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## Letters, Notes, and Answers

All communications in regard to editorial business should be addressed to **The EDITOR, British Medical Journal, B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.**

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### QUERIES AND ANSWERS

#### Domestic Water-heating

"HOT-WATER" writes: I have a two-story house with eight hot-water taps, one being that in the bath, and another being a spray. The present method of heating the water is unsatisfactory and inadequate. Can any reader inform me of the best domestic water-heating system to suit me, or tell me where to turn for information?

#### Softening the Beard

Dr. P. J. EDMUNDS (Dulwich) writes: Shaving difficulties, as discussed recently in "Queries and Answers," are, I believe, almost always due to blunt razors, and these in turn are due to soapy or greasy strops. Strops should be washed in hot water and soap occasionally, well rinsed, and then allowed to dry. Razors should always be wiped clean from soap and debris *before* they are stropped, so as not to soil the leather. A good edge can often be obtained on a piece of brown paper, if it is dry and free from grease or varnish, without any razor paste. The essential point is to get rid of all grease and oil. The same principle is seen in the case of violin bows, the hair of which should never be touched with a finger.

#### Income Tax

##### Liability of Superannuation Allowance

"FARGATE" has retired from public service and receives a superannuation allowance of £27 yearly. Is this correctly assessed at 5s. in the £?

\*\* It is undoubtedly assessable; whether the 5s. rate is correct would depend on "Fargate's" other income—for example, an allowance in respect of earned income relief is due unless the maximum allowance (£250) has been given for the same year from other income.

##### Personal Allowance: Husband and Wife in Practice

"E. W." married on April 2nd, 1932, and has been assessed for 1932-3 on the basis of the aggregate earnings of his wife and himself in 1931-2. The personal allowances given in the assessment are £150+£45 (for earnings of wife), whereas when the income was earned the allowances due were £100+£100=£200.

\*\* It is assumed that for 1932-3 the wife's professional work has continued. On that basis the allowances for 1932-3 are correct, but "E. W." would appear to be entitled to repayment of tax for 1931-2 on the ground that he was a married man in that year, and was entitled to an allowance of £150 in lieu of £100.

##### Definite Retirement

"L. C." is selling his practice as from December 31st, 1932, and retiring from professional work. How will this affect his liability for 1932-3 and the return to be made by him in April, 1933?

\*\* His liability for 1932-3 will be reduced to the tax appropriate (after deduction of full personal allowances) to

the amount of his earnings for the nine months ending December 31st, 1932. Also the Revenue authorities will be entitled to revise the assessment for the year to April 5th, 1932, to the tax appropriate to the earnings of that actual year. As from December 31st he ceases to be liable for professional earnings, and need not make any mention of them on his return for 1933-4.

### LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

#### Witch-burning

It was not without reflection and inquiry that the reviewer of *The Lame, The Halt, and The Blind*, in our issue of October 29th, assigned the date 1727 to the last judicial witch-burning in Scotland. Reference to Chambers's *Encyclopaedia* supplied inconsistent statements. Under the heading "Witchcraft" 1722 was alleged as the date, but under the heading "Dornoch" 1727 was given. Our reviewer then referred the question to the Editor of the *Encyclopaedia*, William Geddie, M.A., B.Sc., who took great pains to clear up the matter, and most courteously sent him copies of correspondence with the Sheriff-Clerk at Dornoch and observations by Dr. Malcolm of the S.S.C. Library, which space will not allow us to quote. Mr. Geddie concluded that "1727 seems to be the more likely date. I do not see much hope of advancing beyond that." Confusion between the figures 2 and 7 in some scripts is easy, and is known to occur.

#### Carbuncles and Boils

Mr. A. P. BERTWISTLE (London, W.1) writes: These conditions are, as Mr. Warren says of haemorrhoids, as commonly painful as they are painfully common. The more we see of them the more we come to rely on what John Hunter would call "the natural defences of the body." That incisions are no cure was shown by Sir James Paget (*Clinical Lectures and Essays*, 1875, p. 252); not only are they useless, but in the case of the upper lip distinctly dangerous. In view of the imminently unsuitable state of our knowledge of them I was tempted to use colloidal manganese butyrate (Crooke's), as recommended by Dr. H. L. McCormick (October 22nd, p. 780). The patient was given 2 c.cm. daily for a week. The patient's mental outlook changed at once, the carbuncle softened, and a few large sloughs came away, though the discharge was copious. I shall certainly use this preparation again.

