Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE INSTITUTION OF A DOCTORATE IN SURGERY
URGED AS AN INDISPENSABLE PORTION OF
REFORM IN THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SUR-
GEONS OF ENGLAND.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At the present important juncture, when the Royal College of Surgeons has at length manifested a disposition to mitigate the weighty grievances that afflict its injured members, I feel anxious, as one of that body, to claim a space in your valuable columns, in order to submit to the special attention of the Council a subject in every way worthy their best consideration, since it is deeply felt, throughout every part of the country, to be an evil of most serious magnitude—one which has undoubtedly contributed to prostrate the *status* of surgery, in Great Britain, more than all other influences combined, empiricism alone excepted,—I allude to the monstrous fact, that British surgeons are not *graduates* in their profession!

That this glaring and cardinal defect in the Charter of the College is no less opprobrious to the *status* of British surgery than it is injurious to the private interests of the practitioner of the science, is a statement, the truth of which is too apparent to admit of doubt; and the continued omission, therefore, to institute a bachelorate and a doctorate in surgery, (particularly the latter,) in all respects equal to corresponding degrees in physic, is deeply to be deplored as a disgraceful slur upon English surgery. It inflicts an injury upon our profession, which can only be properly estimated by reversing the existing relative position of surgery and medicine to each other—a change at once palpably subversive of the best interests of the latter, and which would inevitably prove "a heavy blow and great discouragement" to medicine.

Notwithstanding the mighty development which British surgery has undergone, during the last century, both as regards its theory and practice—a progress towards perfection as brilliant as the history of any other human pursuit can boast, and which sheds enduring lustre around the names with which that progress is associated—yet, in the midst of so many intrinsic achievements, which so strongly lay claim to superior public estimation, we find the institution of those external dignities, so essential to the due maintenance of an exalted *status* for surgery, most culpably neglected;—and with what result? Perpetually taunted with a *presumed* inferiority of rank, as compared with the physician, the unfortunate surgeon, in whatever part of the country he may be located, has to endure, from day to day, annoyances as humiliating to his feelings as a gentleman as they are insulting and disparaging to his intelligence as a man of science. To this *inferred* depreciation of the surgeon's rank are consequently to be traced a large proportion of those bitter animosities and ungenerous reflections which, it is to be regretted, mark the conduct of too many amongst us at the present day, and which are as illiberal and undignified as they are unworthy the noble profession of the healing art.

The vast and unfounded disparity between the collegiate *status* of the practitioners of *operative* medicine and those of *pharmaceutical* medicine is truly a grievance of gigantic magnitude, and cannot be too early considered by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, with a view to its thorough redress.

When the English surgeon looks across the Channel, his chagrin at the neglect he endures is not a little augmented by contrasting the bachelorate and doctorate, attached to his profession in France, with the very equivocal position he holds in his own country—proud, scientific England—where he is at once deprived of *both* titles by his College, and, in lieu, is dubbed with the very unacademic appellation of *member*. More than ever he is made to feel deeply that surgery, as a pure science and profession, is fully entitled to rank with pure physic, and that it ought to have conferred upon it at least a *doctorate*, if not a *bachelorate*, as subservient to the existing fellowship; and that the whole class of members of the English College should at once be created *doctors of surgery*, of equal *status* with *doctors of medicine*. Not only the respectability and the science of the British surgeon, but also the very competition between himself and the doctor of medicine, do both justify and demand such a concession by his College in his behalf;

and depend upon it, there are few steps which that College could adopt, at the present moment, so likely to give general and permanent satisfaction to the great body of its members as the measure now under consideration. It would certainly tend more than a host of other alterations mooted to silence the murmurings of discontent hitherto so prevalent, and, at the same time, to staunchly uphold the true dignity of British surgery as a pure profession.

I would observe, in conclusion, that the change contended for, sustained, as it is, by every consideration of both justice and policy, would go far to vindicate the Council as the avowed conservators of the *status* of surgery in this country, and would wipe away a deep stain that has long defaced the proud escutcheon of the College of Surgeons; but in order to make the concession valuable in equity, the new title should be promptly and unreservedly conferred upon all surgeons who were members of the College prior to the ordonnance for the creation of the fellowship. Under such circumstances, it is unquestionable, that although the innovation is, after all, only such as has long since obtained among our discerning neighbours, the French, it would be gladly accepted by the whole body of members throughout the kingdom; while, on the other hand, the public would recognise in such a measure the discharge of a high duty long incumbent on the College towards the *status* of British surgery, and well done, though at the eleventh hour.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

ROBERT E. CRAINE, M.R.C.S.E.

Ramsey, Isle of Man, February, 1850.

