Correspondence.

NOTES FROM SIERRA LEONE.

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

Sir,—May I, in my turn, be permitted to reply to Major Jack Powell’s "comment" on my "Notes from Sierra Leone"?

Prior to the commencement of the labour pains, which presumably preceded the birth of his "comment," this officer might have perused my "Notes" with a little more care, when he would not so hastily have concluded that I was stating my own case exclusively. He evidently failed to notice that I spoke of "first impressions," and that the "finding no redeeming features" was qualified by the words "up to date," since I had then been but a short time in the country. May I inform him:

(a) That I am a regular tennis player.
(b) That when not indulging in this form of exercise I am always out with a gun.
(c) That I have done my twenty miles and more many a time on the "flat feet" in this country.
(d) That I do not possess a calendar.

Major Powell served here in the year 1908, and he states in his "comment," evidently from memory (the "Coast Memory" is notoriously unreliable), that at least 50 per cent—if not quite 80 per cent, a considerable difference, be it remarked—of all officers during his tour of service were immune from even a day's sickness!!!

A remarkable statement, surely, seeing that a reference to the Admission and Discharge Book for the year 1908 discloses the fact that out of a total strength of 80 officers there were 101 admissions to hospital, 61 of whom were suffering from malaria during this particular year.

Now I should like to quote some statistics for the year 1913, an unusually dry year, and, therefore, presumably a healthy one, as far as the incidence of malaria is concerned.

EUROPEAN OFFICERS, COLONY AND PROTECTORATE, 1913.

(1) Average annual strength, all officers in the Command ... 84
Number of admissions to hospital, all officers, all diseases ... 126
" " " " " " " from malaria ... 81

(2) Average annual strength, officers R.A.M.C. ... 10
Number of admissions to hospital, officers R.A.M.C., all diseases ... 7
" " " " " " " from malaria ... 6
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EUROPEAN OFFICERS, BUSH STATIONS ALONE, 1913.

(1) Average annual strength of officers serving in the three Bush Stations, Port Lokko, Mabantah and W ongkufu

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<th>Number of admissions to hospital of above officers, all diseases</th>
<th>from malaria</th>
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EUROPEAN N.C.Os. AND MEN IN BUSH STATIONS, 1913.

(2) Average annual strength

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By “admission to hospital” is of course also meant “treatment in quarters” in the case of the Bush, since there is no hospital accommodation there for Europeans.

Since my arrival at Freetown, on July 9, 1913, five British officers in the command have died. By the irony of circumstances the obituary notice of the late Captain Farrant, R.A.M.C., occurs in the same issue of the Journal as that containing the “comment” to which I take exception.

Enteric fever, formerly I believe unknown here, has now made its appearance, causing one of the deaths above mentioned. Three medical officers, including myself, were on the sick list during the month of March, 1914, suffering from diseases directly attributable to this climate.

All of which goes to show that the old adage “Truth is stranger than fiction” still holds good. Major Powell’s airy criticism of my “Notes,” and his patronizing advice to those serving here, based on hazy recollections of his experience some five years ago, are neither applicable to, nor appreciated by, officers doing duty on the West Coast of Africa.

Wilberforce, West Africa, April 27, 1914.

I am, etc.,

ROBERT R. LEWIS,
Captain, R.A.M.C.