

expenditure as incurred as outlay to enable him to obtain the allowance.

#### Cost of Visiting Hospitals

"F. G." writes to say that he has been refused—after appeal to the Commissioners—the deduction of the expense of travelling from the town in which he practises to London, where he holds an appointment as senior clinical assistant.

\*\* Legally that is correct. There is, however, a general practice which has long official sanction of pooling appointment receipts with those of the general practice, and allowing the whole of the gross expenses against the aggregate gross receipts. But the normal case is one where the appointment is a local one. In the present instance there is a distance of seventy to eighty miles between the residence and the place where the work of the appointment is carried on, and the Revenue authorities may very well regard that as outside the usual arrangement, and follow the strict legal course of making separate assessments. In that case our correspondent appears to have no remedy.

### LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

#### Aetiology of Silicosis

Lieut.-Colonel G. FOWLER, I.M.S. (ret.), writes from Ghatsila with reference to the report on silicosis and tuberculosis in South Africa (*Journal*, January 20th): An excellent article has been written on the causation of silicosis by Dr. W. R. Jones, in the *Bulletin of the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy* (published at 225, City Road, E.C.), and any of your readers interested in this disease should read it. It clearly shows that the disease is due to the presence of sericite (a hydrous silicate of aluminium and potassium) in a fibrous or acicular condition. The comparison between the South African gold mines and the Kolar gold mines in India is interesting, as in the Indian mines the dry method of drilling is still carried on, and yet the disease there is extremely rare, whereas with wet drilling in the South African mines silicosis still exists and is a menace to the workers. [See page 676.]

#### Ether Convulsions

Dr. MARGARET H. ELLIOTT (Belfast) writes: I have seen several occurrences of ether convulsions such as described by Dr. D. Masters Brown (*Journal*, March 31st, p. 579). They appear to occur when the patient is lightly anaesthetized, and sometimes a pre-existing toxic condition exists. When toxicity is present the patient seems, during the administration, suddenly to pass from the first stage of anaesthesia to what is apparently the third stage, but what is more probably a state of anaesthetic shock, apart from operative intervention, and which on these occasions does not encourage one to deepen the anaesthesia (as one would if operation was in progress), although hardly enough anaesthetic has been administered as would ordinarily produce the third stage of anaesthesia.

#### Professional Telephone Facilities

CETEX LTD. (19, Grosvenor Place, S.W.1), an organization operating an auxiliary exchange under licence from H.M. Postmaster-General, announces the extension of this service to medical men living in the London area. The system, which is already used by commercial concerns, offices, private individuals, and one London newspaper, offers a day-and-night service to each subscriber. There are two types of service—automatic and non-automatic. The former obtains within a radius of roughly a mile from Hyde Park Corner, the latter extends over the whole London area. With the automatic service a switch is fixed to the subscriber's telephone, so that if he has to leave his instrument unattended, all in-coming calls can be diverted on a special line to the Cetex exchange. These calls are answered by operators in that exchange who, using the formula "Mr. —'s secretary speaking," will take messages, fix appointments, advise as to the whereabouts of the doctor in question, and, following instructions previously given to them, get in touch with him if required. When the doctor returns to his consulting room it is only necessary for him to switch back the telephone, ring the Cetex exchange, and take whatever messages there may be waiting for him. This automatic service costs £52 annually, and includes line rental, engineering charges, maintenance costs, etc. Facilities in respect of the subscriber's home telephone number are included under this charge, so that he need not notify any numbers other than that of his home and his consulting room. For those who live outside the "automatic area" the non-automatic service can be arranged for ten guineas a year. By this system the doctor

gives as an alternative number that of the Cetex exchange. In the event of no answer being obtainable at his own house the caller rings up the alternative number, and messages, etc., are taken as in the case of the automatic service. Here, of course, it is necessary to notify on the stationery and in the telephone directory that the alternative number (Sloane 4554) must be rung if "no reply" is obtainable from the first number. It is pointed out that all messages, etc., are treated in strict confidence, and that each subscriber has a private code number.

#### The Meaning of "Vegetarian"

The secretary of the London Vegetarian Society (8, John Street, W.C.2) writes: The text of Dr. Robert Hutchison's Hastings Popular Lecture, as published in the *British Medical Journal* of March 10th, contains no reference to vegetarianism, as such, nor is the word "vegetarian" once included. The fact, however, that leading representatives of the lay press, in publishing their reports of the lecture, assumed that vegetarianism, as invariably defined in this country by those who practise it—that is, as implying abstinence from "fish, flesh, and fowl"—had actually been disparaged, seems to call for some comment. "Doctor critic of vegetarianism," says one; "It is difficult to secure good nutrition by vegetarianism"—on the supposed authority of Dr. Hutchison—declares another. It seems plain, however, that at some point in the lecture the word "vegetarian," in one or other of its forms, was inadvertently used to denote the practice (so far as such, in this country, may be said to exist at all) of living entirely on the produce of the vegetable kingdom, but the fact, Sir, that the word, bearing such erroneous implication, did not actually appear in your own pages, is, in itself, significant. Whether or not the choice of terminology in the first instance was a wise one is now beside the mark; clearly, the word is now well understood, and, also, it has come to stay. The current meaning—denoting, that is to say, abstinence from flesh foods, with or without the use of dairy produce—as adopted by all the vegetarian societies in this country, has been in force at least as far back as 1847, and its employment with quite a different connotation by the lecturer on the occasion above-mentioned seems singularly unfortunate. Moreover, etymologically, the position would seem to be quite clear, the derivation being from the Latin *vegetus*, which means "strong," "vigorous." If, by courteous publication of the present letter, you should see your way to help in clarifying what is to many a not unimportant issue, a good many of your readers, I feel sure, would be duly grateful.

#### "Periodical Sterility"

Dr. MARIE C. STOPES (London, W.1) writes: In the letter under the heading "Ovulation and Menstruation," in the *British Medical Journal* of March 31st, Dr. Denzaburo Kato mentions, as though it were an established fact, that "periodical sterility was a great relief to those people who are not allowed to use any mechanical or chemical contraceptive methods, and who want to limit their families"—in short, what has long been popularly called "the use of the 'safe period.'" May I state the results of an extensive experience at a birth control clinic, and of confidences from every country in the world from people of all classes, that the so-called "safe period," far from being a relief, is a snare and a delusion, and I am much surprised that it should be spoken of in your *Journal* as though it were an established fact.

#### Limits of Cosmetic Medicine

A correspondent sends us the following extract from a London evening newspaper of April 6th. "Miss Bankhead has just had five months in hospital. She is the same Tallulah. The same husky voice. The same dark eyes and the same pallid complexion." Is this to be regarded as a failure on the part of American laryngologists, ophthalmologists, and dermatologists?

The Marmite Food Extract Co. Ltd. (Walsingham House, Seething Lane, E.C.3) has recently issued a pamphlet on the medical uses of marmite. According to a recent estimation one ounce of this product contains 840 international units of vitamin B<sub>1</sub>.

#### Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 50, 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 160.