solution containing an active unorganised ferment. By this process an increase of from 567 per cent. to 608 per cent. in the germination through the action of the artificially supplied ferments takes place. These results are of the utmost importance in throwing light upon the development of plants and as affording a means perhaps of restoring or giving impetus to seeds which otherwise might fail.

"TRANSMISSION OF SYPHILIS TO THE THIRD GENERATION."

A PAPER on this subject by Dr. George Ogilvie appears in the October and November (1897) numbers of the *British Journal of Dermatology*. Dr. Ogilvie considers the matter very exhaustively and has evidently studied very carefully the literature already existing that bears on this question. His contribution is divided into three parts. In the first the possibility of syphilis being transmitted to the third generation is discussed. Numerous authorities are quoted and cases cited which tend to prove that such an event is possible, but at the same time the numerous and obvious difficulties which lie in the way are fully admitted, the chief being that it must be granted once for all that to absolutely exclude acquired syphilis is impossible, and each individual case must be decided on the evidence that is obtainable. Dr. Ogilvie concludes this division of his subject thus: "On the one hand we are told that 'there is not the slightest evidence' of such transmission; on the other that 'there are undoubtedly cases' in which syphilis was thus transmitted. Both statements are equally unwarranted. The evidence before us furnishes us, if not with absolute proof, still with 'reasonable probability' that syphilis may descend to the third generation." In the second part of the paper the "dystrophic" influence of syphilis on the third generation is considered, but Dr. Ogilvie remarks that up to now statements to this effect are more or less vague conjectures and incapable of being proved by clinical evidence. In the last part of his essay the author comes to the conclusion that clinical evidence tends to show that healthy children born of syphilitic mothers during the secondary stage may receive a transitory immunity against syphilitic infection.

THE LINCOLN WATER-SUPPLY.

THE Lincoln Medical Society has rendered good service by awakening public attention to the condition of the water-supply of that town. On Nov. 29th last this society passed a resolution pointing out that as the water-supply was liable to contamination from many sources it was most important that there should be a bacteriological and chemical analysis made every fortnight. The water-supply from the Witham received the sewage effluent from the Bracebridge Asylum, where there had been some cases of typhoid fever. This resolution was forwarded to the mayor and the town council was also recommended to purchase a plot of ground measuring about 2024 square yards which could be obtained for £400 and which adjoined the premises of the waterworks reservoir. It would thus be possible to increase the size of the storage grounds or filters. To this the waterworks committee replied that in 1892 Sir George Buchanan, the former chief medical officer of the Local Government Board, had given evidence to the effect that the process of analysis then used "was of no earthly value for the demonstration of morbid elements." The waterworks committee would only sanction a reasonable expenditure for such analyses if it could be shown that recent improvements had rendered water analysis more reliable. The waterworks committee also pointed out that the sewage from the asylum mentioned passed through irrigation lands and that there was no reason to believe that the effluent contained any injurious properties. Even were

this the case it is mixed with other waters, travels a long distance, and finally has to pass through the corporation filters, therefore the Lincoln supply is as safe as the Thames water drunk in London. Further, the excreta from the typhoid patients at the asylum had not been thrown into the drains, and the death-rate of Lincoln showed that the health of the inhabitants was in no wise affected. Dr. W. A. Carline, secretary of the Lincoln Medical Society, meets this reply by explaining that within the last four years there had been a very rapid development in bacteriological science. By the use of Pasteur filters and centrifugal action the collection, separation, and identification of different bacilli had been greatly facilitated and a much larger volume of water could now be examined. Nor was it necessary that the water examined should contain pathogenic germs, for where innocuous organisms can penetrate there also the disease germs can pass. As for the exclusion of typhoid excreta, this was not always possible, as such excreta passed into the drains before the true character of the disease was ascertained; also mild and undiscovered cases were just as dangerous. As for the death-rate that of Maidstone compared favourably with that of Lincoln. Such is, briefly, the present position of the controversy. The whole question apparently depends upon the efficacy of the methods of filtration employed. When water is not gathered underground and brought to the town in a covered aqueduct or in iron pipes there is always danger of contamination. Therefore such water must be filtered, but there is the risk that the filters may get out of order. It is to check this risk that there should be constant analysis. Such examinations will indicate whether the water is up to its normal standard, and any departure from that standard will suggest the urgent necessity of immediately examining the condition of the filters. By such means it may be possible to nip the mischief in the bud. It seems absurd to spend large sums of public money in building reservoirs, filters, &c., and then to stint the small cost of analyses. This policy of spoiling the ship for the sake of a pennyworth of tar is the most foolish of all policies. Surely the ratepayers of Lincoln will not object to the very small outlay necessary so that a proper control may be established to watch over the quality of their water-supply. They will remember the well-merited abuse that was poured upon the town council of Maidstone because it had under similar circumstances ordered its medical officer of health to cease to analyse the water-supply of that town.

