a resident physician are the result of the acquiescence on their part with the report of the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The appointment of a resident physician and medical superintendent, which was unanimously agreed to by the committee, and unanimously confirmed by the last court, had long been felt by the president and treasurer, and many governors who have devoted much attention to the administration of Bethlem Hospital, and who possess considerable experience in the direction of similar establishments, to be a necessary and desirable alteration in the system pursued at Bethlem Hospital, where, in consequence of the number of patients having doubled since the appointment of the present physicians, the introduction of employments on an extended scale, the classification of the patients under the charge of numerous subordinate officers, and the increased duties involved in the improved and daily improving treatment of lunatics, a degree of constant supervision at all hours, direct control, and undivided responsibility, was imperatively demanded, which it was not in the power of any non-resident physicians, under the present system, to secure.

It is both the duty and the desire of the governors to afford any officer who may feel himself aggrieved the fullest opportunity of explanation and defence; and had the report and evidence complained of by the physicians been a document under the control of the committee, they would most readily furnish them with copies; but the physicians are aware that the investigation originated with the Commissioners in Lunacy, and that by the express and positive direction of the present Secretary of State, the evidence must be confined in the strictest confidence to the members of the committee. As the Secretary of State is alone empowered to furnish the physicians with copies of the report and evidence, the committee can only refer them to that authority for compliance with their request. Should they, however, wish to submit any statement on the subject, the committee will receive it, and give it their best consideration.

The physicians will thus understand that the committee have not entered upon the consideration of that report, and that therefore no opinion has been expressed by them on the several conclusions at which the Commissioners in Lunacy may have arrived; and although it is true that the present medical staff is stated to be insufficient in resident officers for the due management of the hospital, that is a defect in the system, as before stated, which they have long intended to remedy, when an opportunity occurred.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,

(Signed) B. WELTON, Clerk.

To Dr. Monro and Sir Alexander Morison,
Physicians to Bethlem Hospital.

ARTIFICIAL DILATATION OF THE OS UTERI.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I claim a small space to offer a very few remarks on a letter signed "Joseph Ashbury Smith," which appeared in THE LANCET of Saturday, May 8th, relative to my paper on "Artificial Dilatation of the Os Uteri," published on April 17th. In publishing that paper, I was fully prepared for fair, generous, and professional criticism, but I was unprepared for scurrility, distortion of facts, and wilful misrepresentations. A more unphysiological letter than that of Mr. Smith I never read, nor one that displays more ignorance of true pathological knowledge in connexion with parturition.

I need only notice one act of distortion, to enable your readers to form their own judgment of Mr. J. A. Smith's propensity for misrepresentation. I quote his own words:—

"For the state unscientifically denominated 'rigidity of the os uteri,' instead of attempting mechanical and awkward dilatation with the fingers, I have always thought, if anything were done—which female impatience ought never to precipitate—the loss of a little blood, an opiate, and an interval of cessation from useless and wearying effort, far the best practice."

My answer is simply this,—that my entire paper never once alludes to the propriety of using artificial dilatation in rigidity of the os. I need not multiply; *verbum sat*.

Again, the letter displays total ignorance of the physiology and pathology of parturition. He talks of the *whole structure of the uterus* being physiologically in a state of rigidity similar to that rigidity of the os uteri mentioned by writers as one of the causes of lingering labour. Again, he mentions the "impropriety of needlessly interfering with a structure so exquisitely irritable and delicate as the gradually-expanding cervix uteri." Now, I have always found the cervix uteri about as little sensible a part of the human body as I can recollect (the substance of the brain excepted). Surely, Mr. Smith must have fancied he was writing

only for the sake of seeing his name in print. Has he made any rational attempt to show the profession that the practice of artificial dilatation is injurious, when carried out in the fair, gentle, and physiological plan I recommend?

It would only be a waste of time to follow Mr. Smith farther. I can assure him that though I have not spent twenty-five years study "on the observations of living action," I am as fully convinced of the benefits of artificial dilatation in *lingering* labour, when judiciously applied, as he seems to be of its execrability. My paper is written in accordance with principles laid down by the best writers, and has met the approval of many excellent accoucheurs in my locality.

I hope to be able to publish another paper during the summer, which will meet all the arguments against artificial dilatation; a refutation of the supposed injuries resulting from such a proceeding; and the benefits of artificial dilatation contrasted with all other methods of accelerating lingering labour advocated by authors during the last fifty years.

In fine, Sir, Mr. Joseph Ashbury Smith's letter is so unphysiological, so unpathological, so ungentlemanly, so unlike a critique of a member of a learned profession, being more that of a bravo than a generous and honourable antagonist, that I must, in future, decline to notice such distorted criticisms.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Liverpool, May, 1852.

JAMES GILMOUR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am glad of the opportunity of expressing my opinion on a subject which appears to me one of very considerable importance, but which, like every other, has its *pros* and *cons*.

