

## The Services.

### THE ROYAL NAVY MEDICAL SERVICE.

THE course of instruction of the newly entered acting surgeons at Haslar was brought to a close on April 4th by the distribution of the prizes by Inspector-General Thomas D. Gimlette, C.B.

The gold medal was gained by Acting Surgeon S. W. Grimwade, M.B., of St. Thomas's Hospital. The silver medal was awarded to Acting Surgeon H. E. Perkins of Guy's Hospital. The two above-named officers took the first and second places in the combined London and Haslar examinations.

Three navy regulation pocket cases—prizes for subjects in which instruction is given at Haslar—were awarded to Acting Surgeons S. W. Grimwade, M.B., Alexander Scott, M.B., and Basil Taylor, M.B.

The following list shows the places gained by the combined marks of the London and Haslar examinations :

	Marks.
Acting Surgeon S. W. Grimwade	... 3,715
Acting Surgeon H. E. Perkins	... 3,692
Acting Surgeon A. Scott	... 3,643
Acting Surgeon B. Taylor	... 3,479
Acting Surgeon E. C. Holtom	... 3,347
Acting Surgeon C. F. Willes	... 3,310
Acting Surgeon J. G. Danson	... 3,205
Acting Surgeon G. J. Carr	... 3,177
Acting Surgeon H. H. Ormsby	... 3,146
Acting Surgeon E. M. Browne	... 3,088
Acting Surgeon A. E. P. Cheesman	... 2,885

### QUARTERS FOR GLASGOW R.A.M.C. TERRITORIAL UNITS.

ANOTHER hitch has arisen in connexion with the proposed quarters and drill hall for the five medical territorial units in Glasgow. After considerable discussion and lengthy correspondence, the Glasgow Territorial Force Association declined to proceed with buildings which were considered wholly inadequate for the requirements of the medical corps, but eventually plans were approved and a site obtained for the new quarters. The Chief Engineer of the Scottish Command has now taken up the consideration of the subject, and new plans have been suggested. The whole question is one which is likely to strike in the near future at the efficiency of the medical units and their popularity in the city. The medical units in Glasgow have hitherto been kept always at full establishment and in a very high state of efficiency, and since the institution of the Territorial Force these units have not only kept up to their full establishment with a waiting list of recruits, but are the only units in the city which have done so. Despite this, the medical corps is the only one which is not provided with head quarters and drill hall, officers' and sergeants' mess and recreation rooms, gymnasiums, etc., for the men. Drills have had to be abandoned for want of accommodation, and the officers are working under very great difficulties. The question is becoming very acute, and there is very free discussion as to whether, in all the circumstances, time and energy should be expended by officers and men with such inadequate facilities and encouragement.

## Medico-Legal.

### RIGHT TO OPERATE ON AN INFANT.

WHILE the question of "consent" is one which frequently troubles the operating surgeon, it becomes, if anything, more difficult when the patient is an infant in the eye of the law. If a surgeon desires to operate on a person under the age of 21, must he obtain the consent of the parents? It is easy to imagine cases in hospital or elsewhere—cases of emergency, where immediate operation may be necessary or desirable. To delay in order to obtain the parents' consent may mean the death of the patient. What, then, is the duty of the practitioner? There is no English decision on the subject, but a case recently decided in Toronto sheds a certain amount of light on it. It appeared that a young man, aged 19, was referred by a country physician to a Toronto physician for a polypus of the nose. The Toronto physician referred him to the rhinologist of the Toronto Hospital, who removed the polypus, after which he saw no more of the case, leaving the after-observation to one of his assistants. The house officer, however, who also served as senior interne in surgery, observed that the young man had a marked goitre, and advised the removal of one lobe of the thyroid. The young man seemed willing enough to have this done, although there was no evidence that he gave instructions. However, he allowed himself to be transferred to a surgical ward, and quietly submitted to the preparation by nurses, and went to the anaesthetic room without demur. Half the gland was removed, and he made a good recovery in about a week and went home. His parents then instituted a suit against the

hospital; first, for operation without consent of the young man or that of his parents, and, second, for damages to the young man's health.

The case was tried in the High Court at Toronto by Falconbridge, J., who, after finding that the young man did, in fact, assent to the operation, and that no harm was done to him, said :

"The question of law as to which I desired the assistance of counsel was whether, in the case of a young man within three months of 19 years of age, well grown, it was possible that the law was that a surgeon should not venture to operate upon him without getting the consent of his parents. No such law has been found for me, and I shall not be the first judge to declare that there is such a law. Of course, if it was the case of an infant of tender years, or the case of a person manifestly of weak intellect, it might be another matter; but this young man, while manifestly not of the brightest intelligence, is apparently well enough able to take care of himself; and I hold, as far as this case is concerned, that it was no part of the duty of the hospital authorities nor of the operating surgeon to make an inquiry or obtain the leave or licence of the parent or guardian. The result is the defendants are entirely exonerated and vindicated, and the action must be dismissed with costs, if costs are asked for."

It will be noticed that this case rather "went off," because there was no damage proved to have resulted from the operation. Further, the patient was a child "in the eyes of the law," but not in the ordinary sense of the word. The general question cannot therefore be said to have been decided by this case. Indeed, one might say, as Lord Lindley once said in answer to the query, "Can a lunatic be made a bankrupt?": "This question has been open for several hundred years. Suppose we leave it open a little longer." But when it does come up in the course of time it is probable that the English courts will adopt the sound reasoning of Mr. Justice Falconbridge. Brushing aside the legal fiction that a person under 21 is an infant for all purposes, it is practically certain that the question of consent would be decided according to the age and intelligence of the child.

### WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

#### *Alleged Frostbite.*

IN a case heard at Liverpool (March 20th) the owners of the Allan liner *Corsican* were sued for compensation by a seaman whose hands had been frostbitten at Halifax, Nova Scotia. Claimant put socks on his hands in order to handle the ice-covered ropes, but the socks slipped off, and both hands were frostbitten to such an extent that hospital treatment was necessary. The Judge said that the case came very near the border line, but he felt bound to give judgement for the respondents.

## Medico-Ethical.

*The advice given in this column for the assistance of members is based on medico-ethical principles generally recognized by the profession, but must not be taken as representing direct findings of the Central Ethical Committee, except when so stated.*

### OBLIGATIONS OF AN ASSISTANT.

AGGRIEVED—If there was an agreement between B. and C. under which C. contracted not to practise within a certain area for a definite time after the termination of his engagement with B., and if B. waived his rights temporarily in order that C. should act as locumtenent for A. during his illness, and A. and C. have taken advantage of this to take B.'s patients, B. has ground of complaint.

### MESSAGES TO BE CALLED FOR.

W.F.L.D.—The affixing of notices giving the name of a practitioner, and stating that messages can be left for him in or upon premises where he has no bona fide tenancy, is a practice which can only be approved in scattered rural districts where there are few resident medical practitioners, and the arrangement is for the public convenience.

THE Fourteenth Congress of the German Gynaecological Society will be held at Munich in June (7th to 10th) under the presidency of Professor Doederlein. The principal subject proposed for discussion is the relation of tuberculosis to the female genito-urinary organs. Reports on this question will be presented by Drs. Jung, Velt, and Kroenig.

The third meeting of the International Congress of Infant Hygiene will be held at Berlin next September on the 11th and the two following days. The congress is under the patronage of the German Empress, and the Imperial Chancellor is honorary president. Among the excursions arranged is one to the International Exhibition of Hygiene at Dresden, one department of which will be devoted to puericulture.