The object of the work is to meet this difficulty, by furnishing a species of information for which married women are often unwilling to *ask*, although they readily search for it in books.

Dr. Bull has divided the volume now before us, into six chapters; the first exposes several popular errors, which women are apt to entertain, upon the subject of pregnancy; the second treats of what we might call "the popular" signs of pregnancy; in the third chapter the diseases of pregnancy are noticed, and some useful hints are thrown out for their prevention and relief; the fourth chapter treats of miscarriage; and the fifth and sixth contain hints for the lying-in room and for suckling.

The matter of Dr. Bull's treatise is arranged completely in a popular form,—in one that is best calculated to be understood by the fair readers to whom it is addressed; we shall therefore content ourselves with observing, that on the several points enumerated above, it contains a variety of useful information, so clearly conveyed as to render it a very valuable companion for all married women who expect to become mothers.

FEES FROM LIFE ASSURANCE OFFICES FOR MEDICAL OPINIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I have just read in the last number of *THE LANCET* a letter signed "J. R." in which he attempts to show that insurance companies ought not to pay the medical referee, founding his argument on what he calls a difference between *testimony* and *opinion*; and stating that the company refers to the usual medical attendant for *past facts*, and that they submit these to their own medical man for his *opinion*. This is not true, as the following question, put in various forms by different offices, will show,—“Are you acquainted with any circumstances which in your *opinion* renders an insurance on his life more than usually hazardous?” If this is not asking an *opinion*, and a pretty comprehensive one, independently of other searching questions, I know not what can be so considered, and this, too, to be given to them in confidence, and kept strictly concealed from the proposer. It is quite time this question should be settled, and medical men should, one and all, refuse any communication with insurance offices, without they are adequately paid for their, to them extremely useful, information. They have long enough realized enormous profits by the

brains of medical men. If the information they obtain from medical men is necessary or useful to the company, they ought in justice and honesty to remunerate them for it handsomely. If unnecessary or useless, why ask it? causing sometimes a great loss of time and money, as in the case of disputed claims, &c. What would a lawyer think if a person, of whom his client wished to borrow money, were to come and ask him his confidential opinion of the risk he would run in lending it to him, and requiring a minute account of his circumstances?—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

AMICUS JUSTITIÆ.

October 23, 1837.

STOW UNION.

LETTER FROM MR. BEDINGFIELD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Before any one undertakes to impugn the accuracy of others, he ought to be particularly careful to proceed upon correct data himself, especially when he professes to be actuated by “a spirit of fairness.” Nothing can be more correct, as you have observed, than the statement published by the poor law committee of the Medical Provincial Association, relative to the Union of Stow, viz., that previous to the introduction of the New Poor Law Bill, there were three legally-appointed surgeons to the *fourteen* parishes constituting the Hundred of Stow, and that there are now only the same number of legally-appointed medical men to attend upon the whole Union, consisting, at the present moment, of, I believe, *thirty-three* parishes, the longest diameter of which probably exceeds seventeen miles.

It may not be uninteresting to some of your readers to see a concise exposition of the degrading system of sub-appointments, as well as of the different practices pursued in the different Unions. When the assistant poor law underlings, Messrs. Mott and Kay, commenced their bungling operations in Suffolk, I took the liberty to point out in an address to Lord Melbourne, the evils which must result to the poor, and to the medical profession, from a strict adoption of their measures. My objections were unanswered, any further than by permission being given to the district surgeons to engage neighbouring practitioners to assist them in the performance of duties which, from the nature and extent of those duties, it was obvious they could not themselves perform. I believe these sub-appointments to be illegal; but it seemed expedient to the Poor Law Commissioners to act illegally, and they winked at the sub-appointments rather than allow of the direct engagement of a sufficient number of surgeons. The manner in which these sub-appointments

