or the general practitioner who treats practically all wounds with the freest of applications of iodine and dry dressings.

Only the other day I was speaking to a surgeon on the staff of one of our greatest hospitals. I asked him how wounds were treated in the casualty department—was it with iodine and dry dressings? "That's it," he said. "What then," said I, "if 2 per cent. iodine is only a germicide like 1 in 50 carbolic?" "Oh," he answered, "that would be an awful pity, because we have all pinned our faith to it so." There is the whole point. Have we been right or wrong in pinning our faith to it so?

If wrong, so far as I am concerned, I do not want to hunt for this, that, or the other vaunted remedy. I shall go back to phenol pure for the wound and 1 in 20 for the surrounding parts. But I confess if we are wrong I shall be disappointed. Iodine is so quick in application, so simple, and, strange to say, so successful. Nevertheless, if it is established that its use is unsafe because of its feeble antiseptic powers, let us do away with it, because, as I have tried to show, its use has become "the method of choice" with so many. It should be for them now to establish or otherwise its effectiveness.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

ALEXANDER BROWN, M.B. Lond.

London, N.W., Dec. 19th, 1914.

HYALINE CASTS IN THE URINE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The interesting annotation in your issue of Dec. 26th last on the origin and nature of granular and hyaline renal casts leads me to think it worth while to ask the question, "What is the value of hyaline casts in the urine as an indication of renal disease, or even of renal disturbance?" After many years' observation I can say that they are to be found so often in the sediment of the centrifuged urine, without any other evidence of renal disease, that they may often be passed by as of no moment, and I even venture to doubt if many of them come from the kidney at all. If there be no other evidence of renal disturbance they may, I think, be neglected. Surely they cannot all be washed out blood casts. Might not many of them be mucinous, and added to the urine in transit, and, if so, how distinguish between those of renal origin and those that are extraneous?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Dec. 26th, 1914.

JAMES F. GOODHART.

A MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The leading article in THE LANCET of Dec. 19th, 1914, on the necessity for a Ministry of Public Health will be welcomed by many interested in public health. At the present time matters relating to public health are the concern of at least three different bodies—viz., the Board of Education, the Local Government Board, with its Public Health and Poor-law Departments, and the National Health Insurance Commission. That overlapping of the duties of these various bodies, considerable as it is, does not take place to a greater extent must be the result of the earnest desire for coöperation and

coördination on the part of the chief medical officials responsible for the work of the several bodies. It would seem obvious that to coördinate the work of these several bodies another body, the Ministry of Public Health, should be instituted.

The present crisis has accentuated in the minds of the public the extreme importance of the health of the nation. Whether the individual rely in the future for the maintenance of our place among nations on force of arms or efficiency in manufacture or trade, all are at one on the necessity for the physical fitness of the inhabitants of the Empire. When peace is restored the attention of the public will be fixed in an increased degree on the measures necessary to obtain this result. The scope of the work of medical officers engaged in public health duties will be increased and a high degree of efficiency demanded.

But the present conditions as regard training, appointment, and service do not make for efficiency. The rapid headway made by the present movement for the improvement of the status of the medical officers actually engaged in the work of medical inspection of school children is a proof, if any were wanted, of the need for overhauling the whole system and the formation of a Public Health Service on the lines of the Naval, Military, and Indian Medical Services, with due regard to the principles of local government. This duty can only be undertaken by a Ministry of Public Health.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Brighton, Dec. 21st, 1914.

C. W. HUTT.

VACCINES AND THE GERMAN RAID: A USEFUL ANALOGY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The recent raid on the Yorkshire coast seems to provide so good an analogy to the action of vaccines on the human body that it may serve to clarify our ideas on the indications and contra-indications for vaccine treatment. The Germans obviously play the part of the germs which have invaded the body, while leucocytes are fairly comparable with the soldiers of the invaded country.

Let us consider the Yorkshire coast as the site of the injection of a vaccine into England. Here, as elsewhere, the young men, specially of the rural districts, have shown symptoms of lethargy and have not converted themselves into leucocytes as freely as they might have done. (I take the liberty of alternating the metaphor freely.) The injection of toxins by battleships into the superficial English tissues in Yorkshire will certainly result in a marked local leucocytosis, and these leucocytes will join the general blood stream and increase the general resisting powers of the body. If not the immunisation machinery of the body is in a very unhealthy state.

Again, when an efficient dose of vaccine is injected under the skin a red, angry lump is quickly formed at the site of injection consisting of leucocytes and antibodies antagonising the injected toxins. Doubtless we shall soon see some such local response in the case of our coast towns, taking the form of local levies or guns. But this raid illustrates also what I feel to be a further action of a vaccine—viz., that the injection of a proper dose of bacterial toxins acts as a circulating signal to rouse the defences of the whole body to a sense of the reality of invasion. And this is generally

made evident to the patient by a sense of stimulation and well-being in addition to his increased success in his war against the bacterial enemy.

