

contributes to its healthiness. But all these circumstances do not account satisfactorily for its immunity from cholera, for there are other towns (smaller by far) which are suffering, having the same advantage, with respect to drainage, situation, and soil, as Birmingham; and, on the other hand, there are in Birmingham crowded, ill-built, confined streets and houses, admirably calculated to foster any form of disease, especially cholera.

I think, then, we must look to another point for an explanation. I need scarcely mention what are the innumerable manufactures of Birmingham; almost every one knows them—guns, buttons, plated wares, &c.; and in these manufactures there are used immense quantities of acids—sulphuric, nitric, hydrochloric. These acids are, moreover, extensively manufactured here. Can their particles, floating about, have any effect in neutralizing the morbid influence contained in the atmosphere? I only put this forward as a suggestion. There may be some other cause existing; but I think it would be right to institute a series of experiments, for the purpose of ascertaining the real cause of so large a place suffering so little from such an epidemic as cholera; and of applying it in the defence of other places which are at present suffering so severely.—I am, Sir, yours &c.,

London, Sept. 24, 1849.

A SUGGESTER.

\* \* We have before remarked, in *THE LANCET*, that Dr. Fourcault, amongst other observers, has drawn attention to the fact that cholera has everywhere been found to prevail chiefly on tertiary and alluvial soils, and on the banks of rivers and sea-coasts. Birmingham stands, as we believe, not only on a higher elevation than any other town of its magnitude in Britain, but also occupies a site from which tertiary formations are absent; and according to the geological theory, this circumstance would have much to do with its immunity from cholera. The town is, however, singularly well placed for securing salubrity, and is reported to be remarkably free, in general, from several other epidemic diseases.—ED. L.

#### SUMMARY OF THE CLAIMS OF ARMY AND NAVY MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—I was much gratified on reading the very able and powerful article in *THE LANCET* of this day, on the Medical Departments of the Army and Navy. The facts are incontestable and incontrovertible; the analogies clear and thoroughly established; and the inferences ably and powerfully contrasted with the existing state of things. I consider the article of sufficient importance to justify its being stereotyped, that an edition may be kept constantly on the wing of circulation. If, Mr. Editor, you will publish it as a pamphlet, I prophesy a large and remunerating circulation. No doubt every medical officer in both branches of the service would possess himself not only of a copy for his own immediate use, but also of a few for distribution amongst his friends and brother officers.

I would further suggest that copies be supplied to each of the members of both houses of parliament, and to every one who, by his influence or position in society, might be capable and willing to forward the claims of this meritorious and most important branch of the two services. It is by such means that justice triumphs (ultimately) over apathy, selfishness, and exclusion. I also propose that, to cover all incidental and unforeseen expenses, an immediate subscription be entered upon, to which I shall be happy to contribute my humble mite.

With many thanks for the publicity afforded, through your pages, to this admirable article,

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

London, Sept. 22, 1849. PENINSULAR MEDAL WITH SIX CLASSES.

P.S.—Should not *The Times*, and every one of the public journals, be supplied with a copy of the number of *THE LANCET*, and every means adopted to induce the journals to insert the article.

#### A GENERAL "MEDICAL INDEX."

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—Permit me, through the medium of your journal, to lay before the profession what I consider would tend effectually towards the suppression of quackery—be a means of protecting the public from impostors—and last, though not least, would in no inconsiderable degree promote our own welfare.

A state so devoutly to be wished I propose to effect, by the publication of what I will term the "Medical Index," which signifies a book wherein the names and qualifications of every practitioner in each division of the United Kingdom will be set forth, by which guide the profession, as well as the public, would be able to tell at a glance who were really qualified men, and producing the twofold effect of protecting them from injury and preventing us being defrauded of our rights. By it would be set forth in unmistakable words the genuineness of all professing to be surgeons and physicians; for as we are at present placed, many a charlatan makes fearless use of both titles, and likewise may with equal safety practise as one or both, to the detriment of ourselves and the community. As long as the profession remains in so unprotected a state, so long will empiricism flourish; and how can we be but sufferers both in reputation and purse. Are we either doing justice to ourselves or the public in allowing such unprincipled men longer to triumph fearlessly in their course of knavery and manslaughter? Why should their opportunities of practising such gross outrages be longer tolerated? If we cannot directly criminate such practices in the eye of the law, we have it in our power to expose them to shame and ridicule; we can deprive them of their false cloak, that their deceit may appear evident to all, and doubtless the public will bestow upon them their just deserts.

