

privately and professionally. The latter category would cover the surgery, waiting room, garage, and dispensary, and some allowance would be due for the bedroom occupied by the maid employed for the purposes of the practice. There was formerly a maximum allowance of two-thirds for professional use, but nowadays one-half is a more common proportion. One useful basis of comparison is to have regard to the balance left (one-third or one-half as the case may be) and consider whether that represents a reasonable payment for the private use, having in mind what is paid by other private tenants in the locality. Rates would follow the same proportion, but repairs can usually be dealt with more precisely, the actual expenditure on the professional rooms being charged as professional expenses.

Employment of Boy on Car and Garden

"H. S." employs a boy, 18 years of age, for "cleaning the car, doing running repairs, and driving the car when a locum is employed; he also works in the garden, etc." So far, "H. S." has charged half his salary as a professional expense; is that enough?

** The answer depends on whether the boy spends more than half his time working in connexion with the car. Unless "H. S." employs a locum to an abnormal extent, thereby increasing the boy's motor-car work, one-half would seem to be about the right proportion.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Is Determinism Dead?

Mr. E. G. FENTON, F.R.C.S.I. (Dublin), writes: In the *Journal* of February 27th, under the heading of "The philosophy of a biologist," Dr. Joseph Needham's book, *The Great Amphibium*, is reviewed, and the reviewer goes on to say that: "To-day the physicists have abandoned determinism, but most of the followers of biological science, more royalist than the king, remain faithful to their ancient creed, and while the physicists are driven to advance theories of indeterminacy to account for the vagaries of the behaviour of atoms, many psychologists confidently interpret human behaviour on strictly determinist lines." Further on, the article states: "The new physics was founded because the laws of classical physics could not explain the behaviour of the smallest units of matter." From which I presume that the writer of the article, as well as Dr. Needham, agrees with certain eminent physicists that determinism is now dead as the dodo, and should be decently interred. Now, Sir, I have recently perused certain articles, published by Jeans and others, in which they discuss the evidence for and against (chiefly against) determinism, and I must say that I do not feel convinced that determinism is dead. To me, as an ordinary plain man in the street, we must go whole hog either for determinism or for indeterminism. I can find no compromise or half-way road between the two. If we throw determinism overboard, what have we got to take its place? Two and two can no longer, when added together, be held always to make four; and should we combine two parts of hydrogen with one of oxygen in a vessel, and pass an electric spark, we are as likely to find chocolate creams or red herrings resulting as we are to find water. Simply because certain of those minute particles which constitute the atom do not always behave in accordance with our preconceived ideas of how they should behave is, in my opinion, no reason for scrapping determinism. If we scrap determinism, I am afraid nothing will remain but chaos. Until physicists are able to assure us that they thoroughly know and understand all the laws which govern the behaviour of what is called matter in its entirety, I think they would be well advised to leave the question of whether determinism is or is not dead severely alone.

Doctors and District Nurses

A "Somerset G.P." writes: It appears to me that "Another Devonshire G.P.," and possibly "G.P." writing on March 26th, are rather beside the mark. It is undoubtedly the case that rural, and possibly country town, midwifery is now conducted by the district nurse, under the qualification C.M.B. Certainly this is so in slum and cottage cases. The midwife only sends for the doctor when she is unable to conduct the case herself by reason of abnormal presentation. My experience fully endorses that of "G.P." of March 26th, and I need only quote two recent instances, out of many, of flagrant breaches of professional etiquette by the district nurse. (1) Attendance for several weeks

upon a mentally deranged woman who finally committed suicide by putting herself upside down in a tub of water, at which event I was called in. I am pleased to say that I induced the cornerer to reprimand the nurse for accepting responsibilities which did not come within her scope. (2) A private patient of mine, for whom I ordered a simple enema and instructed the friends of the patient to get the nurse to administer it. The nurse reported to me that she had failed to give a satisfactory enema, but had given the patient "a good dose of castor oil." These are two of many instances in my practice where a district nurse has prescribed for my private patients, and more often than not in cases where I have not sent for her, but found her in attendance while I was attending. A nurse's duty is to nurse, to act under the instructions of the medical attendant, and not to run a competitive medical and surgical practice. It is high time that the British Medical Association took up this district nursing question with the county nursing associations, which run their nursing scheme to the detriment of the medical profession and the public. The district nurse is between the devil and the deep sea. She must carry on as her local nursing committee dictates, she must tout for subscribers and please the public, and she must beware of the doctor, upon whose field of work she generally encroaches so unprofessionally.

Dr. S. BARTLETT (South Uist) writes in reply to "G.P.'s" letter published on March 26th (p. 598): I have an area of roughly 100 square miles with two district nurses. I am president of both nursing associations, and control both nurses. They have always proved most willing and eager to do anything I have told them, and have shown themselves capable midwives. They save me many weary hours, and are always at hand to give an enema when required. I would not be without them "for worlds." God bless them.

A Medical Epitaph

"G. S. W." writes: On a tablet beside the south door of Totnes Parish Church there is the following epitaph to William Marshall, surgeon, who died on May 17th, 1808:

Steady but liberal in his Religion
Humane and friendly in his Profession
Circumspect in his Morals
Conciliating in his Manners
Revered by his Relatives
And regretted by his Patients
By a sudden call of the divine Mercy
He was taken hence to a better World

Of Mr. Marshall's virtues the one that appeals to me most is the third. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "Circumspect" as "Cautious, wary, taking everything into account."

First-aid Equipment on the Roads

The Automobile Association announces that in future all A.A. roadside telephone boxes will be equipped with emergency first-aid outfits, which will be available to members at any hour of the day or night. The contents include iodine, sterilized dressings, bandages, safety pins, etc., and are intended for the use of members in the absence of the A.A. patrols. This new emergency outfit is supplementary to the comprehensive first-aid set contained in all the roadside telephone boxes, which is used by patrols who are qualified to render first aid in cases of accident.

Indian Medical Service Pensions

A Correction

Colonel W. G. KING, I.M.S.(ret.), writes: In my letter on the above subject, which appeared in your issue of April 2nd, I suggested that in discussion it was desirable to hold in mind the distinction between the Indian Medical Service and the Indian Medical Department, with which it might be confused. As to the latter term, I should have used the full designation—Indian Medical Subordinate Department.

Corrigendum

The photograph of the late Professor G. M. Robertson reproduced last week was by Messrs. E. R. Yerbury (Edinburgh) and not Yerbury as printed.

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 38, 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 143.