medical profession and the public. Dr. Saleeby's views are largely based on what he has seen of the work of Dr. Rollier at Leysin, of Sir Henry Gauvain at Alton and Hayling Island, of the Finsen light institution in Denmark, and on visits to Canada and the United States. He has learnt the importance of distinguishing between sunlight and sun heat, and that it is the former only which is the curative agency. As regards the value of sunlight and pigmentation he has not failed to observe "that the American negro," notwithstanding abundant sunlight and superabundant pigmentation, "is very subject to tuberculosis," but he passes by that point with the airy remark that "again we 'need more light.'" Everyone presumably will agree with his condemnation of coal smoke in cities, and having indicated by quotation some manifest faults in the volume it may be added that notwithstanding many repetitions, especially in the use of the first personal pronoun, the book can be read with interest if allowance is made for the manner in which the author is carried away by his own enthusiasms.

In a pamphlet on syphilis and marriage⁸ Professor E. FINGER of Vienna discusses several problems of far-reaching importance. The date at which marriage should be allowed after adequate treatment is fixed by him at five to six years after infection. The persistence of a positive Wassermann reaction beyond this period should not in his opinion be a bar to marriage. The author does not welcome the proposal to make a medical certificate compulsory before marriage for the following reasons: In the first place the certificate of fitness, however carefully the examination may have been made, may be valueless, as the candidate for marriage may have been in the incubation stage of a venereal disease at the time he was examined. Moreover, the requirement that a medical man who has had no previous knowledge of the individual should certify that he or she is a suitable candidate for marriage is a difficult and almost impossible one to fulfil. Professor Finger is in favour of the prospective husband who has had syphilis informing his fiancée of the fact himself, or better still by means of his doctor, and asking her if she is willing to take the risks of marriage. Professor Finger asserts that premarital sexual intercourse has become commoner in recent years and has entailed a corresponding increase in the prevalence of venereal disease among young women. When infection has taken place in these circumstances Professor Finger maintains that it is the doctor's duty to prevent dissolution of the attachment and to expedite marriage as the only means of ensuring careful treatment for both partners. A bibliography is appended from which several British names quoted in the text are missing.

A classified directory of *Practising Midwives and Maternity Nurses*⁹ will doubtless be of service to the medical profession. Distinction is clearly made between midwives who are certified and nurses who are not legally entitled to practise on their own responsibility. Although the law is quite definite as to the medical practitioner's position in this respect, he is always liable to misinformation, and the directory may prove useful on this account alone. Further qualifications are noted, and the names are arranged under local headings.

Those interested in the origin and objects of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem will find an interesting though brief account of its history in a pamphlet by Mr. SYMONS-JEUNE,¹⁰ the profits on the sale of which are given to the British Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem. The early history of the Order teems with romance and tales of chivalry from the time when it helped pilgrims on their way to the holy sepulchre, took part in the defence of Jerusalem against Saladin, withdrew to St. Jean d'Acre on the fall of the holy city, and afterwards held Rhodes against all comers for 220 years, until in 1522 its Grand Master, de l'Isle Adam, was forced to capitulate to Solymán the Magnificent. The Order was then established in Malta, granted to it as a sovereign order by the Emperor Charles V. Napoleon seized Malta in 1798 and dispersed the Order, and it is the irony of fate that a Christian order which held out for so many hundreds of years against the Moslems should have been destroyed by a Christian ruler. After the fall of Napoleon in 1814 the various branches of the Order were gradually re-established, the English branch eventually receiving a charter from Queen Victoria. Its present-day activities are well known. Mr. Symons-Jeune's pamphlet gives an excellent account of how it developed from the earliest times up to the time of its activities in the great war.

⁸ *Syphilis and Ehe*. By Professor Dr. E. Finger. Halle a. S.: Carl Marhold, 1923. (Med. 8vo, pp. 37. 0.40 sh.)

⁹ *Practising Midwives and Maternity Nurses, 1923-24*: A Classified Dictionary Alphabetically Arranged. London: The Scientific Press, Ltd. 1923. (Demy 16mo, pp. 231. 9d. net, post free 10½d.)

¹⁰ *Eight Hundred Years of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem*. By J. F. Symons-Jeune. London: William Heinemann. (Post 4to, pp. 23. 1s.)

