therein, 'shall be holder of a certificate showing that he has by examination shown himself competent for such office,' is of opinion (1) That this new enactment is calculated to afford an important additional safeguard to the public health; (2) that it should be extended to the Health Acts applicable to the United Kingdom generally; (3) that a central board of examiners should be formed to conduct the necessary examinations and grant certificates in connexion therewith; and (4) that the constitution of the board of examiners should be subject to the approval of the Local Government Board in England and Wales, the Local Government Board in Ireland for Ireland, and the Board of Supervision in Scotland." I would add that this Institute attaches far more importance to the training of sanitary inspectors than to their examination; but it has no desire that they should receive a "quasi-medical knowledge" or in any way be educated out of their proper position.

I am loth to introduce any point of a controversial character into this letter, but it is right that it should be known that the position is at present complicated by the Sanitary Institute endeavouring to obtain a Royal Charter of Incorporation; the application is being opposed by the British Institute of Public Health, in common with the Incorporated Society of Medical Officers of Health, the Plumbers' Company, the Institute of Civil Engineers and other bodies. So far as we are concerned, we feel that it would be unfair and inexpedient, and not in the public interest, to give any single sanitary institute or society such a prestige as is thus sought, to the prejudice of other allied and not less important bodies, especially in view of the negotiations which must take place for the formation of a single examining board.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

WILLIAM R. SMITH, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S. Ed.,
Chairman of the Council.

Hanover-square, W., March 7th, 1893.

* * Our correspondent is "at a loss to understand on what authority" we say "there is no reason for believing that the Sanitary Institute desires to retain a monopoly of the examination or to prevent the constitution of some other body to undertake this important work." We would ask him what authority has anyone for assuming that the Sanitary Institute has such desire? For our own part, we have regarded the Institute as consisting of gentlemen who, in the absence of a better qualified body, have undertaken a useful work, and we are certainly not prepared, without a shadow of evidence, to assume that these gentlemen are desirous of adopting a course which we believe would not be to the public interest. We note that Dr. Smith does not attempt to give any explanation of the omission to send cards of invitation to the meeting at the Mansion House to members of the council of the Sanitary Institute, an omission to which Dr. Corfield and others called attention in the public press and to which we alluded in our article.—ED. L.

INSANITARY SCHOOLS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—An allegation is made as to the insanitary condition of one of our public school buildings in this town. Currency is given to a report that, owing to the presence of stagnant water underneath its floor, it was unhealthy. The school-board members immediately had the flooring taken up for investigation. Water was discovered covering an area of something like twenty square yards, having a depth of six inches in the centre. The water is as clear as crystal, and perfectly sweet; even the sediment at the bottom is sweet. There is an excavation of three feet below the floor, which is properly ventilated. The flooring-boards and joists are perfectly dry, and the walls show no sign of dampness whatever. The building (a comparatively new structure fulfilling in every way the requirements of the Board of Education) is built partly on a rock, which had to be blasted. It appears that a natural spring oozed from this rock, which, no doubt, accounts for the water. I may also add that after a fortnight of dry weather this water had subsided four inches in depth and covered an area of only ten square yards. To drain this water will entail a very heavy outlay. Will you

kindly express your opinion on the matter? Is the presence of this water a source of danger to the health of the children?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Llanrwst, North Wales, March 11th, 1893. GEORGE WYNNE.

* * There cannot be a doubt that the presence of such a sheet of water beneath the flooring of a building must be a source of danger to the inmates. The fact mentioned in the letter that the source of the water is probably a natural spring also makes it certain that unless steps are taken to remedy the existing state of affairs the risk to the children will be constant. Certainly the clearness and sweetness of the underground water may be looked upon as fortunate; but they do not abolish the dangers of dampness. Equally sure is it that the absence of damp from the walls at present is no guarantee for their dryness in the future. We should strongly recommend that the expense of subsoil drainage (however great) should be incurred, and the basement of the building should be covered with six inches of concrete.—ED. L.

