

Medical News

Recruitment for the Sudan Medical Service, which has been suspended since the outbreak of the war, is to recommence. A notice of a vacancy will be found in our advertisement columns.

The address of the National Radium Commission office is now c/o Westminster Hospital, St. John's Gardens, London, S.W.1. Telephone: Victoria 8161, Extension 72.

The name of Dr. George McCracken, medical practitioner, Manchester, has been brought to notice for brave conduct in civil defence.

A sympathetic obituary notice of Sir D'Arcy Power appears in the *New England Journal of Medicine* of July 3.

A pamphlet entitled "Clothing Coupon Quiz: Answers to Questions on the Rationing of Clothing, Footwear, Cloth, and Knitting Yarn" was issued last week by the Board of Trade and is published by H.M. Stationery Office, price 2d. This provides ready reference to official rulings on the many questions put to retailers and to the Board of Trade since the introduction of the clothes rationing scheme. The coupon requirements for the clothing needs of man, woman, and child are clearly set out in tables. There is also a list of coupon-free articles.

Arrangements are being made in Eire for the manufacture of anaesthetics. For months past hospitals and chemists have found it difficult to secure adequate supplies, especially of ether.

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.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES and LETTERS forwarded for publication are understood to be offered to the *British Medical Journal* alone unless the contrary be stated.

Authors desiring REPRINTS of their articles must communicate with the Secretary, B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1, on receipt of proofs. Authors over-seas should indicate on MSS. if reprints are required, as proofs are not sent abroad.

ADVERTISEMENTS should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager (hours 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Orders for copies of the *Journal* and subscriptions should be addressed to the Secretary.

TELEPHONE No.—B.M.A. and B.M.J.: EUSTON 2111.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES.—EDITOR, *Aitiology Westcent, London*; SECRETARY, *Medisecra Westcent, London*.

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

QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Treatment of Phosphorus Burns

Major-General T. S. COATES, in reply to the inquiry about treating phosphorus burns (September 6, p. 363), writes: (1) Wash the burn immediately with a solution of sodium carbonate (two tablespoonfuls to a pint of water). This treatment neutralizes any phosphoric acid formed as the result of the combustion of phosphorus, and partially destroys any free phosphorus present. (2) To free the burn from all traces of phosphorus, wash with 1% solution copper sulphate. Copper sulphate combines with free phosphorus, forming copper phosphide, thus preventing further ignition. (3) Remove the resulting dark-coloured deposit with forceps, and thoroughly wash with water containing a little antiseptic. For extensive burns requiring hospital treatment, ultra-violet radiation is recommended and dressings of picric acid, etc., as for ordinary burns. Phosphorus burns suppurate much more than ordinary burns, and the healing period is usually three to four weeks.

Timepiece for Blind Person

Miss CATHERINE E. WILLIAMSON writes: In answer to "Inquirer" (August 16, p. 254), if he would get into touch with the National Institute for the Blind in London he would receive full particulars as to the watches which were supplied in the last war for members of His Majesty's Forces in connexion with St. Dunstan's Hostel for the Blind in Regent's Park. These watches were inexpensive, rather large in size; the face was covered, and upon pressing a spring above the winder the face opened and disclosed the time, marked

by raised dots on the dial. I worked for three years at St. Dunstan's, and observed that these watches could be used by all types of cases, even those who were extremely badly injured and unable to lead a normal life. They were also used effectively by those who were slow of thought and perhaps not so well educated as others.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Abortus Fever and Sulphapyridine

Dr. J. WHITTINGDALE (Sherborne) writes: Since my note on the response of *Br. abortus* infection to sulphapyridine (August 9, p. 210) has provoked comment, may I be permitted to reply. The patient has remained well, and one may suppose that the dose of sulphapyridine effected a *sterilisatio magna* in this instance. Sir Weldon Dalrymple-Champneys, whose interest in this disease is well known, has been kind enough to inform me that of the reported cases that have been treated with the drug about 50% have apparently been cured. In this "vale of small dairies" cases of human infection with *Br. abortus* are not infrequent; it is therefore encouraging to be able to hope for a proportion of cures by means of a new drug, in place of the former regime of bed, with occasional doses of boiled milk intramuscularly.

Red Cross Work in Abyssinia

Red Cross work in Abyssinia is being carried out by a unit consisting of a medical officer, two surgeons, four Red Cross and St. John nurses from England, and native dressers. Dr. A. J. Last, the medical officer to the unit, wrote on June 27 to the Deputy Commissioner of the British Red Cross Society, Khartoum: "The larger towns . . . are staffed by military doctors and the original Italian doctors. The latter cannot be sent to outlying districts, but must be kept in the larger towns on account of their personal safety. Tigre, on the other hand, had one Italian doctor only—in Adowa—and he was frightened and wanted to leave. . . . Dr. Gurney and I came to Adowa on June 13. We have taken over from the Italian doctor a former military hospital of some 200 or more beds. It is poorly equipped and staffed with incompetent native dressers. We have already begun to reorganize the place. In addition we see nearly 100 out-patients a day in the civil dispensary."

"Relaxation"

Dr. W. NUNAN (London, W.1) writes: Not being an Olympian, either as a permanent resident or in the guise of a tourist or passing explorer, but as a humble student of the literature and practice of what should be, and will be, an integral component part of the medical curriculum, may I draw attention to the airiness of the use, abuse, and ill use of the word "relaxation" in the literature of psychotherapy. A few recent examples of the nonchalant dismissal of the question of relaxation must suffice for my present purpose. In the communication of Majors F. L. McLaughlin and W. M. Millar (August 2, p. 158), which has given rise to this discussion, the authors wrote somewhat as follows: "Having placed the patient in a state of relaxation, etc." In a recently published book on the war neuroses one of the distinguished contributors to the symposium writes: "I get the patient to relax" (*sic*). Such quotations could be multiplied indefinitely, but the point is raised. One hears daily of such phrases, used by medical men to patients, as "You must try to relax," "You must relax," "Relax all your muscles," and so on. Patients say, "I cannot make myself relax," "I try to relax." The outstanding state of such patients is one of anxiety, and the anxious patient is tense. He tries to relax. He fails, because he becomes even more tense—trying and relaxing being "opposite numbers." A very contradiction in terms. His doctor, however, has insisted that the patient must relax—and the law of reversed effort at once applies. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* The anxious one, indeed, does not relax even when he sleeps, and so is "more tired in the morning than when he went to bed." Naturally, because he has worked a "double shift." Perhaps these few incoherent remarks, touching lightly on the outside edge of a large, complicated, neglected subject, put up as a target, *ballon d'essai*, or what not, may draw some (informative) fire. What is relaxation? How is it obtained? Has one not seen exhausted soldiers—landed from Dunkirk and all that—lying on railway sidings, platforms, trucks, lorries, in waiting rooms, anywhere, everywhere—asleep and tense? The cat on the hearthrug, the tired dog, can relax. *Homo sapiens* cannot relax automatically. He must, alas! be taught.

Corrigendum

In his letter on the treatment of impetigo contagiosa (September 6, p. 356) Dr. F. R. Craddock is made to say that he uses a 20% solution of gentian violet. This should have read 2%. Dr. Craddock states that he has never attempted to use gentian violet in a solution stronger than 5%.