considerably relieved. The vomited matters were evaporated to dryness, and the solid residue, not amounting to two drachms in weight, yielded abundant evidence of the presence of arsenic, copper, lead, iron, and zinc, all of which metals, excepting the last-named, had doubtless been derived from the confectionery of which the children had partaken. On making inquiry into the matter, we were informed that between thirty and forty children had been attacked in a similar way, and that they had all purchased sweetmeats from the Jew in question; but it does not appear that he was acquainted with the poisonous nature of his merchandize, for he had purchased it, so he stated, as the refuse stock of a large and very respectable firm in the City."

"I have been induced to record," states Dr. Letheby, "the preceding cases, not so much for the purpose of exhibiting the nature of the symptoms observed, as with the view of showing the necessity for some legislative interference in a matter of what may truly be termed wholesale public poisoning; for, without such evidence before the mind, it would not be credited by the great bulk of the community, that many of the prettiest and daintiest looking confections of the dessert-table are, like the choice luxury of the Queen-mother, but too often the source of danger to those who partake of them. Within the last three years no less than seventy cases of poisoning have been traced to this source; and how many, may we ask, have escaped discovery?"

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

VERACITY OF THE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to forward you, for insertion in THE LANCET, the enclosed letter addressed to the Editor of the *Association Medical Journal*, in consequence of the "cooked" report of the last meeting of the Metropolitan Branch in the *Journal* of the 12th of May. That report is characterized by misrepresentation and a want of truthfulness. The Editor of the *Association Journal* has not denied the charges I preferred against him, but refuses to insert my letter, because, forsooth, he has "been complained of on several occasions for reporting the speeches of Dr. O'Connor at various recent meetings with far too much amplitude." This is a mere insolent assertion of an editor whose "mendacity requires a cloak, and finds that even a thin disguise is useful." It is rather extraordinary that, if this "mendacious" editor has "been complained of on several occasions for reporting my speeches at various recent meetings," he should so frequently have asked me to write out for him any observations I have made at former as well as "at various recent meetings," and that but very recently, in a very urgent manner, in the presence of a member of his own family, but I declined to comply with the request. I did on one occasion—nearly, twelve months back—comply with his request; but circumstances have gradually taken place to alter very much the opinion I formerly entertained of him; and not the least important was his denial of the charges you preferred against him in connexion with the proceedings at the Medico-Chirurgical Society on the first of March. I could have confirmed those charges had I thought it worth while at the time, and so could other Fellows of this Society besides myself. The Editor of the "*Association Journal*" did vote against THE LANCET at the Medico-Chirurgical Society on the 1st of March.

The Editor of the *Association Journal*, in the number of that paper for the 7th of April, says he did not know anything on the subject of Mr. de Morgan's amendment "*till he heard Mr. de Morgan address the meeting.*" Now, Sir, what is the real fact,—Before the business of the meeting commenced, Mr. de Morgan, Mr. Ancell, and the Editor of the *Association Journal*, were sitting together, in close conversation, and Mr. de Morgan handed to the latter for his perusal the amendment he (Mr. de Morgan) proposed. I saw this take place, for I had occasion to cross the room to speak to the Editor of the *Association Journal* at the time; subsequently I sat opposite to him, and he was noticed by other Fellows of the Society besides myself to record his vote against THE "LANCET." There is no blame to be attached to any man for doing that which he conscientiously considers correct; the baseness, the meanness, is in his not having the honesty to avow it.

The physicians and surgeons of the provinces have reason to

be proud of having established, and so long preserved, the Provincial Association; but let them beware in time, lest a metropolitan clique, aided by their own organ, may not before long destroy its character and usefulness. With them it will soon be to consider how long the *Journal* is to continue a vehicle for the furtherance of personal interest, and the propagation of misrepresentation and falsehood, instead of being what it was intended,—the organ of an association of gentlemen established for the "maintenance of the honour and respectability of the profession generally, in the provinces, by promoting friendly intercourse and free communication of its members, and by establishing among them the harmony and good feeling which ought ever to characterise a liberal profession."

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

May 23, 1854.

WILLIAM O'CONNOR.

To the Editor of the "*Association Medical Journal.*"

SIR,—I regret being obliged to complain of the manner in which the proceedings of the last meeting of the Metropolitan Branch were reported in the *Association Journal* of Saturday.

You make it appear in that report that I was opposed to any alteration in the law regarding the admission of members, and also that I acted in the spirit of a partizan in the discussion on the application of the law.