"ISOLATION v. INUNCTION."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Thresh, in his letter published in THE LANCET of March 4th, implies that I was the author of, or in some way responsible for, some letters in the Hitchin local papers in November last on the subject of infectious hospitals. I am not responsible for anything published in the Hitchin papers, and I had no communication with anyone at Hitchin until I received a letter from a gentleman residing there in February, who was unknown to me, asking for information on the subject of antiseptic inunction. This I replied to and on Feb. 14th I received a letter from him telling me of "the abandonment of the scheme" for building a hospital, "at least, for some time to come." I may have mentioned Chelmsford in my letter to him as one of the places where inunction was used, and I now regret that I had not written and asked Dr. Thresh for particulars, as in every other instance I have done, instead of trusting to the communication of a third person. I have never mentioned Dr. Carter's name in relation to the matter. In 1891 the Enfield Board proposed to build a hospital; they were advised to try the inunction method of disinfection first. They did so and the hospital is not yet built. Dr. Ridge has always declined to give me any information as to the results of its use. In his last letter to me in December he says: "I am not prepared to give you any evidence with regard to the use of the eucalyptus. I have no means of knowing whether it has been properly used, but it is certainly not an infallible preventive in practice." If it be left entirely to the sanitary officer to leave a bottle at each house, with verbal directions to the mothers, how could this or any form of disinfection be infallible? I know that the only precaution taken has been the separation of the other children of the family from the patient. They have not been subjected to the disinfectant precautions mentioned by me in my papers. There is no reason why antiseptic inunction, if properly carried out, should not be as successful in the hands of Dr. Ridge or Dr. Thresh as it has been during the last three years in the hands of many others. These two gentlemen are the only persons from whom I have received any adverse opinion as to the perfect success of antiseptic inunction by the eucalyptus disinfectant in arresting infection. I only ask for a fair trial of inunction, accompanied with all necessary precautions with regard to other children who may have been exposed to the infection and as regards infected clothes, toys &c., but this I fear I must not expect at the hands of the advocates of the hospital system, although that system has proved a disastrous failure, as shown by some facts and figures lately published. The average cost of each patient admitted into an infectious hospital ranges from £5 to £30, exclusive of the cost of the building and site; and the returns from the London Asylums Board show that with all their efforts and the expenditure of over £100,000 in six months they have not in the slightest degree checked the progress of the epidemic of scarlet fever, for on April 2nd last there were 1227 cases in the hospitals and last week there were 2293, the figures in the interim having never receded to the former number. This is a serious matter for the consideration of the ratepayers, and one requiring the

investigation of the Local Government Board before £50,000 more is spent on building a hospital at Tooting. To return to Dr. Thresh, whose letter would lead your readers to believe that I have made other false statements. At Bexley it was proposed last June to build a hospital, but it was decided to try the inunction method first. The hospital is not built, and Dr. Sunderland, in a letter to me in December, says, "I have used the eucalyptus plan in all cases of scarlet fever under my care since I saw you (in July) and have had no spread of infection;" then why build a hospital? The epidemic there was brought to a close with 157 cases; these if treated in a hospital would have cost the ratepayers £1700, but if the whole had been treated by antiseptic inunction the cost would not have exceeded £40. I have not at any time, as implied by Dr. Thresh, stated that Mr. Hayward of Haydock was using inunction to the exclusion of isolation. In his letter to me that gentleman says: "I have certainly seen, since employing this treatment, several cases where the disease (scarlet fever) did not spread to other children of the family who were not protected by a previous attack and where no strict isolation was possible." I cannot trespass further on your valuable space, as all who desire information on the subject can obtain it from my published papers or from the reprint of my last paper from the *Medical Magazine*. It is impossible for me to ascertain who have been using this method of disinfection, but I hope that those who have tried it will not fail to communicate their experience of it to the profession.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Teddington, March 9th, 1893.

J. B. CURGENVEN.

"DEATHS UNDER CHLOROFORM."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I crave your indulgence whilst I make a few remarks on the letters which have appeared under the above heading. Like Dr. Edgelow, I was much struck with the case published above my letter by Mr. Rowlands because of its apparent *à propos*-ness to my remarks. However, I demur to it as an illustration of the "open method," since the exhibition of an anæsthetic on lint is not the same thing as a folded towel. Dr. Haughton exactly expresses my thoughts when he calls the use of lint "simply an abomination," and Dr. Robinson Hill has directed attention to Syme's condemnation of its use. The essence of the use of the folded towel is to ensure an admixture of air and chloroform which varies with the stage of administration, the amount of the former being slight at first, and then, as anæsthesia becomes established, there is a larger quantity of air permitted access. This is readily managed by bringing the towel nearer to or further from the face, according to whether it is desired to let the patient come out or to put him more decidedly under. There is another point requiring special notice, and this is strikingly emphasised in a letter from Mr. A. Neve, where he relates a case under his own care. This point is that there is more danger of giving too little chloroform than too much. It would be interesting if a record could be obtained of the number of deaths, if any, which have occurred in the Edinburgh Infirmary since Syme's day. I never heard of one myself all the time I was in Edinburgh. I throw out this suggestion, not because I would be disposed to base any argument upon statistics merely, but as a species of corroborative evidence. In conclusion, I trust this matter will not be allowed to rest in its present unsatisfactory state. Let there be some authoritative dictum.

