when indications of a poisoned atmosphere appeared. This suggestion will not excite the enthusiasm of architects; but we make it seriously, and in the belief that our great hospital system is attended by most objectionable consequences.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

NATIONAL VACCINATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As you have appealed to the verdict of the medical profession, in your article of last week, respecting the advisability of handing over to a Government official (out of the pale of practice) the vaccination of the country, I for one beg leave to offer a strong protest (in which I think a large majority of practitioners will concur) against any measure so arbitrary and objectionable. It is bad enough, so a number of mothers think, both old and young, that their offspring should be compulsorily subjected to so trying an ordeal, and Government has already incurred a full share of odium for enforcing so precautionary a measure; but to enact that all our babies must be taken to a public official, and there to receive a Government stamp, in preference to the unostentatious method at present in force, will, I fear, be too much even for modern mammas. But the family doctor has to be considered, and when he sees a public functionary step between his patient and himself (to say nothing of his own children), and perform an operation so obviously a part of his duty, it must produce a feeling of great dissatisfaction, in which most likely the family would join.

As a remedy for the inefficiency of the present system, I would suggest that, as vaccination is made compulsory, the State should become responsible to the extent of one-half of the fee, the patient to pay the remainder, determined according to distance, &c. In the case of paupers, the present system would remain unaltered, the "parish doctor" of the district taking all such cases as belonged to him; but in the case of the class you refer to in your leader, it should be lawful for any medical man to claim from the State a fee, say of 1s. or upwards, according to circumstances, for every successful case of vaccination proved, at the same time that it should be lawful for him to claim a like amount from his patient. In the upper classes, where the fees range from 5s. and upwards, it would be impolitic in the medical attendant to claim anything from the State. It ought not to be the duty of the medical practitioner to "look up" babies, but that of the registrar or such like officer.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Stepney-green, Dec. 21st, 1868.

EDMUND POPE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The article in THE LANCET of December 19th on the suggestion by *The Times* of the appointment of public vaccinators, who should be debarred from private practice, has caused considerable excitement in the profession.

I believe such a proposition will be received with the utmost disfavour alike by the public, by the present public vaccinators, and by the profession generally. The public will object to it as an unjustifiable interference with their liberties. There is an insuperable repugnance among many people to having their children vaccinated by any but their private medical attendant; they trust in his judgment, and would bitterly resent any legislative interference in this matter.

Private practitioners would hardly acquiesce in a measure which, while depriving them of a portion of their fees, would cast a slur upon their ability to perform an operation like vaccination. But the change would press with peculiar hardship upon the present public vaccinators, whose vaccination fees form a welcome addition to their often inadequate stipends. The system proposed by *The Times* will

be received by them with something like dismay. It would require a much stronger case than has been made out to justify a measure so destructive of their individual interests. You say that if it relieved medical men of a portion of their fees, it would relieve them of a great responsibility. But medical men, who are accustomed to the heavy responsibility involved in the daily practice of their profession, can well afford to bear the small additional responsibility of having to vaccinate their patients.

Then it is said that the profession at large would be gainers, inasmuch as the appointment of public vaccinators, who should be the direct servants of the State, would be in some sort a recognition of medicine by the State. I confess myself unable to see anything in this last argument. If it were of any advantage to the profession that some of its members should be the direct servants of the State, it would still be possible to point to the medical services of the army and navy, which are "in relation with a department of the Government."

It seems extremely likely that if the appointment of public vaccinators were transferred from boards of guardians to the central government, our metropolitan brethren would get the lion's share of such appointments. Private practitioners would entirely lose their vaccination fees, which would pass into the hands of a class of specialists who would be neither surgeons, physicians, nor general practitioners.

We have been educated by THE LANCET into the heartiest distrust of specialism in medicine and surgery; yet, surely, no form of specialism has ever been more objectionable than the specialism recommended by *The Times*.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bradford, Dec. 21st, 1868.

JOHN FOSTER.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL INSPECTORS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your admirable strictures on the Poor-law Board and its doings must have given great satisfaction to that large body of ill-used men, the Poor-law medical officers.

I trust the powerful influence which your journal possesses will have its weight on the new President, and induce him to carry out the recommendation of the Lords' Committee by appointing Poor-law medical inspectors.

There is no remedy that could be adopted that would be so likely to put an end to the grievances of which Poor-law medical officers have so long complained. The perversity of Lord Devon in appointing barristers rather than medical men, in opposition to the Lords' recommendation, shows the deep hatred to the profession which has existed at the Poor-law Board. The absurdity of appointing legal men to inquire into matters which relate to medicine is too evident to need remark; and it is by no means surprising that so many shameful abuses in workhouses should have escaped the notice of barrister inspectors.

Apart from the important duty of watching the condition of inmates of workhouses, a medical inspector would have important duties. The question of remuneration of the medical officer in rural districts, which form a very large proportion of unions in England and Wales, would come before him for inquiry and report. At present, the number of population is taken as the basis of payment, without regard to the circumstances of the district, as to situation, usual percentage of sickness, kind of roads, or distance of paupers from medical officer's dwelling.

Many of the districts might be advantageously altered, so as to render medical aid more accessible to the poor, instead of, as now, in many cases, compelling them to travel eight or nine miles for the doctor, and the same distance over again for medicine.

In all questions or matters of dispute, a medical man, who himself has been a medical officer and is practically acquainted with everything which relates to union practice in the provinces, would be an arbiter between the guardians and the medical officer, and the appointment of such would tend to allay the grievous heartburnings which have so long existed in the service. The question of forming dispensaries, where, and where not, eligible, their inspection as to supply of drugs, &c. &c., would come before him, and various other matters which are obvious.