

The tragic death, on Sept. 24, of Brevet-Col. JOHN OSCAR THOMAS, M.C., T.D.—drowned whilst bathing—is a great loss to his many friends and colleagues in and around Rochester, where he had been in practice since 1923. Born in 1891, Thomas was the younger son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Walter Thomas of St. Blazey, Cornwall, and received his medical education at the Westminster Hospital, London, where he was a scholar and prizeman. Qualifying in 1914, he served throughout the last war, during which he was awarded the Military Cross, subsequently returning to the Westminster Hospital, where he held all the resident house appointments, became the first resident medical officer, and took his M.D. and M.R.C.P.Lond. Thomas settled in Rochester in 1923. Early in 1927 he was appointed honorary assistant physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester, and has been an active member of the medical committee for many years. In 1933 he established the department of electrocardiology. Later he was appointed honorary physician with charge of in-patients, and recently became full honorary physician. Despite the heavy calls of an extensive consulting practice Thomas kept up his close association with the Territorials, holding for some years command of the County of London 140th Field Ambulance, and on the outbreak of the present war he was called up from the Reserve of Officers and left his practice to organize a general hospital of 1,200 beds, with which he went to France in October, 1939. In the withdrawal of the B.E.F. he was one of the last to leave St. Nazaire. In September, 1940, he mobilized another medical unit, which he took to the Middle East, serving there for three years, first in command of No. 5 Convalescent Depot in Sinai Peninsula, and later commanding No. 16 General Hospital (A.M.S.). Always a keen horseman and a strong swimmer Thomas's busy life gave him little leisure for these relaxations. He leaves a widow and one daughter, and in their grievous loss may they find some consolation from the high personal regard in which he was universally held and the large number of those who gathered at the memorial service in Rochester Cathedral to pay their tribute.

Medical Notes in Parliament

E.M.S. Hospitals

Hospitals in the Emergency Hospital Scheme are administered by their normal governing authorities and not by the Ministry of Health. The scheme now includes 1,640 hospitals, of which 671 are controlled by local authorities. Medical officers attached to a local authority hospital are under the discipline of the hospital authority, which is generally exercised through the medical superintendent. The scheme as originally planned provided for the treatment of civilian casualties from enemy action and of persons transferred from one hospital to another to afford accommodation for the treatment of such casualties. The treatment of these cases is provided for under sections 50 and 53 of the Civil Defence Act, 1939. The scheme has since been extended under agency arrangements made with the Government Departments concerned and authorized by the Treasury, to include Service casualties and sick, members of the Merchant Navy, and various groups of civilian patients engaged on work of importance to the war effort in this country. This information was given by Mr. Willink on Oct. 11 in answer to an inquiry by Sir Ernest Graham-Little.

Production of Penicillin

Replying on Oct. 11 to Mr. A. Edwards, Sir ANDREW DUNCAN said the volume of penicillin production both in this country and in North America had substantially increased during the past three months. Total supplies amply covered Service needs. Increased quantities would become available for civilian use. A large-scale plant now being erected in this country would be managed by the Distillers Company for the Ministry of Supply and would begin production in the spring of next year. Inquiries about civilian supplies should be addressed to the Ministry of Health. Dr. HADEN GUEST reported that Mr. Willink had made penicillin available when required in a large number of cases, and that a circular to that effect had been issued to all medical men in the country.

Psychiatrists for Duty in Prisons

Mr. HERBERT MORRISON announced on Oct. 12 that the Prison Commissioners have appointed two consulting psychiatrists to act as part-time medical officers at Wormwood Scrubs and Holloway Prisons. Medical officers at all prisons have been instructed on the types of cases in which psychological treatment may be beneficial. These cases are transferred to Worm-

wood Scrubs or Holloway for assessment and treatment. The psychiatrist at Wormwood Scrubs, who was appointed in February, 1943, examined in that year 60 male prisoners, of whom 18 received full courses of treatment. The psychiatrist at Holloway, who began work in April, 1944, has investigated 25 cases, of whom 7 are receiving active treatment.

University Representation

The House of Commons went into committee on Oct. 12 on the Redistribution of Seats Bill. Mr. PRITT moved to omit the clause relating to university constituencies. He contended that if persons who had university education were specially represented in the House, there should also be special representation for scientists and doctors. Prof. SAVORY recalled that his predecessors in the representation of Belfast University had been Col. Sinclair, a most distinguished surgeon, and Sir William Whitla, whose *Dictionary of Treatment* formed part of the library of every doctor. Sir ERNEST GRAHAM-LITTLE said there was a strong view that political qualifications should not be considered in a member of a university. He followed that rule himself. He pointed out that Prof. A. V. Hill was a link between the Royal Society and the House. Mr. Peake pointed out that the Speaker's Conference on Redistribution had agreed that the representation of the universities should continue. Mr. Pritt's amendment was defeated by 152 to 16. The Bill passed through Committee and was read a third time.

