

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

Irritation Around Urethral Meatus

"W. E. S." writes: I would greatly appreciate the comments of readers upon the following case. A man, aged 43, suffers from irritation and redness in the periurethral region of the glans penis. The foreskin is lax and completely covers the glans. The condition is made worse by a bus journey or prolonged sitting in a chair. All local sources of irritation have been eliminated and the genito-urinary system fully investigated.

Lymphatic Oedema

Dr. W. J. BURNS SELKIRK (Birmingham) writes in reply to "G.P." (*Journal*, September 18, p. 604): I have a note: "Blue legs with subcutaneous thickening, push vitamin D." As the patient in "G.P.'s" case has menorrhagia she will be losing much calcium. The use of vitamin B in soft oedema is described in the *British Medical Journal* of February 27, 1932 (p. 374).

Medical Treatment for Dupuytren's Contracture

Dr. CRESSWELL DAVIS (Burnham Road, Highbridge, Somerset), in reply to "Nadaud" (*Journal*, September 25, 1937, p. 642), writes: I have treated in adults several severe cases, one bilateral, for which amputation had been advised by surgeons of repute. The patient is instructed to get a series of small rubber balls of graduated size—the smallest just big enough to press firmly between the flexed fingers and the palm. This ball is kneaded with the affected fingers for definite periods each day, and kept in place at night by means of a webbing strap round the dorsum of the hand and the ball. As the desired extension is obtained larger and larger balls are used. Gradual extension and movements aided by the opposite hand are also insisted upon. In one very severe case (bilateral) in a mechanic in six weeks the fingers, previously firmly held in contact with the palms of the hands, had 75 per cent. full extension, and the patient could shave himself for the first time for twelve years. I hope to collect a few more cases, with "before and after" photographs for publication eventually. In the meantime I shall be pleased to give "Nadaud" any further information if he would care to write to me. I suggest an "over-size" glove or mitten to keep the ball in place at night in the case of a child.

Income Tax

Public Appointment: Motor Car Allowance

"CLAIM" is one of a number of assistant medical officers who have not been given a third-class allowance by the appointing authority but only third-class rail or bus fares, except in special circumstances. "All the facts have been annually placed before the income tax authorities" and a deduction

for the incurred cost in running cars has been claimed and granted. Recently claims have been refused and a demand is being made for tax on past allowances.

** It is unlikely that the claim to the allowance would be upheld on appeal. The Act requires the expenses to be "incurred . . . necessarily in carrying out the duties . . ." and the local authority's allowance would probably be regarded as all that was "necessary." As regards past years, the revision can be made if the inspector has "discovered" an under-assessment. Seeing that he had all the facts before him the question of discovery is open to argument, but recent judicial dicta might be construed to support the proposed demands. In the circumstances we suggest that our correspondent might write to the Board of Inland Revenue, Somerset House, W.C.2, pointing out the hardship resulting from altering the assessments for past years and asking—without prejudice to the legal point—that as an act of grace the assessments for those years be left undisturbed.

Occupation Rent Free by Assistant

"HOUSE" is an assistant, and lives rent free in premises owned by his principal. Who should pay the tax assessed on the property under Schedule A?

** The principal is entitled to deduct as an expense of carrying on the practice the amount of the Schedule A assessment, and if, as we assume, he has been allowed that deduction the liability to pay the amount of the tax thereon would seem to be his.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

"The Role of Chemiotaxis in Bone Growth"

Mr. A. P. BERTWISTLE, F.R.C.S.Ed., writes: Your reviewer of the book with the above title complains that I have added another word to an overburdened nomenclature. How else can one express a new process but by coining a new word? Incidentally by this process one is enabled to vindicate John Hunter's dictum that the blood vessels bring bone to its destination. Chemiotaxis is a long word to express the "search for food." The lowly amoeba possesses no eyes, ears, or a nose, and yet it is capable of moving towards and ingesting bacteria in the soil as its cousin the leucocyte does in animal tissues. This search for food is one of the basic principles of life, and is nowhere seen to better advantage than in plant life, hence the subject of Chapter I. "To seek new insight into the nature of the process whereby developing structures follow particular pathways" is almost as difficult a task as finding the origin of life, which will probably be for ever veiled in mystery.

Disclaimer

Dr. JOHN C. HODGSON writes: The clinical memorandum written by me on "Parkinsonism following Peripheral Trauma" which appeared in the *Journal* of September 18 has resulted in a column in the Manchester edition of the *Daily Express*, with my name and address in large type. I wish to disclaim all responsibility for this unauthorized publicity.

Buccal and Lingual Ulcers

Mr. HERBERT TILLEY wishes to correct a statement he made in the *Journal* of September 18 (p. 564) in response to the request of "Puzzled" for suggestions as to the treatment of a patient suffering from buccal and lingual ulcers. In my reply, he writes, I advised a trial of Bayer and Co.'s preparation known as "campolon" because it had given rapid and successful results in three of my own patients who failed to respond to full doses of iron, arsenic, and other haematinics. I was well aware that the remedy suggested was one of the "liver extracts," and that this type of therapy had long since proved efficacious in the treatment of certain of the grave anaemias. But in conversation with a well-known pharmacist previous to forwarding my advice to your correspondent I gathered the impression that campolon was an extract of cod- and halibut-liver oils. Herein laid my mistake, which I hasten to acknowledge.

Corrigendum

We regret that in a paragraph on bacterial flora at high altitudes published on September 18 (p. 572) there were several typing errors which should have been corrected. The words mycobacteria and bacteria were misspelt, and the last five words of the paragraph should have read "*bacillus subtilis* and *bacillus mesentericus*."