MOTOR NOTES FOR MEDICAL MEN.

By H. MASSAC BUIST.

THE NEW YEAR IN PROSPECT.

SIX weeks ago it looked as though the prospects of motoring in 1924 would be defined quite clearly by now. In the interval, however, there has been a general election with most puzzling results in regard to its effects on industry and life in general; the consequence in regard to motoring is a decidedly unsettled outlook. The new year opens with car prices unprecedentedly low when the equipment provided for an inclusive sum is had in mind. With regard to raw material the tendency is distinctly towards a rise in costs, but even if they were stationary it would be impossible to repeat British-made cars of the cut-price type at current figures, for they are practicable only because the manufacturer has no regard to making a profit on the accessories with which his vehicle is equipped; wellnigh all of them are supplied at a loss of at least 10 per cent., some at very much more. It is not a healthy situation, but nevertheless one of which buyers may take advantage. In respect of design there is not much likelihood of any pronounced difference until the autumn. Whether there is to be any really notable development will depend entirely on the extent of the world's trade in motor cars in the interval. We have reached a stage at which British tyre enterprise is on its last legs. Unless something can be done for it we shall lose that key industry. It is the only one which is marketing its goods at approximately one-third of pre-war costs. This figure is arrived at by noting that a corded type cover and tube of any renowned make, British or foreign, can be bought to-day for approximately the price of a pre-war canvas cover and tube. But the mileages of which to-day's types are capable are a minimum of three as great, and in many cases with at all reasonable driving five times as great, as was possible with any type of cover before the war. As we no more have perpetual punctures on the road the gain is even more than a minimum of three times the service.

CONTENDING MOTOR FUEL THEORIES.

Petrol has fallen in price. One school of thought within and without the oil world holds that the prices of motor fuel and of lubricants will tend to decrease during the coming year. Against that there is another school which holds that these prices must rise. At the turn of the year the price of Pennsylvania crude, which has been falling since the early months of 1923, has suddenly begun to be hoisted up. Certainly the production situation in America is being got in hand by the controlling but rival interests. Against that such an extraordinary amount of independent oil exploration has been pushed forward in other parts of the world that it will be impossible for any one country to keep down supplies to the extent which will raise prices permanently. Contrariwise, there cannot be an indefinite run of very low priced fuel and lubricating oils. With such a prospect the big controlling interests would combine to save themselves the cost of exploring for new oil at a time when it would not pay them to find it. Instead they would go into the open market and buy other people's productions while prices are low, because the big people alone have the world-wide marketing organizations.

Considering what cars will do nowadays, alike in the way of acceleration, of hill-climbing, and point-to-point travel at a given speed, with a given load on a gallon of fuel, the average petrol bill at current prices is not greater than before the war, and the performance from a pint of petrol is better for the sufficient reason that much improvement has been made in carburation, engine efficiency, and even in transmission. Current prices of fuel are approximately what they were when war broke out; but that figure included 3d. a gallon by way of a petrol tax. In America the motoring public never buys a car because its petrol consumption is alleged to be low. It is impossible, however, to foretell definitely whether there will be a further drop in the price of fuel. It is at least clear that one current phase of the business will be detrimental to the user unless he is made master of the intricacies of it. All over the world big and little oil distributors buy what are

called "parcels" of oil. Of course the big buyers take the pick because they have the means of disposing of the largest quantities and facilities for refining. They know besides exactly where they can "place" each "parcel" they buy. Therefore, at the Gulf, for example, there are permanent representatives of all the big rival combinations who between them take the best of what is offered and leave the rest. Further, even when these big buyers take the best the material is often re-refined. When it reaches this country in particular such motor spirit is nearly always re-refined by the big houses.

THE MYSTERIOUS SIDE OF MOTOR SPIRIT DEALING.

What, therefore, becomes of the residue? Again, what becomes of such parcels of motor spirit, and of lubricating oils, as the biggest buyers do not want because each is not up to the standard they require? What, moreover, becomes of the big producers' surpluses? These vast organizations not merely buy and distribute: many of them own great numbers of wells. But they do not like to retail under their own names any lubricating oil or motor spirit which is not up to the quality they have set for their standard. America even deliberately exports any amount of this stuff, for her public is sufficiently educated to refuse to use it. England is one of the biggest dumping grounds in the world for this class of oil. It is bought here by all sorts of people, not one of whose names is known to the public: very few are known even to the trade. They are odd jobbers of sorts. How they dispose of their purchases has been a mystery.

