

CORRESPONDENCE.

"ESSAYS WANTED."

SIR,—In your last issue appears a paragraph stating that no essays have been sent in either for the College Triennial Prize or the Jacksonian Prize of the Royal College of Surgeons, and that no award of the former has been made for twenty years.

A partial explanation of this deficiency of candidates is given by the fact, that the College allows no persons except its own members to compete for these prizes. Opinions may differ as to whether the system of prize-essays is that best calculated to elicit good scientific work; but it cannot surely be doubted that the chance of getting good work is greater in proportion as the area of competition is enlarged. One instance is better than any amount of speculation. I know most intimately a member of the medical profession who was very desirous a few years ago of competing for one of these prizes, but was prevented by not possessing the qualification of membership. His essay may not have turned out to be of much account, but would have prevented the unsatisfactory announcement of "no candidates". This individual does not desire to be named, but signs himself merely

NOT A MEMBER OF THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

December 20th, 1879.

** We have reason to know that the writer was a most highly accomplished investigator, and the essay likely to have been valuable.

STATISTICS OF THE GLASGOW INFIRMARY.

SIR,—In your issue of the 13th current, reference is made to some alleged statistics from Glasgow, on which please excuse a remark or two. In the first place, it looks not well that such are accepted from a layman, whose ignorance of such matters has already been exposed before the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, and especially when a more mature and accurate account could easily be obtained from the surgeons. Secondly, the figures given are based on a false statement; viz., that "each surgeon had one day in succession, in which he received every patient that came for admission on that day, so that there could be no selection"; and which said layman knows not to be correct. And, thirdly, the numbers given refer to cases, nine-tenths of which had no antiseptic of any kind used in their treatment, as they did not admit of the use of such—a fact which will be at once admitted even by those who aver that they adopt the antiseptic system; and nearly all the burns under all the surgeons are treated by carbolic acid and oil. Very lately, a fair comparison was demanded of the managers, case against case of a similar kind; but it has not yet been accorded. If the so-called "antiseptic system" requires such bolstering, it rests, as I believe it does, on a very frail foundation. More may be said on this subject soon.—I am yours faithfully,

JAMES MORTON, M.D.

Glasgow, December 15th, 1879.

** In giving the figures at the International Congress at Amsterdam, Mr. McEwen, the President of the Glasgow Infirmary, mentioned that they had been drawn out by the Medical Superintendent and submitted to the surgeons of the Infirmary.

GUY'S HOSPITAL.

SIR,—I have read with much surprise the letter signed by a "Member of the Staff", relative to the nursing question at Guy's Hospital. The Lady Superintendent, whom the "Member of the Staff" calls "Matron", is Miss Burt, who has held a similar position in the Leicester Infirmary for the last five years, and whose leaving was much regretted by those who knew her, and by all the members of the staff. Miss Burt thoroughly reformed the system of nursing at Leicester, with the approval and co-operation of the staff. The plan of having a lady in each large ward establishes an admirable tone throughout the hospital; and, inasmuch as the patients are nursed with the utmost care and devotion, the staff, instead of "protesting" against it as at Guy's Hospital, were most grateful to Miss Burt for introducing such valuable reforms. On her leaving a few months ago, over £100 was subscribed by friends of the Infirmary, amongst whom was included every member of the medical and surgical staff, as a testimonial to her energy, skill, and administrative power in establishing a system of nursing in the Leicester Infirmary equal to any in the kingdom. This system is, I believe, in all its main features identical with that which has been so successfully carried out for many years at King's College Hospital. Under this plan, the staff of the Leicester Infirmary has lost no power or influence,

and I do not think such an idea has ever crossed the mind of any of its members.

The staff at Guy's Hospital may be assured that Miss Burt will work with the single aim of conducing to the comfort and well-being of the patients, and the general improvement of the condition of the wards.—I am, sir, yours faithfully,

C. H. MARRIOTT, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.S. (by Exam.),
Surgeon to the Leicester Infirmary.

Welford Place, Leicester, December 15th, 1879.

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

SIR,—I find that at the Glasgow and Aberdeen Medical Graduates' annual dinner, when responding, on the spur of the moment, for the Army, I fell into the error of naming, as the hero of my narration, Dr. Sylvester, instead of Dr. Hale of the same division (Light). Dr. Sylvester very properly corrects me, and I leave it, with his letter to me, in your hands, to judge whether further correction is necessary as regards the very kind notice you take of the dinner in last week's JOURNAL. I express my regret that my error should thus give you

Royal Hospital, Chelsea, S.W., December 16th, 1879.

THOMAS LIGERTWOOD.

Copy of Letter from Dr. Sylvester.

7, Bessborough Gardens, Pimlico, Saturday, December 13th, 1879.

Dear Dr. Ligertwood,—I have read your speech at the dinner of the Aberdeen and Glasgow University Club, reported in to-day's number of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, and your reference to me and how I won the Victoria Cross. I am quite sure you did not intentionally exaggerate; but you have unwittingly made me a hero indeed, and an actor in an episode which, however, never transpired. It is true that, on the final assault on the Redan, I was in the advanced trenches, assisting the wounded to the best of my powers under a heavy fire; and afterwards, when our troops were beaten back, at the request of Sergeant Shields, V.C., I accompanied him to the open to give surgical aid to the adjutant of our regiment, the 23rd Royal Welsh Fusiliers, who was lying mortally wounded in a spot somewhat sheltered from the grape and roundshot with which the enemy were plentifully dosing us after our compulsory retirement. But the romantic story you related, how I personally withstood the whole Russian force in my efforts to protect him, is, I can assure you, fictitious. Perhaps you were thinking at the time of the assistant-surgeon of the 7th Fusiliers, whose name I have unhappily forgotten, but who was the first medical officer upon whom the Cross was conferred. He indeed did rally the men of his regiment, who, on some sudden onslaught of the Russians—a night surprise—were retiring precipitately. Drawing his sword, he rallied them, led them to the encounter, and drove the enemy from the entrenchment.

I think it would be well if the mistake you fell into were corrected, even though my reputation for conspicuous gallantry is somewhat dimmed.—Believe me, dear Dr. Ligertwood, yours sincerely,

HENRY T. SYLVESTER.

THE IDENTITY OF COW-POX AND SMALL-POX.

SIR,—At the vaccination conference on the 6th instant, objections were made by numerous speakers to the theory which has up till recently received very general acceptance in this country; viz., that cow-pox is a product of the same virus as produces small-pox in man. So far as I am aware, this opposition to one of Jenner's fundamental doctrines is based almost exclusively upon the results of the experiments of M. Chauveau of Lyons, whose arguments have been so ably combated by Dr. Seaton in the thirtieth section of his famous *Handbook of Vaccination*. Into the merits of the controversy I do not propose to enter, except to say that the Government, in repeating Mr. Cecely's and Mr. Badcock's experiments in inoculating cows with the matter of small-pox, would appear to regard the question as still an open one. I should wish, however, as this matter will probably come up for further discussion at the adjourned conference, to rescue from its present obscurity a fact which appears to me to be a very strong argument in favour of cow-pox being actually, as Jenner himself styled it, the variolæ vaccina.

In the year 1840, eight milch cows and two sturks were turned to graze during the daytime in a meadow at Oakley, in the Vale of Aylesbury, in which the clothes and bedding of a person who had died of malignant variola had previously been exposed almost constantly night and day for a week, and in which they were still always exposed at night, and not always removed in the morning before the readmission of the animals. On one occasion, at least, the cows were observed in the midst of the bed-flock, licking it up. Within twelve or fourteen