HOSPITAL ABUSE AT NEWPORT INFIRMARY.

WE have received from the medical staff of the Newport Infirmary the following document, with a request for its publication:—

"Considering the prominence attained by the unfortunate dismissal of Mr. Ensor from his post of honorary ophthalmic surgeon to the Newport and Monmouthshire Hospital by the directors, we think it due to ourselves to state the position which we have taken since the beginning of this controversy. At the meeting of directors in December, when Mr. Ensor was dismissed from his appointment, those of the staff who were present protested and voted against the mode of his dismissal. As soon afterwards as possible a meeting of the honorary medical staff was called to hear Mr. Ensor's explanation of the charges preferred against him at the directors' meeting. This explanation appeared to throw a fresh light upon the case and the staff drew up a unanimous memorial asking that the notice of dismissal should not take effect until Mr. Ensor had been allowed to state his side of the case before a full meeting of the board. Upon the memorial being sent to the directors the house committee asked the staff to meet them in order to discuss the memorial. The staff consented and urged the house committee to call a meeting of directors to hear Mr. Ensor. After a long discussion the house committee refused to call a special meeting unless Mr. Ensor first apologised (the

apology to be one that would satisfy their chairman and a member of the medical staff). This was agreed to by the staff who saw no other method of getting Mr. Ensor's case considered before his dismissal came into force. Mr. Ensor on receiving the form of apology drawn up as before said refused to sign it, saying he had nothing to regret. The house committee then declined to call a special meeting of directors. The original memorial of the staff, however, came before the directors on Jan. 4th, four days after Mr. Ensor's connexion with the hospital had ceased. The whole staff had an interview with the directors when it was carried by a large majority that inasmuch as Mr. Ensor had written saying that he had no reason to regret his action the board refused to reopen the case. The staff then entered their strong protest against this action of the directors, and expressed their intention of publishing their protest in the medical papers. The annual meeting of subscribers will take place at the end of this month, when the matter will come up for further and probably final consideration. We do not now, therefore, propose to enter further into the merits of the case, except to say that no doubt Mr. Ensor acted under a sense of great provocation; but we do not support all his actions which led to the present crisis.

(Signed)

"MELVILLE BREWER.	A. GARROD THOMAS.
"REGD. E. WORMALD BREWER.	J. E. MACORMACK.
"A. E. BULWER MARSH.	H. B. SEDDON.
"ROBERT J. PATON.	CHAS. STUART VINES.
"Jan. 7th, 1898."	

As the matter is to be further considered at the forthcoming meeting of the subscribers we propose to reserve full comment until after this meeting except so far as regards one point and that is that we cannot approve of the action of the staff in agreeing to demand the apology. It was prejudging the case, for if Mr. Ensor had signed the apology it would have been tantamount to confessing himself in the wrong and almost to accepting dismissal. The staff should have insisted upon Mr. Ensor being heard in any case. As will be seen from a report in another column the members of the Newport Medical Society have unanimously passed a resolution disapproving of the action of the directors.

THE PREVENTION OF TYPHOID FEVER.