When buying motor fuel at installations it is advisable to ascertain by cross-questioning whether the fuel is absolutely what it purports to be. In this country a mistake in policy has been made. Here the retailer is more or less owner of his own pump. In the United States of America no such policy has been allowed. The big brand vendors of fuel themselves own all such installations and set them up, charging the retailers a nominal rent for the plant—generally about a dollar a year. This enables the vendor of brand fuel to keep the keys and to have entire charge of such plant. Therefore he is in a position himself to guarantee that what the buyer gets through the retailer is what it purports to be. At least the buyer knows who is the actual supplier. In this country that is not possible, but by cross-examination it is often possible to induce retailers to admit if there has been any tampering with the plant. Prosecutions to this end have had an effect. But if the individual does not want to take trouble in regard to that, he can ask for the certificate (or bill) of the last date of delivery from the wholesaler. Some of these installations have places where certificates are placed by the wholesaler. If the certificate is of recent date it may be taken for granted that the fuel is what it purports to be.

NAMELESS "No. 1."

But there is another class of installation which is beginning to make its appearance about the country and may be regarded as in most cases doubtful. This is a type of kerbside plant with no mention of any brand of petrol, but merely bearing the legend "No. 1 Petrol" or "No. 1 Motor Spirit." In point of fact there is no such thing as No. 1 motor spirit as far as an official or Government definition is concerned. No. 1 motor spirit is merely the best class for car service that the various brand makers see fit to market. With the competition that exists between them the quality is such that No. 1 spirit has come to signify in the public mind first-class motor car fuel; whereas in point of fact it may signify that only when associated directly with a brand which has established itself in public esteem in virtue of the quality of the petrol supplied by the wholesaler over a term of years. No. 1 brand without a name attached to it may be good motor spirit; but it may be anything but that. It is even within my knowledge that out of one of these anonymous No. 1 installations a good tankful of motor spirit may be got one day and next week about as bad a tankful as possible. The explanation lies in the fact that an odd parcel was offered cheap to the retailer by one of these subterranean dealers, and it chanced to be good fuel; and the next parcel that came along had been bought from

an entirely different source and was very different fuel. In other words, there is no guarantee of continuity of supplies of a given quality. It is no more satisfactory to motorists in the sense of making for efficiency, cleanliness, economy, and so forth, than is the principle of going to a garage and asking for a particular brand of lubricating oil and being told that it is not in stock, but, "Here is some very good stuff we have of about the same thickness." Garage hands throughout the country in general have not learnt that viscosity has very little to do with lubricating efficiency. Many mechanics are satisfied only when they put something about as thick as glue into a back axle. It has been demonstrated by scientific experiment during the last two or three years that our whole previous theory and practice of lubrication were wrong. We are using now on the most highly stressed constructions relatively very thin oils, and we are keeping the parts adequately lubricated and burning very little of such oils, so that the parts are being kept clean.

A POSSIBLE REDUCTION OF THE H.-P. TAX.

During this year we are likely to have bills dealing not merely with the urgent problem of traffic regulation, but also with motor taxation. The latter would be a certainty were the Government to continue in office, but as things are the future is problematical. It is fully expected that the Committee on Motor Taxation will issue its report during the present year. Probably an attempt will be made to get it out before the Budget. Without entering into the region of prophecy, it may be taken as certain that no recommendation will be made for a tax on motor fuel, the evidence presented to the Committee in proof of the difficulties and impracticability of such a scheme being overwhelming. But it may be assumed that the Committee will almost certainly recommend a reduction in the scale of taxation, because the present duty was imposed with the intention of yielding a maximum of £8,000,000 a year, and £14,000,000 has been actually levied during the twelve months now concluded. A minimum of 2s. 6d. in the pound off the horse-power tax must be urged. But a great impetus would be given to the movement, and no revenue would be lost to the Exchequer, if there were a reduction of 25 per cent., and 15s. were substituted for £1 per horse-power. Any such proposal would be conditioned by the fact that there must be no falling off of revenue in the first year in which the new scheme would come into operation, but a great impetus would be given to motoring. After the transition year the rate of increase of revenue would be so rapid as to yield a much greater sum than if the tax were maintained at its present rate, or even reduced merely by 2s. 6d. in the £. Another point on which it may be taken for granted that the evidence shows that we have been working on the wrong lines is in regard to the vexatious Registration Book, which is useless. Another point that it may be hoped will be recommended urgently is to allow car licences for twelve months to be taken out on any day; incidentally, this would distribute, and therefore reduce, the amount of labour necessary for the issue of car licences.

