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to explain the circumstances fully to the inspector of taxes and press his contention that there is no adequate ground in law for the assessment of the sum in question.

Expense of Locumtenent

"K. L." is a dispensary doctor in Northern Ireland. The board of guardians allows him a month's holiday, and pay a locumtenent £4 4s. per week. The locumtenent does "K. L.'s" panel work as well, and "K. L." bears the cost of his board and lodging. The inspector of taxes refuses "K. L.'s" claim to deduct that expense.

** The legal position is that "K. L." is not entitled to deduct the expense in arriving at his liability under Schedule E, but presumably the "panel" profits are assessed under Schedule D, and it seems fairly clear that both law and practice would support his claim to deduct the board and lodging cost in calculating the Schedule D liability on the panel practice.

Cash Basis

"O. L. M." has been assessed on the cash basis ever since he has been in practice—in four districts. The inspector of taxes now insists on changing over to the cash basis as adjusted by the value of outstanding debts as from January next. Can he resist this?

** The inspector's attitude is legally correct, and the assessment of medical profits on a cash basis is a matter of convenience and concession only. Consequently "O. L. M." cannot very well press his resistance to a formal appeal. At the same time there is a fairly general understanding that the cash basis shall not be disturbed in cases where the profits do not show a tendency to increase—and where accordingly the change in basis would give trouble and bring in no advantage to the revenue—and "O. L. M." might emphasize that aspect of the question with advantage.

Replacement of Car—Obsolescence

"L. H. B. M." bought a car for £430 in 1929 and has been allowed depreciation in respect of it at 20 per cent. for the years 1930-1, 1931-2, and 1932-3—apparently to an aggregate amount of £86+£69+£55=£210. He sold it last September for £110, buying in its place two cars costing £345 and £125 respectively. What allowances should he claim and for what year?

** The allowances should be claimed as for the year 1933-4, and are as follows:

Obsolescence Allowance:

Original cost price of car	...	...	...	£430
Deduct—Aggregate depreciation allowances	...	...	£210	
Amount received on sale...	...	...	£110	
				£320
Amount of obsolescence allowance	...	...	...	£110
to be treated as a professional expense of the year 1932				

Depreciation Allowance:

Cost price of cars (£345 + £125)	...	...	...	£470
Allowance at 20 per cent.	...	...	...	£ 94
Value to carry forward	...	...	...	£376

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Treatment of Erysipelas

Dr. E. T. LARKAM (Birmingham) writes: In your issue of October 15th Drs. Schlesinger and Fraser, in reporting a case of erysipelas, state that "ringing round an inch from the spreading edge with tr. iodi fortis had not the slightest effect." For many years past I have treated erysipelas, with excellent results, by applying lint soaked in a 15 per cent. solution of ichthyol in glycerin, deeply ringing round the advancing margin with the strong solution of perchloride of iron (B.P.) twice daily for three or four days. I have found strong tincture of iodine to be totally ineffective.

Witch-burning

Professor D. F. FRASER-HARRIS writes: May I correct the date of the burning of the last witch in Scotland as given by your reviewer of *The Lame, the Halt, and the Blind* (October 29th, p. 800). The date was 1722, not 1727. I happen to possess a copy of a work, *Old Dornoch: Its Traditions and Legends*, by H. M. MacKay, town clerk (privately printed, 1920). In Chapter III (p. 95) we are

told that the name of this poor creature was Janet Horn, and that she was burnt alive after being covered with tar. It is almost incredible that in this country so late as 1722 a human being should have received such treatment at the hands of "the authorities," but it is one more proof of the lengths to which pious people will go when they believe they are doing something praiseworthy, for was it not written: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"? Janet Horn was duly tried in Dornoch, the county town, by the sheriff-depute of the county of Sutherland.

Medical Pundits

Sir ERNEST GRAHAM-LITTLE writes: In your editorial (October 29th) you imply some bewilderment as to how addresses given by me reach the public press. The explanation is entirely simple, and has already been made by me in the *British Medical Journal Supplement* (November 22nd, 1930), when I mentioned that some years ago I received an invitation from the managing director of one of the leading press agencies in London to furnish his agency with an advance summary of any public lecture I proposed to give. I happen to be the only medical representative in Parliament of British universities; I am the sole representative of my university, and it is the largest in the British Empire, if not in the world, with some 24,000 students now registered as reading for its degrees. Doubtless it is this circumstance, and not my own qualities, that accounts for the invitation, which I accepted, and which is still in operation. The agency selects without consultation with myself the portions of the address which it will furnish to the press, and on this occasion it happens that one subject forming a relatively small part of my address was so selected—namely, my comment on the action taken by the Council of the British Medical Association in concert with other bodies to prevent or restrict the granting of medical patents.

** The rest of Sir E. Graham-Little's letter is irrelevant to the point at issue.

Thyroideum Siccum "B.P. 1932"

Dr. H. A. MITCHELL (Evans' Biological Institute, Runcorn) writes: A certain amount of confusion has arisen in respect of this product, which is now to be assayed on a new basis. This new basis does not bear any constant relation in successive batches to the total iodine content of the gland, and our ideas with regard to dosage must be amended accordingly. This present communication, however, refers to the standard now laid down. This states that it shall contain 0.1 per cent. of iodine in combination as thyroxine, and not more inorganic iodine than 10 per cent. of the content of total iodine. The iodine content of thyroid gland is made up, partly of inorganic iodine, but mainly of iodine in organic combination. This organic iodine occurs in two forms—namely, as thyroxine, and as acid-soluble di-iodotyrosine, this latter being physiologically inert. The B.P. requirement is satisfactory in so far as the thyroxine content is concerned, but it is assumed in describing the assay of inorganic iodine that it is only this which is water-soluble. Harrington and Randall (*Quart. Journ. Pharm.*, 1929, p. 501) also assume that in drying thyroid the iodothyroglobin is denatured and so rendered insoluble in water. In actual practice this is only correct if the temperature of drying is sufficiently high. The B.P. 1932 fixes an upper limit of 60° C. for this drying, but makes no mention of a lower limit, leaving one to conclude that therefore the drying should be carried out at the lowest possible temperature in order that as little change as possible due to heat will be caused. Yet if thyroid gland be dried at a temperature of, say, 40° to 45° C., the organic iodine is not denatured, and consequently remains water-soluble. It appears, therefore, that thyroid dried at low, and what I describe as optimum, temperatures will not conform with the new B.P. requirement, but must be heated up to a considerably higher temperature than is actually necessary for drying. One may argue that denatured protein is more readily assimilated by the gastrointestinal tract, and that therefore one would get more rapid absorption, but in the presence of a certain amount of empiricism it is advisable to heat a substance unnecessarily, with its resultant chemical change, the exact therapeutic action of which is even yet not clearly understood?

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 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 243.

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