With regard to the first point, my observations were made solely with the view to obtain an explanation of the manner in which members were admitted to the parent Association. I was fearful that we might be running counter to the central Council; for I was at the time under the impression that due care was exhibited in the admission of members of the Association, and that consequently there could be no objection to admitting any member into the Branch established in the neighbourhood in which he resided. This I have no doubt must have been the view of the members of the Council of the Metropolitan Branch when they drew up the rules. After your explanation of the lax manner in which members were admitted to the parent Association, and that such a law as that proposed was observed in other branches, I at once expressed my approval of this alteration suggested, and gave it my unqualified support. That expression of my approval and support you have studiously omitted.

With regard to the application of the law in its altered form, I was opposed to giving it a retrospective effect, as advocated by you and Mr. Ancell, which I considered to be at variance with all precedent and practice, and perfectly unconstitutional. I discussed the question solely on its merits, and as a matter of principle, free from any personal considerations whatever.

Your constant "beating about the bush" and whisperings with Mr. Ancell led me to suspect there was some undercurrent at work, which induced me to persevere in my opposition, and my suspicions were further excited by Mr. Ancell saying, after the alteration in the law was adopted, "Then, Mr. Chairman, I apprehend that all who have paid their subscriptions since the intention to alter the law was promulgated are not members of the Branch, and can only be admitted under its altered form." You cannot forget that I promptly opposed this monstrous proposition, although you have taken care to suppress it. It was not until I perseveringly resisted your efforts that the object of Mr. Ancell and yourself became known. I had no idea of your real motive until my opposition forced you to admit that you were "beating about the bush" instead of openly avowing the object of your hostility. I did contend, and still do so, that the payment of the subscription, as a member of the Branch, to any authorized person by a member of the parent Association, and that member obtaining his receipt, is a sufficient proof of membership under the old law; the possession of the receipt is an evidence that the proper person has been communicated with, and therefore—free from all personal squabbles and considerations—I do contend that Mr. Wakley is as much a member of the Branch as you or any other person. Mr. Toynbee, Dr. Henry, and yourself, as well as Mr. Honeyman, in the instance of Mr. Wakley, have received subscriptions and given receipts to those who were not before members of the Branch without communicating with the secretary.

With your and Mr. Wakley's personalities I have nothing to do. I am alike independent of both of you. I shall always deliver my opinion according to my judgment in the discussion of any matter in which I take part, regardless of whether it is pleasing to either of you, and for that reason I do protest against you or any journal representing me in the character of a partizan.

A suppression of truth, and a suggestion of the reverse, characterizes the report in the *Association Journal* which I complain of; and I would suggest that unless the reports of the future meetings are more in accordance with what really takes place, it would be more conducive to the well-being of the Association and the honour of the profession if they were discontinued altogether.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

WILLIAM O'CONNOR.

Upper Montagu-street, Montagu-square, May, 1854.

THE PRIZE-MEN AND PRIZE SYSTEM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have been sorry to see the frequency with which, of late, attacks have been made in your pages upon the prize systems and prize-men of the medical schools, inasmuch as I think it should be an object with all those who are interested in the development of "young medicine" to stimulate as much as possible that useful emulation which prompts each man to endeavour to raise himself above his neighbours. Many letters have been published, apparently with the sole object of proving that those who get prizes are those who least deserve them, and that the real action of the prize system is to rear a race of bookworms, destined to become neither useful nor ornamental. Unquestionably, were a man, for the sake of gaining a prize in a particular branch of study, to neglect to cultivate the rest, he might become a proficient in that one whilst a dunce in every other department—a result against which we are warned session after session, and by one lecturer after another, in addition to the grave cautions on the same subject which you yourself generally offer us at the beginning of each medical year; but is not even this evil preferable to the case of the *soi-disant* students, who, as ignorant as this imaginary prize-man upon every other subject, has not his merit of being well informed even upon one? Of what is the class of medical students generally made up? As far as my experience has led me to form an opinion, they consist, first, of those who spend nearly the whole of their period of studentship, to within about two or three months of their examinations, in a continued round of dissipation, barely attending so many lectures as will suffice to get them their schedules signed, which, by the bye, in some of the larger and more lax schools, scarcely requires the waste of more than two or three hours upon an entire course,) and for obtaining their diplomas, putting their faith partly in Providence, and partly in Messrs. Power, Hind, Barron, Steggall, &c., *et omne hoc genus*. Then there is another class of men who probably attend lectures, but with the most placid contentment, until the time comes also for them to "*grind*," and when they, too, have to put their noses to the stone, and work "for dear life." And then we have a class of men who feel that they have entered upon their studies at a medical school for a very different purpose, and who, from the first, work diligently to prepare themselves, not merely for their examinations, but that they become also fully qualified to practise their profession scientifically and faithfully afterwards. Of these, all, it is true, do not compete for prizes, but from them certainly are the prize-men taken.

