him that this may be the case, I feel sure you will assist us by giving publicity to the matter. Of course, if this does not succeed, our association will feel bound to make a representation on the subject to the Home Secretary.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

H. NELSON HARDY,

Treasurer of the United Kingdom Police Surgeons' Association.
Dulwich-grove, S.E., Nov. 7th, 1894.

EPIDEMIC SKIN DISEASE AND THE LAY PRESS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—When I wrote to you on Oct. 13th disclaiming any connexion with an article which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Oct. 11th, containing a *précis* of my monograph on Epidemic Skin Disease, I stated my belief that it would hardly be necessary to trouble you to publish my letter, as it seemed to me sufficiently obvious to anyone who read it closely that I could not be held in any way responsible for that article. Subsequent events have shown me, however, that a public disavowal is desirable, and I should esteem it a favour if you could find a place for this in your columns. Enclosed I beg to forward for your perusal a letter addressed to me by the assistant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* stating "that the article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Oct. 11th on the New Skin Disease was not published at your instigation or suggestion, and, so far as I know, you read it, like the rest of the world, first in our columns. The writer was never in communication with you, and was, and is still, unknown to you." The article was published entirely without my knowledge, consent, or approval.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

THOMAS D. SAVILL, M.D.

Upper Berkeley-street, W., Nov. 6th, 1894.

"THE ETIOLOGY OF TYPHOID FEVER."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I can fully corroborate Dr. Kenwood's opinion as expressed in his letter to you in your last issue with reference to the etiology of typhoid fever. I held the post of medical officer of health to the borough of Lewes for nearly twenty years, and during that period observed numerous sporadic cases in which it was utterly impossible to trace a cause from previous cases. It is true that Lewes suffered from a severe epidemic of typhoid fever just twenty years ago, since which time, in consequence of sweeping changes in sanitary matters, the disease has been conspicuous by its absence, so that an origin from that remote period might be safely eliminated. Bacteriology may be, and possibly is, doing much, yet there are among us, as Dr. Kenwood says, many who still believe cases may arise without infection from a previous case.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

J. G. BRADEN, M.R.C.S., &c.,

Fellow of the Society of Medical Officers of Health.
St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe, Nov. 6th, 1894.

"COMMON DISEASES MISTAKEN OR MISTREATED."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A portion of Dr. Goodhart's interesting address published in THE LANCET of Oct. 13th refers so obviously to my writings that I hope I may be allowed a few lines to defend my position on the principle of your well-known motto of fair play. Though at first sight one might regard it as an honour that one's pages should have the attention of such a well known physician, this feeling is considerably damped down on observing that the address refers especially to mistakes and mistreatment; and still more so when it is said that someone has experimented on himself and then gone and preached a universal rule, ignoring the very first principle of the art of medicine. If this applies to me—and it follows close on several lines which are entirely made up of the chapter headings of my book—Uric Acid as a Factor in the Causation of Disease,—I can only reply that I will undertake to produce either with diet, drugs, or uric acid itself, in anyone who will lend the necessary *corpus vile* in a condition of good physiological activity, results which would readily be acknowledged to be identical with those

I have obtained in myself; and anyone who reads my book carefully will see that, to a considerable extent, this has already been done.

I am quite aware that drugs may produce different effects in different individuals, or in different conditions of one and the same individual—e.g., chloroform; but this is generally due to very simple causes, and does not often require us to postulate the unknown quantity, individualism. Thus, salicylate of soda will produce slightly differing physiological effects, according to the amount of uric acid it meets with. Again, the effects of opium may be determined by the presence or absence of diarrhoea or intestinal ulceration; and even a glass of water will produce different effects on the flow of urine, according to the condition of the renal arterioles when it is administered; thus, relax them by a dose of calomel or the primary action of a dose of opium, and a glass of water will cause an immediate diuresis; on the other hand contract them by the secondary action of opium, and there will hardly be any increased flow of urine. If beyond these things there is still an unknown individualism I believe that further knowledge will reduce it to the very smallest dimensions, and even now I often regard the human test tube as but little less reliable than the chemist's instrument of glass. Introduce the same drug under the same conditions, and the same reaction will appear.

Dr. Goodhart says, Is it possible that all these things are produced by uric acid? I believe that it is quite possible; for though the names of these diseases are many, the effects of uric acid in producing them are few; thus local irritation of tissues accounts for gout and rheumatism, while the effects of uric acid on the arterioles and capillaries, and so on the circulation and nutrition of the body, will satisfactorily account for all the rest. It does not of necessity follow that we should escape all these diseases if we became vegetarians, for the liability of young women to anæmia and of children to rheumatism is, in part at least, due to the active metabolism of childhood, which entails a large formation of urates; but even here diet and the introduction of urates count for a good deal (as observed by Bouchard and others), and may in many cases just suffice to make the difference between health and disease. I should be quite willing to admit that diet is a product of evolution; but surely evolution turns out both useful and harmful variations, while selection perpetuates the one and eliminates the other; and it has yet to be decided whether we are to keep on with our present diet or return to that which was in use at the beginning of the century. In Persia gout is known as the disease of the rich, as in that country only the rich eat meat. In this country meat eating has gradually spread down to the lowest classes, especially in towns, and with it have come gout and its kindred diseases: the great majority suffer in some way, and those are most fortunate whose troubles most quickly oblige them to return to the habits of their fathers and grandfathers. Quite a large number of men in various countries are now investigating the possibility of the causation of disease by uric acid, and when my own researches are complete, which is by no means the case yet, I shall wait these results with every confidence; and I have already mentioned the results obtained by many fellow-workers. One of these is now investigating the diet relationships of stone in India, and what he has already told me lends but little support either to Dr. Goodhart's facts or his conclusions on the subject.

Dr. Goodhart is very certain that persistence in a rigid form of dieting does harm in some cases; I can only say that diet has cured me and made it possible for me to live and work in comparative comfort, and I could now easily give a number of similar cases from the ranks of the profession alone. I am aware, however, that in running headlong from Scylla it is possible to get too close to Charybdis, but that hardly proves that there is no *via media* of safety. The object which I at the present time hope to achieve by diet is rather to stop the unnecessary introduction of uric acid into the body than to aid its elimination, though one effect of diminished introduction is increased elimination, and, conversely, increased introduction produces diminished elimination, which accounts for Dr. Goodhart's observation on the effects of more meat in children who are "uric-acid passers." If, however, as Dr. Goodhart suggests, uric acid is an effect, not a cause, it follows that uric acid is itself a harmless substance, and can be taken to any extent without effect on the circulation or nutrition. I have often taken a little uric acid, and if it is harmless there is no drug in the Pharmacopœia toxic, for, like any drug, its evil effects can be demonstrated