To effect this, all I ask is to publish facts. Let the name of the university or college to which each man belongs, follow his name in the medical index; and to make certain that no frauds may be practised even in this, let every name for insertion in the medical index be accompanied with the name and date from where, and when, he obtained his titles, so that the compiler of the work may have it in his power to satisfy himself as to the eligibility of any name for insertion. Some may think this precaution unnecessary, but unless we prevent the possibility of a doubt as to a man's reality, how can we expect to effect a reformation in our state? The unanimous consent and support of the profession to this work is indispensable to its proper working; and let but the leading men of our ranks approve it, and the insertion of a practitioner's name in the index will become a duty. Once let this system become fairly organized, and woe be to the usurper of our dominions; for either by name or action let an unlucky wight attempt a gull, and any one of our ranks will be at liberty to challenge him, and exhibit him to the best advantage in the lists of your learned (?) black sheep. The public can then be at no loss whom to employ; for let a man call himself what he may, let his titles be what they will, should his name not appear in the medical index of his country, then may it safely brand him with the names, impostor! quack! pestilence personified! The medical index will be got up at the least possible expense, so as to bring it within the reach of all, and will thus act as a preventive to the public either ignorantly paying for poison, or securing disease by the visit. By reference to it, the names of all the real doctors in their locale will be found, from which list they can select for themselves, and, by so doing, save both health and purse. I propose to have a separate index for England, Scotland, and Ireland, to be published in the capital of each country. This will combine cheapness with convenience, and would answer better than one book for all. The necessity of a medical man acting as compiler will be obvious. The plan of the work to be as follows:—First, the cities and towns in each country to be alphabetically arranged. Second, the names of all the medical men, with their qualifications, to follow the same arrangement. Third, the work to be got up in the pamphlet style, combining the least expense with sufficient durability. Fourth, the work to be issued annually—say about May, or the beginning of June.

White, Thomas, Surgeon; dipl. Coll. Surg. Edinburgh.  
Brown, J. G., M.D. & Surgeon; deg. Edinburgh Univ.;  
dipl. Coll. Surg. England.

These two examples will show the style of inserting the qualifications after the name.

Should my proposed plan meet the approval of the profession, which I shall learn from your columns, I shall lose no time in getting "The Medical Index for Scotland" set afoot. Further particulars regarding the publication will, if necessary, be afterwards duly announced; and meantime, Mr. Editor, I have the honour to be, your most obedient servant,  
Edinburgh, Sept. 1849. JUSTITIA.

#### NAVAL ASSISTANT-SURGEONS.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—I beg leave to remark on the slowness of promotion in the medical branch of naval officers. The average period,

until lately, was eight years of active service, whilst it exceeded ten in the army; and many medical men joined that service in which advancement was most speedy. Eight years now form the usual period of promotion in the army, and naval assistant-surgeons are sent abroad as supernumeraries, without the hope of promotion, after nine and ten years' servitude.

Thus the navy is deprived of one advantage it possessed over the sister service, and rendered utterly unfit for respectable medical men.

In the position occupied by assistant-surgeons of the navy, promotion is of the greatest consequence, for in this is admission to the respectful consideration and accommodation accorded to gentlemen in civil life. It is different in the army, where the assistant-surgeon is treated as a man and a gentleman on first joining his regiment; with him there is duration of service, with, perhaps, weariness; but with his naval brother officer there is a degrading apprenticeship, or probationary cadetship (as it might be entitled), with dejection of spirits, inaptitude for study, and loss of zeal in his profession, to which is sometimes added a heart broken by a sense of the indignities of his position.

Several suicides of late have sealed the truth of this statement with their blood, and this kind of witness, it is to be feared, may rapidly increase under the system employed at the present time.

Numerous are the resignations from the service, but England knows not of them—*resignations are not published.*

It was stated by a correspondent in a late number of your journal, that "of those who enter the navy as assistant-surgeons, thirty per cent. leave it within a period of two years, whilst only two per cent. leave the army in the same space of time." Comment on these statistics is almost unnecessary.

M. D.

#### THE "BURY POST" AND THE EXCLUSION OF QUACK ADVERTISEMENTS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In your last week's number is the following extract from the work entitled "Confessions of a Hypochondriac":—

"When will the provincials follow the glorious example of the metropolitans, and, preferring principle to pelf, cease to defile their columns with advertisements teeming with obscenity, delusion, and falsehood?"

Now, Sir, I will not deny that some of the metropolitan journals have excluded from their columns the description of advertisements here referred to, but this I know, that they are not excluded from several papers making the highest pretensions to respect for decency and morality. And, on the other hand, I know that many of the provincial journals have long ago excluded such advertisements, (as I myself have done,) and that without waiting for the "glorious example of the metropolitans." It is, however, true, lamentably true, that some of the country papers (and some that could best afford to make the first sacrifice) have continued to admit these disgusting announcements, or announcements of publications more disgusting still, into their pages; and I can inform my brother proprietors, that had they the moral courage at once to reject them, they would find their reward, not only in the approval of their own consciences, but also in the increased favour which it would give them amongst the most valuable class of readers and supporters. I could appeal to the experience of several who have made the trial, in support of this position.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bury St. Edmund's, Sept. 22, 1849.

