows of considerable standing in the society, one of them an ex-President, but this invitation was not accepted. I have called attention to the conduct of business at the last annual meeting, and moved a resolution proposing the formation of a committee to revise the rules relating to the public business of the society. The resolution was lost. Since this was the last constitutional step I could take by way of protest I feel that there is no longer any reason for me to remain in a position in which I can be of no service to those who elected me and which is most distasteful to myself.

"Your obedient servant,
"LOVELL DRAGE.

"The President of the Obstetrical Society of London."

"Obstetrical Society of London, July 22nd, 1896.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter resigning your seat on the Council of this society.

"Yours faithfully,
"F. H. CHAMPNEYS.

NURSING HOMES AND SECRET COMMISSIONS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The Lord Chief Justice recently said in reference to secret commissions:—

This business of corrupt bargains was a malignant canker; it was affecting honesty in all, or in many, details of the relations of life, and was not confined to commercial relations. It was dishonest to fair trading; it was dishonest to the fair employer; it broke down that principle of morality which ought to be preserved among men who desired to cultivate and deserve honesty.

For some time past there have been whispers that some members of our profession are directly interested in certain nursing homes and are pecuniarily concerned in the prosperity of these institutions as commercial undertakings. This alliance is fraught with many evils, but there is one which is particularly grave—namely, the temptation and opportunity it affords to send patients into these homes unnecessarily for treatment, which may be more or less unnecessary also. But the confederacy manifests itself in another way. A few days ago the proprietress of a long-established home asked my advice and opinion respecting a proposal which had been made to her by a surgeon to the effect that she should pay him a commission on all the patients he should send to her. She asked whether it was usual and right for a medical man to ask or to receive such commissions. I replied that I hoped and believed it was not usual and that it was certainly not right. Is the "malignant canker" attacking our profession? If so, the sooner it is eradicated the better.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,
JOHN TWEEDY.

July 23rd, 1896.

"THE QUESTION OF MEDICAL DEFENCE."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It is a matter of regret that you should have still to speak in the plural number of Medical Defence Societies, the object of which is the same and which are respectively presided over by gentlemen of the highest scientific and personal character.

To me it seems also a matter of regret that as regards one of these there is a prospect of its being merged or lost in the great medical association which was founded for nearly all medical purposes but this one of medical defence. The number of members of these societies and the number of cases in which the action of the societies is invoked are proof of the necessity for specialising this work and having a society to do it. I cannot see the necessity for two societies, but as to the necessity for a special society I have no doubt. It is, of course, possible that as the mere section of a great association, a defence or protection committee may have the efficiency of our present societies, but I very much doubt it; and I very much doubt whether members of the Medical Defence Union—which is understood to contemplate parting with its identity after having achieved a creditable reputation for usefulness—will think so. It may be said that this is a mere domestic matter of compatibility of temper between two societies, and to a certain extent this may be admitted. But neither the leaders of the British Medical Association nor of the Medical Defence Union would take it as a compliment to have it said that their

amalgamation or their separation was a matter of indifference to the profession to which they both have done such signal service. The functions of the British Medical Association are already legion, and further multiplication may only lead to inefficiency and disappointment. It is evident that among its own members there is grave doubt as to this new development and the form it should take. The words of Lord Melbourne will come to the minds of many, "Can't you leave well alone?"—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
July 27th. M.D.

* * Our correspondent, M.D., will observe that the same doubt has entered our minds. We have given expression to it in more than one article.—ED. L.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Your able leading article last week on this subject seems to me—I say it respectfully—to lack one thing, and that is a cordial recommendation to the profession to join one or other of the Defence Societies. Medical defence is a new want in the profession, or rather it is a want the seriousness of which we have only recently realised. It is not very imaginable that the mere supply of such societies could create a demand for them, from which it follows either that there is an increased tendency in the public to exact more from their medical attendants than is reasonable, or to be critical and ungenerous in their construction of professional service, or, worse still, that there is a growth of unprincipled or morbid classes that are ready to extort money from a medical man on any pretence whatever—classes to whom the very nature of medical practice gives special chances and opportunities.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the medical is the only profession that suffers such annoyances. They are experienced not infrequently by lawyers—not, indeed, in the gross and morbid forms in which medical men are often attacked, but in the form of charges of negligent and unskilful treatment of cases. I have not heard that the number of such cases is such as to have given rise to special defence societies in the legal profession, but they are not infrequent and are generally arranged without public appearance. This is the great service done to the medical profession by its defence and protection societies. They avert or arrest legal processes involving cost, worry, and publicity at such an extremely small expense that a medical man is unwise who willingly neglects to become a member. Of course, the first line of defence in every honest and fairly capable member of the profession is his carefulness to preserve his own character and the reputation of his profession, and no society or number of societies will avail to protect men who do not so protect themselves.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
July 28th. D.V.

A ZEALOUS MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The following case may be of interest as well as a help to others, especially to younger medical men beginning life. A few weeks ago a lad was brought to me suffering from a simple sore throat. I ordered him to bed and called afterwards. A very doubtful and slight rash determined me in watching the patient and explicitly warning the mother that it might turn out to be scarlet fever. The parent being poor I called again gratuitously, each time explicitly warning her of future possibilities. On calling in about two weeks from the date of the child being first ill I was told he was out, probably enjoying himself with other youths of the town. I asked if he were desquamating. "No, not the slightest signs." Still not satisfied, I examined the child that evening and next day and found him desquamating on the hands and body. I at once reported the case and advised removal. A few days afterwards I received a letter from the medical officer of health saying he "was informed" that I had told the parent four days after I first saw the boy that he was suffering from scarlet fever, and would I be so good as to give my explanation, as he was bound, &c., to bring the matter before his committee. Many medical men would have replied to such a frivolous piece of hearsay in a very few lines, but instead I courteously informed this gentleman of the facts as I have given them—a result beneficial to the parish as well as to the boy. I certainly expected some apology, but