evidence of tubercle; and 3 were discharged in whom there was undoubted evidence of tubercle—viz., one case of phthisis advanced to cavitation and two patients suffering from tubercular peritonitis, having masses easily felt in the abdomen. Of 7 cases where tubercle was suspected one positive reaction occurred (the diagnosis resting between sarcoma and tubercle); tubercle was found at the operation. Of the remaining six, the diagnosis resting between empyema and tubercle, all failed to react, and were operated upon and found to be empyemata. Two died later and no tubercle was found at the post-mortem examination.

Two cases where the reaction was so indefinite (with 1 per cent. solution) that it was queried positive were found at the necropsy to be tubercle. These I have not included. It will be seen that in every case where a positive reaction was obtained tubercle was either found post mortem or definite clinical signs were evident. Three inaccuracies out of 45 cases occurred, but these were of the negative order. The patients submitted to the test were all under the care of the senior physicians, to whom I am indebted for the publication.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
HENLEY H. MOYLE.

East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, E.,
Nov. 28th, 1908.

EPSOM ASYLUMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your issue of Dec. 5th is a short comment on the public meeting held in Epsom to protest against the walking parties from the lunatic asylums of the London County Council. As your remarks are likely, I think, to give a wrong impression as to the feeling in this locality on the question of the exercise of the lunatics in public, and also as to the object and result of the meeting, I hope you will give publication to these remarks. There were several motions before the meeting in addition to the one asking the London County Council to put a stop to "the practice of walking parties outside the asylum grounds" which you allude to, and one of the most important was the one asking the London County Council to direct attention to the escapes of lunatics. The result of the meeting was that the motions were passed and not lost by a large majority as you state. There were no direct attacks made on the medical superintendents as such, though, of course, the administration which permitted the walking parties and the escapes was adversely criticised, but the "attacks," if they can be called such, were directed against the asylums committee as a whole. As regards "the improvement in the mental state of the lunatics likely to be derived from the change of air and scene" there is some divergence of opinion amongst the medical superintendents of the asylums in this district as regards change of scene, for the medical superintendent of one of the asylums here does not permit the lunatics to exercise outside the grounds of the asylum he is in charge of, and his results are as good as the results of those who permit the walking parties outside the asylum grounds.

As was pointed out at the public meeting, the grounds of the asylums near here are extensive and give ample room for exercise, but no doubt popular opinion would be pacified if the asylums committee were only to allow small parties of selected patients with *adequate* escort to walk the public roads, and also if the asylum authorities take more active measures as regards escapes. As a result of the meeting a committee is to wait upon the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, and the Lunacy Commissioners if found necessary.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
HORTON.

Dec. 8th, 1908.

A SERUM TREATMENT OF CARCINOMA IN MICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—You were good enough to verify by a note to my letter published in THE LANCET of Nov. 28th a quotation from a letter written to me by Dr. Borrel on Nov. 12th last, in which he said that he had done "nothing resembling" my experiments with sera upon carcinoma in mice. Dr. Blair Bell has stated that I had repeated Dr. Borrel's experiments. I have shown conclusively that I did nothing of the kind. He stated that I was self-invited to the Liverpool Medical Institution. I was not. In spite of this, in his letter to you

published on Dec. 12th Dr. Bell attempts to maintain his original position, although he uses vague words of apology.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
CHARLES WALKER.

Cancer Research Laboratory, University of Liverpool
Dec. 12th, 1908.

THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF DENTAL CARIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the discussion on "The Cause and Prevention of Dental Caries," which has been published in recent numbers of THE LANCET, it has been assumed that extreme frequency in the occurrence of dental caries is a purely modern phenomenon which most writers attribute to "modern dietetics" or "the changes the food of man has undergone during the last few centuries."

I would like to call attention to the fact that 5000 years ago, in the time of the Pyramid builders, dental caries and alveolar abscesses were at least as common amongst the *adult aristocracy* of Egypt as they are in Europe to-day, although dental caries was rare among the people of lower social status and almost unknown in children. Among several thousand children found in ancient Egyptian graves I have seen only three instances of caries in deciduous teeth.

These facts, I think, support the general conclusions to which the discussion has pointed.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
G. ELLIOT SMITH.

Cairo, Dec. 7th, 1908.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF ALCOHOL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Last night I attended a meeting of the United Services Medical Society, held at the Royal Army Medical College, when a most interesting and instructive discussion took place on the use and abuse of alcohol. The question was raised as to whether the total abstaining races, such as the Hindoos, the Persians, and the Fellaheen of Egypt, showed any evidence of being more moral or progressive than the races that take alcohol, and it was also pointed out that all the progressive races, including the Japanese, take it. The total abstainers present did not attempt to answer this point, but it would be interesting if some of them could do so in your columns. Incidentally, they might also try to explain why the total abstainers have practically never produced great admirals, generals, or statesmen.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
H. N. ROBSON.

Junior Constitutional Club, Piccadilly, W., Dec. 11th, 1908.

THE STERILISATION OF POTABLE WATERS BY MEANS OF CALCIUM HYPOCHLORITE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your correspondents, referring to my brief contribution to your journal of Nov. 28th, overlooked the most essential point to which I directed attention—viz., that in waters free from suspended matter and of fair organic purity an almost infinitesimal amount of chlorine suffices for practical sterilisation. Experiments now being conducted on a larger scale indicate that the same results are obtainable as in laboratory experiments. I believe that I am in possession of all the reports which have been referred to, and hitherto the amounts of chlorine which have been used for sewages and dirty waters, whilst showing that even such waters were capable of being sterilised, gave very little ground for hoping that the process could be made a practical one.

May I also direct attention to an error in the original paper? I find that the hypochlorite can be purchased at £7 per ton, or less than half the price I first had quoted. This means that about 25,000 gallons can be sterilised for one penny. When electrical treatment can be shown to produce the same effect for less money I will give it further attention.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
JOHN C. THRESH.

London Hospital Medical College,
Dec. 15th, 1908