declared asparagus to be a diuretic, and the truth of this he attempts to establish by some fresh observations which he records. It was this generally accepted opinion which I attempted to refute and I do not consider that he has now corroborated it by the cases he has reported. Dr. Burney Yeo has done no more than declare that in a certain number of hours during which there have been several evacuations of the bladder the urine has not diminished, but frequently been increased in quantity after asparagus has been eaten at meals. If a large number of cases corroborate this I, of course, accept it, but even then my own statement may be correct. His observations cannot upset the fact related to me over and over again by patients and medical friends; their statements being too systematically clear and uniform, as to the inhibitory power of asparagus over the kidney, to be rejected. I have never intended to make precise and scientific statements. I have used the term "diuretic" in the popular sense only as when anyone after drinking certain mineral waters or beer declares that he passes more water. My patients did not take the specific gravity or make any note of the subsequent evacuations. I therefore offered no opinion as to the whole functionising action of the kidney, but spoke merely of diuresis in the popular sense of the term. The statement of my patients has been to this effect; that being aware of the customary time of micturition, after dinner, they had observed that after eating asparagus the usual hour was postponed and the amount of water much reduced in quantity. When I made inquiries on the subject in your journal some years ago, three replies came from medical men quite in accordance with the same declaration. Dr. Tidy said he had been investigating the subject with great care, and at least in four cases out of five asparagus had a marked inhibitory action on the kidney. "M.B. Cantab." wrote to say that the amount of urine was considerably diminished, accompanied by some irritation in micturition. "F.R.C.S." said that after two meals of asparagus the water was diminished to a third of the average. All the numerous statements made to me are so plain and so alike that they cannot be impugned. Idiosyncrasy might now and then account for difference of effect, but I believe there must be a tolerably uniform rule of action in the alkaloid of this vegetable as in all others. Dr. Burney Yeo's observations are interesting, but only show to me how soon the effect of the asparagus may pass off. If continuously and largely eaten this might not be the case. For example, a lady writes to me to say that she suffered from pain in the back and swelling of the ankles at a time when she was eating abundantly of asparagus. She observed that her urine was much diminished in quantity, but she continued to take the vegetable thinking it was wholesome. On hearing that its action as a diuretic was doubted, she immediately left it off. The flow of water was at once increased, and the pains in her back and legs left her. A friend who was travelling with her had also observed how in her own case the amount of water was diminished, again becoming natural in quantity on leaving off asparagus. Let Dr. Burney Yeo simply repeat my method. Inquire of reliable persons whether after eating asparagus for dinner they make water more speedily and more in quantity than usual, or whether the time of micturition is not deferred, and the quantity made less in amount. I have no doubt about the answer he will obtain. The quasi-scientific method of measuring the amount of water made in three or four evacuations during twenty-four hours or more in a person who has partaken of a small amount of the vegetable only tends to throw an obscurity over a very simple question.—I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,
Grovesnor-street, June 2nd, 1894.

SAMUEL WILKS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Burney Yeo's letter on the diuretic properties of asparagus is very interesting, and especially the experiments which he gives us. It has occurred to me that, after all, there may be a fallacy on both sides in the question. I find in my own case that after eating, not fifteen heads, but twice fifteen and probably more, my urine passed a few hours after (e.g., dinner at 7 P.M. and urine passed at 11 P.M.) is largely reduced in quantity and high-coloured, and this is invariably the case. Dr. Yeo does not give us the separate quantities passed within a few hours, but the day's total, and I think it is probably here that the error lies; for I have also noticed that the next morning I get a larger flow of urine than usual and of a more watery nature, and also quite pale in colour, thus making up for the pre-

vious deficiency; but as I have never measured it I cannot say if the total quantities would be in excess.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Winterbourne, Bristol, June 4th, 1894. REGINALD EAGER, M.D.

