

be done and material improvements in the existing system be effected 'it is inevitable that recent experience will be repeated in the next great war in which we are involved and wastage from enteric fever will continue to the same extent as of old.' The paper is a suggestive one and deserves careful attention. Among the other communications we may call attention to Mauser Bullet Wounds of Nerves, a Surprising Lesion, by Major S. F. Freyer, C.M.G., R.A.M.C.; Major J. Fayrer's contribution on High-frequency Currents; Lieutenant Colonel A. M. Davies's notes on the Instruction of Staff and Regimental Officers in Military Hygiene; and the second part of the editorial article on Malta Fever.

Permission has been given to Dr. Fristedt, assistant surgeon, Swedish Army, to visit the barracks and hospitals in London about the beginning of August.

A walking contest between soldiers which took place in the outskirts of Paris on May 29th has resulted in one death and numerous cases of heat-stroke. 30 per cent. of the competitors are said to have been in need of medical assistance. The distance was about 28 miles.

It has been decided to abolish the rum ration on transports and to substitute, on homeward voyages only, an issue, on payment of 2d a pint, of British-brewed ale or an alternative ration of chocolate at ½d. a pint, to troops who desire to make such purchases.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

HOSPITAL SUNDAY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am this year President and Treasurer of the Hospital Sunday Fund and as such I appeal most earnestly to all classes, rich and poor, to assist me, each according to his means, to make the collection as large as possible, for the institutions for which I am pleading are sorely in need of help. All must know of the very great benefits conferred by our hospitals, for not only do they succour the very poor, but as training schools for our medical men they render incalculable services to those who can afford to pay for the skill and experience gained within their walls. Now if everyone will give something to swell the amount I am sure the institutions will be placed in a position to fulfil the charitable duties for which they were established. Mr. George Herring has again with splendid liberality offered to add one quarter, up to £25,000, to the sum collected in places of worship.

I am, very truly yours,

J. T. RITCHIE,
Lord Mayor.

Mansion House, E.C., June 6th, 1904.

SPONGES AND FORCEPS LEFT IN THE ABDOMINAL CAVITY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The distressing calamities which occur in connexion with this subject from time to time necessitate, in my judgment, some definite action on the part of surgeons to render this accident impossible. I am thankful to say that one of these surgical disasters has never occurred to myself though operating on all sorts of abdominal cases over a series of years. I have always adhered to two principles: the first to use few sponges and forceps and to have the number of these written on a slate; and the second to verify the sponges and forceps personally after each abdominal case and never to leave this duty to a subordinate. Also I have made it a rule never to pass a sponge deeply into the abdomen without attaching it to a long pair of forceps which projects from the wound and cannot fail to attract attention to the sponge beneath. As for tearing sponges into pieces, or using "wholesale" wool and gauze "dabs," as is often now done, I can only say that such practice is fraught with risk and I cannot too strongly inveigh against it.

On talking this serious matter over with my friend Dr. Hewitt, who from the coign of vantage occupied by the anaesthetist is able to judge largely of surgical practice, he suggested a method for the custody of sponges which I at once put into use. A coarse wire tray is made containing

(for myself) six compartments. This lies in the antiseptic lotion and the six sponges are each in its own compartment. At the end of the operation the tray is shown to me with each sponge in its place. The number of compartments may be made to vary with the fancy of the operator as to the number of sponges to be employed. Next as to pressure forceps, I am having constructed a white delf disc 12 inches in diameter and about half an inch thick. In this are bored 18 holes equidistant round the edge. These holes are plainly numbered in red figures. The "clips" stand in the disc and at the end of the operation, before the wound is closed, the operator is shown each pressure forceps in its proper place. He can see that "all is right" at a glance. Added to these precautions the numbers should be written on a slate previously to operation which prevents the error of adding to the number of forceps or sponges after the operation is commenced. Large forceps and clamps can hardly be left in the abdominal cavity. I recommend these simple devices very strongly and earnestly to the notice of my professional brethren both for hospital and private practice. The surgeon cannot avoid personal responsibility for these serious mishaps, and all of us who have been long in practice know of instances of their occurrence in the practice of well-known operators. Such cases have never obtained unfortunate publicity but speak eloquently to the truth of the maxim "Humanum est errare."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

A. MARMADUKE SHEILD.

Cavendish-place, W., June 6th, 1904.

THE SO-CALLED PANCREATIC REACTION IN THE URINE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—We consider Dr. P. J. Cammidge's reply to our criticism of his "pancreatic reaction" as very unsatisfactory. It will, perhaps, be best to state some of our objections to his "reaction" and to his letter in tabular form so that he and others may the more easily estimate their merits or demerits.

1. Dr. Cammidge's remarks about the varying solubility of lead chloride in hot and cold water were well known to us but as an answer to our criticism are quite beside the mark. The fact that lead chloride is soluble at all in water at 0° C. should have suggested to Dr. Cammidge the necessity of removing the lead salts from the solution with which he was experimenting before proceeding with his test. Therefore we, in estimating the value to be attached to this "pancreatic reaction," thought it advisable to remove this possible source of fallacy and after having done so we found that those cases, pancreatic and otherwise, which previous to the removal of the lead salts gave a positive reaction, now uniformly yielded negative results. These cases included: (a) one case of acute pancreatitis; and (b) five cases of "chronic pancreatitis"—that is to say, cases in which the pancreas showed distinct evidence of interstitial overgrowth. All these cases were verified post mortem. Surely were the test dependent on any change in the original constituents of the urine, resulting from disease of the pancreas, removal of the lead salts should in nowise interfere with positive results in such cases. How, then, explain the total absence in the above six verified cases of such results?

2. Moreover, the crystals we obtained were not those of lead chloride, as Dr. Cammidge suggests. They were only obtained when phenylhydrazine hydrochlorate and sodium acetate in solution were boiled with a solution containing lead salts (e.g., as in "Reaction A"). Presumably they consist of a compound that the lead salts form with phenylhydrazine. As we stated, they do not appear when the lead salts (chlorides, &c.) are removed previous to adding the phenylhydrazine, &c.

3. The shape of these crystals is almost identical with those of phenylglucosazone, so much so that when both the lead-compound crystals and the latter were present together (as in applying "Reaction A" to unfermented diabetic urine), the two sets of crystals could not be distinguished, though each could, by the appropriate processes, be obtained separately and so be compared with those in the mixture. Again, in spite of his assertion that the lead-compound crystals were "quite distinct both in behaviour and appearance" from the crystals of his pancreatic reaction we may mention that we have shown them