have been made has varied in different Unions—in some the surgeon has been left uncontrolled in his choice of assistants; in others they have been made subject to the approval of the Boards of Guardians. The Woodbridge Union was, and still may be, an instance of the former; and the Stow Union is an instance of the latter. This want of uniformity has been productive of much bickering and heart-burning. In the Woodbridge Union one of the surgeons deputed another to attend upon a parish which was placed at an inconvenient distance for himself; but the parishioners not approving of the person so appointed, applied to the Board of Guardians upon the subject. The reply of the Board was, that “they could not interfere in such appointment.” In the Stow Union the opposite practice was pursued; the surgeons were told that their nominations must be subject to the approval of the Board of Guardians. The beautiful operation of their plan very soon manifested itself. One of the assistants nominated by a district surgeon, and *approved* of by the Board of Guardians (although he was an *entire* stranger to them), was reported to have very grossly neglected his duties; and it was said, how truly I know not, that some paupers had died without ever having been visited. For this neglect the Guardians censured the district surgeon, who very naturally and properly retorted upon them, that as they had approved of his nominee, he considered all responsibility removed from himself in the parishes so transferred.

Allow me now to inquire how far the authority of the Poor Law Commissioners and Guardians extends. Have they or have they not any legal right to prevent any surgeon appointed by them, from dividing his parishes with another practitioner? And having so divided them, what right have they, without the slightest ground, or charge, of neglect of duty, to remove him from those parishes? I have the honour to remain, Sir, yours very respectfully,

J. BEDINGFIELD.

Medical School, Stowmarket,
Oct. 28, 1837.

MESMERISM AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Mr. Wood is highly offended that I do not take a more favourable view of the *science* of mesmerism. This is somewhat remarkable; for, upon the whole, the conclusions at which Mr. Wood arrives do not appear to differ materially from my own. I plead guilty to having forgotten the exact statement in Dr. Elliotson's lecture, not having THE LANCET by me to refer to while writing; however, impartial persons will

not think much of this error. I said that it was unnecessary to enter into the details of that able lecture; as an old pupil of the learned professor, I did not wish to “leap my light courser o'er the bounds of taste,” by placing my judgment against that of my teacher. I spoke only of such experiments as had been performed during the absence of Dr. Elliotson; and, curiously enough, though Mr. Wood was present, I believe, during these very experiments, he does not controvert one of the *facts* which I stated respecting them. On those facts my opinion was founded, for before these deviations from the assertions of M. Dupotet occurred, I was inclined to believe somewhat in mesmerism. To the facts in question I again appeal. They prove at least this, that in one instance (that of Rebecca) the sleep, on one occasion, was neither “mesmeric” nor produced by mesmerism,—unless, homœopathically, a small dose produced an effect which a larger one, of the same kind, removed. Surely Mr. Wood forgets that Rebecca applied at the hospital from having seen accounts of M. Dupotet's experiments in the papers; she was, therefore, not entirely ignorant of what was to be done, nor of the effects that were expected. But I have no wish to quibble in the matter. What have been the results of M. Dupotet's experiments at the hospital? That “is the question.” Leaving the case of the girl with ecstatic delirium, as recorded by Dr. Elliotson, for each reader to draw his own conclusion from it (remembering that the mesmerism produced the state which it now temporarily relieves, and that the patient is epileptic) let me ask, what do all the other experiments prove?—“That mesmerism has the power of producing a peculiar state, in peculiar habits, which state resembles the coma following epilepsy, or the insensibility attendant on hysteria,”—or, in other words, the “profound *mesmetic* sleep” of Mr. Wood. I speak of all the cases, male and female, which have been operated on, leaving that of the girl with ecstatic delirium, to the verdict I have above proposed. The “gasps, or catchings of the breath,” would, of course, accompany a state of drowsiness. Mr. Wood will not forget that many male patients were operated upon without the slightest effect being produced, even during half-an-hour's manipulations, in some instances. Four epileptic males were operated on in one day, and only one of these experienced any effect therefrom, and that one felt *drowsy* after the motions had been made before his eyes for upwards of twenty-five minutes. No wonder! Boerhaave sent a patient to sleep by dropping water on a brass pan, even when narcotics have failed. Drowsiness is producible by the monotonous sound of a water-mill, the ticking of a clock, or the motion of its pendulum; and I myself felt drowsy while