

A good deal of maternal morbidity is due to the inability of the working-class mother to carry out our instructions regarding rest, etc., during pregnancy and the puerperium. The difficulty of obtaining domestic help is one of the reasons why an increasing number of women are going into hospital for their confinements. Only by improving home conditions will this trend be discouraged.—I am, etc.,

HELEN M. JARDINE, M.B., Ch.B., M.M.S.A.

Leyton, April 2nd.

### A Record Card for the Retired?

SIR,—It is common knowledge that certain towns in the country—many of them on the South Coast—are regarded as purely residential areas. This means that many business and professional people decide, on reaching the age of retirement, to leave the town in which they have spent the greater part of their lives, and to migrate to one of these resorts for the period of their retirement. Sooner or later these people have to consult a practitioner who knows nothing of their previous medical history. On making an examination for the purpose of diagnosis it not infrequently happens that evidence is found of a surgical operation. On asking the nature of the operation we are quite often met with the reply, "I do not know."

My object in writing is to suggest that some means should be devised whereby the medical history of a patient should be available for any future practitioner who may have charge of the case. When an operation has been performed the patient should be given a written statement such as is at present only sent to the practitioner at that time in attendance.

It is not necessary to stress the urgency of some means to this end being devised. Obviously there may not be time to communicate with the medical practitioner referred to by the patient, and we are faced with the necessity of making a diagnosis "in the dark," and the possibility of making a mistake which with fuller knowledge might have been avoided.—I am, etc.,

Hastings, April 2nd.

J. S. FARNFIELD.

### Recruitment of Medical Men in a National Emergency

SIR,—In the *Journal* of March 28th (p. 667) appears a letter from Dr. Harry Boyde drawing attention to the fact that many of our colleagues are prepared to throw their weight behind those forces making for peace and against those making for a world catastrophe. Surely this statement should apply to the bulk of a profession which, both reasonably and emotionally, is on the side of preserving life. Would it be too much to demand that all those of us who co-operate in preparing to deal with the results of war should spend at least an equal amount of time and thought and energy in efforts to prevent war? Our attention has been drawn to the doctors' protest against the bombing of the Red Cross units in Abyssinia; having signed that protest there must be other constructive ways in which the medical profession can co-operate to fight the menace of war.—I am, etc.,

London, N.W.1, March 30th.

CECILE BOOYSEN.

SIR,—I have read the interesting letter of Dr. Harry C. Boyde in the *Journal* of March 28th. I must confess that I do not take such a hopeless view of the international situation as his letter would imply, and while I am quite prepared to admit the difficulties of the correct diagnosis of the causes of war, I believe (to quote his own argument) that just as the preventive side of medicine is

as important as the curative aspect in civilian life, so the same reasoning holds good in the preliminary training of civilian medical practitioners before any possible sudden national air emergency.

Manifestos by individuals, public bodies, or even Governments are more or less useless as a practical deterrent to a would-be air aggressor, as shown by recent history and the action of our own Government itself. After pursuing a fifteen-years policy of unilateral disarmament our Government reluctantly comes to the same conclusions, hence the intensive speeding up in the expansion of the Royal Air Force, in conjunction with the air-raid precautions undertaken in collaboration with the St. John Ambulance and British Red Cross Society. Fortunately some of the local Divisions of the British Medical Association, realizing the importance of anti-gas training, have already held classes of instruction in this subject for their members.—I am, etc.,

J. B. SCOTT, M.C., T.D.,

Putney, S.W.15, March 29th.

Lieut.-Colonel R.A.M.C.(T.).

SIR,—When war is inevitable I can quite easily conceive the medical profession having to deal seriously with the problem of how to preserve the financial interests of the doctors who volunteer or who are conscripted. But surely whilst war is not with us and is preventable the medical profession should use all its powers to help the millions of people who are against war. We are guardians of the health of the community, and should be more interested in organizing means for preserving it than in organizing to aid the forces which work for its destruction.

The doctors and the majority of the peoples, combatants of either side, gained nothing either materially or spiritually from the last war. On the contrary, the loss in manpower and spiritual values was enormous. With modern means of mechanical and chemical warfare it has been estimated by experts that the next world war will probably bring with it the destruction of civilization. When we realize this our concern as doctors cannot be our own financial interests, it can only be the preservation of civilization.

Can a war be waged without doctors? Can a war be waged without engineers? These are the problems that confront us, and we must seek their solution in a practical way after wide discussion in our Association for the organization of peace.—I am, etc.,

London, N.19, April 4th.

S. LEFF, M.B., B.S.

### Anthropophobia

SIR,—The interesting letters of Dr. Bentley (*Journal*, March 21st, p. 610) and Dr. A. J. Brock (April 4th, p. 724) give food for thought. There evidently is something the matter—"Kali the Destroyer," with fair promises, is leading us along paths that are dangerous though apparently easy. We are morally and spiritually ill, and thoughtful people are asking more and more what is the meaning of it all. It may be, as Dr. Bentley suggests, that we are suffering from a hormone deficiency; but this appears far-fetched. More likely the deficiency is not on the material plane, but is that we are lacking in those Christian virtues which contributed so much to the greatness of our country in the past, placing it in the vanguard of nations to this very day. By all means let us investigate, as these two doctors suggest, and let there be a meeting somewhere to discuss the question. I believe thousands of medical men, clergymen, and others would give their support.—I am, etc.,

Prestatyn, April 5th.

W. THOMAS.