

LETTERS, NOTES, AND ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE CURRENT WEEK'S JOURNAL SHOULD REACH THE OFFICE NOT LATER THAN MIDDAY POST ON WEDNESDAY. TELEGRAMS CAN BE RECEIVED ON THURSDAY MORNING.

COMMUNICATIONS respecting Editorial matters should be addressed to the Editor, 429, Strand, W.C., London; those concerning business matters, non-delivery of the JOURNAL, etc., should be addressed to the Manager, at the Office, 429, Strand, W.C., London.

IN order to avoid delay, it is particularly requested that all letters on the editorial business of the JOURNAL be addressed to the Editor at the Office of the JOURNAL, and not to his private house.

AUTHORS desiring reprints of their articles published in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL are requested to communicate beforehand with the Manager, 429, Strand, W.C.

CORRESPONDENTS who wish notice to be taken of their communications should authenticate them with their names—of course not necessarily for publication.

CORRESPONDENTS not answered are requested to look to the Notices to Correspondents of the following week.

MANUSCRIPTS FORWARDED TO THE OFFICE OF THIS JOURNAL CANNOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BE RETURNED.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT.—We shall be much obliged to Medical Officers of Health if they will, on forwarding their Annual and other Reports, favour us with duplicate copies.

Queries, answers, and communications relating to subjects to which special departments of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL are devoted, will be found under their respective headings.

QUERIES.

IGNORAMUS asks: What are the dangers attending the use of antipyrin as an anodyne (for example, in megrim)?

WORKS ON LIFE ASSURANCE.

A YOUNG SURGEON writes: I have been recently appointed a medical examiner to a life assurance company, and shall be glad if you can recommend a suitable book, at a reasonable price, as a guide.

** The *Medical Adviser in Life Assurance*, by Sir Edward Sieveking (Churchill), or the *Medical Handbook on Life Assurance*, by Messrs. Pollock and Chisholm (Cassell), will be found useful.

BACTERIA OF HEALTHY SKIN.

G. D. inquires where he can get information about the bacteria of healthy skin.

** The subject has not been sufficiently worked out. G. D. will find a paper by Bordoni-Uffreduzzi, on the normal microbes of the skin, in the *Fortschr. d. Med.*, Nr. 5, 1888, and some information in a monograph by Preindlsberger (*Zur Kenntniss der Bakterien des Unternageltraumes und zur Desinfektion der Hände*, Vienna, 1891). We are not aware that the comparatively scant information which has been obtained regarding the subject has been gathered together in a separate publication.

ANSWERS.

A MEMBER (Whitehaven).—The gentleman in question being a Branch Officer, it is, we think, for the Branch Council to express an opinion rather than, or prior to, ourselves.

B.A. (Cantab) is, we think, clearly bound to hand over the fees in question. They were never his but his employers', and the date at which they were handed to him does not affect the question of ownership.

DR. JOHN WOODMAN (M.O.H., Exeter).—From the commencement of the current year the Registrar-General has added five to the list of great towns for which he publishes Weekly Returns; and, therefore, the death-rate in thirty-three towns is now given by him in place of the twenty-eight towns hitherto composing the list. This is the first extension of the list since 1882, when eight new towns were added. Dr. Woodman will, therefore, understand and no doubt acquiesce in the corresponding change which we have made.

LIFE INSURANCE EXAMINATION.

IF "Meum" answers the question "Do you consider him temperate?" at all, he is bound to speak the truth. The applicant, by consenting to be examined by his regular medical attendant, tacitly allows the latter to give to the assurance company the benefit of any information he may have derived from his medical attendance on the applicant.

TREATMENT OF SCIATICA.

P. M. writes: "Junior" may find acetanilide (antifebrin) in doses of 7 grains every 4 hours of use in sciatica, if the case be of the usual rheumatic type. A preliminary purge of calomel or podophyllin is usually advisable, and rest in bed with free perspirations may be necessary, especially if there be much lithic acid in the urine. But gout, obstructed bowels, or tumours pressing on the sciatic nerve are sometimes causes and should be kept in mind.

THE BACILLUS OF INFLUENZA.

WE have examined the documents submitted by Mr. Grün and have arrived at the conclusion that the micro-organism which he described in

1890-91 is not at all the same as but different from those described by Pfeiffer, Kitasato, and Canon. There are many discrepancies and marked differences in behaviour with reagents, in mode of growth, motile power, etc. The question may be definitely settled later on by those interested. Meantime Mr. Grün appears to us to fail in the desired identification.

NOTES, LETTERS, ETC.

ERRATUM.—In the letter in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of January 23rd, on "Prognosis on Acute Pneumonia," the last signature was printed W. M. Ord, instead of W. W. Ord.

