might stop here, and leave the public to decide what credit can be given to parties who can so garble statements to suit their own views.

To proceed, however, most of the candidates so selected appeared before the sub-committee (consisting of three members of the committee, the medical board, and the consulting surgeon), and of these candidates three were selected, to recommend to the general committee for the election.

I shortly afterwards received an application from a Dr. Hancox, of Penn, Staffordshire (one of the unsuccessful candidates), for the payment of £3 10s., the amount of his alleged expenses, accompanied by a threat of the County Court! It is possible that my not acceding to that demand has now suggested this attack upon me, and the Birkenhead Hospital, in your valuable paper.

In conclusion, I may add that this appointment of house-surgeon was most assuredly awarded by merit, and *not*, as your correspondent so confidently asserts, "by interest." I defy him to prove his statement in the slightest degree, and I firmly believe that not one member of the committee was personally acquainted with any of the candidates, or that the slightest "interest" was ever used, directly or indirectly, to secure the election.

This much, sir, I think is due in defence of our valuable institution, and I do hope that a little reflection may for the future reconcile such unsuccessful candidates to the disappointment consequent on all elections, where the best man only wins. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Birkenhead, May 4, 1854.

W. W. ST. GEORGE, Hon. Sec.

INQUESTS IN LAMBETH AND SOUTHWARK.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Some few months ago a man was brought from the street to my house, and, notwithstanding my endeavours, died in a few minutes in my surgery, without having uttered a word. An inquest was held, and a verdict of "Natural Death" returned, without any medical testimony, and without even my having been summoned as a witness.

On Monday the 1st of May, when going my round, I was requested to look at the body of a woman who had just been found dead. An hour before she was in good spirits, and talking with her landlady. An inquest was held on Thursday last, and a verdict of died by the "Visitation of God" returned, again, without medical testimony.

How long, Mr. Editor, will these mock inquests continue to be held? It would seem that in order to ingratiate himself with the magistrates by saving the county the expence of a medical witness the requisite testimony is not produced before the jury by the coroner. It would be interesting to know if his disinterestedness makes him refuse his own fee.

I remain, Sir, yours &c.,

Kennington-cross, May, 1854.

H. M. MEADOWS, Surgeon.

* * On many occasions similar to those mentioned by Mr. Meadows the fault may be traced to the neglect or ignorance of the summoning officer.—ED. L.

THE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.—MIDWIVES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Now that so much is being said about Medical Reform, perhaps the following will not be altogether uninteresting, as it shows the necessity which there is for protecting the legally-qualified medical man in that branch of our profession called midwifery. I am a young beginner, fully qualified, as required by the laws of this country, and having a family to maintain. About twelve months since, I settled down in my present situation; there is no other medical man near me, (the neighbourhood being small,) and who, do you suppose, I find my principal opponents? Why a class of ignorant midwives, who do not hesitate to inform their victims that they *have their diplomas*; and what is worse, there are some medical men around, who are stated to allow these women to assert that they will *follow* them in case of emergency. It is only very recently that a fine child was fairly killed by one of these women; and in my rounds this morning, I was informed that this very woman had sent to inform a lady-patient of mine, with whom she had made an arrangement to "char," that she was very sorry she could not come, as she had been called out to attend a patient in her confinement. Is it an encouragement to young men about to qualify, that they will have to compete with these ignorant persons? There is yet another

case referring to the subject which I may mention; it is this: like all young surgeons commencing a practice, I of course expected competition from the various surgeons around me, and so long as it is done in a fair way, there can be no reasonable objection; but fancy a guardian of the parish, a most wealthy and influential man, brother to one of the surgeons of our largest hospitals, allowing his wife to join with the parish surgeon, in forming a society to oppose me. Surely this is too bad. Certainly societies offer inducements to the working man's wife: to have every requisite provided for themselves and their children, with five shillings towards the payment of the medical man, is not to be sneered at; but I think it is degrading to our profession, to find one of them stooping to injure a brother, although a younger one, by entering into such an engagement, especially one who calls himself respectable, and is reported wealthy. Surely in the Bill before Parliament, we ought to be entirely protected against both of these evils. In the first place, midwives ought to be done away with entirely, and all those who cannot afford to pay a reasonable fee, ought to have the parish surgeon, who should be obliged to contract, in one stated sum, to supply medicine and attendance, act as accoucheur, or attend in any other case. He would not then be anxious to take the midwifery cases of other practitioners, or prefer to attend them for the small fee allowed by the parish, than to let another medical man attend, whom they would and could pay, but for the inducement held out to them that they would, by the means mentioned, have to pay nothing at all.

I am Sir, yours obediently,

Essex, April, 1854.

M.R.C.S.L. &c.

THE WAR.

MEDICAL INTELLIGENCE.

SMALL-POX IN THE BALTIC FLEET.—The small-pox, which was said to have broken out extensively in the Baltic fleet, has proceeded no further than the *James Watt*, which has lost several men. Many of the other ships of war have had their crews re-vaccinated at Elsinore.

THE BALTIC HOSPITAL-SHIP.—The *Belleisle*, Commander Hoskins, fitted out at Plymouth as an hospital-ship for the Baltic, proceeded to the Sound on Saturday afternoon last, to wait for final orders. She is fitted with 160 beds—118 on the lower deck, 38 on the orlop deck, and four in what is to be called the operating-room. Ten cabins will be appropriated to sick officers, who will also be provided with a separate sickness berth. Everything necessary for an hospital-ship has been taken on board by the *Belleisle*—medical stores, wooden limbs, &c. She is a twenty-four gun-ship, but will only carry six guns—thirty-two pounders, placed on the quarter deck and fore-castle.

The *Belleisle* sailed from the Sound on Wednesday. The Admiralty have directed the authorities of the Victualling Yard, Stonehouse, to supply the following articles of provisions, of the very best quality, to the *Belleisle*, for the use of the sick:—Beef, 50,000lbs., bread, 50,000lbs., flour, 50,000lbs., Scotch barley, 7000lbs., essence of beef, 2000 $\frac{1}{4}$ pints, white wine, 87 gallons. She is also to take on board for Sir Charles Napier's fleet in the Baltic—Bread, 1000 bags, salt meat, 250 tierces, spirits, 50 puncheons, and a proportionate quantity of all other species of provisions. One hundred seamen were lent yesterday from the *Impregnable* and *Royal William* to navigate her to the Downs, returning to Plymouth in the *Avon*.

MALTA, MAY 2.—Letters from Malta of this date specify that surgeon Bostock, and assistant-surgeons Robinson and Pilkington had left Malta for Scutari on the 22nd ultimo, with a staff of officers and about 900 of the Scots Fusilier Guards. Surgeon Huthwaite, Assistant-surgeons Wardrope and Blenkins, with the officers and 650 privates of the Grenadier Guards, had also departed on board the *Golden Fleece* for the same destination. Battalion Surgeon Skelton, and Assistant-surgeon Wyatt, with a wing of the Coldstream Guards, for the same place, on board the *Vulcan* steam-vessel. Assistant-surgeon Gilborne, of the Royal Artillery, arrived at Malta on the 26th ult., in the *Edendale* transport, number 10, from Gravesend, with men and horses all well. After watering in Valetta harbour they were all sent forward to Scutari. The *Euxine* from Portsmouth, with Surgeon Jamieson, and a portion of the 19th regiment, arrived on the 28th, and were immediately forwarded to Constantinople. The *Melita*, screw-steamer, from Liverpool, arrived on the afternoon of the same day, with Dr. McDonald, Dr. Hannon, Dr. Tucker, Dr. Han-