Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE LOWER UTERINE SEGMENT AND UTERINE TENDONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET for March 22nd (p. 481) Dr. R. H. Paramore takes me to task for the description I have given of the tendons of the uterus, and traverses some of the conclusions founded on that conception. As Dr. Paramore has made so close a study of the pelvic floor it is to me a matter of sincere regret that I cannot convince him as to the truth of my views.

There are several minor and three important particulars in which he appears to differ from me: 1. In respect to the existence during pregnancy of these uterine tendons (Makenrodt's ligaments). 2. Their paramount rôle (if present) in keeping the uterus in its elevated position. 3. Whether the elongated supra-vaginal portion of the cervix is caused as a result of hypertrophy rather than that of a mere stretching process. The truth or error of these differences of opinion can be brought within the range of actual observation, and I suggest the following procedure as a means of settling the question. When operating for prolapse, ring the base of the cervix by an incision as for circular amputation. Press the bladder off the uterus up to its peritoneal border. Wipe the skin flaps from either side of the cervix outward toward the lateral fornices. If these flaps are not easily wiped from the cervix deepen the incision. If traction is now applied to the cervix the tendons will be brought into distinct relief. They can be compared to stirrup-straps. They are sharply differentiated from surrounding structures and are capable of being palpated on their lower and upper surfaces. Their state of tautness produced by traction on the cervix demonstrates, beyond a doubt, the importance of their function.

Dr. Paramore is mistaken in thinking that this tissue must be removed when Wertheim's hysterectomy is performed. It is severed but a short distance from the cervix. The gap left in the vault of the vagina quickly closes by central cicatrisation and Makenrodt's ligaments are drawn tighter than ever.

In the further steps of the operation above described, the cervix will probably require a circular amputation, and will thus afford Dr. Paramore an opportunity of testing my third contention—viz., that the elongated cervix is the result of hypertrophy and not a mere stretching of tissue. Were it the latter it will appear as a structure not thicker than that of a pencil. Whereas, if my experience is correct, its diameter will remain undiminished.

Dr. Paramore states that what I call the tendons of the uterus "have not the same structure as tendons," and that "we are not going to believe that tissues of a different structure, and, indeed, of a different order, behave similarly." What he means exactly by this sentence is not quite clear. Anatomists describe a tendon as a fibrous cord by which a voluntary muscle gains attachment to bone. They have not, it is true, described tendons in connexion with involuntary muscle. The tissue, however, which forms the floor of the pelvis, consists of bundles of fibrous tissue and smooth muscle intimately mingled together. This tissue radiates from the uterus at the level of the os internum. At one extremity it is intimately blended with the muscle fibres of the uterus, at the other it is attached to the bony walls of the pelvis. It forms a fibro-muscular diaphragm or floor for the pelvis, stronger in some parts than in others, and either kept in tension or relaxed according as the os internum is contracted or open. It is thus a fibro-muscular attachment of the uterine muscle to the bony walls of the pelvis, just as a tendon is a fibrous insertion of a voluntary muscle into bone. I consider that this similarity of structure and of function justifies me in using the term "tendon of the uterus." If this contention is correct it is obvious that as long as the os internum remains closed the cervix uteri will be protected from direct pressure from above, while as the os internum dilates during pregnancy pressure will be exerted by the ovum of the cervix. This, I

contend, leads to growth in the cervix, and the formation of the lower uterine segment.

There is much of Dr. Paramore's criticism which does not concern the matter under consideration. The fact that there is a rise of intravaginal pressure during coughing does not affect the question. That the condition of the bladder influences the position of the uterus is surely not disputed by anyone. Obstetricians differentiate between "proci-dentia uteri" and "prolapse of the uterus," and it did not seem necessary to define the meaning of terms in such common use. What exactly Dr. Paramore means by the last sentence in his letter I am at a loss to understand, nor does the statement there made appear to explain any obstetric or gynaecological difficulty.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Dublin, April 15th, 1919.

E. HASTINGS TWEEDY.

THE NOTIFICATION OF DYSENTERY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your issue of April 12th I find a long article on the disposal of dysentery cases. I find that dysentery is to be notified and that "thus prompt and effective treatment will be secured for the individual." Now I have a case in point. A patient has come to me stating that he has had dysentery and has now a relapse. The relapse seems to be clinically diarrhoea. It is no doubt a case calling for investigation. If I send a specimen to the county laboratory, the result is a foregone conclusion. It will be negative because positive results vary in inverse ratio to the time before specimens arrive at the laboratory—in this case it is a long time. Again, am I to notify the case without more evidence than an attack of diarrhoea and even if I do will any treatment be provided? The patient will not enter an institution if asked to. Further, no one is likely to be at great pains to notify cases when there is no resulting benefit to the patient and 1s. reward to the doctor. Five shillings might begin to pay us for the particulars asked—I hear no suggestion of such payment. Nor can I prevent the patient from being a milkman or a pastrycook, or anything he likes. Will a notification have this effect? If it will I am certainly disinclined to notify without adequate bacteriological investigation, for I might thereby do the man considerable injury and general practitioners are least of all able to inflict damage of this sort.

I ask these questions because it seems to me that many regulations exist but their outcome is of dubious benefit to anyone. If we have a hot summer there is reason to expect such outbreaks of dysentery as have already occurred among the civilian population in Germany. It is not too soon to prepare really effectual schemes for meeting such emergencies.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Sevenoaks, April 17th, 1919.

GORDON WARD, M.D. Lond.

A FREAK OF NATURE?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It may, I think, be questioned whether, as stated in your annotation with this title in THE LANCET of April 5th, prehistoric archaeology "is especially productive of questionable conclusions." I do not consider that the annotation establishes the case. Has it yet been *proved* that the painted lines which Professor Sollas found in a Welsh cave are without any doubt "the daubs on the wall of a boat-builder's former paint store"? Again, I know of no reason why genuine neolithic "pot-boilers" should not be present "on the site of a Jubilee bonfire," or are we to suppose that bonfires are never lit where calcined flints of the Neolithic period are lying upon the ground? Then as regards the Stopes' shell, which is quoted as an example of one of the "prodigies" that have deceived the "very elect." Reference to the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, Vol. I., Part III. ("Report of Special Committee"), pp. 326-332, will show that this specimen did not "deceive" those of us who formed the special committee appointed to examine it. But perhaps we are not to be numbered amongst the "very elect." Finally, I cannot see why, if the piece of chalk I have described in *Man* for February last is proved to be humanly fashioned, "it will be of great importance for the solution of the problem of the antiquity