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The

British Medical Journal

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.



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No. 3454.

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AURELIUS CORNELIUS CELSUS, WHO WROTE THE FIRST SKETCH OF THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF MEDICINE WHICH HAS COME DOWN TO US.—Without Celsus some of the most valuable medical works of the Ancients might have been lost. We are indebted to him for our knowledge of the Alexandrian School of Medicine, especially for an account of the pioneer work in surgery there achieved, and we should know little of the school of Asclepiades but for him. His book, *De Re Medicina*, was one of the first medical works to be printed at the Revival of Learning; it had a conspicuous effect upon medical practice down to the middle of the nineteenth century. It consists of eight books, the first four of which give an account of disease treated by diet and hygiene, while the last four deal with treatment by drugs and surgery. His account of heart disease was the earliest complete description and became the standard treatise on the subject. Celsus was probably not a member of the medical profession, though it is likely he had studied medicine in his general education and was physician to his own household. His historical sense, his power and independence of judgment, added to his personal experience, make his work one of the chief masterpieces of ancient medicine. As typical of his own attitude, the following comment may be cited: "It must be borne in mind that medicine is not an exact science, and apparently fully-established premises may, under special circumstances, prove false; speculation should occupy a prominent position in thought but not in actual practice." Down to his time, medical works had been written in Greek; Celsus wrote in Latin of such excellence that his works have been studied for their style alone. "I would bear something," proclaimed Dr. Johnson, "rather than that Celsus should be detected in an error." Celsus was the pioneer of scientific Latin.

Date: c. 25 B.C.—A.D. (?) 5

Leprosy with Syphilis

TRADE MARK 'HYPOLOID' BRAND

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Hermetically-sealed phials of 10 c.c., at 1/9 each

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Treatment by arsenical preparations as ordinarily employed for syphilis may aggravate the leprous condition, while hydnocarpus oil alone seldom affects the Wassermann Reaction, but 'AVENYL' has given promising results in these cases.

*(See Indian Journal of Medical Research,
October, 1926, page 291)*

Further particulars on application



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CHRONIC URTICARIA.

"J. B. S." writes: "Pruritus" should again examine the urine of his patient for sugar, with a specimen of high specific gravity. Not a large amount of sugar, but a small amount—say, 3 per 1,000—for which the "Char test" is the best. Treat the patient as a potential diabetic, perhaps by heredity. Cut off starch and sugar and give liquor ammonii acetatis to act on the skin. Consider also occupation.

RURAL WATER SUPPLIES.

In reply to Dr. D. M. Macdonald (Arnside, Westmorland), it may be stated that the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878, which is still current, places upon a rural sanitary authority the duty of seeing that every inhabited house in its area has a convenient and adequate supply of wholesome water, and empowers the rural sanitary authority to call upon an owner to provide such supply where requisite. If the owner fails to comply after statutory notices given the rural sanitary authority may itself provide the supply and recover expenses. These provisions, however, do not relieve the rural sanitary authority of its general duty under Section 51 of the Public Health Act, 1875, to provide its district or part of it with a wholesome water supply where necessary on health grounds. A rural sanitary authority is a rural district council—that is to say, the council of a union or portion of a union which is not in an urban district. The medical officer and the sanitary inspector of a rural district are officers, but not members, of the rural sanitary authority. It may be noted that, under the Local Government Act, 1894, a parish council itself, as distinguished from a rural district council, has certain water duties. It may utilize a well, spring, or stream, and provide facilities for obtaining water therefrom, but its borrowing powers are limited under statute and are subject to the consent of the parish meeting.

INCOME TAX.

Motor Car Transactions.

"P. G. S. C." bought a car in 1924, but found it unsuitable for his neighbourhood and sold it in the same year at a loss of £95, purchasing a heavier car for £310. The assessor allowed the £95 as an expense of the year 1924, but refuses the 20 per cent. depreciation allowance for 1926-27 unless the former allowance is cancelled.

