

Letters, Notes, and Answers.

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

MIGRAINE.

"M.R.C.S.," who suffers severely from migraine, would be glad to hear from any fellow-sufferer whether luminal is of use as a prophylactic, and, if so, whether sodium bromide should be taken at the same time.

CIGARETTES AND SUCKLING.

"A. F. S." asks if excessive cigarette smoking on the part of a nursing mother would be injurious to a six-weeks-old infant and be likely to cause vomiting and general ill health.

ULTRA-VIOLET RAYS FOR ACNE.

DR. T. M. GUTHRIE (Rock Ferry, Cheshire) asks what form of ultra-violet ray treatment is the best for chronic indurated acne of back and shoulders. Is a course of exposures at 36 in. for one and a half to two minutes to the rays of a mercury vapour lamp sufficient, or is something more stimulating needed, such as the Kromayer lamp actually pressed on the skin or held quite close?

ANGOSTURA BITTERS.

"T. D." asks: (1) What is the chemical nature of angostura bitters, and what, if any, are its active or toxic constituents? (2) What are its physiological or pathological effects? (3) Are there any known authentic cases of poisoning, chronic or acute, occurring as a direct result of the consumption of angostura bark?

*** The chief ingredient of angostura bitters is the angostura bark, also called cusparia bark. A good deal of work has been done on cusparia in times past, and numerous alkaloids have been found in it, but we are not aware of any evidence suggesting that the bark can be regarded as in any way toxic. It was formerly thought to have febrifuge and antiperiodic properties, but its virtues are, in all probability, merely those of an aromatic bitter tonic. We have been unable to find any record of a case of poisoning, acute or chronic, as the result of consuming the bark in any form. Two recipes for angostura bitters are given in *Pharmaceutical Formulas*, issued from the office of the *Chemist and Druggist*. Each contains angostura bark and alcohol as the principal ingredients, with cardamom seeds, cinnamon, and orange peel as flavourings. The second formula includes also cinchona bark and gentian root.

INCOME TAX.

Renewal of Car.

"A. C. R." sold his car in July, 1927, and is being allowed £640 as obsolescence; that amount wipes out his Schedule D income, if not his entire taxable income, and therefore he receives no benefit from the children's and life assurance allowances. Can he spread the deduction over, say, the next two years?

*** No; the amount must be treated as an expense of the year in which the replacement was effected. "A. C. R." can, however, carry forward the loss resulting from so treating the expense and deduct that amount from the income of 1928, and

can also claim to have the personal and similar allowances for 1928-29 granted from his other income—by repayment, if necessary.

Claim to Three Years' Average.

"J. M." commenced practice on September 30th, 1924, having terminated his assistantship two months earlier. He was assessed for 1925-26 on the amount of his earnings for that year—presumably as having commenced a new practice. Can he claim to be assessed on the basis of the three years' average for 1927-28?

*** The average can be claimed under certain conditions by "any person who for the year 1926-27 was assessed and charged under Schedule D . . . upon an average of a period of three years or more . . ." (Finance Act, 1926, Section 29 (3)). If, as we understand, "J. M." was regarded for income tax purposes as having started a new practice, he will have been charged to tax for 1926-27 on the basis of his first year's earnings and not on "an average . . . of three years." In such circumstances he is not within the relieving section quoted above.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

BRONCHO-PNEUMONIA IN CHILDREN TREATED BY INJECTIONS OF EMETINE.

DR. T. DOUGLAS ROSS (Glasgow) writes: In your issue of May 19th (p. 844) Dr. C. Robertson Wilson recorded the results of treatment of fifty cases of broncho-pneumonia with injections of emetine hydrochloride. He notes that, while in some cases the febrile period seemed to be shortened by emetine, in others the drug had no apparent effect. I suggest that his successful cases (apart from some that might have done well with no medicine) were examples of the homoeopathic action of emetine, and that the cases which did not respond needed some other drug, according to their particular symptoms. Fifty children with broncho-pneumonia differ widely one from the other. One may show anxiety, restlessness, an after-midnight aggravation of symptoms, and excessive prostration—indicating arsenic. In another, intense thirst for big cold drinks would suggest phosphorus; if with this thirst there is profuse head sweat, veratrum viride is indicated. In my experience ipecacuanha is needed fairly frequently, especially at the commencement of pneumonia in children, when nausea and vomiting are prominent, the respirations are rattling from excess of mucus, and the cough is spasmodic, almost suffocative. When this rattling is present in cases nearly moribund, and the child seems almost suffocated with its bronchial secretions, tartar emetic is preferable, and often saves a life.

WHOLESALE EXTRACTION OF TEETH.

DR. R. N. BURTON (Irvinebank, North Queensland) writes: Is it not time that a halt was called in regard to the indiscriminate extraction of teeth on insufficient grounds? On a number of occasions I have seen patients urged to have all their teeth removed, the only local indications being a slight retraction of the gums or a slight gingivitis. A brief discussion with any patient who has had all his or her teeth extracted would, I am sure, convince any medical man that there are grave mechanical and other disadvantages attached to the wearing of dentures. I am convinced that in many cases where the trouble is attributed to a patient's teeth this is a refuge and not a diagnosis. I would suggest that before advising the serious step of wholesale extraction a doctor should satisfy himself that the teeth in question are definitely loose, or that apical sepsis is clearly demonstrated by x rays. If there is any doubt as to the cause of the malady (and I submit that in many cases where the patient's teeth are blamed there is grave doubt), instead of ordering a wholesale extraction of teeth the patient should be given the benefit of that doubt and treated on general lines, and instructed to return in, say, six months' time for another examination.

INTRAVENOUS TREATMENT OF VARICOSE ULCERS.

At the combined meeting of the Sections of Dermatology and Surgery of the Royal Society of Medicine on May 16th, reported in our last issue at p. 897, the chair was taken not by Mr. Davies-Colley, but by Dr. J. M. H. MacLeod, President of the Section of Dermatology.

HARVEY TERCENTENARY BANQUET.

PHOTOGRAPHIA, LTD. (17, Cheapside, E.C.2), ask us to say that their flashlight photograph of the Harvey tercentenary banquet in the Guildhall may be obtained in three sections, No. 1 being the centre section, No. 2 that on the president's left, and No. 3 that on his right.

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 44, 45, 48, 49, 50, and 51 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 46 and 47.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 235.