

patients dying in convulsions after four or five hours of cruel sufferings." A subsequent letter shows a decline, the cases on the 9th and 10th being 312, the deaths 213; on the 10th and 11th, 206 cases and 162 deaths. The latest reports from Catania give for two days—cases, 87, 85; deaths, 79, 80; and those from Catalgirone, Paterno, Pozzino, and other places are proportionately bad. Messina is no longer free from the disease. Wherever the epidemic has broken out with severity in the rural districts of Italy and Sicily, the population would appear to be demoralised by panic, and to have frequently broken out into open riot. Believing too commonly that the malady is the result of poison administered by those who profess to relieve them, they have rendered effective aid well-nigh impossible, and in some cases the help has had to be enforced under the protection of troops. The accounts read, indeed, like a chapter from Hecker's "History of Epidemics of the Middle Ages."

A rumour has reached us of a serious outbreak of cholera at Aden, and consequent discomfort in Egypt. The quarantine authorities of that country are about to take, or have taken, active measures for its protection, and passengers from India by way of Suez may be subjected to some of the tribulations inseparable from the restrictions suggested by the International Sanitary Conference last year.

COMPENSATION FOR RAILWAY INJURIES.

AT Bristol, on Monday last, was tried the case of "Hand and wife against the Midland Railway Company," to recover compensation for injuries sustained by the female plaintiff before her marriage, by reason of the negligent conduct of the defendants' servants. The accident happened as long ago as 1864. The defendants admitted their liability, but pleaded that Mrs. Hand had accepted and received from the defendants the sum of £211 in full satisfaction of all demands. The plaintiff denied this, and said that if she had received that money she was induced to do so by fraud. It appeared in evidence that Mr. Day, surgeon to the railway company, shortly after the accident assured Mrs. Hand she would soon be well, and paid to her a check for £211, which was to remunerate her for loss of business &c., and pay her own doctor's account. Mrs. Hand deposed that she took the money because she wanted it at the time, and relying on the assurance of Mr. Day. The receipt given by Mrs. Hand was witnessed by Dr. Boodle, her own medical attendant, who, on examination, stated that he did not advise the patient to settle, and merely signed his name as witness to the receipt because he did not wish to interfere with any arrangement that had been come to; even at the time, however, he had expressed doubts as to the period of her recovery. She had since been very ill, and was now on the verge of paralysis. Several medical witnesses gave similar testimony.

The defendants called no witnesses, but relied upon the reply of Mr. Coleridge, who rejected entirely the word "fraud;" there was no pretence whatever for its employment. He contended that the arrangement was an equitable one, and come to openly; and the jury could not believe Dr. Boodle was ignorant of the arrangement, as he received his fees out of the £211. Dr. Boodle also admitted that the plaintiff was in a fit state to enter into an arrangement.

In summing up, the Judge said that if the jury were of opinion that the plaintiff did not accept the money in full satisfaction and discharge of all claims she might have, or that, having thus received it, she had been induced to do so by the fraud of the defendants' agent, then the plaintiff would be entitled to their verdict. If the converse were the case, the verdict would be for the defendants. The jury must be satisfied, if they found for the plaintiff on the ground of misrepresentation or moral fraud, that Mr. Day not only misrepresented her state, but that he did so knowing it was untrue. The learned judge then drew the attention of the jury to the question as to whether the transaction was done in secret. Was it done openly? Was it done while the plaintiff was in the hands of Mr. Day, or was it done without the knowledge of the plaintiff's professional man? He knew full well that Mr. Day was the surgeon of the company, and was not employed by her; and she knew her own medical man entertained an opinion differing from that of Mr. Day. He must say that, as a general rule, it was most objectionable that medical men should engage in making compromises. If such a com-

promise was to be made, it was better that it should be in the hands of the professional legal advisers than in those of medical men.

The jury asked whether, if they were of opinion that Mr. Day's statement was not fraudulent, although mistaken, they could give further damages. The Judge said if they negatived fraud, they would then have to consider whether the plaintiff received the money in full satisfaction. No doubt the receipt would show that; and if they were of opinion that she knew what she was about at the time, the receipt would bind her.

Eventually the jury gave a verdict for the plaintiffs—damages £300, in addition to the £211 paid,—they being of opinion that there had been misrepresentation on the part of Mr. Day.

