Correspondence.

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

My Dear Cummins,—Despite stresses, I feel that I must make an effort to secure a little more adequate recognition of the national value of the wonderful services rendered by the late Sir William Horrocks during our last war. Tributes have been paid in the Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps to his qualities and to his services as its editor, but no adequate reference has been made to his contributions to our victory in the field. It is because that omission is probably due to the fact that no other survivor shares my intimate knowledge resulting from working directly under his orders that I feel impelled—in justice to his memory—to bring those services to the notice of the R.A.M.C. as it mourns the passing of one of its most distinguished scientists.

I propose to illustrate his great practical services in two special directions only.

Firstly, as regards the Army water cart, I note that it was on the day after the outbreak of war, and hence just in time, that I completed to Sir William's satisfaction the efficiency tests of the design and action which he had perfected with characteristic thoroughness. My final test showed that water bacterially contaminated even to the extent of opalescence was sterilized by half an hour's routine exposure to chlorine in our water cart, as controlled by use of the "Horrocks Test-box" later so familiar to British troops.

It is impossible accurately to allocate credit among the factors which almost eliminated enteric from our forces during the last war, but this application of scientific methods to water purification in the field undoubtedly contributed to the reduction of enteric from the high level of our previous wars. At the rate obtaining in the South African war, for example, enteric would have cost us about 200,000 lives in the war of 1914-18, whereas it actually caused the death of only 204 of our troops in France.

Secondly, as regards his even more important and successful services when upon the Royal Army Medical Service was thrown the task of devising means of protecting our field forces against poison-gas. While such work might have perhaps more reasonably have devolved upon the R.A. Ordnance Corps, it was indeed fortunate for the Army and the country that Sir William was available and ready to undertake that vital duty.

The success which attended our efforts of scientific initiative, for which he bore the main responsibility, was largely attributable to his remarkable ability to improvise organizations to meet such new and unexpected needs. His capacity for rapid organization was illustrated by the speed of our response to the surprise of the Germans' initial gas-attack at Ypres: although the chemical antidote had to be chosen and purchased and the
Correspondence

textiles bought, cut, stitched, dipped, dried and sent overseas, 160,000 protective pads had been distributed to our front-line troops within sixty hours—a truly wonderful achievement. Before the "Great War" ended no less than 55,000,000 respirators of various kinds had been made, largely to his specifications.

In the light of such evidence it is perhaps not too much to claim that but few individual officers contributed more of practical value and applied science to our victory of 1918 than did Sir William Heaton Horrocks.

University of Edinburgh,
Usher Institute of Public Health,
Warrender Park Road.
April 12, 1941.

NOTES ON THE MEDICAL SERVICES OF A DIVISION.

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

DEAR SIR,—Reference the Article "Notes on the Medical Services of a Division," in the March number of the Journal. I would be obliged if you will make the following corrections in the Text:

Page 130, line five, for "show" read "know."
Page 134, line six, for "D.P.s" read "D.R.s"
Page 134, para. seven, should read, "With the present equipment . . . defensive positions, that are not going lightly to be permitted to fall into enemy hands, the A.D.S. should be . . ." etc.

The substance of these notes was prepared in July and August, 1940, and a considerable delay occurred after submission for censorship before they were printed in the Journal.

Since August, 1940, a considerable modification in the tactical handling of a Field Ambulance has taken place. This is most particularly marked in the Subdivision of the Companies into sections.

Many of the remarks in the article should therefore be read in conjunction with this change in tactics. The basic principles remain the same and I am convinced that the Section principle is a sound one. It is to be hoped that the scheme of forming Sections of the Field Ambulances, for close liaison with the infantry battalions is the germ of the idea of making the Field Ambulance a true evacuating unit and that the process of evolution will result in the introduction of more vehicles to enable us, having collected our casualties, to evacuate them with the utmost speed to the place where their injuries can receive the treatment they so urgently need.

I would be obliged if you can see your way to publishing this apologia for the apparent "out of dateness" of some of the remarks in the article referred to above.

Headquarters 44 Division,
Home Forces.
April 11, 1941.

Yours, etc.,

J. C. Dowse,
Colonel.