

Letters, Notes, and Answers.

COMMUNICATIONS respecting Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, 429, Strand, London, W.C.; those concerning business matters, advertisements, non-delivery of the JOURNAL, etc., should be addressed to the Office, 429, Strand, London, W.C.

Queries, answers, and communications relating to subjects to which special departments of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL are devoted will be found under their respective headings.

ANSWERS.

DR. FORBES WINSLOW (London) writes in answer to "J. L. M.": Hypnotism in the case narrated would do considerable harm. The case is one of hallucination of hearing probably associated with delusion of persecution and suspicion so often seen in connexion with auricular insanity. "Consulting a solicitor" is often a concomitant symptom. I have a case precisely the same under my observation. It is in all probability a typical case of "paranoia" and one in which hypnotism should not be tried.

THE CLIMATE OF PERAK.

S.—As tropical climates go Perak and the Malay Peninsula generally may be looked upon as comparatively healthy. People can live there, for example, for years without coming home on leave, a state of affairs which seems to be impossible on the West Coast of Africa and other unhealthy parts of the tropics. The common diseases are malaria and dysentery, but with care they can largely be avoided now. If the financial terms are satisfactory the post might be worth accepting, but a course at one of the tropical schools should be taken previously to going abroad.

HAIR-WASHES CONTAINING LEAD.

HAIR-WASH.—In the circumstances mentioned by "Hair-Wash" it is very possible that the symptoms complained of were due to lead. Lead lotion applied in the manner stated—that is, "vigorously (? daily) with a sponge over the scalp, beard, and moustache," is not a proper way of applying such a solution. There is formation of lead sulphide, and, in such a case, in excess. There would, therefore, be a risk of getting some of the lead sulphide when dry through the mouth, and to some extent, perhaps, through the skin. The patient evidently used the lotion regardless of expense (daily). After use excess should be removed with warm water and frequent applications avoided. When employed in this way with care the risk of lead poisoning is remote. "Hair-Wash" does not say whether there was any sign of a lead line on gums. As to the particular hair lotion (proprietary article) named by our correspondent, there is little doubt that it contains some metallic salt or other (assuming the particular proprietary article in question was sold to dye the hair). That is the rule with hair dyes on the market, notwithstanding any advertised assertion to the contrary. Many advertised dyes said to contain nothing but vegetable substances are not to be relied upon. *Caveat emptor!* In Germany and Austria hair dyes containing poisonous metallic salts are not (ostensibly?) allowed to be sold on the ground that they contain toxic substances. But that such dyes are sold goes without saying, however zealous and lynx-eyed officials may be. Fraud and quackery are rampant everywhere. One writer has well said that the mainstay of the newspaper is the "pale person."

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

THE BRIGHTON THROAT HOSPITAL.

MR. C. H. GOLDING-BIRD writes: In my notice of the late Mr. Cresswell Baber in your last issue, I spoke of him as founder of the Throat and Ear Hospital at Brighton. I now learn he was joint founder with the late Dr. Scatliff, a fact of which I was not aware when I wrote. I hasten to make the correction.

"TIGHT NECK-CLOTHING."

DR. W. G. WALFORD, of Finchley Road, N.W., to whose views on the important part played by tight neck-clothing in the production of disordered health we have before called attention, has been good enough to supply some further details respecting one of his cases. The patient is a widow lady, aged about 50, who tries to eke out her resources by running a lodging-house single handed. She has been very much out of health for some six months, salient features being very marked enlargement of one knee from rheumatic gout and neuralgia at the back of the neck and shoulders. She was receiving no treatment, as her former medical adviser and herself agreed as to its inability so long as her environment and mode of life was so unfavourable. Seen at Easter by Dr. Walford, she was noted to be wearing tight neck-clothing, and was told that if she relaxed it and continued to do so gradually, she would find a decided change in a fortnight and be pretty well in three weeks or a month. The prognosis was verified; in a fortnight she reported quite as improving, and at the end of five weeks as being quite her old self, despite no alteration in her mode of life, surroundings, or other circumstances other than attention to the neck clothing. Dr. Walford also puts forward grounds

for believing that persons of so-called gouty habit to whom an incautious meal commonly provokes great discomfort, may dine "well but not wisely," and yet escape scot free provided they have adopted the loose-neck clothing principle. An account of Dr. Walford's views will be found at pages 1100 and 1336, vol. i, 1909, and a review of his booklet on page 699, vol. i, 1910. He retired from practice some years ago, and is anxious that those who have greater opportunities should turn their attention to the same disorder.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND THE REDUCTION OF DISEASE.

MR. FREDERICK DIXON writes: In an article entitled the "Decrease of Medical Students in America" you go cut of your way, after the manner which is becoming almost inevitable in the press to-day, to attack Christian Science, and, if you will forgive my saying so, you lose sight of your logic in the effort. You put down the decline in the number of medical students to some various causes, amongst others to Christian Science, and then conclude with the deduction that the decline may be taken as a proof of the success with which the medical profession is fulfilling its aim. Now, as a mere matter of argument, if the decline is owing to the success of the medical profession, how can it possibly be owing to the competition of Christian Scientists? Furthermore, why, because you differ entirely from the methods of Christian Science, should it be necessary to speak of Christian Scientists as the personification of childish credulity, encouraging people to go to the devil? The best way to meet childish credulity is to ignore it, and when people are sure that their neighbours are childishly credulous they find it easy enough to ignore their claims. The persistent attacks which are made on Christian Scientists all over the world, and which seem to grow in intensity rather than anything else, are possibly the strongest proof that their opponents are perfectly conscious that Christian Science is not childish credulity, but is a great movement to be reckoned with.

* * We may point out to Mr. Dixon that "Christian Science" was only incidentally mentioned among other forms of wonder working. The attribution to the American people of credulity in matters relating to health had no special reference to Christian Science. We do not attach the same importance to this "great movement" that Mr. Dixon does, nor did we refer to it as encouraging people to go to the devil; we do not meddle with theology. Does Mr. Dixon deny that various diseases have been stamped out, and the prevalence of others greatly reduced by the self-sacrificing labours of the medical profession? Does he contend that anything of the kind has been achieved by Christian Science? If so, will he do what we have several times asked for in vain—give a few properly authenticated facts to support his contention? The awakening of slumbering will power in some neurotic people is nothing to the purpose, for the same thing has been, and is done, by the stimulating action of faith whether in some form of religion or in particular persons believed to be endowed with the power of healing. Has Christian Science reduced the mortality from any organic disease, or had any effect at all on public health that can be proved by evidence that will bear examination? We repeat what we want is Facts. If these are brought forward we are quite willing to examine them dispassionately, for our only object is to get at the truth. But so far we have got nothing but assertions—"a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong."

CORRECTIONS.

In a review of a work entitled *The Prevention and Treatment of Abortion*, which was published in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of May 28th, p. 1296, the name of the author should be "Taussig," not "Janssig" as printed throughout the article. The name of the publishers was also incorrectly given—it should have been "George Keener and Co.," not "George Keenan and Co."

In the article on "Distribution of Diseases in Persia," which appeared in the JOURNAL of May 21st, p. 1247, Dr. M. M. Basi is referred to as "of Taurni, Constantinople." This is an error, "Taurni" being a misprint for "Taxim."

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