your readers may have gathered, I held the office of house-surgeon for six months, at the end of which time I was offered an additional three months, which I accepted, knowing that the same reward had within the last four years twice been offered to gentlemen who were in no way connected with the staff. To the former of these Mr. Heckford alludes, "to prevent a quibble," as he says, but suppresses the most important circumstance, that the gentleman in question was actually recommended by the surgical staff to the committee for re-appointment, but that the latter body refused to accept him on account of his having been guilty of a breach of regulations. In the latter case Mr. Dove was re-elected, and held office for an additional period of two months, without any objection. Now whether these facts were known to Mr. Heckford or not, his assertions are equally unjustifiable; but I distinctly recollect telling him, in the presence of witnesses, the true state of the case concerning the first instance I have cited, and he was also reminded of the second. In addition, I may inform Mr. Heckford, and the public generally, that, according to the standing orders, "the office of house-surgeon is renewable every three months, subject to the limitation that the office shall not be held by the same individual for a period exceeding two years."

With regard to my appointment as medical registrar (which I resigned last year, knowing that Mr. Heckford would be a candidate for it), he must be aware that I did not seek the post until I was assured that no other student of the hospital of equal standing with myself desired it, and that I then ventured to oppose a gentleman far superior to myself, because he had previously been unconnected with the hospital, that the office might still remain within the reach of our own students.

Mr. Heckford's knowledge of the history of this institution "for the last ten years" appears to be decidedly hazy, but ignorance can be no cloak for inaccurate statements made by a disinterested champion of a great cause. I am the son of the senior surgeon, but I am also a perpetual student: why may I not have the same privileges extended to me that are granted to others? I have neither asked nor obtained more, and there are some who have held more appointments than I, and justly so, because their general attainments have been superior to mine.

To avoid the possibility of an insinuation of favouritism I did not present myself as a candidate for the surgical gold medal, and so lost a chance (however remote) of being able to advertise the double distinction, which Mr. Heckford and Mr. Walker have, with questionable taste, taken a recent opportunity of doing. I am, Sir, yours truly,

Aug. 1867.

JAMES ADAMS.

* * Several other letters have been received on this painful subject. The amount of space we have already given to it evinces our desire to afford full publicity to the explanations from both parties in the dispute. The various points of disagreement have now been placed sufficiently in detail before the profession, and the demands on our space compel us to limit the discussion. Next week a letter from Mr. Heckford, in which he makes certain suggestions in the way of reform for the consideration of the Council of the London Hospital, and another, containing a personal explanation from Mr. Robinson, will appear in our columns; after which the official reply of Mr. Hutchinson, as the dean of the school, must end the controversy.—ED. L.

CRAMMING FOR EXAMINATIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—THE LANCET of the 11th of May last contains a letter from Mr. Busk commenting on certain statements made by me—with reference to the Chelsea competitive examination—in an article "On Army Reorganisation" in the *United Service Magazine* for March, 1867. In concluding his remarks Mr. Busk states:—

"Dr. Rennie is further of opinion, as may be gathered from the following curious sentence, that if the examination were done away with 'the army would become a prize for the best of students, and be relieved from the approbation which of late has begun to be attached to it in the medical periodicals of being a place of refuge for the sweepings of the medical schools.' It is to be hoped that this beginning will not be followed up, and I think few will be found to concur with Dr.

Rennie in the opinion that the system of competitive examination for entry into the service should be abolished."

Those who read the magazine referred to may have observed, from a letter addressed by me to the editor (in the number for May of the present year), that in writing from a remote part of India I labour under the disadvantage of not seeing "proof sheets," and consequently of being unable myself to correct typographical errors; and as Mr. Busk has quoted what is certainly a curious sentence, I have to ask the favour of your giving insertion to the following—namely, the sentence in question as originally written by me, also the context as published in the *United Service Magazine*, the same being necessary to render intelligible the expression of opinion cited by Mr. Busk:—

