

## 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. Correspondents who wish notice to be taken of their communications should authenticate them with their names, not necessarily for publication.

Authors desiring REPRINTS of their articles published in the *British Medical Journal* 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.

All communications with reference to ADVERTISEMENTS should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager. Orders for copies of the *Journal* and communications with reference to subscriptions should be addressed to the Secretary, B.M.A. House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1.

The TELEPHONE NUMBER of the British Medical Association and the *British Medical Journal* is EUSTON 2111.

The TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES are

EDITOR OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, *Aitology Westcent, London.*

SECRETARY, *Medisecra Westcent, London.*

The address of the B.M.A. Scottish Office is 7, Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh (telegrams: *Associate, Edinburgh*; telephone 24361 Edinburgh), and of the Office of the Irish Free State Medical Union (I.M.A. and B.M.A.), 18, Kildare Street, Dublin (telegrams: *Bacillus, Dublin*; telephone 62550 Dublin).

### QUERIES AND ANSWERS

#### Finger-prints of Twins

Dr. R. COTTER (Liverpool) writes: In *Minor Medical Mysteries* (p. 2) Dr. Leonard Williams says: "But perhaps the most interesting, as it is certainly the most surprising, point of similarity in 'like' twins is the fact that not only their finger-prints but the whole of what is known as the 'friction surfaces' of their hands and feet are frequently found to be identical." On the other hand, Sir James Crichton-Browne, in *From the Doctor's Notebook* (p. 68), quotes with approval evidence given at Cardiff by Inspector Greville: "In finger-print identifications the authorities never make a mistake; a mistake would destroy the whole value of the department. . . . It is impossible to make a mistake . . . even in twins the finger-marks are totally different." I have always been under the impression that the finger-prints of twins—even of uniovular twins and irrespective of whether the single ovum from which these twins developed originally possessed two nuclei, or a single nucleus which after fertilization divided into two blastoderms—have never been shown to be identical. In view of the diametrically opposed contentions of the two high authorities whom I have quoted I should be grateful for the opinions of those who possess more knowledge of this subject than I.

#### Sulphanilamide and Breast Milk

"J. L. B." writes: I would be glad to learn of any change in the quality of the breast milk, or any effect on the health of the infant, observed after the administration to the mother, prophylactically or curatively, of sulphanilamide compounds. In one case in my practice a morbilliform rash appeared on the fourth day following the administration of prontosil album to the mother; no untoward effect on the general health of the infant was noticed. Is this experience general?

#### Preparation of Measles Serum

"J. S. M." asks for instructions regarding the domestic preparation of serum from a convalescent measles case.

\*\* It is unwise for anyone not having at his disposal the services of a properly equipped laboratory to prepare serum, on account of the possibility that accidental contamination may occur in the process. Laboratory procedures include addition of disinfectant and filtration to ensure sterility. Where serum is not available whole blood

(double the dose of serum) may be injected immediately after withdrawal into the leg muscles of contacts. Members of the family, preferably parents, only should be employed as donors, in view of the possibility of transmission of syphilis.

#### Menostaxis

"A. H. I." writes: I have a female patient, aged 25, who has been married ten years and is sterile, who suffers from almost continuous uterine haemorrhage. Menstruation started at about the age of 15, and was irregular and scanty for three years, since when she has had this present trouble. There is apparently no physical abnormality. Curettage has been undertaken three times without any result. I shall be glad of any advice, particularly with reference to endocrine therapy.

#### Ill-health from Coal-gas Leaks

"R. H." writes: I should be grateful for information of the most recent work on ill-health caused by the unsuspected leakage of coal gas in minute quantity from loose taps or erosion of pipes. I have good reason to suspect that a large amount of ill-health might be prevented by scrutinizing the gas fittings, especially in old houses. I want to know (1) the most reliable method of proving the presence of CO in the air of living-rooms; (2) the presence of CO in the blood of living persons suffering from chronic ill-health.

### LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

#### Sidelights on Syphilis

In an article on "William Shakespeare, Syphilographer," by Walter E. Vest, contributed to the March number of the *West Virginia Medical Journal*, numerous and appropriate quotations from his works illustrate the poet's familiarity with syphilis, which he discusses frankly under such synonyms as "malady of France," "Neapolitan bone-ache," "pox," and "the infinite malady."

To aid the campaign against syphilis, the Société Française de Prophylaxie Sanitaire et Morale has issued a stamp (65+25 centimes, light mulberry in colour) depicting the symbolic figure of France holding an infant—the future race—in her arms. The legend reads "Pour sauver la race."

#### Medical Postage Stamps

Jean Baptiste Charcot (1867–1936), the French physician and explorer, is strikingly portrayed on a bluish-green 65+35 centimes stamp with the legend "Jean Charcot. Société des Œuvres de Mer." In commemoration of the recent international leprosy congress at Cairo an artistic set of three oblong Egyptian stamps has been issued: 5 millièmes brown, 15 violet, and 20 blue. The central design shows a branch of *Hydnocarpus*, the seeds of which yield an oil used in the treatment of leprosy.

#### Medical Golf

The eighth spring meeting of the Sussex Medical and Dental Golfing Society will be held on the links of the Crowborough Beacon Golf Club on Sunday, June 5. In the morning there will be 18 holes medal play under handicap, and in the afternoon four-ball foursomes against bogey. Seeded draw.

#### Corrigendum

In epitome paragraph No. 405, which appeared in the *Journal* of May 14 at p. 81, the reference to F. R. B. Atkinson's paper on Niemann-Pick's disease was given as *Arch. Dis. Childh.*, October–December, 1937, p. 245. This should have read *Brit. J. Child. Dis.*, October–December, 1937, p. 245.

#### The Adreno-genital Syndrome

We regret that the footnote in the first column of page 1056 of last week's issue (May 14) gave incorrect particulars of Mr. L. R. Broster's book *The Adrenal Cortex and Intersexuality*. This work, published by Chapman and Hall, Ltd., contains 257 pages, and the price is 15s. net., postage 6d., abroad 9d.