a sexual disease. But this only happens in isolated, secluded, and uncivilised parts of the world. With the growth and spread of civilisation the frequency of extra-genital infection declines. The attenuation of syphilis is well accounted for in the words of Joh. Benedictus: "Ratio est in promptu, quia homines nunc sibi melius cavent ab infectis, vel quia medici docti melius cognoscunt nunc causam morbi, et melius applicant remedia quam tempore anteacto."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
 Welbeck-street, W., Feb. 7th, 1898. GEORGE OGILVIE.

"CHARGES TO PATIENTS IN ISOLATION HOSPITALS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Your annotation in THE LANCET of Feb. 26th criticising my paper on "Charges to Patients in Isolation Hospitals" is to me most interesting and novel. At a time like this when there are very few local authorities who do not reckon an isolation hospital as one of their assets it is of the highest importance that this question should be thoroughly thrashed out. May I therefore add a little to my side of the case? My statement that the isolation hospital is the property of the ratepayers is termed "misleading." I confess that I am at a loss to see how this can be so, broadly speaking, for in a short time the ratepayers of this borough will probably be called upon to pay a rate of threepence in the pound according to the rateable value of their dwelling-houses, &c., for isolation hospital purposes. About one penny of this rate will pay off a portion of the principal and interest on money borrowed for the erection of the hospital and twopence will go to pay the current expenses of maintenance of the nursing staff, patients, &c. For a period of thirty years the ratepayers will go on paying their penny in the pound and for as long as the hospital lasts—providing the law remains the same—they will continue to maintain the staff, &c. On these counts I maintain that, broadly speaking always, the isolation hospital is quite as much the property of the ratepayers as are the public parks, public buildings, streets, sewers, and so on. I am one of those who think that it encourages a healthy public spirit to let the public know that such things are their property.

A much more serious statement on the part of your critic, however, is that the public should prove fitness for admission to such hospitals and especially their inability to secure isolation at home. Plainly and shortly I regard this as an inversion of the best way of looking at this question. The cases in which isolation at home can be carried out are extremely few—very much fewer than those who have not had experience of attempts to carry it out would perhaps credit. Even when it is apparently being carried out with every rigour and precaution there is always the danger of some emergency—nay, some domestic triviality even—occurring which undoes in a few moments the efforts of many weeks. I cannot call to mind more than one or two cases in an experience of about six years where even in large houses I could honestly say that efficient isolation had been carried out. The inability to secure isolation at home, to me at least, therefore would require but little proof, but experience has taught me to demand detailed and practical proof of the ability to provide and maintain it.

The whole question under discussion turns on this—that the individual is removed to an isolation hospital much more for the good of his immediate neighbours and of the community at large than for his own personal good. He is "unclean," and therefore for the good of the community, "He shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."

In conclusion I would like to point out that though there may be a very remote possibility of this procedure I am advocating leading a few degenerate individuals into a state of demoralisation and encouraging pauperism there is another side even to that. As Professor Wynter Blyth pointed out in his address to the Sanitary Institute Congress in 1896, many individuals who have been well and properly treated in isolation hospitals would probably, if treated or allowed to remain in their homes, have been added to the chronic invalids of the population and would drift gradually into poverty and then into pauperism. Is it not better to pay a few pence more for the maintenance of an isolation hospital and keep up the health and working capital

of our country than to pay those same few pence for the maintenance of the useless "flotsam and jetsam" population of our workhouses? I apologise for the length of my letter, offering as my only excuse the great importance of the subject. I hope some others of your readers will give us their ideas. Thanking you in anticipation for your insertion of my letter,

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
 MEREDITH YOUNG, M.D. Edin., D.P.H. Vict.
 Crewe, March 1st, 1898.

* * We are happy to print Dr. Meredith Young's letter, but we remain of our former opinion. A ratepayer cannot (to reduce the matter to a logical absurdity) elect to take his meals whenever he likes in the workhouse.—ED. L.

THE DUTIES OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I find that some misunderstanding prevails in reference to Mr. Carter's statements that the President of the General Medical Council ought not to have been approached by myself (since Dec. 22nd, 1897) on questions affecting the business of the General Medical Council and that he is disabled by illness from attending to the same. Permit me to point out that these statements are contrary to the fact.