** If we have gathered correctly the practice of the authorities on this point, the action of the assessor in question would not be supported by headquarters, seeing that there was no depreciation allowance in force until 1925-26. We suggest that our correspondent might point out that fact to the assessor, and if he still declines to make both allowances—which are obviously equitable—then that the full facts should be placed by letter before the Secretary, Inland Revenue, Somerset House, London.

Obsolescence Allowance for Car.

"A. B. C."—A touring car four-seater was bought in 1921 for £440 and sold in 1927 for £25. Depreciation (£41) was allowed for 1925-26 and £40 for 1926-27. A new car was bought from the same makers in 1927 for £265. What amount can be deducted for obsolescence?

** The amount is the cost of a touring four-seater of the same make in 1927 less (£25+£41+£40=) £106. That amount should be regarded as a professional expense of the year 1927.

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

ETIOLOGY OF CANCER.

DR. A. T. BRAND (Driffeld), referring to the letter by Dr. W. H. Fearis on Spengler's bacteriological theory of cancer (JOURNAL, February 12th, p. 305), protests against the term "theory" being used in connexion with the etiology of cancer, and asserts that the bacterial origin of this condition is a fact which was established by logical deduction long before it was proved by experiment and demonstration. He argues that the distribution of cancer through the entire vertebrate kingdom postulates a microbic origin, since a microbe can be the only possible universal agent, and he considers that the investigations of Dr. T. J. Glover (see *Epitome*, January 29th, para. 127) have defined this pleomorphic organism conclusively. He adds that Dr. Glover's work has been confirmed by Drs. Julian London and J. M. McCormack of Toronto and Dr. M. J. Scott of Montana, while Dr. J. Young of Edinburgh has independently isolated a pleomorphic organism from cancerous growths, and Dr. Gye of London has discovered a filter-passing organism from the same. Dr. Brand concludes that attempts to produce malignant disease by mechanical irritation are now obsolete and impossible, and that attention should be paid rather to the cancerous tissues themselves and to the cause of the natural or acquired immunity from this disease possessed by many people.

LABOUR AND THE PUERPERIUM COMPLICATED BY PNEUMONIA.

DR. L. MATHER (Lancaster) writes to record a case of severe complications during pregnancy and the puerperium with a satisfactory outcome. A woman, aged 32, the mother of three children, developed pleurisy and pneumonia in the later weeks of pregnancy. Labour started spontaneously and terminated naturally with the birth of a healthy male child, weighing

5 lb. 12 oz. For several days the woman was very ill, with extensive consolidation of the bases of both lungs, and, at the height of her illness, acute cholangitis supervened, with deep jaundice. The temperature fell to subnormal twenty-four hours later, resolution quickly followed in the consolidated lungs, and the jaundice gradually disappeared. The patient's convalescence was rapid and uninterrupted, and one month after her confinement she was apparently little the worse for her ordeal. The child also progressed favourably.

VOLUNTARY PULSE CONTROL.

DR. THOMAS LINDSAY (London, S.W.) refers to the statement that voluntary and conscious control of the radial pulse, though rare, is not unknown (*Epitome*, February 26th, 1927, para. 216), and calls attention to his description of aortic systolic murmurs (JOURNAL, May 13th, 1922, p. 759), when he wrote: "Many persons, by contracting their muscles, can obliterate the radial pulse." He adds that he can do this easily himself, and that his wife, while nursing during the war, frequently detected this ability in military patients.

LIFE ASSURANCE AND TUBERCULOSIS.

DR. ROBERT CARSWELL (Wandsworth, S.W.18) has sent us a letter suggesting that holders of a negative tuberculin test certificate should be accorded specially favourable terms for sickness and life assurance. "A negative test certificate, by which," Dr. Carswell continues, "I mean negative in the original sense of Koch, would at least indicate freedom from the risks of endogenous tuberculosis. Not only would this be an economically sound proposition from the insurance point of view, but the pressure of the insurance world in this direction would react favourably on the elimination of tuberculosis by promoting on the part of individuals a desire to belong to the 'tuberculosis-free herd.'"