THE CARPENTER AND DUKES FUND.

THE Treasurer of this Fund, Dr. W. F. Coles, 50, George Street, Croydon, acknowledges the following additional subscriptions:

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
W. C. Blaker, Esq. ...	0	7	6	Dr. A. B. Carpenter...	2	2	0
Dr. C. B. Richardson ...	0	5	0	Dr. E. W. Du Buisson ...	0	10	6
Dr. Withers Moore ...	2	2	0	T. A. White, Esq. ...	1	0	0

THE DUTIES OF HEAD WARDSMAN.

X. sends an advertisement cut from the *Adelaide Observer* of November 28th, 1891. The advertisement is for a competent head wardsmen to administer anaesthetics and to dispense. Our correspondent thinks it would be interesting to know whether the attention of the Adelaide Medical Board has been drawn to the administrator of chloroform, etc., at the Wilcannia Hospital.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL OFFICERS.

DR. F. P. ATKINSON (Surbiton), in a letter to the *Daily News* on the management of our Local Government Medical Service, expresses the opinion that "the pay of the parish medical officer is too small, and the poor consequently do not get the attendance they should do. What," he says, "is wanted is the appointment of a medical man to attend solely upon the poor, and drugs, etc., should be found by the parish. The district should be sufficiently large to occupy his whole time, or the Poor-law work might be judiciously combined with sanitary. The pay should be sufficient to attract good men, and small districts might be training grounds for the larger ones."

POLICE CAUTION.

MR. ANDERSON, of the Metropolitan Police Office, writes to caution members of the medical profession "against a man who for some months past has been carrying on a system of fraud in various parts of London. His mode of proceeding is to call on clergymen and doctors and introducing himself as being connected with a firm of shipping agents; he states that he has been commissioned to obtain suitable lodgings for a young gentleman, who is about to arrive in London, and asks to be recommended to persons having furnished apartments to let. He then goes to the address given, takes the apartments, and in payment for rent in advance tenders a worthless cheque for a larger amount (usually written on plain paper) and receives the balance. His description is as follows: age about 40, height 5 feet 6 inches, pale face, hair and moustache dark brown, slim build, gentlemanly appearance and of good address. The police hold a warrant for his arrest, and it is requested that he may be detained and handed over to a constable.

"THE MAN OF GENIUS."

DR. G. YEATES HUNTER (Philbeach Gardens, S.W.) writes: In the review of *The Man of Genius*, by Cesare Lombroso, in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of January 16th, you allude to Christopher Smart as a writer of second-rate poetry, who, having become insane, suddenly felt the inspiration of genius, and wrote the "Song to David," one of the noblest poems in our language. You add, "How was it," asks Mr. Browning, in his *Parleyings With Certain People*, "this happened but once? Here was a poet who always could, but never did but once!" On this head I beg to inform you that I sent Mr. Browning several other productions of this poet for his perusal, and received a letter in reply, from which I extract the following: "I beg to return the MS. which your kindness has permitted me to see. They bear the unmistakable stamp of their author in the extraordinary strength, as well as occasional weakness; the rapturous elevation is everywhere apparent. I am glad that what I wrote concerning this truly inspired man gives you pleasure." I venture to submit this to you, because it proves that, in Mr. Browning's opinion, the "Song to David" was not a solitary flash of genius. The poems I was enabled to send Mr. Browning after I had read his *Parleyings* are in my possession, as Christopher Smart was the brother of my great grandmother, wife of the late Mr. Wm. Hunter, of Margate. I may add that Smart was a Fellow of Pembroke Hall, and gained the Seatonian prize for five years, four of them in succession. He was, also, a friend of Pope, Johnson, and other men of literary eminence.

THE CHAMPION TOOTH EXTRACTOR.

THE champion tooth-drawer of the world is said to be a monk, Fra Orsenico, of Rome, who operates by the Japanese method—that is, with the simple instruments provided for him by Nature in the shape of his thumb and forefinger. His extractions average 100 a day, but there are days (perhaps when an east wind is blowing) when the number does not fall far short of 400. The good brother seems to be as proud of these dental trophies as an Indian brave of his scalps. He has two boxes containing thousands of more or less dilapidated teeth from which he has delivered his patients; these are kept open in his operating-room, doubtless *pour encourager les autres*. There seems to be some doubt as to who has the honour of having extracted the largest number of teeth at one sitting. An American dentist, Dr. Thomas Snel, is said to have relieved a gentleman of 27 in five minutes, but a Plymouth doctor seems to have broken the record by extracting 31 at one fell swoop. He would, doubtless, have given an epic completeness to his work by drawing the thirty-second, but, unfortunately, Nature had been beforehand with him.