salvarsanised serum may possibly be able to stop the progress of the disease. Much more than that must not be expected, and therefore early diagnosis is more important than anything else. One must try to stop the disease whilst the patient is still an individual of fairly full value.

I should like to record my best thanks to the members of the honorary medical staff of the hospital for giving me the opportunity of performing these intracranial injections.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
G. H. MONRAD-KRÖHN, M.B., M.R.C.P. Lond.,
M.R.C.S.,

Resident Medical Officer, Hospital for Epilepsy and
Paralysis, Maida Vale, W.
June 8th, 1914.

EVACUATION OF ASCITIC FLUID THROUGH A SLENDER CANNULA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of June 27th, p. 1831, you mention that Dr. Buth, of Berlin, advocates tapping in ascites with a small cannula. In the second edition of my "Therapeutics of the Circulation," published three months ago, I have fully described the advantages of this process and the method of performing it. Dr. Buth's method seems exactly the same as mine, and I have described some additional precautions which I think will be useful in cases where the medical man is obliged to leave the patient for some hours.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Stratford-place, W., June 29th, 1914. LAUDER BRUNTON.

THE NATIONAL MEDICAL UNION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The annual meeting of the National Medical Union took place on June 27th and the dinner followed in the evening.

The representative of THE LANCET, returning thanks for the toast of "The Press," made the remark that the value of such a union depended on unity and numbers. The membership of the union now extends to some hundreds, but to make it a success and a real force in the land it will have to increase to thousands. The principal resolution at the meeting—"That refusal of service in any capacity under the existing National Insurance Acts, 1911 and 1913, be incorporated as a primary principle in the policy of the National Medical Union"—was carried by a large majority, and it was pointed out during the meeting that there were 15,000 non-panel men in the country and 14,000 panel. It was also pointed out that in London only about 1400 men were on the panel out of 6600 names on the Medical Register, and I am informed that even those small numbers are decreased each month by about half a dozen.

A most important resolution was carried *nem. con.* to the effect that either a full-time manager or a part-time officer should be engaged at a salary to put some new life into the union, and it would depend on the guarantee fund which it would be. The fund is not very well supported, and the matter seems to me so important that I will increase my guarantee by 50 per cent. if any other man will do the same.

May I appeal to every non-panel man in the country to join at once this non-panel union? They may be tired of medical politics, but it seems to me

that if the profession is not to sink to the level of "underpaid artisans" (your Commissioner for dealing with the working of the Act has stated that this was the remark made to him by a German doctor about the state of the panel men in that country) it is necessary to work for the freedom of the profession and the public; and we can only do this by union and number. But to attempt to unite panel and non-panel men is to my mind hopeless.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Streatham, S.W., June 29th, 1914. E. H. WORTH.

TOUCHING FOR THE KING'S EVIL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The "IAC. 8" touch-piece, to which Dr. F. Parkes Weber alludes in his letter in THE LANCET of June 27th, was among those in the recently dispersed Hodgkin collection. I would suggest that it was struck for use in Scotland, perhaps during the 1715 campaign; otherwise it is hard to see why the Old Pretender should prefer to masquerade as James VIII. of Scotland rather than as James III. of England. I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

London, June 27th, 1914. RAYMOND CRAWFURD.

THE MEDICAL DEFENCE UNION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having been a member of the Medical Defence Union some 28 years I venture to make some suggestions for the improvement both of the efficiency of the organisation and of the position of the members.

1. That an annual meeting of members be held at which it shall be competent for any member to bring forward motions or to ask questions, and generally discuss the business of the Union transacted during the year under consideration.

2. That an official shorthand reporter shall be present at such meeting aforesaid, and that the usual attendance book shall be signed by members before entering the meeting.

3. That an official report of the proceedings of the same shall be printed and circulated to all members.

4. That the president and council of the Union be elected at the annual meeting in question, the members of council and the ordinary members having equality both in nomination and vote. That the election be by ballot, nomination papers being previously circulated.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
London, June 23rd, 1914. DENNIS VINRACE.

ULTRAMICROSCOPIC VIRUS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In an annotation on the Etiology of Mumps in THE LANCET of June 27th, p. 1832, the following sentence occurs: "The investigation affords evidence that mumps is due to an ultramicroscopic virus comparable to that of poliomyelitis."

If the virus is purely chemical in nature it might be ultramicroscopic, but I have always contended that if the virus is due to the growth of a bacterial organism it matters not how minute the individual organisms may be, when they grow, as all bacteria do, in colonies composed of myriads of individuals, such colonies should be easily detected by the microscope. This has been my consistent attitude

with regard to the virus, for instance, of poliomyelitis mentioned in the sentence quoted above. Has not Flexner¹ (with the assistance of Noguchi and others at the Rockefeller Institute, New York) succeeded in cultivating and identifying the virus (micro-organism) of poliomyelitis? This has been accomplished on lines similar to that devised by Noguchi for the cultivation of spirochetæ. Two cultivating media are used, and in the second minute colonies are visible, even to the naked eye, clouding the medium. Under the microscope a globular organism is found in pairs, chains, or clusters. We are further informed that by Giemsa's stain the organism can also be demonstrated in infected tissues. The disease has been reproduced experimentally in monkeys.

