Correspondence

nervous disorders from alienism and some organic conditions. As regards the epilepsies we consider that such points as conjugate deviation of the eyes during a fit, and a transient extensor plantar response after one, are worth passing mention, re the differentiation of true from hysterical epilepsy. Even the common phenomenon of evacuation of the bladder during a fit is a fairly reliable criterion in the opinion of most neurologists but is not mentioned. This book is a notable contribution to psycho-neurology and the author’s views will be carefully examined by all interested in the subject. The book is quite luxuriously printed and got up and in every way a pleasure to read.

H. G.

Correspondence.

THE CITRUS INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

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

Sir,—Before leaving for South Africa I was asked by so many brother officers to let them know my experiences, more especially those in relation to the citrus industry which is now so extensively appealing to the British public and particularly to Service officers for support, that I feel a letter in the Journal may be of general interest.

I left England in the s.s. "Umtata," Natal Direct Line, on February 14, and after an uneventful voyage disembarked at Durban on March 15. From there I made my way to Maritzburg, where I remained for close on a month, looking at various small properties and residential plots with a view to settling near the excellent schools and University in this district. Not having found anything quite suitable, I proceeded to Johannesburg in order that I might arrange with the Directors of the Letaba Estates an inspection and visit to their property. It is not possible for me to overstate the kindness and attention I received from one and all of the officers connected with this Company, both on arrival, when I was met at the railway station, and throughout my entire stay both on the Estate itself and journeying to and fro.

I left Johannesburg at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 23, and arrived at Tzaneen 5 p.m. Monday; as this train did not proceed farther, I was met by the Acting Manager and taken the remaining twelve miles by motor.

I found myself quartered in a well-built bungalow about 300 feet above the irrigated land, commanding a magnificent view of the whole property.

During the following days I had opportunities given me of seeing land in every stage of preparation from the rough veldt in process of clearing of bush and stumps to the planting of the trees in the cleared and most accurately levelled ground. So far as I could judge nothing was being left to chance and no precaution was neglected to ensure the ultimate results.

Work is not quite so forward as was anticipated originally, the following unexpected obstacles having been encountered:—

(1) The main furrow was a much bigger engineering proposition than was estimated.
Correspondence

(3) A delay of about three months owing to obstructions by an adjoining property owner regarding a canal through his land—now happily overcome without litigation.

(3) A vast amount of expensive work in levelling ant-heaps—some I saw the size of a moderate two-storied cottage.

Now, however, all classes of work are progressing rapidly.

There are nineteen teams of the Company's oxen, as well as others working under contract, in daily use, stumping, clearing, ploughing and levelling, also eighteen white men and 300 natives. Three hundred and ten acres are already planted and work is going forward at the rate of from twenty-five to thirty acres a week. All young trees are passed by a Government inspector before planting. Every tree is actually planted and handled personally by an expert horticulturist—in fact, if I were to enumerate in detail all the steps and precautions I myself saw being taken to ensure the results which the Company as trustees for plot-holders are using, I would far exceed the space I hope you will allow me.

As regards the climate and soil. I was taken round estates bordering on Letaba and saw orange trees six years old carrying from about 200 to 300 Washington Navels, and trees from ten to twenty years so laden that their branches were bent to almost breaking point. This, I may add, in an orchard that by previous owners had been sadly neglected and even now was suffering from a dirty tilth and careless irrigation.

I naturally did not expect to find mosquitoes at the time of year my visit was made, nor did I, but I was informed that undoubtedly during the wet season a few cases of malaria did occur amongst those who failed to take the ordinary precautions against infection or slept without curtains. The class of infection I judge to be principally a mild benign tertian and I cannot see that the danger of infection is as great as we encounter daily in nine-tenths of the stations which in India are regarded as healthy; furthermore, the Company have already taken steps under the personal recommendation of Dr. Orenstein, late of the Panama Canal Malaria Commission, to clear out spruits, drain low-lying land and plant blue gum trees in order that such malaria as now exists should be completely eradicated. No great work is required, no mosquitoes can breed in the clean cut conduits and canals that lead abundant water in all directions over the Estate, and as all irrigation channels amongst the trees are opened and filled in again within the space of twenty-four hours, no danger can arise from routine working, in fact the management confidently expect that by next year malaria will cease to exist within the confines of their property, and I am optimistic enough to agree with them, but in my opinion it would be as well for intending settlers to postpone taking up permanent residence until such time as the estate is in a producing stage, say five years from date.

