

exclusively reserved for medical practitioners and medical students; they can, however, up to 15 per cent. of the total, be accompanied by their wives or one of their daughters. The cost of the journey, from the meeting place, Besançon, to the breaking-up place, Lyons, is 790 francs, including all expenses. A 50 per cent. reduction will be granted on the French railways from the frontier station to Besançon, and a similar reduction from Lyons back to the frontier station. Further information may be obtained from Madame Juppé-Blaise, representative of the French spas, at the French Touring Office, 56, Haymarket, S.W.1.

THE annual meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland will be held under the presidency of Dr. E. Goodall at the house of the Medical Society of London, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W.1, on July 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and 13th.

THE Council of the Royal Institute of Public Health has accepted invitations from the mayor and the University of Bordeaux to hold its annual meeting there at Whitsuntide next year. The president will be Viscount Burnham, and the local honorary secretaries, Professor René Cruchet, professor of medicine in the University of Bordeaux, and M. G. Faure, treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce. The meetings will take place in the University. Special arrangements are being made for travelling and hotel accommodation.

DR. S. J. CLEGG, on leaving the post of deputy medical officer of health for Newcastle to take up the duties of medical officer of health for Durban, South Africa, has been presented by his colleagues in the Newcastle Health Department with a pair of binoculars. Dr. Clegg has also received a silver inkstand from the members of the 50th (Northumberland) Sanitary Section, of which he was commanding officer in France.

ERRATUM.

READERS of the JOURNAL are asked to substitute the following for the last seven lines of the paragraph beginning "The remainder of this absorbing report" in the issue of June 9th (p. 988, col. 2):

the whole more efficacious than the mercury vapour lamp or cod-liver oil, especially as regards improvement in general health; but there was an impression that the addition of cod-liver oil to open-air treatment accelerated cure (p. 84). It is important to note that excellent conditions of hospital hygiene in winter, with a diet of high calorie value (Diet I), did not effect a cure of rickets.

Letters, Notes, and Answers.

As, owing to printing difficulties, the JOURNAL must be sent to press earlier than hitherto, it is essential that communications intended for the current issue should be received by the first post on Tuesday, and lengthy documents on Monday.

AUTHORS desiring reprints of their articles published in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL are requested to communicate with the Office, 429, Strand, W.C.2, on receipt of proof.

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.

THE postal address of the BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION and BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL is 429, Strand, London, W.C.2. The telegraphic addresses are:

1. EDITOR of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, *Aitiology*, *Westrand*, London; telephone, 2630, Gerrard.
2. FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND BUSINESS MANAGER (Advertisements, etc.), *Articulate*, *Westrand*, London; telephone, 2630, Gerrard.
3. MEDICAL SECRETARY, *Medisecra*, *Westrand*, London; telephone, 2630, Gerrard. The address of the Irish Office of the British Medical Association is 16, South Frederick Street, Dublin (telegrams: *Bacillus*, *Dublin*; telephone, 4737, Dublin), and of the Scottish Office, 6, Rutland Square, Edinburgh (telegrams: *Associate*, *Edinburgh*; telephone, 4361, Central).

QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"T. P. G." asks for advice in the treatment of a married woman (2-para), aged 45, who is troubled with a constant sensation of "futtering" down the course of the left sciatic nerve from the thigh to the calf. There is no pain. It is worse at night, especially if she is tired. Blisters have been tried without benefit.

INCOME TAX.

"I. N.," who holds a resident appointment at a sanatorium, inquires (a) whether the cost of removal from one sanatorium to another is an admissible expense, and (b) what allowance can be

claimed for the use of his car for the purpose of attending committee meetings.

* * (a) Nothing is legally due if the removal arises from a change in the appointment held. The expense could be claimed if the removal were from one sanatorium to another of the same authority by that authority's direction. (b) No allowance is due for the initial cost of the car—which represents capital outlay—but assuming that attendance at the committee meetings is a part of his duties, "I. N." can deduct the amount of the expense necessary—that is, if he were to go by car, train, tram, etc.—as included in the total cost of running the (private) car.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

MEDICINE AND MEDICINES.

DR. JAMES GARDNER (Burnley) writes: From your review of it Dr. Harry Roberts's book, *A National Health Policy*, must be interesting and worth reading, and I shall get it and read it during my holiday. Your reviewer gives one quotation—"Nine out of every ten bottles of medicine prescribed are entirely useless to the persons taking them, and are known to be useless by the doctors who prescribe them." How does Dr. Roberts know this to be true? He cannot be so intimate with other doctors' practices to know the results of their prescriptions, and if the statement be true of the practice carried on by him and his partners he should say so and not make the sweeping assertion quoted in your review. The matter does not end here, because drugs are noxious articles and cannot pass harmlessly through the body; if they are not useful they are not merely useless but harmful, and a corollary to Dr. Roberts's statement must be that nine out of every ten bottles of medicine are harmful—minus the mere placebos. This is serious from two points: (1) Public finance; (2) our system of therapeutics.

(1) There are 14,000,000 insured persons, and the drug bill is between 1s. 6d. and 2s. per insured person. At 2s. the bill is £1,400,000, and nine-tenths of this amount is £1,260,000, spent on useless and harmful drugs. Or if the figure is 1s. 6d., the amount spent uselessly and harmfully is £945,000. Comment is superfluous.

(2) Dr. Roberts's statement is an indictment of our system of therapeutics. If nine-tenths of our prescriptions are useless, whose is the fault? Our teachers', or ours individually? Some years ago the Royal Colleges in London cut pharmacology out of their examination. Has it been reinstated, or do the Colleges still disbelieve in it? The subject is still taught in universities, but for what purpose should students spend time over a subject if nine-tenths of it be useless, not to say harmful? We talk of the honour and dignity of the profession, and yet we go on prescribing and outwardly professing our faith in the healing virtue of drugs we know to be harmful; to my mind, there is neither honour nor dignity in us if the assertion be true.

Is our system of therapeutics at fault, or have we any system at all? It certainly behoves us to reconsider our position, both on account of the financial aspect and "for the honour and dignity of the profession."

* * The curriculum of the Conjoint Board in England has for many years past included a course of pharmacology and therapeutics; therapeutics was specified as one of the final examination subjects, but pharmacology was included under the head of medicine and therapeutics. In 1919 pharmacology was grouped with materia medica as Part II of the second professional examination of the Board, leaving therapeutics only to be included under medicine in the final examination. It would appear, therefore, that pharmacology has never ceased to be a part of the curriculum but has been a subject of examination with materia medica since 1919.

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 32, 33, 36, 37, and 38 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 34 and 35.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 288.

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All remittances by Post Office Orders must be made payable to the British Medical Association at the General Post Office, London. No responsibility will be accepted for any such remittance not so safeguarded.

Advertisements should be delivered, addressed to the Manager, 429, Strand, London, W.C.2, not later than the first post on Tuesday morning preceding publication, and, if not paid for at the time, should be accompanied by a reference.

NOTE.—It is against the rules of the Post Office to receive *poste restante* letters addressed either in initials or numbers.