ON THE THREE AFFERENT VESSELS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—From Mr. Jackson's paper, entitled "The Three Afferent Vessels," and the letter appended to it, his views appear to be the following:—viz., that the *whole* process of absorption of the food and drink is performed *solely* by the bloodvessels of the alimentary canal, and in no degree by the lacteals; and that the spleen, by its contraction, impels the portal blood through the liver.

Now it will not be difficult to show, from well-known and well-ascertained facts, that these opinions are quite untenable. First, as to the bloodvessels being the sole agents of absorption. In such case we might reasonably expect that the blood of the portal vein would, during digestion, contain, as compared with other blood, an increased quantity of the nitrogenous principles, fibrine and albumen, absorbed from the food. But what information do the best analyses afford on this point? Why, that the portal blood contains not more than half the usual quantity of either fibrine or albumen.

Again, if the lacteals have nothing to do with absorption, either of nitrogenous or other principles of the food, and perform only the general functions of the lymphatics, how comes it that these vessels, which during abstinence are nearly empty, and contain a fluid like that of the lymphatics, quite limpid and very poor in organizable constituents, should, during digestion, become distended with a milky fluid, which on analysis is found to be three times richer in albumen and fibrine than either that of the lymphatics, or the lacteals themselves during abstinence? Of this Mr. Jackson may at any time readily satisfy himself, as has been often done by Mr. Paget of St. Bartholomew's, by taking two rabbits, and killing and dissecting both, one after a long fast, the other a short time after a full meal of greens. In the former case it will scarcely be possible to find the lacteal vessels, in the latter they will be readily distinguishable, being distended with a large quantity of milky fluid, the chyme.

Lastly, how does it happen that in experiments where the thoracic duct has been tied, the animals have always died of inanition.

Now of these facts, any one, singly, would be sufficient to disprove Mr. Jackson's theory; but all together, they appear to *compel* us to believe that the nitrogenous portions of the ingesta are absorbed by the lacteals, as certainly as are the fluids and most other principles by the bloodvessels. So much for the first portion of the theory; now for the alleged propelling office of the spleen.

In the first place I think it open to great doubt whether the tissue of the spleen is capable of contracting sufficiently for the end proposed; but allowing this, there is an anatomical fact which seems to render it almost impossible that any such contraction could do any good; I allude to the absence of valves in any of the portal system of veins, either in the splenic, superior, or inferior mesenteric. Now let us suppose the

spleen full of blood; it contracts; there are no valves at the entrance of the splenic artery, therefore part of the arterial blood would attempt to return up that vessel, in direct opposition to the heart's impulse. But as to the greater portion of the fluid, it would pass along the splenic vein to the junction of the superior mesenteric; and as there are no valves at the entrance of that vessel, it would be driven two ways, partly into the mesenteric veins, in direct opposition to the general circulation, and partly up the portal vein to the liver. Such an arrangement would be almost as useless as the left ventricle of the heart acting without a mitral valve.

I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

Kilton-Lindsey, Feb. 1850.

H. J. WATERLAND.

THE COUNCIL OF THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is to be regretted that the opportunity offered by the delivery of the Hunterian Oration, once in every year, should not be made, as was intended by the illustrious founder, a source of profit, and the means of cementing the combined interests of our noble profession! This year it was preceded, purposely, I should imagine, by an announcement from the Council of a most unjust and illiberal kind, intended, no doubt, to test the feelings of the members; offering them a stone as a substitute for bread. When I couple the insincere and offensive language of the orator, I am at a loss to conceive what deductions were anticipated, and what expectations realized; if the symbol of the College, as to the future, is to be a withered olive-branch, and the anchor of hope, broken, the members will vote it unanimously. They will also add a broken lute, as an insignia of the discord and want of harmony which pervade its edicts and incantations. The Council, I should think, are not musical, or they would remember the fate of Orpheus, who, it is said,—

“—played so well he moved Old Nick,
But now moves nothing but his fiddle stick.”

It is quite evident, however, that the perfections of the highest order of minds are unknown to the Council! despite the annual recital and commemoration of departed virtue and acquirements, which was received with the usual marked respect on the present occasion, though it was quite evident there was something in subjection, and that something was the noble science, which has been so long fettered by conservative principles, which, in these days of civilization, free trade, and reform, can no longer resist the pressure of her true votaries. It is foreign to my purpose to review, critically, the peculiar phases of an oration, intended to illustrate the bright deeds and characters of the departed; yet I cannot refrain expressing my sentiments at the mockery held out to the living.

My motive for addressing you, Sir, is to call forth, if it exist, the expiring scintillation, the last dying glimmer of good faith, from the heads or hearts of those satellites, who are revolving round the shadows, not the substance, of the mighty and regretted planets, whose memory we venerate, and whose absence we annually meet to deplore.

