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guided in his decision by what is best for the child, rather than by what will cause him least trouble, as suggested by Mrs. "A."

Finally Mrs. "A" asks whether she should change her doctor; the answer to this is, "yes." No doctor would wish to look after a patient who has so little confidence in his ability and integrity.

"Country Doctor."

Cheshire.

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SIR,—Your anonymous correspondent Mrs. "A" reveals all too well one of the difficulties of the N.H.S. She called her doctor nine times in one year for ailments which were, on her own admission, trivial.

In my own practice of some 3,500 patients this would amount to over 27,000 new calls each year; that is roughly 550 each week in a widespread rural area (incidentally, not Mrs. A's, I trust). Under conditions like this prescribing becomes a hit and miss affair.

May I tell Mrs. "A" of one patient who called me out for her daughters many times at night. At the end of my first year in practice, I estimated that if all patients had called me as much at night as she I would have had between 35,000 and 36,000 night calls; in fact I would never have gone to bed at all. I laid my statistical analysis

G.P.'s fault that he is forced, often against his better judgment, to submit such patients for a second opinion and/or X-ray or other special examination. The patient had demanded it and the doctor, forced to rush his examinations, dared not refuse.

It would probably be true to say at the present time that of medical out-patients seen in a big hospital at least one-fifth, and possibly more, have nothing organically wrong with them at all or suffer from quite trivial complaints.

If those amorallists who misuse the Medical Services by making unfair demands upon them would pause to think that by their greed and selfishness they are depriving others of restoration to health and even of life, the situation could still be saved. Bad habits are infectious and this particular infection is virulent and spreading.

P. C. M.

Address given.

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Translators' Trials

SIR,—The words "Les traductions sont comme les femmes," etc., have been attributed to Rabelais; but where in his works they occur I have never discovered.

Reginald Spink.

Ruislip.

who has been cutting suits and fitting them on customers for fifty years tells me, "you may take it for fact that the normal person is deformed twice. His left leg is longer than his right one and his right arm is longer than his left."

"If you knew the number of times," he went on, "that I have taken a pair of 'breaks' up to our workshop, borrowed a tailor's iron and what we call a 'damp rag' and corrected what a client thought was a fault by shrinking the right leg as required, you'd be surprised."

We seem to be a thoroughly lopsided lot. Can any reader explain?

Henry Longhurst.

Hassocks.

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Doctors of Divinity

SIR,—I cannot let slip this opportunity of actually answering one of your readers' queries. The R.L.S. quotation sought by Mr. Wallace is "every man is his own doctor of divinity in the last resort" and it occurs in "An Inland Voyage," at the end of that superb paragraph beginning "I find I never weary of great churches" in the chapter on Noyon Cathedral.

Paul Jennings.

East Bergholt.

William H. Gill.
London, S.W.7.

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Gogol

SIR,—Although I have long understood Gorki to have been the author of the remark "We are all descended from Gogol's 'The Overcoat,'" it is quite possible that I am mistaken and that the phrase was really Turgenyev's.

Mr. Zekulin is, however, at fault in supposing that Chekhov was praising Gogol's short story "The Carriage" and not "The Marriage," his play. The reference in Constance Garnett's translation of Chekhov's letters (page 121) is perfectly clear. "His 'Marriage' alone is worth two hundred thousand roubles," Chekhov wrote, and then went on to say: "In 'The Inspector General' the first act is the best, in 'The Marriage' the third act is the worst," thus leaving no doubt that he was referring to the play.

It is, of course, quite possible that he admired "The Carriage," too.

H. E. Bates.

Ashford, Kent.

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An Elizabethan Menu

SIR,—I solicit the aid of your gourmet readers, especially those of an historical turn of palate, in the composition of an unusual menu.

As a part of the Harvey Tercentenary Celebrations organised by the Harveian Society, the town of Folkestone will on June 8 be giving a civic banquet in honour of distinguished British and foreign

The Great Mystery

SIR,—After stating "that survival has not been scientifically proved" (his italics), Dr. W. E.

The Editor thanks those scores of readers who con-

as though there were no question about it, that papists are bigots, or that protestants are, that Charles II was "not a good man" and