

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

ON A CASE OF OSTEO-CEPHALOMA OF THE FEMUR; AMPUTATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—IN THE LANCET of the 9th ultimo, I find a report of a case occurring in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, under the care of my friend, Mr. Spence, which in many respects so much resembled one happening in my own practice lately, that you may perhaps consider it sufficiently interesting to merit publication.

J. N.—, aged seventeen, had suffered for a year or more from an enlargement of the left thigh, the real nature of which was not detected until just previously to his admission into St. George's Hospital in June, 1855. At this time, as I was told, the disease had involved nearly the entire thigh, and was upon the point of ulceration; at all events the limb was removed at the hip by Mr. Tatum, and the boy soon recovered from the operation.* His physical development, previously much arrested, became greatly improved; his chest and limbs expanded; signs of puberty, before wanting, began to develop themselves, and an almost colourless countenance became tinted with the hue of health. He was sent to school, and continued well until towards the end of February in the present year, when cough and difficulty of breathing commenced, but he kept about until the 7th of March, when he was brought home, and I commenced my attendance. I found the left side of the thorax fixed, dull everywhere upon percussion, no respiratory murmur, and the heart beating a little below the axilla of the right side. There were copious perspirations, an anxious countenance, cough, and rusty sputa. The usual treatment to arrest inflammation and promote absorption was adopted with no good effect, dyspnoea increased, and it became evident that our only chance lay in evacuation of the fluid contained in the left side of the thorax. Mr. Tatum, who had taken much interest in the case, kindly came down and removed three pints of sanguineous fluid on March 20th with much temporary relief, and the operation was repeated by myself on the 23rd with the same result. He died on the 25th.

Upon examination the disease was found reproduced in the left lung, which formed a mass about the size of two fists compressed against the spine, the pleura being distended with two or three pints of bloody serum similar to what had been evacuated by tapping. There was slight appearance of the disease commencing in the right lung, no sign of glandular disease, the stump was sound, and all the other organs healthy.

I was suspicious from the commencement, of the nature of the case, not being able to understand how the patient could manage to get about with an inflammation sufficiently severe to produce the physical signs; although, except we looked to his antecedents, there was nothing to lead us to any other conclusion, than that they resulted from pleuro-pneumonia running on to extensive effusion into the pleural cavity.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Ealing, Sept. 1856.

JOHN GOODCHILD.

CONTINUED NEGLECT OF NAVAL SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The July *Navy List* shows that for certain 102 ships in commission, the proper complement of assistant-surgeons is 159; the number actually serving is only 40, and there are 111 wanting. Four surgeons also are wanting. Three ships have no medical officer. There are 115 medical vacancies in 102 ships. In seven or eight instances a surgeon is serving instead of an assistant-surgeon—(these are not here reckoned as vacant assistant-surgeoncies.) Two assistant-surgeons resigned. The reason of this backwardness in young medical men to enter the navy is, the continued neglect of, and injustice done to, the full surgeons. Even allowing that the situation of an assistant-surgeon is better than it was some time ago, there has been no general increase of surgeons' pay for many years, with the exception of some seven or eight who receive the addition of an extra shilling a day. Each of 300 paymasters (late pursers) receives on an average 19s. 7d. a day. Now, a few surgeons of ships receive 18s., some receive 11s., and others 12s.; the greater number 14s.: and this may be called the average sum for all,

* The case was reported in the "Mirror," in August last.

commencing at the age of thirty-one, while the paymaster, at the age of twenty-five, receives 5s. 7d. a day more for taking care of stores (!) than the surgeon does for taking care of men's lives. The surgeons of her Majesty's ships decline to be satisfied with less pay than is given to paymasters. We here confine the comparison between paymasters and *surgeons of ships*; the medical officers of naval hospitals cannot be compared with the paymasters of ships. In another way the paymasters' class have greater advantages afloat than medical officers, as from them is filled the situation of *secretary*, an official who is always to be found where there is an admiral; whereas, in time of peace, there is scarcely ever a deputy-inspector afloat. It is thought by some that the admiral, who is at present the second commissioner of the Admiralty, is unfriendly to the medical department, and that the others would do justice but for his opposition; but it cannot be supposed that, for the sake of gratifying any prejudice, he would act in a way that deprives British tars of 115 medical practitioners—that being the number which the British navy is now short of complement. The country is ready and willing to pay sufficiently for medical aid to its sailors, and the said sailors have a right to the full complement of medical officers. Till the Admiralty raise the pay of the full surgeons, the motto of the medical department may be, "Ye leave all hope behind who enter here."

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Sept. 1856.

UNDERPAID, R.N.

THE MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A letter from "A Life-Governor of the Royal Medical Benevolent College," in THE LANCET of the 13th instant, is calculated to create some misgivings in the minds of those who have sons placed at that establishment. I am well aware that the additional payment of £10 a year for the exhibitors has been a source of much dissatisfaction to many. How far this may have been the result of mismanagement in the pecuniary or domestic arrangements, as suggested by your correspondent, I am not prepared to say. I had an opportunity, in placing one of my sons there lately, of inspecting the whole establishment, the internal arrangements of which seemed to be most satisfactory. The boys looked healthy and cheerful, and I had the pleasure of seeing them enjoy a dinner of most excellent roast mutton, with a due proportion of bread and vegetables, and an allowance of some good wholesome beer. But there is one point to which my approbation must demur, and that is, I think there appears a deficiency in the "educational staff." High classical attainments are not required to instruct the younger boys in the first rudiments of education; in fact, to a man of learning it must be sheer drudgery. How easy, then, and at what comparative little expense, could be obtained two or three young men to act as assistants in teaching the English language, writing, arithmetic, &c., under the superintendence of the masters, of whom there are only *four*, to conduct the education of one hundred and fifty boys!

Whatever may be the sum charged for the exhibitors, the great object to be ensured to them is a thoroughly good education, the only bequest, I fear, many of us can afford to our sons, and if that is not accomplished, the Royal Medical Benevolent College will have conferred no boon upon the profession, but defeated one of its chief and most important objects, and with which view it has received so much support from the public.

Yours &c.,

September, 1856.

A GOVERNOR.

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE DENTAL PROFESSION.—On Monday evening last, a numerous and influential meeting of members of the dental profession and others interested in the advancement of dental science, was held at the London Tavern, Bishopsgate-street, when resolutions in favour of establishing a Society of Dentists, similar in many respects to the existing medical societies, and of establishing a College of Dentistry, were unanimously carried. The meeting was very ably presided over by Mr. Alfred Carpenter, M.B., who, as a medical practitioner, could speak to the importance of the movement in an impartial manner. The resolutions were proposed and spoken to by Mr. S. L. Rymcr, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Peter Mathews, Mr. W. Perkins, &c. Remarkable unanimity characterised the whole proceedings, which were brought to a close (after the appointment of a committee of twenty-five, to carry the previous resolutions into effect) by a cordial vote of thanks to the chairman.