a powerful electric light. It was reported by one observer, Dr. Hedley of the London Hospital tells me, that the organisms connected with the production of pus were markedly affected by such a current, a consideration bearing upon the possible value of ethereal energy in circuit through the body, a subject a little removed from the present one. The lightning plate exposed by me for fifteen minutes was still found under-exposed, whereas the same plate would under ordinary sunlight be fully exposed in a small fraction of a second. This, viewed in connexion with Professor Marshall Ward's experiments showing that two hours' exposure to sunlight was necessary to destroy pathogenic germs, by analogy would accord a very feeble possibility of the Roentgen rays now produced possessing germicidal properties of practical value. My experiments in this direction proved so far as they went a negative which was almost a foregone conclusion. An impure cultivation of diphtheritic bacilli (kindly obtained for me by Dr. Hugh Walsham, thanks to whom also is due from me for other help in my investigations) was exposed in a test tube in an incubator at 35° C. for twelve hours to Roentgen's rays produced by the apparatus described above. Considerable growth took place during these twelve hours and continued on further incubation. Exposure to the Roentgen rays had failed, as might be expected, to influence the growth of the bacilli to any appreciable extent. A pure cultivation of tubercle bacilli exposed at the same time showed a vigorous power of growth afterwards.

During these exposures, on account of an escape of electricity in one way and another, an intense odour of ozone was perceptible in the incubator and around it; the ozone apparently, however, was unable to penetrate the cotton-wool plug of the tube and affect the germs. A somewhat interesting result was obtained by photographing by Roentgen's rays the cultivation of diphtheritic bacilli sideways. The turbid blood serum gave a faint shadow, but the—to the eye opaque—colony of germs over a quarter of an inch thick gave no signs of existence. The rays passed through them as light through glass. Experiments like these are not, of course, final, but on the whole one is forced to the conclusion that with our present methods radiant ethereal energy is powerless against pathogenic organisms. At the same time, increased knowledge and improved apparatus may place the cure of disease by radiant energy within the possibilities of the future.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

T. GLOVER LYON, M.D. Cantab.,

Senior Assistant Physician to the Victoria Park Chest Hospital.

Feb. 17th, 1896.

"WOMEN AND THE PROFESSION IN INDIA."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Referring to the letter of Mr. Dhingra in THE LANCET of Feb. 15th, which pretends to prove that there is no great need for lady doctors in India, surely Mr. Dhingra is aware that there are many cases where a woman, in whatever stage of normal or abnormal labour, is surrounded with grave dangers affecting the safety of her life and is certainly in want of skilled professional help at such times. He is also aware that qualified midwives cannot give such aid without a knowledge of medicine and surgery. Mr. Dhingra does not mean to say that these poor women should miserably perish without professional aid, which, as he admits, is only possible for women to render. It is to be regretted that Mr. Dhingra has taken such an unkind view of Lady Dufferin's noble scheme. Lady Dufferin's name will be cherished by her sisters of that vast empire to whom she has been a generous benefactress with mingled feelings of affection and gratitude for alleviating their sufferings.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. F. D'ABREU, L.R.C.P. Edin., &c.

Handsworth, Feb. 15th, 1896.

"THE SOCIAL EVIL AND THE PROPAGATION OF VENEREAL DISEASES."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I read with much interest the article in THE LANCET of Feb. 1st on the above subject. In this you show the excellent result of the stringent enforcement of the Contagious Diseases Acts in Malta, but you only give the statistics of two British battalions. I find that the British Committee of the Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice

maintain that the worthlessness of the Contagious Diseases Acts is proved both in England and India by the Memorandum of the Army Sanitary Commission. On referring to the Blue-book (Return 318) in which the Army Sanitary Commission report is published I find that the Commission, while advising that the compulsory lock hospital system in India be not re-instituted, do advise that women should be expelled from cantonments "when they are known to be diseased and refuse to submit to treatment in hospital." In other parts of the Blue-book I find recorded the opinions of judges, commissioners, registrars, and magistrates in various parts of India, and, as far as I have been able to discover, with one exception they are all in favour of the Contagious Diseases Acts. I have many friends, medical and combatant, in the Services, and where I have discussed the matter with them I have found them unanimous in favour of the Acts. I think that you are doing good service by referring to the matter at the present time, and I cannot help thinking that but for the apathy and want of organisation amongst medical men the Acts would never have been repealed. I should be obliged if you would inform me where I could obtain a full history of the working of the Acts, and if there is any society working for their re-enactment.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

ATWOOD THORNE, M.R.C.S. Eng.

Dunster House, Mincing-lane, E.C., Feb. 8th, 1896.

* * If our correspondent will communicate with Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode he will obtain the blue-books he requires, and at a moderate cost.—ED. L.

PEROXIDE OF HYDROGEN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Having very nearly been seriously injured by the explosion of a bottle of peroxide of hydrogen vaunted as a germicide, which was sent to me from America some weeks ago, I think it is right to warn my brethren against the destructive potentialities of this fluid. The bottle in question had been put away in a cupboard, and without obvious or discoverable cause exploded with great violence after it had lain undisturbed since it came into my possession. The fragments of the label having been pieced together I was able to find the address of the sender, Marchand of New York, and in reply to a letter telling what had happened he wrote that I must have failed to observe the printed directions, which order the preparation to be kept "in a cool place so as to prevent the slight decomposition which always takes place when the temperature is high, producing a heavy pressure in the bottle." He was right in saying that I had not read the instructions, but wrong in the assumption that the bottle had not been kept in a cool place. My colleague, Mr. Laurie, Lecturer on Chemistry at St. Mary's Hospital, tells me that "alkaline solutions and strong solutions decompose rapidly. A strong solution decomposes rapidly at 20° C., explosively at 100° C., and I can only suppose that owing to the solution being alkaline or too strong the peroxide had decomposed, the oxygen accumulating and finally bursting the bottle." It is certain that the bottle in my possession had not been exposed even to the lower of these degrees, 20° C., equal to 68° F. By his advice, also, I wrote to Messrs. Burton and Sons of Bethnal-green upon the subject, and their reply is much to the point. "The sample of peroxide of hydrogen which exploded," they write, "must have been very imperfect—probably alkaline—a condition that induces liberation of oxygen; the pressure becomes more than the bottle can resist, and consequently it gives way. In the early days such things did happen occasionally, but with us it is quite a thing of the past. The strength generally used is 12 vol.—i.e., 1 litre contains 12 litres available oxygen. We send out some thousands of gallons weekly for technical purposes, and, as we make it, consider the risk about the same as if it were water." It is obvious, therefore, that under ordinary conditions peroxide of hydrogen is free from explosive tendencies; but nevertheless it is a substance which, without the owner's knowledge, may have other and less harmful qualities than those which, rightly or wrongly, are attributed to it as a germicide, and I ask you to be so good as to put this, my experience, on record as a warning to those who may keep it for use in surgical practice.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

Feb. 18th, 1896.

HERBERT W. PAGE.

* * As alkalinity appears to be the source of mischief, it might perhaps be a useful precaution to carefully neutralise,