

LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

Diphtheria Immunization

Dr. C. H. FOLEY writes from Athenry, Co. Galway: The following cases may be of interest in relation to the question of diphtheria immunization. Last Christmas Day I was called to see a case of diphtheria of virulent form in a school child who had had three injections of T.A.M. in the previous September. The child's home was in a clean, well-kept, railway crossing cottage. Two other children had also been immunized, each with three injections of T.A.M. A fourth child had not been immunized, and I gave it 2,000 units of fresh diphtheria antitoxin, and also immunized the father and mother with similar doses of antitoxin. In the next two days a second child in that cottage, who had also received three injections of T.A.M. in September, developed diphtheria. This time I immunized the third child, who had also been given three injections of T.A.M., with antitoxic serum. It did not develop diphtheria. On February 3rd I was called, in the same area, to the well-kept home of a small farmer, who had five children. Four of these had each received three injections of T.A.M., also in September, three of them being school children. The eldest had a severe attack of diphtheria, and I immunized with serum the younger child and the mother and father. None of these children had got injections of T.A.M. from me. All patients were removed to hospital, and complete disinfection was carried out. A second child, who also had received three injections of T.A.M., developed diphtheria, and was seen by me yesterday; and I immunized with anti-diphtheria serum the two remaining children "protected" by three injections of T.A.M. in September. The diagnosis was confirmed in all but one case, the report on which is not yet to hand. I heard of a fifth—not in my area. Here is a country school in a healthy rural district, with a small average, say fifty children, all immunized with three injections of T.A.M., yet at least five, if not more, develop not mild but severe diphtheria. Does it matter really what we say when the public judges treatment by results? In defence of T.A.M. various reasons are given; but any one of these reasons would equally apply to the proper use of serum antitoxin. The manufacturers guarantee serum only if kept at a refrigerator temperature of 5° to 15° C. This applies also to anti-pneumococcus, anti-streptococcus, and anti-tetanus serum. Now as a general practitioner I am forced by circumstances to keep my serum in a drawer in a hall, but beneath a wall thermometer, at which I glance frequently. I dare say that there is no medical man to-day who can postulate a judgement on the value of this or that serum, or decide on the question of dosage, until the general practitioner can be informed as to how to keep serum safely stored (a) in his house or surgery, and (b) in his car, at a proper temperature.

Fungous Infection of Toes

"M.D." writes: I have suffered for many years from a fungous disease of the interdigital spaces of the feet, which has subsequently invaded the nails, and I obtained little or no benefit from the various methods of treatment in vogue. Experience has convinced me that the best treatment of the interdigital manifestations is to dip the toes in ordinary paraffin every day for a minute or two, putting on the socks with the toes still dripping with paraffin. It may be necessary to pare the nails should they have undergone thickening in order to facilitate access. The disease not infrequently spreads to the nails of the hands, and in such cases nothing acts more promptly and satisfactorily than paraffin, which, by the way, does not appear to irritate in the slightest. It may take several weeks to make a complete cure.

Cancer and Radium Water

"A. G." (Bathford) writes: The recent work of Professors Cook and Dodds on cancer, reported by the Medical Research Council, suggests a further investigation. These workers have observed the similarity in chemical structure that exists between certain carcinogenic substances and the sex hormone oestrin. "Synthetic compounds of this type, it is stated, have indeed been prepared which possess the power both of inducing tumour growth and of sex excitement." It is therefore thought that there may be some relation between the cell multiplication of normal pregnancy and that of malignant tumours. I suggest that trial might be made of feeding experimental animals on radium-impregnated water, in order to see whether sterility would result, or whether any inhibitory effect was thereby produced on the process of pregnancy. The question of the possible value in cancer of drinking radium emanation water is raised also by an experience of my own. Many years ago I took a course of such treatment for arthritis,

the only apparent result of which was the disappearance of a wart, which had been for some years on my finger. In view of the work of Dr. A. F. Watson (*Journal*, December 8th, 1934, p. 1062), which indicates that there may be a "possibility of experimentally modifying the susceptibility of tissues to the development of malignancy," it seems not impossible that radium may exert some chemical influence inimical to growths besides that of direct destruction of the cells. With the idea of bringing about some such change in the tissues as Dr. Watson describes, the drinking of radium water might be thought to be worth a trial to reinforce local treatment by radium; in inoperable cases, especially, as my friend Mr. A. Leech-Wilkinson suggests, in cancer of the stomach, and as a prophylactic measure against recurrence of the disease. The water I drank during a six weeks' course was obtained fresh daily from the Radium Institute, and was of "an average content of from 0.5 to 1 mc. of radon per litre."

Samples of Ergometrine

Mr. CHARLES ALEX. HILL (chairman and managing director, The British Drug Houses Ltd., Graham Street, N.1), in a letter dated April 1st, writes: The interest aroused by the recent announcement of the discovery of the new water-soluble solution of ergot—ergometrine—by Chassar Moir and Dudley will probably have made some obstetricians wishful to try the clinical use of a substance of such high promise. By the application of the published details of methods employed by the above-mentioned workers, the scientific staff of this company has already prepared some ergometrine with a view to its production on an industrial scale, and I write to state that a sample tube of tablets, each containing 0.5 mg. of ergometrine, will be sent without charge to any obstetrician who applies.

Boots Medical Products

Boots Pure Drug Co. Ltd. have published a pamphlet giving brief descriptions of the special medical products prepared in their laboratories. It has a useful thumb index for ready reference to the various preparations, and the general index on page 7 enumerates alphabetically the name of each product and indicates the page on which particulars are available. Copies will be sent to members of the medical profession on application to Boots Pure Drug Co. Ltd., Wholesale and Export Department, Station Street, Nottingham.

A Waiting Room Indicator

The L. C. Smith & Corona Typewriter Company have brought out a time-saving indicator for use in hospital out-patient departments. An interchangeable stencil is provided bearing the name of the doctor and the words "Next please." When a button is depressed in the surgery the patient waiting outside is called in by seeing the words on the panel. This device has been found a considerable improvement on the old type of bell-calling system.

A Bath for Small Dwellings

Representatives of the Ministry of Health, Board of Trade, L.C.C., several of the metropolitan boroughs, Members of Parliament, and others interested in housing and public health matters recently attended a demonstration at the Hotel Metropole, London, of a new type of bath for working-class dwellings. The bath, which is also a kitchen table, sink and draining board, wash basin and home laundry, is intended for old property in which there is no bathroom or for new property in which the provision of a separate room for a bath would be uneconomic. It is called the "five-purpose bath," and is sponsored by the International Bath Association, which includes 90 per cent. of the British manufacturers. It will be made by all the leading bath founders in England and Scotland. Apart from working-class houses, it is believed that the five-purpose bath may be useful for one-room flats, modern week-end bungalows, for nursery use, and in small middle-class houses as a second bath for the maid's use in kitchen or scullery.

Disclaimer

Dr. E. GRAHAM HOWE wishes to disclaim all responsibility for the misuse of his name which has taken place in certain advertising matter in the current number of *Psychic News*.

Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 62, and 63 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 60 and 61.

A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 144.