notice. We are happy to publish their letter, but we see no reason for changing our view that the work is immature, and that its discussion by persons technically ignorant may lead to the grave disappointment of sufferers.—ED. L.

INFECTIVITY OF WHOOPING-COUGH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your issue of June 10th Dr. J. Cross asks for personal experience *re* the transmission of whooping-cough from adults to children. I have no personal experience of whooping-cough in an adult in spite of ten years' varied and very extensive practice. But at a lecture on medicine in St Thomas's Hospital in 1898, or thereabouts, Dr. Joseph Frank Payne, the most erudite of physicians, said: "When old men—say, of over 70 years—contract pertussis, and then hand it on to children, the latter suffer from an intensely virulent form of the disease, much more so than if contracted from another child." I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

R. E. ROBERTS, M.B., B.Sc. Lond.

Castell, Cwmfelinfach, Mon., June 14th, 1911.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In this district we had what I may safely term "a big epidemic," beginning 18 months ago and only just abating. In some cases the parents developed the disease first, then their children; of course, the difficulty is to say whether the children contracted the ailment from their parents or from their playmates. Personally, I am of the opinion it was from their parents.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

T. L. ASHFORTH.

Woodlands, near Doncaster, June 13th, 1911.

GENIUS AND INSANITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I observe in the criticism of this part of Dr. Mott's interesting lecture by Mr. Kenneth Campbell, where an allusion to Napoleon is made, that the age of that extraordinary man is stated to have been 46 when he left the Island of Elba. This, I believe, is not strictly accurate, as it is generally agreed that Napoleon was born on August 15th, 1769, and therefore in February, 1815, he would be 45½. I have an impression that an attempt was made to tamper with Napoleon's age with reference to his marriage with Josephine, the latter, as we know, being some years older than he was; but this was subsequently put right. It would be very interesting to know more than we do of Napoleon's medical history before he was taken to St. Helena, but there is certainly no very clear evidence with regard to epilepsy, though I believe I have read in one of the numerous "lives" that he had one severe epileptic fit when in Egypt.

With regard to Mr. Kenneth Campbell's statement, "It is known that the *petit caporal* was a veritable Don Juan," we have the authority of Sir Walter Scott and Napoleon himself. The former thought Napoleon had "too much respect for himself to lead one to place any credit in the calumnies that were launched at him in this respect." The latter, in spite of the dictum of the Psalmist, as quoted, I believe, by one of our judges on the bench recently, said in allusion to the subject: "Besides, I had no time on account of my multifarious duties," &c. There is pretty clear historical evidence of one liaison with a Polish lady, but with this exception—which would hardly place Napoleon in the same flight as the author of "Don Juan" or of a Don Juan himself—there is not much to rely on. Nor is there, I think, any medical evidence of syphilis in the ordinary sense. Napoleon married just before he set out to command the army of Italy, and ever after his surroundings and circumstances were such that his chances of infection must have been slight. We have, too, no evidence of Napoleon being on the sick list during the fatigues of numerous long and arduous campaigns; indeed, he said himself that his health was always at its best when at war. On the other hand, we know that in our own army on service, the syphilitic soldiers soon break down. I have seen this myself, and such importance is attached to this disease on mobilisation that any soldier showing evidence of even mild secondary symptoms would certainly be sent back for treatment. I know, of course, that there is

a vast difference between a general and a private soldier in this connexion, but still it is strange that Napoleon should have withstood his long and severe campaigns if he had suffered from this disease. He may have had "heart block" during the later period of his extraordinary career, but his so-called epileptic attacks were so rare that they could hardly correspond with the symptoms associated with degeneration of the muscular fibres of His, as we know the disease in the present day.

I have an impression I have read somewhere that Napoleon's pulse was always much below the normal in frequency, even in his youth, and we know that he was of a calm, phlegmatic temperament even in the most desperate conditions of war, and that his presence of mind rarely, if ever, forsook him, as witness the retreat of the Russians after the battle of Austerlitz, when, to make his victory more complete (and he alone apparently saw the opportunity), he ordered his gunners to fire on the ice.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. D. RECKITT, M.D. Brux., M.R.C.S. Eng., &c.

Talgarth-road, Kensington, W., June 14th, 1911.

THE METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL SUNDAY FUND.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your excellent leading article last week on the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund no reference was made to a question which has recently been raised and made public in the newspapers with regard to the acceptance by one or two hospitals of money derived from certain entertainments of a lay character taking place on Sundays. These entertainments have been permitted by the London County Council upon the condition of their profits, less necessary deductions, being distributed to approved charitable objects, which include the hospitals referred to, and to this objection has been raised by highly respected supporters of the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund, who have threatened withdrawal of support in consequence. At present the consideration of the matter may be said to be in abeyance, but the conclusion to which I invite those interested in it to come is this: that it is not reasonable to demand of the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund more than the strict supervision which they now exercise over the spending by the hospitals of their all too scanty revenues. Inquiry into the ultimate sources from which these are derived appears to us to be remote from the duties and powers of those who administer the Fund, and to demand such inquiry would in our opinion be an invitation to them to exceed their reasonable and legitimate jurisdiction. I consider that both the great Funds have already done this. The individual may follow the dictates of his private opinions by withdrawing his gift from an institution which has accepted a legacy from a publican or a book-maker, or which has profited from a collection made in the Stock Exchange upon an occasion of speculative activity and of consequent profits earned by its members. Again, he may decline to support an institution which derives some part of its income from the regular contributions of a place of worship of which, upon religious grounds, he disapproves. We do not suggest that we should commend him for so doing, for we think that his action would be unwise and undesirable in many ways, but his individual conduct actuated by the motives suggested would be more reasonable than that of one who declined support to the Metropolitan Hospital Sunday Fund because it refused to convert his individual expression of disapproval into a boycott. Let us reflect that if one or two hospitals have accepted gifts of which some may disapprove, whether we agree with these or not, their so doing has been necessary because their revenues from other sources have not been sufficient to enable them to meet the demands made upon them by the patients whom they seek to heal. Therefore, let the increased generosity of the public place them in a position of greater financial independence before it asks them to forego support which is absolutely lawful, and of which a large section of the Fund's supporters have neither felt nor expressed disapproval.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

June 19th, 1911.

DEEPLY INTERESTED.