THE very instructive discussion upon the prevention of typhoid fever which has occupied three meetings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society terminated on Tuesday last. It has been the means of bringing to light the various points of view from which this important subject may be regarded—the propagation of the virus by means of contaminated water- and food-supplies, the regulation of water-supplies and drainage, the germicidal action of the well-tilled soil, the bacteriological examination of suspected water, the conditions of existence and the persistence of the bacillus typhosus, the question of natural immunity and individual predisposition, besides many other interesting facts and suggestions as to the control of epidemics, methods of disinfection, and the like. Reserving for more detailed comment and examination the numerous points that have been raised in the course of the debate we must content ourselves to-day with merely noting that the speeches delivered at the final meeting were no less instructive than those that preceded, fully justifying the President's closing remarks upon the value and importance, practical and scientific, of so free a ventilation of the subject. Dr. Poore's advocacy of dry methods of the disposal of excreta in rural districts was strenuous and well maintained, nor do we think that his chief argument was shaken by the numerous criticisms that were passed upon it. However, as he forcibly pointed out in his reply, there is a wrong and a right way of disposal of refuse and when, as so often happens, the wrong way is chosen the method defeats its own object. He complained, and not without reason, of being misunderstood in his main contention by many of his critics. The discussion will have

done good if it impresses on the Legislature the need for better control of water- and milk-supplies and the enlargement of the powers of district sanitary authorities, with whom should rest the responsibilities of securing the community from the invasion of epidemic disease.

THE LANCET COMMISSION ON THE METROPOLITAN WATER-SUPPLY.

WE publish in another column a letter from our Special Commissioner, who was appointed to give a description of the sources, treatment, and distribution of the present London water-supply (the results of his inquiry being published in various numbers of THE LANCET throughout last year). From this we seem to have unintentionally, in summarising the work in THE LANCET of Dec. 25th, 1897, conveyed to some readers the impression that this important and onerous investigation was undertaken with the view of setting a *financial* estimate upon the existing London water undertakings. We wish to state positively that the inquiry was not instituted with such a purpose in view and the following sentences from the article referred to may be quoted in support of this statement. "We have felt that, despite the great number of official inquiries and Royal Commissions that have been held on water-supply, not in the reports of any of these inquiries are to be found, at least compiled in a convenient way, facts and statistics relating in detail to the undertakings of the companies, beginning with the intake and ending with the means of distribution. At any rate we do not know of an independent inquiry ever having been made on these points. *It is exactly this omission which the articles that have appeared in THE LANCET this year are believed to repair.*" And again in a later sentence it is written that "after all it is largely the important question of the public health that is concerned *and this primarily is our reason for instituting the inquiry.*" In speaking of "the real value of the machinery and plant" we were referring to the points of view of adequacy and efficiency not to their intrinsic worth. We wish to add our thanks to those of our Special Commissioner to the secretaries and engineers of the various water companies for their courteous assistance in our inquiry.

THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE sixty-sixth annual meeting of the British Medical Association is to take place this year in Edinburgh, the President-elect being Sir Thomas Grainger Stewart, K.C.B., M.D. Edin. The meeting will commence on Tuesday, July 26th, and terminate on Friday, July 29th. An address in Medicine will be delivered by Professor Thomas Fraser, M.D. Edin., one in Surgery by Professor Thomas Annandale, F.R.C.S. Edin., and one in Psychological Medicine by Sir John Batty Tuke, M.D. Edin. There will be as many as sixteen sections, the subjects of Anatomy and Physiology being assigned to separate sections, and three departments not hitherto separately formed are constituted distinct sections—namely, Neurology, Medicine in Relation to Life Assurance, and Tropical Diseases. The following is a list of the presidents and secretaries of the sections:—A. Medicine: President, Dr. G. W. Balfour; honorary secretaries, Dr. J. Graham Brown, Dr. S. H. Habershon, and Dr. G. L. Gulland. B. Surgery: President, Mr. J. Duncan, F.R.C.S. Edin.; honorary secretaries, Mr. F. M. Caird, Mr. J. W. B. Hodsdon, and Mr. T. K. Dalziel. C. Obstetrics and Diseases of Women: President, Professor A. R. Simpson; honorary secretaries, Dr. R. Milne Murray, Dr. F. W. N. Haultain, and Dr. J. Campbell. D. State Medicine: President, Professor Sir H. D. Littlejohn, M.D. Edin.; honorary secretaries, Dr. C. H. Stewart and Dr. W. L. Mackenzie. E. Psychology: President, Dr. T. S. Clouston; honorary