"INOCULATIONS WITH YERSIN'S SERUM.—A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS."

Sir,—In the February number of the Journal for 1908 you published a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel McCreery, R.A.M.C., giving a résumé of his experience of Yersin's serum.

It may be of interest to Colonel McCreery to learn that, in Mauritius at least, Yersin's serum is not now looked on as a satisfactory or safe therapeutic agent. The Mauritius Medical Society discussed the question, at great length, on no fewer than five occasions, in the early part of 1907. In these discussions the bulk of the opinion was distinctly against the use of the serum either as a preventive or curative measure. In recent years cases of illness following on the injection of the serum have been carefully followed up, and have been found to be numerous, and often severe. The larger number of these cases present only some form of urticaria, such as is mentioned by Colonel McCreery as occurring in his own case, but numerous other cases have shown varying degrees of nerve and joint affections. Dr. Rouget (mentioned by Colonel McCreery), of the Civil Hospital, Port Louis, stated in the discussion at the meeting of the Society that his limited experience of the use of the serum did not admit of his expressing an opinion as to its efficacy.

In connection with the personal experience of Yersin's serum by "N. M.,” published in the Journal for November, 1907, it is interesting to note that the officer who accompanied "N. M." from Mauritius to Réunion, and who was injected with the serum at the same time as "N. M.,” has since suffered from a most intractable form of urticaria. This officer returned from Réunion on April 30th, 1907, i.e., one month after his injection, having then felt no ill effects. He remained quite fit until October 18th, on which day he found a few patches of urticaria on his body. At this time he had no gastric symptoms and no rise of temperature, while no immediate cause could be discovered. The eruption persisted with varying severity until January, the irritation causing much discomfort. Treatment seemed to have no effect, and the condition subsided gradually. I have discussed this case with Dr. Lorans, Chief of the Mauritius Medical and Health Department, and with Dr. Blackburn, the local plague authority. Both agree that it is probably a case of late after-effects of serum injection.

I am, &c.,

G. S. WALLACE,
Lieutenant, R.A.M.C.

Port Louis, Mauritius,
April 12th, 1908.