A PROVINCIAL.

#### TREATMENT OF MEDICAL STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Another medical session is now close at hand, and if University College began the *annus medicus* last year under a black and murky cloud, the treatment of the medical students during the past, and their prospects for the approaching session, will not lessen the cloud. The council of the college, or perhaps Messrs. Atkinson and Goodiff, have decided that the medical library is sufficient for the wants of the medical students, and for another session they are to be deprived of the valuable library which was left them by Dr. Holme. It was proposed that the new library which has swallowed up the funds of the college should be made a joint library for the medical and arts students, and next October it is to be occupied by the arts men, but the medicals are to re-

main where they are. Is it because the new library, which has the appearance of a royal stable, is not large enough? or was the proposal for turning the two libraries into one merely a blind, to enable the council to appropriate the fees of medical students, and bequests which have been made to the medical department, for the benefit of the faculty of arts? If we are not to have any share of the new library, what do we gain by the new building? We have a lecture-room given us, and for fear we should have too much we have one taken from us, Dr. Grant being turned out of his room, (to give it to the faculty of arts,) and put in the room in which the late Dr. Thomson lectured, so there is only an exchange. It is now more than one year since it was announced that the medical department had a legacy of £20,000 left it; and what have they gained by it? Not even a book. Pereira's new edition has been out some time, and it will be out some time longer before a medical student of University College will see it, unless he buys it himself; but that is only mentioning a single case; it would make a long list to mention all the works which are not to be found in the library of University College; and those that are there are generally presented by the author or the publisher, and come with "the author's compliments." Upon whom does the duty devolve to see that the medical library is well filled—upon the dean, or on Mr. Goodiff? neither of whom enters the library more often than he ought.

University College, London, Sept. 1849.

A VICTIM.

#### INTRAMURAL INTERMENTS.—PETITION OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS TO THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg to enclose a copy of the petition to the Board of Health, drawn up and signed by the medical practitioners in St. John's district, Paddington. The graveyard in question has been established rather more than eighty years; the average number of burials is 1200 annually, though during the last ten weeks, 358 corpses have been interred. The ground extends over rather more than five acres; of this, one acre, being set apart for the opulent, appears to be but little used. No plan is kept of the relative position of the graves, thus compelling the sexton to resort to the process of boring, to find a resting-place for the next comer.

Trusting our medical brethren in other districts will unite in a similar manner to prevent intramural burials,

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Albion-street, Sept. 1849.

J. S. DRURY, M.B., Hon. Sec.

*To the General Board of Health.*

GENTLEMEN,—We, the undersigned medical practitioners in Paddington and its vicinity, respectfully call upon the Board of Health to exercise the power with which they are invested for the purpose of closing the burial-ground of St. George's, Hanover-square, situated in the very heart of this populous neighbourhood.

Firmly convinced that intramural burial grounds are at all times most prejudicial to the public health, we feel that they are more especially so at a time when the metropolis is afflicted by an unexampled visitation of epidemic cholera.

We moreover respectfully urge our petition, on account of the notoriously over-crowded state of this particular burial-ground, and indulge the confident hope that your honourable board will at once terminate a nuisance, which evidently tends to poison the atmosphere, and to produce the most baneful consequences in this otherwise healthy locality.

W. D. Chowne, 8, Connaught-place West; R. H. Goolden, M.D., 41, Sussex-gardens; Henry Bennet, M.D., 9, Cambridge-square; Thos. Grant, 9, Connaught-terrace; Robert Stephenson, 10, Oxford-terrace; Geo. Gaskoine, 34, Cambridge-terrace; John Pyle, 56, Oxford-terrace; Henry Howlett, 18, Cambridge-terrace; F. W. Mackenzie, M.D., Chester-place; Robert Woollaston, 13, Conduit-street West; Thomas Hill, 1A, Sussex-terrace; Thomas A. Adey, M.D., 49, Connaught-square; Thos. G. Phillips, 44, Albion-street; Geo. Reece, 45, Sussex-gardens; Wm. Robins, 16, Upper Southwick-street; Edward Hart Vines, 6, Chepstow-villas; John Enscoe, 79, Oxford-terrace; Thos. Ballard, 10, Southwick-place; Walter Thompson Boddy, 31, Albion-street; William Richardson, 17, Radnor-place; Chas. S. Webber, 23A, Connaught-square; Edgar Barker, 40, Edgware-road; David Dickman, 14, Porchester-place; James Newton Heale, 11, Westbourne-crescent; John Morgan, 5, Albion-street; M. Teevan, 44, Gloucester-road; W. C.