

Letters, Notes, and Answers

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TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES.—EDITOR, *Atiology Westcent, London*; SECRETARY, *Medisera Westcent, London*.

B.M.A. SCOTTISH OFFICE: 7, Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh.

QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Disfigurement of Nails

"DIGIT" writes: Could any of your readers give assistance with the following case? The patient is a young bank official in his early twenties. About five years ago he noticed that his finger and toe nails were becoming rough and brittle, and now all his nails are furrowed, thick, and constantly breaking off at the distal end. There is no pain, and his sole complaint is that they are very unsightly. He has seen a specialist, who tried various remedies, including x rays, but all without any real benefit. One nail was even removed, but the new nail was as bad as ever; otherwise he is quite healthy.

"Only Functional"

"L. P. S." writes: Your correspondent writing under the heading "Only Functional" (August 17, p. 244) will find the diagnosis of his case in an article called "Some Alarming Seizures," by Prof. John A. Ryle, published in the *British Medical Journal* of January 20, 1934.

Bromidrosis of the Feet

"G. B. F." writes: In reply to "A. D.'s" query for a remedy for bromidrosis (October 5, p. 478). When acting as a civilian medical practitioner at a military hospital, all the known remedies having failed in a bad case and also all the treatment advocated by Continental armies, I tried a course of ultra-violet rays. This was immediately successful, and since then I have advised sufferers from the complaint to expose their feet to graduated doses of sun rays until the feet are pigmented; this is simpler and quite as effective.

Income Tax

Board of Locumtenent

"C. D." points out that while a locumtenent receives free board and lodging under his principal's roof he is not liable to tax on the value thereof to him. If so, why should his income tax be increased because the principal for private reasons makes a change and gives him an additional £2 per week to board himself?

** The value of board and lodging provided cannot be turned into money by the recipient, therefore on a technical argument it is exempt from taxation. On the change referred to above "C. D." reverted to the position in which the ordinary taxpayer finds himself—liable to pay tax on the income out of which he provides for his own maintenance.

Payment in Kind

"D. R." has some patients who have asked if they can pay their accounts in goods instead of in cash. Would receipts of this kind be liable to income tax?

** Yes—but they should be reckoned at the amounts of cash which "D. R." could obtain for the goods—presumably less than their normal retail value.

Personal Allowance

"R. A." has been assessed on £243 earnings, with deductions for expenses and earned income relief but not for the married personal allowance or for his child. The assessment is for 1939-40.

** Unless the latter allowances are being given for the same year against some other income, "R. A." is entitled to have them deducted in this assessment. The fact that other allowances have been given suggests that "R. A." has made his return, in which case either he has had his allowances elsewhere or an error has been made in the inspector's office, which will no doubt be corrected if attention is drawn to it.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

L.C.C. Ambulance Service: Telephone Calls

With reference to applications by telephone for the use of ambulances for the conveyance of cases of illness, we are asked to inform readers that if Waterloo 3311 is unobtainable at any time the alternative numbers Whitehall 2177 or Waterloo 6687 should be used. Applications in connexion with street accidents and emergencies should continue to be made by dialling "999."

First Aid for Burns

"A. B." writes: I have read with great interest Mr. J. L. Aymard's letter on first aid for burns (August 3, p. 167). I have practised his method for quite a number of years with excellent results. It was brought to my notice by a Viennese housewife, who used to dip her finger in white of egg if she burned her fingers while working in the kitchen. If that was done immediately no blisters appeared. I have since used egg albumen in many cases of burns, and it never failed to help if applied a short time after the accident.

"Typhoid Mary"

"Typhoid Mary," who died in 1938, will probably be heard of for many years yet, and those who wish to have an accurate record of her life will find it in the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, October, 1939, under the title of "The Curious Career of Typhoid Mary," by Dr. George A. Soper, who wrote the first account of Mary Mallon in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 15, 1907. A reprint of Dr. Soper's article is in the library of the B.M.A.

Ingrowing Toenail

"ARCHICLAST" writes: This condition is the result of pressure of a keratinous arch by its footings or lateral edges into the sensitive underlying tissues or quick. Pressure by footwear reinforces the arch, and the natural growth forward of the nail so pressed in adds a ploughing effect to the agony. The above definition indicates the main requirement for cure, which is to break the arch, and for prevention, which is to keep it broken. Dr. Prentice's rather painful method (August 24, p. 274) breaks the crown of the arch in its forward part, and will give temporary relief, while the sensitive quick remains exposed. The following simple operation undermines both springs of the arch without touching or exposing the quick, and may be said to be good for a lifetime. It consists in making two well-defined grooves along the length of the nail so as to mark off from its central two-thirds two lateral parts or "wings" (of one-sixth each) which remain hinged to it by the underlying membrane after the manner of Gooch splinting. Scraping with the corner of a one-edged razor-blade is as good a method as any for making the grooves. As a preliminary the sites for grooves may be marked in pencil. Once started the patient usually can be trusted to complete the grooving, taking care to desist when the scraping begins to hurt, showing that the right depth has been reached—that is, only a thin film of keratin remains in the invert of the groove. As a finish a little manipulation of the wing-pieces will exercise their hinges. The arch thus broken, the resistance of the suffering tissues soon bends up its footings—the offending wings. After-care rests with the patient. He should keep the nail trimmed close, but cut flush across all three sections, resisting the temptation to lop off the looser ends of the wings. The grooves are prolonged into the new growth of nail as it appears, and if they go askew fresh grooves should be made in the correct position.

A Word of Caution

We are informed by a correspondent practising in North-West England that he recently had a visit from a lady who described herself as a Norwegian radiologist and asked for a loan until her money came through. She was able to give the names and addresses of various Norwegian residents, but as on inquiry she proved to be unknown to them our correspondent suggests that if other members of the profession receive a similar request it might be wise to test this lady's bona fides before giving the assistance asked for.

Corrigendum

In the leading article on pregnandioli (October 26, p. 561) two reference numbers were incorrectly given in the text. The sentence beginning "Venning and Browne^{6, 7}" should read "Venning and Browne^{7, 8}".