

his appointment (dated Nov. 19th, 1887).—14th Middlesex (Inns of Court): The undermentioned officer resigns his commission:—Surgeon J. H. Morgan (dated Nov. 19th, 1887). 18th Middlesex: Druce John Slater, M.B., to be Acting Surgeon (dated Nov. 19th, 1887).

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

### THE NATURE OF SMALL-POX.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Sir James Paget, in the Morton Lecture, says: "We cannot tell why small-pox is especially manifested on the skin." In the nomenclature, small-pox, having fallen amongst the "specific febrile diseases," is regarded as a typical blood disorder. Believing that the fermentation theory has misled us, I hold this an unfortunate association, and would group small-pox with "parasitic diseases of the skin." The manifestations of small-pox can be accounted for by an hypothesis that spores dispersed from a small-pox victim, falling on "good ground," vegetate locally; that the local lesion and constitutional disturbance are sequences of that local growth. In ringworm spores may be carried by the air and settle on the skin. "In the first place the fungus takes root in the superficial epidermic layers." "The fungus elements act as a foreign body, irritating the subjacent papillæ." These become hyperæmic. Serous exudation follows, the epidermis is loosened and raised into vesicles, the part grown on is then protected from further vesicular eruption (see Hebra, new series, vol. v., p. 215). "Fever may also accompany such an eruption if it is spread over a large part of the trunk" (p. 201). There is no doubt that small-pox is propagated by spores (see Dr. Buist's "Vaccinia and Variola"). It is probable that they are given off in enormous numbers from a small-pox patient. An unprotected person entering a spore-laden atmosphere would arrest some of them. If each spore produced a pock at the spot where it was arrested, we would expect the pocks to be most numerous on well-aired parts, the respiratory tract, face, and hands; less so in parts covered by clothes and hair; least on unaired surfaces, such as the œsophagus, vagina, and urethra. It is so in small-pox, with the exception of the conjunctiva (the spores were washed away to the eyelashes). If we imagine the spores to be blood-carried, we cannot explain the distribution of pocks. The other theory does account for it. On the fermentation hypothesis the number of pocks would be independent of the number of spores originally leavening the blood. But on the unprotected the number of pocks does depend on the circumstances of exposure. Such a person passing a small-pox patient in the street would have discrete small-pox. Such a person attending a small-pox patient in a room for days, or sleeping in the same bed, would have confluent small-pox. The instances of most extensive confluent eruption over the body in my experience have been personal attendants on small-pox patients admitted into general hospitals. The longer such a one is exposed to infection, the nearer to the source, the fewer intervening obstacles and the more confined the space, the greater will be the number of spores adhering, the greater the number of pocks.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Hospital Ships, Nov. 20th, 1887.

R. A. BIRDWOOD.

### "IS CANCER CONTAGIOUS?"

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with great interest the many letters which have appeared in the late numbers of THE LANCET on the subject of cancer, and also the admirable lecture in last week's number by Sir James Paget, Bart., who is decidedly of opinion that the disease is not contagious. Now, with your kind permission, I should like to bring before the profession a few cases which have happened in my own practice, and which can hardly, I think, be explained upon any other hypothesis than that of contagion.

1. Some years ago a gentleman, who had spent many

years in India, came under my care for cancer of the lip, for which he refused to submit to any operation. When he was confined to his bed a favourite little terrier was scarcely ever out of his room, and, as is the habit of such little dogs, frequently licked his master's lips. This dog died, before his master, of cancer of the tongue.

2. A lady suffering from cancer of the uterus and vagina was nursed by a strong, healthy young woman of nineteen. She, in spite of my remonstrances, persisted in washing the rags which were saturated with the discharges from her mistress's wounds. Six months after the death of the lady this young woman was admitted into the North Devon Infirmary with a large mass of cancer in the axilla, and speedily died of the disease.

3. Since I have been in practice in this small town five surgeons, all of whom had officiated at the North Devon Infirmary, have died of cancer. Such a mortality can hardly be conceived except on the supposition that the disease was communicated, at least to some of them, during their manipulations on patients suffering from cancer.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Barnstaple, Nov. 21st, 1887. RICHARD BUDD, M.D., F.R.C.P.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The letter in your last issue under the above heading recalls to my mind the case of a man who died in the Liverpool Royal Infirmary in 1884 from cancer of the penis and secondary glandular disease, his wife having previously succumbed to malignant disease of the uterus. Like Mr. Whitehead's case, this may have been purely coincidental, but may also possibly bear another interpretation.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

ARTHUR H. CLEMOW, M.D.

Earl's-court-square, S.W., Nov. 21st, 1887.

### MANCHESTER.

(From our own Correspondent.)

#### VICTORIA UNIVERSITY.

THE ceremony of conferring degrees took place in the Town Hall, in the presence of a large and fashionable audience. Thirty-one degrees in all were conferred, in Arts, Science, and Medicine. The Vice-Chancellor, in his report, stated that the number of candidates at the various examinations was increasing yearly, amounting in the past year to 285. At a meeting of the University Court held the same day an important step was taken in the admission of the Yorkshire College at Leeds as a college of the University. The application was strongly supported by the Marquis of Ripon; and the Duke of Devonshire, Chancellor of the University, also wrote, expressing his sympathy with the application. After considerable discussion, it was unanimously decided to admit the Yorkshire College. Thus, another provincial medical school will have it in its power to offer a degree to its students. It is, however, to be hoped that, for the credit of the Leeds medical students, we shall not hear again of such a silly public demonstration as was made last week in the streets of Leeds by some of their number because they had been invited to attend a meeting under the auspices of the Young Men's Christian Association.

#### INFIRMARY AND SOUTHERN HOSPITAL.

The offer, alluded to in these columns, to build and equip a cottage hospital in Hulme, to be handed over to the Royal Infirmary, has been reluctantly declined by the board of that charity, as involving pecuniary responsibilities they do not see their way clear to incur. The recent death of Madame "Jenny Lind" has served to remind the present generation of the debt of gratitude owing to her for the substantial assistance given by her in building the third wing to the infirmary. During the past year the Southern Hospital has extended its sphere of operations by opening a lying-in department, and Dr. Sinclair, in the report presented at the annual meeting, was able to state that the public had responded well to the application for increased support to meet the additional expenses thus incurred. Good and useful work is being done by this hospital. At the last meeting of the Medical Society (which, by the way, continues this year to hold some of its meetings at the