PROSPECTS IN REGARD TO TRIALS.

In regard to trials of motor cars of the type which is at all likely to interest medical men, it may be mentioned that the arrangement arrived at before the war, and adhered to since, is that reliability trials of the six days' 1,000 miles sort on the road should be conducted in alternate years by the Royal Automobile Club in England and in Scotland by the Royal Scottish Automobile Club. This is the turn of the Royal Automobile Club, which has drawn up a scheme for a small car trial on the road in England during the summer. It can do no more than offer such a test. The question is whether the industry and trade desire such an opportunity. Very often these things are found rather to upset than to encourage trade. Often they are used as a last gamble by firms and dealers which have scarcely a pound left in the bank. They run a car in a trial because the big makers see no necessity to put their machines through such a test. Some of these outsiders with relatively indifferent "stuff" come out comparatively well and so manage to keep going on the strength of sales resulting from such a cheap advertisement. In other words, if first-class trials lack the

support of all the responsible members of the trade because they do not want them, then they fail to serve the public purpose because they give an entirely misleading idea of the relative merits of the given vehicles, inasmuch as the best class is not represented in such a competition. Therefore it will be interesting to note what attitude the organized trade takes in regard to the suggestion that will be made to it of holding a small car reliability and efficiency trial this summer.

Noba et Vetera.

JOHN MEMIS, M.D.

A PROTAGONIST OF OBSTETRIC TEACHING.

On January 18th, 1775, James Boswell received from Samuel Johnson a presentation copy of the *Journey to the Hebrides*, which he read at a sitting, "though ill of a bad cold," and though the task kept him up most of the night. Within a few hours the letter of thanks was penned, and in it the writer proceeds to ask the great man for "immediate aid in my profession." Then follows a short sketch of the action raised by Dr. Memis of Aberdeen against the managers of the Royal Infirmary there. The case was a singular one, and as it is here presented almost a silly one, but it interested Johnson and roused him into unwonted activity. His reply has been preserved as well as the more considered opinion he dictated in the succeeding May. Finally, on February 14th, 1777, Boswell describes to the Doctor how the action was decided by the court.

These facts are of course well known, for they are recorded in one of the world's great books. Thereby Memis has found fame, or rather an immortality of ignominy. But if the curious reader seeks further light on the man his quest will be vain. At least he is not likely to find anything in the ordinary works of reference. What follows may, therefore, be regarded as a footnote to *Boswell*, and as it refers to some little known aspects of Scottish medical history it may not be deemed out of place in these columns.

Notwithstanding Juliet's dictum, ordinary people will agree with Wilkes when he said: "There is something in names which one cannot help feeling. Now *Elkanah Settle* sounds so queer, who can expect much from that name?" And Byron was no less emphatic:

"Oh! Amos Cottle! Phœbus! what a name
To fill the speaking trump of future fame!"

The name Memis is unusual, perplexing, almost foreign in sound. Perhaps that is why it has been derived from the Des Mesmes, an old Béarnese stock, whereof a branch was transplanted to England, and gave, it is said, a governor to Berwick. Others have sought its origin in a territorial designation, a custom common in Scotland; and there was a farm called Memus or Memis in Tannadice in Forfar. All that is certain is that at this period there were a few individuals of the name domiciled in Aberdeen and vicinity. Not undistinguished either. One, an Episcopalian minister at Stonehaven, was a great botanist and taught that subject at Aberdeen, where he set up a botanic garden in 1780. Another, at a later date, was appointed librarian of Marischal College while an undergraduate, became LL.D. when scarce out of his teens, and after being rector of Ayr Academy finally joined the ministry. The surviving members of the family migrated to Australia, and all recollection of them seems to have died out in the Granite City. Even the pronunciation of the name remains uncertain.