Treatment of Silicosis.—On Oct. 10 Mrs. TATE asked the Minister of Fuel and Power whether he had any information about the discoveries that had been made at McGill University, Montreal, concerning the prevention and cure of silicosis. Major LLOYD GEORGE said he was aware of the experiments going on in Canada on the treatment of silicosis by the inhalation of aluminium powder, which were probably what Mrs. Tate had in mind. These experiments were being closely watched both by his Department and by the Medical Research Council, but he was advised that the results were not yet conclusive enough to justify the adoption of this method of treatment at British mines. Mrs. TATE asked if the Minister would get into touch with McGill University to see whether these were the same experiments. Major LLOYD GEORGE said he would certainly do so, but he believed that our people had been in touch. A report was recently published in South Wales dealing with the question of silicosis, and as a result of that he was satisfied that every possible research was being made.

Notes in Brief

A substantial additional tonnage of paper has now been allocated for educational books.

A free grant of £477,500 has been made under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act for the construction of a new hospital of 1,100 beds at Mulago, Uganda. The Governor proposes to increase the present accommodation to 700 beds in temporary buildings while the new hospital is under construction.

The Services

The King of Egypt has conferred the Insignia of the Third Class of the Order of the Nile on Lieut.-Col. A. G. Harsant, O.B.E., R.A.M.C., on the occasion of his retirement from the professorship of anatomy in the Faculty of Medicine at Fouad University.

Capt. (Temp. Major) D. G. C. Whyte, R.A.M.C., has been awarded the D.S.O., and Capt. R. R. Lal, I.A.M.C., the M.C., in recognition of gallant and distinguished services in Burma.

CASUALTIES IN THE MEDICAL SERVICES

Killed in action.—Capt. Matthew Donald Murrough Bergin, R.A.M.C.

Died.—Capt. William Dinwoodie Speedy, War Subs. Capt. Ian Malcolm Hill, R.A.M.C.

Previously reported missing, now reported to have died while a prisoner of war.—Capt. Percival Binnington, R.A.M.C.

Missing, presumed lost at sea, while prisoner of war in Japanese hands.—Major John Moore Officer, R.A.M.C.

Reported missing.—Capt. T. F. Redman, R.A.M.C.

Reported missing, believed prisoner of war at Arnhem.—Col. G. M. Warrack, A.D.M.S., 1st Airborne Division.

Missing at Arnhem.—Capt. J. G. Jones and B. Brownscombe, R.A.M.C.

Missing at Arnhem, believed prisoner of war.—Capt. G. B. D. Scott, R.A.M.C.

Missing from operations in N.-W. Europe.—Capt. C. A. Simmons, R.A.M.C.

Missing in Italy.—Capt. E. Haigh, R.A.M.C.

Wounded.—Major R. L. Harward, War Subs. Capt. D. H. Swayne, I. S. Dalton, M. MacIntyre, I. F. Thompson, Lieuts. W. L. Cooper and J. H. Orr, R.A.M.C.

Repatriated.—Surg. Lieut. A. P. B. Waind, R.N.V.R.

Medical News

At the annual general meeting of the Medical Society of London, to be held on Monday, Oct. 23, at 4.30 p.m. the presidential address on "Subjective Disorders of Sensation" will be given by the incoming President, Dr. Anthony Feiling.

Mr. R. A. Butler, Minister of Education, will address the School Medical Service Group of the Society of Medical Officers of Health at the Town Hall, High Holborn, London, W.C.1, on Friday, Nov. 3, at 2.30 p.m. He will speak on "The Place of the School Medical Service in the Education Service of the Future." The annual general meeting of the group will be held immediately after Mr. Butler's address.

The National Conference on Maternity and Child Welfare, which was postponed in July last owing to the restriction on travel, will be held on Thursday and Friday, Nov. 23 and 24, in the Big Hall of Friends House, Euston Road, N.W., with Sir George Elliston in the chair. The subject for discussion is "The Rebuilding of Family Life after the War." Mr. Henry Willink, Minister of Health, will give his presidential address on the second day at 10.30 a.m. Tickets, 3s. each for one day, 5s. each for two days, may be obtained from Miss M. R. Lovelock, secretary of the National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres and for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

A demonstration of some of their recent work will be given at the Inoculation Department of St. Mary's Hospital, W.C., by Sir Almoth Wright and Sir Alexander Fleming on Tuesday, Oct. 24, at 8 p.m. Owing to technical considerations the attendance will be limited to members of the Polish Medical Association in the United Kingdom and to members of the Paddington Division of the B.M.A.

The annual general meeting of the Middlesex County Medical Society will be held at Chase Farm Hospital, The Ridgeway, Enfield, on Thursday, Oct. 26, at 3 p.m., when an address will be given by Dr. C. Allan Birch on "Medical Emergencies." Visitors, including members of the American and Canadian Forces at present in this country, will be welcome.

At the next meeting of the Medico-Legal Society, to be held at Manson House, 26, Portland Place, W.1, on Thursday, Oct. 26, at 5 p.m., Dr. Eric Gardner will read a paper on "Death in the Bathroom." Members may introduce guests to the meeting; tea at 4.30.

