

position as surgeons. It is announced that the annual meeting of the Caledonian Medical Society will be held in Manchester on June 23rd.

New Inventions.

THE TYPHOID AGGLUTOMETER.

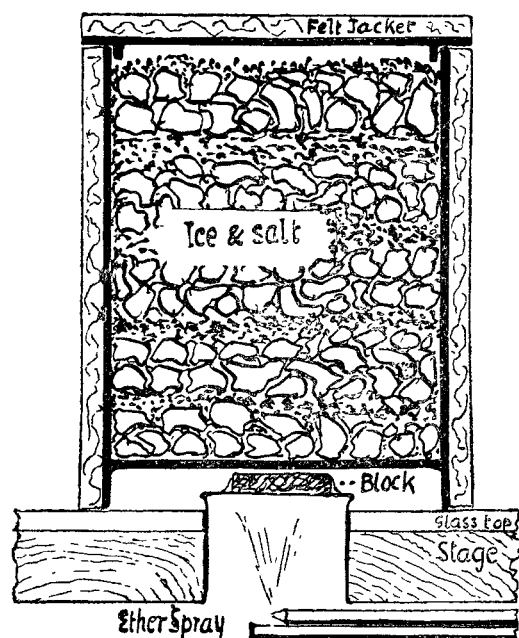
WE have received from Messrs. Parke, Davis and Co. a handy little apparatus for the performance of the Gruber-Widal test for typhoid fever without the use of a microscope. It consists of four small tubes each containing a suspension of dead typhoid bacilli arranged side by side in a stand; three of these tubes are for inoculation with the serum to be investigated, the fourth being left as a control. Apparatus is also supplied for collecting the blood, diluting the serum obtained from it, and for inoculating the tubes. The method of procedure is as follows: a few drops of blood are received into a short wide tube labeled "blood tube" and allowed to coagulate; the serum, which separates, is drawn up into a glass tube with a rubber bulb and two drops are then dropped into a tube containing fluid, labeled "serum diluting fluid," and well mixed. Varying quantities of the serum thus diluted are dropped into the three typhoid suspensions so as to give dilutions of 1 in 30, 1 in 50, and 1 in 100, respectively. These tubes are then corked and shaken to insure admixture and then placed in a warm room, an incubator not being necessary. If a positive reaction results flocculi appear in one or more of the tubes, which must be carefully compared with the control. In the course of a few hours these flocculi sink to form a distinct layer at the bottom of the tube. We have tested the apparatus with the blood of a case of typhoid fever, which gave a well-marked reaction with the 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 tubes within three hours and a slight precipitate in the 1 in 100 tube, a deposit being very distinct in all three 12 hours afterwards. The apparatus was kept in an ordinary warm room and not in an incubator. A control performed with the serum of the same case by means of the ordinary Widal test with the microscope gave a good agglutination with a dilution of 1 in 40 in about half an hour.

The apparatus is supplied in a convenient form and is easy to use, the directions given with each apparatus being clear and explicit. Each agglutometer serves for one test only. It should be of use in general practice, especially where laboratory assistance is difficult to obtain, since the information afforded by the test appears to be as trustworthy as that afforded by the usual laboratory method. It will be remembered that the original reaction as described by Gruber was a macroscopic method and that for some time past dead cultures have been used, especially in Germany, where recently a considerable amount of work has been carried out with cultures treated with formaline and by means of Ficker's method, also presumably a method with dead cultures, although details of the preparation of his reagent are withheld by the author. Some German authors¹ maintain that more uniformly trustworthy results are obtained by these means than by the ordinary method of employing living cultures and the microscopic study of the clumping process.

AN ACCESSORY FOR FREEZING MICROTOMES.

DURING the hot weather it is not easy to cut sections on the microtome by the freezing method whether with the ice well or ether-spray microtome. During the past few months I have used a simple device which makes one practically independent of the atmospheric temperature. The illustration shows the device standing on the stage of an ether freezing microtome. It is a box of thin metal, the walls of which are prolonged below the bottom of the box for the distance of a centimetre; the box is clothed in a jacket of felt. When sections are to be cut a lump of ice of the size of the fist is slung in a towel, well beaten against the floor and the pounded ice is put into the box in alternate layers with common salt to fill the box. By standing the ice chamber above the die on which the gum-soaked block of tissue is

placed the specimen is inclosed in an atmosphere below freezing point so that the cooling agent below the die rapidly freezes the block. The saving in time is surprising whilst the diminished quantity of ether used in spraying is no small gain, not to mention the reduction of the wearisome labour of bellows blowing, also when using the ice chamber



blocks of tissue of larger area and thickness can be frozen than is possible without its aid. During the intervals of use the water should be poured out of the box occasionally, the ice rammed down to the bottom, and if the chamber be stood on a non-conducting surface as a glass plate the freezing mixture will remain useful for an hour or more. The ice chamber is made by Messrs. J. Swift and Sons of Tottenham Court-road, W.; its cost is small.

Queen Anne-street, W.

N. BISHOP HARMAN.

Looking Back.

FROM
THE LANCET, SATURDAY, June 2, 1827.

DISSECTION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Should any measure be brought before Parliament for the general improvement of our medical legislation, I would suggest that a clause be introduced to legalise the transfer of our corporeal frame by post obit, in the same way as any other property, and rendering it obligatory upon the executors, as survivors, to fulfil the bond.

For myself, I have a great antipathy to being dissected by worms, and would much rather my body was submitted to the scalpel of some elegant and scientific anatomist. It is really astonishing to me, Sir, that such prejudice should exist against dissection, and that people should be so anxious to be immured in a cold dark hole, there to become the prey of a set of loathsome zoophytes; how much more congenial it appears to have one's bones scraped beautifully clean, arranged after the order of Nature, and hung up in some chimney corner, or perchance honoured with a glass case! There would then be some pleasure in returning from the world of spirits to revisit our earthly tabernacle, and perhaps see some old friend again shake our bunch of phalanges, and, like Hamlet, soliloquize over the sad remnants of mortality.

Another advantage attending this method is, that when the trumpet sounds, one will know where to find one's self, and instead of grubbing and squabbling for bones* in a church-yard, be able to pack up and be off at a moment's notice!

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Loughton, Essex.

NON-MEDICUS.

¹ Lion: Münchener Medicinische Wochenschrift, 1904, No. 21.

* Old Spanish apologue.