AN OCTOGENARIAN HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If you will allow the following facts to appear in the columns of your valuable journal, it may perhaps lead to a virtuous result, and shorten a species of underhand work:—

A well-known senior physician to one of the largest hospitals in London, has many years held the office, tacitly giving the students to understand that he does not wish them to accompany him round the wards, neither does he profess to give them medical instruction, while he continues to pocket the annual fees accruing therefrom. He moreover admits that his day is gone by. It therefore must appear to you, Sir, very just, that this memorable physician should be called upon to resign the post he can no longer fill with his former activity and credit.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

April, 1849.

JUSTITIA.

ON A NEW AMALGAM FOR THE TEETH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I shall be obliged if you will allow me, through the medium of your journal, to make known to my professional brethren the composition of an amalgam invented by myself some years ago, which I have used with much success for a length of time, in some peculiar cases, and have experimented with it extensively in filling carious teeth. It is composed of chemically pure tin, prepared with much care, to insure its being free from any other metallic substance, and combined with prepared cadmium, in small quantities, and mercury. In using it, more or less mercury should be employed, as may be required to make it more or less plastic.

The cavity of the tooth being previously thoroughly freed from carious matter, can be carefully filled with the paste thus formed. In the course of a few minutes it hardens into a solid, and gradually acquires a still firmer consistence and toughness, exhibiting a whitish colour, or, if cut or burnished, a metallic lustre, like that of pure tin.

The advantages of this filling, I believe, are such as are possessed by no other amalgam. It retains its colour perfectly, neither oxidizing on the external surface, nor on that applied to the cavity, and of course it does not discolour the tooth itself. It fills each crevice of the cavity, and, effectually excluding moisture, and all kinds of deleterious matters, prevents the recurrence of caries; and becomes sufficiently hard to withstand the friction of mastication. To these most important advantages may be added others—*e.g.*, it is easily and quickly prepared, without the trouble of heating it, as is the case with some of the amalgams hitherto used. It is readily applied to the cavity of the teeth, and without the disagreeable creaking sound which attends the employment of other preparations. It will not amalgamate with, or injure, any gold clasps or plate bearing artificial teeth, which may be placed in contact with it; and in case of its removal being necessary, it can be cut out as easily as a gold filling, as it forms a tough, almost ductile substance, and not a hard, brittle one, like the ordinary amalgams.

I have submitted it to the inspection and trial of some of the best dentists here and in London. As far as their opportunities of investigating it have hitherto extended, I think they fully agree with me as to its advantages. It is, I believe, the best filling hitherto used, in those cases where amalgams are thought to be useful; and some of my friends are willing to award it higher praise even than this.

Believing it, therefore, to be a useful discovery, I wish to place it in the hands of the profession, and I make this communication to you, at the same time that I publish a similar one in France, and in my native country, America, where I first used it.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Rue de la Paix, Paris, April, 1849. THOMAS W. EVANS, Dentist.

P.S.—Having been urged by many distinguished members of the profession to have it manufactured under my immediate superintendence, to secure accuracy in its preparation, that it may be fully tested, I have made arrangements so to do.—T. W. E.

DUBLIN AND EDINBURGH GRADUATES AND
"THE PRINCIPLES."*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Agreeing in every word you say relative to the necessity of the independent members of the profession opposing "the Principles" sent forth by the close corporations and the

miserable rump of the Institute in every way possible, I see the manifest advantage of acting in compact bodies, and your appeal to the Edinburgh men ought not to be thrown away, and I trust some combined movement may be made, rectifying Dr. Christison's sad blunder, and impressing the Scotch and Irish members of parliament with the justice of our cause, and the importance of the subject.

To all graduates now in general practice, but contemplating ultimately to act solely as physicians, the admirable, calm, conclusive letter of Dr. May, of Maldon, in a late number of *THE LANCET*, must act as a stimulus to exertion. I shall be ready to lend my feeble aid in the cause, although I have no wish to become a pure; indeed, with all due deference to your able correspondent, I doubt the prudence of such an act in any one in good general practice. The country physician may be viewed as geologists do the mammoth, belonging to an age gone by, or, at least, belonging to a species rapidly passing away before a highly-educated class of chirurgi-medici, improvements in locomotion, &c. Still, although I have no intention of this kind, I should indeed be sorry to doff a title I have been long accustomed to, albeit it is merely honorary.

I remain, yours truly,

Orsett, April, 1849.

DAV. CORBET, M.D. Edin.

