

Health and Home.

[BY DR. ROBERT WATSON.]

IS IT THE CANCER CURE?

To a symposium of views on the three greatest achievements of the year 1913 certain famous folk contributed their opinion that the discovery of radium's power to cure cancer was one of the three notable things. Evidently there exists a widespread belief that radium possesses this virtue for which the world has waited centuries in a state of noble impatience. You see it insinuated in newspapers day by day. Institutions are founded and completed in the glorious expectation. The world sings in the ear of every victim. But now, with years of experience to base a fair judgment upon, can we say that radium is the cure for cancer? It is a bold and finally that we have at last got hold of the cure for cancer? The matter is no mere adventure of 1913. In January of 1909 it was announced that a British Radium Institute was to be founded, at the suggestion of King Edward VII. In the autumn of the same year the first radium factory was established at Limehouse, under the supervision of Sir William Ramsay. Even then the use of radium as a treatment for cancerous tumours was well under way. So to ask the question and, pending a clear and definite answer, to consider as premature the hopeful expressions of our symposiasts is to brand one's self as a cruel cynic. To my mind there is no question more cruelly in fostering, nay, booming, a belief for which the foundations are still to seek.

WHERE RADIUM STANDS.

Sir Alfred Pearce Gould opens with references to some cases where radium has undoubtedly (as far as skilled eyes can trace events) cured dangerous cancers. He shows that in these cases radium appeared able to pick out the tumour cells for special attention, removing the growth without doing it in bulk, and doing this work without injury to neighbouring healthy tissues.

He then details the risks to the patient—of destruction of pieces of diseased and healthy tissue (with dangerous, even fatal, consequences); of the formation of blood-clots, which may lead to death or serious symptoms; of bleeding; and of an amount of constitutional disturbance which may threaten life. Certain of these risks, he points out, can be eliminated as experience teaches where and how these risks lurk.

Afterwards he summarises the limitations of this method of treatment. A growth may occupy the liver or the spine, and be beyond the reach of radium; or it may develop in a tissue like the intestine or the stomach or bladder, too frail to stand the direct emanations of such uncertain, such deconstructive power, as those of radium. Also growths liable to be attended by numerous secondary growths (in which the seed, as it were, is sprinkled soon and far through the body, to make new tumours), do not benefit notably by radium. He expresses here his distrust of treatment by what is known as "radium water." And he calls attention to the fact that the area influenced by radium appears "to be very variable and often quite limited," while the same dose of radium applied in exactly the same way to two patients, which to the expert appear identical may cure one and either have no effect upon the other or actually seem to make it worse.

AND THE VERDICT.

The conclusion to which Sir Alfred Pearce Gould comes is that "in radium we have an agent that in many cases can be used in the treatment of cancer with great hope of success, and that the selective action upon cancer cells marks it out from all other known remedies for this disease; but it would be a gross exaggeration to speak of radium as the 'cure for cancer' if the case that it will deal with and every case. . . . There is good ground for hope that in the time, which will surely come, when we shall unravel the secret of the nature of cancer, and how to use them better and to control them, we shall have a great extension of the therapeutic value of radium in cancer."

An interesting sidelight upon the foregoing is contained in a paragraph dealing with the question of the advisability of using radium as an alternative to operation. Sir Arthur, with some diffidence, puts operation first wherever the cancer and such glands as may have received dangerous material from it can be cleanly and certainly removed by the knife. "We do not yet know that even the radium deals satisfactorily with the primary growth. It would prevent the usual developments of these metastases, while we do know that a careful and wide operation affords a very good prospect of setting our patient free from the disease. In cases of this kind, operation is known to be unsatisfactory, radium is desirable, he says.

AFTER-THOUGHTS.

It ought to be obvious that a treatment so uncertain in its effects, and so destructive, is in the present state of our knowledge, very far from being anything like even a rational method of dealing with a problem so grave as cancer. To hail the odd chance of cure as the goal of all our searchings, and the event of 1913, is surely cruel satire.