I much fear that this injudicious practice, "the artificial dilatation of the os uteri," does prevail to some considerable extent, although the profession has had the benefit of some of the most talented and enlightened professors in this branch of medicine for more than fifty years. "Quot homines, tot sententiæ," is a phrase that pleads no apology for a diversity of opinion, where "lex suprema naturæ" declares there should be unanimity.

Not very many years since, it was, I know, the custom of a professor of midwifery (and for the sake of humanity, I hope, the only one) to teach his pupils, as a rule, that the first stage of labour should be conducted after this officious fashion—thus, of course, making humanity and science debtors to a false philosophy. Parturition is a natural process; the uterus is its own interpreter, and spurns the aid and touch of what it needs not. The language of truth is sometimes severe; but the expression "meddlesome midwifery" I consider very mild indeed when applied to the abettors of this malpractice. But it may be the dear doctor is a very feeling man, and cannot resist the earnest cry of the sufferer for help. What, then, is he, the only individual to whom she looks for assistance in the trying moment of childbearing, to be indifferent? Certainly not; but by kind and attentive treatment, and all the resources of our humane profession, to soothe the expectant sufferer; and yet, after all, the urgent appeal, if properly understood, amounts probably to little more than: "An ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten mine imagination."

I take leave of the subject by referring the reader to a hint which he may gather from the first rule of the Latin Grammar: "Esto femineum quod femina (natura?) sola reposcit."

Yours in haste,

London, May, 1852.

ALPHA.

HOSPITAL FOR INCURABLE DISEASES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—When I consented to join Mr. Sampson in the establishment of an hospital for the treatment of Incurable Disease, I did so because I was aware that no express provision had been made for the admission of such cases into any of our medical charities, and because it appeared to me that a great hospital, calculated to afford succour to a number of destitute persons otherwise unprovided for, and to furnish the profession with a new and more ample field for the systematic study of these obscure diseases, was no mean and illusory object. I thought, however, that such an hospital, to be *bonâ fide* in its purpose, and useful in its end, should admit only such cases as came provided with certificates of ineligibility to our general or special hospitals, and that an ample medical staff should be enlisted, both to serve upon the committee and do duty in the wards. The persuasion appeared well-founded that an hospital so constituted would be an advantage to the profession, a boon to the public, and a relief to the general hospitals; and it was thought that by

applying to these diseases the improved means of Diagnosis which have accrued to us within the last half-century, something more might be elicited in respect to their Nature, and something better effected in regard to their Treatment.

With these opinions, and in the belief that he was animated by a similar spirit, I entered into active co-operation with Mr. Sampson. I was therefore surprised and chagrined, when, on the 6th of January, 1852, he intimated to me his desire to give up the Hospital for Incurables *as such*, and to establish instead (but under the same title) an institution for the reception of persons labouring under Diseases of the Joints, affections which, being merely Chronic, are supposed by the profession to be susceptible of cure. I could not consent to this, and from that moment it was manifest that my co-operation was disagreeable to Mr. Sampson. He said nothing, however, but suddenly, and without my knowledge, inserted an advertisement in the *Times*, in which he omitted my name altogether, the names of Mr. Cole,* the Honorary Secretary, and all the subscribers whom he knew to be inimical to his design, and in which, to suit the purpose he had in view, he changed the name of the hospital from "Hospital for Incurables" to "Hospital for the Treatment of Incurable and Chronic Diseases."

The case, then, stands thus between Mr. Sampson and myself. He is about to establish a special institution, to admit cases *for the incurability of which he offers no guarantee*, and which on that account will neither be sanctioned by the profession nor supported by the public; while my own views are still directed to the foundation of a National Hospital, such as we at first contemplated. A public meeting has been held to secure this end;† resolutions have been passed to establish such an hospital upon open and national principles; a committee of fifteen noblemen and gentlemen, well known for their practical benevolence and the liberality of their views, has been organized for its government and protection;‡ and one hundred and five governors (independently of the seventy-eight withdrawn by Mr. Sampson) have enrolled themselves for its support.

And now, Sir, I have merely to intimate to my professional brethren, that so soon as this committee shall have entered upon its functions, and a sufficient number of the profession been elected to serve upon it, it is my purpose (while continuing all my interest in the welfare of the charity) to withdraw any personal claims which I may be supposed to possess to active OFFICE within its wards.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sloane-street, London,
May 20, 1852.

FRANCIS SEYMOUR HADEN.

UNIVERSAL VACCINATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have had the care of a large rural district for twenty years, and may therefore be considered to have had some experience in this matter. I have read the letter of Dr. Philson in your last number, and must say, I quite agree with him, that prejudice, the result of ignorance, is one of the principal obstacles to the extension of vaccination. The better-informed classes I find always anxious to have their children vaccinated at an early age, and willingly pay their half-guinea or guinea (they do not take advantage of the Act) for the operation; but the labouring class, who can have their children done for nothing, entertain an insuperable prejudice against it. When the Vaccination Act passed, the idea prevailed that it was compulsory, that a penalty attached to a non-compliance with it, and thus scores of unwilling parents brought their children to the station. Under these circumstances, I vaccinated about 1300 the first year; but since that time, I do not think I have averaged fifty.

