Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

SAWDUST URINALS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Some few years since I took occasion to direct attention to the value of sawdust in rendering urine filtered through it thoroughly aseptic; and the present dearth of water for sanitary purposes is my reason for asking you to allow me to direct the attention of sanitary authorities to this fact; and to advise them to give sawdust urinals a trial, as my increasing experience in this matter leads me to say that when properly constructed they are thoroughly satisfactory. There should always be complete exposure to light and air, but protection from rain is advisable. No better urinal can be devised than a tall bushel basket filled with deal sawdust and placed in a shed. Such a urinal in dry hot weather will take a surprising amount of urine without affording any filtrate, owing to the freedom of evaporation. If the use of such a urinal be not excessive and if it be stirred occasionally it will increase in effectiveness with use. If the nose be placed close to the surface of such a urinal it will be found to be strongly ammoniacal, but I have never known one to be foul. The filtrate is usually slightly aromatic and has never shown any disposition to putrefy. I do not know how often the sawdust needs to be changed. I lately examined the sawdust which had been used for three months in the urinal of a country public-house and I found it absolutely free from all offensive odour.

When such urinals are not made of basket-work they must have an outlet at the bottom through which the aseptic filtrate may escape to the drain. Those who may wish for further details as to the construction of sawdust urinals will find them in my little book, "The Dwelling House," which is published by Longmans.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Sept. 2nd, 1898.

G. V. POORE, M.D.

"THE PLAISTOW MATERNITY CHARITY."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With reference to your remarks on the Plaistow Maternity Charity in Howard's-road, Plaistow, in THE LANCET of August 27th, I beg to state that St. Mary's Day Nursery and Hospital for Sick Children, Plaistow, E., is in no way connected with the St. Mary's Children's Hospital, Plaistow, E.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

W. W. FARNFIELD, Resident Medical Officer.

St. Mary's Children's Hospital, Plaistow, E., August 30th, 1898.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the article in THE LANCET of August 27th referring to the East Suburban Medical Protection Society your contributor deals with nursing charities to some extent from a medical man's point of view, and passes certain strictures which are wholly undeserved upon the Maternity Charity and District Nurses' Home, Plaistow. It is no part of your aim to deal with the subject from the patient's point of view, and therefore any observations upon that head would be out of place. In the interest, however, of the charity to which you refer, there are certain misstatements of fact in that article which ought to be corrected. In all ordinary cases—that is to say, in all the district nursing and most of the midwifery—no payment whatever is received, and the frequent reference to fees in your article is most misleading. Further, as regards the district nursing, no patient is nursed unless attended by a medical man, except in a few trifling cases, such as cut fingers, for which no doctor would be called in. As to the case of people who have been attended who might be able to afford a nurse, it may be pointed out that these cases are extremely rare, numbering certainly not more than 2 in every 1000 cases attended, and in each case there has been a special reason for the attendance.

As regards the midwifery work it should be observed that

in the great majority of the cases no payment is made, and that the fee, in such cases where it is payable, was raised from 5s. to 10s. with a view to meeting certain objections advanced by this medical protection society. The sum of 10s. was fixed upon because this pays the whole expense of the attendance, so that it is a misrepresentation to suggest that the patient gets any benefit out of the donations to the charity or, on the other hand, that the charity makes any profit out of the patient. The right of the patient to choose between a midwife and a local medical man, and where she insists on a midwife—as many poor women will—the desirability of ensuring that a properly certificated midwife shall be in attendance, are matters which are beside the point of your article, though not in themselves unimportant.

In conclusion, it is desirable to state a fact, which is probably well known to your contributor, that the advantage to the local practitioners of the presence of this charity is very great. The local medical men are constantly asking for nurses to attend their cases and returning warm thanks for their being sent; the more important practitioners are enabled in this way to attend cases which must otherwise go to hospital; they often have patients sent them by the nurses and, in fact, their demands for nursing attendance tax to the utmost the resources of the charity.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Inner Temple, August 30th, 1898.

ARTHUR PRITCHARD.

THE PERSHORE GUARDIANS AND THEIR POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The Pershore Guardians, at the last annual election of their medical officers, advertised for candidates who would waive all claim to superannuation. The Local Government Board, upon representation being made to them, informed the guardians that the arrangement was not one to which they could consent. It would seem now, according to a report of the proceedings of the guardians in the *Evesham Journal and Four Shires Advertiser*, to be the intention of certain members of that board to oust at least one of their medical officers, who has served them for nearly thirty years, by appointing at their next election a medical man they would get to "reside" in the district, and thus unless the Local Government Board again interfere he will not only lose his appointment but have the annoyance of being opposed under most unfair circumstances.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ARTHUR GREENWOOD,

Honorary Secretary, Poor-Law Medical Officers' Association, 3, Copthall-avenue, London Wall.

August 31st, 1898.

VITALITY.¹

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Harry Campbell will, I hope, pardon me for this late reply. Having recently occupied so many columns of THE LANCET I did not like to ask for space until the last of "Vitality" was published. Perhaps I may be allowed to remark that in replying to those who may differ from me I shall be as brief as possible and shall compress what I may deem it right to say in less than half a column of the journal.

If, as Dr. Harry Campbell considers, vitality is to be regarded "as a peculiar play of forces belonging to the inanimate world" I venture to inquire what it is that governs, controls, and regulates the particular forces of that very small portion of the matter of the inanimate part of our world which alone has entered or ever will enter into the composition of living things.

Although I consider that the "immaterial" does act, ever has acted, and will continue to act upon the "material," I cannot think that I occupy "a position as untenable as that of the spiritualists" which has been assigned to me by Dr. Harry Campbell, who also tells your readers that my assumption "that bioplasm is structureless" is "wholly illogical," because forsooth "*in our journey into the world of the infinitesimal we come sooner or later to a point at which we cease to detect structure!*" (The italics are mine.) I

¹ In reply to Dr. Harry Campbell's letter to THE LANCET of July 16th.