

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

## THE ROYAL ORTHOPÆDIC HOSPITAL.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Without desiring at present to make any observations upon the events which have recently occurred at the Royal Orthopædic Hospital, which have been warmly condemned by the medical press and professional opinion, and as to which I shall shortly ask for an authoritative judgment, I feel called upon to notice the statement made by Mr. Brodhurst in a letter published in your journal of the 13th inst., that, "Prior to most of the Annual and Special Courts an active canvass for new governors has taken place." I can only say that I have no knowledge of any such practice, and that on no occasion whatever since my connexion with the hospital have I directly or indirectly been instrumental in making a single new governor for the purpose of voting at any Annual or Special Court.

I am, Sir, yours, &amp;c.,

Henrietta-street, Cavendish-square,  
April 17th, 1872.

WM. ADAMS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I should be obliged if you would allow me to supplement my letter to you of last week by the following statement.

I had no communication with the thirty governors whose votes are referred to in your leading article. The vote upon the Report of the Committee was taken by show of hands in a very crowded meeting; but as I know very few of these governors, and, indeed, I am acquainted with a small portion only of those who were collected in the room, even by sight, I could not attempt to say how they voted. This, however, I know, that some of these new governors were prevented from attending the meeting, and that some of those who came did not vote.

I find that there were present at the meeting not fewer than 104 governors, only thirty-three of whom voted against the Report of the Committee. But these represent considerably less than half the meeting if the thirty governors in question are deducted from the full number attending.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Grosvenor-street, W., April 16th.

B. E. BRODHURST.

## LOCOMOTOR ATAXY.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In reply to Dr. Hooper's criticism of my case of ataxy, I would remind him that I employed that term as being expressive of the most obvious symptom present, and not as implying that I considered the case to be one of tabes dorsalis. On the contrary, I thought it probable that the symptoms might be due to some sudden lesion of the central nervous organs, perhaps of the cerebellum.

I cannot accept Dr. Hooper's suggestion that the ataxy was the result of alcoholism, and this for several reasons. 1st. On account of the suddenness of its accession. Alcoholism is as little likely as Duchenne's disease to produce sudden ataxy, muscular power being retained. 2nd. Because there was no appearance of tremulousness of the hands or tongue. 3rd. There was no disorder of the digestive system. 4th. He did not appear to have been drinking freely at all recently. One of the reasons Dr. Hooper gives for his opinion is that improvement took place under the use of small doses of nitro-hydrochloric acid. I believe that few physicians would now-a-days base their diagnosis of the nature of a disease on the results of employing a particular drug, except perhaps in a very few instances. Many discard the notion of specific remedies altogether, and most will scarcely go further than to allow that quinine is a specific for ague, iodide of potassium for secondary syphilis, and perhaps bromide of potassium for epilepsy. And as each of these drugs will often produce

striking results in various other diseases, the diagnosis of a disease simply from the remedy which appears to cure it must be accepted with the greatest caution.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

St. Thomas's Hospital, April 16th, 1872.

F. POLLARD, M.D.

## THE HANWELL ASYLUM.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Some three months ago the office of resident medical officer of the female department at Hanwell fell vacant by the promotion of Dr. Lindsay to the medical superintendentship of the Derby Asylum. The Visitors advertised for a successor, but finding the candidates few and unsuitable, they invested the assistant medical officer with the temporary charge, which he still holds. Shortly after, the resident medical officer of the male department (Dr. Begley), after a service of thirty-four years, sought his long-needed retirement, and rumour asserted that, in the fortunate event of this double vacancy, the Visitors had under consideration a proposal to restore the office of medical superintendent of the asylum, last held by my late revered friend Dr. Conolly. I was myself in communication with a distinguished psychologist, who would have offered himself for the office, and whose election, I believe, would have done more than all the control and meddling of the Visitors will ever accomplish to restore to Hanwell its sadly tarnished renown. I admit I doubted the rumour. I knew well the tactics of the Hanwell Committee, and I was not surprised to see in this week's LANCET an advertisement for candidates to fill Dr. Begley's vacancy—in the old groove of limited authority and divided responsibility.

For years past it has been my practice to warn the many distinguished foreign alienists whom I have had the honour of receiving in England to avoid Hanwell, or, if they went there, to remember that it no longer followed the traditions of the founder of its fame. It is very sad that this chance of reverting to the old lines of one permanent medical authority should thus be lost, and I would fain ask your leave to record in the pages of THE LANCET my feeble protest against the ill-judged purpose of the Visitors again to repeat, with a new company of resident medical officers, their melancholy parody on asylum medical superintendentship.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Athenæum, April 9th, 1872.

M.D. CANTAB.

\* \* Our correspondent puts the matter rather strongly; but we fear there is too much truth in what he says. We have had occasion, when commenting on the numerous accidents to patients at Hanwell, to point out the evils which necessarily flow from the system of management which prevails there.—ED. L.

## THE GENEVA CONVENTION.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—With reference to the Medical Congress of Lyons, noticed in your journal of the 6th inst., I trust you will do me the favour of giving publicity to the following facts, which bear on Nos. 2 and 3 paragraphs of "Third question" for discussion—viz., "On the relations between the head of an Ambulance and the Military Commander; and the relations between the Government Ambulances and those organised by the public."

Having had the honour of serving with the "British Ambulance" during part of the late Franco-German War, I experienced some difficulty in working under the Red Cross, the existing articles of the Geneva Convention of 1864 being either misunderstood or disregarded by contending powers; my object, therefore, in addressing you is, that the members of the British medical profession attending the Congress may be in possession of such slight information respecting the difficulties as my recent experience will afford them, which I hope may be of some assistance in defining the position and privileges of foreign ambulances with belligerents.

During the month of November, 1870, when supplies