#### "Punch"

"*Punch*" *Almanack*, published this week, is a very good shillingsworth, which the family medical attendant can prescribe for his patients, old and young, with every confidence. One of the larger "literary pieces" is a detective story by Evøe, who succeeds Sir Owen Seaman in the editorial chair. Polished wit, delicate humour, and admirable taste have always distinguished the writings of Mr. E. V. Knox, and the tradition of *Punch* is secure in his hands.

#### Corrigenda

In Dr. J. B. Simpson's letter on maternal morbidity, on page 855 of our last issue, an inaccuracy occurs owing to a wrong interpretation of the author's corrected proof. From the seventeenth line the text should read: "... and cause anxiety to both doctor and nurse in country practice. Even in L.O.A. positions of the vertex muscular young primiparae frequently require instrumental help," etc.

The conclusion of Dr. Wright Lambert's letter on "Fractures of the mandible" (November 5th, p. 858) should have run: "... where the only treatment he had received was a bandage to support his chin, and they told him to report at the end of a week."

#### "B.P. 1932"

Messrs. C. J. Hewlett and Son, Ltd. (Charlotte Street, E.C.2), are issuing to their medical and pharmaceutical clients a useful 46-page pamphlet entitled *Notes on the British Pharmacopoeia, 1932*, by E. J. Millard, Ph.C., F.C.S. They will forward a copy to any medical practitioner who applies for it, as long as the supply lasts.

#### Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 45, 46, 47, 50, and 51 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 251.



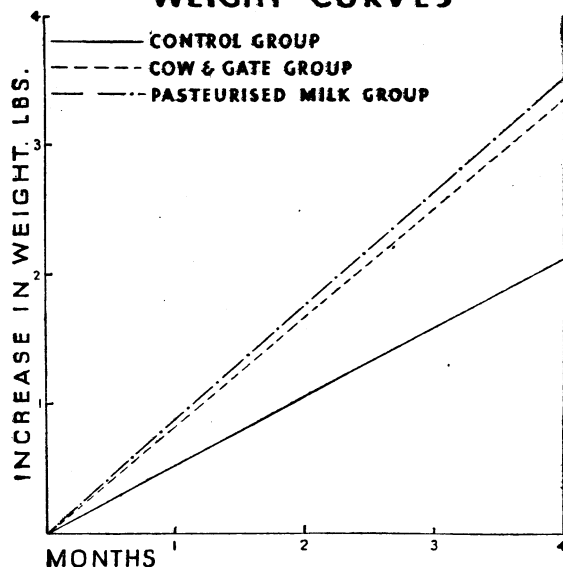
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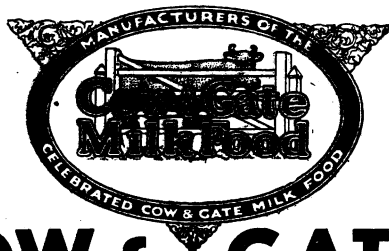
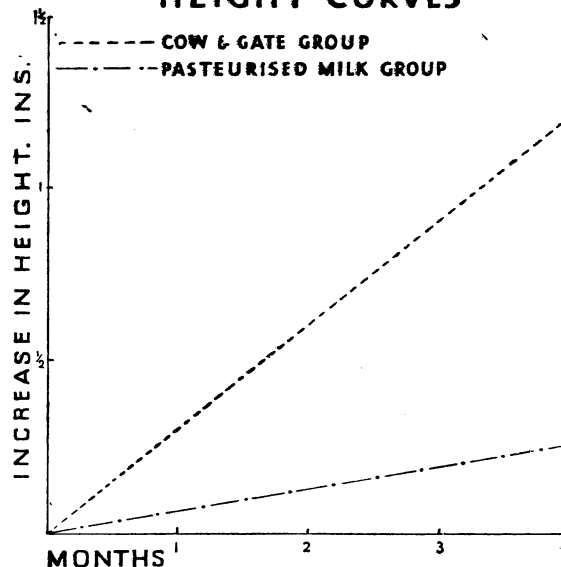
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### HEIGHT CURVES



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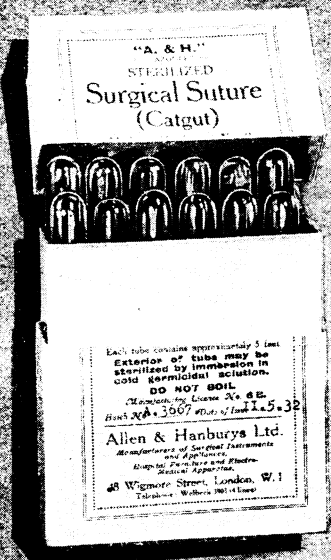


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