Dr. Collins, with a full knowledge of the conditions under which the poorer classes of the community almost invariably live in crowded localities, and of the apparently hopeless task it is to instil into their minds the most elementary principles of the hygiene of the sick room and of the meaning of the word "cleanliness," will perhaps admit that, although the compulsory element in the Bill is not entirely free from objection, it will only press hardly on those who, either from ignorance or from selfishness, are apathetic as to the public health—the class precisely for which a little mild legislative interference with the liberty of the subject is so sorely needed. That the Bill as it stands is not absolutely perfect may be granted; that opinions vary as to the justice of requiring the practitioner to notify as well as to certify is also a fact; that young practitioners have, and will again, call measles scarlet fever is a matter of history. Surely Dr. Collins does not desire to delay the passing of the measure on grounds such as these; or even because Dr. John Harley has not yet obtained proof of the contagiousness of scarlet fever. The Bill is sound in principle, and should be loyally supported by all sanitarians and the profession generally—to the extent even of waiving, for once in a way, any individual pet theories of the spread and prevention of certain diseases,—and welcomed as a step in the direction of strengthening the hands of those doing battle in the cause of health. As an educational measure alone it will prove invaluable, inculcating upon the individual the obligations of citizenship. The beneficial effects of the system have been proved already in more than fifty towns and districts. The measure can scarcely be called ill-considered, and, if it does become law, will, after all, be optional outside the metropolis, instead of being universally compulsory.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

E. J. LAWLESS, M.D. Brux., D.P.H. Lond.

London, Aug. 19th, 1889.

THE PROPHYLAXIS OF TUBERCULOSIS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—On page 326 of THE LANCET of last week you publish some American rules as prophylactic against phthisis. Among other things, it is there stated that the room where the unfortunate patient lives and that in which he sleeps must be without curtains, or carpets, or rugs, or anything that is nice and cozy; and the sputum and the evacuations from the bowels are to be disinfected. And all this—I will not say what—you publish without note or comment. In opposition to these arbitrary, and in my judgment quite needless, precautions, seeing that it is still doubtful if phthisis is infectious at all in the ordinary sense of the term, will you kindly publish the fact so often stated, and as it would seem so generally ignored or overlooked, by our ardent theorists, that before the *bacillus* came to the front, or was even dreamt of, the Consumption Hospital at Brompton, without any precautions against infection whatever, showed as clean a bill of health amongst its staff of medical men, matron, and nurses, as any *non-special* hospital in the kingdom. Perhaps this fact may comfort some who have relatives or friends suffering from pulmonary consumption, and who may not care so to shut them out of society, and so to treat them, as laid down in the above-mentioned extraordinary rules.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

King's Lynn, Aug. 20th, 1889.

WM. DALE, M.D. Lond.

* * Publication of the suggestions referred to does not imply approval, as our correspondent would have seen had he noted the remarks on this matter made in these columns in the preceding week. We agree with him as to the impracticability of these and many other proposals to treat phthisis as a contagious disease; but there is no disguising the fact that the opinion that it is communicable has been arrived at by many scientists in all parts of the world.—ED. L.

DIPHTHERIA AND ITS TREATMENT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with great interest Dr. May's letter in your issue of Aug. 17th under the above heading. I do not think he emphasises sufficiently the importance of frequent applications every three or four hours at least of the selected germicide to the affected parts, with

removal at every application of as much membrane as possible. With regard to Dr. May's practice of administering an emetic or an aperient with the view of removing from the stomach and intestines the diphtheritic poison which may have lodged there, it is difficult to see how a single evacuation of their contents can be of any service at all. We know that the diphtheritic membrane is constantly re-forming, and that particles of it are constantly being swallowed by the patient along with his food or the saliva; one would require therefore continual emetics and aperients to keep the alimentary system free from the presence of the germs. I cannot agree with Dr. May that "tonics and stimulants in the early stage should not be given." One can lay down in diphtheria no such hard-and-fast line, for though I may have seen cases which required throughout little treatment save attention to general rules, I have carefully followed to its termination many a one in which a free and early exhibition of tonics and stimulants seemed obviously the rational treatment. I may say that I have found a solution of 1 in 1000 corrosive sublimate made up with glycerine and applied with a brush a most excellent throat application. Allow me to add that my experience has been gained in the Birmingham Children's Hospital, and that the results of the treatment there have always been very good.—Yours faithfully,

Linlithgow, Aug. 20th, 1889.

THOS. HENDERSON, M.B.

THE GOVERNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL PENSIONS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The Bill relating to Civil Service Pensions which is to be brought into the House of Commons aims a blow at all professional men who are engaged in the service of the Crown, and the fact of such a measure being introduced at the fag end of a Parliamentary session alone calls for the most uncompromising opposition to which a Bill can be subjected. Medical men, engineers, and other professional and scientific experts who have been engaged on a definite understanding as to pensions run grave risk of having the amount of their pensions lowered under this Bill. One proposal is to calculate the amount of pensions on a longer period of service than heretofore; another is to do away with the special allowances in case of abolition of office; and a still more important change is, in calculating pension allowances, to deprive professional men of the added number of years which were allowed them owing to the fact that they have had to spend many years in acquiring a profession before they were fitted to serve the State. Besides which, the age at which a professional man can enter the service of the State, taken together with compulsory retirement at sixty-five years, would prevent him, and him alone among civil servants, from ever attaining the two-thirds of his salary which constitutes full pension. Immediate steps should be taken to urge all members of Parliament to oppose the introduction of such a Bill at this season of the year; and all who are likely to be influenced by the proposal, either now, on promotion, or hereafter, should at once communicate with members of Parliament on the subject; appeal being especially made to members representing universities, and to members of the learned professions who are in the House of Commons.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

Aug. 20th, 1889.

Q.

RESECTION OF LAMINÆ OF THE VERTEBRÆ.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Mr. Henry Thompson, in connexion with the report of a case at the Hull Infirmary, published in the last number of THE LANCET, refers to a case of paraplegia due to spinal disease, treated by resection of the laminæ of three vertebræ, under my care. I regret to state that the subsequent course of that case was not so satisfactory as I had hoped it would be. The boy progressed very well till he was attacked by diarrhœa, which was prevalent in the ward at the time, and he suffered very severely from it for some weeks in spite of remedies. On my return to town, after a month's absence, I found him much emaciated and extremely feeble. His chest trouble, which had apparently subsided before the onset of the diarrhœa, had also made considerable progress. He was sent home. I have not heard of him since.—Your obedient servant,

St. Thomas's-st., S.E., Aug. 17th, 1889. W. ARBUTHNOT LANE.