NOTIFICATION: IS IT LIKELY TO SUCCEED?

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In reply to your correspondent, Dr. F. P. Atkinson, on the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, 1889, he may not know that whooping-cough and measles are not defined as infectious diseases in that Act, but the local authority may by order extend their power of requiring report in respect of other diseases not defined. This is what has probably taken place in his district. It is possible that the framers of the Act were imbued with the popular idea that these two diseases are so contagious that they must be universal when once they are started, and that it is useless to try to escape them. Certainly as regards whooping-cough, its beginning is so insidious and its duration so long, that one possibly may be sometimes rather inclined to the belief that there can be no advantage from reporting it; but with both measles and whooping-cough it is possible that, on the first real suggestion of an epidemic to the authorities, the closing of schools and similar precautions may confine the disease to a few houses instead of a whole community. To my mind the object of the Act is excellent. To get to the fountain head or cause of the disease (I do not refer to any minute microscopic or chemical cause), that is the object of the Act. What can be sounder than for a well-advised central authority to know of all cases—that is, effects,—and if possible trace them back to their cause; if not possible, then to prevent these in time becoming causes by doing away with their poison. In this way notification is likely to succeed. The pity is that the application of the Act or the notification of its definitions may in any way be left to local option. I have myself known of a fatal case of diphtheria of the worst type in a district where the Act is not in force, within one hundred yards of one borough boundary, and half a mile from a second borough boundary.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Rochdale, Sept. 26th, 1890. WILLIAM STANWELL.

SANITATION AT SEA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The letter which appears in THE LANCET of Oct. 4th from Dr. Stuart Hallows might possibly cause an erroneous impression respecting my statements regarding sanitation, in one, at least, of the P. and O. Company's ships, in the year 1876.

Dr. Hallows remarks: "If Mr. Piggott had done the usual thing—consulted with the captain &c." My report was duly read and signed by the commander of the ship the day before our arrival at Aden, outward bound, and was transmitted from there to the chief office of the company, Leadenhall-street, addressed to the managing directors, the commander fully concurring in its provisions. With regard to "the unpleasant ordeal of appearing before the higher powers," allow me to inform Dr. Hallows there is nothing derogatory in an officer conscientiously performing his duty, let the result be what it may.

A few months after being dismissed from the P. and O. Company I applied for an appointment in the Royal Mail Company's service, and their chairman upon hearing the reason of my dismissal from the P. and O. Company without any hesitation gave me the appointment I desired.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
EDWD. A. PIGGOTT, L.R.C.P. & S. Edin.,
Late Surgeon P. and O. Company.
Clare, Suffolk, Oct. 4th, 1890.

OVERDOSE OF CHLOROFORM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—On Sept. 10th, while performing a lateral lithotomy on an Arab boy, about sixteen years old, it was suddenly found that the patient had stopped breathing. He had been got under perfectly quietly, and he had evidently simply got too much of the anæsthetic. It was still being administered when the stoppage of respiration occurred. Artificial respiration, with head thrown back over the edge of the table and with the ammonia bottle at the nose, was kept up for, I think, nearly two minutes. The time was not taken, however, and it may have been more or less. Then very feeble respiration began and gradually strengthened. At the beginning neither the pulse at the wrist nor heart impulse could be felt, but throughout there was a feeble

flickering seen in the lines of the carotid vessels in the neck. Thus there is no doubt that respiration was mainly affected, and artificial breathing was sufficient to bring the patient round.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

H. HERBERT,
Aden, Sept. 17th, 1890. Surgeon, I.M.S.

HOSPITALS AND CHILDREN'S INSURANCE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I beg to enclose copies of two letters; one which I wrote to the Secretary of ——— Hospital, and the reply.

I remain, Sirs, your obedient servant,
Welbeck-street, W., Oct. 7th, 1890. ERNEST SNAPE.

[COPY.]

St. Marylebone General Dispensary, 77, Welbeck-street, W., Oct. 6th.

DEAR SIR,—I waited until this morning expecting to hear from you with regard to my letter in THE LANCET and the answer given to it by the Editors of that paper. As you will see, I offered, if I was in the wrong, to apologise to you; as it turns out that the course I pursued was justifiable, I am sure you will see that some apology is due to me for the rudeness of the letters I have received from your hospital. In case I receive no answer from you I shall feel obliged to lay the matter before the Board of ——— Hospital.

I remain, faithfully yours,
The Secretary, ——— Hospital. ERNEST SNAPE.

[COPY.]

Hospital, Oct. 6th, 1890.

DEAR SIR,—I have your letter of this day's date, which closes with these words: "In case I receive no answer from you I shall feel obliged to lay the matter before the Board of ——— Hospital." With such a fearful threat hanging over my head, should I fail to answer, you will scarcely be surprised to know that I grasped my pen on the instant. I never, or scarcely ever, see THE LANCET, and therefore my proceedings are not affected by what may appear therein. I fear too, that if I read it I should not respect it, for the fiat of a judge who forms his judgment on an *ex parte* statement is not worth a brass farthing. I have no doubt that great weight attaches to any statement, even though unsupported, that you may make, but *audi alteram partem* is still a good motto, though I fear too old-fashioned for you. I should have replied to your letter in the absence of your threat to bring my conduct, if I failed to do so, to the notice of my Board; but since circumstances, which you do not deserve that I should explain to you, have been such that no previous letter of yours to me has met with so prompt a reply, you are perhaps entitled to consider your method of extracting a prompt reply a great success. This satisfaction I should be sorry to deprive you of; I can only regret the great pains you have been at to secure it.

I remain, faithfully yours,
Ernest Snape, Esq.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Owens College.

THE Session 1890-91 was opened on Thursday, Sir Spencer Wells delivering "the introductory." The report presented by the Dean (Dr. Young) of the work of the past year shows an unbroken record of progress. The number of students attending the medical department of the College was 387, of whom 134 were preparing themselves for degrees in the Victoria University, and 66 for those of the London University. To those whose memory of our medical school goes back only a dozen years, this gives evidence of a vastly higher standard aspired to by the student of to-day as regards his "qualification." In those days the large bulk of the men were content with "the College" and "the Hall," whereas more than 50 per cent. now aspire to a University degree. Sir Spencer Wells' address was almost entirely devoted to sanitary matters. Speaking in Manchester, whose death-rate has become notorious amongst the large towns of the country, he had a topic possessed of interest to a much larger circle in this district than his immediate audience, but, like many others not familiar with the life conditions and population of Manchester, he drew unjustifiable contrasts between us and such towns, for instance, as Nottingham. Of course, he could scarcely avoid in this connexion alluding to cremation, in which he is known to take special interest, and he forcibly urged the substitution of this method of disposal of the dead in our large centres of population. The same evening the College medical dinner was held at the Queen's Hotel, the Principal of the College, Dr. Ward, presiding. Most of the members of the medical staff were present, together with a number of old students; but as present students have now for some years had a dinner of their own at a later date in the session, the number of these attending at the more sedate gathering is always small.

Extensions of College and Infirmary.

For some time the requirements of the medical depart-