

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE NEW PROJECT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Medical Protection Office, 43, Lincoln's Inn Fields,
London, August 22nd, 1848.

SIR,—As solicitor to Mr. F. W. Brearey, general manager of the Medical Protection Office, my attention has been drawn to your number of the 19th of August, wherein you insert an anonymous letter, signed "One not to be Caught," reflecting on the Medical Protection Office, and asking a series of questions, which I have no doubt will be answered by the highly respectable party to whom they are addressed.

As regards the objects of the office and the probability of its success, time alone will prove it; but why the medical profession should not have a protection office, as well as merchants, bankers, and tradesmen, and why some of your professional correspondents should feel angry at such a society being formed, when it is optional with them whether they support it or not, and why "an appeal for subscriptions for benevolent purposes should be deemed piteous," I am at a loss to conceive. At all events, no medical man need patronize the office unless he deems its object praiseworthy; and I am happy to inform you, that whatever "One not to be Caught" (*who doubtless feels very angry at that portion of the project which is directed against illegal practitioners*) may think of it, many of the most respectable of the profession have afforded it their most unqualified approbation and support. Trusting to your known sense of justice to insert this, I have the honour to be,

Your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM V. EYRE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It has rejoiced me much that you have inserted the letter signed "One not to be Caught," respecting the new scheme for raising the wind. I am glad such a letter has been published, because it is certain that the questions which your correspondent has addressed to that highly respectable gentleman, Mr. John Propert, will be fully and completely answered, and thus that the whole truth regarding this, to me, incomprehensible project, will be made plain to the profession. In Heaven's name, if we have any benefactors, let us know who they are, that we may be grateful to them; but if there are any schemers, whether belonging to the profession or not, who want to dip their hands deeply into our pockets, they also ought to be known, as well as their objects. What, in Heaven's name, has induced Captain Trapaud (Trap-Oh!) unattached, to interfere in our behalf? It appears to me to be obvious, that we are not thought to be quite so poor as we are stupid. However, I will not say more, as I long to see the answer of Mr. Propert in THE LANCET of next Saturday.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ANOTHER NOT TO BE CAUGHT.

* * We regret to state, that up to the time of our going to press we have received no reply from Mr. Propert to the questions which were propounded to him in THE LANCET of last week; and anything more vague and unsatisfactory than the letter of Mr. Eyre, published above, could not well be written. This gentleman, however, states that he has no doubt the questions will be answered by the highly respectable party to whom they are addressed. It is probable, therefore, that we shall receive a communication from Mr. Propert before the next number of THE LANCET issues from the press.—ED. L.

TREATMENT OF CHOLERA BY CARBON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Perceiving that the (in my opinion) highly suggestive communication of Mr. Ritson, inserted in your LANCET of the 5th inst., and headed "Cholera—Preventive Qualities of Carbonic Acid Gas and Charcoal," has not in to-day's number elicited any observation, either from the editorial we, or from any of the gifted contributors to your excellent journal, I am induced to request a brief space for a few remarks thereon.

Mr. Ritson states, that "in the territory of Marsala, in Sicily, that city containing a population of about 24,000 persons, surrounded by a large tract of country producing a large quantity of wine, that is kept in open casks, which

evolves a large quantity of carbonic acid gas, only sixteen deaths from cholera occurred in the whole district; whilst the city of Trapani, only eighteen miles distant, lost nearly a fourth of its population," &c.

This opinion entertained by Mr. Ritson, that the immunity from cholera enjoyed by the Marsalians was due to the carbonic acid gas evolved from their open wine casks, is, I think, erroneous. Should, however, this theory be admitted, then all densely populated districts would be exempt from cholera, and the best preventive to that fearful scourge would be to sleep three or more in a bed, and to reside in crowded habitations and cities, where, of course, under such conditions, an abundance of the carbonic acid would be evolved. Whether under such treatment the disease or the remedy would prove most fatal, a peep into the history of "the black hole of Calcutta" would probably enable us to decide. We must look for some other cause to account for the comparative non-intrusion of cholera into Marsala.

The importance of the following passage is my apology for again presenting it to your readers. "The almost total exemption of the porters and other labourers engaged in discharging and storing the cargoes of vessels laden with charcoal at Malta from attacks of cholera was particularly observed; at Palermo, the comparative freedom from this disease of the same class of people was also a subject of observation; and the same fact was noticed at all the other large ports of the Mediterranean, where charcoal principally is used for fuel," &c. When, in addition to and in connexion with the above-mentioned facts, we consider the enormous capacity charcoal possesses of absorbing gases, and when we know that the stench or gases arising from putrid animal and vegetable substances are readily absorbable by charcoal, and further decomposition arrested, then I say, that taking all these facts in connexion with each other, the conclusion which irresistibly forces itself upon my mind is, that charcoal has the property of absorbing the choleric virus. This inference granted, or even being deemed probable, the preventive treatment will, in addition to other modes already made public, be the administration of charcoal internally, and the presentation of large surfaces of it to the atmosphere out of doors and in doors. Dr. Ure mentions, in his "Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures, and Mines," that workmen employed in manufacturing coke are generally remarkably healthy.

In the treatment of an attack of cholera, charcoal should be administered by the mouth, and suspended in enemata of gruel &c.

If the conclusion arrived at from the facts given by Mr. Ritson should prove to be legitimate, then the profession and the public are much indebted to that gentleman.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. PRICE EVANS, Surgeon.

Mile-end, near Swansea, August 14th, 1848.

P.S.—It is essential that the charcoal be fresh, and the powder kept in accurately stoppered bottles. Also, the suggestion of Mr. Ritson, that water for drinking should be filtered through charcoal, is important.

* * The administration of carbon in cholera has been also recommended by Dr. Parkin, whose pamphlet we reviewed in the same number which contained the communication of Mr. Ritson. We refer our correspondent to p. 156.—ED. L.

POOR-LAW UNION MEDICAL CONTRACTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I should feel obliged by your inserting the following observations in your widely-circulated journal, should you deem them worthy of attention.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Blythe Cottage, Coleshill, Warwickshire.

J. DAVIES, M.D.

Every one must admit that the medical attendance upon the sick poor forms a most important branch of parochial government. Having been professionally engaged in attending upon the poor for upwards of forty years, and having had ample opportunities of witnessing the workings of the past and present poor-law, will, I trust, be deemed a sufficient apology for my offering a few observations on the subject.

From the various remarks which have from time to time appeared, it is manifest the present system of affording medical relief is very defective. In the first place, the medical districts are much too large, especially in the country; too many parishes are united into one district; consequently a medical man is obliged to take all or none; and to my certain