

# British Medical Journal

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gas or lamps? How many actual cases of fires or explosions have been recorded under these circumstances? Is the risk so great as to warrant the use of the—to the patient—more dangerous chloroform, in preference to the less dangerous, but more inflammable, ether? For over twenty years I have always used ether in midwifery, and have never had the slightest anxiety during its administration; it seems to be particularly well tolerated by the woman in labour. Now that the risk of fire or explosions has been brought forward so prominently one would like to have an authoritative ruling, which would settle the matter one way or the other.

#### Recurrent Nightmares

"R. C." writes in reply to "H. P. C." (February 8th, p. 294): In my practice I have had several cases such as you describe, and in each one of them the cause was found to be an unsuspected nasal sinusitis. The symptoms cleared up entirely when this was drained by the continuous non-operative methods suggested to me by Dr. Rosa Ford.

#### Priapism after Pruritus Ani

"A. M." writes: The case of priapism following pruritus ani (December 21st, 1935, p. 1240) is clearly of psychoneurotic origin. Each symptom separately is a typical neurotic one, and the change over from an anal to a genital manifestation is quite characteristic of neurosis. Psychotherapy is needed, but if the psychopathic diagnosis is put bluntly before the patient he will hotly deny it. The fact that he admits to a neurasthenia opens a means of approach. Suggest to him that a course of psychotherapy (preferably Freudian analysis) will ameliorate his neurasthenia and may perhaps cure the priapism.

#### Income Tax

##### Dividends from Abroad

"M. E." is a Canadian by birth, but has been in practice in England for fifteen years. He has Canadian investments bearing dividends, and brings money into this country from that source. Is he liable in both countries?

\*\* Yes. He is liable to assessment here on the amount of the dividends arising in Canada before deduction of the Canadian income tax. But from the amount of the United Kingdom tax he is entitled to claim a deduction calculated on the gross amount of the assessment at one-half his appropriate rate or at the Canadian rate, whichever is less. The inspector of taxes is entitled to make assessments for the current and previous six financial years.

### LETTERS, NOTES, ETC.

#### Foreign Body in Child's Heart

Drs. T. T. W. EATON and W. MULHALL CORBET (Canvey Island, Essex) write: We are aware of the incredible nature of this case, but feel impelled to place on record what we believe to be an occurrence unique in the annals of pathology. A female child was born at term to a primipara, who had an uneventful gestation and a normal labour. The child appeared normal in every way, but died suddenly some hours after birth. A post-mortem was ordered, and the examination was carried out with the most meticulous care by one of us (T. T. W. E.) in the presence of the other, whose case it was, there being no professional connexion between us. Nothing of importance was observed until the heart was removed and dissected with a scalpel and a pair of unplated surgical scissors. On opening the right ventricle a small bright object was seen lying free within the cavity. It was a little piece of metal resembling brass or gilded tin, a circlet of sorts, folded upon itself, with regular serrations along its edge and measuring roughly 3 by 2 mm. It looked something like the claw setting of a toy jewel ring. We emphasize that there was no possibility of its having been dropped by one of us as we leaned over the heart, or of its having come from one of the instruments used, or of its having been picked up from the post-mortem table. We naturally examined all these possibilities critically before ruling them out. The explanation of its presence which is forced upon us by the process of exclusion seems as fantastic as the discovery itself, but we would welcome any alternative suggestions. It seems that the foreign body must have been lying in the mother's uterus at the time of conception, and the growing ovum enfolded it so that it finally came to be where it was found. Then when the placental circulation ceased and the child's heart "took over" it caused some momentary disturbance of the circulation, which produced syncope and death.

#### Prevention of Premature Burial

We have received for publication the following letter signed by Major R. F. E. AUSTIN, R.A.M.C. (ret.), Dr. JANE HAWTHORNE, Dr. J. LACHLANE-COPE, and others: The Society for Prevention of Premature Burial, founded in 1896, has for its object the reform of the law relating to the granting of death certificates. Until the beginning of this year the society existed as an independent body, but it is now affiliated with the Council for the Disposition of the Dead Inc., one of whose basic objects is the revision of the codification of the laws relating to death. The council now has in hand a Bill for the registration of funeral directors. This affiliation has a twofold purpose: (1) the machinery necessary for the reform is strengthened, and (2) overlapping is eliminated. But the internal policy and expenditure of the Society for Prevention of Premature Burial continues, and while informing the public of this affiliation we would like to take this opportunity of seeking further interest and support. Funds and increased membership are earnestly desired. All inquiries should be addressed to the Secretary, Society for Prevention of Premature Burial, 30, Castelnau Gardens, Barnes, S.W.13.

#### Pipe Preservation

Dr. F. WILLIAM COCK (Appledore, Kent), in response to numerous inquiries from those who read his letter (February 1st, p. 242), gives the following advice on how to prolong the life of a good tobacco pipe: (1) Have three or four pipes in use. (2) Never recharge a hot pipe. (3) Keep two ounces of spirits of chloroform in a stoppered phial (*N.B.*, corks stick); it is better than either spirit or chloroform alone. Also have at hand a penny bundle of cotton-on-wire cleaners, an old but serviceable pair of Spencer Wells forceps, and a slightly vaselined rag. (4) Scrape out charcoal *lightly* when layer has got too thick at mouth, but never scrape to show wood underneath charcoal; treat your friend kindly. (5) Pass cleaner down to bottom of bowl, dip free end in spirits of chloroform, catch hold of bowl, and pull through. Repeat if very foul. Blow through, wait five minutes, and you have a clean, sweet pipe. If outside of bowl is dulled by spirits wipe over with the vaselined rag.

#### Disclaimer

Dr. D. THOMSON writes: I beg on behalf of my brother, Dr. Robert Thomson, Mr. E. T. Thompson, and myself to disclaim any responsibility for the publicity in the lay newspapers which has recently appeared with regard to ourselves and our work. This has arisen, of course, from our article on oral vaccines which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of February 8th. We have been pestered by the Press, but have refused any interviews with them on the matter, in spite of the fact that many representatives have called upon us. It would appear that the interest taken by the lay press in colds and influenza is so great that it is almost dangerous now for a doctor to publish an article on the subject except in some obscure medical journal. Dr. Robert Thomson's photograph appeared in an evening newspaper without his knowledge or permission.

#### Corrigenda

##### Treatment of Gastritis

Owing to a mishap in the printing department the three last lines at the end of the paragraph headed "Treatment of the Cause" in the article by Dr. S. W. Patterson entitled "Treatment of Acute and Chronic Gastritis" (February 8th, p. 272), and the three last lines in the right-hand column of the same page were incorrectly printed. The first should have read: "The patient's habits in regard to alcohol and tobacco may need correction. Smoking before meals and alcohol on an empty stomach should be forbidden." The second should have read "the acidity of the gastric juice and the general character of the gastric secretion does not therefore come much into consideration. The meals should be small and rather dry, a little fluid being . . ."

Dr. GEORGE CHESNEY wishes to correct an error in his article on "Alum-Precipitated Toxoid in Diphtheria Immunization," which appeared in the *Journal* of February 1st (p. 208). In the last line but one of the second paragraph "a single dose of 0.1 c.cm." should read "a single dose of 1 c.cm."

#### Vacancies

Notifications of offices vacant in universities, medical colleges, and of vacant resident and other appointments at hospitals, will be found at pages 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, and 59 of our advertisement columns, and advertisements as to partnerships, assistantships, and locumtenencies at pages 56 and 57. A short summary of vacant posts notified in the advertisement columns appears in the *Supplement* at page 76.