"THE RIGHTS OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with great interest the letters in THE LANCET of the last few weeks relating to the rights of medical practitioners and club fees. It has been my privilege to act as locum tenens to a number of medical practitioners in all parts of the kingdom, and thus I have come into contact with all kinds of practices. In the majority of these the medical man has clubs, the fees ranging between twopence and threepence a fortnight—a few (very few) fourpence and sixpence. I know of one instance where a medical man has a club, the members paying the small sum of a halfpenny a month. The result of this cheap practising is that the position of the medical man is lowered (because the profession is lowered), the patients in many cases looking upon him as a jobber and not as a member of an honourable profession. There is a tendency to "rush" the work, for the simple reason that it is impossible for a man to visit and treat thirty or forty cases in the day, whereas if there were fewer good paying patients he could give them the proper attention. I believe a great number of practitioners would be only too pleased to give up this cheap practising, if only their colleagues in the town and village would unite; but I have noticed that if one man refuses a club on cheap terms a neighbouring one will take it; thus the evil continues. There is always someone who will outbid the other. I know that many take the cheap clubs in order to make a living, on the principle that there is "safety in numbers"; but others, I am afraid, simply do it for no reason but that they do not respect themselves or their profession. I believe this pernicious and lowering system could be stopped if the authorities of the profession made a law compelling all practitioners to take nothing lower than a certain fee for clubs &c. I am of the same opinion as Mr. Pike—that if some of the heads of the profession spoke out boldly, like Mr. Bryant, the remedy would soon appear.

Believe me, Sirs, yours very truly,

A. WALDEGRAVE MITCHELL.

Wandsworth-common, S.W., June 2nd, 1894.

THE VACCINATION ACTS AND THEIR REFORMATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It is doubtful whether the new system of carrying out the Vaccination Acts advocated by Dr. Yarrow in THE LANCET of May 19th would prove as successful even as the one now in force. I quite agree with him when he says that vaccination is unpopular, but I fail to see any signs in this town of its *growing* unpopularity. The operation is not welcomed with cordiality by any class, and it never will be. Nine-tenths of the mothers, knowing it has to be performed sooner or later, submit with a good grace and get it over when their children are two or three months old. And here I should like to remark *en passant* that my experience of sixteen years has taught me that infants six weeks old "take" better and recover better than infants of twice that age. Mothers of large families have confirmed this statement in a very large number of instances. With respect to Dr. Yarrow's second assertion, that the bulk of the vaccination now performed is inefficient, I venture to say that the inspectors of the Local Government Board would not agree with it. Such a statement certainly needs proof. I cannot speak for the metropolis; but in the provincial towns I suppose quite two-thirds of the vaccination is performed by the public vaccinators. Of the remaining third it would not be too much to say that at least one-half is efficiently performed by conscientious practitioners, who believe in the operation being thoroughly well done. Of the remaining proportion I dare say, as far as protection goes, the children are not any the better off than if the operation had not been performed.

Dr. Yarrow must be sanguine, indeed, if he really believes that the public will, as it were, embrace the Vaccination Acts when the compulsory clauses are abolished. What advantage

would accrue to the parents if they had the advantage of having their children vaccinated by their own doctors free, gratis, and for nothing? The fact is, Sirs, mothers object to the operation and not to the operator. Once make the Vaccination Acts voluntary and you might as well repeal them altogether. In my humble judgment the whole of the vaccination of the country should be placed in the hands of officers who should be compelled to devote all their time to the duties. The public stations should exist as at present; but the number of public vaccinators would have to be reduced. People who preferred having their children vaccinated at home could do so by paying a stipulated fee. Arm-to-arm vaccination should be insisted on in all cases except where a preference was shown for calf lymph. Under this system all jealousy of public vaccination would cease to exist, and medical men would no longer be tempted to perform an important operation in an inefficient manner. As each public vaccinator would have a large district to work it would always be possible for him, even in remote country districts, to ensure that the vaccination should be from "arm to arm." Another very important matter could be dealt with, and that is the regular inspection of school-children. My experience in Cardiff tells me that in large schools quite 15 per cent. of the children are found with very imperfect marks—in short, are practically unprotected against small-pox. People migrate from town to town so often nowadays that it is practically impossible to trace them and it would therefore prove most beneficial if the Local Government Board gave orders for a house-to-house inspection periodically. Such an inspection can now only be done when an epidemic of small-pox has broken out. With regard to insusceptibility, I have vaccinated about 16,000 children, and up to the present time have had only once to certify that a child was insusceptible.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

T. GARRETT HORDER, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. Edin.,
Cardiff, May 23rd, 1894. Public Vaccinator for Cardiff.

"CASE OF CONGENITAL SYPHILIS; INFECTION OF THE MOTHER BY HER OWN CHILD."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I think that Dr. Coutts has quite failed to prove that the case he related in your issue of the 9th inst. is an exception to Colles' law, for the following reasons:—
1. The total want of evidence of any syphilitic infection in the father. I admit that this evidence is not necessary, but, taken with the other reasons, helps to give it weight.
2. Previous birth of four healthy children. 3. Failure of evidence to prove that the rash which the infant suffered from when three weeks old was due to hereditary syphilis.
4. Absence of proof that the symptoms which commenced last September were due to hereditary and not to early acquired syphilis.