And the end is not yet. You will travel very far in the profession before you find a hundred surgeons so sanguine of the effects to be attained through the use of radium. In Germany there is a strong feeling that with X-rays you can achieve what is possible with radium, and already the scope of the rays has been gauged as very circumscribed. Then many surgeons consider that the only way to derive the full curative value from a dose of radium is to enclose it in a case of glass, silver, or platinum containing the precious dose for a period of twenty-four or more hours. But this is to incur grave risks. Time again one sees and hears of cases in which such an incision has been the means of setting free in the blood-stream enough lively cancer cells to sow the disease far and wide in the body, and hasten the end of the patient. Operation is undertaken for, say, a growth in the breast; it is so free from signs of malignancy that the surgeon doubts whether he is justified in making a total amputation of the breast, and to confirm matters he cuts into the diseased tissue first; a look suffices to prove it cancer; he rapidly takes away all the gland, and an lymphatic gland is likely to be implicated, but, faster than he can work in blood vessels to regions he cannot reach, and the end is failure and a miserable death.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"Cinema" (Oidham).—See local doctor with view to vaccine injections to eradicate boils. "Chilly" (Horson) and "F. H." (Norwich).—Live on vegetarian diet for two months, keep bowels regular, wear flannel, dusted with sulphur around back, and take (gr. of aceto-salicylic acid at bedtime until pain goes.

"A.H." (Mouthbeire).—Take one Bland and arsenic tablet three times daily after food for some weeks; and apply to light to build up a healthy complexion of equal parts of red oxide of mercury ointment and vaseline, stopping it scalp infamies.

"W. N." (Falls-worth).—Hints appear regularly. "Maurine."—Time will cure.

Letters relating to this column should be addressed to Dr. Robert Watson, c/o White-frars House, Carmelite-street, London, E.C. Please note: No infantile ailments, acute cases, surgical or skin troubles, or anything that needs seeing can be advised on.

ACCRINGTON DISTRICT.

FIVE AND THIRTY YEARS AGO.

[BY "OLD HAND."]

The older end will recall the Rev. Thomas Farmer Collins, an active little gentleman with a will of his own, which sometimes brought him into friction with parishioners, and who was appointed rector of Church Kirk 35 years ago, on the death of the Rev. J. Birchall. Mr. Collins was M.A., Brasenose College, Oxford, and was a Hulse exhibitioner, having taken high honours. He took his B.A. in 1859, and M.A. in 1862; was ordained deacon in 1861, and priest in the following year. He had been curate of Goldington, Northampton, and of Tring, Herts., and rector of that parish in 1868, when he came to Church Kirk. His first curacy dates for the living of Church Kirk, which at that period, it was stated, was worth about £1,000 a year.

Mr. Edward Rostron won Haslingden Gun Club's silver cup 35 years ago, the other competitors being Messrs. Young Greenwood, Thomas Warburton, and William Waddington.

At the third anniversary gathering of Prosperity Lodge, M.U. of Oddfellow, at the Castle Inn, Accrington, 35 years ago the following prominent officers were present: Messrs. Joseph Watson, James Haworth, Henry K. Lang, Fielcing Calver, John Mian, John Edmund Welsh, Michael Scott Fryers, John Broadley, jun., Joseph Noble, Marquis Noble, and William Brown.

Messrs. F. Lill, James Townson, Enoch Bowler, S. Horton, and J. Duckworth were the committee of the Accrington Plate Glass Insurance Society 35 years ago, and Mr. J. Coward was secretary. Mr. James Townson, J.P., whose name is so well known, will always be remembered, is now the secretary.

The letters of "Verax" (Mr. Henry Duncley) in the old Manchester "Examiner and Times," had a great influence on politics in the old days, and "Verax" was a power in the Liberal party. Mr. Duncley was the recipient of valuable presentations at the Manchester Reform Club in recognition of his services to Liberalism. Mr. Duncley, then Member for Bury, made the presentation, and among quite a galaxy of M.P.'s and others at the gathering was the late Mr. E. J. Broadfield, at one time pastor at Accrington New Jerusalem Church. Mr. Broadfield proposed the health of Mrs. Duncley, Mr. W. Snape, of Darwin, was also present.

A fire which did about £4,000 damage, occurred 35 years ago at the works of Messrs. Steiner and Co., Irwell Springs. The whole of the drying premises, four storeys high, were destroyed, and 300 hands thrown out of work.