To illustrate the contra-indications to vaccine treatment, imagine that England had already turned every man into a soldier and had spent all her money and resources in fighting the enemy. What would be the effect of a bombardment of coast towns then? It would merely add to the general havoc and could have no beneficial effect, because the whole nation had already been roused and could do no more. For the same reason I hold (with the majority) that it is useless or harmful to inject vaccines or tuberculin in the presence of an acute general bacterial infection when the body is already swamped with toxins and its defences already thoroughly aroused or even overwhelmed. Yet this is frequently done.

But Britain is in exactly the opposite state to this, and illustrates the condition in which a vaccine would be prescribed to arouse unexploited powers of resistance. And I can still say this, even although I have had the real grimness of the local situation brought home to me by a visit to Scarborough on the day following the bombardment.

Till further evidence is forthcoming I believe that the fundamental indication for a vaccine is when it may be expected to rouse dormant resisting powers.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Hull, Dec. 21st, 1914.

FRANK C. EVE.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION IN INJURIES OF THE EYE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the ophthalmology section of your review of medicine during 1914 I confess I am rather dismayed to find no mention of the important discussion on "Workmen's Compensation in Injuries of the Eye," which took place at the last meeting of the Oxford Ophthalmological Congress (July, 1914). It was opened by Mr. William Robinson, and important papers dealing with the subject were read by Dr. Frank Shufflebotham, Mr. Angus MacNab, Mr. J. Jameson Evans, Mr. John Gray Clegg, Mr. G. H. Pooley, and Mr. R. J. Coulter. The majority of the foregoing communications were published in the *Ophthalmoscope* of September, 1914.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

SYDNEY STEPHENSON,

Welbeck-street, W., Dec. 28th, 1914. Master of the Congress.

AN IMPROVED (DOYEN'S) MOUTH GAG.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—There are many modifications of Doyen's original pattern, which is still sold by some makers. It was worked by a rack-catch (like artery forceps) instead of a ratchet and spring, so that its sudden release was sometimes difficult or impossible. Most of Mr. Charles Heath's objections¹ may be obviated by care. The guarding of the ratchet is, however, a distinct improvement on most patterns. In the one I use it is guarded by the (spiral) spring.

Nipping of the lower lip is a misfortune I used to find impossible always to avoid (especially with unruly children) when the gag has to be put in before induction of anæsthesia, as is necessary when using nitrous oxide or ethyl chloride alone. I have found it may be prevented by a piece of rubber about one-twentieth of an inch thick cut

into the shape of a shield about three-quarters of an inch (less for a child) from top to bottom, with a horizontal slit near the top by which it may be fitted on the lower jaw of the gag, so that it will hang between the lower lip and teeth.

In Mr. Heath's model there is a shallow groove for the reception of the teeth, but I doubt whether this will prove always to be effectual.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. D. MORTIMER, M.B. Lond., F.R.C.S. Eng.

Anæsthetist, Central London Throat Hospital, &c.

Clifton Hill, N.W., Dec. 28th, 1914.

STRETCHERS FOR THE WOUNDED IN TRENCHES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Captain G. K. Aubrey, in his interesting description of the "Fusilier" trench stretcher in THE LANCET of Dec. 26th, asks for suggestions from your readers which might assist in the solution of a point which, I think I am justified in saying, had not occurred to the majority of ambulance workers.

That severely wounded men should have to wait for assistance until nightfall, and that even then bearers should run the greatest risk of being shot, is a state of affairs which makes the provision of some method of transport which can be carried out during the daytime under the shelter of the trench of the greatest importance.

It occurs to me on reading his useful communication that in emergency an ordinary wheel-barrow could be adapted for the purpose of negotiating the sharp turns of the spurs thrown out to protect the trench from enfilading fire. Shallow troughs could be fixed on either side of the wheel, and in these the patient's legs could be laid. Where the bearer company was insufficient to deal with large numbers of the wounded, it would be possible to manage a case with only one bearer.

During the wet weather the depth of mud at the bottom of the trench might prevent any wheel conveyance being used with success; but in that case stretchers can be constructed by lashing short poles to an ordinary chair. The space between the front legs can be filled in by a piece of canvas stretched across, or by having some battens nailed to them. If the poles are lashed somewhat obliquely from below, upwards and backwards, the patient will have a reclining tilt when being carried. A rope lashed from the front legs to the back of the chair would prevent an insensible person from falling out sideways during transport.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Dec. 29th, 1914.

W. J. M. E.

THE MALLOCK-ARMSTRONG EAR-DEFENDER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Understanding that inquiries have been made at THE LANCET for further particulars as to the Mallock-Armstrong Ear-Defender, of which a notice with illustration appeared in your issue of Dec. 26th, 1914, I wish to say that I shall be pleased to furnish full particulars.

The price at which the 1915 pattern is retailed is 4s. per pair in a pocket-case of convenient form.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

H. N. G. COBBE.

86, York-street, Westminster, S.W., Dec. 30th, 1914.

¹ THE LANCET, Dec. 19th, 1914, p. 1422.