line of work depends on the early reference of all breast tumors to the surgeon who is equipped for microscopic diagnosis during the operation. To secure this desired result the laity must be educated and the general profession must accept and act on the dicta that early operation is the first indication, and that such early operation must be radical, as the first operator generally seals the fate of the cancer victim.

J. CLARK STEWART, M.D., Minneapolis.

The Army Canteen

To the Editor: The letter of Dr. A. S. Condon in *THE JOURNAL*, March 9, furnishes a striking illustration of a common misapprehension of the act of Congress (1901) abolishing the sale of beer in the army canteen. Dr. Condon describes the "canteen" as the soldiers' club where "the boys" met to play cards or billiards or "took a turn in the gymnasium" or read in the library or wrote letters home.

The "soldiers' club" part of the canteen has never been abolished by the act of Congress. Congress has voted appropriations amounting to \$2,000,000 or more for increasing the attractions and recreations of the soldiers' clubs. Thousands of dollars of this appropriation have been spent in fitting up gymnasiums and providing outfits for bowling, billiards and other recreations. All that Congress abolished was the sale of beer and wine in the canteen.

According to the previous army regulations permitting the sale of wine and beer, that sale was to be conducted in a separate room, used for no other purpose. That room—the bar room—was the only one closed by the act of Congress.

And yet Dr. Condon says that one day an order came from Washington to suspend the canteen, store the billiard tables and other impedimenta away and vacate the rooms.

Any order of that kind was wholly without warrant in the act of Congress abolishing the sale of beer; nor was it necessitated at any well-managed post exchange by lack of funds consequent on stopping the sale of beer, for there were profits from other articles.

Major Reynolds of the Department of Dakota, for instance, said (Report of the War Dept. 1902-3) the year after the sale of beer was abolished: "The exchanges are fulfilling their puerile purpose and making money."

The report of the inspector-general of the Army for 1903—two years after the abolition of the sale of beer—gave the following clear picture of the business side of the post exchange, showing that it was not abolished when the sale of beer was stopped. He says: "The exchange is a growing institution of post life. It is not only the soldier's club, but it is the medium through which all the necessities of family life for the soldiers and their families are obtained. A properly supervised exchange furnishes at low cost all kinds of fabrics for wear as well as notions and in later years it has extended to the furnishing of vegetables, fruits, butter, milk and eggs. There is one exchange on the Pacific coast that furnishes a fine tailoring establishment for the benefit of the officers and men."

The report of the financial condition of the post exchanges for the year ending June 30 1902, gave the receipts of the exchanges for that year as \$1,124,542.50, which also shows that they continued to do a large volume of business after the sale of beer was discontinued.

Dr. Condon's account of the way the order to close the canteen was construed is another evidence that the term "canteen" has been used and understood by army officials in two different senses. And there appears to have been a cause for such misunderstanding in the different constructions given the term in the official reports of the War Department.

Thus in the report for 1899, page 275 (House Document, Vol. 2, No. 2) is the following description of the "canteen." "The army canteen, officially known as the post exchange, had its origin in our service at Vancouver Barracks in 1880, but it was not until February, 1889, that the institution was recognized by the War Department and rules and regulations for its establishment and government were published to the Army. The purpose of the canteen as officially announced is to supply troops with goods at a low rate of profit and to afford recreation and amusement to all enlisted men."

This takes the word "canteen" in the broad sense of soldier's club. But the adjutant-general, the same year, uses in his report the wording of the army regulation establishing the post exchange, in which the word "canteen" is applied only to the room in which beer and light wines are sold. Other "features" of the exchange named in this regulation are (a) a well-stocked general store, (b) a well-kept lunch counter, (c) reading and recreation rooms supplied with books, periodicals, billiard and pool tables, bowling alley, etc.

Further evidence of the different senses in which the word was understood appears in the opinions collated by the then adjutant-general from army officers concerning the working of the "canteen" feature of the post exchange, and the probable effect of its abolition. These opinions have been widely quoted as showing that a preponderating number of the officers were in favor of the sale of beer. That many of them understood the adjutant-general's question about the "canteen feature" to mean the whole post exchange is evident from replies like the following:

"The canteen is the enlisted man's club, a pleasant and popular resort."

"The merchants of the neighboring town would have unlimited extortion on sales of many articles now procured through the exchange, if that cooperative store were closed there."

And even the superintendent of the West Point Military Academy at that time took the word canteen in its broad sense, for he says:

"To abolish the post exchange will be to bring back to the Army many of the evils from which for years past it has been free."

It is more than probable therefore, in fact Dr. Condon's letter may be taken as evidence in one case at least, that the order to close the "canteen" has been erroneously taken, no one knows how often, to mean to close the whole exchange, recreation rooms and all. It is no wonder the soldiers resented such a measure and that well intentioned officers opposed it. It is clear also that even to-day Dr. Condon and others are still laboring under this misapprehension. That it may speedily be corrected it is necessary to keep reiterating:

The soldier's club has never been abolished by act of Congress. All that Congress ordered closed was one feature of the soldier's club—the beer or wine bar.

HENRY O. MARCY, Boston,
Late Surgeon and Medical Director, U.S.A.

Crutcher Not in League for Medical Frauds

To the Editor:—Please state in your columns that I have never had any connection, direct or indirect, with the National League for Medical Frauds, or with any association with an allied name or purpose.

HOWARD CRUTCHER, Roswell, N. Mex.

Queries and Minor Notes

ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATIONS will not be noticed. Every letter must contain the writer's name and address, but these will be omitted, on request.

THYMOL AND HOOKWORM DISEASE IN NURSING MOTHERS

To the Editor:—Is there any contra-indication to the administration of thymol to a nursing mother for the treatment of hookworm disease? I have two severe cases, in one of which the mother nurses a child 1 month old, the other patient nursing one 15 months old. The latter child is just recovering from bronchopneumonia.

THOMAS J. TUDER, Keokee, Va.

ANSWER.—We are unable to find any statements with regard to the administration of thymol to nursing women. As the remedy, however, when given for hookworm disease, is not calculated to be absorbed, it is probable that no harm to the infant would result, since few remedies are excreted in the milk. Thymol is regarded as contra-indicated in pregnancy. In the case of a nursing mother it would be prudent to remove the child from the breast during the treatment and until the