Novel Method of Digital Traction

Sir,—Our attention has been drawn to Dr. Kenneth MacLeod's recent description of a novel method of digital traction by means of a thread passed through a hole in the nail and attached to a "banjo" splint (Oct. 26, p. 614). We have used this method at Ronkwood Hospital, Worcester, for more than two years, and have incorporated additional refinements such as the use of elastic in the extension and the fitting of a second "banjo" loop at right angles to the first to give support by means of little rubber slings under the proximal inter-phalangeal joints for those cases in which this is desirable. The appliance has proved most useful for minor fractures, peripheral nerve injuries, etc. We are sorry to disappoint Dr. MacLeod, but his "new" method is an old-established practice at our hospital.—We are, etc.,

E. W. BINTCLIFFE.
HIREN DE.

Worcester.

Sir,—This method can hardly be called novel. On page 317 of Trueta's War Surgery, published in 1943, a better procedure is illustrated, thanks to the simple device of threading the end of the nail and the retention of all the finger joints in flexion rather than in extension, the latter being the undesirable position maintained by the "banjo" splint shown in the photograph accompanying Dr. MacLeod's memorandum.—I am, etc.,

F. LOUIS.

Obituary

Sir EDWARD THORNTON, K.B.E., M.R.C.S.

We regret to learn that Sir Edward Thornton, formerly Secretary for Public Health and Chief Health Officer for the Union of South Africa and D.G.M.S. of the Union Defence Forces with the rank of brigadier, died on Oct. 26 at Pretoria. He had been chairman of the Pretoria Division of the B.M.A. and president of the Northern Transvaal Branch, and presided over the South African Medical Congress in 1934.

Edward Newbury Thornton, sixth son of Thomas Thornton, of Sporle, Swaffham, Norfolk, was born on June 10, 1878, and from Cheltenham College came to study medicine at the London Hospital, qualifying M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. in 1902 and later taking the Cambridge D.P.H. After service in the South African war and on plague duty in India he entered the Public Health Department of Cape Colony as additional medical officer in 1903, and in 1910–14 was medical adviser to the Cape Province Administration and chief local government inspector of the Province. At the outbreak of the 1914–18 war he joined the South African Expeditionary Force and in 1915–20 commanded the large South African Military Hospital at Richmond Park, Sussex, where he inaugurated the scheme for the vocational training of disabled soldiers during their stay in hospital, and was chairman of the executive committee on vocational training in military hospitals in the London District. He was created K.B.E. (Military Division) in 1919. On returning to South Africa he was appointed D.M.S. of the Union Defence Forces and assistant health officer to the Union, and chairman of the Housing Board. His early work as a plague officer in the Punjab at the beginning of the century led the Government of Nigeria in 1926 and the Administration of the Uganda Protectorate in 1930 to seek his advice on the control of that disease.

Sir Edward Thornton was a versatile man of great energy. He published many reports and scientific articles, and at one time held the chair of public health in the Witwatersrand University; he had a seat for a long period on the South African Medical Council and was an authority on the organization of State-aided hospitals and charitable institutions.

C. E. K. HERAPATH, M.C., M.D.

We regret to announce that Dr. Charles Edward Kynaston Herapath, a former chairman of the Bristol Division of the B.M.A., died on Nov. 4 aged 64. His father was the late C. K. Herapath, and he studied at the Bristol Medical School, taking the English Joint qualifications in 1907, the M.B., B.S., degree at the University of Bristol in 1908. His earliest appointments were those of house-physician and house-surgeon at the Bristol Royal Infirmary, and he was for some years physician to the Bristol Dispensary. During the war of 1914–18 he held a temporary commission as major in the R.A.M.C. and won the Military Cross; four years after his return to civilian life he was awarded the Colston research fellowship.

For many years Dr. Herapath was honorary physician and Dean of Faculty at the Bristol Royal Hospital, clinical lecturer in medicine in the University of Bristol, and cardiac specialist to the Somerset County Council; he was also honorary physician to the Wimford Orthopaedic and Heart Hospital, and consultant to the Clevedon Cottage Hospital, the Northwood Mental Hospital, and Southmead Hospital. He was a member of the Association of Physicians of Great Britain and Ireland and of the Cardiac Society, and published a number of papers on diseases of the heart, which appeared in these columns and in the Lancet.

He joined the British Medical Association in 1909, was joint honorary secretary of the Bath and Bristol Branch for ten years, and was an Executive Councilor in 1936. At headquarters he served for four years on the Medical Students and Newly Qualified Practitioners Subcommittee.

We regret to announce the death of Prof. Marcel Brulé of Paris. In later life a well-known physician, he was formerly Chief de Laboratoire of the Faculté de Médecine de Paris, where he worked on liver diseases and especially the name familiar far beyond the borders of France. He was an old friend of Sir Humphry Rolleston and of many other physicians in Britain and America.

Grief came to the medical profession of Cheltenham and to his numerous patients when Dr. Basil Taylor died on Oct. 24 at the age of 62 after three weeks' illness. A son of the late Rev. George Taylor, rector of Great Witcombe, he studied at Durham University and graduated M.B., B.S. in 1908. He then entered the Royal Navy, from which he retired in 1919 with the rank of surg. lieut.-cmdr. He saw service in the original Dreadnought and with Evans of the Broke. J.R.C. writes: Basil first came to Cheltenham in 1917, and was appointed on the medical staff of Cheltenham College and also to the Cheltenham Hospital for Sick Children. Endowed with an extraordinary charm of personality, a lasting boyish temperament, and always capable of making people think that he brought with him from his life in the Navy some of the freshness and vigour of the sea. I think that it was his work at Cheltenham College that was nearest his heart, and his temperament made him a welcome and successful doctor with that observant and critical patient the public school boy. He won their confidence, and they knew that no matter how hard it worked he might be they came first. The funeral service was held at the College chapel and was attended by the Head master, the staff of the College, many of the medical profession and a large congregation of his patients and friends.

Devoted to his patients, loyal to his colleagues, happy in his home, he may be said that he lived in his wife and also in his faith that he should be mourned by so many. He had been a member of the B.M.A. for 34 years. He is survived by his widow and two sons, both majors in the Royal Artillery. A third son, also a major in the R.A., died this year.

Dr. C. B. VAKIL, who died on Oct. 23, was an Indian who spent his professional life in England after qualifying M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. in 1913 from St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He was born at the end of 1882 and began his medical studies in Bombay. He practised in various parts of London and joined the B.M.A. in 1930. A colleague writes: Dr. Vakil was a man of quiet manner with a deep passion for his ideals—the welfare of his fellow men, the freedom of his country, and the well-being of his patients. These qualities endeared him to all kinds of people; his passing was mourned by a large gathering, including lawyers, doctors, students, business men, journalists, and labourers. He leaves a widow but no children.