The fifth annual treat to sightless persons in Accrington district promoted by the Blind Society, which mainly owes its inception to the efforts of Mr. James Townson, J.P., who has worked for the institution tirelessly for over 30 years, was given in Accrington Town Hall. The following ladies presided at the table: Mrs. Bury, Mrs. Clayton, Miss Walmsey (Paddock House), the Misses Roscoe, Mrs. Parker, Miss Hall, Mrs. Wornell, the Misses Barlow (Holly Bank), Mrs. W. Boothman, and Mrs. Ewart. There were 59 blind persons present. One of them, Edward Boardman, travelled the district as a tea dealer, and sightless had named Fielden sold papers, and Miss Yarkes, of Oswaldtwistle, did housework. The Rev. John Rogers presided, and the youth Fielden read a portion of Scripture. Mr. Townson, in his report, said that John Rogers taught the sightless reading, writing and arithmetic, geography, etc., and music. Songs, etc., were given by Miss Lancaster, Miss John Ingham, and Mr. Grimshaw, of Blackburn. Mr. Ingham, in responding to a vote of thanks to the entertainers, reminded them that blind folk enjoyed a picnic in his way, because if they could see they could smell, and others could describe the beauties of the flowers and landscape to them.

The Rev. Charles Williams, for 50 years Baptist minister at Accrington, who was a stalwart Liberalist in the old days, speaking in favour of the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Church at a meeting in Heywood, submitted the following drastic method to deal with the "curse of the Church" causing much excitement in the Church of England. Mr. Williams said he would not dismiss the ritualists from the Church, any more than he would dismiss the evangelists, but to all of them he would say: "We are weary of your quarrels and of your ecclesiastical wrangling; we will take from you the office you hold and the national endowments by which you are sustained, for these were never intended for sectarian purposes, and you shall do just as you please; you must be maintained by the State, by the resources of your co-religionists, but not from those of the nation." That was a method which was fair all round, and the way in which the Nonconformists were dealt with. There would be liberty to one and all. Let thought be free, and speech as free as thought, and all through the land, let men, unfettered by the State, speak and act as he thought best. Mr. Williams always hit straight from the shoulder, never mincing his words when great principles were involved.

In view of the rising rates and other grievances, a Ratepayers' Association was formed at Oswaldtwistle 35 years ago, and the following were appointed on the working committee: Messrs. Moses Haworth, George Walmsey, George Riley, R. Haworth, John Pilling, J. Harwood, George Clez, Richard Holden, Thomas Halstead, Hindle Haworth, Fickup Haworth, Joseph Corneal, Joshua Helm, John Grimshaw, Elijah Ridghead, Robert Sudall, George Haworth, William Bury, Edward Openshaw, Anthony Woodworth. Mr. E. Openshaw was appointed president, and Mr. Newton, secretary of the Liberal Club, was entrusted with the secretarial duties.

Accrington had four Guardians 35 years ago, the same as Haslingden, which had a much less population and rateable value. Although the population of Accrington had increased from 8,719 in 1841 to more than 30,000 in 1878, and the number of Guardians from 422,104 in 1848 to 435,672 in 1878, the number of Guardians had never been increased. The Accrington Town Council adopted a memorial to the Local Government Board asking for three more Guardians. Alderman Ribdy stated that 28 years before they tried to form Accrington into a separate union, but the Local Government Board were opposed on the ground that they were in favour of making unions larger instead of curtailing them. Haslingden, with only £46,000 rateable value, was against Accrington's £20,000, but many Guardians were subsequently increased, and now there are eleven.

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A Child's Suffering. USED FOR EXCITING CHARITY.

Woman Fined at Accrington.

At Accrington Police Court, on Wednesday, Mary Agnes Walker, of no fixed abode, was charged with having articles without a certificate and also with exposing a child so as to make it suffer and injure its health.

P.C. Clements said on the 19th inst. prisoner was having a few pins and lace in Orange Lane. She had a child about 2½ years old in her arms. When he asked her if she had a certificate for having, she at first said it was at her lodgings, and then admitted she had no certificate. He took her into custody, and the child, which was in a starved condition, was fed and well looked after.