"Having casually alluded to the exception taken by the medical schools of the United Kingdom to the medical service of the army, it appears to me that grounds exist for identifying these schools more with the Army Medical Department than has yet been done, by holding them more responsible for the class of medical officers entering the army than it has yet been practicable to do, and thus counteract the evils of the vicious system of cramming for special examinations, to which I have endeavoured to draw attention. Either such examinations are unnecessary, or such grave defects exist in the present system of medical education as to justify the belief that the legal qualification to practise medicine and surgery is a mere licence, in many instances, to trifle with health and life; because it stands to common sense, that if 'qualified medical practitioners' are not fit to treat British soldiers without being specially tested, they must be certainly equally unfit to treat her Majesty's ordinary, but apparently less fortunate, subjects. Such at least is the unvarnished conclusion that the present system of examining and re-examining medical candidates inevitably leads to. That the present plan of competitive examination is a bad one there is but little doubt, and were a commission appointed to inquire into its workings and take the evidence of military and medical officers competent to give opinions on the subject, I do not think that a single fact could be adduced in support of it, that a stronger one could not be urged against it. The remedy, in my opinion, for the present unsatisfactory state of matters, is a return, in an altered form, to the patronage system, by throwing the filling up of vacancies in the Army Medical Department entirely into the hands of the licensing medical schools of the country, according to a regulated proportion and roster. Were this done, the army would become a prize for the best of students, and be relieved from the opprobrium which of late has begun to be attached to it in the medical periodicals, of being a place of refuge for the 'sweepings of the medical schools'—language, however, it is to be hoped, more vigorous than accurate."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

D. F. RENNIE, M.D.,
Surgeon, 20th Hussars.

Campbellpore, June 29th, 1867.

REVACCINATION OF PREGNANT WOMEN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your notice of the proceedings of the Obstetrical Society of London, on the 27th ult., Dr. Madge is reported to have suggested "the necessity or advisability of vaccinating or revaccinating all pregnant women during epidemics of small-pox, so as to extend the protective influence of vaccination through the blood of the mother to the child in utero." Such advice is so much at variance with the practice in general use, and, if adopted, may be productive of so much mischief, that I cannot forbear quoting the remarks of Dr. Meigs (Philadelphia) on this subject. He says: "Pregnant women ought not to be vaccinated. This is a rule that I advise you to depart from only on the most urgent occasions. If a woman have been once vaccinated, and appeal to you to revaccinate her, because there is a present variolous epidemic, I hope you will refuse to accede to her request. Small-pox is exceedingly and peculiarly pernicious to pregnant women. She who has it, and miscarries, or who is brought to bed at term, generally dies. It is, in my opinion, inexcusable to expose her to so great a risk, a risk far greater than that from accidental contagion, or that of the epidemic. But the vaccine is identical with the variolous animal poison, saving some lessened intensity of its malignant form, derived from its having been modified by the nature of another mammal. To inoculate a cow with small-pox virus, is to give her the vaccine disease, with the lymph of which you can vaccinate, but not reproduce unmodi-

fied small-pox. Keep your pregnant patients clear of small-pox in all its forms, whether modified or unmodified. Do not vaccinate them. I have been the witness of dreadful distress from the operation. Eschew it, I entreat you."

Such warning from one so deservedly trusted must have weight; and Dr. Barnes, judging from his reply to Dr. Madge, "that, although it might be desirable to revaccinate pregnant women who were specially exposed to infection during an epidemic, yet, as a general rule, it was not called for," seems to be averse to the practice suggested.

The insertion of this note in your next number, may, I trust, induce him to speak plainly on this subject, as at the present time, owing to the wilful neglect of preventive means, we need not be surprised at the prevalence of small-pox in many districts, and if the plan alluded to be followed, lamentable results must be expected.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Truro, Cornwall, Aug. 1867. RICH'D. H. WILLIAMS.

THE PRIMARY EXAMINATION AT THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The Royal College of Physicians has fixed October 1st for the primary examination for its licence. This is, to say the least, a most unfortunate arrangement, as it will entirely prevent all provincial and some metropolitan students taking part in the proceedings of a day which has special interest for the junior members of our profession. In many cases it will form an obstacle to some receiving in the presence of their competitors the prizes and other rewards for successful study. Surely the College authorities might have thought of this.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,
Aug. 21st, 1867. A PROVINCIAL TEACHER.

NATIONAL ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In pursuance of former custom, I beg to forward a report of medical and surgical cases occurring in the camp at Shoebury Fort from July 24th to August 3rd, 1867.