It was soon found out that the Act was only permissive; and notwithstanding the expenditure of much time, and great trouble, to say nothing of no small sum of money, in inducing them to consent to vaccination, I could not succeed with the labourers.

I have adopted, from time to time, a variety of means to accomplish my object, and am now quite in despair. I have had large placards printed, with the Royal Arms at the top, posted

through my district, announcing the places and times for vaccination, and requesting parents to bring their children, &c. (I inclose one of these bills as a sample.) I have always kept these appointments most punctually, and often at great inconvenience; but seldom have I found a person at the place fixed on; and if I succeeded in vaccinating any, on these days, it was done by going from house to house, and spending much time in persuading and almost imploring.

On one occasion, I had appointed a meeting at a cottage, whither I had sent a woman with a healthy vaccinated child. Through fear of displeasing the clergyman, several children were brought; but in order to frustrate my object, the mothers persuaded the woman with the cow-pox child to run and hide herself and it on my approach; so, after a journey of five miles, I did nothing.

Determined not to give the matter up, I have on several occasions provided, at the village inn, beer and cakes, &c., for parents who brought children. I have carried pockets-full of pence to distribute among the vaccinated, and thus I have managed to vaccinate a few. A widely-spread practice, with lots of small shoes to buy, would not allow me to continue such a plan. Eighteen-pence per head (not much above the price paid by farmers for operating on a pig) would not allow of this outlay of time and trouble. I cannot help stopping to ask if it be not disgraceful to award *eighteen-pence!!* for securing to a human being immunity from one of the most loathsome diseases incidental to humanity?

In very small villages, where all the cottagers are under the influence of the lord, much good might be effected by bringing it to bear in getting them to attend at the appointed places; and it affords me great pleasure to mention an instance of this kind:—

In the parish of Mottisfont, Lady M— went from house to house, insisting on the attendance of the cottagers for vaccination, attended herself, and kindly assisted in exposing the children's arms, &c.

This is a rare instance. The parochial authorities lend no aid, but sometimes rather endeavour to prevent our success. I know, in one case, a guardian who suggested to an obstinate woman who had several children unvaccinated, that she need not have the operation performed.

I do not recollect any religious objection being urged; it has been generally said:—"I don't want my children made ill;" "I would sooner they had the real thing;" "They will be sure to break out;" "Mrs. So-and-so's child was never well afterwards;" "I am not obliged to have it done, and I shan't;" &c.

I must protest, with Dr. Philson, that it is most unjust to throw all the onus of non-vaccination on the medical officers of unions—the fault does not lie with them. After long experience, (and I think, Sir, you will not say I have not tried hard to carry out vaccination,) I have arrived at the conclusion, that in order to extend vaccination satisfactorily, and with a prospect of banishing small-pox from the land, it must be made compulsory. Is it not so in Sweden? I defy any set of men, two or twenty, unarmed with a compulsory act, to carry out vaccination as it ought to be done. You may send agents, missionaries, tracts, &c., but you will find them of little use.

I feel persuaded, unless some steps be taken to enforce vaccination, it will exist, in many districts, in name only, among the labouring classes. If a compulsory act cannot be passed, why not make *non-vaccination* a disqualification for national schools, domestic service, admission to friendly societies, parochial relief, excepting in urgent cases, &c.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

L. OWEN FOX.

Broughton, Stockbridge, Hants, April, 1852.

THE PROPOSED LAWS OF THE MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have lately received a copy of the laws of "The Medical Benevolent College," and regret to find therein some propositions and regulations which I consider are highly unjust, impolitic, and most objectionable.

In the rule No. 1, it is proposed to erect a chapel for divine worship, according to the ritual of the Church of England. This I consider most unjust towards medical men who are Dissenters, and impolitic, as a considerable sum of money must be expended for its erection, which could be much more appropriately applied to the relief of our needy and worn-out brethren.

At the rule No. 17, it states that "the Bishops of London and Winchester are to be visitors of the College, with authority to do all those things which pertain to visitors, as often as to them shall

* Mr. Cole was a member of the Committee.

† See Report of a Special General Meeting of the Governors, held at the Thatched House on the 26th ultimo.

‡ It is desired to include in this committee, or to enrol into a separate committee, a number of the medical officers already attached to the general hospitals, so as to bring the Hospital for Incurables as much as possible into combined action with the other medical charities of the metropolis; and it has been proposed, in reference to the first resolution, that a book should be opened by the Honorary Secretary to receive the names of those gentlemen in the profession who, approving the objects of the charity as here expressed, are desirous to assist its promotion by their advice and co-operation.