

## Letters, Notes, and Answers.

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### QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

#### LEAD SALTS IN CANCER.

COLONEL G. F. ROWCROFT (Bangalore) writes: I have received several issues of the JOURNAL since that for November 28th, 1925, containing (p. 1040) Dr. G. C. Belcher's note on the use of lead for cancer, but so far no one has remarked on the dose he advocates,  $\frac{1}{2}$  grains daily for a week, and then twice the amount, which he describes as "heroic doses." I can hardly imagine that  $\frac{1}{2}$  grains would have much effect.

#### ENLARGED VEINS ON THE CHEST IN CHILDREN.

DR. J. LEWIS THOMAS (Newport, Mon.) writes: Can we depend upon the presence of enlarged veins in the infraclavicular region as an aid to diagnosis between cardiac disease and tuberculosis, when signs and symptoms, together with the radiograph, give uncertain testimony? The von Pirquet test, with repeated negative results in such cases, warrants a decision in favour of the former; and this has been supported by the history of patients during school age and adolescence. In the congeries of venules in the suprascapular regions we have a different and less definite picture.

#### "JOGRAJ."

DR. J. D. DHURV (London), with reference to the inquiry printed on December 26th, 1925 (p. 1252), writes to say that this preparation is used for chronic inflammatory swellings. He is not sure whether it contains iodine, but it contains some Indian herbs, and its chief constituent is a gum resin. The original formula can be found in *Sarangdhar Samhita*, a classical Sanskrit pharmaceutical book.

### LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

#### BURNS FOLLOWING THE USE OF INFLAMMABLE HAIR COMBS.

DR. T. STENNER EVANS (Fochriw, Glamorgan) writes: The letters published recently in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL on this subject prompt me to place on record an account of a similar case. Some months ago I was called to see a young woman whose scalp had been severely burnt. Her relations stated that she had been standing near a fire whilst rubbing into her hair an alcoholic lotion. She then fixed into her hair some celluloid combs, which almost immediately burst into flame. Her hair and scalp were severely damaged before the relatives could remove the combs. The scalp has now healed, but there remains a large adherent painful scar, in which nearly all the hair follicles are destroyed, and on which, consequently, very little hair is likely to grow. The increasing number of such accidents serves to accentuate the danger of wearing inflammable hair combs, and, in my view, the manufacture of such articles should be strictly prohibited.

#### TREATMENT OF VARICOSE VEINS.

DR. J. NISSEN DEACON (London), whose previous letter appeared on September 26th, 1925 (p. 588), writes further with reference to the Bagnolles treatment of varicose veins:—I have since had experience of the home treatment for women, which is as follows:

Having visited the spa in June or July, the patient waits until September or October, and then lies quietly and completely submerged in a bath almost full of water at 97° F., to which has been added 20 oz. of sodium bicarbonate and 4 oz. of alum. The bath is taken twice a week before breakfast and lasts for twenty minutes. For half an hour after the bath she lies flat, and breakfast in bed follows, the rest being continued for an hour or so afterwards. For the ten days following the termination of the menses 10 minims of a 1 in 1,000 solution of adrenaline are taken by the mouth before breakfast, lunch, and dinner (I have seen this cause indigestion, and believe oral administration to be useless). For the next ten days the patient takes phlebosine fem. (H. Carrion and Co., Paris), one tablet before lunch and dinner. This is a polyglandular product containing small amounts of thyroid and other extracts (personally, I prefer hormotone: Carrick). During the menses baths and all medications cease. This course is continued for three months, alternating with a period of two months' cessation of treatment, so that by the time the patient is due to return to Bagnolles she will have completed two courses and two rest periods. During alternate months, and irrespective of "courses" and "rests," she must gently and centripetally massage her legs at night when in bed. Hot-water bottles must be put out of the bed when entering it. When sitting the leg should be supported by a low padded stool; special stools are sold in Bagnolles. In subthyrotic and vagotonic women I have seen definite improvement in the general condition follow this régime, although the veins may appear unaffected. This is probably due to stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system by the thyroid extract. The detail of such a "cure" doubtless impresses some patients, who feel better in consequence of knowing that something is being done. If the administration of thyroid is controlled, and withheld when necessary, the "cure" can do no harm, and almost becomes an occupation for leisured people!

#### POTASSIUM CHLORATE IN CANCEROUS ULCERATION.

DR. T. M. ALLISON (Newcastle-on-Tyne) writes: In carcinoma the pain appears to be due to one of two causes—pressure or ulceration. For the pain of pressure morphine alone seems to give relief; but for the pain and sepsis of ulceration, in any part of the body, may I suggest the use in large quantities of potassium chlorate? By large quantities I mean doses starting with 10 grains three times a day and going up to the limit of tolerance. I have seen no ill effects from 50 grains or more three times a day in milk (sweetened) or in chloroform water. In some cases the results are striking. I have seen a case of cancer of the cervix with vaginal ulceration clear up in a remarkable way, the patient dying later of peritonitis, but the fetor, bleeding, and pain practically disappeared. In another case of inoperable cancer of the rectum, where the ulceration was verified *post mortem*, the patient was quite unconscious of anything but slight discomfort at times, and there was no septic absorption and no cachexia. If one can relieve pain and avoid sepsis, and convert death from distress into death from painless haemorrhage—as in the latter case—it is a step, if only a small one, in the welfare of the patient.

#### THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS.

MR. W. A. MAGGS (Northam, North Devon) writes: The delightfully written and lately published *Life of Keats*, by Amy Lowell, gives many details of the illness of this great poet. Keats, accompanied by his buoyant and devoted friend Severn, reached Rome on November 17th, 1820, and went into lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna. The following extract from the book mentioned may be interesting to your readers:

"... the landlady of the apartment, who had notified the police that a man with consumption was dying in her house. Long before the English doctors had found out that tuberculosis was a contagious disease the Italians were convinced of the fact, and by their law everything in the room occupied by a tuberculous patient, even to the very wallpaper, must, after his death, be burnt. Now both Severn and Dr. Clark thought it would cheer Keats up to move him from his bedroom to the sofa in the sitting room for a few hours. In the sitting room were his and Severn's few books, the hired piano, Severn's painting materials—in short, everything of value which the friends possessed. All these things would be destroyed if it came to the knowledge of the police that Keats had been carried into the room."

Keats died in these apartments on February 23rd, 1821, and the communication referred to was made a few weeks previously.

#### A DISCLAIMER.

DR. S. HARDY KINGSTON (Clifton, Bristol) writes to disclaim all responsibility for references in the public press to a meeting of the local Branch of the British Medical Association, in which his name occurs. The matter which appeared was published without any authority from him.

#### VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 37, 38, 39, 42, and 43 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 40 and 41.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 51.