

## Correspondence

### Healthy Employees in Kitchen and Dining-Room

*To the Editor:*—In THE JOURNAL, April 26, p. 1310, appears a news item headed "Waiters Must Be Healthy," which mentions the safeguards against communicable diseases enforced by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company among its employees in dining-car and restaurant service. This is so fully in line with what I have been urging in St. Louis for a number of years that I desire to enlarge somewhat on the topic, as it is of immediate hygienic concern to every person who eats in public or semipublic places, as dining-cars, clubs, hotels and restaurants.

Several years ago a movement was begun here for the formation of a local club, the declared purpose of which was the advancement of wholesome civic conditions, general and special. On joining the club I conceived the occasion opportune to address a letter to its president, calling attention to the importance of starting right and with clean hands as concerned kitchen help and dining-room service, by requiring that every proposed employee should undergo a strict physical examination, to be conducted preferably by the health department as a part of its regular work, and that no one should be employed who could not present from that official source a certificate attesting the clean, sound personal health of the applicant. It was further advised that every person thus employed should be subject to supplemental tests as might be provided in rules to be framed later, and that employees of this selected class should receive a higher wage than those not thus tested, if the latter were taken into club service.

These suggestions seemed to find favor at first; but later, as is common, lions were found in the way, or what appeared as such—most likely on close examination they would have been found to be merely stuffed felines rather the worse for moths—and nothing was done. Some time later when a syphilitic waiter appeared to take an order for luncheon, I thought that the limit had been reached, and my resignation was soon sent in and accepted.

Such an experience is not exceptional, as any physician with open eyes may prove who frequently eats in public places, and the danger may be greatest in establishments of most pretentious claim in which sanitary suspicion would be lulled by fine appointments. It is not an uncommon occurrence in some of the most exclusive eating concerns for the fingers of the waiter to visit his mouth when supplying a napkin to a diner; and rolls, cutlery, plates, etc., are served with the same unsterile fingers. Tuberculosis, syphilis, diphtheria, cancer and other dangerous and revolting ailments affect the mouth and air-passages often in concealed form; hence the imperative hygienic need for barring from table and kitchen service among self-respecting people, by means of a searching medical examination, every person found thus affected, esthetic considerations weighing as well as those that are prophylactic and hygienic.

GEORGE HOMAN, M.D., St. Louis.

### Need for a Physician in the Mountains of North Carolina

*To the Editor:*—Far up in the mountains of North Carolina is a little hospital, founded and run by a trained nurse, Miss Lydia Holman, who for twelve years has quietly worked among these mountain people, not only bringing to them medical aid and care, but also teaching modern sanitary improvements, hygiene and social betterment. When the railroad ran its line through Altapass, a small building was erected for use during its construction, and after the completion of the road, seeing the splendid work Miss Holman was doing there, the railroad gave the building to her to use as a hospital.

Miss Holman's work covers a large area, patients traveling many miles to reach the little hospital, or sending for her in all sorts of weather, night or day, so that her work has really become that of a physician as well as a nurse,

because she could not refuse medical aid when it was needed and there was no one else to give it. This even resulted at one time in her arrest for practicing medicine. Finally a doctor was found, but after a year or two of work down there he has left, and again Miss Holman, with the help of one or two nurses, is bearing the immense burden of this work.

Patients with typhoid (of which a large number of these people die), pneumonia, tuberculosis, all sorts of surgical cases and even the victims of a small-pox epidemic have been cared for by Miss Holman. One of the first things which called her attention to the great need of medical aid in this region, was a report of the terrible death-rate among the mothers, and the spectacle of babies sick and deformed for life because they had not had proper hospital treatment at birth.

For many months she has been looking for a physician to help her, and brave and plucky as she is, no woman can possibly keep on doing the enormous work she is doing and taking the great responsibility that she is taking without ultimately breaking down under the physical strain. This is an opportunity for some man to do a wonderful good in a community of our own white citizens, a race of people descended from the Scotch, Irish and Germans who fled to these mountains during the Revolution. They are self-respecting and independent, and although living such isolated lives far from civilization, when given the chance, they respond readily to those influences which make toward more enlightened social conditions.

It is not a place in which a man will gain general reputation, wealth or public praise, but to one who cares more about helping others than about worldly gain, this is an opportunity the possibilities of which cannot be exaggerated. The income would probably be about a hundred dollars a month and any fees a physician might make at the small hotel there. Of course only a man with the ability and training to cope with every sort of disease and emergency would be fitted for such a position; but when we think of all the fine medical schools scattered throughout the country, it seems as if there ought to be no trouble or delay in securing the right sort of physician.

We hear of many men willing and anxious to go to China, India and other lands as medical missionaries, or of physicians gladly volunteering to go to Labrador with Dr. Grenfell; surely there is one who will find his work in helping our own people—Americans who live such lonely, desolate lives, growing old and dying before their time because of the lack of teaching as to proper sanitary and hygienic modes of life, as well as aid in sickness. Among all our young physicians there must be a man who will respond to Miss Holman's call.

AGNES WILLARD BARTLETT, 21 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn.

### Report of Cases of Wood-Alcohol Poisoning

*To the Editor:*—In THE JOURNAL of April 19, 1913, p. 1247, a query was inserted concerning articles on wood-alcohol poisoning. A report of four cases that I have treated may be of general interest.

In 1910 four adult male Winnebago Indians obtained 4 ounces of wood-alcohol at a drug-store on the pretense that it would be used as a liniment, but they drank the full quantity. Two of them soon became comatose and died on the third and fourth day after. The third was comatose three days and within a month had recovered except that his vision was completely lost. The fourth, who evidently drank only a small quantity, suffered no ill effects.

Another case occurred in 1912. A mixed-blood Menominee Indian obtained a pint of wood-alcohol from the matron at the Menominee Indian Hospital, saying that he wanted it to clean his paint brushes. He drank only a small part of this and continued his work for two days; on the third day he died after hours of excruciating pain in the epigastric and temporal regions.

All three deaths seemed to be due to respiratory suppression.

EDWARD L. SWADENER, M.D., Keshena, Wis.