PETITION IN FAVOUR OF ASSISTANT NAVY
SURGEONS.*"To the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesses, in Parliament assembled."**"The Petition of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, humbly sheweth,*

"That many of the fellows and licentiates of this royal college are now engaged in the public service as medical officers in her Majesty's navy, and, as your petitioners believe, discharge their duty with credit to themselves and advantage to the country.

"That many complaints have been laid before your petitioners, as a body legally entrusted with the education and control of the surgical profession in Ireland, to the effect that such of the fellows and licentiates of the college as serve at sea in the rank of assistant-surgeons are much aggrieved by being deprived of the accommodation of separate cabins, and by not being permitted to mess with the ward-room officers, whereby they are prevented from opportunities of study and professional improvement, to the detriment of the public service, not less than to their own inconvenience.

"Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will take this matter into your consideration, and adopt such measures of relief as to your wisdom may seem fit."

MEDICAL REFORM.—MEMORIAL TO SIR GEORGE
GREY.

DR. WRIGHT presents his compliments to the Editor of *THE LANCET*, and begs to submit for publication in the next number of his journal, the inclosed Memorial, which has been presented to Sir George Grey, from the Council of the Gloucestershire Medical and Surgical Association.

Cheltenham, April, 1849.

*To the Right Honourable Sir George Grey, Bart., M.P.,
Her Majesty's Secretary of State, &c.*The Memorial of the Council of the Gloucestershire
Medical and Surgical Association, sheweth,—

That your memorialists, in conjunction with the members of the Association which they represent, have for many years taken a deep interest in the important question of medical reform, and have from time to time memorialized the Crown and the Government on this subject. Your memorialists are of opinion, that one of the evils of the medical profession is the number of corporate bodies empowered to grant diplomas and licences; that the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of England, if rightly organized, are sufficient for the requirements of the profession and the public in this country.

That the proposed creation of a new institution, for the enrolment of general practitioners, is uncalled for by any necessity; and that the establishment of another college, whilst it would increase the existing evil of corporate monopoly, would fail to effect the objects for which it was concerted.

That your memorialists have read, with much satisfaction, a memorial presented to you by the medical men of Manchester, in reference to certain "Outlines of a Bill" for the regulation of physic and surgery, proposed by a conference of parties representing the metropolitan corporations and the National Institute.

Your memorialists desire to record their approbation of the views and principles embodied in the "Manchester Memorial," and they respectfully urge their truthfulness and importance upon your serious consideration.

Signed, on behalf of the Council of the Gloucestershire Medical and Surgical Association,

THOMAS WRIGHT, M.D., *President*.
Gloucester, April, 1849. JOHN W. WILTON, F.R.C.S., *Secretary*.

DETECTION OF NITRIC ACID IN THE URINE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—While expressing my thanks to Dr. Basham for his courteous reply to my note on the detection of nitric acid in the urine, when nitrate of potass is exhibited, in large doses, in acute rheumatism, I must still beg to differ from him as to the presence of *more* than mere traces of the acid in the urine. His communication, indeed, confirms that opinion, as I shall presently show, from the tenour of the note itself. The process described is one of extreme delicacy, but not so convincing as it might be, since Dr. Basham has depended on the peroxidation of the iron, which may be produced by simple exposure to the air. I should have felt much more satisfied of the presence of nitric acid had he observed the characteristic blackening of the liquid, produced by the reduction of the nitric acid to binoxide of nitrogen, and the reaction of the gas on the protosulphate of iron, which would assuredly have occurred, in a marked degree, had even half a grain of nitre been present in the saline matter subjected to experiment. I would suggest, if Dr. Basham pursues the inquiry further, as I hope he will, that the examination be conducted in the following manner; and this I do with great deference:—

After removing the organic matters, as much as possible, by alcohol and ether, dissolve the saline residue in water, filter, and evaporate gently to dryness. Then place a portion of the saline matter in a test-tube, pour on it strong sulphuric acid, to the height of half an inch, and again pour carefully on this about an equal quantity of solution of protosulphate of iron. If nitric acid be present, a black ring will be observed when the two liquids are in apposition; and if the nitric acid be present in any quantity, the whole liquid will be gradually blackened.

