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 offered to the British Medical Journal alone, unless the contrary be stated. Correspondents who wish to have their communications authenticated with their names, not necessarily for publication.

Authors desiring REPRINTS of their articles published in the British Medical Journal must communicate with the Financial Secretary and Business Manager, British Medical Association House, Tavistock Square, W.C.1, on receipt of proofs. Authors of those articles should indicate on MSS. if reprints are required, as proofs are not sent abroad.

All communications with reference to ADVERTISEMENTS, as well as orders for copies of the Journal, should be addressed to the Financial Secretary and Business Manager.

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

The TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESSES are:

British Medical Journal, Aitology, Assistant Secretary, London.

MEDICAL SECRETARY, Medisecra Westcent, London.

The address of the B.M.A. Service is: 5 Brunnsburgh Gardens, Edinburgh (telegrams: Associate, Edinburgh). Additionally, it is 24861 Edinburgh, and of the Office of the Irish Free State Medical Union (L.M.A.), 18, Kildare Street, Dublin (telegrams: Bacillus, Dublin; telephone: 62550 Dublin).

QUERIES AND ANSWERS

Nocturnal Cramp

"Alpha" writes: The query on cramp in the legs in your issue of October 3rd (p. 698) prompts me to ask those members of the profession who have the opportunity to investigate the cause, and incidentally the treatment, of this common and often distressing malady. I have to confess that my own observations have been disappointing, though not entirely without result. The investigation can hardly be carried out without a laboratory having the means of chemically testing the blood, etc. I have been troubled with a nocturnal cramp ever since my childhood, and it has increased in severity until, in my eighty-third year, it is the plague of my life. It occurs every night, sometimes mildly, but is often very intense. I have considered all the possible causes, but have been unable to determine its cause beyond an apparent dependence on lactic acid in some way, for it has been enormously increased when I have eaten lactic acid cheese. I am an extremely moderate eater. When I have been well nourished the cramp is worse. If, through illness, my diet is reduced and I become temporarily ill nourished the cramp disappears. I am certain that it depends on no way on lactic acid salts in the urine, for I have taken calcium lactate daily for thirteen years, with great benefit to general health, but with no effect, either for better or worse, on the cramp. Nitrogenous foods seem to cause less cramp than carbohydrate foods. Narcotics, such as opium, chloral, bromide, perhaps even alcohol, seem to make it worse. It is not affected by heat or cold, for it is as bad in summer with only a sheet over me as in winter with several blankets. My mother suffered severely from it; so do my brothers and sisters. The complaint seems to be very common. It is probably caused by some error of diet, which upsets the chemistry of the body. It would be worth while to investigate the cause systematically. I wonder that so little is known about this common but really dreadful complaint.

Sterilizing Needles and Syringes for Solganal Injections

Dr. J. H. Blackburn (Westwood Sanatorium, Queensland) writes in reply to Dr. E. Armstrong (August 22nd): I have been administering solganol intramuscularly for the last two years and have adopted the following procedure. The syringe (Record) and needles are placed in methylated spirits overnight; early the following morning they are placed on a gauge on the sterilized tray used for injections, and by the time I administer the injections the needles and syringes are dry. I use a 3 c.c.m. syringe to a lactic matter in view of the fact that the fifth and sixth doses contain 3 c.c.m. oil. If a smaller gauge syringe is used the needle has to be left in situ and the syringe filled with the rest of the solution. I use one separate needle for each injection, and when the injections have been administered for the day the syringe is filled with sp. vin. methylated spirits and screwed through each needle in rotation to expel the gold residue. The syringe is taken to pieces, cleaned, etc., and the needles threaded with the stylets. The needles used are of the "Empire" British-made rustless steel, with a good shoulder, which can be held tightly between the thumb and first finger of the left hand when injecting.

Letters, Notes, Etc.

A Pharmaceutical Discrepancy

Dr. Stuart Goldhurst writes: I should like to draw attention to a pharmaceutical discrepancy which is bad both in practice and in principle. On ordering for a patient ac. salicylicyl co., — which I have always considered to consist of aspirin, phenacetin, and caffeine — I was surprised to find that she had been sent a tablet containing aspirin, phenacetin, and pulv. ippecac. co. When I protested at the pharmacist holding a bottle with the label of a reputable firm, which read " ac. ac. salicylicyl co., aspirin, phenacetin, pulv. ippecac." Whilst I admit that we physicians should write prescriptions in full rather than orders, a variety of tablets is of less use and not without danger that such happenings as the above can occur. Perhaps this note may help to put them right.

Undulant Fever in Malta

The annual report on the Health of the Maltese Islands (Malta and Gozo) for 1935 includes a description of the measures taken for the prevention of undulant fever. There were 1,909 cases of the disease during the year with eighty-eight deaths, while the routine examination of goats, involving agglutination tests on 5,648 samples of blood, indicated that 805 animals were infected. The authorities are still carrying out experiments on a large scale at the new Undulant Fever Research Station with a view to discovering an immunization of Maltese goats by vaccination. Another method employed to combat the disease is Pasteurization. The recommendations of a special committee appointed to deal with the subject have now been sanctioned, and it is proposed to erect a milk-pasteurizing plant capable of dealing with 400 gallons of milk an hour. Improved methods of collection, examination, and distribution of milk are also envisaged. It is hoped these means to decrease the incidence of the disease, which has been unduly prevalent during recent years.

Medical Golf

The autumn meeting of the Shropshire Medical Golf Association was held at Church Stretton on October 4th in glorious weather. The excellent scores indicate the ideal conditions for golf. The morning medal competition was played for the captain's prize, presented by Dr. M. J. Harker of Shrewsbury. The leading scores were as follows:—Dr. H. G. W. Beckett: 82 — 13 = 69; Colonel W. H. S. Burnley: 76 — 6 = 70; Dr. J. Lavelle: 82 — 12 = 70; Dr. R. O. Smyth: 89 — 18 = 71. Dr. Beckett won the tie with the best score over the last nine holes. In the afternoon the Foursomes u. Bogey was won by Dr. Harker and Mr. B. T. Keon-Cohen 4 down; Dr. T. R. Elliott and Dr. A. V. Mackenzie 6 down; Dr. Lavelle and Colonel Burnley 6 down. The next meeting of the association is arranged for the second Sunday in May, 1937, at Oswestry Golf Club. Dr. Mackenzie was elected captain for 1936-7 and Dr. Elliott honorary secretary.

Corrigendum

In Dr. W. Corner's letter on "Rellj" in last week's issue an error occurred on page 785. He stated in the fourth paragraph that "oral mucous patches are common also in adults"—not, of course, as oral as printed.

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, and 65 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistanships, and locumtenancies at pages 60 and 61.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the Supplement at page 225.