His Lordship gave leave to Mr. Coleridge to move.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

LONDON HOSPITAL GRIEVANCES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As Mr. Ley's letter may possibly lead some of your readers to imagine that I had acted precipitately and unjustly in the manner in which I had performed the duty of nominating the candidates for the vacant office of resident accoucheur to the London Hospital, I should esteem it a favour if you will permit the following remarks appertaining to this affair to appear in your columns.

In reply to Mr. Ley's communication, I am sorry to say that he omits much that is of material importance, places matters out of the connexion which they ought to hold, and only partially exhibits the steps that I have taken in discharging my duty in this painful affair. From Mr. Ley's letter it would appear that Mr. Macarthy had been promised the office months before it was vacant; that I, knowing the promise had been made, caused a notice to be placed in the library to the effect that the post was vacant, and that applications would be received; that, on arriving in town as a candidate, he heard somewhere that it was useless to try, inasmuch as the said appointment had been promised for months; that I confirmed this statement in private conversation, but that afterwards, in consequence of threatening meetings of the students, I asked him to take it for three months, and that then, with a view of defeating this, my own proposition, my recommendation was—"I recommend Mr. Macarthy and Mr. Ley for the office of resident accoucheur." If this be a true statement of the affair from the beginning, I confess that no condemnation of my conduct could be too strong; if it be an incomplete statement of steps that have been taken to oblige and satisfy Mr. Ley and those who have instigated him to take up the course he has thought fit to adopt, then his conduct will stand in a very different light.

The following simple relation of the facts of this affair, recounted in order from the beginning, will, I have no doubt, do much to dissipate, in all candid minds, the injurious imputations Mr. Ley wishes to fasten on me.

In January last, the late resident accoucheur informed me, with a view to my appointing a successor, that his term of office of six months had nearly expired. Prior to this communication, Mr. Macarthy had informed me that he should become a candidate on the next vacancy. I inquired of the late resident accoucheur if there were any other candidates besides Mr. Macarthy in the field, and being answered in the negative, I shortly afterwards wrote to the House Committee, in whose hands the appointment lies, suggesting the name of Mr. Macarthy. Meanwhile, the late resident accoucheur had applied for a privilege which has frequent precedent in its favour in the case of those who have satisfactorily discharged the duties of the post to which they have been appointed—that is, an extension of office. This application from the late accoucheur and my nomination of Mr. Macarthy were both acceded to. However—and this should be remembered,—I received no notification of the latter appointment, and supposed that in consequence of the extension of the term of the late accoucheur's office my nomination of Mr. Macarthy had been passed over. So matters rested, until another gentleman, two or three months since, asked me to look favourably on his

application at the next vacancy for the same office. My answer was that I thought Mr. Macarthy would stand a better chance, as I had proposed him some months since to the House Committee, when I thought there was a vacancy; and that the great number of cases of midwifery that he had attended for the maternity would carry considerable weight. Soon after this, one or two candidates more appeared, and these, supported by a section of the students, commenced an agitation with a view of defeating Mr. Macarthy. The strong point they alleged in their favour was that Mr. Macarthy was not a full student of the school. As to myself, being at the time of Mr. Macarthy's first nomination in January last unconnected with the school, I was not aware, in nominating him, that there were any grounds whatever for supposing him ineligible, or that strong feelings on these and kindred matters were rife amongst students. However, the Council of the college, after receiving a deputation of the students, considered that their claim to these appointments was not without grounds, and came to the resolution that the latter should in future be reserved for full pupils entirely. The Council held, however, that it would be unfair to make this rule retrospective in Mr. Macarthy's case.

With a simple wish, therefore, of satisfactorily carrying out this arrangement, and ignorant that Mr. Macarthy had been definitively appointed, I told the latter gentleman that he must not rely on my past nomination made in ignorance, but send in his application with other candidates. Of these candidates it was not difficult to select Mr. Macarthy and Mr. Ley as the two most eligible—one on the ground of personal qualification, the other on seniority of standing. To go further involved great difficulty. An examination was proposed, but felt to be inapplicable inasmuch as Mr. Ley, although practically equal to any emergency that might occur, yet coming from private practice, stood an unequal chance in such a contest against Mr. Macarthy, whose time was more devoted to reading. Indeed, Mr. Ley himself declined submitting to this test, and rested his claim to office entirely on the ground of seniority. After anxious consideration it was proposed as a satisfactory solution of the difficulty that Mr. Macarthy and Mr. Ley should be appointed to hold office successively for three months, preference as to time to be given to Mr. Ley. With a view of making this arrangement I wrote to the House Committee. Not having a copy of my letter, I cannot state here the exact words, but they were, I believe, as follows:—

"After mature deliberation of the qualifications of the four candidates for the appointment of resident accoucheur, I have arrived at the conclusion that the two most eligible candidates are Mr. Macarthy and Mr. Ley."

