

he has had a bath and enters the presence of the medical officer, excitement may have the effect of raising the pulse-rate, and in the case of an irritable heart may add twenty to forty beats per minute.

I think it is wise to accept men with a pulse of 100; for the rate may be temporarily accelerated owing to hard work and improper feeding.

From the presence of stained fingers, cigarette smoking is common amongst this class.

I believe that under the influence of rest and good food during the first month's service, the heart may settle down to the normal rate. At the same time, I think it very likely that a certain number of these cases may eventually have to be invalidated for D.A.H.

For the last year or two the pulse rate on enlistment has invariably been recorded in the medical history sheet.

It would be very interesting in the future to see how many cases of D.A.H. had a high pulse-rate on enlistment. From the records of the past four years available at Stratford, I find that 24,199 recruits have presented themselves, of these 6,123 have been rejected, and of these 869 have been for heart disease. Very few of these cases have had valvular disease, and it is fair to assume that the great majority have been for D.A.H.

Up to the last three weeks the recruiters have not eliminated cases of D.A.H., and so the figures I have given may be accepted as approximately correct. During the previous three weeks my rejection for D.A.H. amount to 0.76, 1.05, and 0.71, respectively. Since they have counted the pulse the numbers have fallen to 0.22, 0.38, and 0.52.

The rejections by six recruiters for D.A.H. during the past week of pulse counting amounted to 25. As they now invariably count the pulse first, it must be understood that in the old days it would not have followed that all these cases would have reached the medical officer; many of them would have been rejected by the recruiters for other defects. The number serves, however, to show that the contention is correct—namely, that D.A.H. is an exceedingly common complaint amongst the class from which the soldier is drawn.—I am, etc.,

F. J. W. PORTER,
Major, R.A.M.C.; Recruiting
Medical Officer.

London, E., Nov. 1st.

THE VALUE OF THE DIPLOMA OF THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF SPECTACLE MAKERS.

SIR,—A prescription of mine for glasses was taken by the patient to a sight-testing "optician and spectacle specialist," who advertises himself as holding the diploma of "The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, London."

I had ordered, according to my custom, that the glasses were to be sent to me for verification, and in course of time they were sent to me by the optician. On examining the glasses, I found that the lenses were wrong; spheres had been given in place of cylinders and cylinders in place of spheres. The centreing of the lenses was grossly wrong, 10 mm. beyond what I had ordered, so that the centreing in one lens was only just on the lens. The shape of the lenses was not what I had ordered, although I had sketched the shape I wanted. The workmanship of the frames was poor, the frames so soft that they bent easily, and the cutting of the lenses was very rough.

Yet, with all these errors, the optician would appear to be so ignorant of his work that he sends the glasses to me for verification, believing them to be right.

Surely it would be better if the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers took some care that those holding their diploma could carry out their proper work, namely, to make spectacles correctly, than that they should endeavour to extend their sphere to sight-testing.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Oct. 24th.

RAYNER D. BATTEN.

THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD IN DIETETICS.

SIR,—As one who has long taken a practical interest in the study of diet by experimental investigation, perhaps you will kindly allow me to comment on the recently published record by Professor Reid Hunt on the effects of various diets upon the resistance of animals, which was the occasion of an editorial article in your columns in the JOURNAL of October 22nd. Professor Hunt is to be

congratulated on the new ground which he has broken in his investigation, and on the very important and suggestive results which he has obtained. One of his most striking conclusions has reference to the thyroid gland. His results have led him to conclude that the profound influence on resistance which he found associated with certain diets was due to their powers of stimulating the thyroid gland. This conclusion is to me personally of the greatest interest, as it is identical with one which I have previously drawn from the results of many years' investigations along a different yet closely allied line of inquiry—namely, the influence of diet on the structure of the tissues. The results of the investigations carried out by myself and others in the physiological laboratory of Edinburgh University in the past ten years have, I think, conclusively shown that diet profoundly modifies the structure of the tissues, and very specially the thyroid gland, the importance of the changes described being perhaps none the less, because their significance is as yet imperfectly understood. It was specially interesting to me to read the results described by Professor Hunt in his observations on oatmeal, since, as he himself points out, his conclusion as to the special influence of this food on the thyroid gland is in agreement with that arrived at by me from a different line of investigation, of which an account was published in your columns in 1907.

The whole subject of dietetics is at present in an interesting state. As you rightly observe, there are factors entering into the composition of food which are more complicated than its protein, fat, and carbohydrate or its caloric value, and the data now in our possession give ground for the hope that a continuation of what you have happily termed "the experimental method in dietetics" will yield results of the highest scientific and practical value. To those who have the opportunity of taking part in such investigations, I would like to point out that a vast amount of work is now waiting to be done along the following closely allied lines of research which have been initiated in recent years. These are: (1) The influence of diet on the structure of the tissues, as determined by the writer and his collaborators, a full record of these observations being in course of publication. (2) The influence of diet on the bacterial flora in the alimentary tract along lines indicated by the work of Herter and Kendall, which was specially referred to in your columns in May, 1910; and (3) the influence of diet on the resistance to disease (Reid Hunt).

I am confident that collective investigation of the subject along these lines would soon yield results of the highest importance to practitioners.—I am, etc.,

Edinburgh, Oct. 22nd.

CHALMERS WATSON.

THE PLAGUE.

SIR,—In connexion with the cases of plague in Suffolk, let me say that the Research Defence Society has lately published an illustrated pamphlet on plague in India, past and present, by Lieutenant-Colonel Bannerman, M.B., D.Sc., Director of the Bombay Bacteriological Laboratory. It gives a full account of the experiments which proved that fleas carry the plague from rats to man; it also gives a full account of Haffkine's preventive treatment, and of the many thousands of lives that have been saved by this treatment. I am sorry that the society cannot afford to give away this pamphlet in large quantities; but I shall be happy to send it to any of your readers who will send me seven stamps. I shall also be happy to send copies, on sale or return, to all booksellers.—I am, etc.,

STEPHEN PAGET,

Honorary Secretary, Research Defence Society.

London, W., Oct. 31st.

HUNTERIAN SOCIETY SILVER MEDAL.

SIR,—The Hunterian Society awards annually a silver medal for the best essay by a general practitioner embodying the results of his own observations. May we remind intending candidates that the last day for sending in essays for the present competition is December 31st, 1910? Any further particulars may be obtained from us.—We are, etc.,

W. LANGDON BROWN,

A. P. GIBBONS,

Honorary Secretaries.

London, W., Oct. 29th.