

CHLOROFORM IN LABOUR

SIR,—I think that Dr. Solomons comes to the crux of the matter when he states in his letter, published on January 2nd, that "where junior assistants are giving the anaesthetics . . . deaths . . . do occur." About a decade ago, when I, in company with other Glasgow students, did our cases at a famous Dublin maternity hospital, we were horror-stricken at the manner in which chloroform was administered by the junior house-surgeons. I remember vividly the discussions we had concerning this. Since then I have conducted a very large number of confinements and have, without exception, always employed chloroform. My cases have been often in unfavourable circumstances, without adequate assistance, yet I have never lost a patient, nor, like your other correspondents, had a moment's anxiety. As cocksure students, we came to the conclusion that the teaching of chloroform administration was only done properly in Scotland, where the anaesthetic had its original home!—I am, etc.,

Glasgow, Jan. 5th.

H. Y. STODDART.

MEDICAL CENTENARIANS

SIR,—In the *Journal* of December 19th, 1931 (p. 1141), the reviewer of Mr. Forbes Gray's book *Five Score* expresses surprise that "diligent search in many likely quarters" had failed to reveal more than one medical man who reached the hundred-year mark—Sir Henry Pitman. Many medical men must have passed the century. In the Bengal Medical Service three men have done so in the past thirty-five years. As they were all medical officers of the Bengal Army, the dates of their births and deaths have all been officially recorded. They are: (1) John Bowron, born February, 1799, died at Hove, March 3rd, 1899; (2) Henry Benjamin Hinton, born March 7th, 1813, died at Adelaide, May 14th, 1916; (3) Thomas Lambert Hinton, born May 1st, 1808, died at St. Leonards, June 10th, 1908. T. L. Hinton only spent a few years in India, but the other two put in full service of a quarter of a century or more in that country. The two Hintons, though contemporaries, were not related to each other. During the last few years of H. B. Hinton's life there were, I remember, several references to him in the *Journal*. He reached the age of 103; the other two barely passed the century by a month.—I am, etc.,

Ealing, Dec. 27th, 1931.

D. G. CRAWFORD.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS IN SOVIET RUSSIA

SIR,—Will you allow me to endorse to the full the observations of your correspondent, Dr. V. P. Wasson, on this subject, published in the *British Medical Journal* of January 2nd?

I have no first-hand knowledge of present-day conditions in Russia, but my knowledge of pre-war conditions in that unhappy country, and particularly of those connected with the study and practice of the medical arts and sciences, was close and intimate, and enables me to speak with no uncertain voice on this question. If those whose object it is to depict in rose-colour the actual state of medicine in Russia are driven to support their claims by giving a grotesquely untrue picture of pre-Bolshevik conditions, their case must be a weak one indeed. At the time of the Twelfth International Medical Congress, held in Moscow in 1897, I published, in the form of a 32-page supplement to the *Lancet*,¹ a fairly complete account of "Medicine, past and present, in Russia." (Owing to an unfortunate misunderstanding, the essay was published

¹ *Lancet*, 1897, ii, 342.

without my name, and appeared as the joint work of several authors, which was not the case.) I cannot do better than quote the closing words of that essay:

"Of the medical institutions of Russia it may truly be said that they are worthy of the great country which has given them birth, of the great people by which they are supported, and of the great profession which has brought them to their present admirable state of development."

That statement was unquestionably true of the conditions prevailing a generation ago; whether it could with equal truth be made of the conditions prevailing to-day, I am not in a position to say.—I am, etc.,

Ealing, W.5, Jan. 11th.

F. G. CLEMOW.

MR. PUNCH'S HUMP

SIR,—Many, like Dr. Tidy, must have speculated upon what manner of man Mr. Punch's prototype may have been. All must have wished they had been present to witness Dr. Tidy in the guise of Sherlock Holmes pursuing his quarry. He suggests that the original Mr. Punch was an achondroplastic dwarf, basing this thesis partly upon his mental attributes and partly upon his physical configuration, and he would explain the hump as a sartorial artefact. Mr. Punch of our beloved journal, it is true, wears a perpetual smile, and would certainly seem to see the amusing and bright side of life; but it must not be forgotten that the same gentleman, in the more domestic surroundings of the puppet show, is a wife-beater, and is depicted as a rather sinister figure, more akin to some other historical hunchbacks. On the physical side, save that he is a dwarf, I would suggest that Mr. Punch shows no other characteristics of achondroplasia. Many dwarfs, and, indeed, non-dwarfs, present a rather marked paunch at the same age. Again, though two types of achondroplasia are recognized—the pug-dog type, with squat nose, and the dachshund type, with long nose—in the case of the latter the nose is long but straight, rather than of Wellington type. One other characteristic is, I think, of interest. Mr. Punch shows a long, curved sweep of the jaw-line, without marked angle, a feature, I believe, to be characteristic of the face of persons with deformity following Pott's disease, and which gives rise to what the French might call a *facies pottique*.—I am, etc.,

London, W.1, Jan. 11th.

HUGH S. STANNUS.

SIR,—I wonder whether Dr. Letheby Tidy would have reached another conclusion as to the nature of Mr. Punch's hump had he studied Toby. There is little difficulty in defining the prototype of Toby as we see him careering with Mr. Punch in the Summer Almanack, or dancing in the Epilogue. There Toby is a typical canine achondroplastic. But each week he reveals, as he sits for his portrait, the facies of canine hyperthyroidism and the coarse limbs which doubtless he derived from his father. Incidentally, out of respect for his feelings, I suggest that the identity of Toby's father be unnamed. Mr. Punch, whatever his mood, remains an achondroplastic, but Toby appears to take delight in revealing his catholic ancestry. I find only one hypothesis to fit these facts—that Toby's prototype was a dog of the Never-Never Land, contemporary with the cat who walked by himself, and with the elephant's child when the camel got his hump.

Consequently, I should suggest to Dr. Tidy that Mr. Punch's artists are not at fault; we know that they invariably interpret the truth of life, but sometimes they see life far beyond the limited range of biologists. Where and when Mr. Punch's artists saw the prototypes of Mr. Punch and Toby, only they can reveal; but I suspect they visited the Never-Never Land. It was there, I