The climate during my stay was perfect, cool nights making a blanket or even two, if sleeping on the verandah, desirable. The rains fall during the hot months, November, December and January, when temperatures of almost 100° F. are registered, but the nights are cool, and I was unable to obtain any information about "prickly heat" as no one knew what I meant.

The Company are making quite serviceable bricks out of ant-heaps, which can be purchased for £1 per 1,000, labour is cheap, and if one used local timber an estimate for a really fine spacious bungalow with a fourteen-foot verandah and
Correspondence

kitchen and out offices of substantial nature comes to £800 to £1,000; of course, if expensive doors, windows and bathroom fittings are purchased, any sum may be expended.

As, before arrival in the country, my ideas regarding distances, travelling expenses, etc., were vague in the extreme, I give here a few particulars on these points:—

Passage to Durban by Natal Line (one class only) ... £52 10 0
Rail Durban to Johannesburg ... ... ... ... 4 16 0
Johannesburg to Pietersburg ... ... ... ... 2 6 0
Johannesburg to Capetown ... ... ... ... 9 0 0

There is excellent accommodation on trains. On each occasion I was given without any trouble a coupé to myself, the dining car on all mail trains is quite good and reasonable—3s. 6d. breakfast and lunch, 4s. dinner.

I had to pay rather heavily for excess baggage as I had much more than I really needed. Ordinary light summer-weight tweed suits are worn and in the hot season silk and linen. Some men wear pith topees, but I never felt the need and wore an ordinary Homburg all through. Hotel charges are from 17s. to £1 per day inclusive, but such is the hospitality of the country that although I started comparatively friendless, I was put up at the best clubs everywhere I stayed at a most reasonable rate.

Now as regards the crux of the whole position apart from the desirability of South Africa as a place of residence for poor pensioned officers. Will citrus farming pay? It most certainly pays at present and the industry is most confident that the market can be expanded indefinitely—within the last month a most important development has taken place in the formation of a Fruit Growers' Exchange, which will be working on co-operative lines and control the selection, export and selling of citrus fruits and reduce all overhead charges.

There is no fortune to be made at general farming I am convinced. A boy, after four years' practical work on a farm and at an agricultural college should be able to earn a livelihood either as a manager or by leasing a farm and slowly getting together a herd, but without several thousand pounds and a reserve to tide over a bad season or two, it is slow and very hard work. Many men have come to grief during the present slump, who owing to starting on borrowed capital have been sold up by the banks and bond-holders for want of such a reserve. A small pension of even £200 a year is an enormous asset.

At the present time all branches of farming are at a low ebb. Stock is unsalable, the drought which seems almost universal will bring many tottering concerns into the bankruptcy court, and the revolt on the Rand has had a far-reaching effect. Now, no doubt, is the time for a man with some ready money and experience to purchase and stock a farm, but without the experience and farming knowledge he will surely lose his money.

I am informed that the Letaba Estate has no more land to sell at present. There are many other more or less similar properties on the market; a personal visit before purchase is most advisable, and will be a couple of hundred pounds well invested.

That individual owners of ten acres more or less of orange groves will be able to work, pick and market their fruit is I consider quite impossible as an economic
proposition. A large estate split up into plots will have to work as a co-operative society, each plot-holder having shares in proportion to his holding; a resident Board of Directors to guard their interests, with a technical skilled staff performing the highly specialized work of cultivation and gathering, will be required—and once the fruit is handed over to the District Exchange of the Fruit Growers' Association, the transport and marketing is provided for. The importance to the industry of this newly-formed Exchange cannot be overstated—it will be in a position to secure adequate shipping accommodation, open up new markets and control shipments so that the chaos and delays now of weekly occurrence will be obviated, and a regular supply of properly graded fruit of high quality only will be offered for sale on the European markets.

On reading over this letter I am struck with its optimistic tone and fear that as regards the particular Estate I visited I may be considered prejudiced in its favour. So far from this being the case, I went up there prepared to throw over the whole scheme, forfeit the payments I had made if necessary, and clear out, cutting my loss. A personal visit to the property and acquaintance with the financiers responsible to the plot-holders for the successful launching of the venture inspired the opinion I herewith express.

Thymira,

Toothery,

August 2, 1922,

H. CARR,

I am, etc.,

Major-General, R.P.