The Personal Service League has consulted the British Hospitals Association in regard to the distribution of a substantial gift of dried banana. The League has accepted the suggestion that some of the dried banana should be held in reserve against its requirement for use in cases of coeliac disease or other emergency. Application may be made for supply to the Personal Service League, 41, Lowndes Square, London, S.W.1 (telephone, Sloane 6291) by day or night.

The twentieth annual report of the Nursery School Association of Great Britain for the year 1943 is a 16-page pamphlet, obtainable from the new headquarters at 1, Park Crescent, London, W.1.

Dr. James Deeny, F.R.C.P.I., has been appointed Chief Medical Adviser to the Department of Local Government and Public Health, Government of Eire.

Universities and Colleges

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND

At a quarterly meeting of the Council held on Oct. 12, with Sir Alfred Webb-Johnson, President, in the chair, Dr. Rupert A. Willis, pathologist at the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Australia, was appointed as the first Sir William H. Collins Professor of Human and Comparative Pathology. Prof. Matthew Stewart was elected Moynihan Lecturer for 1945. Mr. P. H. Lovell was nominated as the fifty-second Jenks Scholar. Votes of thanks were given to Sir Buckston Browne for an augmentation of the endowment for the annual dinner of Fellows and Members of the College; to Mrs. Cecil Joll for a silver-gilt loving cup, once the property of William Cheselden; to Miss B. C. Crookshank for a fire-screen panel embroidered with the arms of the College; and to Mrs. King for pictures and busts of Sir William Blizard.

Diplomas of membership were granted to R. Astley, F. Batley, M. F. Bethell, P. H. Friedlander, Alison B. Hay-Bolton, Adrian Hill, J. G. Kendall, R. J. P. Pugh, Irvine B. Smith, A. McR. Walker.

Letters, Notes, and Answers

All communications with regard to editorial business should be addressed to THE EDITOR, BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, B.M.A. HOUSE, TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1. TELEPHONE: EUSTON 2111. TELEGRAMS: *Aitiology Westcent, London*. ORIGINAL ARTICLES AND LETTERS forwarded for publication are understood to be offered to the *British Medical Journal* alone unless the contrary be stated.

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ANY QUESTIONS?

Sulphonamides and Sterility

Q.—*I have heard it stated that the sulphonamide group of drugs induce sterility. Is there any truth in this? If so, how long would the sterility so induced last?*

A.—There are animal experiments which suggest that the sulphonamide group of drugs may reduce spermatogenesis, but the bad effect is only temporary and not likely to last more than a few months. It is difficult to give clinical evidence of this because the infections for which sulphonamides are given are themselves likely to reduce fertility.

Cockroaches and Infection

Q.—*How far are cockroaches known to serve as carriers of human infection?*

A.—Several experiments have shown that cockroaches can transfer germs mechanically on their legs, and it has also been reported that the following bacteria can be passed through the alimentary canal of a cockroach, quite unharmed: *B. tuberculosis*, *B. leprae*, cysts of *Entamoeba histolytica*, and *E. coli*. Transmission of human infection is liable to occur under the following conditions: (1) if the cockroaches have access to human food; (2) if they have access to sources of infection. Condition 1 must be very commonly fulfilled, as cockroaches are mainly troublesome in kitchens. The sources of infection (2) vary from one situation to another; there may be particular danger where there are cases of illness present, as in a hospital. A habit of cockroaches which makes them likely to pick up germs is their frequent searching for water, which leads them to visit sinks, drains, slops, etc.

The Psychology of "the Presser"

Q.—*What is the mental process involved in the phenomenon known as "pressing" in the game of golf? Carried to its logical conclusion the emotions obtain complete sway over reason. The same psychological process is seen under different disguises in everyday life. What is the remedy?*

A.—"Pressing" in golf is the physical result of the longing to do superlatively well. The cure is not "Don't press," but, "Be content to go by easy stages from tee to pin." The better-class players and professionals do not "press" because they have a stable confidence in their own ability, born of aiming at the possible and not the impossible. The "presser's" muscles are taut and poorly co-ordinated because he aims at an ideal and is apprehensively aware that this is pitched too high. The "pressers" in everyday life are aiming too high and refusing to face their limitations. Reason may control the emotions if the source of the anxiety to succeed can be faced and checked—e.g., where an adolescent deems it necessary to live up to a parent's ambitions. Emotions outrun reason where the source of the ambition presides in a modified "Lady Macbeth complex," to succeed in order to stamp out shame or guilt. The "pressers" in everyday life strain not so much the muscles of their upper extremities as their autonomic system, which reacts by irregular peristalsis and is registered as nervous dyspepsia or nervous colitis. The remedy is simple persuasion in the first group, more intensive psychotherapy in the second (if this is not contraindicated), and small doses of luminal to help them through special periods of stress.

Erb's Paralysis

Q.—*What is the treatment of Erb's paralysis in an infant—the result of a very difficult confinement?*

A.—Erb's paralysis is usually caused by traction of the upper part of the brachial plexus, leading to tearing of the nerve fibres and subsequent paralysis of the muscles which surround the shoulder—particularly the deltoid and the spinati, and the forearm muscles—particularly biceps, brachialis anticus, and the supinator longus.