

THE SUPPLY OF MEDICAL MEN.

SIR,—It would help one in appraising the true value of the letter of "Temporary Lieutenant," in your issue of June 12th, if we knew a little more of his age and circumstances, of which he tells us nothing. Surely "circumstances alter cases," and it would be absurd to apply the same judgement to all.

For instance, if like many, probably the great majority, of medical men who have taken temporary commissions, he is young, unmarried, and fairly recently qualified, he can perhaps afford to regard his future with equanimity, as even if he has left a practice he can start afresh after the war without any serious drag. If, however, like the "Young G.P." whom he attacks in such scathing and intolerant terms, he had given hostages to fortune in the shape of a wife and family and a recently acquired practice which had absorbed all his capital, his patriotic fervour might perhaps take a more sober though not less genuine turn. It is very easy to criticize others who may be equally patriotic, but unable, from their position, to make it so apparent.

As a temporary lieutenant, I take it that your correspondent is one of those who waited till the war came before he offered his services. Let me remind him that there are thousands of men who answered the call in time of peace before there was much glory in serving, by joining the Territorial R.A.M.C. These men bore the burden and heat of the day and performed the drudgery of the business, thus trying to serve their country best by occupying their scanty leisure in attending drills, camps, and courses of instruction, passing examinations and training the men. Many of them are older, and of longer service and higher rank, than the temporary lieutenants, and they had to leave their practices at a moment's notice, with no time to make any arrangements. Yet they are mostly receiving far less pay than "Temporary Lieutenant." In spite of this, however, they are only too willing to help their country, but what they do feel badly is the want of adequate provision for those left behind in case of death.

To take my own case, I have a small partnership in the country and a wife and two young children to support. Neither I nor my wife have any private income, and a practice is, of course, unsaleable till after the war, buyers being non-existent.

If I am killed, my wife gets the princely pension of £100 a year, with £18 for each child, and a certain gratuity down. If I die from disease due to exposure, etc., or to injury not received in action, the pensions are only £75 and £15 respectively, and no gratuity at all. This, too, at a time when living has been and still is becoming dearer. Owing to this, I have not felt able to volunteer for service abroad, and I know of course there must be many more similarly situated.

Cannot the profession combine to compel the Government to make better provision for the families of the fallen? At present our duty to the country and to our own flesh and blood pull in opposite directions, for it is hard to expect a man in such a case to run extra risks of leaving his dear ones dependent on charity; and one knows how easily, when the war and the shouting are past, the soldier and his claims are forgotten.

Let "Temporary Lieutenant," therefore, be a little more charitable in his judgements, and try not to imagine that all patriotism is centred in those who come in at the eleventh hour, but give their due also to those who have served in peace, and to the rest who perhaps find it impossible to do more than the inglorious but useful task of working harder at home.—I am, etc.,

June 15th.

CAPTAIN, R.A.M.C.(T.).

SIR,—My letter was not written in a gibing spirit, as Dr. Johnson suggests. My purpose was to point out that medical men are not making greater sacrifices in taking a commission than are men in other walks of life. I also maintain that £470 a year, £60 bonus, and option of retiring at the end of twelve months are far and away more liberal terms than those given to a field officer of similar rank, though his risk of death is much greater. I do not ask Dr. Johnson or any young married man with wife and children dependent on him to take a commission. What I did ask was that until Dr. Johnson, "G.P." and others (a few) were personally pressed to take a commission,

they should not publish the terms on which only they will agree to serve their country, as the general public might make the mistake of thinking that this was the spirit which animated the whole profession.—I am, etc.,

June 21st.

TEMPORARY LIEUTENANT.

HELP FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS JOINING THE R.A.M.C.

An Opportunity for Consultants.

SIR,—There are many men like myself who have joined H.M. Forces and have a practice upon which their bread-and-butter really depends. The pay from the army is not sufficient to cover their expenses, and when they join they do so at a considerable financial loss.

Locumtenents are, of course, unobtainable except at impossible figures, and it has occurred to me that there must be many men in consulting practice who would be only too pleased to give up part of their day to look after the work of a colleague who is called away on active service. They would, indeed, feel they were doing their bit by helping an army brother to get away.

I happen to know a well-known consultant who is running entirely a panel practice for a colleague in the North of London who has been called away, and I cannot help saying that he is a really splendid fellow for doing it.

I may myself have to go any day. Now, if there was any chance of my getting some one, such as I have spoken of, to take on my work for me in my absence and safeguard the wherewithal for my wife and family, I should be relieved of a terrible anxiety, and I suggest that there are many fellows in my position who need that helping good Samaritan in the hour of this national crisis.—I am, etc.,

CHAS. SAMPSON,
Lieutenant, R.A.M.C.(T.)

London, S.E., June 18th.

TEMPORARY LIEUTENANTS IN THE R.A.M.C.

SIR,—Medical men who have volunteered for one year's service with the R.A.M.C. have shortly to decide whether they will renew their service.

Of those who have served at the front I have heard that there have been very few (if any) who have received promotion, many having become subordinate to permanent R.A.M.C. medical officers their juniors in age and experience. This, if it be correct, is not encouraging to the temporary lieutenants, and would appear to be a short-sighted policy on the part of the Government, since promotion of these officers lasts only for the duration of their service, and would entail no lasting charge on the revenue, as in the case of the permanent officers.

Unless the temporary lieutenants, who are often serving in subordinate positions and at great personal loss, receive some encouragement, it is to be feared that many will not renew their services, and that the shortage (if shortage there is) of medical officers will thereby be considerably increased.—I am, etc.,

June 21st.

MEDICUS.

ACUTE GONORRHOEA TREATED BY ELECTROLYSIS.

SIR,—In reply to Dr. Fyfe's letter, I should like to correct an impression he seems to hold. Ionic medication has been concerned with driving certain chemical ions—for example, zinc, copper, and iodine—into various human tissues. I have never used such a system and can offer no opinions as to its value, especially as a means to overcome suppuration. My system of electrical treatment of suppuration is based on three experimentally ascertained facts: First, that all bacteria move to the positive electrode in simple salt solutions (for example, sodium chloride) at which they aggregate. Secondly, that all bacteria are soon killed by the passage of currents through the fluids in which they are suspended. Thirdly, that vasocongestion follows electrolysis of human tissues which are immersed in such fluids. Dr. Fyfe is driving iodine into the urethral mucosa, and theory shows that the gonococci would go the same way. On the other hand, I am drawing gonococci from the mucosa to the anode (stylet), and there they enter a fluid zone of weak iodine. The electrolysis stimulates the mucous glands and