refer to a curious instance of official impatience which occurs in it. On the first page is a paragraph which reads thus: "The Board in the first instance, on July 22nd, called for a detailed report by the medical officer of health of the Catherington rural district, with which request, however, he did not comply until August 6th." Had the latter portion of this sentence been stated affirmatively thus, "with which request he complied on August 6th," it would have been a mere statement of the facts. As it stands, however, it is more than this, it implies a censure on the medical officer of health of the Catherington rural district for having taken so long as 14 days to report on a highly complex epidemic. The current Medical Directory states that the medical officer of health of this district receives an annual salary of £10 for this appointment. I will not enter into the question as to whether such a highly paid official is deserving of the implied censure, but I wish merely to point out that this censure concerning a delay of 14 days is contained in the report of an inspector who received his instructions to report on August 3rd, 1901, and whose report bears the date of May 10th, 1902.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Coventry, Oct. 27th, 1902. E. H. SNELL.

THE EXAMINATION IN PHYSICS AT THE CONJOINT BOARD OF THE ROYAL COL- LEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON AND THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As a member of the medical profession and a teacher of physics I have long had much sympathy with students preparing for the conjoint examinations in this subject. The syllabus contains a good deal that may well be left out and omits much that is really useful. It is not definite enough. There is economy of words at the expense of clearness, and the onus is thrown on the teacher of deciding how much of the work comprehended under an indefinite, or rather an exhaustive, heading he may consider it desirable to teach. To make a comparison the syllabus is almost the exact opposite to that of the London University, which leaves practically nothing to be desired in the matter of clearness and of the range of knowledge to be expected from the student.

Labouring for years under a sense of irritation as a teacher of this imperfect syllabus I hailed with a feeling of pleasurable expectation the advent of a new one. It is out and is distinctly disappointing. It is a case of "*parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*," and one may be forgiven for a suspicion that the labour was a particularly short and easy one. The new syllabus is only a slight improvement on the old one. It contains nearly all the faults I have indicated above. Taken as a whole it can hardly be called a syllabus at all. It consists of a number of headings flung together without due regard either for the troubles of the poor student or for his interests (to say nothing of the poor teacher). Clearness has again been sacrificed to brevity. A lot of work is implied under certain headings that can be of no possible use to a medical student except as an intellectual exercise, and I think that he has about enough of that in other directions, and some work, especially in light and electricity, omitted that would be both interesting and useful. In order to keep this letter within short limits my criticisms have been general only, but should you think the subject worthy of discussion I am quite prepared to enter into details. The subject of physics plays only a subordinate part in the curriculum of a medical student, but it is useful, its utility is increasing, it is as easy to have a good syllabus as a bad one, and, in my opinion, the new syllabus is, on the whole, a bad one.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
H. SOMERVILLE.

Westminster Hospital Medical School, Oct. 20th, 1902.

THE SURGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE ILIO-PSOAS BURSA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Your annotation on the Surgical Importance of the Ilio-*ps*oas Bursa in THE LANCET of Oct. 25th, p. 1139, is the first reference I have seen to a condition which

I met with some time ago and which puzzled me considerably. The clinical features closely resembled those described by Dr. F. B. Lund. There was a tense cystic swelling on the outer side of Scarpa's triangle which had been diagnosed as a mass of malignant glands. It was, however, clearly cystic and might have been taken for a femoral hernia if it had not been for the femoral artery which was pushed in front and to the inner side of the swelling. The absence of any flexion of the hip or fulness in the iliac fossa negatived *ps*oas abscess. I took it to be some anomalous form of hernia, but on exposing it I found a thick-walled laminated cyst containing what looked like synovial fluid, and passing down to the small trochanter; obviously it was an enlarged ilio-*ps*oas bursa. The anterior crural nerve was tightly stretched over its anterior surface, accounting for the pain. The greater portion of the thick sac was dissected away and the wound was drained. I could not find any communication with the hip-joint. When last seen, however, the patient, an elderly man, still complained of a certain amount of pain and stiffness in the hip. As the condition appears to be rare the above particulars may be of interest.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Wolverhampton, Oct. 26th, 1902. EDWARD DEANESLY.

THE OXIDATION OF SEWER GASES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—One evening in the garden of Admiralty House, Bombay, I observed the perfume of the moon-flower, a large white convolvulus whose blooms open after sunset and fade at the first streak of dawn. Its odour is so delicate and so distinct from all others as to announce the opening of the flowers even if they are not within sight. The plant in question was about 15 feet away when I first perceived its odour and on advancing to examine it I observed that the odour was less sensible close to the flowers than at several yards' distance. The air was almost still, but its movement was in the direction of my first position, away from the plant, and it seemed as if a certain combination with the atmosphere was necessary in order fully to develop the perfume. At a distance of 25 feet in the same direction the odour was not perceptible. This is not the case with the rose and with certain other flowers whose perfume is strongest at a very short distance. My experience with the moon-flower reminds me of complaints that were made in Bombay regarding the emanations from a sewer ventilating pipe by people who lived at least 50 yards away from it, although I was assured by the engineer in charge that he had smelt the discharge at the pipe itself and found no perceptible odour. It is also currently believed that much mischief is caused to the public health by inodorous sewer gases, although it is difficult to believe that any of the very mixed gases arising from decomposed sewage can be odourless. All this seems to point to the necessity of a series of experiments on the oxidation of the gases by decomposition arising from drains and sewers. It is generally admitted that contact with the air is all that is required to render them innocuous, and there are already schemes before the public for the more efficient application of the air to the gases. But for practical success there will arise further considerations, such as duration of contact, intimacy of admixture of the ingredients, influences of wind or still air at the outlet, and lastly, the influence of temperature both as a cause and a cure.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
JOHN WALLACE.
Indian Municipal Journal, Bombay, Sept. 20th, 1902.

MASSAGE IN SPRAINS AND DISLOCATIONS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—You have been good enough to publish four letters of mine dealing with the treatment of dislocations and sprains by massage and movement. Since my first letter in February, 1898, various authorities have corroborated the soundness of the treatment which I advocated. In fact, I know of at least two books which have been written since that date about the subject. Still, I am afraid that the treatment is not sufficiently known to a great many practitioners.

I have recently had two cases which show the beneficial effect of the treatment. A policeman slipped on the kerb