essential to the prophylactic action of vaccination since it is by their action that the required area of scarring is produced. If the latter conclusion is the right one, attempts to exclude these micro-organisms from the lymph by treatment with glycerine, and from the skin by aseptic precautions, would tend only to defeat the object we have in view.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
HENRY W. P. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H. Cantab.

Norbury, S.W.

"LOOKING BACK":¹ "ON BATHING" THE SKIN AS AN ABSORBENT ORGAN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—This problem, which was discussed in THE LANCET in 1824, recalls the recollection that it was the subject of my first contribution to medical literature. It was published in THE LANCET in 1839. I was then a student at St. George's Hospital. In a surgical ward a man took a bath containing tartar emetic. This induced severe vomiting. It might be objected that the man swallowed some of the bath-water. I saw no evidence of this, and was satisfied that he had absorbed enough through the skin to cause the vomiting. The case made a lasting impression on my mind as an instructive example of the absorbent property of the skin. It may be regarded as a beautiful experiment, rich in therapeutical suggestions. I have often turned it to useful account in practice.

The eliminating and in-taking functions of the skin, as of other organs—for example, the lungs—are influenced by the balance between repletion and vacuity. Experiments on the absorbent power of the skin must be ruled by this law. If the vascular system is replete absorption is arrested, and inhalation, aerial and liquid, is active. And *vice versa*, if vacuum is the dominant condition then inhalation or in-drawing is active. It is not a little remarkable that this question of the absorbent capacity of the skin which was discussed in THE LANCET in 1824 should still remain undetermined after 78 years of physiological and pathological observation. The physician has, however, adopted it more or less directly in practice. But the pure physiologist of to-day, if we may take Sir Michael Foster as an authority, still looks doubtfully upon the absorptive power of the skin. He says: "In the case of the sound human skin the balance of conflicting evidence is in favour of the view that soluble non-volatile substances are not absorbed." But surely the problem may be definitely solved by well-directed experiments which take due account of the law that nature abhors a vacuum.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ROBERT BARNES.

Jan. 15th, 1902.

AN UNUSUAL COMPLICATION OF INFLUENZA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In answer to Sir John W. Moore's question in THE LANCET of Jan. 18th, p. 191, respecting "An Unusual Complication of Influenza" which I reported in THE LANCET of Jan. 11th, p. 89, I may say that there was no symptom of typhoid fever, and that the temperature was never above 100° F., and the pulse never above 110.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. G. CARRUTHERS, M.R.C.P. Edin.

South Norwood, Jan. 20th, 1902.

A DANGEROUS PRINCIPLE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Continuing the correspondence which has taken place under the above heading in THE LANCET of Dec. 21st, 1901, p. 1764, and Jan. 11th, 1902, p. 121, I beg to trespass further on your indulgence by requesting you kindly to insert the following copy of a letter directed by me to the Under Secretary of State, Home Office, Whitehall, on Jan. 17th, 1902:—

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge and to thank the Secretary of State for his letter B37039—8, dated the 16th inst., informing me "that the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland allow to Licentiates the privilege of perusing the charters, by-laws, and

ordinances, &c., of the College, as printed in one volume, and that" I "have availed myself of an offer of this privilege, but that the Licentiates are not entitled to be supplied with copies of such charters, by-laws, &c."

On this ruling of the Council I will only say that it cannot but prove highly inconvenient to such Licentiates as may require professional collegiate guidance outside this portion of His Majesty's kingdom; for instance, in England, Scotland, the Colonies, or British Dependencies.

On the other hand, I beg respectfully to point out to the Secretary of State that in my letter to you [of Jan. 9th] I quoted for his information a letter of the Secretary of Council of the College [dated Jan. 2nd] addressed to a *Fellow* of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, stating "that there are no copies of the by-laws available. A new edition is being prepared, but it will take some time to bring out this edition as several changes are contemplated in the by-laws and charters."

I would also add, in reference to the present attitude of the Council in withholding a copy of the by-laws from the Licentiates, that I hold a communication from the secretary of that Council dated June 21st informing me that "the revised by-laws are being printed and as soon as they are ready" I "can have a copy." On June 21st I was, and continue to be, a Licentiate. It is evident that since that date the opinion of the College as to the advisableness of issuing its by-laws to Licentiates has changed.

Respecting the special copy of "charters, by-laws, and ordinances, &c.," which Licentiates have "the privilege of perusing," I have to observe that I inspected the said copy so far back as Feb. 25th of last year—a date subsequent to the February, 1901, Fellowship Examination—and in May of last year another Licentiate of the College also inspected and took notes from the volume [dated January, 1886] proffered him by the Registrar, R.C.S.I. This Licentiate is prepared to corroborate my statement in the following special particulars.