I remain, Sirs, yours sincerely,

G. A. VAN SOMEREN, M.D. Edin.

Orange, New South Wales, Feb. 4th, 1893.

SMALL-POX AT LEICESTER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In view of the "statements" that are appearing in the medical and lay papers as to small-pox and the staff at the Leicester Fever Hospital, allow me to give you the following facts: "At the time of the small-pox outbreak our fever hospital staff consisted of 1 medical officer, 1 matron, 15 nurses, 1 cook, 3 wardmaids, 4 laundresses, 1 stoker, 1 porter and his wife—making 28 persons in all. Of these 28, 22 were protected either by a previous attack of small-pox or by revaccination (including 8 whom I revaccinated), whilst the remaining 6 had only been vaccinated in childhood and so were not 'efficiently' protected. Of

these 6 'inefficiently' protected officials, *all of whom refused revaccination which I offered them*, 4 have since contracted small-pox and 1 has died, so that 2 only of the staff now remain 'inefficiently' protected, and it will be interesting to note their future histories. The 4 recent additions to our hospital staff have now been revaccinated. One nurse (said to have been revaccinated ten years ago) has suffered from a doubtful attack of modified small-pox (half a dozen spots in all, and these abortive), and, curiously enough, *she too refused revaccination* when our small-pox broke out. I am unable to ascertain whether or not her revaccination was efficiently performed. Her case (if small-pox at all) would seem to point to the advisability of even revaccination being *re-done* in times of epidemics." The above is an extract from a report already in the hands of the printer.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY,

Leicester, March 10th, 1893.

Medical Officer of Health.

HOW UNION APPOINTMENTS ARE MADE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Frequently in THE LANCET and elsewhere are advertised vacancies for medical officers to various unions: will you allow me through its columns to point out what a farce these elections are? As a matter of fact nearly all these appointments are cut and dried, and the man who buys the practice or death vacancy, as the case may be, practically buys the appointments as well. I do not so much grumble at this, but what I object to is the fact of boards of guardians asking for applications and then not even troubling to have the applicants before them when the appointment is made, which is frequently the case. In my personal experience I have been a candidate for two union appointments; in the first instance I bought the practice (the union appointment connected with it was not even advertised) and I was of course elected. This may be illegal, as I believe all union appointments are supposed to be advertised, but in my opinion it is far preferable not to do so than to advertise an appointment already practically filled up. In the second instance I was one of six applicants, and the board, after advertising the appointment and asking for testimonials, did not wish to see any of us at the election and eventually appointed the man (a foreigner) who had bought the practice. What, then, is the use of applying for these posts as the elections are at present conducted? If boards of guardians really wish to appoint the most suitable man they certainly ought to have the candidates before them and consider carefully every application. At present the whole thing is a farce, and a man who buys a practice and has been qualified only a week stands a better chance of the appointment than one who has had ten years' experience and has held a similar post. Trusting you will insert this letter and enclosing my card,

Feb. 22nd, 1893.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

M.R.C.P.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Enlargement of the Medical School at Owens College.

THE half-yearly meeting of the council of the Owens College was held on the 7th inst., at which a report was presented showing the attendance of students in the several departments. The total number of day students was given as 941, of which 356 were medical (as compared with 389 at the corresponding date of last year). One of the causes of this falling off in the number of medical students is believed to be the insufficient accommodation at present available in the existing medical school buildings. The fine new buildings for this school are fast progressing towards completion under the direction of Mr. Alfred Waterhouse, architect to the college. The subscriptions received towards the building fund of this part of the college now amount to rather more than £20,000, which is very far short of the probable requirements of the scheme. The report proceeds:—"At a time when the college is incurring heavy responsibilities on behalf of its medical school and is involved in a steadily increasing annual expenditure on account of the natural history museum, it is cut off by lack of funds from other important developments necessary to its progress in the departments of arts and