John Memis was born about 1720, probably in Aberdeen, where his father, Robert, was a wheelwright and burghess. In the matriculation roll for the class, 1734-38, the name of John appears as entering Marischal College with a Guild Bursary. He failed, or at least did not proceed to graduate. For more than twenty years thereafter his career can be traced only through the mists of conjecture. We must assume that somewhere and at some time he passed apprenticeship with a surgeon. His own words are voucher that he

studied midwifery under Thomas Young in Edinburgh. He probably had been for some years in practice before becoming a burghess of Aberdeen (May 7th, 1757), and he is described on the roll as "Chirurgus."

About this time he began a class for midwives, and felt the necessity of obtaining that full status in his profession which he had attained as a citizen. It is likely that he had attended medical classes at Marischal College. At all events it was to that body that he applied to be admitted M.D. His petition was refused. At St. Andrews he was more fortunate and the degree was conferred upon him (May 6th, 1765) "upon testimonials from Dr. James Forbes and Dr. Andrew Burnet in Aberdeen."*

Later on in the same year, 1765, he published in London a small volume giving the substance of his teaching in midwifery. The title-page is long enough to be explicit, and yet in one respect it was misleading.

The Midwife's Pocket-Companion; or A Practical Treatise of Midwifery on a New Plan containing full and plain directions for the Management and Delivery of Child-bearing Women in the different Cases, and the Cure of the several Diseases incident to them and new-born Children, in the safest Manner and according to the Best Improvements. Adapted to the Use of the Female as well as the Male Practitioner in that Art.

By John Memis, D.M.,
Of Marischal College, Aberdeen.

London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, near the Mansion House. MDCCCLXV. (12vo, pp. 234.)

It gave great offence to Marischal authorities, who forthwith inserted an advertisement in the *London Chronicle* to the effect that the author was not a graduate of their College and that in fact their degree had been refused to him. Memis apparently only intended to imply that he had studied at Marischal College, which, of course, was true. He was so satisfied as to his rectitude in this matter that the title-page was printed unchanged in the second edition, which appeared in 1786, and was published in Aberdeen. The notoriety thus given the book was unfortunate since the critics took advantage of it to amuse themselves at his expense and to belittle the work.

At this period Memis must have been in fairly comfortable circumstances. In addition to the expense involved in obtaining a degree and launching a book, he could afford to listen to the call of charity. In January, 1766, he gave a donation of £25 to the Aberdeen Infirmary, and the grateful committee added him to the list of managers.† He took his new duties seriously, attended meetings regularly, and on occasion presided. All was not well, however, for the minute of February 17th, 1767, records a complaint from one of the infirmary physicians that Memis had written a letter "wherein he disapproved very much of the General Dyet for this Infirmary, which was unanimously approved of by all the other Physicians." The record ends with these ominous words: "as Dr. Memis had formerly thrown out many reflections extremely ill founded and very prejudicial to the interests of the Infirmary and to the characters of the Physicians in Ordinary, . . . it is humbly submitted . . . to the first general Meeting to consider whether Dr. Memis deserves to be expelled or continued as a Director."

What happened is not known, for the minutes are silent. At all events Memis was not expelled and was still a manager when the Infirmary received its Royal Charter in 1773. It was the translation of this document into English which brought about the famous lawsuit. Memis objected to the way in which he was therein designated, and as the managers refused to meet his views he raised an action for damages against them. The case calls for detailed examination, which it will receive on another occasion. Here it is enough to say that Memis lost the suit and was called upon to pay £40 towards the defenders' expenses. Even with this help the Infirmary had to bear a net loss of £100, so that the cost to the plaintiff must have been well over £200. But he, at least, had been fighting for a principle, while the managers

* For these facts we are indebted to the courtesy of J. Maitland Anderson, Esq., University Librarian, St. Andrews.

† Thanks are due to the present managers for permitting their records to be examined, and to Mr. Finney, their clerk, for the time and trouble involved in the search.