THE MEDICAL ACT OF 1858.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As Honorary Secretary to the Committee appointed by the Council of the Medical Defence Association to report what amendments were necessary to render the Medical Act of 1858 more effective to prevent illegal practice, I have to inform you that the draft of proposed amendments somewhat freely circulated within the last three weeks has in no way emanated from the Medical Defence Association, but is the independent production of a member of the profession.

As some misconception has arisen with regard to the authorship of this document, I trust, on behalf of the committee, you will give this disclaimer early publicity.

I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
N. C. MACLEAN, M.D.

Office of the Medical Defence Association,
6, John-street, Bedford-row,
March 6, 1877.

THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, PENDLEBURY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Steinthal having, as will be seen, entirely failed to meet my statements, and attempting now to cast reflections upon me which are neither truthful nor relevant to the subject under discussion, it is unnecessary for me to take further notice of his letter, and I have only now to offer you my best thanks for having afforded me the opportunity of exposing a very glaring abuse.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Eccles, February 26th.

CHAS. A. RAYNE, M.B. Lond.

* * With this letter, which was inadvertently omitted from our last number, the correspondence must cease.—
Ed. L.

MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH AND POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Would you kindly insert the enclosed resolution, and oblige yours,

J. WICKHAM BARNES,

Honorary Secretary of the Poor Law
Medical Officers' Association.

3, Bolt-court, Fleet-street,
March 7, 1877.

At a meeting of the Council held at 3, Bolt-court, Tuesday, 6th March, it was resolved,—That this Council, having taken into consideration the statement of Mr. Ashburner, medical officer of the Horsham Workhouse, in reference to the conduct of Dr. Kelly, medical officer of health for West Sussex combined district, begs to express its condemnation of the course pursued by that gentleman, and trusts that the Local Government Board will issue such general instructions as will preclude the possibility of such action being followed by any medical officer of health towards any Poor-law medical officer in future.—That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the medical journals and to the Local Government Board.

Obituary.

RICHARD GULLETT WHITFIELD.

THE death of Richard Gullett Whitfield, announced in our issue of the 24th ultimo, is an event which demands something more than the very brief notice there accorded to it. He was the last of a series of officials who, though now improved away, represented in their own persons the traditional glories of their hospitals, and wielded probably more real power than surgeons, physicians, or even treasurers. They were apothecaries, which means that they occupied the finest houses, after the treasurers', within the hospital walls, that they dispensed more lavish hospitality than any other hospital official, that the drug and

wine departments were their immediate charge, that they were the resident medical officers, and as such had the entire medical care of the patients in the absence of the physicians and surgeons, that the ventilation and general sanitary condition of the wards were under their supervision, that the sisters and nurses, and other subordinate officials, had to obey their orders, that even the dressers were in some degree under their governance, and that they shared the pupils' fees. They were medical secretaries, which implies that they attended all meetings of the medical officers and lecturers, and kept their minutes, that they had votes equally with other members of the school, that they were the treasurers of the school fund, that they were the depositories and expounders of all unwritten laws and regulations, and that the general management of the school, of the school-buildings, and of the *employés* was in their grasp. For school and hospital alike they were permanent grand viziers, and it was largely if not mainly through them that treasurers derived their knowledge of hospital and school affairs, and through the information thus acquired, if not through them, that they acted for good or evil.

The post of apothecary to St. Thomas's Hospital had been hereditary in Mr. Whitfield's family. His grandfather, who was of an old Shropshire family, was appointed in 1752, and continued in office until 1800, dying at the age of seventy-six in the course of the following year. His father succeeded to the apothecaryship in 1800, and held it until 1832, dying, aged sixty-seven, five years later. On his retirement the subject of the present memoir received the appointment.

Mr. Whitfield was born on the 31st January, 1801, was sent to Eton when about nine years old, and continued there until he went to St. John's College, Oxford, where he matriculated in 1818 or 1819. It was then intended that he should take his degree and become a physician. But he had not been at college more than a term or two when he was suddenly recalled to London and entered as a student at St. Thomas's Hospital. It was at this time that the united schools of St. Thomas's and Guy's and the rival school of St. Bartholomew's were at the zenith of their reputation, and Mr. Whitfield, like many others, studied at both. In 1822, when twenty-one years of age, he became a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, and in the same year was appointed assistant to his father. He became a member of the Society of Apothecaries in 1824, married in 1828; was elected apothecary in 1832, and medical secretary in the course of the next year. He continued apothecary down to the removal of the hospital to its present site in the year 1871, then retiring on a pension; and medical secretary to within a month or six weeks of his death, which took place on February 20th of the present year, at the ripe age of seventy-six.

No man was ever more thoroughly identified with an institution than Mr. Whitfield with St. Thomas's Hospital; he loved it with an almost idolatrous love; its success was his success, its failures his failures, and he strove heart and soul through a long life to further in every way what he considered to be its best interests. The separation between the united schools of St. Thomas's and Guy's occurred while he was assistant to his father—at a time, therefore, when probably he was compelled to be a mere passive spectator of a crisis which he deplored. But no other event of any importance to the hospital or school took place in which his influence was not more or less conspicuous. It was in great measure through his ascendancy over the late treasurer, Mr. Baggallay, that the early hour of visit to the hospital wards, which has now been continued for nearly twenty years, was forced upon the medical staff. When, a few years later, the question of the removal of the hospital from its historic site in the Boro' came on for decision, he advocated with characteristic and persistent vigour its translation into the country, with the retention of only a small supplementary hospital or receiving house in London. But when he found his hopes in this direction frustrated, he co-operated loyally with his colleagues and the governors in securing the site at Stangate, and he was largely, if indirectly, concerned in determining the construction of the hospital on the pavilion principle.

He was not great as a physician, nor were his attainments in chemistry or pharmacology of a high order; still he was a competent and zealous medical officer, and an excellent