In the first place, as regards the President's inability to deal with matters laid before him, it is the fact that he retains the business of the Council in his hands, that the Registrar takes his instructions from him, and that quite lately, in response to a request that he would summon a committee appointed to recover if possible certain moneys due to the Council and wrongfully impounded by the police, he (the President) wrote me under date Feb. 15th, 1898, a letter couched in forcible and undesirable terms. The profession must clearly understand that so long as a President of the General Medical Council retains office the sole power of convening certain committees and dealing with urgent business rests with him and him only. That I have been obliged to apply to him for these objects is the inexorable effect of the Standing Orders and his retention of office. If Mr. Carter's statement were true, then to prevent the public business of the Council stagnating for six months it would of course be necessary for the President to resign an office the duties of which he could not fulfil.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
 Cavendish-square, Feb. 28th, 1898. VICTOR HORSLEY.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON COMMISSION BILL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I shall be extremely obliged if you will publish the annexed copy of resolution of the Court of Assistants in THE LANCET and which has not been previously forwarded for the following reasons: the omission of the Society from the Senate has come as a surprise, the Lord President having intimated that he would fully consider the question, and it being generally understood that the Royal Colleges and the main body of medical teachers throughout the metropolis are favourable to their inclusion.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
 March 1st, 1898. JAMES R. UPTON.

Resolution passed at a Court of Assistants of the Society of Apothecaries held on Feb. 8th, 1898:—

That the Society of Apothecaries of London having considered the provisions of the London University Commission Bill of 1897 are of opinion that the omission of the Society from the Senate of the proposed University, thereby taking away the place assigned to the Society by the report of the Cowper Commission, is eminently unsatisfactory and that the Bill unless amended in this respect will fail to meet the requirements of medical education in London.

"THE REGISTRATION OF MIDWIVES BILL."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Although I am of opinion that legislation is necessary to protect the poor from the results of ignorance on the part of midwives, yet I think the present Bill should be stoutly opposed and for the following reasons:—1 Because

it will not prevent unregistered women from acting in the capacity of midwives. 2. Because it does not prohibit midwives registered under the Act from assuming the title of Licentiate in Midwifery. 3. Because the proposed constitution of the Midwives Board is objectionable from every practitioner's point of view—that is to say, it will be a body with the constitution of which the general practitioners of this country will have no voice. We cannot for one moment allow the two Royal Colleges and the Society of Apothecaries to exercise powers of nomination, neither can we see the necessity of giving so much representation to the Privy Council. 4. Because the provision made for the local supervision of midwives is impracticable. How in the name of common-sense is a medical officer of health of a large town to exercise supervision over all midwives practising in it?

It is clearly manifest that if we are to oppose this Bill we must without delay, both individually and collectively, appeal to our representatives in Parliament. And, further, I think we should take opportunities of making known our views in the lay press.

Cardiff, Feb. 26th, 1898.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
T. GARRETT HORDER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Without any desire to cavil with Mr. Humphreys there is one expression in his letter to which I beg to take exception. It runs thus: "Is it not, however, for those who disagree with its provisions to put their views clearly before Parliament and to leave the question to its decision rather than to incur the responsibility of causing further delay in a matter in which delay means the sacrifice of many lives and exposure to much unnecessary suffering?" Now, Sirs, at the outside the scheme of registration is clearly an experimental process and Mr. Humphreys is begging the whole question by stating that the delay implies the sacrifice of lives as there is not a particle of evidence in support of such a statement. It is no doubt the fact that a melancholy death takes place occasionally in the hands of an untrained midwife, but that these are exceedingly rare every practical man knows, and it is very difficult to conceive how any Parliamentary measure, however skilfully tinkered up, which revolutionises obstetric practice by offering a premium on quackery can in the long run compensate for the loss of a life here and there under the present system; and, indeed, if there is any assumption with regard to the delay of legislation, to my way of thinking, it is on the score of the longer the delay the better.

Peckham, Feb. 26th, 1898.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
CLEMENT H. SERS.

