

Letters, Notes, and Answers.

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

OBESITY AFTER CHILDBIRTH.

"C. F." asks for suggestions for the treatment of a young married lady, aged 21, with a baby 10 months old, who has got very fat since the birth of her child, having increased about 21 lb. Her height is about 5 ft. 2 in. Dieting has been tried. There is no sign of hypothyroidism.

CREAKING IN THE JOINTS.

"H. S." asks: What is the significance of tendency to creaking in the joints, without other signs or symptoms, developing at the age of 30? What is the significance when this is associated with slight thickening of synovial edge of joints, with some aching and tiredness in all joints (chiefly large) after movement?

DERMATITIS AFTER ULTRA-VIOLET RADIATION.

"W. A. K." asks for suggestions for the treatment of a mild dermatitis of the face—especially nose—in a lady, aged 25. The condition followed a course of ultra-violet radiation nine months ago. Being in an overheated room causes conspicuous and unsightly red areas to appear. Sedative lotions, ointments, and hazeline preparations have failed to effect any improvement.

INCOME TAX.

"A. S. B." has been building up a practice *de novo* and asks for information on various points, the nature of which will be seen from the replies.

* * (1) The return for 1928-29 should be made on the amount of the gross income of 1927-28, less the expenses incurred in that year. (2) The amount to be claimed for the accommodation, surgery, and use of waiting room provided by his parents is the amount reasonably paid; if no payment was made no deduction is due. (3) The same applies to the services given in keeping the rooms in order, etc. (4) Books are like instruments, in that only replacements are allowed. (5) The subscriptions stated seem to us to be allowable.

Salary with House, etc.

"C. L. P." holds a resident hospital appointment with salary, plus house, rates, fuel, and light.

* * He is taxable on the salary only, but should bear in mind that the position as regards income tax would be otherwise if his appointment were for a fixed amount, subject to deductions for house, etc., though the total advantages of his appointment might be the same.

Motor Car Transaction.

"C. R. D." bought a 15.1-h.p. car in February, 1923, for £263, and sold it in March, 1928, for £125, when he bought an 11.8-h.p. car for £650. What can he claim?

* * (1) As a claim to obsolescence allowance the amount is £650-£125=£525. We assume that the occasional private use is negligible; if it is not, some deduction should be made on that account. (2) Depreciation allowance due is 15 per cent. on £650 for the year 1928-29. "C. R. D." does not state the date to which he makes up his year's accounts; the obsolescence allowance has to be treated as one of the year's expenses, and if his accounts are made up to December 31st it will not affect his liability until 1929-30, but if he has been taking March 31st or April 5th as the closing date, then the financial year affected will be 1928-29.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

FIVE GENERATIONS ATTENDED BY ONE DOCTOR.

IN our last issue (p. 700) Dr. L. J. Hood asked whether any other medical practitioner had had the experience of attending five generations in one family. Mr. E. B. TURNER (London) writes: I have attended five generations in two families, and in one of them the fifth individual (a girl) is now about 14½ years old, so that (with luck) I might even run to a sixth!

COLONEL A. N. FLEMING, A.M.S.(ret.) (Edinburgh), writes: I can quote the case of the late Dr. Gibson of Campbeltown, Argyllshire. About forty years ago my great-grandmother died and before her death my sister had two children. Dr. Gibson had been the family doctor for many years, and at some time or another attended all the individuals concerned. Dr. Gibson had another claim to fame: not only did he live to be nearly 100 years of age, but actually continued in active practice till he was well over 90.

THE FORGOTTEN SWAB.

DR. N. I. LETTERS (Sydney) writes: The second of the cases recorded in Dr. Segar's interesting memorandum on swabs left within the abdomen (January 21st, 1928, p. 95) is not absolutely unique. In Willard Bartlett's *After Treatment of Surgical Patients* (C. V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, 1920), vol. 1, p. 179, I find the following: "A colleague requested me to explore one of his patients for a very ill-defined symptom-complex, which had followed an operation on the pelvic viscera. We were both surprised, and my colleague greatly embarrassed, by finding a very large gauze pad tightly encapsulated between intestinal coils. The interesting thing about this case, and the reason for quoting it, is that it exemplifies in no uncertain way Nature's method of spontaneous relief, which must be rather frequently afforded such patients. There was no mistaking the fact that one corner of the thick gauze pad was drawn out and twisted into a conical mass, of which the distal six or eight centimetres were smeared with faeces. Upon further inspection of the wound we found that this gauze cone had been withdrawn from an opening in the intestine, into the lumen of which viscous the gauze was gradually being drawn by peristaltic activity. No doubt, in the course of time, the newly formed cavity in which the pad lay would have been emptied and its walls collapsed; then, had the foreign body not obstructed the intestine, it would have eventually been passed out through the anus, and quite possibly never been noted at all by the patient."

BACK TO SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

"N. 3" writes: I see that the old dispute about the inheritance of acquired characteristics has been raised once again, though not with asperity, in your columns. On this matter some of us are willing, with Omar, to leave the Wise to wrangle. But when such questions crop up I am reminded of the sayings of a physician of long ago. Sir Thomas Browne was well aware of the "sturdy doubts and boisterous objections, wherewith the unhappiness of our knowledge too neerely acquainteth us." "I remember (he says) a Doctor in Physick of Italy, who could not perfectly believe the immortality of the soule, because Galen seemed to make a doubt thereof. . . . The whole Creation is a mystery, and particularly that of man. . . . In our study of Anatomy there is a masse of mysterious Philosophv." We may not be able in these times to follow the author of *Religio Medici* through all his curious speculations, but it is interesting to recall some of his musings on the problems of life. "The world," says Sir Thomas Browne, "was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man: 'tis the debt we owe unto God, and the homage wee pay for not being beasts; without this the world is still as though it had not been." Nature he defines "not with the Schooles, the principle of motion and rest, but, that streight and regular line, that settled and constant course the wisdom of God hath ordained the actions of his creatures, according to their severall kinds. . . . Now this course of Nature God seldom alters or perverts, but like an excellent Artist hath so contrived his worke, that with the selfe same instruments without a new creation hee may effect his ob-curest designes." And again, introducing an odd train of thought, he makes this profound remark: "There is no liberty for causes to operate in a loose and straggling way, nor any effect whatever but hath its warrant from some universall or superiour cause." Elsewhere, in the *Garden of Cyrus*, he observes that "The Aequivocall production of things under undiscerned principles, makes a large part of generation, though they seem to hold a wide univocacy in their set and certain Originals. . . . All things began in order, so shall they end, and so shall they begin again." From a literary point of view these last two sentences are in striking contrast. I prefer the second.

SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL CONGRESS.

THE name of Lennon Limited should have been included in the list of exhibitors in the trades section of the first annual scientific meeting of the Medical Association of South Africa (B.M.A.), of which an account appeared in our issue of April 21st (p. 684).

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 51, 52, 53, 56, and 57 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 54 and 55.

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