Mr. San Gerde represented the N.S.P.C.C., who prosecuted in the case of exposing the child in a way that was injurious to its health. Prisoner was not the mother of the child, but under the Act she was amenable to the law as the person in charge of the child. Prisoner was lodging about Grange-lane carrying the child, which was very poorly clad, dirty, and evidently suffering considerably from the bitterly cold weather. She told the story that she and the father and mother of the child had been staying in a lodging-house in Burnley, and had walked from Burnley to Accrington with two children, and they had given her one of the children, about 2½ years old, to carry. She said the father and mother of the child had left her, and she had come into Accrington carrying the child. She had a few pins, and was evidently begging and using the child to get pity. The Society's officer had seen the father and mother, and they were evidently as bad as the prisoner.

P.C. Clements said he saw the prisoner go to a house. The child was badly clad, with nothing but a shawl over the shoulders. The little one's face was blue from the cold, and it was suffering severely from the bitter weather. The child seemed to be hungry. Prisoner said the child belonged to a woman in Burnley, and that its thigh had been broken, but was getting better. The child could not walk.

Prisoner: I only carried the child from Burnley, and I was captured as soon as I got into Accrington. I had not been more than a few minutes in Accrington when he captured me. I do not know who the mother is.

The Magistrate's Clerk said it was a good thing that she had been captured.

Mrs. McLaughlin, 18, Union-street, said the child was brought to her by the police to be looked after and fed. The little one was very poorly clad, and was starved, and it had been neglected with regard to the under-clothing, and had not been washed as it ought to have been. The child had not been given the attention that was necessary, and it was suffering from the bitterly cold weather, and was hungry. It had bruises on the leg and arm, and the neck had broken out. She did everything possible for the child, and fed it.

Inspector Everington said he saw the child on the 19th inst., and it was suffering in the way described. The child was poorly clad, and the clothing was dirty. The little one had bruises on the left arm and left leg, and could not walk. At first he thought the child was rickety, but afterwards found that it was suffering from exposure and neglect.

From inquiries he found that the child's parents and two children had been staying at a common lodging-house in Burnley, and the prisoner was also there. The child's father was a ship's engineer out of work. The parents had taken one of the children out at night for begging purposes.

The Chief Constable said the prisoner had been up several times for vagrancy and other offences, the last time being in November. There was no doubt that prisoner brought the child to Accrington on a begging excursion, and the children were divided, prisoner taking one and the parents the other. Prisoner took one part of the town with the child, and the parents another part of the town with the other child. The children were carried to excite pity.

The father, who was called up by the Bench, said he had tried to get work but could not. He denied taking out the child at nights for begging.

The Chief Constable said it was evident that the parents had been moving about the country in a vagrant way. The father ought to send his wife and children to the workhouse. The father was not before the Bench to be dealt with. If he had been he would have been severely punished. He ought to look after the children, and give them a chance in life. He was handicapping the children for life, and if he was brought up he would be most severely punished. They hoped he would treat his children properly and settle down to work.

The Magistrate's Clerk also stated that if the father had been brought up he would not have got off so easily. He could not get work as a ship's engineer by coming to Accrington.

CHILDREN AND PICTURE SHOWS.

At the meeting of the Lancashire Education Committee at Preston on Monday, Mr. Cookshut, in presenting the Elementary Education Sub-committee's report, referred to the report of that Sub-committee on the effect of cinematograph shows on the school children. Mr. Cookshut observed that the report did not contain any recommendations. It was thought better to leave the matter entirely in the hands of the authorities, who had the power to grant or withhold licences or make conditions in granting them, and simply point out to the authorities the circumstances which had come to the knowledge of the committee.

It was suggested that copies of the report should be sent to the clerk, to county justices, and he would like to all to the chief constable of the county and the police superintendents. County Councillor Robinson drew the attention of the Eccles Education Committee on Monday to what the County Committee is doing. Mr. Robinson quoted the opinion that pictures show lowered the moral sense of the children. "They have looked the devil's work," said Alderman Farnie.

A tramp, remanded at Lambeth on a charge of refusing to perform his task in the casual ward, was stated to be generally recognised as the laziest man in the world.

"A gross exaggeration," said Mr. Paul Taylor, a London magistrate, in granting a summons for assault to a woman who said that her husband had "torn her in pieces."

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