The rules of the hospital admit of my only nominating one; I therefore had no doubt but that the House Committee would require from me a personal explanation of this irregular nomination. I remained at the hospital on the day of meeting for that purpose, but my object was frustrated by the fact that, on referring to their minutes, the House Committee discovered that the following resolution was entered on the 12th of February last:—"That Dr. Head's suggestion be approved, and that Mr. Macarthy be appointed from the date of the actual retirement of Mr. Mackenzie."

I might, and perhaps ought to, have written to the House Committee a longer letter of explanation when I forwarded the double nomination; but, right or wrong, I deemed personal explanation more advisable.

It may be fairly asked, judging from the issue, What reasons had you for concluding that the House Committee would afford you such opportunity? My reasons are that, being by precedent limited to one nominee, the extraordinary nature of my nomination would require investigation; that a copy of the resolutions of the indignation meeting of the students, protesting against the manner in which appointments had been lately made, had just been sent to the House Committee, who, I thought, would naturally look on this nomination as a case in point, and require of me a personal explanation; that I was firmly convinced that the House Committee would not perform the delicate task of deciding on the claims of the rival candidates without further information. Whatever be the justness of these reasons, the imputation that I endeavoured to defeat a compromise suggested by the Council, and publicly stated to be agreeable to myself, by mystification, is not only unjust, but inapplicable. The nomination made by me fell to the ground, not on account of that or any other reason suggested by Mr. Ley, but from another distinct cause, quite independent of the latter conjoined nomination—that is, that Mr. Macarthy had been definitively appointed six months before. This simple narration of facts relating to this unfortunate

affair clearly disposes of the strange mistake that I said the office of resident accoucheur was kept open for Mr. Macarthy.

These are the main facts of the case. It will be observed that there are two grievances alleged, and laid mainly to my charge: (1) the oversight of neglecting to notify the approaching vacancy; and (2) the form of the irregular nomination, and the reception it met with from the House Committee.

With regard to the first of these, it will be seen that I allow a formal inadvertence has occurred. In all such cases it is certainly desirable to give the utmost amount of publicity of such vacancy among all those who are eligible and competent of competing. I regret much that this was not done on the present occasion. In my own defence, however, I have to plead, that the vacancy occurred at regular and successive intervals which might be well known; that long previous preparation for the appointment in the maternity is required; that the post is a reward for application and merit, much more than for seniority. Besides—which is material—it has been the custom at the hospital for the physician to assign the post, without examination, to whom he considers best qualified to discharge such onerous duties; and that therefore I naturally, almost unconsciously, considered that it was quite impossible that there could have been a professed candidate qualified for the appointment who was unknown to myself.

With reference to the appointment actually proposed, it will be seen that, contrary to what has been ungenerously suggested, I have had no knowledge of Mr. Macarthy except in and through the hospital; that the approbation I have given to his claims has been approbation, not to himself, but to his work done; that he was considered an eligible candidate; that with respect to his services in my department he had by far the best claims: consequently the amount of blame that can be attributed to me must rest within the narrow limits here exhibited. The main point, and indeed almost the only consideration that is of interest to your readers, is whether the late appointment has been made in good faith, or as a matter of favouritism and jobbery—the result, in fact, of motives that will not bear inspection. This charge of corruption is, I confess, the chief point I am anxious about. From such charge, however, I hope that the previous statements, made as clearly as I can, will fully exonerate me.

