

English equivalents would be simpler and more readily understood. The descriptions of bandages are, on the whole, clear and straightforward, and the figures are good. It would be easy, were it worth while, to draw attention to other faults, but enough has been said for our purpose. A book of this nature is intended for students and nurses, and may do much harm by misleading those who are unable to discriminate between sound and unsound teaching. This work is altogether untrustworthy and cannot be recommended.

Correspondence.

THE FUTURE OF THE JOURNAL.

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

SIR,—I trust you will excuse the liberty I take in making the following suggestions, but I know that a considerable number of our officers do not subscribe to the Journal, which fact would seem to prove that there is a lack of general interest and that it is not widely popular. If such is the case it is much to be regretted, for I am sure that those of us (and there are very many) who have the interests of the Corps at heart feel that if we can extend its popularity so as to secure the support of all—or nearly all—the results may well be of the most far-reaching character, in the fostering of that cordial feeling of *camaraderie* and regard for the well-being of the body politic, which is usually included in the generic expression *esprit de corps*. It is evident that any scheme of reform must of necessity be dual in its inception—critical on the one hand, suggestive on the other.

First, then, as to criticism. It appears to me that, heretofore, the tone of the Magazine has been too ultra-scientific, too strictly professional, and especially, too prominently bacteriological. No doubt to the expert it may be highly interesting to know that under certain conditions monkey 27 is + and guinea-pig 43 —; but, to the non-expert, it is somewhat wearisome to wade through columns of such experiments; he either skips them, or, if he does not, they convey no mental impression. The *results* are interesting and therefore should be published, but surely these long lists of numerical monkeys and guinea-pigs might be relegated to appendices or stored amongst the archives and available for reference. You cannot pump up any enthusiasm about a number, and if these earnest workers would even condescend to call monkey 27 "Jacko," and guinea-pig 43 "Sue," it might, conceivably, excite a passing interest, and, so to speak, impart a little colour to an otherwise bald statement. It reminds me somewhat of the man who, after reading some pages of a dictionary, remarked that "it was very interesting, but he could not quite follow the thread of the narrative." Moreover, there are hosts of journals and magazines already existent whose pages are open to such contributions. Understand me, however, clearly. I do not for a moment advocate the elimination of all

such articles, far from it, but I think that there should be a greater sense of proportion, and that they should not occupy so much space as hitherto. It was of set purpose that I wrote the article, "The Humour of Indian Sanitation," which you were good enough to publish a few months ago; it was an attempt to lift the Journal out of a rather dreary groove, and, from what I have since heard, many appreciated it.

And this brings me to my second point. I am one of those who believe that a tactical blunder was made in the inaugural number of the Journal when it was enunciated that nothing controversial would be admitted into its pages. Pugnacity is a national characteristic, and is, to my mind, an evidence of virility. Controversy is the very life-blood of journalism, and when this latter degenerates into the "prunes and prisms" type it is prone to pall and prove stale and unprofitable; it lacks *goût*—what the Yankees aptly designate "snap"—and I doubt if there is a single magazine in existence which has attained to a position of success on a policy of this kind; therefore I think that an anæmic attitude of oleaginous dulness spells ultimate disaster. There are always two sides to every question, and it should not be a difficult matter to present these two sides (under editorial supervision) without trespassing beyond the bounds of discipline or rubbing military susceptibilities the wrong way. I am not advocating the encouragement of carping criticism and habitual "grousing"; nothing of the sort, but what I do plead for is a little stirring up of the dry bones and some indication that our junior officers are such; not be-spectacled, bald-headed professors, nourished on a diet of skim milk, backward in expressing an opinion, and with a fearsome skiagram of irascible (perchance irrational) P.M.O.'s indelibly printed on their cerebral convolutions. In illustration of my meaning: How would it do to devote three or four pages monthly (or more on occasion) to questions of general interest, which may afford ground for differences of opinion? Under some such heading as "The Two Sides of the Shield," and a sub-heading of the well-known couplet—

"Oh, would some power the giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as ithers see us!"

many an useful hint might be forthcoming. Innumerable subjects open to legitimate discussion suggest themselves. For example, why should we not know how officers regard the scheme of accelerated promotion by examination? or what is thought of the College course—its instructional value, educational advantage, and the like? Or, why might we not elicit from the rank and file their ideas of the merits and shortcomings of our hospitals, our sanitary restrictions, regulations and so forth? None of us are infallible, and it might well happen, on the one hand, that we might be less dogmatic and dictatorial if we could grasp the view-point of the victims of our vagaries; and, on the other, remove misapprehension by editorial comment. I see no reason, moreover, why correspondents should not use pseudonyms if they so desire; it would

promote freedom in the expression of opinion, and abuse could always be checked by the exercise of the editorial veto. Similarly, if a *nom de plume* were allowed, and its inviolability recognised, we might extract many interesting personal experiences and reminiscences which the authors might be chary of recording if their identity were revealed; parenthetically, it may be added, that here also the editor might control any threatening epidemic of the Gilbertian malady—"a taste for faultless fact." Or, again, why should not the Journal take up the cudgels in our defence when ill-informed, irresponsible anonymity vilifies us by parading mendacious "facts" in the columns of contemporaries? I do not believe in taking abuse "lying down," or turning the other cheek to the smiter; ethically, no doubt, it is very commendable, but in a workaday world it pays better to hit back, and hit hard.

Lastly, the *clientèle* of our Journal is necessarily limited, and even if every officer subscribed financial success would scarcely be assured. Why not therefore make a bid for an extended circulation by giving more encouragement to our brethren in the Reserve Forces to discuss questions in which they are more directly interested? Such expansion, moreover, might well mean increase in advertisements.

I apologise for the length of this letter, but the subject appears to me to be an important one; and I may be allowed to express the hope that, having raised it, others will favour us with their views, so that we may gauge what is the true path to that success whose attainment is comprised in the triple formula, instruction, general interest and concomitant popularity.

Yours faithfully,

Bombay,

December 11th, 1906.

R. H. FORMAN,

Colonel, R.A.M.C.

THE TREATMENT OF SCABIES BY BALSAM OF PERU.

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

DEAR SIR,—Since Lieutenant-Colonel S. C. B. Robinson, R.A.M.C. submitted his paper on the above subject to the Director-General in August last, this method has been subjected to further trial (to the exclusion of all others) in the Military Hospital at Colchester.¹ The results have been absolutely satisfactory. In no case has the patient ever complained of itching, either on the first night after the application or subsequently. This would appear to prove that the parent *Acarus* is killed within a few hours. As regards the ova, it is uncertain whether the fumes of the balsam have the power of penetrating the capsules at all stages of their development, or whether it is necessary for them to arrive at some stage of maturity before it is effective. I have referred this

¹ [An account of the method employed at Colchester was published in the Journal for January, 1907, p. 52.—Ed.]