** We referred this suggestion to Mr. Ferris-Scott, F.C.A., who is Secretary of the Medical Insurance Agency, as well as Financial Secretary and Business Manager of the British Medical Association. He writes:

"I have no knowledge as to the practical value of the suggestion Dr. Carswell makes, but there has been a movement for some considerable time towards the establishment of a practice by which every person holding a life assurance policy should submit to a medical examination every year. Attempts of this nature have been made with varying success in America and at least one, tentatively, in England. The advantage to the assured person should be fairly obvious; the advantage to the assurance company is the possibility that illness discovered by this thorough examination whilst in its early stages might be arrested and the claims experience of the company concerned thereby benefited. In practice, however, it has not been proved that the cost of paying adequately for these medical examinations would be recouped, nor is it certain that the average person would be willing to submit to a periodical medical examination at the behest of the assurance company. I should not care to say whether Dr. Carswell's suggestion would be an economical proposition, and I think that he is optimistic in so regarding it until he has made some suggestion as to the extent of the specially favourable terms to be granted. It might be economically sound if the specially favourable terms are 1 or 5 per cent. and the fee for the certificate only a few shillings, but such a fee would not be remunerative to the medical examiner. The proposition would not be economically sound if the specially favourable terms were 25 or 50 per cent. and the fee £3 3s.

"There is a class of life assurance which starts at an early age. I believe it is arguable, but I think an assurance company would accept the proposition, that a child of 12 or 15 might receive a negative certificate and develop tuberculosis at some time between 25 and 35. If I am correct in supposing that a person might receive a negative certificate at one period of his life, either before or after an attack, then it seems obvious that the assurance policy would have to be determinable or could be altered at the option of the assurance company, and the security of the assured's position would be severely damaged and confidence in life assurance shaken."

CORRECTION.

THE price of Daukes's *Barrier Charts for Health Officers*, which was reviewed in the JOURNAL of March 5th (p. 432), is 3s. 6d.—not 2s. 6d., as stated in the footnote to the review.

VACANCIES.

NOTIFICATIONS of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, and 49 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 46 and 47.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 95.

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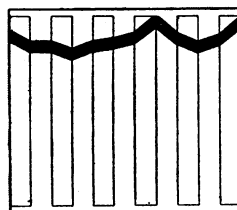
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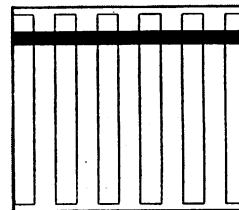
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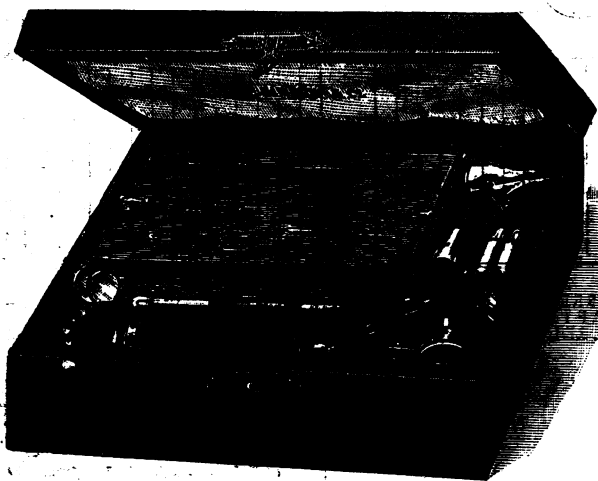


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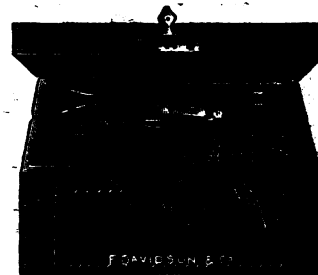
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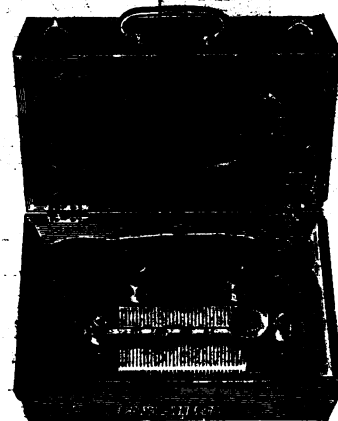
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