

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL NOTES

Acute Poliomyelitis

During the week notifications of acute poliomyelitis in England and Wales fell to nearly one-half the number notified in the previous week: this is the largest decrease since the epidemic began in the first week of July last year. It is perhaps significant that the decline of the disease has coincided with the recent spell of exceptionally cold weather. The 16 cases notified in England and Wales occurred in: London 4 (Chelsea, Deptford, Poplar, and St. Marylebone 1 each); Glamorgan 3 (Cardiff 3); Berkshire 2 (Easthampstead 2); Southampton 2 (Basingstoke 2); Surrey 2 (Haslemere and Hambledon 1 each); and 1 each in Gloucestershire (Bristol), Hertfordshire (Bushey), and Sussex (Chancetonbury).

Typhoid in Essex

Typhoid fever appears to be on the increase in England and Wales, notifications being 34, compared with 29, 24, 28, and 31 in the four immediately preceding weeks. In the county of Essex 13 cases were notified, or more than a third of the total—6 in West Ham, 5 in East Ham, 1 each in Southend and Chelmsford. Eleven of the cases belong to an outbreak in the adjacent boroughs of East and West Ham, in which at the time of going to press 39 cases have been notified with 4 deaths. As the cases have appeared in a limited district it is possible that the source of infection is contaminated food.

Influenza

Deaths from influenza in England and Wales during the week under review were more than double those reported in the previous week, while in London the number was eight times greater. Increases were also noted in Scotland, Eire, and Northern Ireland. The largest number of deaths were reported in Liverpool 13, London 8, Hull 6, and 3 each in Birkenhead, Bradford, and Manchester. In Liverpool, where prevalence was unusually high, the epidemic was ascribed to the quick change of weather recently encountered, and among preventive measures recommended by the public health authorities were the wearing of warm clothing and sound footwear, the provision of adequate ventilation in working and sleeping rooms, and the avoidance of unnecessary travel and assembly in crowded places.

Measles and Whooping-cough

The well-known observation that epidemics of measles and whooping-cough alternate is illustrated in the figures for Scotland in the week under review. Two hundred and thirty-four cases and 12 deaths from whooping-cough were recorded, compared with 22 cases and 1 death in the corresponding week last year; while there were 8 cases of measles and no deaths, compared with 481 cases and 4 deaths last year. As notification of measles and whooping-cough was not applied generally in London until October 1, 1938, comparative figures for the two years are not available, but the numbers notified during the week (149 whooping-cough and 17 measles) are suggestive that the same holds true for London.

Cholera

China.—The most recent information from China indicates that the epidemic of cholera declined during October in the provinces of Shansi, Shensi, and Honan, and in the provinces of Kwangsi, Kwangtung, and Fukien during November. In the province of Honan, which was most severely affected, widespread vaccination of the town population led to a rapid disappearance of the disease towards the end of August, but it continued to spread in the rural areas, especially such as were near large towns or on the Peiping-Hankow railway. The public health authorities were satisfied that water did not play an exclusive or even predominant part in the spread of the disease in this province.

British India.—Recent reports show a decline in cholera morbidity in most of the provinces of India. In Bengal,

where the seasonal maximum is usually reached in December, the cases notified in the week ended December 17 were 3,062, compared with 3,741 a fortnight previously. In Assam 1,464 cases were notified during the three-week period ended December 24, compared with 3,369 cases in the preceding three-week period. During the whole of December no cases were reported in the provinces west of the United Provinces, and the last cases notified in the frontier provinces occurred in the week ended November 12. In Madras Presidency, on the other hand, where the peak is usually reached in January, 146 cases were recorded in the three-week period ended December 24, compared with 81 during the previous three weeks.

Medical News

A meeting of the Kensington Medical Society will be held at St. Mary Abbots Hospital, Marloes Road, W., on Wednesday, January 25, at 8.30 p.m., when Dame Louise McIlroy and Professor James Young will open a discussion on "Diet in Pregnancy."

The annual meeting of the Royal Microscopical Society will be held at B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C., on Wednesday, January 18, at 5.30 p.m., when Mr. J. E. Barnard, F.R.S., will deliver his presidential address on "Towards the Smallest Living Things."

The Hunterian Society gives notice that, owing to unforeseen circumstances, it has been found impossible to hold the Hunterian Lecture on January 16. Professor Emile de Grósz of Budapest will deliver this lecture, on "The Problem of Glaucoma," at the Mansion House on April 17, at 9 p.m. The annual general meeting of the society will now be held on May 8 at Simpson's Restaurant, Cheapside, E.C.

The London Jewish Hospital Medical Society has arranged a symposium on "Points of View" to be held at the London Jewish Hospital, Stepney Green, E., on Thursday, January 26, at 3.45 p.m. Sir Maurice Cassidy will discuss "The Consultant Looks upon the Practitioner" and Dr. J. Snowman "The Practitioner Looks upon the Consultant."

A meeting of the Medico-Legal Society will be held at 26, Portland Place, W., on Thursday, January 26, at 8.30 p.m., when a paper will be read by Dr. Kenneth McFadyean on "The Death of Edwin Bartlett."

A second conference of representatives of medical staffs of London voluntary hospitals will be held at B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C., on Friday, January 27, at 5 p.m., when the amended contributory scheme for persons whose incomes are just over hospital income limits, as issued by the London Voluntary Hospitals Committee to boards and committees of management of London voluntary hospitals, will be considered.

The centenary of the death of Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839), the Swedish pioneer in physical training and medical gymnastics, was celebrated in London on January 3 by a dinner of the Ling Physical Education Association, which was attended by Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education. The Swedish Minister and Miss M. Stansfeld, principal of the Bedford Physical Training College, eulogized Ling's work for physical education, and Professor Winifred Cullis recalled the Ling Association's rapid growth since its foundation in 1899.

The new department for rheumatism and arthritis established at the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth under the aegis of the Empire Rheumatism Council was declared open by Lord Horder on January 7. In addition to a six-bedded and a two-bedded ward there is an occupational therapy room, two electrical rooms, and one for hydrotherapy. There is also a laboratory, where Dr. C. B. Dyson is already working as full-time research worker for the Empire Rheumatism Council.

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."