

Although far removed from primordial life we are, nevertheless, the inheritors of every level from the simplest to our own crowning heights in humanity, and are inherently furnished with the means of living in an environment swarming with battling factors, which we should be capable of overcoming, and also adapting ourselves to our surroundings. All life is one vast brigandage, the greater absorbing the lesser; but these natural phenomena, seemingly cruel by our human standards, should be explained as part of the scheme of the universe, and not hidden from developing youth.

It is reproduction which replenishes this wastage and reveals a unity of purpose which we can observe but neither explain nor understand. Examples of natural forces constantly working can be demonstrated—such as gravity, magnetism, polarity, and the affinities of the elements of which our bodies are composed. The school chemistry experiments serve to show the perpetual flux in the inorganic kingdom; also plants flowering, seeding, and springing up again. To the more advanced youth the ties of companionship, affection, love, and passion may be dwelt on and explained in their setting of romance and tragedy, and he may be shown how links can be forged in the mind which survive when passion and love have faded. A background of this kind of abstract texture gives the subject of sex a fitting place as one of the most profound mysteries, and without which life would be poor indeed. Unfortunately the subject is approached too directly, and with insufficient delicacy, or is treated as though it were altogether taboo, producing shock and embarrassment in a matter which can be made beautiful; for there is nothing improper in nature—it is only the mind that makes it. Later on, with no apprenticeship to life as it is, and little knowledge of the facts, the rough-and-tumble comes as an astonishment, and there is inability to adjust matters; the usual problem of undeserved suffering presents itself, and either Job's attitude is taken, or his wife's, which is frequently the prelude to a mental home. There is nutritional hunger and sex hunger, and with some, who are more highly charged, it is almost as dangerous to renounce the one as the other, for there is that insistent inarticulate quest which will assert itself at times for satisfaction and full-orbed development of self.

Canon Pym has given most valuable assistance towards handling a very hushed subject, and these humble suggestions are made as a plea for extending and further clothing the subject, without in any way clashing with modern Church doctrine or morality. In my experience I have been forcibly led to the opinion that with many people the mere mention of "sex" envisages the organs of reproduction rather than one of the most wonderful mysteries in creation; and (as stated in the address) it is to the quality of the mind of the educator that we must look for suitable presentation of this interesting and important theme.—I am, etc.,

Armagh, Nov. 28th.

ARTHUR KING, M.D.

#### THE CREOSOTE ENEMA IN PNEUMONIA

SIR,—In recent papers and lectures on pneumonia no mention appears to have been made of Schoull and Weiller's method of treatment by the creosote enema. No one imagines that the use of creosote in respiratory affections is new, for fifty years ago it was advocated in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis. But these authors, in their small brochure<sup>1</sup> of 70 pages, advise its use, not in chronic lung infections, but in the acute, particularly those due to the pneumococcus. Their method, briefly, is as follows. In pneumonia, after a wash-out enema, forty drops of pure creosote, well shaken for

<sup>1</sup> Published by Maloine, Paris.

several minutes in 2 ounces of warm milk, are injected slowly well up the rectum. The enema should be retained about two hours. If not retained longer than half an hour it should be repeated, and in the adult ten drops of tincture of opium may be added to it. This dose in an adult should be repeated twice in twenty-four hours. In children under 1 year two to ten drops is the dose, twice daily; in second infancy and adolescence five to ten drops, with an extra drop for each year. In old age less than forty drops may be given. The action of creosote in the purely pneumococcal conditions seems to be almost specific, like serum; when it fails, a streptococcal infection must be feared. It is interesting to note that in pneumococcal peritonitis Daru, Loederich, and Mamon<sup>2</sup> also advise its use for its selective action on the pneumococcus.

In the *Presse Médicale* (November 11th, 1931) there is a useful summary of the value and details of the method. When our attention was called to this use of creosote we at once obtained some striking results in the treatment of pneumonia at all ages. We then applied it as a prophylactic in post-operative pulmonary complications. It quickly clears up catarrhal states in patients awaiting operation, and is now part of our routine preparation for all laparotomies or major operations of general surgery. In 150 cases of laparotomy of all types under open ether no case occurred of post-operative pneumonia. But in two cases in which the enema was omitted by mistake pulmonary complications occurred—a broncho-pneumonia in a simple inguinal hernia, and a severe and prolonged congestion of the right lung in a gastrectomy for hour-glass stomach. Both patients recovered, creosote being given at once on the appearance of the lung trouble. In urgent surgery we try to give the enema before the patient goes on the table if there is time; if not, immediately after operation.

Bassett<sup>3</sup> has also recently called attention to the value of creosote; in 174 operations, mostly gynaecological, no death occurred from lung complications when the drug was administered for some days before operation. Kocher,<sup>4</sup> over twenty years ago, evidently believed in its efficacy, for he then wrote:

"We do not hesitate to give large doses of creosotal when necessary; two and a half drachms may be administered night and morning in the form of an enema with milk. Dr. Rollier, who has carefully investigated the action of this drug for some years, has shown it prevents complications, and acts beneficially on the course of a pneumonia."

In these days, when economy is necessary and three doses of Felton's serum cost approximately £10, it may be worth while giving another trial to creosote, administered in this simple way.—I am, etc.,

Huelva, Spain, Nov. 17th.

IAN MACDONALD, M.D.

#### THE "SOBERING-UP" RATE

SIR,—A matter of considerable medico-legal importance is raised by the question whether persons under the influence of alcohol "sober up" at the same rate, or whether individual variation may be exhibited in this particular, such as is well known to occur in the process of becoming intoxicated. From inquiries made, the latter view appears to be held widely, and although I am unable to find any statement in current literature to the effect that the sobering-up rate is constant for all persons, I venture to suggest that all the experimental evidence at our disposal supports that view.

Schweissheimer, Mellanby, and others have shown that there is a close relationship between the concentration of alcohol in the blood at any given time and the symptoms

<sup>2</sup> *Journ. de Chir.*, October, 1931, xxxviii, No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Bull. et Mém. Soc. Nat. de Chir.*, November 22nd, 1930, lvi, No. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Kocher: *Operative Surgery*.