But really, Sir, no such extreme delicacy is requisite in the inquiry, if the nitric acid be not decomposed during the passage of the salt from the stomach to the urine. When we reflect that four or six drachms of nitrate of potass are given, in these cases, for several days, in the course of each twenty-four hours, it is evident that after continuing the exhibition of the salt for a short time, the system will be saturated with it, and hence a nearly equal amount of the salt will be excreted to that taken into the stomach. Hence, if four drachms of nitre be administered, we may expect about the same quantity to be excreted, and as each 101.50 grains of nitre contain 54.24 grains of dry nitric acid, 240 grains (four drachms) will contain 128.25 grains of dry nitric acid, or 146.5 grains of the strongest hydrous nitric acid. If such a quantity of nitric acid were present in the saline residue of the urine, not only would it give the most strongly-marked reaction with the tests, but even the saline matter would deflagrate when thrown on hot coals. If, on the contrary, the nitric acid be decomposed, as I believe to be the case, then either none at all would be present in the urine, or minute traces might escape decomposition, and require the elaborate process described by Dr. Basham for its detection. The quantitative estimation of the nitric acid in the urine of the twenty-four hours would prove extremely interesting, as solving an important question in therapeutical science—the action of nitre in the numerous forms of inflammatory disease in which it is continually exhibited. I may remark, in conclusion, that the nitric acid of four drachms of nitrate of potass contains 94.69 grains of oxygen, equal to 274 cubic inches of that gas, which, on the supposition that the whole of the acid is decomposed, would be employed in promoting the change of matter, as it is termed by Liebig.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Wandsworth-road, April, 1849. PHILIP B. AYRES, M.D. Lord.

UNION HOSPITAL, MANCHESTER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you do me the politeness to insert this note, which I write from a sense of duty, in consequence of reading in your journal (No. 14) a communication from a Mr. Crowther, entitled "Hospital Reports," and headed "Union Hospital, Manchester"?

I beg to state, in the first place, that no hospital of that name exists in Manchester. It is quite true that there are sick-wards, provided by the Board of Guardians within the walls of the Manchester Workhouse, for the medical treatment of those resident in the establishment who are ill on admission, or who subsequently are overtaken with physical infirmity.

Furthermore, I am under the necessity to state, that no medical pupils are, or, according to law, can be, admitted as "dressers." It is quite true that, some two years ago, three pupils of the Manchester School of Medicine were allowed, from time to time, to see the practice in the sick department of the Workhouse, as a matter of special politeness, and for private friendship's sake; and since this period none others have enjoyed like privileges.

I cannot help concluding, that your correspondent has exceeded the right use of courtesies shown to him whilst yet a student; and if he had felt clear about publishing cases from the Workhouse, it seems to me that he would have exhibited a more refined delicacy of feeling had he abstained from so public a parade of the place whence he derived his information.

I am sorry to write thus pointedly; but when one man exceeds the bounds of propriety in these matters, he cannot as justly calculate how great a barrier he places in the way of others who have yet to learn, and yet to have advantages for information held out to them by members of the profession, who are glad to encourage a desire for information.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. FARR,
Resident Medical Officer
of the Manchester Workhouse.
Manchester Workhouse, April, 1849.

PROPOSITION FOR MEDICAL REORGANIZATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I propose the following system for the improvement of the medical profession, based, as I think it will be, upon justice and equal rights to all its members:—

Let there be two grades—physicians and surgeons. Physicians to include all who are members of any college of physicians, or graduates in medicine of any university, with licence to practise in any part of Great Britain or Ireland, or any part of her Majesty's dominions; surgeons to include all members of any legally constituted college of surgeons, or legally constituted bodies licensing to practise in surgery, with permission to practise in any part of the Queen's dominions.

Let both physicians and surgeons be able to recover, both for medical and surgical advice and medicines if required; and let both be able to hold any union appointment.—I beg to remain, Sir, your obedient servant, EDWARD WILLIAMS.
Crackerbtown, Cardiff, 1849.

IODINE IN THE URINE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Can any of your correspondents enlighten me upon the following subject? I was examining the urine of a lady who has been taking hydriodate of potass for ten days; from an accidental circumstance the urine has been for the last two days loaded with lithate of ammonia. I had added a drop of nitric acid to some of this urine on a slip of glass for microscopic purposes; and on wiping this off with an old cambric handkerchief which had been slightly starched, I was surprised to see immediately the characteristic blue colour produced by the combination of free iodine with starch. Subsequently I placed a few drops of the same urine on the handkerchief, and upon adding a drop of nitric acid, it immediately became blue. Does this urine contain free iodide of potassium—or is there any decomposition in the passage of this medicine through the system, and does the iodine exist in combination with any of the salts of the urine?

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Leamington, March 22, 1849. X. Y. Z.

EDINBURGH GRADUATES PRACTISING AS PHYSICIANS IN ENGLAND.

EVIDENCE OF DR. CHRISTISON BEFORE THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION COMMITTEE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I observe a statement in Dr. Christison's evidence which, I think, requires correction. Dr. Christison says, before the committee, (see THE LANCET, Jan. 13, p. 30.) that "there is scarcely a county town of considerable size in the northern