For the honour of English medicine, and seeing that in our days the communicability of phthisis has become a scientific question of the first order, I beg to call attention through your columns to the subject, adding for my part that the main valuable conclusions reached by the great pathologist Morton not only were not overlooked in his time but were confirmed and corroborated by the experience of his successors whose opinions and works appeared far before Villemin, or even Kranke ("Untersuchungen und Erfahrungen im Gebiete der Anatomie," &c., 1843), who evidently preceded the former, had attempted experimental inoculations. Thus v.g., D. L. G. Klein in his book, "Interpres Clinicus, sive de morborum indole," &c. (Francofurti et Lipsiæ, 1759), art. Phthisis, p. 232, says clearly: "Contagiosa est atque circa æquinoctia exacerbatur." Van Swieten (1764), Sennert, Valsalva, Maret, Borden, Baumes, and others, were also partisans of the doctrine of contagion. It is known that Morgagni very rarely made post-mortem examinations of tuberculous bodies for fear of contracting the disease. Laennec and Andral, though they did not adopt entirely the views of the already mentioned authors, recommended to the healthy persons living in contact with phthisical patients several preventive measures and prohibited them from sleeping in the same room.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Zacatecas, Mexico, August 4th, 1902. JUAN BREÑA, M.D.

A QUERY IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In this district the whole of a dwelling house, with the exception of a part which is used as a dairy and a room above this (dairy) which can be used as a bedroom, has been pulled down to below the ground floor and is now being rebuilt. Before it can be occupied after rebuilding is it necessary that a certificate under Section 6 of the Public Health Water Act, 1878, should be obtained? The staircase leading to the room above the dairy has been pulled down also.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Fressingfield, August 25th, 1902. SAM'L. J. KIRBY.

. We should say that the facts disclosed in the letter of our correspondent amount to a pulling down and rebuilding within the meaning of the section referred to, but whether the house has been "pulled down and rebuilt" is a question of fact for the magistrates should any dispute arise and we cannot positively predict the view they would take upon the evidence which would be before them.—ED. L.

THE DIAZO REACTION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The following easy method, which I have employed for some time, might be of service to the busy practitioner. A small pinch of sulphanilic acid is shaken up with a little pure hydrochloric acid in the bottom of a test tube; the urine is then added and boiled. On dropping a piece of potass. chlorate into the liquid the characteristic colour is found, more especially near the chlorate. There may be a strong brick-like precipitate to the KClO_3 , according to the amount of reaction. If very little HCl is used (one or two drops) the colour, &c., may be produced on adding pure HCl to the mixed urine, &c. If pure HCl , sulphanilic acid, and KClO_3 are mixed, and to the milky chlorine-evolving fluid ordinary urine is added, no reaction occurs even on boiling; but if to the boiled fluid a few drops of diazo urine are added a colouration appears, more marked according to quantity. If the ordinary urine + reagent fluid is neutralised by NH_3 a crystalline precipitate falls in a dark fluid, while a little of the diazo reacting urine added will at once show the characteristic colour. In a narrow test-tube boiling the diazo urine with the KClO_3 added as in the first case produces purple adherent flakes on the surface, as well as a dark precipitate (two substances, giving by admixture the brick colour?). If to sulphanilic acid + HCl diazo urine be added and then KClO_3 without heat the brick deposit will destroy the white colour of the KClO_3 . The urine will be coloured in a few hours. In ordinary urine the KClO_3 remains white and the urine colour unaltered. The above is probably simpler than by employing the nitrite and ammonia.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
J. REID, M.A., M.D., C.M. Aberd.
Tunbridge Wells, August 23rd, 1902.

THE DANGERS OF A COMMON COLD.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of August 16th, p. 419, you print a very interesting address by Dr. A. Latham on "Modern Treatment of Pulmonary Consumption" in which two mentions of "catching cold" are made. In one he says: "By this means the body is hardened and colds are avoided"; and in the other, "The windows of his (the patient's) room are then closed that he may not catch cold whilst dressing." In a discussion on the cause of a common cold that appeared in your columns last year Dr. H. Willoughby Gardner¹ quoted the immunity of the inmates of open-air sanatoriums as a proof that colds were due only to infection, but from these mentions of "catching cold" Dr. Latham seems to imply that the immunity in these sanatoriums is due to an avoidance of contrasts of temperature rather than to the absence of an infective germ; and this is the old popular view. It would be very interesting to know if patients before the "body is hardened" catch cold, and whether the closing of the windows during dressing is the result of experience, and whether any disobey the rule and suffer the penalty.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
O. CLAYTON JONES, M.B. Oxon.

Ilfracombe, August 22nd, 1902.

LYMPH FOR REVACCINATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—During the recent epidemic of small-pox many persons applied to me for revaccination. Being unable to obtain vaccine lymph from the Local Government Board I was obliged to get it elsewhere—viz., the Renner Establishment. In this way I incurred a bill of £3 19s. This bill in due course was presented to the guardians for payment, which they refused to entertain until the opinion of the Local Government Board had been taken. This was done by me, and the Local Government Board recommended to the guardians that the amount should be paid. At the last meeting of the guardians on Saturday, August 23rd, it was put to the vote, with the result that my bill was negatived by one vote, 13 for, 14 against, and six neutral. By some misunderstanding the clerk represented the bill to be £1 19s., instead of £3 19s. Will you give me your opinion if it has been customary during the recent epidemic for boards of guardians to pay for lymph for revaccination, and also I should feel obliged for the names of such boards, so as to be able to put this before my board. One guardian stated that if I were paid it would establish a precedent, as if my application had been the first made for lymph.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
August, 1902. AN OLD SUBSCRIBER.

. We do not remember the matter having been previously brought to our notice but in the recent epidemic of small-pox at Glasgow the municipality expended £4570 for calf-lymph in connexion with revaccination and it would seem only reasonable that the guardians should pay in accordance with the opinion of the Local Government Board.—ED. L.

¹ THE LANCET, Dec. 14th, 1901, p. 1697.

VACCINATION GRANT—Mr. William Millar, public vaccinator of the Fourth (Welton) District of the Sculcoates Union, has been awarded a grant for successful vaccination for the second time in succession.

LITERARY INTELLIGENCE.—"Rich and Poor in the New Testament: a Study of the Primitive Christian Doctrine of Earthly Possessions," is the title of a book by Dr. Orello Gone published by Messrs. A. and C. Black on Sept. 2nd. In it the writer endeavours to interpret the New Testament teachers historically and grammatically, and to find what there may be in the spirit of their teachings that is applicable to modern social conditions. He deems it no great loss if in this process the letter of their words is not in all cases found to be available. It is believed that the chapter on "Conditions and Teachings before Christ," setting forth the humanity of the Old Testament, will be found to furnish an instructive introduction to the central theme of the book—A new edition of Mr. Sydney Stephenson's "Ophthalmic Nursing" will shortly be issued by the Scientific Press.