

On December 22, 1938, the French Minister of Public Health inaugurated the new laboratories of the Pasteur Institute at Garches, a suburb of Paris. On this occasion Professor Gaston Ramon, of anatoxin fame, was invested with the insignia of Commander of the Legion of Honour. It was recalled that Louis Pasteur in 1884 installed himself at Garches to pursue his studies on rabies.

Sir Frank E. Smith, F.R.S., will relinquish on January 31, 1939, his appointment as Secretary to the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and will be succeeded by Professor E. V. Appleton, F.R.S.

Professor Jules Bordet, director of the Pasteur Institute of Brussels, has been awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour.

Professor Sieur has been elected president of the French Academy of Medicine for 1939 and Professor Louis Martin vice-president. Professor Achard remains secretary-general.

Fifteen more names have been added to the memorial erected by the German Roentgen Association at Hamburg in commemoration of the roentgenologists and radiologists who have sacrificed their lives to science.

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

Income Tax

"H. S." inquires as to the appropriate wording of "a certificate of deduction of income tax" from a yearly payment.

** A small supply of the appropriate forms of certificate will be forwarded by the local inspector of taxes on request. The official number of the form is R 185.

Expenses of Practice

"M. S." inquires as to the advisability of deductions for (a) expenses of postgraduate course (£6 6s.) and examination (£21), and (b) on payment, to the extent to which it was not covered by insurance, of a claim for damages arising out of a wrong prescription.

** (a) There would seem to be no legal claim in respect of the examination fee; so far as the "course" is concerned there may be some doubt on the point, but the general principle is that the expense of *improving* professional skill and knowledge is not allowable. (b) The amount of the payment not covered by insurance is allowable.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

True Social Medicine

Dr. C. LUNDIE (Durban) writes: Your annotation on bio-economics in the *Journal* of November 19 (p. 1051) is interesting and instructive. I cannot help feeling that a good beginning for the reforms which Mr. Yahuda stipulates as essential for "the stability of human society" could be made by the institution of a "true social medicine," such as I sketched in the *Supplement* of December 28, 1935 (p. 283). Since that date schemes of social medicine, as nearly approximating to the "true social medicine" sketched by me as anything not sponsored by the Government could be, have been established in South Africa by (1) the United Banks, (2) the Shell Oil Company, and (3) Durban City Employees. All are recognized by the profession officially and are a boon both to members of the societies and to members of the profession. When will any Government emulate such schemes?

Syncope while Bathing

Dr. F. GOURLAY (Ontario) writes: Last summer when bathing in Lake Ontario in water just under 60°, I had a curious and unpleasant experience. After swimming about quite happily in three or four feet of water I seemed, without the slightest warning, to be seized by the head by an irresistible force and pushed under. The thought flashed through my mind, "This is the end"; then I seemed to be at the bottom and did not know where the surface was. The next thing I knew was that my son, who happened to be near, was holding me up, and I was able to walk ashore with almost no assistance. He tells me that I was only just under the surface face downwards, but "was splashing so wildly he thought I had a fit." I may say I am 70 and never subject to epilepsy in either form. Was it cardiac? The suddenness and the wild splashing look more like "grand mal" with an aura. I may say I have bathed in the same place three or four times since and had no more experiences, only I have not taken such long swims without a rest. There was no question of an overfull stomach; I had had only a light meal four hours before bathing. I only swallowed one mouthful of water, but would no doubt have drowned if my son had not been standing near. It would be interesting to hear from anyone who has had a similar experience. I had no cramp.

Sterilization, Abortion, and the Law

Dr. B. DUNLOP (Putney, S.W.) writes: Lord Dawson usefully asked in a speech at the annual dinner of the Medico-Legal Society (*British Medical Journal*, December 24, 1938, p. 1325): "In the case of persons of mature age who wish to marry, one of them being unfortunately liable to transmit disease, why should not he or she, on request, be allowed to be sterilized?" He might well have gone further and asked why any overburdened parent should not be allowed to be sterilized. There is no law against sterilization, and eugenicists and other humanitarians should get a Government pronouncement that neither the ancient law of maiming nor any other existing one can be construed as such. As to the law of abortion, its abolition or drastic amendment should be urged by all who do not believe that the foetus has a soul, and who therefore consider that it is merely a potential life and not affected by the decalogue. Our population will continue to deteriorate eugenically until one or both of the surgical methods of family limitation be made freely available to poor parents.

A Warning

"M.B., B.Ch." sends the following note of caution from Staffordshire: Any doctor who is called upon by a young, darkish, eager salesman, purporting to represent a firm of manufacturers in Birmingham, would do well to ring up the police. This adventurer offers to sell a type of surgical bandage, and prefers cash with the first order. Although he gives a receipt the goods never arrive, and inquiries show that there is no such company at the address stated and the telephone number was given up some time ago.

Corrigendum

In the leading article "Livelihood and Mortality" (January 7, p. 22) one figure was incorrectly given. In the fifteenth line of the third paragraph the range of mortality of married women should have read "from 19 per cent. below to 13 per cent. above standard."