

A FORM OF SEPTIC CONJUNCTIVITIS FOUND IN ASSAM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Nov. 7th, 1903, p. 1299, Mr. R. W. Doyne described a variety of septic conjunctivitis which has certain peculiar features and which, as far as I know, is not mentioned in any English text-book on ophthalmology. A very similar form of conjunctivitis is to be found among the coolies on the tea-gardens of Upper Assam, and I have had three cases among Europeans during the last three months. The symptoms present were similar to those described by Mr. Doyne—namely, the preliminary palpebral conjunctivitis, which, if neglected, tends to spread to the ocular conjunctiva, the infiltration of the lids, a seropurulent discharge, enlargement of pre-auricular gland, and resemblance to trachoma. It appears to attack persons of all ages. I have seen it in quite small children and old people and it is apparently not connected with unhealthy surroundings or weakly constitutions, as it occurs in healthy, able-bodied coolies, and my three European patients were strong and well. The condition subsided in from two to six weeks, completely clearing up under nitrate of silver or sulphate of copper, an eye shade, and open air. It is invariably unioocular and I have only twice seen it in both eyes, and these were cases which came to hospital late and which assumed a chronic character, being only cured after from two to three months' treatment. As to the cause, Mr. Doyne suggests the possible infection from animals suffering from the mange and the likelihood of this source of infection in this country is very great. Quite one-third, and possibly more, of the native dogs suffer from the mange and as these animals are in close contact with the coolies in the lines, sleeping in their huts and running about among the children, the possible source of contagion is evident. Another way of infection may be from insects getting into the conjunctival sac and directly infecting the conjunctiva. This form of conjunctivitis appears to be comparatively much more frequent at the commencement of the rains than during the rest of the year, and it is just before the rains that insects are most numerous and troublesome. With regard to the European patients, one owned a cat which was suffering from mange and which he had been in the habit of stroking; a second attributed the eye trouble to an insect which had got into the eye and caused some pain; while no cause could be assigned to the third.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

HOWARD M. STRATFORD.

Dibrugarh, Upper Assam, Sept. 15th, 1904.

THE CARE OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Oct. 1st, p. 963, you call attention to the efforts made by the National Association for the Feeble-minded. It is possible that some who are interested in this most useful work may not know that the Lancashire and Cheshire Society for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-minded has for several years been most active in its efforts to help the mentally defective and to minimise the evils that must of necessity arise if they are allowed to mix freely with others. The society was founded six years ago by Miss Dendy of Manchester, who first studied the question thoroughly in all its bearings and then secured the help of a strong committee to carry out her suggestions. There are at the present time two homes—one for boys (opened three years ago) and one for girls. As more accommodation is urgently needed the committee contemplate further building as soon as possible. I may add that I believe it was Miss Dendy who first in this country urged the necessity for permanent care of the mentally defective.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Manchester, Oct. 11th, 1904. C. CHRISTOPHER HEYWOOD.

STATIC MACHINES AND X-RAY DERMATITIS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In a description of an improved x-ray tube for use with static machines in THE LANCET of Oct. 1st, p. 958, Dr. W. S. Sharpe says that he "understands that dermatitis from rays generated by a static machine has not yet been seen."

As such a belief seems to be widespread and if acted on might lead to some deplorable results, may I point out that it has absolutely no justification in fact? I have lately treated six patients with x rays produced by a mica-plate static machine and in every case I have produced a definite reaction of the skin from an erythema accompanied by itching to a weeping dermatitis when I have intentionally pushed the treatment. The cases were all different in nature, consisting of lupus of the face, rodent ulcer of the nose, recurrent cancer of the breast, sarcoma of the skull, cancer of the uterus treated through the abdominal wall, and cancer of the sigmoid flexure becoming superficial. I rarely give more than three exposures a week, I never put the target nearer than six inches from the skin, and I very seldom exceed ten minutes for the duration of a single exposure. Dr. W. A. Pusey in his book on x rays says, "There is, in my opinion, not the slightest vestige of reason for the claim that x rays produced by a static machine are less liable to cause burns than those produced by coils." I have used both coils and static machine for exciting an x-ray tube and I am entirely of Dr. Pusey's opinion.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ARTHUR J. CLEVELAND, M.D. Lond., M.R.C.P. Lond.

Norwich, Oct. 10th, 1904.

SOME POINTS IN THE PREVENTION OF EPIDEMIC DIARRHŒA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I will reply to Dr. J. T. C. Nash's questions in THE LANCET of Oct. 8th, p. 1043, seriatim. I meant epidemic diarrhœa in the cases to which I alluded. 1. These cases are stated by the mothers to be wholly breast-fed and this is from the nature of the case the only guarantee that they are. 2. The mother's statement is the only guarantee. 3. No. Such instructions would not, and probably could not, be carried out. 4. No. This is my fault—they ought to have been forbidden. 5. No. 6. Yes. It would from the nature of the case be impossible to enforce the régime mentioned in questions 5 and 6. My patients were seen at a dispensary in one of the poorest districts of Liverpool, the houses of which are insanitary, and there are numerous open brick middens in the district.

During a three years' practice in India I became convinced that the large amount of human fæces lying on the ground and the enormous number of flies at certain seasons are two potent factors in the spread of the large amount of typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery, and diarrhœa there. Some of the public latrines adjoin kitchens and I have watched flies settle on fæces and then fly through the window and settle on food. My letter in THE LANCET of Oct. 1st, p. 981, was written, not to criticise Dr. Nash's able letter, but for information which he has so kindly given and for which I thank him.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Oct. 8th, 1904.

PRACTITIONER.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Water-supply.

ALTHOUGH rain has fallen and the supply of water has been cut off at night for some weeks, the quantity in the Longendale reservoirs is sinking lower day by day and it is said that there is now only enough to last for 25 days. The rainfall at Longendale during the last week-end was 0.75 of an inch but there was a greater consumption, as it was turned off at 8 P.M. instead of 7 P.M. This extra hour meant an increase in consumption of more than 2,000,000 gallons on Sunday night last, as compared with that of the previous Sunday. Now that the drought has once broken the probability is that we shall once more tide over this difficulty without increased restrictions.

Presentation of Whitworth Park to the City.

On Oct. 5th the Whitworth trustees made a formal transfer of Whitworth Park to the Manchester corporation. The buildings appropriated to the art gallery and about five acres of land will remain the property of the Institute Galleries and the remainder of the park is transferred to the corporation in the form, for technical reasons, of a lease for 1000 years, subject to the annual rent of £10. The