Last year the staff were in a state of considerable anxiety lest an outbreak of cholera should take place, that disease prevailing, and having been fatal in several cases, in the adjoining village. But this year we had, fortunately, no grounds for alarm. A few cases of diarrhoea presented themselves at the commencement, which were easily checked. On the other hand, constipation prevailed to a certain extent, requiring treatment. Catarrh of a mild character attacked some of the men, caused by the severe "downpour" we experienced on the second and third nights, when some parts of the camp were completely flooded. After this the weather was of an Indian character. Several cases occurred of blistering of the face and forehead from sun and wind; and in others, of severe cedema of the eyelids, closing them entirely for some twenty-four hours or more. A case of spasmodic stricture occurred, with retention, relieved by passing the catheter three or four times. There were several casualties—viz., incised and contused wounds from falls &c. A very severe contusion of the foot, from the fall of a forty-pound Armstrong shot upon it, which spoilt the man for service for several days, but he eventually returned to duty. One of the captains fell over the tent-ropes in the dark and dislocated his shoulder; this was reduced, but he could do no duty the rest of the time. A severe abrasion of the shin from contact with the trail of an Armstrong gun. We finished the last morning with the fracture of two ribs from a fall over a heap of bricks. Altogether (including casualties) some fifty-four cases required treatment.

The hospital arrangements consisted of a large double tent with beds, a surgery tent, and such other conveniences as existed in the two former years. The latrines were improved upon this year by the adoption of the earth-closet system, large pits being dug and covered with seats, with traps at the back, so that early in the morning of each day a supply of dry earth was used to cover up the soil of the previous day; and this was quite successful. To our old acquaintances, the ditches and pond, we freely applied chloride of lime and carbolic acid. A great deal of damage was done in the camp by the stormy nights of the early part of the time, but all hands set to work with such a will and alacrity to repair it as to draw forth the

encomiums of the commanding officer of the camp, Colonel Gordon, R.A.

This report will give an idea of what occurs in this branch of the service. We have again to thank Colonel Wilmot, commandant of the garrison, Colonel Gordon, Colonel Fisher, Dr. Alexander Smith, and the whole of the Royal Artillery officers, for their kind assistance, and the hospitality extended by them to the volunteer officers in camp and at their mess.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
Connaught-terrace, Hyde-park, W., DE LISLE ALLEN,
August, 1867. Staff Surgeon.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS.

(FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

AT last, after many months' gestation, the Paris Medical International Congress has seen the light. Much interest had been excited all through Europe and America whilst arrangements were in progress; and many members of the profession determined to give countenance to a gathering of a novel kind. The committee in Paris had been indefatigable in their exertions; and, besides making an appeal to their professional brethren in France, had sought the support of foreign medical societies, journals, and men of eminence.

Your readers, from the various articles you have published, are aware that this committee hit upon the idea of appointing delegates. Herein they were right; but they made a mistake in abstaining from *direct* applications to medical societies and the different corporations—such as (to restrict my observations to our own country) the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, the Apothecaries' Society, the Universities of Great Britain and Ireland, the staffs of the principal hospitals, &c. The support would then have been *official*, and, perhaps, more powerful, than it has turned out. Nor had the committee who organised the Congress a collegiate status. No doubt it is composed of men of character and eminence; but the Faculty of Paris did not take direct action in the proceedings. This is, then, a kind of democratic movement, where individuality plays a prominent part. Up to this day it has been a fair success; but, if I may speak the sentiments of the British profession, there is some disappointment. The *language* is the stumbling-block, as far as we are concerned.

It is no use concealing it, but the members of the profession, in Europe generally, are better acquainted with French than we are. And if after this trial an international medical gathering is ever again thought of, it could not take place anywhere but in the French capital. The language of our Gallic friends is becoming more and more universal (it is a pity Latin is not kept up and *spoken* as the language of the learned of all countries); and through it only is there any hope of scientific interchange at meetings of an *international* kind.

But this is not all. The papers are read with such rapidity that most foreigners must give up in despair any attempt at following and understanding. And as for discussion, we must not think of it. He who catches but a few words of the papers must bend his diminished head before French oratory.

To tell the honest truth, I noticed but very few of our dismayed countrymen on the seats of the vast theatre of the Faculty. Half a dozen London men I recognised; there might, however, have been a few from the country. I cannot say how strong our American cousins mustered; but I know there were a few. Two papers are announced from New York: an obstetrical one from Dr. Maxson, and one on cerebral affections by Dr. Brown-Séquard.

These papers are marked in the prospectus; but this does not mean that the authors will come and read them. Yesterday, for instance, I expected to see Dr. Tilt's face when his turn came to give his experience as to the influence of climate on menstruation; but this physician made no appearance. His paper was read by Dr. Ball, a naturalised Englishman, who holds important appointments at the French Faculty.

That Americans, however, have come over, is a fact; for one of these sat beside me. He had also been present at the Dublin meeting, and said, in surveying the vast concourse here assembled, "These do not look such a fine set of men as I saw in Dublin." So much for international outward appearance.