(A.) In the Charters the following is laid down both in those of 1844 and 85, pages 43 and 59 respectively: "And the examiners, or any number of them declared by the by-law to be competent to transact business as a court of examiners, shall in the presence of the President, or, in his absence, of the Vice-President and two or more Members of the Council, examine any candidate for a Fellowship."

(B.) In the by-laws no mention is made in them of the number "declared to be competent to transact business," unless an "educational ordinance" or other "ordinance" can be regarded as such. These, however, are printed in the volume referred to as a class of rules, differing from by-laws, and I should imagine if they have not received the sanction of the Secretary of State as required by the Charter of 1844, or the sanction of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as required by the Charter of 1885, they cannot be regarded as by-laws. (There is no evidence of such sanction.) In fact, pages 62 to 66 are specifically intitled on each page as "By-laws," and under the heading of the title "By-laws of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland" (page 62) may be read "which have received the approval of the Queen in conformity with last Clause of Sec. 7 of Supplemental Charter."

(C.) In the Ordinances it is true the number of examiners is laid down.

(D.) In the Educational Ordinances the following appears at page 106 of the volume:—

FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATIONS.

"*Presence of Councillors*: The President or Vice-President and two Members of Council shall be present at the Oral Examination," &c. My contention, therefore, is that the President, Vice-President, and Council of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland at the Ordinary Fellowship Examination of February, 1901, did not observe their charters or their by-laws if it be conceded that the educational ordinances can be classed as such, and I would respectfully urge upon the Secretary of State to give me the reply to my letters of Dec. 9th and 14th, in which I ask specifically if the corporate body concerned deny the accuracy of my statement that the witnesses prescribed were not present on the occasion stated. I subsequently referred to this question on Dec. 18th as being not a *personal* but a *constitutional* one, and I contend that it is made in the best interests of the College itself and of the vast body of Fellows and Licentiates which it is empowered by the Crown to make and to control.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

S. WESLEY WILSON.

P.S.—Kindly see affidavits sent Oct. 22nd: (a) As to non-observance of charters; (b) method taken by a Fellowship Examiner to procure Fellowship candidates for his son's tuition.—S. W. W.

My apology is due to you for thus far trespassing on your space, but I do so that the profession generally will recognise the justice of the claim that Licentiates have privileges which must not be foregone by a corporate licensing body, however strenuously such corporate body may endeavour to ignore the fundamental principles of its existence and the legal carrying-out of functions for which it is responsible to the State.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Dublin, Jan. 18th, 1902.

S. WESLEY WILSON.

BEEF WORM IN THE ORBITAL CAVITY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the account of his case of Beef Worm in the Orbital Cavity in THE LANCET of Jan. 4th, p. 19, Mr. T. W. F. Gann is under the impression that the case is unique. May I be allowed to draw his attention to an almost identical case already recorded (with very instructive illustrations) by Dr. Fred. Keyt, assistant colonial surgeon, British Honduras, a colleague in the same colony and in the same service!¹ Under the circumstances it is singular that this earlier

¹ THE LANCET, Jan. 4th and 11th, 1902.

¹ Vide Brit. Med. Jour., Feb. 10th, 1900.

record should have escaped Mr. Gann's observation, but, of course, allowance must be made in such matters for the exigencies of "bush life." There is, however, I fear, a growing tendency on the part of some to ignore the work of others. This may be due to the number and voluminous character of our works of reference, to which the pressure of work makes it impossible for many to refer. But one cannot help lamenting this tendency to overlook or ignore the painstaking work of others, not alone because one likes to see credit paid where credit is due, but because one is loth to see the fairer courtesies which always existed between members of our profession in danger of being brushed into oblivion. Thus a noble calling may soon degenerate into a "pushful" profession.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
GEORGE FERDINANDS, M.D. Aberd.

Aberdeen, Jan. 8th, 1902.

CANCER AMONG HINDOOS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With reference to Mr. C. B. Keetley's letter in THE LANCET of Jan. 12th, p. 192, on this subject I append the names of the three or four accredited booksellers in London from whom the annual reports of the medical institutions of India may be obtained. Mr. E. A. Arnold, 37, Bedford-street; Mr. B. Quaritch, 15, Piccadilly; Messrs. Constable and Co., 2, Whitehall-gardens; Messrs. Sampson Low and Co., St. Dunstan's House, Fetter-lane; Messrs. Luzac and Co., 46, Great Russell-street; and Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Charing-cross-road.

I hope this will partly mollify Mr. Keetley. As I am on the eve of leaving for India and have none of my works of reference at hand I am unable, except on my own *ipse dixit*, to give him the proper and more scientific—*ergo*, more up-to-date—definition of the word "Hindoo." On my arrival at my destination in Madras I shall, if the subject is still open in your columns, remedy my present inability.

Do not any of Mr. Keetley's dictionaries (those of an encyclopædic character) clear up the point "whether the Mahomedans circumcise or not"?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
C. DONOVAN, B.A., M.D., B.Ch. R. U.I.,
Captain, I.M.S.

