Letters, Notes, and Answers.

All communications in regard to editorial business should be addressed to ***The EDITOR, British Medical Journal, British Medical Association House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.***

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QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"Obstruction," who contemplates having a colostomy performed, would like to have the experiences of some medical man who has undergone this operation, especially as to the amount of disagreeableness thereby entailed and the amount of time spent daily in dressing the wound. Is the mental picture that every medical man has of this condition an exaggerated one?

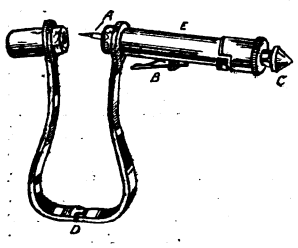
Spa Treatment.

"R. P. S." asks for information about the baths at Jura in Peru, said to be efficacious in gout.

Surgeon Captain E. H. Meaden, R.N.(ret.), asks for advice in the choice of a spa for the treatment of chronic articular rheumatism and fibrosis, with a certain degree of arterio-sclerosis. He has thought of Droitwich or Bath.

Boring the Lobule.

Dr. James Brown (Stirchley, Birmingham) sends us a sketch (reproduced herewith) of an instrument which is used by jewellers to puncture the lobule of the ear. A is a trocar and cannula, B is a trigger, C a pull-back to set the apparatus, and D a hinge; when set, the trocar and cannula are withdrawn into the tube E. "I have used this instrument several times," Dr. Brown adds; "the 'operation' can be done quickly and accurately and is practically painless. The cost of the instrument is about 10s. 6d.; it can be obtained from the Wilmot Manufacturing Company, Camden Street, Birmingham."



Stomach Cough.

"M.B.Cantab." asks for help in self-treatment. He has suffered for years from persistent night cough, the performance being always the same, waking from 1 to 2 a.m.—that is, roughly five hours after last meal—with violent irritation in the throat, coughing incessantly for about half an hour or more until flatus forms in the stomach and can be expelled, when the irritation ceases and rest can be resumed. Condition diagnosed by physician as nervous hyperchlorhydria, but treatment by dieting and various stomach mixtures has been unsuccessful. Bromides occasionally relieve, but are undependable. Alkalis taken at the time shorten the attack and hasten expulsion of flatus, but taken at bedtime seem powerless to ward off the attacks, which have persisted for some ten years. Teeth good, throat normal, general health good, and no conscious indigestion by day.

Income Tax.

Free Quarters.

"P. E. A." holds an appointment as assistant medical officer to a convalescent home at a salary *plus* free quarters and board in the home. Are his free quarters assessable to income tax?

*** It seems that the authorities recognize that the home is entitled to exemption from assessment, Schedule A, but there is a statutory qualification to such exemptions—"so far as not occupied by any individual officer . . . whose total annual income . . . amounts to £150." Although "P. E. A." has the free use of the rooms the statutory occupier of the premises as a whole is the authority administering the home, and the retaining of the value of the quarters as liable to tax should therefore be by way of a restriction of the exemption granted to the authority—in other words, the tax is payable, but by the treasurer rather than by our correspondent.

Cash Basis.

"A. W. S. C." has been assessed for the past twenty years on a cash receipt basis. He has now been asked, through the agent by whom his returns are lodged, to revise his figures so as to put them on the basis of "fees earned." For various reasons this would prove very troublesome.

*** Unless the practice is expanding there would apparently be no ground for believing that a revision to the *value* of fees earned would effect any material change over a period of years, and in such circumstances it is understood that inspectors of taxes do not press for the change to be made. We suggest that our correspondent should communicate with the inspector—or preferably see him if practicable—and explain the particular difficulties in meeting his request, including that of the specific valuation of outstanding debts, and endeavour to show him that compliance is unnecessary. Theoretically the inspector is right, but on the assumption made above his request is not in accordance with the normal practice, and would not, we believe, be supported on appeal to the Commissioners appointed to hear appeals against assessments. In any case insistence on the request would have to be backed by a previous amendment of the existing assessment, which apparently agrees with the cash basis return.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

The Registration of Nursing Homes.

Miss L. Ramsden, President of the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, writes: We feel that your readers are not sufficiently aware of the dangerous provisions that have been inserted in the Nursing Homes (Registration) Bill. These place the duty of inspecting nursing and maternity homes in the hands of the smaller local authorities (in many cases the rural or district councils) and propose the repeal of Part II of the Midwives and Maternity Homes Act, 1926. This Act, which has been working satisfactorily since passed, placed the inspection of maternity homes under the same authority as the midwives—the county councils and the county borough councils. If the new bill, as amended, is passed, the result will be: dual inspection, the home being under one authority and the midwives working in it under another, with conflicting rules and regulations; the possibility, so undesirable in administrative work, of the influence of personal friends and vested interests; and the certainty that the smaller authorities would not be able to provide well trained, whole-time inspectors with expert knowledge.

Menstrual "Uncleanliness."

Colonel P. Broome Giles (Folkestone) writes: Whilst I do not believe that the usual brief handling of food by a menstruating woman will decompose the food, I know by actual experience that the prolonged contact between the hands of a menstruating woman in the process of rubbing salt, etc., for the preservation of hams will produce a decomposition and render the hams uneatable. This fact is well known to the farmers' wives in Herefordshire, Radnorshire, and Breconshire.

Soy Bean Seeds as Culture Medium.

Major H. St. Arnaud Agate (Salisbury) writes: In the British Medical Journal of October 22nd (*Epitome*, para. 379) there appears an extract from the *Rassegna int. di clin. e ter.* of August 31st, under the heading of "Soy bean seeds as culture medium," by L. Vitale. I should like to point out that in an original communication entitled "The standardization of a base culture medium," published in the *Journal of the R.A.M.C.*, dated March, 1922, I mentioned soy beans as being among the substances used in the preparation of culture medium. I still use it, with the addition of 0.5 per cent. of marmite. I have done this for about eight years, with uniformly satisfactory results. I can, therefore, confirm L. Vitale's experience.

A Corrected Price.

The price of *The Invert and His Social Adjustment*, which was reviewed last week, is, we are informed, 5s., and not 3s. 6d.

Vacancies.

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 50, 51, 52, 53, 56, and 58 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 54 and 55.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page *187*.

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