such and proof that they are in the right hands before their author can be permitted to lay a further tax on the profession.—I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

East Sheen, Nov. 20th, 1897. ALEXANDER MCCOOK WEIR.

"THE DISINFECTION OF CLOTHING BY HEAT."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Will you kindly give me room for a few lines with regard to the article by Mr. Messiter published in THE LANCET of Nov. 20th, 1897, p. 1305.

Mr. Messiter very properly points out the advantages of current steam and of having some simple and portable form of current steam disinfecter for certain public health purposes. Such a disinfecter would be specially useful in places where no large disinfecting station exists or where it is desirable to carry out the disinfection of clothes, &c., at the houses of patients affected with infectious illnesses. He appears, however, to be quite unaware of the fact that both these desiderata have been met in Manchester for no inconsiderable time by means identical with those he recommends. He will find in Dr. Niven's report for 1895 full reference to this. "It is remarkable that Mr. Messiter should have had constructed an apparatus which corresponds so closely with the one in use in Manchester that even the dimensions of the steam chamber are the same (within a quarter or half an inch). The mode of heating by petroleum furnace was introduced by me in 1894, not only on account of its convenience, cleanness, and cheapness, but also, and more especially, because I could find no other means to obtain rapidly the intense heat required to produce a very rapid ebullition of water, a factor which I consider of very great importance in steam disinfection. Mr. Messiter does not speak in his description of the means he uses for preventing the wetting of clothes by the condensation taking place on the sides of the steam chamber or of the ways in which he prevents the splashing resulting from sharp boiling. The quantity of water he recommends is the same as I have found after many trials to be the best. The method of drying clothes after disinfection is the same which has been taught to the sanitary inspectors in Manchester nearly two years ago.

Coincidences of this kind impress one as indicating the soundness of the method if they come from two absolutely independent sources. In justice, however, to Dr. Niven and myself I think it right to mention the fact that Mr. Messiter recommends methods which we have used in laboratory or public work for at least three years.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

SHERIDAN DELÉPINE,
Professor of Pathology, Owens College,
Manchester.

Nov. 22nd, 1897.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Professor Delépine having shown me a letter which he is about to send to you in reference to a paper on "A Mode of Disinfecting Personal Clothing at Home," by Mr. A. F. Messiter, M.R.C.S. Eng., which appeared in THE LANCET of Nov. 20th, 1897, p. 1305, I have to confirm his statement that Mr. Messiter's machine, in its shape and dimensions, in the means of heating, and in the purpose for which it is being introduced, is identical with a disinfecter invented by Professor Delépine. Professor Delépine's disinfecter contains a novel application of physical laws (not to be found in the description of a machine given in Mr. Messiter's article), and its working was demonstrated to the sanitary inspectors of this city over eighteen months ago, by whom it has since been used.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

JAMES NIVEN,
Medical Officer of Health.
Manchester, Nov. 23rd, 1897.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Nov. 20th, Mr. Messiter, medical officer of health to the Isle of Axholme District Council, illustrates an apparatus for disinfection of clothes by heat. As I had myself long felt the need of a somewhat similar portable apparatus I exhibited a model of one in the Section of State Medicine, Dublin, in April, 1896, a short description of which you were good enough to give in THE LANCET of May 16th, 1896, p. 1359. I afterwards sent

the model to Professor Gairdner, of Glasgow, who forwarded it for exhibit to the medical officer of health of Glasgow. Each medical man in doing battle against the possible conveyance of contagion should be his own detective officer, and should with the most intense energy guard his coming puerperal patient with all the means that lie within his reach against scarlatinal or other poison. Our responsibility in this should make us tremble, as I fear we are indirectly the cause of some deaths. Every man, *paid or unpaid*, ought to be an honest, independent, and courageous sanitary worker.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Londonderry, Nov. 20th, 1897.

WALTER BERNARD.

LOCALISATION AND MEASUREMENT BY X RAYS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With reference to an article on the above subject in THE LANCET of Oct. 16th, of which I was a joint author, and with reference also to other means of localisation which have been suggested before and since, I beg to point out that whether a mechanical or a mathematical method be adopted the necessary apparatus need be only of the very simplest description. The primary requirement is of course a small steady stand to carry the focus tube and allow of horizontal and perpendicular adjustment. This stand may be either of the "Bridge" pattern—i.e., two small perpendicular pillars (with heavy bases) joined by a horizontal bar, the latter capable of being raised and lowered and permitting of lateral displacement of the tube—or it may be the "sliding tube holder" described by Mr. Payne.¹ In any case the horizontal bar must be provided with a knife edge bearing three shallow notches, a central and two lateral ones, the latter equidistant—say, two and a half inches—from this centre. These notches mark respectively a centre and the limit of the lateral displacements of the tube. In the further steps described in the above-named article it is evident that this same stand and these same notches permit of a perpendicular being dropped from the centre one, whilst the two lateral notches now carry the threads which represent the path of the x rays. In other words, the necessity for a second piece of apparatus is avoided—a pair of compasses, a spirit level, and a foot rule complete the equipment. Those who have become accustomed to associate x ray localisation with a formidable arrangement of stands, screws, and spirit levels, reflecting mirrors, cast-iron retouching desks, and yards of millimetre scale, may rest assured that they will lose little in time and nothing in accuracy if at the expense of a few shillings they avail themselves of the simple apparatus I now advocate.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

W. S. HEDLEY, M.D. Edin.
Mansfield-street, Cavendish-square, W., Nov. 23rd, 1897.

"A NOTE ON CYCLING."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the two able and interesting letters that have appeared in THE LANCET of Nov. 13th and 20th the writers make no reference to the two distinct methods of leaning forward: (1) the spine may be bent forward with a stoop of the shoulders; or (2) the pelvis may be rotated and the spine inclined forward without bending and with the shoulders back. Those who have studied river-rowing consider the former method unsightly and injurious while the latter is practised by all skilled oarsmen. To my thinking the same holds true in cycling. The bent back and stooping shoulders are certainly unsightly and the position seems to cramp the chest. On the other hand the body swung forward from the hips, with the back straight and the shoulders back, to my eye is graceful; the position allows freedom to the chest-wall and at the same time the rider gains the mechanical advantage that a forward position certainly gives. There is perhaps more danger of perineal pressure, but this would be avoided if the cycle makers would make a hard saddle with a low peak instead of the very unsatisfactory yielding leather hammock now in use.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

Ottery St. Mary.

O. CLAYTON JONES, M.B. Oxon.

¹ Archives of the Roentgen Ray.