"NOSTRUMS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—While such differences of opinion are held by distinguished members of the medical profession anxious to promote the best interests of the profession as to the meaning of the present Medical Act there can be but little hope of getting a new Medical Act passed. It will surely take an absolute unanimity of object and opinion in our profession to bring about such a result. Both the disputants, however, are agreed that the sale of "nostrums" and patent medicines as at present permitted is a gross evil; with this opinion every medical man in the kingdom will agree, so that upon this subject at least we have unanimity. Is it not possible, therefore, to bring pressure to bear upon the Legislature to deal with this question?

I had the pleasure when addressing the students at St. Mary's Hospital in 1896 of dealing with this subject. In proposing a vote of thanks Sir William Broadbent suggested as a partial remedy that each nostrum should have printed upon the bottle the ingredients and the exact quantities of the drugs. May I make a suggestion—viz., that the Presidents of all the medical corporations and societies should in the name of their respective bodies approach the Board of Trade as a deputation urging such remedies for the existing state of things as they in their wisdom may arrive at after deliberate consultation?

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,
Feb. 27th, 1898. MORTON SMALE.

P.S.—I will with pleasure send a copy of my address to anybody who would care to have it.

"DEATHS WITHOUT OBVIOUS CAUSES."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Feb. 19th you published an annotation bearing the above title. I met with such a case a short time ago. A woman, aged forty-five years, was admitted to the Belfast Royal Hospital on Feb. 5th suffering from a varicose ulcer on the left leg just above the ankle. The ulcer was progressing favourably under treatment, but on the 13th the patient suddenly felt an attack of slight dyspnoea with pain at the heart; this lasted for about thirty seconds when she expressed herself as feeling quite well; in ten minutes she was again seized with the same symptoms and died inside a minute. On a most careful post-mortem examination made by Dr. Lorrain Smith, lecturer on pathology, Queen's College, Belfast, no cause for death could be discovered. There were no signs of phlebitis nor could any traces of clot in the pulmonary vessels be found and all the organs were in a healthy condition. During the week the patient was in hospital she appeared to be a very healthy woman and she was kept at absolute rest in bed till she died.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ALEX. MONTGOMERY, M.B. R.U.I.
Feb. 28th, 1898. Resident Surgeon Belfast Royal Hospital.

TOTAL ABSTINENCE IN ASYLUMS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The annual meeting of German alienists took place last September in Hanover and I beg leave to call the attention of THE LANCET to two subjects which cannot fail to interest the English medical profession.

1. This meeting after an exhaustive discourse by Professor Jolly, of Berlin, and on the motion of the learned professor, passed unanimously a resolution directed principally against a criticism contrary to facts on the part of the Reichstag in January, 1897, having reference to the actual condition of German asylums. This resolution is as follows: "This meeting concurs in the proposal adopted at the sitting of the Reichstag for regulating in conformity with the laws of the empire the supervision of lunatic asylums. But this meeting considers it a duty to point out once more that the most important reform consists in the establishment of independent boards of supervision directly subordinate to the minister and at the head of which stands a specialist occupying that post at headquarters."

2. The subject of alcohol in lunatic asylums was exhaustively discussed by Professor Hoppe, of Allenberg, who concluded his discourse by expressing the opinion that alcohol should not only be kept out of the reach of drunkards by establishing in asylums a so-called drunkards' department but should be kept altogether out of asylums, milk or lemonade being substituted for it. "If alcoholists," contended Professor Hoppe, "were not to be allowed to have alcohol then the other patients should also not be allowed to have it, as otherwise it would be impossible to make alcoholists practise total abstinence."

The greater portion of the alienists present were in favour of Professor Hoppe's views; and some of these alienists, amongst others Professor Forel, of Burghoelzli, and Professor Mocli, of Berlin, have already introduced the system of total abstinence into the respective asylums of which they are the medical superintendents.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Villach, Feb. 28th, 1898. DIRECTOR SCHLANGENHAUSEN.

THE TREATMENT OF BURNS AND OTHER SURFACE WOUNDS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The surface wounds of a lower animal, such as a dog, heal as a rule very much better than those of a man, particularly when the former has not and the latter has the advantage of experienced surgical aid. I do not know that a dog has a like advantage as regards deep wounds such as those caused by a bullet, a lance, or a sword. Certainly I think that a man deeply wounded and tended by a surgeon has a better chance of speedy recovery than a dog with a similar wound that receives no skilled aid; but not so in