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THE TREATMENT OF SYPHILIS.

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

Sir,—Major F. J. N. Porter, in the August number of the Journal, while extolling the treatment of syphilis by intra-muscular injections, makes the statement that "the treatment of inunction and by the mouth has been well known for a very long time, but these methods are quite inadmissible to Army out-patient practice." This assumption has been made so frequently by advocates of the injection treatment that I think it is time it was contradicted. I can assure Major Porter that during the whole of my service, twenty-one years, I have treated out-patients by the mouth and have never found the slightest difficulty in carrying out the treatment. My procedure has been as follows: When the acute symptoms have subsided the patient has been discharged hospital and a memorandum sent to his commanding officer that he was to attend twice daily in his own time for medicine, but that he was fit for all duties. A roll has been kept by my wardmaster, who reported to me when men did not attend. On reporting non-attendance to the man's commanding officer, he has always been caused to attend and usually also been punished for his absence. On Thursday morning all the men thus taking treatment have reported with the sick and been inspected by me, and any modifications in their treatment indicated have been ordered. Three stock mixtures have been kept: one I called mist. specific, which contained 2 drachms of liq. hydrarg. perchlor. per ounce; a second, mist. alterative, containing this with 10 grains of iodide of potassium; and a third, mist. potass. iodid., containing 10 grains of this drug alone.

There has been no difficulty in carrying out this treatment in any hospital of which I have had charge. A non-commissioned officer is always on duty and can surely be trusted with the simple duty of looking up the roll and giving the man a dose of whatever mixture he requires. In large hospitals, where compounders are always on duty, the procedure is even more easily carried out. Of course, it is the duty of him who administers the medicine to see the draught swallowed before marking the patient as having attended.

With our hands strengthened by Army Order 158 of 1903, I can hardly conceive any difficulty in ensuring the taking of mercury by the mouth for the period desired by the medical officer. Has anyone experienced difficulty in carrying out the administration of quinine as a prophylactic for malaria? Why then should it be impossible to administer mercury as a prophylactic for the later manifestations of syphilis?

In writing this letter I have no intention of criticising the injection treatment. I have not sufficient experience of it to attempt this. I only wish to remove the delusion that it occupies the field to the exclusion of all other methods in Army out-patient practice. Unlike Major Porter,
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I think that it is as well that our young officers should know that they may prescribe mercurial pills, powders, and medicines to out-patients, and by a little arrangement can make sure that they will be taken, and that they are not confined to a method of giving mercury which, though praised almost to the extent of fanaticism by its advocates, does not seem to have commended itself to our civilian brethren as judged by the evidence in the Advisory Board Reports on Venereal Disease in the Army. The treatment of syphilis by intra-muscular injections should be considered on its own merits.

Woolwich, August 22nd, 1908.

J. Ritchie,
Major, R.A.M.C.

GUIDE TO THE OPERATIONS OF THE MEDICAL SERVICE IN THE FIELD.

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

Sir,—With reference to Major Porter’s suggestion that some notes or books should be published as a guide to the operations of the Medical Service in the field, it may be of interest to the officers of the Corps to know that a pamphlet is about to be distributed on the subject containing a lecture by Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Macpherson delivered at the Staff College in December last.

Lieutenant-Colonel Macpherson is also engaged in translating one of the many works that have been prepared by staff officers of Continental armies on medical tactics.

War Office, Whitehall, London, S.W., September 11th, 1908.

J. M. Irwin, Lieutenant-Colonel, A.D.G., A.M.S.

EMPLOYMENT OF RESERVE AND DISCHARGED SOLDIERS OF THE CORPS.

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

Sir,—Lieutenant-Colonel Bedford’s appeal in last month’s Journal on behalf of the Army and Navy Male Nurses’ Co-operation, and the interesting account of the first annual meeting of this excellent Society, induces me to hope that some small space may be found in which to draw attention to some regulations of our own which appear to be imperfectly complied with.

The American school-boy when asked at an examination to describe the constitution of the United States replied that it was “that bit at the back of the book which nobody reads”; and I think the last four paragraphs in our Standing Orders relating to the keeping of a Corps Register