As Mr. Walker has referred to the second grievance in such strong terms, I must be permitted to add a few words on that matter. This gentleman remarks in his letter that a compromise was suggested by the Council, which was "unwillingly accepted, but still accepted and ratified by Dr. Head. Then by a quibble, far more contemptible than an open falsehood, the eligible and senior candidate was discarded for the ineligible and junior." In reply to this I have to remark, for a clearer comprehension by your readers, that there are two bodies who have been referred to in this correspondence, the Committee of the hospital and the Council of the school. This appointment is absolutely vested in the former body, who appoint the candidate nominated by the obstetric physician. Many ungenerous attempts have been made to draw in the Council of the school in this matter. This is most unfair. The only steps they have taken in the matter have been kindly volunteered, with the object of satisfying the pupils, and meeting their wishes. As a body they have no special right of interference, the nomination being my own, who alone am personally responsible for it. All that has been imputed to the Council of the school in this special affair is therefore utterly beside the question. The alleged gravamen rests simply with regard to my second nomination, and the reception it met with, not from the Council of the school, but from the House Committee of the hospital.

The statement that such a compromise as Mr. Ley refers to was offered is quite true. As the carrying out of this compromise, however, did not depend at all on the Council of the school, nor on myself, but required the consent of the House Committee, the ratification that Mr. Walker speaks of was made essentially on the supposition that such consent could be obtained. As the promise of the body, in whom the appointment is absolutely vested, had not been given, there could not possibly have been any quibble in the matter. The manner in which our expectation in the matter has been frustrated has already been given. I regret that it issued as it did. I can only maintain that what I have stated in this matter is the simple truth, and that the steps I have taken, however prejudged, were considered by me best calculated to subserve the success of my irregular nomination.

I cannot but hope that this correspondence will show to the pupils, and, indeed, to all interested on this occasion, that a nomination selected for the purpose of exemplifying a corrupt

system of procedure will still bear a sifting examination, and will be the means of enabling us all to obtain a better mutual understanding. Our students must be well aware that their wishes have all been granted by the Council; that the exceptional case cannot recur; that this appointment will for the future absolutely belong to their own body. Moreover, it cannot be a secret to them how at great sacrifice the hospital and college have lately been engaged in raising funds for scholarships, &c.

If these bodies were indifferent, as the students are led to suppose, to their interests, what could have induced them to make such sacrifices? Are not the interests of the students and staff one and identical? Can it be supposed that, after the sacrifices that the staff have made to promote the interest of the students, they are nevertheless at the same time wilfully doing all they can to injure and damage them?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

EDWARD HEAD,

Obstetric Physician to the London Hospital.

Harley-street, Aug. 9th, 1867.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It was not my intention to have entered into any controversy whatever touching the recent grievances connected with the London Hospital, although I consider myself one of the most aggrieved personages; but when I see the whole school of my professional alma mater, with the exception of a very small minority, up in arms in defence of their rights and privileges, I feel that I should not be fair to myself, or show that amount of adherence and fellowship to the present students which is due from one who has received his education at the *school and hospital*, and who fully sympathises with them in endeavouring to rectify, *pro futuro*, any encroachments upon their claims which they now consider have been unfairly infringed upon, did I not come forward and contribute my mite of oppression through the medium of your journal.

If you will allow me, I will briefly relate my professional career at the London Hospital. I entered at the school in 1860. In my second year, and after I had passed my anatomical examination at the College of Surgeons, the committee, upon the recommendation of Dr. Barnes,—the then obstetric physician, and whose loss we sincerely deplore,—appointed me to the office of resident accoucheur for the period of six months, at the end of which time I was re-elected, and held the appointment for four months longer, when I resigned, having other professional views placed before me, making, in the whole, ten months. In 1864 the surgical staff represented me in a favourable manner to the committee as competent to fulfil the duties of house-surgeon. I was permitted to hold that responsible office for the usual six months.

Now, Sir, I wish to draw your attention to the point which has been the chief cause of my addressing this letter to you. During March of the present year, the resident medical officership became vacant upon the resignation of Dr. Jackson. There were three candidates for the office—Messrs. Heckford, G. W. Mackenzie, and myself,—all of us having held in rotation identical appointments of the institution. I need not enter into detail respecting the grounds upon which these appointments have been given from time immemorial, after the very lucid and, I am bound to say, just manner in which it has been placed before you in THE LANCET of last week by Mr. Hutchinson; although, with the greatest deference and respect to that gentleman, I must correct that part of his letter where he states that the House Committee, acting under the recommendation of the physicians, elect the man. I am afraid that, if such had been the case in this instance, the institution would have been honoured by the services of three medical officers; for, on comparing notes, the candidates found that each man was represented to the aforesaid body by the medical staff as equally and fully competent in every respect to fulfil the duties of the appointment, no distinctive superiority of any kind being shown.

