

Letters, Notes, and Answers

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Dry Mouth

Dr. C. LUTHER BATTESON (Watford) writes: If the cause of dryness is sleeping with the mouth open "W. H. M." (February 20th, p. 361) may get relief from the use of a "bridle" to prevent the lower jaw falling during sleep. This is made of elastic, one inch wide, to go over the head and under the chin, with another piece stitched on so as to pass above the ears and under the occiput. It should not be tight; slight elastic pressure is sufficient. I have found this arrangement of great value for children under similar conditions.

Mr. J. H. BADCOCK (London, W.) writes: Supposing that "W. H. M." breathes freely through the nose he should consult his dental surgeon, who would make him a light vulcanite shield, known as a "mouth valve," to fit inside the lips and prevent mouth-breathing. Of the comfort it gives I speak from personal experience. The absence of teeth is a difficulty, but doubtless this could be overcome. If the jaw tends to drop during sleep a light bandage might be needed to support it.

"B" writes: I suffer in a similar way to "W. H. M." By the side of my bed at night I keep a number of tiny pieces of lump sugar. When I wake I put a piece of this between the gum and the lip of the upper side of the mouth. It induces saliva, and if one "swallows" it when asleep it is not likely to matter much. I have done this for many years, and always with effect.

Wasp Stings

Dr. E. H. WILKINS (assistant school medical officer, Birmingham) writes: The application of alkalis is generally recommended for stings, probably on the ground that most stings are acid. It is said, however, that wasp sting is alkaline. Can anyone give authoritative information on this point and the best remedy for wasp sting?

Cowper's Insanity

Dr. J. B. DAVIDSON (Morpeth) writes: In reply to "M.D.'s" question about the type of insanity from which Cowper the poet suffered, I imagine this must have been chronic melancholia, following on paranoia. As a schoolboy he was shy and suspicious of his fellows. He became introspective and appeared to misinterpret his sensations. In later life he became the subject of both hallucinations and delusions, which goaded him on to attempt suicide by hanging. This failed, and he next became filled with acute remorse. It is interesting to note that the climax of his suicidal desire took place in the early morning—a tendency common to chronic melancholics. For some years Cowper lived a life of self-accusation, delusions, and false beliefs, especially those of sin and unworthiness. Finally, dropsy overtook him, and he died in April, 1800.

Income Tax

Residence in the United Kingdom

"W. H. P." is in the Colonial Medical Service, and his wife and children are normally resident here. He is at present in the United Kingdom on leave, but proposes to return to the colony on April 6th. He inquires what will be the result as regards his income tax liability if he purchases or rents a house for his wife and children in 1932-33.

** The general principle deduced from a series of High Court decisions is that when a person maintains a residence in the United Kingdom available for his use he is liable as a British resident for any financial year in which he is personally in this country. Those decisions do not specifically contemplate a case where the residence was acquired after departure from the country, but the general tendency is to look to the facts of each financial year as a whole. While, therefore, the position is open to doubt, we are inclined to think that "W. H. P." would be held to be liable to British income tax as a resident for the year 1932-33 in the circumstances stated unless he can arrange to expedite his departure by twenty-four hours. The basis of liability would be the total amount remitted to the United Kingdom during the year.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Operation at Advanced Age

Professor GREY TURNER (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) writes: In your last issue, my friend Mr. Dickie of Middlesbrough writes concerning an operation for hernia on a man during his 91st year. Five years ago I operated for double inguinal hernia on a hardy old Northerner of 93 years of age. The ruptures were causing him a good deal of inconvenience, though they had never been strangulated. At his very urgent request I did a double radical cure, using a local anaesthetic. He tolerated the intervention perfectly well, and made a good immediate recovery, though alas! both herniae recurred a few months afterwards. Surely it was expecting too much of tissues nearing their normal span! Two years ago I saw an old gentleman in his 91st year suffering from what was clearly a ruptured viscus. Unfortunately ten hours had elapsed since the time of perforation, but none the less he appeared to have a reasonable chance, and an operation was carried out. A perforated duodenal ulcer was found and dealt with, but he died quite suddenly some few hours afterwards. I have at the present time under my care a bright, alert old man in his 90th year, suffering from a large rodent ulcer occupying the orbit and extending into both the cheek and the nose. In order to carry out treatment by radium it was necessary to give him a general anaesthetic, but he withstood the ordeal perfectly well, and is making a recovery free from untoward incident. I remember, many years ago, a woman in the seventies who was highly indignant with her own medical man because he had told her that she was too old for an operation. Her words of reproach, to the effect that "old people had as much right to be relieved as young ones," have always been a guiding principle with me, and I have often proved their justification.

"Captain of the Men of Death"

Dr. R. CHALMERS (Darlington) writes: I thank Dr. Hayes Smith for his correction of my misapplication of Osler's designation referred to in my letter. It is nearly twenty-five years since I read *Aequanimitas*, and the quotation was quite familiar to me. The responsibility for misapplication is due to my finding it so applied in a paper by Sir James Barr, published in the *British Medical Journal* of April 26th, 1930 (p. 774), where he says, "How is it that since then [the armistice] not only the incidence but the mortality from diseases of the circulatory system has so increased that they have now become, in Osler's language, the 'Captain of the Men of Death'?"

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, and 50 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 48 and 49.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 75.