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Letters, Notes, and Answers.

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EDITOR of the **BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL**, *Aitiology Westcent, London.*

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

MENSTRUAL "UNCLEANLINESS."

DR. ROBERT HUTCHISON (London, W.) writes: I have recently discovered that there exists a belief, even amongst educated persons, that if meat is handled by a woman during her menstrual period decomposition of the meat is apt to result. I should be glad if any of your readers can inform me whether this superstition is at all widespread and, if so, how it arose.

* * Some hint of an explanation of how it arose may perhaps be found in *Leviticus*, chapter 15, verse 19 et seq. The belief that milk may be spoiled if a menstruating woman handles the udder of the cow or the utensils is certainly very widespread.

"FILLETING."

"J. E. P." writes: The following is an extract from the churchwardens' and overseers' account for the year 1680: "Paid for five yard of filleting and for sugar, which was used about setting Peter Smyth's leg, 0-0-6." "Filleting," I am told, is a kind of lute and was probably used for a bandage. I should be interested to learn for what purpose the sugar was used. Was it to "stiffen" the bandage?

* * This is probably a variant spelling of "filleting," which is synonymous with a bandage. The two small "f's" represent a capital letter. In the *New English Dictionary* we find under Filleting:

"2. A woven material for binding; tape; a piece of the same; a band or bandage."

Examples of its use are:

1639, De Gray, *Compl. Horsem.*, 79, "Take a peece of Filleting and bind it above the Pastern-joynt."

1658, A. Fox, *Wurtz Surg.*, II, xxviii, 197, "I tied on the roulers two filletins."

There seems no connexion between filleting and lace on record in any of the dictionaries consulted. It is perhaps suggestive that "fillet" was also, and more commonly, used to denote a bandage, and that one meaning of this word, which is still in technical use, is a thin narrow strip of any material. The *New English Dictionary* has the following:

"Fillet. b. *Carpentry*. A narrow strip of wood fastened upon any surface to serve as a support, etc., or to strengthen an angle formed by two surfaces."

It is tempting to suppose that this word may have been used for a light splint, and the following quotation from Paley's *Natural Theology* supports such an interpretation:

"We cannot hardly help [sic] comparing this" (the ligament of the knee) "with the binding up of a fracture, where the fillet is almost always strapped across, for the sake of giving firmness and strength to the bandage."

Sugar may have been used as a poultice. We have known it so used aboard ship either alone or mixed with salt, and when mixed with soap it is a popular application for boils. Perhaps it acted as a hypertonic solution when wet. The eighteenth

century surgeon, William Cheselden, used white of egg and flour to stiffen a bandage for fractures, etc., but we have no recollection of reading of sugar being so employed. As Cheselden tells us that he got the idea from a bonesetter, the method may have been in use for centuries, handed down as a trade secret, and 1680 was not so very remote from his time.

TREATMENT OF FLATULENCE.

DR. P. H. COURT (Norton Cuckney, Mansfield) writes in answer to "West Country" (October 1st, p. 620), who asked for advice as to the treatment of recurrent attacks of gastric and intestinal flatulence, to recommend "taxol," a French preparation. The makers state that it consists of extracts of intestinal glands and of bile, together with lactic ferments, and agar-agar. Dr. Court recommends that it should be given after meals, and that the dose should be from one to six tablets, according to the result obtained.

DR. C. C. ELLIOTT (Leicester), in reply to the inquiry from "West Country," sends the following suggestions: (1) Deal with oral sepsis, if present; (2) give 2 grains of takadiastase with each meal; (3) if still unrelieved, give also colloidal hydroxide of aluminium, two tablets before and two tablets after each meal.

INCOME TAX.

Car Replacement: Average Basis.

"W. L. A." replaced his car in 1925 and, owing to the operation of the three years' average, has so far received a benefit of only one-third of that amount. As the assessment for 1927-28 is on the 1926 figures, he is losing the benefit of the remaining two-thirds. The inspector of taxes offers to cancel the £69 deduction and allow percentage wear and tear on (apparently) the new car. (Section 29, Finance Act, 1926, giving the election to continue the average does not apply.)

* * In our view the deduction of the 1925 expenses, giving an effective relief of £69 only, can properly be treated as a grant of the "obsolescence" allowance. In that case there is no reason why the depreciation allowance on the new car for 1927-28 and future years should not be given. (The 1926-27 claim is now out of date.) The equities of the case are so strong that the inspector might reasonably be pressed to deal with it on this basis.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

INSURANCE AGAINST ACCIDENTS TO DEPUTIES.

"SHEFFIELD" writes: On inquiry I find that a medical man who employs a locumtenent is liable for accidents (1) under the common law; (2) under the Workmen's Compensation Acts. Under the latter Acts if a locumtenent meets with a fatal accident when so employed the employer may have to pay as much as £300. This year I insured my locumtenent for three weeks. There were the usual forms to be filled up and a payment of 10s. 9d., also a wages book had to be kept showing the weekly payments to the locumtenent, and finally I had to fill up a form for the use of the Government inspector, giving full particulars of wages paid, costs of board, lodging, etc., and date of termination of contract, etc. I intend in future to cut all this trouble out by only engaging a locumtenent who has insured himself already against all risks.

MEDICAL GOLF.

The autumn meeting of the Medical Golfing Society was held at Rye on October 8th and 9th, by kind permission. The course was in beautiful order and every arrangement was made for the comfort of the competitors. The thanks of the society are certainly due to the secretary, Major Reeves. The dinner and selling sweep were a great success. The results of the competitions were as follows:

Singles v. Bogey.—1st, W. H. Lamplough, 1 up; 2nd, H. Chapple, 1 down; G. Dawson and G. Hebert tied for third place, 2 down.

Foursomes v. Bogey.—1st, L. Bromley and Surgeon Commander Busack, 2 down; J. Everidge and M. S. Mayou, J. C. Lee and D. Ligat, tied for second place, 3 down.

The *Canny Ryall Cup* was won by J. D. Gray with the score of 77; T. A. Torrance, J. W. Harrison, and M. S. Mayou tied at 78 for second place. Won on replay by T. A. Torrance.

BAG FOUND.

A **BLACK** Gladstone bag was picked up and handed to the police on August 22nd on the Maidstone Road, East Sutton, near Maidstone. It is 15 in. by 9 in., has become almost brown from wear, and contains various surgical appliances, bandages, etc. Communications should be sent to the Kent County Constabulary, Wrens Cross, Maidstone.

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 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 151.