

Letters, Notes, and Answers.

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

SACRO-ILIAC PAIN.

Dr. S. W. RHODES (Scarborough) asks for help in the following case: A man aged 29, who has been suffering from acute rheumatism for three months, has severe pain in the sacro-iliac joint, and relief can only be got by the use of Dover's powder (75 grains a day). He has had treatment of all kinds—from salicylates to electric massage and radiant heat; x-ray examinations, both of the sacro-iliac joint and sigmoid colon, are negative.

VULCANITE.

"J. S." asks: What industrial diseases, if any, arise in workers at vulcanite works? Is it likely that any form of paralysis is contracted in the course of this occupation?

* * We have referred this question to an authority on industrial medicine, who, however, is unable to give a reply from personal experience. Since the introduction of wireless and its widespread use, the output of vulcanite has much increased. During the boring of vulcanite a most unpleasant odour is emitted, and as the smell may be due to dust some of this may be inhaled, but our adviser has not hitherto heard of any ill effects to the workers arising therefrom.

WHAT IS A "MORPHINE ADDICT"?

Dr. G. WASHINGTON ISAACS (London, W.C.) asks for a definition of a "morphine addict," and adds: I have a patient who suffers from asthma and who can generally control his attacks with adrenaline, but every few weeks he comes to me for heroin and I give him three or four tablets 1/12 gr. in each. I have another patient who suffers from tabes dorsalis, and occasionally gets a severe attack of lightning pains. On one occasion he shouted loudly and disturbed his neighbours at intervals of less than a minute for about sixty consecutive hours. This man requires morphine, and two tubes of twenty tablets 1/4 gr. last him five or six months. He will not take morphine if he can avoid it, as it invariably makes him vomit. Are these cases morphine addicts and am I liable to punishment by law and subsequently to the wrath of the General Medical Council? Must I keep a record of the heroin supplied and the morphine prescribed? May I take my hypodermic case and morphine tablets with me if I am called out to a case which seems likely to require a sedative? Or, if called to a case of acute mania, may I take it even though it contains morphine as well as hyoscine? I ask these questions in all seriousness.

* * A careful study of the report of the Departmental Committee on Morphine and Heroin Addiction, 1926, will at once remove our correspondent's fears. A fairly full analysis of the report was published in the **BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL** of February 27th (p. 391), but the report itself can be obtained from H.M. Stationery Office, Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, price 1s. An addict is defined in the report as—

"A person who, not requiring the continued use of a drug for the relief of the symptoms of organic disease, has acquired, as a result of repeated administration, an overpowering desire for its continuance, and in whom withdrawal of the drug leads to definite symptoms of mental or physical distress or disorder."

Neither of the patients mentioned is an addict, so there is no

risk of any censure or penalty from either the law courts or the General Medical Council. It is quite safe to take—and to use if necessary—a hypodermic case to a patient with acute mania or to anyone likely to need a sedative. Section III of the report sets out in detail the circumstances in which it may be medically advisable to administer morphine or heroin to persons known to be suffering from addiction to these drugs, and Section IV deals with the precautions to be observed in the administration of morphine or heroin. For his own guidance and protection every practising physician should make himself familiar with these very important matters. The regulations issued under the Dangerous Drugs Act make it compulsory to keep a record of any of the scheduled drugs, including heroin, supplied, but there is no obligation to keep any record of morphine or the other drugs if they are prescribed or personally administered.

INCOME TAX.

Motor Car Expenses: Irish Free State.

"J. C." writes from the Irish Free State explaining that his son has given him a motor car because his old car is worn out, and asking what allowance he can claim.

* * We fear that at present he cannot claim any allowance.

He has not incurred expenditure in replacing his old car—apart from the fact that the new car was a gift, he still retains the old one—and the Free State has not yet followed the example of the British Parliament in providing for a depreciation allowance in respect of cars used for professional purposes. "J. C." might perhaps keep the latter possibility in mind as regards 1926-27.

Partnership: Car Expenses.

"LEX."—A and B hold half shares in a practice, and the income tax authorities insist on deducting the combined expenses of running their cars from the total receipts of the practice. Is this correct?

* * Yes. The firm is assessable as such, and the partners are not entitled to be assessed separately. The result is inconvenient, and the Association represented that fact some years ago to the Royal Commission on the Income Tax. We advise "Lex" to enlist the assistance of his inspector of taxes, if possible—if the detailed figures have been supplied to him—or, alternatively, to recalculate the three years' average for each partner separately agreeing the aggregate with the actual assessment.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

A WARNING.

THE Secretary of the Medical Defence Union asks us to state that he has been informed by a member of the Union residing in Birmingham that recently a man brought a parcel of books, stating that the member had ordered them from W. H. Smith and Sons. At his request he was paid £1. The parcel contained some novels which had not been ordered. The member was informed by the Birmingham police that a man had been working this trick in various parts of the country and that a warrant was out in several towns for his arrest. He is described as about 30 years of age, medium height, slight dark moustache, fairly well dressed, and wearing a brown overcoat.

POISONING BY THE PRODUCTS OF COMBUSTION OF TOBACCO.

Dr. HOWARD B. GLADSTONE (London, S.E.) writes: The case of a child poisoned by the juice of an old pipe rubbed into the skin, reported in the **BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL** of April 24th (p. 739), can be matched by that of a little boy of 16 months I saw recently, who got the poison in by his mouth. He was allowed to put a dirty old pipe in his mouth and pretend to smoke it for the amusement of his parents. This was at 6.30 p.m., and after half an hour he was put to bed apparently in good health. At about 7.30 he was seen to be uneasy and to be very pale, and shortly after he began to vomit. He looked very bad and the vomiting was persistent; by the time I saw him, about 10.30 p.m., he had vomited mucus seven times. He was then beginning to revive, and as his temperature was normal, his abdomen and muscles generally relaxed, it was evidently a case of nicotine poisoning, from which he was just recovering. I saw him next morning and heard that he had not been ill after I left, and he was playing about as if nothing had happened.

ERRATUM.

WE regret the error on page 758 of last week's issue of the **JOURNAL**, in which a tuberculosis hospital scheme was attributed to "Portsmouth," instead of "Plymouth."

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 39, 40, 41, 44, and 45 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 42 and 43.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 179.