Instow, N. Devon, Jan. 21st, 1902.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Jan. 18th, p. 193, I notice a statement to the effect that Jews are less prone to cancer than other civilised peoples. This statement is certainly erroneous so far as the Jews in the United States are concerned; and it seems to me that the balance of evidence is against its acceptance as applied to most other countries. Dr. Billings' statistical reports show that in the United States the Jewish mortality from cancer is almost the same as that of the rest of the white population. He gives the cancer mortality per 1000 deaths for Jews and Gentiles as follows:—

	Jews.	Other
		U. S. Whites.
Males	13.58	13.09
Females	21.65	23.59

It was the opinion of the late Sir B. W. Richardson—who had considerable experience among London Jews—that they were as prone to cancer as other London people. Billroth's experience in Vienna and elsewhere coincides with this. Moreover, from observations made by Bauby in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, it appears that pork-eaters are no more prone to cancer than those who feed on other kinds of meat.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Clifton, Bristol, Jan. 18th, 1902. W. ROGER WILLIAMS.

IS SALT A PROBABLE CAUSE OF CANCER?

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The interest which has been created by the publication in your influential paper of Dr. James Braithwaite's theory with regard to salt being a cause of cancer has been very marked, and as a number of other newspapers have commented on the subject the idea seems to be gradually spreading abroad that what has hitherto been considered and proved to be a wholesome and necessary article of diet

is in fact a thing to be shunned and avoided as dangerous. Dr. Braithwaite says the idea originated in his mind by his noticing the comparative immunity of the Jews from this disease, and explains it by the difference in their diet, which he says consists mainly "in the absence of bacon and ham from the diet of the Jews."

I think all your readers must admit that Dr. Braithwaite in his very interesting paper has conclusively proved that in those sections of country where a very large amount of bacon and ham is consumed the disease of cancer is most prevalent, and I merely write to suggest that it is possibly not the salt, but the unclean bacon and ham, that is responsible for the scourge, and as I have lived on the other side of the Atlantic for a number of years and know something of the manner in which pigs are fed over there I cannot see how it can possibly be otherwise. The greater part of the bacon and ham consumed in this country is imported from the United States and Canada, and it is a notorious fact that at many slaughter-houses in those lands the pigs are habitually fed on the entrails and blood of slaughtered animals. Unfortunately, owing to a very imperfect system of cattle inspection, some of the cattle which are killed there are infected by diseases of a cancerous nature, and if the pigs are fed upon the entrails of such animals it follows that their bodies are likely to become impregnated with the effects of such a diet, and if Englishmen persist in eating the flesh of such a carnivorous animal so impregnated they will probably reap the consequences, while the Jews who refuse to eat such food will naturally be exempt from such disease.

In the Revised Statutes of Ontario, chap. 248, sec. 108, the sanction of the Provincial Government is given to the feeding of pigs with blood, offal, and the meat of any dead animal, but the Act provides that they must not be fed on *decomposed* or *putrid* blood and offal, and that these must be steamed before feeding the pigs. It further provides that if the medical health officer discovers that the pigs have been fed upon putrid offal, then he has power to destroy such pigs so as to prevent them from being used as food for man. It is not a place, however, where the medical health officer likes to spend much of his time and therefore the inspection is not very rigid. It has become rather fashionable in recent years to impugn the accuracy of the Bible in many respects, but those portions of it which call our attention to the inadvisability of indulging in swine's flesh may be well worthy of consideration in the light which has been thrown on the subject by the statistics in Dr. James Braithwaite's exhaustive paper. Any information which may be the means of putting us on our guard against this terrible disease must be hailed with satisfaction.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Hanover-terrace, W., Jan. 22nd, 1902. R. D'OYLY NOBLE.

MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS UNDER THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Dec. 14th, 1901, p. 91, the London School Board advertised for "two oculists (of either sex) for the purpose of testing the eyesight of the children in the senior departments of the schools of the Board and for giving such advice and taking such steps thereon as may be desirable." The salary offered was 100 guineas and the work was expected to be completed in one year. The statement of duties expected being a little vague, I therefore wrote for further details. In reply regret was expressed that no further details could be given. I sent in an application with required testimonials and references. After some days I received the inclosed letter which, I think, might be of interest to the profession. Evidently experience is not considered a necessity, or such a handsome remuneration for so much important work would not be offered, seeing that practically all one's time would be required to carry out the duties.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Jan. 18th, 1902. A RETIRING CANDIDATE.

[INCLOSURE.]
SCHOOL BOARD FOR LONDON.
Victoria Embankment, W.C., 17th January, 1902.
POSTS OF OCULISTS.

DEAR SIR (OR MADAM),—I am directed to state that the committee have favourably considered your written application, but as they think it possible from your standing in your profession that you may not