

for a workman-like finish I might even break your correspondent's record, to have mine broken in turn. Still, as "scorching" never popularised sport, so it will be found that the man unaccustomed to examine sputa for the tubercle bacillus will not be encouraged to start that praiseworthy practice by being told the process is practically instantaneous.

Not only is a well-mounted specimen a thing of beauty (so Professor Arnold taught us, and after 20 years' storing of the slides so prepared the remainder of the proverb is true) but it is suitable to send for the inspection of others—seeing is believing—and possible to retain with the notes of the case for future reference. The lack of cover-glasses and the use of oil-immersion lenses for several reasons militate against so doing. Apart from the question of time (and that is not a vital point) the article with the correspondence has been deeply interesting and I confess to having received several (a student's phrase) "good tips."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

DAVID ANDERSON-BERRY.

St. Leonards-on-Sea, Sept. 25th, 1905.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I trust you will allow me to supplement the few remarks I ventured to make on the above clinically important subject in your issue of Sept. 16th. Obviously the desideratum is quickness coupled with efficiency: that amount of quickness which is compatible with due satisfaction of the feeling of reliance in the mind of the searcher. When I quoted four and a half minutes as the requisite time in my own case I was writing not as a professional pathologist but as a practical clinical physician, imbued with the necessity of determining as definitely as possible whether certain lesions existing in patients at the time *under his own care* were or were not tuberculous. Provided such examinations can be made in *five minutes* that, practically speaking, surely is as far as it is necessary to go. It is quite possible that the professional pathologist sitting in his well-equipped laboratory may evolve a method which may require even some very much shorter time than this.

But, Sirs, I trust the time is at hand when the investigation of *all* the excreta of the body will become once more amongst the matter-of-course personal duties of every conscientious physician, and that the lazy present-day habit of deputing such observations to some perhaps distally situated professional pathologist will be amongst the disgraces of the past. And to this most desirable end any correspondence that may tend to simplify an important and very frequently called for pathological investigation and help to further the natural union of clinical observation with scientific methods will be no waste of your valuable space.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Sept. 25th, 1905.

E. T.

THE ROYAL PORTSMOUTH HOSPITAL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It may interest you to know that Mr. Henry Rundle, a member of the senior surgical staff of this hospital, made an offer to the governors to-day to build and furnish a room as a museum and medical library. This work will be carried out at the same time as the new operation theatre, the foundation stone of which will probably be laid by the mayor at the end of next month. Mr. Rundle's munificent offer was received with warm appreciation by the governing body.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Sept. 22nd, 1905.

J. S. NEIL, Secretary.

THE CAUSATION OF SENILE DECAY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of August 5th, p. 403, you were good enough to publish a letter of mine in which I suggested that senile decay, far from being a mere wearing out of the tissues, is in large measure the result of specific changes in the blood—that it is, in fact, a process of slow suicide. Shortly after the publication of this letter Dr. A. Lorand of Carlsbad drew my attention to a pamphlet by him, entitled "Sur les Causes de la Sénilité et son Traitement Hygiénique et Thérapeutique." I did not in my letter attempt to define what the blood changes which accompany and, as I believe, induce senility precisely are, but I threw out the suggestion

that they might partly consist in an altered state of the internal secretions. Dr. Lorand argues in his pamphlet, which was published in April of the present year, and therefore some months before my letter, that senility is due to atrophy of certain glands, to wit, the thyroid, the pineal gland, the ovaries, and testis, and to the consequent diminution in the blood of the secretions peculiar to them. It will thus be seen that in the view that senility may be induced by some change taking place in the internal secretions I was anticipated by Dr. Lorand.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Wimpole-street, W., Sept. 24th, 1905.

HARRY CAMPBELL.

THE BOY AND HIS SCHOOL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The acknowledged authority of THE LANCET in the scientific world makes me value highly the honour of being noticed at all in its pages, but it also makes the shock more painful when the notice of "The Boy and his School" ends by classifying me as a fossil.¹ Apparently from a misunderstanding of the expression "lacking human interest" I am taken to mean that the physical sciences lack interest, which I do not say and am far from thinking; indeed, on p. 86, I admit that I should have preferred them for my own study, if I had been able to choose. What I do mean by "lacking human interest" may be found on pp. 63-64. I can only offer my apology for having used an expression which proves to be less commonly understood than I had supposed. Trusting that you will kindly insert this correction,

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ROBERT L. LEIGHTON.

The Grammar School, Bristol, Sept. 25th, 1905.

VARICOCELE—WHAT OF IT?

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In his letter to THE LANCET of Sept. 23rd, p. 923, Colonel F. Howard raised a most important question. The present attitude of the public services towards candidates who have a varicocele is illogical in the extreme. The question may be regarded from two points of view, the candidate's and the service's. Mr. C. A. Rankin Nitch and I had despatched a communication on the results of the operation from the individual's point of view within a few hours of the publication of Colonel Howard's letter. Being in the possession of the results of our inquiry, which are in entire harmony with Colonel Howard's opinion, it seemed desirable that some statement should be made, though owing to time and space we must refer readers to the original paper when it appears.

Three questions may be raised: firstly, what is a varicocele and what harm does it do? secondly, what is the effect of operations performed for its relief? and thirdly, in what way should these considerations affect the attitude of the services to this affection? A varicocele may be said to be an enlarged, and perhaps varicose, condition of the veins of the pampiniform plexus. It is not physiological as stated by the eminent authority whom Colonel Howard quotes as having taught it to be for the last 20 years. It is usually a unilateral condition, a consideration which forbids all general, and therefore bilateral, theorisations. Although it is not physiological, a varicocele need not be pathological in the gross and baneful sense of the term. It may be said to be always harmful to the testis with which it is connected and in the majority of instances equally harmless to the individual who possesses it. The consequence to the testis is of consideration to the individual but not to the service for which he is a candidate. The latter is only interested in the varicocele as it may cause so much distress as to prevent the man from doing his duty.

The second question, concerning the results of operation, can be discussed under these two heads—namely, its effect on the testis and its effect in making a man fit for work again. With regard to the individual the whole point is, "Can we save the testis by operation from the fibrotic changes which we know the varicocele will slowly produce in it?" There is no doubt as to the answer to this. No, we cannot. Mr. Nitch and I found that the operation, as it is usually performed, hastens and magnifies those changes in the testis, precipitating the very issues which the operation

¹ THE LANCET, Sept. 16th, 1905, p. 832.