When once a suitable medium for cultivation and a suitable stain have been discovered, a cultivable organism should in time be recognised, in colonies at any rate.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Norwich, June 26th, 1914.

J. T. C. NASH.

AN EXPLANATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the course of a speech made by me at Leeds in November last and in the press correspondence which ensued thereon in which I dealt with the Insurance Act and the method in which it was being carried out by the medical profession, I felt it my duty to call attention to the conduct of certain doctors in Yorkshire.

It has been pointed out to me that the words I used have been interpreted by certain persons as casting a reflection upon Dr. Walker and Dr. Erhardt of Crosshills, near Keighley, and I willingly take this opportunity of stating that I did not make, and never intended to make, any imputation upon either of these gentlemen.

I would further wish to state that there is, so far as I am aware, no cause for complaint against either of these two gentlemen, who are carrying out the Act loyally and honestly, and I would desire to express sincere regret that any words of mine could possibly have been thought to be applicable to them.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully.

F. HANDEL BOOTH,
Chairman of the Council of the
Faculty of Insurance.

London, W.C., July 1st, 1914.

* * We are glad to publish Mr. Handel Booth's expression of regret, and hope that he will be more careful of his words in the future.—ED. L.

¹ Journal of the American Medical Association, 1913, vol. i., p. 362.

ILFORD AND ITS LATE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.—On June 23rd a representative gathering of local medical practitioners took place in the Seven Kings Hotel, Ilford, under the auspices of the Ilford Medical Society. Mr. C. F. H. Stovin was the guest of honour. Mr. H. E. Watts, the President, occupied the chair, and in proposing "Long life, happiness, and prosperity to our late medical officer of health, Mr. Stovin," spoke of the cordial relations which had always existed between the medical officer of health and the general practitioners in the district, of their great appreciation of his services in the interests of the public health of the parish, and of their genuine regret that circumstances had arisen which necessitated his leaving them. Mr. G. N. P. Carrell, the senior practitioner present, supported the toast. The President then presented Mr. Stovin, on behalf of the society, with a silver salver suitably inscribed with words of appreciation from 36 of Mr. Stovin's professional brethren in the district. Mr. Stovin, after acknowledging the gift, proposed the toast of "The Ilford Medical Society," and the honorary secretary, Mr. Percy J. Drought, replied.

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE ACT.

PROPRIETARY MEDICINES AND THE INSURANCE ACT.

It is to be observed that a falling off in the sale of the inland revenue stamps applied to proprietary or so-called "patent" medicines, which was stated by Mr. Lloyd George to have taken place and was attributed to the Insurance Act, has not been maintained. The Chancellor of the Exchequer at the same time (in connexion with last year's Budget) spoke of the evidence given before the Select Committee on Proprietary Medicines as a contributing cause of the decline in the trade referred to. Be this as it may, the sale of stamps during the financial year which ended on March 31st was the largest hitherto known, amounting to £360,376, an increase of £32,000 upon the figures of 1912-13. At the same time, however, the rise in the number of licences for the retail sale of these articles has increased but little, and there is no evidence of any connexion between the increased sale of articles to which stamps must be applied and the working of the National Insurance Act. As to this, it seems possible that insured patients, who have before not consulted a medical man, may have done so, and having obtained from him information as to what they are suffering from described in general terms, may have been tempted to make use of such knowledge in order to doctor themselves with advertised "cures" and "remedies"—a regrettable and dangerous course. This seems to be a reasonable explanation, if there is such an increase as that referred to in the sale of preparations strictly of a medicinal character. At the same time it would be interesting to know whether there has not been also a rather marked increase in the sale of proprietary articles which would not take the place of medicines prescribed to insured persons, but which nevertheless are sold under stamps. It may be suggested, for example, that attention drawn to the necessity for taking care of the teeth has caused a large increase in the advertisement, and presumably in the sale of proprietary dental preparations.

HOSPITALS AND THE INSURANCE ACT.

At the fifth annual conference of the British Hospitals Association, held at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Dr. G. H. Hume, vice-president of the infirmary, initiated an interesting discussion in a speech which had for its subject "The Voluntary Hospital on its Trial." Dr. Hume spoke of the Insurance Act as responsible for much of the increased pressure upon the voluntary hospitals, in that it might not unfairly be said to provide treatment mainly for trivial cases and to leave the serious cases to be dealt with at the hospitals, and that it also was having its effect in precipitating the change of mutual attitude of givers and recipients. There was a growing reluctance to give, and on the part of the working-classes when they were contributors there was a growing unwillingness, if they became in-patients, to pay anything further for their treatment. Insured persons, again, believed that they had a right to have hospital treatment free, which at least was intelligible. He considered that hospitals had a claim for provision towards their expenses to be brought about by an amending Act. He suggested the division of the country into hospital areas, each with at least one