Correspondence

to Greece and Montenegro; it has also decided to fit out several field hospitals.

The Swedish Red Cross Society has sent a fully equipped ambulance to Greece.

C. E. P.

Correspondence.

THE SPIDER’S WEB IN MALARIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF “THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.”


After warning the medical man against the fashion of prescribing poisons he states he would like to introduce one “simple” remedy to the confidence of his readers: “The cobweb of cellars, barns and stables is a valuable remedy for ague,” &c. . . .

“Some American physicians, who have taken it, say it produces a calm and delightful state of feeling, succeeded by a disposition to sleep.”

On p. 240 on Ague: “Dr. Jackson was for fifty years in the medical department of the Army, &c. . . .

“He was well known to the profession as one of the most attentive and accurate observers, as well as one of the most judicious and successful practitioners.”

Dr. Jackson is quoted as follows:—

“I think I may venture to say that the cobweb prevents the recurrence of febrile paroxysms more abruptly and more effectually than bark or arsenic or any other remedy employed for that purpose with which I am acquainted,” &c.

This is indeed remarkable testimony of a now discarded form of treatment.

Was this empirical treatment a foreshadowing of our present day organo-therapy, or was it some form of antitoxin treatment?

Was it the secretions of the spider or the excretions of his parlour visitor that acted like a charm on the malarial parasite?

Apropos of the spider’s web we had a Gunner Major in West Africa who encouraged and cultivated the spider and his web in the barrack rooms, as he considered they kept away the mosquitoes.

Such was his faith in the spider’s web that he had one tattooed on his bald head to frighten the dreaded anopheles away, and he looked on himself as quite immune on that account.

As our author’s frontispiece says:—

“The subject of man’s body is of all things the most susceptible of remedy, but then that remedy is the most susceptible of error” (Bacon).

I am, &c.

Tralee,
December 16, 1912.

F. P. LAUNDER,
Major R.A.M.C.