general view of the subject, or to the particular kind of supuration mentioned by Mr. Nunn. Thus, one gentleman attributed the formation of abscess to keeping the parturient woman too long on slops after delivery, and from the child not being placed to the breast soon enough;—another regarded them as the result of sore nipples, &c. With respect to treatment, there was much difference of opinion. Tonics, poultices, and good diet, with the recumbent position, seemed the panacea of some. Others saw no objection to depletion, if early applied. Some used the knife as soon as matter had formed; others delayed the operation. Some had tried Mr. Nunn's plan, with success; others contended that mercury, in any shape, form, or manner of application, could not be safely used in the parturient woman. Some regarded the feelings of the patient as the best guide to the kind of application, whether, for instance, it should be hot or cold. The plan of pressure was strongly advocated by one speaker.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

SUPERANNUATION FUND FOR POOR-LAW OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the first place, I have to acknowledge with gratitude your powerful and valuable advocacy of the interests of the poor-law medical officers, and your indignant denunciation of those who would exclude them from the operation of the Superannuation Fund Bill. The only reasons assigned, as I understand, for this invidious distinction, are, that the medical officers are in general practice, and that many of them are not permanent officers, being elected annually. Now, Sir, as to the first objection, I would ask whether the clerks of the guardians are not almost all attorneys engaged in general practice, and yet they are first named in the schedule; and as to the second, it is in the power of the Poor-law Board, by one stroke of the pen, to put a stop to the degrading annual elections which some have to undergo, and make them permanent officers, as all others engaged under the poor-law are, and thus to nullify this objection.

I would now beg to supply an omission in my former letter, which has been very properly alluded to by Mr. Bullin. The fund, when formed, is to be placed under the authority of the commissioners, who are to have the sole administration of it. Each present officer's eligibility to come within the provisions of the Bill is to date from the time of his appointment, provided he pay up the arrears which he would have been called upon annually to pay if the Act had been in existence at the time: this I do not think unfair.

With respect to the question of your other correspondent of last week on this subject, I have to say that I do not believe any medical man was ever invited to the meeting which took place when the proposed fund Bill was concocted, and I only by accident became acquainted with its provisions.

It will be perceived, by an advertisement in this day's LANCET, that a meeting of medical officers is to be holden next week, and if our professional brethren will but render their co-operation and advice, I do not fear that justice will be done to us by the Poor-law Board; if not, I think I can safely predict that no such Bill will pass through Parliament without a full admission of our claims being made in it.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. N. BAINBRIDGE, M.D. & M.R.C.S.

St. Martin's-lane, Feb. 12, 1850.

BENEFIT CLUBS AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is not my intention to occupy your valuable columns, however important the subject, with a full dissertation on medical clubs, and their bearings upon the profession, in a social or pecuniary point of view. Like most things in this world, these clubs are mixtures of good and evil—the former often, the latter occasionally, preponderating. Is it possible to separate the good from the evil? I believe it is. Does the present time, when there has been a great drain upon youth for engineering and emigration, diminishing the numbers entering the profession, and thus lessening competition, afford a favourable opportunity of getting rid of what is objectionable in these clubs? I again answer in the affirmative.

There can be little doubt that benefit societies, with medical insurance, among working men—men supporting themselves and families by daily labour, especially in rural districts, where the range of wages is low—is not only highly commendable in the men who so associate and assure, but really of advantage to the medical practitioner; and even if the latter was not the case, it would be the duty of philanthropists to encourage the feeling of independence which is sure to be engendered by membership in a well-conducted friendly society.

"One of the most striking manifestations of virtue that ever was made, by any people," observes the writer of the article on "Benefit Societies," in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "is for persons merged in poverty, and deprived of education, as the English have so generally been, to have so much foresight, or so much of that self-command which is necessary, to draw on the gratifications of the present for those of a distant day. When a people, thus situated, have a provision made for them, to which they can with certainty have recourse, as often as they themselves are deprived of the means of earning their own subsistence, and yet, notwithstanding this security, choose to form themselves into benefit societies, in order that, by taking something from the means of their present scanty enjoyments, they may, in sickness and old age, be saved from the necessity of having recourse to public charity, and may continue to live, to the end of their days, upon the fruit of their own labour, no burthen to the public, or dependent on its bounty, they exhibit a combination of qualities, the existence of which could hardly be credited, if it were not seen; above all, in a country in which the higher ranks too often display an eager desire to benefit themselves at the public expense."

It is the duty of every one, as I am sure it is the wish and the rule, in the medical profession, to aid these admirable struggles at independence among the working class, and to place within their reach medical aid, on terms hardly remunerative to the surgeon, but enabling them to say, "We have our own doctor; we do not trouble the relieving-officer even in sickness."

But there are other classes of mutual associations—tradesmen's lodges, odd fellows, and masonic, &c.—half benefit clubs, half jovial *réunions*—embracing very different individuals from the day-labourer, many of them wealthy, and all of them in the receipt of large incomes,—these also must contract for medical attendance, and the terms are generally disgraceful to both contracting parties. It is this which is the evil, and which it behoves medical men to make a stand against.

This time last year I became surgeon to a lodge, almost in self-defence; but I will not recal the past by detailing the circumstances; suffice it to say, on looking over the list, at the end of the year, I found, not only the names of several of my own hitherto good private patients, but that of a shopkeeper, in a large way of business at Grays, where there are two resident medical men—also of a farmer at Tollesbury, a surgeon, residing three miles nearer to him than I do—ditto of a wealthy publican on the banks of the Thames, &c. True it is I have private patients in all these parishes; but this is nothing to the purpose. A moment's reflection satisfied me of the injury I was inflicting on myself and others, and the following note was the result:—

"To Mr. Reid, Secretary to the Loyal True Friends Lodge of Odd Fellows, George Inn, Orsett.

Orsett, December, 1849.

DEAR SIR,—Be kind enough to inform the brethren, on next lodge-night, that it is my intention to resign the office of surgeon to their medical club. I wish to state that my resignation is from no personal offence, but altogether on broader, I may say professional, grounds. Wishing continued success to all odd fellows, I remain, yours truly,

DAVID CORBET."

I have asked no co-operation from my medical competitors, satisfied that I have closed the year 1849 by an act of substantial justice, both to them and myself; and it remains to be perceived, whether the example will be aided and extended, or rendered naught.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Orsett, Essex, Dec. 1849.

DAVID CORBET, M.D.

P.S.—There is a very extensive Provident Society, embracing hundreds connected with the district,—Mr. Radford, Mr. Jordison, and myself, joint surgeons. The members are divided into classes, varying from 7s. to £1 1s. weekly sick allowance. It is my intention to refuse medical insurance to all members above the 10s. 6d. class.—D. C.