Correspondence.

MAJOR SMITH'S RESERVE SCHEME.

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

Sir,—As a civilian who has undergone some military training and service, I have read with interest the extracts from Major Smith's paper on the subject of a Medical Reserve, which appeared in the July number of the Journal, particularly those which deal with the Reserve of civil medical men and male nurses. A good start is made by treating the subject as a purely business question, because, unfortunately, the majority of medical men cannot afford to be as self-sacrificing in their patriotism as people in other callings, therefore, unless the question is dealt with in this spirit, schemes, however excellent in other ways, will not succeed. During the discussion that followed the paper, it was said insufficient account seemed to have been taken of Militia, Volunteers, and various Voluntary Aid Associations, as means to the end in view. As regards the Royal Army Medical Corps Militia, the authorised establishment of officers is so small, and the training in nursing falls so far short of the minimum initial training suggested in part (C) of the paper, that the author could not be expected to assign to the Militia an important place in his scheme. Probably for like reasons the Volunteer Medical Service was not mentioned as a means for supplying a Reserve of trained hospital attendants. Moreover, since Militia, Yeomanry and Volunteer medical officers may, at any time, be required for duty with their own regiments and Corps, it seems unwise to admit them to a Reserve of medical officers, unless seconded in the force to which they belong. At the same time, it will probably be conceded that medical officers of the Auxiliary Forces are well qualified to discharge such duties as the Reserve officers would generally be called upon to perform, and some are capable of filling minor administrative posts. There would be no objection to drawing on this source of supply if selected medical officers of the Auxiliary Forces were seconded or transferred for duty in the Reserve. The foundation of a Reserve of officers could be laid in this way at any time, and if the practice was introduced the Auxiliary Forces might eventually constitute the means for training and supplying large numbers to the Reserve. In order to give a sense of reality to the business, it is advisable to assign, when possible, a definite place on mobilisation to each officer on joining the Reserve. Probably it is chiefly owing to the want of a dependable supply that it is not the fashion to employ male nurses in civil life. The Voluntary Aid Associations might do much towards altering the situation by establishing male nursing institutions, and so, in conjunction with the Army Medical Department, lay the foundation of a skilled nursing Reserve. It is not difficult to interest civilians in military medical work,
Correspondence

provided they can see it near their homes, and much could be done to bring the work in touch with the daily life of large numbers, if those military hospitals, however small, in or close to large towns and populous centres, were used as instructional units for probationary officers, N.C.O.'s and men, in the purely military side of the work. For instructional purposes a military hospital's position in relation to population is of infinitely greater importance than its size.

I am, Sir,

Wallasey,
July 10th, 1907.

Yours faithfully,

J. H. P. GRAHAM.

WANTED, AN EXPLANATION.

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

SIR,—I am much obliged to Major Durant for his suggested explanation re the absence of mosquitoes at Sarant Wadi, but if he saw the place himself he would be the first to admit that his solution is quite inadequate. The tank, or rather lake, is full of plants, particularly lilies, the shores are shelving with innumerable shallows that no fish, however small, could get into, the Residency is anything but the ideal abode which his fancy pictures, and on the opposite side the native town comes down to the shore, and its condition is exactly that of the villages he describes. Of course, when trying to solve the problem I thought of fish destroying the larva, but fish never eliminated mosquitoes anywhere, and never will. There are myriads of possible breeding places for mosquitoes in Sarant Wadi to which no fish could gain access; but there are neither mosquitoes nor larva. Why? My house in Bombay, both as regards construction and environment, is far in advance of the Sarant Wadi Residency, yet, if I tried in the former to sleep without curtains, a very few minutes would convince me of my folly, whereas in the latter I could do it, and did do it, with impunity, as did everybody else. I know of no place on the Plains of India, other than this, where everyone can sleep without curtain or punkah throughout the year, and I gravely doubt if such exists; nor is my experience a limited one, for at different times I have travelled from Peshawar to Tuticorin and from Karachi to Mandalay. I wish I were an expert on the subject of culicidae, for it is, to my mind, just possible that this apparently unimportant fact—the absence of mosquitoes from this limited area where conditions seem eminently suited to favour their propagation—may contain within it the germ of discoveries whose application may conceivably have the widest signification in the elucidation of the outstanding problems connected with that tropical scourge, malarial fever. I quite admit that I am promulgating the vaguest hypothesis based on an isolated fact, and that there may be nothing whatever in it but...