

Letters, Notes, and Answers

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The TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES are:

EDITOR OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, Aitiology Westcent, London.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND BUSINESS MANAGER (Advertisements, etc.), Articulate Westcent, London.

MEDICAL SECRETARY, Medisecra Westcent, London.

The address of the Irish Office of the British Medical Association is 18, Kildare Street, Dublin (telegrams: *Bacillus, Dublin*; telephone: 62550 Dublin), and of the Scottish Office, 7, Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh (telegrams: *Associate, Edinburgh*; telephone: 24361 Edinburgh).

QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Loss of Taste and Smell in Hay Fever

Captain H. G. ROBERTSON, R.A.M.C., writes: Up to five years ago a patient of mine suffered from severe attacks of hay fever and coryza, during which, as is common, he temporarily lost his sense of smell. After one of these attacks his smell (completely) and taste (partially) did not return, and though the hay fever was shortly afterwards cured by inoculation his senses of smell and taste remained absent. Three weeks ago he was admitted to hospital with a mixed infection of B.T. and M.T. malaria, and was treated in the usual way with quinine and plasmoquine. On his discharge he discovered that his senses of smell and taste had suddenly returned, and are now, if anything, more acute than ever before. Can any of your readers recall a parallel case, or can any explanation of the reasons for this be produced?

Income Tax

Obsolescence of Car—Assistant

"McK." bought a second-hand car on November 10th, 1930, for £110 and claimed depreciation on it as from that date to April 5th, 1932, thereby reducing the value by £9 plus £20 to £81. He was then out of employment, and sold the car for £57 in March, 1932. On May 31st, 1932, he took a permanent assistantship, and bought a second-hand car for £55. What can he claim?

** The "obsolescence" allowance would be £81 - £57 = £24, but it is doubtful whether it is technically due, because the car-transactions were not based on any question of obsolescence of the car. The claim is equitable, however, and we recommend "McK." to make it. He is, of course, entitled to the depreciation allowance for 1932-3, which would be ten-twelfths of 20 per cent. of £55—that is, £9.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Seasonal Incidence of Eclampsia

Dr. GEORGE MAHOMED (Bournemouth) writes: Dr. R. E. Tottenham's paper (*Journal*, December 9th, p. 1067) on the seasonal incidence of eclampsia in Hong-Kong is very interesting to all, but especially to me, because in 1922 I read a paper on the relation of atmospheric electrical variations to the incidence of fits in epileptics. Dr. Tottenham finds puerperal eclampsia more frequent when the humidity and temperature are lowest. I found the fits at an epileptic colony were generally fewer when the atmospheric electricity was low, and vice versa. I found the fits corresponded with the inverted temperature, but not so closely as with the electrical variation. The month with the highest temperature (inverted the lowest) was a month later

than the lowest fit month. There is probably no record of atmospheric electricity in Hong-Kong, but as a rule it is high in cold dry weather and low in humid weather. In one of my other papers ("Distribution of Deaths from Lighting Stroke") I summarized various analogies and arguments thus: "I believe a high positive potential stimulates mentation and other psychic operations, and that a lower or possibly a negative condition stimulates skeletal and muscular growth." In support of this I quoted a letter of Thackeray's from New York in 1855, which is very confirmatory. When you have rapid mentation and increased psychic activity I suppose an explosion—that is, a fit—occurs.

Pulmonary Tuberculosis in Childhood

Major P. HEFFERNAN, M.D. (Buxton), in the course of a letter on this subject, writes: May I, as a clinical tuberculosis officer, express my agreement with Dr. F. J. Bentley's letter in your issue of December 16th? I would further beg to be allowed to protest against some of your recent leaders and annotations on the subject of tuberculosis. The article to which Dr. Bentley takes exception is rivalled by the annotation entitled "Recovery from Tuberculosis" in the *Journal* of December 16th. Let me take one statement from the latter as an example: "To say that it [pulmonary tuberculosis] is not definitely recognizable in its early stages is wrong" (I presume that "wrong" means "inaccurate," and does not impute moral turpitude to the writer of the London County Council report). Well, if the methods advocated by Drs. Chown and Medovy, and supported by you, are to be regarded as definitive the diagnosis of early cases is in truth a simple matter. With such criteria from 50 to 75 per cent. of the total population of Greater London will remain permanently on the tuberculosis registers of the London County Council until released by death. In such circumstances the recovery rate from tuberculosis should show a gratifying improvement, provided that the eventual cause of death is correctly registered, and is not attributed to the early tuberculous infection, "shoved behind them, long ago and far away"! If, however, you will refer to the published work of consultants on the staffs of the chest hospitals, men who are occupied daily in sorting out and treating the various forms of chest disease, you may yet learn that the separation of tuberculous from non-tuberculous disease is not such a simple matter.

Silence in the Operating Theatre

"M.B." writes: Mr. Bankart mentions the talkative surgeon (December 9th, p. 1093), but there may be other offenders. I have in mind a super-efficient theatre sister who, whilst presiding at the instrument trolley, kept up a constant stream of loud instruction, admonition, etc., to her nurses. Strange to say, the same hospital showed a lack of cleanliness in the anaesthetic instruments, which is by no means uncommon elsewhere, and which possibly might be the cause of some post-anaesthetic chest complications.

Stone upon Stone

Dr. HENRY J. DEAN (Reading) writes: The following rather unusual inscription is to be seen on a tombstone at Stafford: "In loving memory of —, who died of a stone in the bladder the size of below." Underneath is a hollow cut in the stone big enough to hold a duck's egg.

Constipation in Childhood: Correction

A mistake, for which we were not responsible, occurred in the report of the meeting of the London Association of the Medical Women's Federation at which Dr. Jean Smith read a paper on constipation in childhood (December 16th, p. 1119). The remarks made by Dr. A. H. Nicoll were incorrectly attributed to Dr. Octavia Lewin, and vice versa.

This year Cadburys have introduced many new boxes and novelties, among the most prominent being chocolate boxes designed by well-known artists, which make excellent gifts for Christmas. Bourn-vita, the food-drink introduced last year, is also finding a ready sale in this weather.

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 30, 31, 32, 33, and 36 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 34 and 35.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 320.