Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE CONSTANT CURRENT IN THERAPEUTICS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am pained by the tone of Dr. Anstie's letter in your journal of May 20th. I do not think that the remarks I made as president of the Clinical Society were fairly obvious to an expression of anger and blame.

My attention was not directed to Dr. Anstie's letter until this morning (May 27th), or I would, with your favour, have replied to it in your last issue. What I intended to say, and what I think I said, respecting the use of the constant current in neuralgia was to this effect: That we first wanted a better diagnosis of the cases; that pain was often of such a nature as to be relieved by many means; that of the three cases related at the meeting, one only had been cured—relief in one was varied and uncertain, and one had apparently not been benefited at all. I went on to say that it was desirable to criticise more carefully the actual operation of the constant current in the cases cured by it, since it was notorious that inert means, like the "metallic tractors" of former times, could produce general evidence of "good effects."

Dr. Anstie mistook the feeling which prompted my remarks in attributing them to any intention on my part to persuade the members of the Society either way as to the subject before us. I asserted that at present it is uncertain in what cases the "constant current" is therapeutical, and that we required more knowledge of its *modus operandi*.

Dr. Anstie says there is already established a scientific basis for the belief in its efficiency. The error I seem to have committed was in expressing a doubt if there were as yet a fair empirical basis for such belief. It is admitted that the constant current does not cure all forms of neuralgia; therefore, if there exists a known scientific basis of its operation, this will of necessity show why the cases that are cured by it are cured, and why it fails in others. Until this is fully set forth, and I do not think it was set forth in the communications to the Society on the night referred to, I must feel that I was not wrong in pleading for more exact evidence on the subject.

Yours truly,

May 27th, 1871.

WILLIAM W. GULL.

P.S.—Dr. Anstie says that twenty years ago "no apparatus existed (at any rate in this country) by means of which an electric current could be applied with constancy within the modern meaning of the term." Dr. Anstie forgets that the constant battery was the invention of our country, by Professor Daniell, of King's College, more than thirty years ago.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In common with many of your readers who try to keep *au courant* with the medical literature of the day, I have been surprised and disappointed on reading Dr. Gull's remarks at the Clinical Society on the constant current. I trust these remarks may call forth abundant evidence on the other side. Having used the constant current for the last three or four years, especially in cases of tic and neuralgia generally, I can bear testimony to the great benefit conferred upon the patients. The relief is often immediate, and seldom delayed beyond three or four applications. It may be said that this is a vague and general statement. What can be more vague than Dr. Gull's assertion that he had made elaborate researches *twenty years ago*? Will Dr. Gull tell us what these were, and with what apparatus made? It seems to me he might as well deny the value of the electric telegraph on the evidence of experiments made a century ago. It is to be hoped that Dr. Gull will retract those remarks of his, evidently made in haste.

It requires not a little strength of mind to use electricity as a remedy, because one's brother practitioners are too ready to cry "Quack!" when an obstinate case has been cured by its means. I say "cured" advisedly, for I have cured

numbers of patients upon whom I and others had tried almost every remedy, including those used hypodermically. It is a melancholy fact that in not more than two or three London hospitals is a galvanic battery in working order to be found.

It is really too bad that a remedy of such great power, both for good and evil, should be almost unknown to the most industrious medical student. Hence the general ignorance upon the subject, and those who are unacquainted with it and too lazy to acquire a knowledge of it, will be content to hide behind Dr. Gull's mantle, and continue to cry "Quack!" with renewed strength and vehemence.

I hope before long to place before the profession evidence of the great good to be obtained by the use of the constant current, together with details of cases which have been cured by its use.

No doubt Remak much exaggerated the advantages to be derived from galvanisation of the sympathetic; still no one who will try it patiently, and in many cases, can possibly deny the wonderful effects which are occasionally produced. If we are to abstain from applying a remedy because "it lacks a scientific basis," we should refrain from the administration of many, if not most, of our most valuable drugs. It is sufficient that our patients find their pain relieved.

In conclusion, I can but hope that Dr. Anstie may find himself supported by a fair number of experimenters. It must be remembered, however, that to practise medical electricity successfully demands great patience and expensive and troublesome apparatus. These are being improved daily, and I trust the day is not far distant when electricity, both as a valuable means of diagnosis and as a remedial agent, will be understood by every well-informed physician.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Leamington, May, 1871.

H. STANLEY GALE.

ON DIGITAL EXAMINATION OF THE UTERUS AND OF THE PELVIC CAVITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am much obliged to Dr. Henry Bennet for his friendly criticism of my lecture on the above subject. When, however, Dr. Bennet says that my statement as to the very great prevalence of the use of the speculum, to the exclusion of other methods of examination, is "totally and entirely wrong," I must be excused for repeating that, on the contrary, it is true. It is a fact which has been daily brought before me for some years past, in hospital and in consulting practice.

I am quite aware that digital examination of the uterus is not a new procedure. I never stated that it was. The object of my lecture, introductory to the course of clinical lectures I am in the habit of delivering in University College Hospital, was to inculcate its primary importance.

It affords me much gratification to be made aware that Dr. Henry Bennet so entirely agrees with me as to the "primary importance" of digital examination of the uterus.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

May 29th, 1871.

GRAILY HEWITT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a clinical lecture given by Dr. Graily Hewitt, lately published in THE LANCET, I find the following statement:—"Within the past thirty years much attention has been given to the investigation of the physical condition of the generative organs. For some time the speculum was the instrument almost exclusively used in obtaining information as to the physical condition of the uterus. This method of investigation has been followed, in too many cases, to the exclusion of all other methods of examination. One cannot therefore be surprised to find that in many instances very remarkable physical alterations of the uterus remained quite undetected, since the examination was confined to a visual examination of the os uteri."

These assertions, so contrary to fact, show how little Dr. Graily Hewitt is conversant with the works and the teaching of Recamier, Lisfranc, Velpeau, Dupuytren, Trousseau,