3. General practitioners with toy sets which, while they may be adequate for the diagnosis of fractured phalanges, are all too frequently employed in the most inexpert manner for work which is far beyond their capacity. The manufacturers are largely to blame for this, as their salesmen almost invariably assure the innocent purchaser that these miniature sets can "tackle anything."

4. The surgeon who sees a patient in private, sends him to a hospital to be *x*-rayed, and then admits him to a nursing home for operation. This far from honest practice is much more widespread than is generally supposed, especially among younger surgeons.

The solution of these problems does not lie with the radiological specialist; it depends simply on our receiving honest dealing and fair treatment at the hands of our medical and surgical colleagues.—I am, etc.,

December 14th. M.D.

Calcium and Gold Therapy

SIR,—I was interested in Dr. Williams's article on the prevention of reactions in the gold treatment of rheumatoid arthritis by the use of calcium. I can confirm his results. I have, however, used calcium gluconate by mouth in 10-gram doses, sometimes intramuscularly in 1-gram doses, and as I stated in my article in the *Practitioner* of June, 1935 (p. 788), I found that calcium gluconate and liver extract with collosol sulphur at night in drachm doses lessens the risk of reaction.

It is interesting to note that in patients who are subject to allergic disorders these reactions are more likely to occur, and those with high eosinophil counts tend to be less tolerant. For such patients we have used, for the last two years, calcium gluconate as a routine adjuvant to gold therapy.—I am, etc.,

London, W.1, Dec. 7th. GERALD SLOT.

Voluntary Euthanasia

SIR,—When Dr. Millard writes that voluntary euthanasia is not a medical question he states a truth which may be wider, and wiser, than he intends. Is there any good reason why we, who have been trained and continue to train ourselves as the adversaries of death, should be forced to become his allies? The onus of executing patients belongs elsewhere. A suggestion, which has the merit that its adoption would strip this question of some of the sentimentality which now enwraps it, is that the task should be delegated either to the hangman or to some official appointed *ad hoc*. Any person with a modicum of intelligence could be speedily trained in toxicology to a degree of proficiency adequate for the task. Should the practice gain general favour it might become possible in course of time to establish abattoirs, each with its whole-time staff, in all large centres of population. Further research directed towards the discovery of cures for what the infallibles call incurable diseases would gradually become redundant.—I am, etc.,

London, S.E.21, Dec. 14th. DONALD M. O'CONNOR.

Migraine

SIR,—A patient who had been sent to me because of severe attacks of migraine felt an attack coming on as I was doing a retinoscopy. I immediately examined the fundi and watched the retinal veins dilate. If this condition were not due to increase of intracranial pressure of some kind, on what grounds could it be explained? Is it not reasonable to suppose that there is a rise of intracranial pressure, which is followed by a fall before the attack passes off?—I am, etc.,

Wanstead, E.11, Dec. 14th. FRANCIS E, PRESTON.

Obituary

WALTER SYDNEY PERRIN, M.CH., F.R.C.S.

Surgeon to the London Hospital

As announced in last week's *Journal*, Mr. W. S. Perrin died after a short illness, on December 8th, at the early age of 53.

Walter Sydney Perrin was educated at the City of London School and at Caius College, Cambridge, where he had a brilliant career, taking first-class honours in both parts of the Natural Sciences Tripos in 1903 and 1904. He was also awarded the University Walsingham Prize Medal and the Shuttleworth Research Studentship at Caius. After working for several years at protozoology Perrin decided to enter medicine, and studied for this at the London Hospital. He qualified M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. in 1912, during which year he won the medical and surgical scholarships at his hospital; two years later he was awarded the triennial Jonathan Hutchinson Prize for an essay on intussusception. He obtained the F.R.C.S. in 1913, and the M.Ch.Cambridge in 1914.

During the war Perrin was for a short time in command of the Belgian Field Hospital at Furnes, and later became surgical specialist in the R.A.M.C., with the rank of major. In 1921 he was appointed assistant to the London Hospital, and in 1928 became a full surgeon. Among his various activities he examined in surgery at Cambridge, was president of the Subsection of Proctology of the Royal Society of Medicine, and was on the surgical staff of the Royal Masonic Hospital. Some eighteen months ago he was invited to serve on the Board of Electors to the chair of anatomy at Cambridge.

Perrin was a surgeon's surgeon. The care with which he investigated his cases, his sound judgement and skill, the kindly sympathy and patience with which he treated his patients, brought him a reputation which may be estimated by the frequency with which his colleagues sought his advice for their relatives or themselves. Ever alive to surgical progress, he weighed each new theory or practice in the scales of a cautious criticism based on wide experience, and adopted always what he found to be good.

Generations of students owe a great debt to Perrin, for in his early days he acquired a brilliant reputation as a successful coach. When he was compelled for financial reasons to abandon his career in zoology, to the loss of that science, he supported himself and paid for his medical fees by coaching in various subjects, and those who have had an easier path may gauge the courage and hard work that made this possible. He carried on his classes at Cambridge for several years after he had gone down. At the London Hospital many had cause to be grateful for his teaching in anatomy and physiology, and later in surgery. His retentive memory, his grasp of any subject he studied, and his extraordinarily clear and simple exposition, illustrated by skilful draughtsmanship, smoothed away the difficulties of his students and impressed essentials on their memory. His kindness to students beginning surgery on his firm will long be remembered by those who experienced it.

Highly cultured, with an extensive knowledge of literature and art, he was a charming friend, and those who knew him best will remember him above all for his personal qualities. The soul of honour and the most loyal of colleagues, Walter Sydney Perrin leaves behind him the memory of a trusted and lovable friend. He is survived by his widow, two sons, and a daughter. H. L.

