

I don't deny that it may require both patience and care, but to hold that it is not the most important sign of the developed condition I venture to maintain would be a dangerous error.—I am, etc.,

London, W.1, July 7th.

F. JOHN POYNTON.

### Sunbathing and Tuberculosis

SIR,—The article on sunbathing and tuberculosis by Drs. A. H. Gosse and G. S. Erwin, in your issue of July 7th (p. 15), raises a point of very great importance, for, although one would expect these facts to be realized by all medical practitioners, strangely this does not appear to be so; while among the general public the fallacy of the good effect of the direct action of the sun's rays is almost an obsession. It cannot be too much stressed that the proportion of cases infected with tuberculosis is very much larger than those known, or who know themselves, to have the disease; especially is this so among "contact" cases, who may indeed especially endeavour to avoid the fell disease of which they have first-hand knowledge by a good dose of the sun. These evil results are found not only in tuberculosis but after any infection, and it is not uncommon to see a fresh attack of pneumonia occurring from too much sun in a patient convalescent of this disease.

It is well recognized at all sanatoria that not only an acute flare-up of the parenchymal disease, but even miliary tuberculosis, may occur after indiscriminate exposure, and the patients are cautioned of this. All those in touch with hospital, and especially dispensary, work will agree as to the large number of cases of acute activation of disease in both known and "new" cases as a result of the summer of last year, and the same state of things is occurring this summer. It should be a matter of routine with every doctor who is in charge of cases of tuberculosis repeatedly to warn the patient and also his contacts of the necessity of care in this respect. The intelligent interest taken by the public in living healthily has had its effect in decreased illness, especially among young people; popular health journals have advertised the benefit accruing from Alpine sunlight treatment, but the technique and care which is necessary to its advantageous use is little stressed. The same applies to artificial sunlight treatment by the indiscriminate use of these lamps without supervision—I have seen several quiescent cases badly activated.

One has assumed that the effect of the sunlight is to liberate a flood of toxins which diminishes the resistance of the patient to the specific organisms with which he is infected, and that the effect of graduated light is much the same as graduated exercise in cases of chronic infection.—I am, etc.,

London, W.1, July 6th.

A. J. SCOTT PINCHIN.

### Tuberculin

SIR,—I think I must be voicing the opinions of a good many general practitioners who, like myself, have used tuberculin over a period of twenty years in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis when I say that the expressed opinion of Dr. N. D. Bardswell (*British Medical Journal*, June 30th, p. 1136) on tuberculin fills us with amazement.

That other methods of cure are preferred by the experts is perhaps true, but there is among general practitioners a vast amount of clinical evidence, more than sufficient to justify a direct contradiction to the statement that tuberculin is not seriously considered as a "cure."—I am, etc.,

Tonbridge, July 8th.

G. L. BUNTING.

SIR,—More than twenty years ago Dr. Noel Bardswell, after a perfunctory investigation upon the value of tuberculin AF (which is merely one of many forms of tuberculin, containing as it does chiefly exotoxins), condemned tuberculin as a whole, upon evidence which I knew to be quite worthless and misleading (see *Practitioner*, 1913). Somewhat later Dr. Halliday Sutherland, in ignorance which he now honestly deplores, attacked me for my views upon the value of tuberculin in diagnosis and treatment; but more knowledge and personal experience converted him to the views I have consistently held, practised, and preached for more than forty years. Dr. Sutherland candidly admitted so much at the Centenary Meeting of the British Medical Association.

It is sad that Dr. Bardswell, who can influence the L.C.C. in its policy concerning the greatest and most difficult medical problem affecting the life and health of the poorest sections of humanity forced to live in the greatest city in the world—London—dares to tell the lay public that tuberculin, as a means of diagnosis, as a remedy, and as an invaluable agent even in prognosis, is merely bunkum. As a pupil, friend, and faithful disciple of Robert Koch, I challenge the views of Dr. Bardswell. Statistics, based not upon post-mortem examinations but upon casual death certificates signed mostly by general practitioners, are certainly not above criticism in the elaboration of mortality statistics.

As the problem of tuberculosis is the greatest and most difficult problem in medical science, may I earnestly ask that a Royal Commission be appointed by the Government to collect evidence and call witnesses, so that the whole truth may be revealed upon the nature of tuberculosis and the best method of attacking the disease, so as to reduce the high mortality and morbidity constantly occurring in our midst, especially in our great cities?—I am, etc.,

W. CAMAC WILKINSON, M.D., F.R.C.P.

London, W.1, July 1st.

### Bile Salts for Empyema

SIR,—Dr. H. R. Donald, in his letter in the *Journal* of June 30th (p. 1189), stated that it is possible to inject 10 c.cm. of 10 per cent. desoxycholate into the ear vein of a rabbit without harmful complications, though he qualifies his statement by adding that it is quoted from memory. I myself, however, know that less than one-third of this dose, dissolved in normal saline and administered in a similar manner, kills a rabbit within thirty seconds. I think, therefore, that the caution expressed in the article by Mr. B. R. Sworn and myself regarding the toxicity of this substance is justified.—I am, etc.,

Stafford, July 4th.

T. V. COOPER.

### The Cancer Problem

SIR,—The review by Dr. J. A. Murray, in the *Journal* of June 16th, of Dr. A. T. Todd's recent paper on the selenide treatment of cancer is of very great interest, as, after explaining some of the many difficulties which have to be surmounted before we can solve the problem of malignant growths, it indicates one line of attack which has been to some extent successful.

After briefly reviewing the method of treatment by sulphur selenium colloid, radio-active selenium colloid, and deep x rays, Dr. Murray gives it as his opinion that the improvement brought about in a substantial percentage