Again, with regard to the prize system, that possibly may be faulty in leading the energies of the students in a wrong direction, making their success too much dependent upon mere book knowledge, and in not instituting those practical tests to which the candidates for the fellowship of the English College of Surgeons, for instance, are now subjected; but in this respect the higher examinations which the student has subsequently to undergo are liable to exactly the same animadversions, as it is a well-known fact that three months' hard work will enable a man of the most ordinary capabilities to get the college membership diploma, although he has never in his life seen a surgical case treated, or had his nose offended by the foul effluvia of the dissecting-room; and especially, with regard to the latter, it is notorious that as long as a man pays for his proper number of "parts," there is not the least necessity for risking the cutting of his fingers with his dissecting-knives. And moreover, Sir, I maintain that those who usually compete for prizes are animated by an ambition which would equally aid them, were the character of the examinations changed; that they are in fact, men of action whose love of pre-eminence will be gratified whatever labour may be necessary in order to obtain that gratification; and that, consequently, those who are the prize-men now, would be prize-men were the system altered. But why are the recipients of prizes attacked? "They are," it is said, "mere theorists." Well, granting, for

the moment, this assertion (which I believe, Sir, to be itself a mere theory), suppose a man has acquired a thorough book knowledge of medicine and the collateral sciences, but has neglected to cultivate that close, bedside acquaintance with disease so essential to form a good practitioner, yet is he not in a much more favourable position than the man alike ignorant of theory and practice? and has he not much more chance of recognising and properly treating disease, when brought into contact with it, than the man who has never troubled his head about the matter? Those who are generally loudest in their denunciations of the prize system are the would-be "practical men"—usually men who, feeling that their only chance of maintaining a character for knowing anything at all consists in claiming a knowledge not easily scrutinized and judged of by their fellow-students, loudly proclaim their "practical" abilities, which perhaps, in a great many instances, would be found, were they put to the test, to about equal their theoretical knowledge. "Oh," says the practical man, speaking of a successful prize-man, "its all very fine, but he would not know a case of measles if he saw it, in spite of all his theory." This may possibly be true, if the man in question had never seen a case of the kind, which his being a prize-man, however, does not at all necessitate; but even admitting it, if you show him a single case of measles, he is just in as good a position as regards this as the "practical man" himself, and has all his scientific knowledge in addition.

But from what I myself have seen, I believe, Sir, that the prize-men do not consume the whole of their time in reading merely, but that they are also the most diligent in the dissecting-room, and in attendance in the hospital wards, (a fact upon which it would be interesting and useful if the various medical teachers would record their experience in your journal,) and that when the energies of such men become wholly devoted to the practice of the science which they have already well studied in all its branches, they will become of much more service to their profession and to society at large, than those who, priding themselves on their practical acquirements, do so for the purpose of blinding their own eyes, as well as those of others, to their lamentable deficiencies. The motives of the complainants are, in some instances, amusingly apparent; thus, your correspondent "*Res Facta*" evidently invokes your thunder against the system because a friend of his happened to be disappointed in obtaining a certificate, in consequence of some arrangement which he asserts to prevail at his particular school, but which, so far as I know, exists nowhere else. True, he takes up the hacknied cry about the inutility of reading without experience—a thing which, not being contested, scarcely requires such repeated affirmations; but, in making the comparison of a week at the bedside, and a month at books, let it not be forgotten that not even bedside experience will teach a man who is not prepared to observe the symptoms which are presented to him, and who, when he sees them, knows not what they portend. In fact, Sir, I believe, that in fighting against an imaginary danger, those who have written in condemnation of the prize system have been causing real mischief by discouraging the industrious and lulling the idle into a false self-complacency; and let me earnestly beg of you, Sir, to beware how you encourage this (I fear) too prevalent feeling by sanctioning it in your pages; not that I would presume to attempt to dictate to you the course to be pursued, but I, being a student, am therefore in some degree capable of bearing witness to the feelings of students in general; and I can for myself declare that, although I have had even more than an average share of success in competing for prizes, I have ever held their acquisition as merely secondary to the other more important purposes for which I study.

As you have admitted so much into your pages in the way of accusation, I hope that, in accordance with your excellent motto "*audi alteram partem*," you will also give insertion to this attempt at a defence, weak and imperfect as it may seem. The reason, probably, that the cudgels have not been previously taken up by abler hands than mine, is, that prize-men generally think that "they may laugh who win."

London, May, 1854.

A PRIZE-MAN.

LOCAL MEDICAL REGISTRARS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The suggestion contained in the note from "M. R. C. S.," in your last paper, appears to me well worthy of attention. Living at a distance from London, I can only learn through THE LANCET, the nature and progress of the various Medical Bills before the House, but the subject is deeply interesting to me in common with the profession. If the