Now I wish you to understand that I base my great claim upon the grounds of seniority, which, as you will perceive by Mr. Hutchinson's letter, has always been acknowledged as having the greatest weight, other things being equal, and is now, by the whole of the staff. Now, Sir, if seniority was not considered in my case, it must have been something connected with the *ceteris paribus* which was the cause of my being unsuccessful. Now, the following reply was given, by a recently elected physician and one of the Council, to the deputation of the students, when the latter inquired why a man twelve months my junior, in the face of all precedent, was appointed

in preference to me—namely, "Because we are obliged to consider the moral and social qualifications of the man." But I think this gentleman must have forgotten that I was not suspended from the hospital for three months for committing myself "socially" and "morally;" neither was I ever summoned before the Committee to receive rebuke for any derogatory act, either socially or morally. I trust you will not think me egotistical in what I have now said; but, as my virtuous principles have been challenged, negatively, unfairly and ungenerously, I must take up the gauntlet and defend myself. My testimonials, which I can produce, are not at all compatible with such an assertion; and, what is most peculiar, associated with the same I find this identical gentleman bearing his testimony, in the most flowery language and the very acme of eulogy, to my unsullied character. One of the authorising body informed me, on applying for his influence, that he could say nothing officially. Another of the same recommended me to write to the Committee and house-governor at once. How does this tally with the commendatory authority and control which the physicians are alleged to have over the office? How should this unprofessional corporation, or the house-governor, know the most deserving and efficient candidate? I should think the burdens of the domestic working of the institution were quite onerous enough, without interfering with matters they can know nothing about. Whose influence and support were we to seek? There was no canvassing. The medical staff informed us they had left it in the hands of the Committee; and the latter, on our appearance before them, told us they must receive the counsel of the former before they could appoint anyone. Who to appeal to we knew not. There was a mystery, which to me has never been unravelled. The result was, that Mr. Heckford was rejected on matrimonial grounds; I on "social and moral" disqualifications which no one has ever heard of. But I trust, out of consideration to my reputation and future career in life, the individual who made that excuse will give a public explanation for my benefit and the satisfaction of my friends.

I had almost forgotten to inform you that more men entered at the school the year Mr. Heckford and I did than ever was known, there being, I think, forty. Is it not peculiar that not one of these could be found efficient enough to fulfil the duties of medical officer of the London Hospital?

In conclusion: I think, Sir, it would be not only disrespectful, but ungenerous of me, were I to terminate this epistle without expressing my sincere respect and esteem for the surgical department of the institution. As far as I am individually concerned, I have always received the greatest courtesy from them, and it has always appeared to be their earnest endeavour to promote my interest both professionally and socially.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

W. T. COLMAN,

Resident Medical Officer, Tower Hamlets Dispensary.

August 12th, 1867.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In reference to that part of Mr. Heckford's letter which refers to the reappointment of my son as house-surgeon for an additional three months, I beg to state that this was done by my colleagues, without any solicitation on my part, and I had really nothing whatever to do with it. My son was house-surgeon to Mr. Curling for six months, and discharged his duties so satisfactorily that both Mr. Curling and Mr. Hutchinson—I suspect out of compliment to me, who had been connected with the school for thirty-six years—thought it right that he should be reappointed for three months as my house-surgeon. As to the gentleman to whom, I suppose, Mr. Heckford refers as having been refused an extension of his term, it was a question whether this gentleman should be appointed at all; and Mr. Heckford is as cognisant of all the facts connected with his case as I or any one else attached to the hospital. We are quite unwilling to resuscitate the past, and had rather remain silent on this subject.

I have the honour to be, Sir, yours obediently,

London Hospital, August 21st, 1867.

JOHN ADAMS, Surgeon.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As Mr. Heckford has thought proper to allude to my official position in the hospital, I feel myself called upon to vindicate the character of our governing bodies against the insinuations of that gentleman, so far as regards the statements he has made concerning me. He endeavours to show that almost unprecedented honour has been thrust upon me. As

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-