

Letters, Notes, and Answers

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Suppression of Salivary Secretion

"X. Y. Z." writes: On August 11th a lady aged 60 had three teeth removed from the maxilla—premolar and two incisors—under a local anaesthetic. Since then she has had marked suppression of the salivary secretions, the mouth being, in consequence, very dry and somewhat anaesthetic; taste is perverted, and she is very uncomfortable. The dental surgeon disclaims all responsibility, and says there is no question of cause and effect so far as the injection and extraction are concerned. The sucking of acid sweets and drinking lemon water with a view to stimulating salivary flow affords no relief. There was no trouble as described before the visit to the dental surgeon, and she is otherwise in good health. I should be very grateful for any explanation, and still more grateful for suggestions as to treatment.

Wanted—A Page Turner

"G. H." writes: I shall be greatly obliged if any reader can let me know if such a thing exists as an electrical appliance which can turn over the leaves of a book for a patient who has great difficulty in doing so for himself.

Cramp in the Legs

"W." writes: I shall be grateful for suggestions as to treatment of cramp in the legs, coming on mostly at night, in a man over 70. Apart from long-standing gastric trouble, he is healthy. Is it due to too much calcium in the arterial walls (he lives chiefly on eggs and milk), or to lack of calcium?

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

? Epidemic Myalgia

Dr. L. B. SCOTT (Dorset) writes: During the last two months my partners and I have seen some forty or fifty cases of an epidemic febrile disease whose main symptom is pain on movement of the diaphragm—that is, on laughing, coughing, sneezing, yawning, or deep breathing. This pain is in the lower thoracic region. Children and young adults are affected. The temperature is high at first, and lasts irregularly for a week or less, sometimes with intermissions. Anorexia is marked. Sometimes there is a slight sore throat. The tongue remains clean. There is considerable prostration in the severer cases, but all have recovered well. I remember reading some years ago in the *Journal* a description of a similar epidemic. Can any reader refer me to this article or to any other record of similar epidemics?

* In the *Journal* of November 4th, 1933, at page 817, Dr. W. N. Pickles described an outbreak in Yorkshire of "Bornholm" disease—now better known as epidemic myalgia. An annotation on the same subject appeared in the issue of December 23rd, 1933 (p. 1178). Dr. Pickles's original article may be the one to which Dr. Scott refers.

Problems of Chance in Clinical Work

Dr. W. L. ENGLISH (Crewe) writes: The fallacy in the "experiments" suggested by certain scientists, astronomers, and others is simple. The experiment with the halfpennies is a product of a mental exercise, and is not carried out with real coins. One cannot throw up the same halfpenny twice, as the mere act of touching it wears it out to some extent. It is part oxidized before it comes down. Can any event or experiment be actually repeated? As the immortal Holmes would say, this is elementary. Einstein argues from real events as opposed to previous theoretical considerations. In Dr. Mainland's interesting article (*Journal*, August 1st, p. 221) he mentions samples (the definition given in a dictionary is: "a part of anything presented as evidence of the quality of the whole.") What samples of anything, in the widest sense, are alike, actually identical?

Healthy Teeth

We have received copies of *The Story of a Tooth*; a pamphlet describing in simple language the process of decay in a tooth from the appearance of a small pit of decay in the enamel, through destruction of the nerve, to abscess formation in the jaw. The pamphlet has been designed for the Dental Board by the Senior Dental Officer of the West Riding County Council, and, with its nine illustrations of the different stages in this process of decay, is admirably suited to its purpose—namely, for use in elementary schools.

Institute of British Surgical Technicians

An Institute of British Surgical Technicians has lately been formed with the object of according professional status to persons engaged in the surgical instrument and appliance industry. A surgical technician is defined as "one who, in conjunction with the surgical and medical profession, designs and produces the tools, instruments, and appliances required by them in their profession and for the use of their patients." This covers alike the manufacturers of the surgeon's instruments, the operating table, and the artificial limb. The initiative in founding the institute was taken in October, 1934, by the Surgical Instrument Manufacturers' Association, but there is no connexion between the activities of the two bodies. The membership of the institute consists of fellows and licentiates, and there are also student associates. The qualification for fellowship is the holding of a statutory qualification in surgical technology, experience of certain hospital or other appointments, or recognition by the council of the institute as having special proficiency or experience; and for licentiate status the passing of an examination or the attainment of other prescribed qualifications. At the first general meeting in May last it was reported that the membership was already 145, and the chairman, Mr. H. Guy Drew, expressed the hope that by the next annual meeting the figure might be doubled. The institute has a threefold design: the creation of a register with certificates of qualification, the organization of a system of technical education, and the pronouncement of an ethical code binding the members to work only with professional (that is, medical and surgical) collaboration. This code states that the technician "must at no time assume the status of one having surgical or medical knowledge, and it therefore follows that he must not advertise that he is in a position to cure any human failing or physical ill. . . . His constant endeavour must be to use his experience, skill, and mechanical knowledge in the construction and application of appliances for the relief of human ailments and suffering in collaboration with the surgical and medical profession." It is specially forbidden that he should proclaim or let it be understood that he can cure failings such as deafness, hernia, blindness, paralysis, or any ailments in connexion with the sexual system. The educational scheme adopted by the council includes courses for juveniles entering the industry, older students, and advanced craftsmen. A course of lectures by surgeons is arranged for the autumn and winter. The first volume of the institute's *Transactions* (issued from 6, Holborn Viaduct, E.C.1) contains the report of the first meeting, particulars of the education scheme and the ethical code, the register of members and a list of the firms employing them, and the reports of two technical lectures and discussions.

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, 54, 55, 58, 59, and 60 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locum tenencies at pages 56 and 57.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 191.