

I do not need Mr. Bayly's invitation to collaborate with those who will keep to the truth and avoid the ridiculous and lurid which has disfigured some aspects of a probably beneficial antivenereal campaign.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Sept. 20th.

CHARLES RUSS.

POLICE SURGEONS' FEES.

SIR,—As a divisional police surgeon of the county of Wilts, I write to say that I heartily agree with Dr. Withers Green in his remarks on police surgeons' fees (September 11th, p. 413).

The scale of fees for police surgeons of this county was drawn up as far back as 1896, and although the police have received a considerable increase in pay, the fees for their medical officers have not been revised except in the case of payment for examination of recruits. This examination has naturally to be a searching one, and takes considerable time; yet the fee paid was only 2s. 6d. On application to the committee for an increase it was raised to 5s. a head. Surely in these days it is still inadequate. The application for a revision of the other fees which were fixed in 1896 was not acceded to.

It is to be hoped the British Medical Association will take the whole matter up.—I am, etc.,

Devizes, Sept. 13th.

R. STEELE.

DOSIMETRIC CHLOROFORM.

SIR,—Dr. Fairlie's article on a simple method of continuing ether administration with the Vernon Harcourt inhaler (BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, September 18th, p. 438) is of interest as advocating the more extensive employment of dosimetric chloroform anaesthesia. Excluding cases of sepsis, where the danger of acidosis precludes its use, chloroform still occupies a valuable place, and its dangers can be, as he remarks, discounted by the employment of a percentage inhaler. Personally, I prefer the one I described in the *Lancet* of April 1st, 1916, as with it there is always an excess of air, rebreathing is impossible, and in addition it is without valves and cannot get out of order. Ether can be substituted after the induction with chloroform by merely pouring in ether to replace the chloroform. With percentage methods I feel that the anaesthetist's motto can indeed be,

"Ademtum tibi jam saxo omnem metum, in aurem utramvis otiose ut dormias."

Many who swear by the drop method have learnt that to laugh at danger means that it comes all the sooner.

Chloroform is by no means disagreeable to take; it is powerful, so that any degree of anaesthesia and relaxation can be produced, and the after-effects are usually slight. Having recently had four doses of my own "smoke," and ether on three occasions, I can honestly as a patient testify to the unpleasant after-results of the latter; I know I was sick for a week after; hence my hope that the present disrepute of chloroform may lessen and that its employment, at least in suitable cases, may again become popular. Anaesthetists should remember that ether is not the only substance to produce sleep. Voltaire, I think, remarks: "Je suis assez semblable aux girouettes, qui ne se fixent que quand elles sont rouillées." The absurd man is he who never changes.—I am, etc.,

London, S.W., Sept. 20th.

CHARLES T. W. HIRSCH.

PRICE OF PETROL ON THE CONTINENT.

SIR,—In his article in the *JOURNAL* of September 18th (page 441) Mr. Massac Buist writes that "in France something over 12s. a gallon is paid for petrol." I think he has been misinformed, or possibly he has mistaken shillings for francs. During a recent tour abroad I found that the price of petrol varied from Fr. 12.50 on the quay at Antwerp to Fr. 13.50 at Lille. The French *bidon* contains 5 litres, which is nearly 8.75 pints, so that the price was a little less than 12½ to 13½ francs per gallon. This is a heavy increase of price for the French to pay, as before the war I can remember buying *essence* round about 2 francs a gallon. But it is a small augmentation for the British tourist; at present he is paying 4s. 3½d. a gallon in England, and the 12½ francs he has to pay in France is, at the present rate of exchange, less than five shillings.

I cannot, therefore, understand why Mr. Buist is satisfied that vendors of motor fuel "would be much in pocket if they ceased selling motor fuel in this country and disposed of all they could secure in markets overseas." I would rather suspect the vendors of being as commercially minded as other gentry of the same ilk, particularly from what a visit to France has taught me in regard to dealers in motor tyres at home. I bought a tyre in devastated Arras for £8 (at the current rate of exchange) of exactly the same size and make for which I had paid £13 in London. The inner tube for it costs £2 1s. 9d. at home and can be bought in France for £1 6s. I can produce the English and French price lists of the same goods, at the same dates. By shoeing my car in France I can save over £20. The difference of £5 on the price of a single tyre seems difficult to explain, and it certainly suggests some profiteering in this country.—I am, etc.,

September 22nd.

STCLAIR THOMSON.

Obituary.

SIR WILLIAM BABBIE, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., LL.D., M.B.,
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL A.M.S. (RET.).

WE announced last week, with deep regret, the sudden and unexpected death at Knocke, on the Belgian coast, of Sir William Babbie, on September 11th. He was found dead in an armchair in his room at the hotel where he had been staying for some time with Lady Babbie and his daughter. The body was brought to London and an inquest was held on September 16th by the Westminster coroner, who found that death was due to natural causes.

William Babbie was the eldest son of the late John Babbie, ex-provost and J.P. of Dumbarton, and was born on May 7th, 1859. He studied medicine at the University of Glasgow, and in 1880 graduated M.B. and obtained the L.R.C.P. and S. Edin. diplomas. In the following year he entered the Army Medical Service as surgeon, and he reached the rank of surgeon-general after thirty years' service. He was senior medical officer in the island of Crete in 1897-98, and for his services during the troubles there was awarded the C.M.G. During the South African war he served as staff officer to the principal medical officer with the Natal army; he was present at the actions leading up to the relief of Ladysmith and the subsequent operations in Natal and the Eastern Transvaal.

Babbie won the V.C. at the battle of Colenso on December 15th, 1899, for his conspicuous bravery in attending wounded under heavy fire and in attempting to save Lord Roberts's son, who was lying in the open desperately wounded. The official record in the *London Gazette* of April 20th, 1900, ran as follows:

The wounded of the 14th and 66th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery, were lying in an advanced donga close in the rear of the guns, without any medical officer to attend to them; and when a message was sent back asking for assistance, Major W. Babbie, R.A.M.C., rode up under a heavy rifle fire, his pony being hit three times. When he arrived at the donga, where the wounded were lying in sheltered corners, he attended to them all, going from place to place exposed to the heavy rifle fire which greeted anyone who showed himself. Later on in the day Major Babbie went out with Captain Congreve to bring in Lieutenant Roberts, who was lying mortally wounded on the veldt (after a gallant attempt to save the guns). This also was under a heavy fire.

A graphic account of how Babbie won the Victoria Cross was contributed to our columns by Sir Frederick Treves on April 28th, 1900, p. 1048. Apart from this gallant act, Babbie's services in the South African war were recognized by mention in dispatches and promotion to lieutenant-colonel, and he received the Queen's medal, with five clasps. In the years that followed he held the appointments of Assistant Director-General A.M.S. at the War Office from 1901 to 1906, Inspector of Medical Services 1907-10, Deputy Director-General A.M.S. 1910-14. In March, 1914, he was appointed Director of Medical Services in India, reaching that country three months before the outbreak of war. He held the appointment until June 5th, 1915, when he was brought to the Mediterranean for special service. In the words of the Mesopotamia Commission, which regarded him, as D.M.S. India, as partly responsible for the breakdown of medical arrangements in the operations for the relief of Kut: "He was considered of sufficient importance to be