Mr. CLIFFORD DOBELL, F.R.S., writes:

After taking his B.A. degree Perrin decided to study protozoology, in which he was encouraged by Adam Sedgwick, who was then still reader (though acting as professor) of zoology at Cambridge. To prepare himself for this, Perrin wished to work in Berlin under Fritz Schaudinn, who was then at the height of his fame and regarded as the greatest living authority on the protozoa. But he was unable to do so for various reasons, and went instead to study under von Prowazek (who was a personal friend and great admirer of Schaudinn) at the Zoological Station at Rovigno on the Adriatic (in Istria, then Austrian territory). Perrin worked here during the winter 1904–5, and for a part of 1905, altogether for about a year, and became deeply interested in the works of Schaudinn and von Prowazek, whose speculations greatly influenced all his own researches in protozoology. He was able to continue these because he won the Shuttleworth Research Studentship (Caius College) at this time; while in 1905 he also gained the Walsingham Medal (Cambridge University—for research in biology), which carried with it £20.

On his return to Cambridge Perrin was appointed demonstrator in zoology (under Sedgwick) and continued his researches in protozoology during 1906, 1907, and part of 1908. He also kept himself by coaching in the evenings. At this date (1906–7) he was a fully qualified zoologist, with special knowledge of the protozoa. He had no thought of undertaking any medical work, and his future at Cambridge looked bright. He had already made a fine beginning as a protozoologist, with several intriguing publications to his credit. He was a University demonstrator, with a small coaching practice to eke out his salary; and he was enthusiastically pursuing his researches in the intervals between teaching. All he needed to consolidate his position was a Fellowship at his College (Caius). But although he put in for this every year possible, with every prospect of success, he failed to obtain one. After his last attempt in 1907 he was thus faced with the alternatives of continuing independently as a zoologist and supporting himself by coaching and demonstrating, and with little chance of advancement, or he could abandon the career on which he had embarked so successfully and take up another. He had no money beyond what he had gained by his own labours, and had already enjoyed all the scholarships and prizes which were available. He faced his zoological defeat with astonishing courage and composure, and resolved to take up medicine as a career. Domestic troubles at this time made it imperative that he should earn more money, and this was the factor which really determined his action—as I well remember. Accordingly he relinquished all hope of continuing as a zoologist and began to study for his first M.B. examination. He got through easily, of course, and coached other candidates simultaneously. He then tackled the more difficult proposition of the second M.B. and solved it in the same way. He qualified in 1912, as a result of almost incredibly strenuous labours divided between Cambridge and London.

After 1908 I saw very little of Perrin, though we met and corresponded occasionally. Our ways diverged, and he who was, by first intention, a zoologist became a medico; while I, originally a medical student, developed into a zoologist. At the cross-roads we made contact for a year or two, and we worked side by side in the same small laboratory, on the friendliest terms, as keen students of the protozoa during 1906 and 1907. I have no doubt at all that Perrin would have made his mark as a protozoologist if he had been able to continue his work. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he could have carved out a permanent niche in his own honour in almost any corridor of the Temple of Science. He had great natural gifts as a learner and teacher, when a young man, and by applying them he was able to surmount difficulties which would have annihilated most other men.

When he was a protozoologist Perrin published five papers, of which only two ("Researches upon the Life-history of *Trypanosoma balbianii* Certes," *Arch. Protistenk.*, 1903, vii, 131, and "Observations on the Structure and Life-history of *Pleistophora periplanetae*, Lutz and Splendore, *Quart. Journ. Microscop. Sci.*, 1906, xlix, 615) are really noteworthy: the others were preliminary notes. But he did a great deal more work than these papers reveal, and most of his researches on the protozoa were neither finished nor published. I am confident that he could have accomplished great things as a zoologist if fate had been kinder to him.

Professor WILLIAM WRIGHT writes:

I feel there is nothing for me to add to what has already been said about my old friend and former assistant, unless it be a reminiscence—a reminiscence which recalls what we know to have been his constant if unexpressed attitude to life; a reminiscence which may be said to contain within it his last message and instruction—he was ever a teacher—to that great multitude of former pupils scattered over the face of the earth who at Cambridge and the London Hospital had at one time or another come under his inspiring influence. Only a few weeks before he died he wrote, asking if I could tell him where the following lines were to be found:

> The common problem, yours, mine, everyone's
> Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
> Provided it could be—but finding first
> What may be, then find how to make it fair!*

—a problem which he attacked with indomitable and persistent courage from his earliest youth, and which few, I imagine, ever succeeded so satisfactorily in solving. I have, however, sometimes wondered in these last sad days if his inquiry had not a deeper meaning and purpose than I at the time appreciated; if, in the quotation, he had not found a "rod and staff" which were to guide and comfort him as he walked through the valley of the shadow, for as we now know he was for a long time conscious of the serious nature of his illness. It is not, however, on so gloomy a journey that we shall think of him, still less as lying in that *perpetuus sopor* of which the Latin poet writes; rather shall we see him on the "farther shore," with that smile we remember so well—head a little on one side—waving us a cheerful farewell, ere turning sharply on his heel he steps forward, resolutely we may be sure, on the path which all that lives must ultimately tread.

ROBERT ARTHUR ASKINS, M.A., M.D., D.P.H.

Principal Medical Officer, Southern Rhodesia

The tragic death of Dr. R. A. Askins, principal medical officer to the Government of Southern Rhodesia, while returning to South Africa, has deprived two continents of a well-known and distinguished figure in public health. His untimely death is particularly mourned in Bristol, where he had many friends and had lived and worked, first as school medical officer and later as medical officer of health of the city, port, and school service.

* Robert Browning: *Bishop Blougram's Apology.*