It has oftentimes been asked—What do the members require? I will now state what it appears to me we require. First, an extension of the collegiate franchise, in order that surgeons in general practice may possess the right of election to the council. I would also submit, that all students in medicine and surgery (for they cannot be separated) be admitted at a certain age, say eighteen or twenty, before they commence anatomy and surgery, to their examination in the classics, mathematics, languages, &c., giving each successful candidate a certificate of qualification on these points, thereby disburthening their minds and improving the whole class of medical practitioners, without placing the burthen on the fellows only; in after years, their diploma to practise would be the result of future studies and the industry exercised. As regards the council, their prodigal and unnatural bearing towards us, their own offspring, is monstrous, and, like the sin of the giants, as expressed by Tully, “is an actual rebellion against heaven.” The generality of your readers will recollect the information given by Homer, when Minerva removed the mist from the eyes of Diomedes, in order that he might plainly distinguish both gods and men—in other words, that he might discern the good from the evil. All will, no doubt, feel it their duty to call up their best efforts to operate gratuitously in removing the cataract which has become permanent in the optical delusions of the council. Oh! that they possessed the soul to exclaim, with Alcibiades, “Remove from my mind the darkness, or whatever else that obscures it; I will refuse nothing, so that I become a better

man.” Can modern generals or philosophers say more? Will advancement in knowledge and science say as much. Whether we are medical or legal practitioners, we must not forget that we are men—responsible, reasonable, Christian men. I would refer your readers to the tenth satire of Juvenal, and the second of Persius, which afford to the curious some interesting arguments, demonstrative of the feelings of the most refined heathens. I quote the first passage, translated by Dryden, of Juvenal's tenth satire:—

“Look round the habitable world—how few
Know their own good, and knowing it, pursue”

I am, Sir, yours obliged,

WILLIAM SETH GILL.

Colebrook-terrace, Islington, Feb. 25, 1850.

THE JOHN HUNTER CLUB.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Touching the election for the secretaryship of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, allow me to say, that it appears to me that Mr. Charles Hawkins has been rather hardly dealt with, being made to bear all the odium attaching to the “John-Hunter Club.” I was not a member myself, but I have heard that it comprised among its members a very considerable number of “Fellows.” Now, I think it but fair that we should learn the names of the other members, that we may at least mete out the same measure of justice to each that Mr. Charles Hawkins has received. Perhaps you can furnish the names. But I conclude that the gentlemen who composed the club, as they have declared they wished not for secrecy, will send you their names; or perhaps Mr. Charles Hawkins, who was secretary, will furnish you with a list. I cannot believe what I have heard, that Mr. Erichsen was a member of the club, and lent himself to the opposition to Mr. Charles Hawkins, and was silent on this subject; and as I think Mr. Erichsen ought to have an opportunity to clear himself from the supposition, I consider that the names of the members of the John-Hunter Club should be made public.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,

FIAT JUSTITIA.

* * We are not in possession of the names of the members of the John-Hunter Club. If the list be sent to us, it shall be published for the information of the profession. We do not believe that Mr. Erichsen was a member of the club.—ED L.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND THE ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

The Industrial and General Life Assurance and Deposit Company,
2, Waterloo-place, London, Feb. 28, 1850.

SIR,—My attention having been called to your correspondent's letter on the 23rd instant, I consider it necessary to trouble you with the following remarks, being of opinion, that, without additional information, the profession cannot fairly judge as to the propriety of accepting the fee of 2s. 6d. therein referred to.

This company has been established with the view of extending the benefits of life assurance to the industrial classes, by inculcating habits of saving, and affording them opportunities of making provision for their wives and families, hitherto unattainable by that large and important class—thus,

By a weekly payment of 1s., a person twenty years of age may assure £149 3s. If thirty years of age, £118 1s.; and if forty years of age, £89 7s., to be paid to their families at death.

By a monthly payment of 1s., a person twenty years of age may assure £34 11s. If thirty years of age, £27 7s. 6d.; and if forty years of age, £20 13s. 6d., to be paid to their families in like manner.

By a quarterly payment of 1s., a person twenty years of age may assure £11 12s. 6d. If thirty years of age, £9 4s. 9d.; and if forty years of age, £6 19s., to be in like manner paid at death.

Under the “deposit” or “accumulative” system also,

A person, aged twenty, on payment of £3 9s. 9d. will receive a policy, assuring £10 at death, (on which policy no further payment whatever is required,) and after the first year may receive back £3 9s. 9d., or after the sixth year, £3 15s. 2d., as shown in table, and surrender the policy; or may borrow the full amount of premium paid at the usual interest, on security of the policy only, repaying the loan at convenience.

The directors coincide in opinion with your correspondent,