The whole history of the case points to an early acquired infection, and in point of time, taking the appearance of the secondary symptoms in September as a guide, this infection took place about the time the child was vaccinated. I cannot admit that, because Dr. Coutts failed to find the primary sore, this is evidence of it never having existed. I am sure Dr. Coutts will pardon me criticising his case, as he has evidently reported it for this express purpose.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

EDWARD COTTERELL.

West Halkin-street, Belgrave-square, S.W., June 11th, 1894.

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN MEDICAL MEN: BLOXHAM v. COLLIE, COLLIE v. BLOXHAM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Inasmuch as the reports of the termination of these actions which have appeared in the Press are so meagre, I shall be glad if, on behalf of my client, Dr. Bloxham, you will permit me to give the following explanation. In the action brought by Dr. Collie he sought to restrain Dr. Bloxham from practising within a radius of three miles of Catford, and to recover a penalty of £100 a month from August, 1893, and to recover damages in addition thereto. In the action brought by Dr. Bloxham he sought to recover damages from Dr. Collie for the breach by the latter of an

agreement alleged to have been entered into whereby Dr. Bloxham was to have been admitted into partnership with Dr. Collie from Jan. 1st, 1894, Dr. Bloxham to receive one-fourth of the net profits of the practice. To this claim Dr. Collie counterclaimed £81 14s. 6d., with interest at 7½ per cent. from May 1st, 1893. Upon the two actions coming before Mr. Justice Hawkins the following order was by consent made: "A juror withdrawn; all imputations of professional misconduct mutually withdrawn, Dr. Bloxham undertaking not to practise within three miles of Dr. Collie's present residence for ten years; the counterclaim of Dr. Collie abandoned, and no costs to be taxed or paid on either side. The sum of £20 16s. 8d. paid into court by Dr. Collie to be received by Dr. Bloxham."

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

THOS. J. SAVAGE.

Ludgate-hill, June 6th, 1894.

Solicitor for Dr. Bloxham.

* * We are happy to give publicity to Mr. Savage's letter, but we may be allowed to point out that as long ago as June 2nd we announced the result of these actions in almost identical words in our columns.—ED. L.

NORTHERN COUNTIES NOTES.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Newcastle Water-supply.

THE Newcastle and Gateshead Water Company have now completed the erection, at their Wylam station, of two pairs of pumping engines to deliver 3,000,000 gallons of water per day. The pumps are of the direct-acting horizontal type, and, by an ingenious mechanical contrivance, are arranged so that each pair can be worked simultaneously, or any single pump independently of its neighbour. The well-known "duplex" motion has thus been embodied, ensuring a continuous flow of water, with the additional advantage that either single pump can be worked alone, when desirable. These pumps, which are now at work, are said to be pumping water for trade purposes only, but thoughtful people look upon the pumping of Tyne water with some uneasiness, although, thanks to the late rains, there is at the present time a stock sufficient for many months in the reservoirs.

The Recent Outbreak of Typhoid Fever at Shildon.

The late serious outbreak of typhoid fever at Shildon, concerning which the Home Office sent down a medical expert, has been made the subject of an exhaustive report, which has just been received by the Shildon Local Board. Its purport is that the water-supply was not responsible for the epidemic. In the inspector's opinion the outbreak was principally due to defective sanitary arrangements, while milk had been to some extent a contributory cause.

Insurance of Infants.

At an inquest at Gateshead the other day, it transpired that the child's life was insured, and, in reply to the coroner, the mother made the strange admission that on the same day the child was born an insurance agent called at the house and asked her to take out a policy on the child's life. The coroner commented on the keenness of the competition which must exist among insurance companies when they canvassed for policies so soon after a birth. A case has been mentioned in which an insurance agent "booked" a babe before it was born. It needs but little prescience or experience to see where these business aptitudes might lead.

St. John Ambulance Association.

Surgeon-Captain George Middlemiss, M.D., of Darlington, has been selected for enrolment as an honorary associate of the Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England, in recognition of services rendered, and the selection has received the sanction and approval of the Queen, the patron of the order. Surgeon-Major Hutton has inspected a class of railway employees at Gateshead and expressed satisfaction with the efficient instruction they had received from Mr. Abraham.

Middleton St. George Convalescent Home.

The Middleton St. George Convalescent Home will be opened on the 16th inst. for men, women, and children. The new institution is established for the benefit of the workmen and the poor of Teeside and Cleveland.