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NEW SERIES.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE LANCET attacks us *more suo* by asking questions and suggesting answers. For example: "Will Dr. CORMACK deny that he was in conference with our loving friends, Mr. ANCELL and Mr. DE MORGAN, respecting the celebrated amendment of the latter?" Now, Dr. Cormack had no conference with anybody about the amendment of the 1st of March; and he did not know anything on the subject, except by general rumour, till he heard Mr. De Morgan address the meeting.

LETTERS, ETC., FOR THE EDITOR, may be addressed as formerly, or to 21, EDWARDS STREET, PORTMAN SQUARE, where members may see the Editor, on Wednesdays, between 12 and 1 o'clock.

THE ARMY MEDICAL WAR SERVICE.

MR. GUTHRIE lately came forward with a courageousness which did him great credit, to call the attention of the public to the inefficient state of the army medical service for actual warfare. He had appealed in vain to the authorities at the war-office. "Of the favourable intentions of the great authorities of the country—of the commander-in-chief in particular—I have never doubted; it is from the small secondary authorities in the different offices of the four or five departments such measure proposed has to go through that discomfiture has hitherto occurred, and will probably again take place." So Mr. Guthrie, sick of "the insolence of office", ceased to appeal to that quarter; and brought his case before the nation in the columns of the *Times*. To the credit of the Government, many of Mr. Guthrie's suggestions were immediately considered, and are, we believe, to be acted upon.

Such an appeal could not be overlooked. The facts are most damning; and to the inexperienced in military battles most startling. Mr. Guthrie quotes a letter from a medical officer, written immediately after the great and bloody battles of Ferozeshah and Moodkee, in 1848, which was so true and so shocking, that having sent a copy of it to Sir John Macdonald for the late Duke of Wellington, Sir John called upon Mr. Guthrie to beg, as an old friend, he would not make it public, as it would excite much distressing feeling. He said, the Duke approved of the opinions, and admitted they were true; but the subject was shelved by the red-tapists. This surgeon in India thus describes himself as alone, surrounded by one hundred and seventy-five wounded men, all clamouring and beseeching for assistance. "I have no time to do any thing satisfactorily. I have, however, managed to do some amputations to-day, and dressed the greater number of the serious cases, including two amputations I brought off the field, and am quite weary of the bloody work." He then describes his condition during the battle. Instead of seventy-five litters for the sick, they had but twelve; their small quantity of water was taken by the thirsty soldiers; their field hospital was neither protected nor cared for; and such was the

mismanagement, that in moving the wounded at night they wandered near the Sikh camp, the litter carriers threw down their loads, and left many of the wounded to be murdered by the enemy in cold blood.

Mr. Guthrie says that there were similar scenes from a similar defective state of administrative arrangement in three-fifths of the Peninsular war. During the last fifth, when the army were in the south of France, the medical staff was sufficient in number, and properly organised, so that at the battle of Toulouse they did their duty effectively; but not so at the battle of Waterloo; there the surgeons were too few, and, as Mr. Guthrie most significantly says, "*nothing could be worse*". The defect, both in India and in the early part of the Peninsular war, is set down by Mr. Guthrie as depending on parsimony. The East India Company, for instance, did not allow the forces a necessary proportion of staff medical officers of a higher grade than the regimental surgeon to advise him in difficulties, relieve him after a battle, and assist him in the general execution of his duties on such arduous occasions. Such appointments, moreover, are rewards which stimulate surgeons to exertion; and such prizes were found eminently serviceable in 1814, when Sir J. McGrigor was the medical chief under the Duke of Wellington in Spain.

Mr. Guthrie relates that, after the battle of Toulouse, one thousand three hundred and fifty-nine wounded were received into the hospitals. Of these there were one hundred and six persons wounded in the chest; of whom thirty-five died, fourteen returned to duty, and fifty-seven were sent to England, few or none to return to service. Now mark what follows. Three times as many European soldiers were wounded in the four great battles with the Sikhs in India; and it is a fair inference that there were the same proportion of wounds in the chest. But how many soldiers so wounded were sent to England? Not one hundred and seventy-one, which would have been in proportion to those wounded in Toulouse; but only nine of such cases. The only inference that can be drawn is, that, from the defective medical organisation, it was impossible to treat the wounded soldiers efficiently; and that more perished who might have recovered. At the battle of Toulouse, there were one inspector general, two deputy inspectors, eight staff surgeons, eighteen assistant staff surgeons, all assisting the ordinary surgical staff of the regiments. On the Sutlej, during three battles, there were none of these superior officers. The British troops sent to Burmah lately were also without any officers superior to the regimental surgeons; and, had any great battle been fought, the British soldiers must have suffered like those on the Sutlej.

Nothing can be more reasonable than the views of Mr. Guthrie. Great battles require extra surgical skill of the highest kind, as well as more of it; and this could be supplied by appointing a sufficient number of inspectors, deputy inspectors, staff surgeons, and staff assistant surgeons, who would, during and after battles, properly or-