

THE CANCER SCOURGE.

Smoking as a Factor.

Women Less Affected Than Men.

"Hot air," was the terse comment of several Adelaide medical men concerning the cabled statement of Dr. Blair, of the University of Glasgow, that smoking and alcohol were the principal causes of cancer in the mouth and throat.

It was stated that statistics did not support Dr. Blair in his assertion, at any rate not in Australia, and one or two leading countries of the world. Smoking might have an irritating effect on the throat, but there was no scientific proof that alcohol was a factor in the causation of the disease.

Professor Brailsford Robertson did not agree fully with the theory expounded. From his own observations he considered that if an individual were to suffer from cancer, he would get it irrespective of indulgence in tobacco or alcohol. They merely acted as irritants to the disease when it was contracted.

Are Cigarettes Safer?

In his address, Dr. Blair suggested that wooden pipes and cigarette holders, gripped by men in the most comfortable position, continually directed a stream of hot gases to the same part of the tongue, the roof of the mouth, or the throat, and he considered that the use of cigarettes without holders was safest when cigars could not be secured. With this assertion Professor Robertson agreed, but he did not think cancer was definitely caused by such practices. "That is merely a question of habit," he said, "and of course, the proposal that people should be compelled to visit clinics at least twice a year is purely one of, say, Governmental policy. It has much to commend it, but comment at this juncture is hardly necessary."

Disease of Old Age.

Professor Robertson said statistics showed that cancer was increasing all the world over, not one country being definitely immune; but it was essentially a disease of old age. As the expectation of life was lengthening, so people were living into the cancer age. Previously, they used to die of something else. Little was known of the disease, and until medical science knew its origin, civilization would not be able to take the best preventive measures. Anything done in the present ignorance of cancer might leave alone the most essential thing. "Many useful things can be done, and one is undoubtedly frequent examination of people to catch the disease in its early stages. Research is being directed to find out what cancer really is. Until that discovery is made, there can be little done," he concluded.

Increasing Mortality.

A well-known doctor, who has taken an active interest in the campaign against cancer, said the disease was on the increase, and was most prevalent among persons of mature age. The increase was too great to be explained by improvements in methods of diagnosis. "This is true of Australia," he continued, "as of other parts of the world. Official figures show that the mortality rate in Australia has risen from 26.1 per 100,000 people in 1870 to 89.1 in 1923. The increase has been fairly equal in both sexes, and uniformly steady. While the mortality rate from cancer has been increasing, the death rate from all other causes in Australia has declined. Outstanding features of this decline are the decrease of deaths from tuberculosis, and the fewer deaths of infants from two to 12 months. Cancer is thus increasing very rapidly in its relative importance as a cause of death."

Principally in Digestive Organs.

Official figures indicate that the deaths from cancer in the period 1881-1885 were one in 43, but this had risen in 1923 to one in every 11 deaths. South Australia showed a steady rise, and for years had pressed Victoria closely for the highest cancer mortality rate. It would probably be within correct limits to say that 52 per cent of the total cancer deaths could be attributed to some part of the digestive organs. "Figures appear to show that cancer of the whole digestive tract has so increased as to suggest that it counts largely for the increase in cancer as a whole," said the doctor. Cancer of the buccal organs, which include the throat, tonsils, &c., as outlined by Dr. Blair, is not so important as cancer of the stomach and liver, the percentage for Australia being 7.3 to 37.2.

Smoking Only Slight Factor.

It has been generally recognised that continued local irritation plays a part in the production of the disease, and there are various grounds for believing that in cancer of the buccal cavity, smoking, on

this account, does play some part in its causation. This is generally accepted as an explanation of the relative infrequency of cancer in the buccal cavity in women compared with men, the proportion being 1.3 per cent. to 12.8, whereas in the digestive regions, the proportion is much more even. So far as I know, there is no scientific ground for Dr. Blair's contention that alcohol plays a part in the production of the disease."

Women and the Future.

"It would be interesting to know," continued the speaker, "and to learn in the future, whether the percentage of women suffering from the disease in the buccal cavity will increase, in view of the prevailing and extensive desire of the sex to take up smoking. Few cases in this direction have come under the notice of medical men. In one instance, it was definitely proved that the sufferer of the disease in the throat had smoked a clay pipe."

Investigation Urgent.

"The authorities are much concerned about the prevention of cancer," the doctor continued; "but it is yet too early to organize a vast co-operative scheme for prevention, as suggested by Dr. Blair, because at present we know little about the real causation. The crying need at the moment is the organization of investigation into the whole subject. This is being attempted in each capital city in Australia, and the investigations are linked up to a certain extent with subsidies from the Commonwealth Government. In Sydney a large sum has been raised for cancer research, and much useful work is being done in investigating the relation of X-ray action to cancer and the presence of minute quantities of different metals in the body tissues. In Melbourne, enquiries are being conducted along different lines, including the relation of tuberculosis to the disease. In Adelaide Professor Brailsford Robertson is at work on the relation of cancer to nutrition."

Knife the Best Prevention.

"Much more good can be done in this way than by adopting the statements reported to have been made by Dr. Blair. The best measure known at present for the prevention of mortality from cancer is early recognition and an early operation. There is much commonsense in the suggestion that persons over 40 should be regularly examined, and this practice is becoming recognised more considerably as a valuable measure for the prevention of other diseases as well as cancer. It has already been adopted for policy holders by several large insurance companies in America."

REG. 3. 12. 27

UNIVERSITY OF LOUVAIN.

ADELAIDE GREETINGS ACKNOWLEDGED.

Following is a translation of the reply sent by the University of Louvain to the greetings sent by the Council of the University of Adelaide:—"The University of Louvain sends greetings to all who from all parts of the world attended or sent messages on the occasion of its 500th anniversary. The days on which we celebrated our 500th anniversary have passed. But there still remains with us the memory of those who, sharing our joy and desirous of increasing it, have most courteously communicated with us by sending a representative or an address. Wherefore, now that the academic year has ended, and we are free from our most exacting cares, we feel the greatest pleasure in acknowledging our gratitude to them. You sought no private or public advantage, but followed the judgment of your mind and heart in paying us this great honour. But since you showed us this favour in order to celebrate the happy day on which the University recalled the memory of its first establishment and its long life continuing for 500 years, shall we appear to err and to take too much praise to ourselves, if we think that you have kindly given evidence that the present University of Louvain is not unworthy of its distinguished ancestors, who for five centuries have laboured, to the best of their ability, by teaching and writing to extend the culture of mankind? We earnestly pray that the friendship by which you have been closely bound with us may always flourish and may unite our minds still more closely. For such an association and friendship of universities and colleges, while it cherishes and extends the love of truth and knowledge among them, will not less contribute to the culture and happiness of life. To secure this result we send as a mark of our gratitude to you a book written by our scholars dealing with the achievements of the University of Louvain during the last 500 years. May it be to you a sign by which posterity may be reminded of your earnest association with us during these days. May it also be an inducement to urge us to associate with one another, when the opportunity recurs, with the same friendly interest."

ADV. 3. 12. 27

Miss Jean Ysobel Virgo has been awarded the practice of music scholarship at the Elder Conservatorium. She is the twin daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Virgo, of Strathalbyn, and is 12 years of age.

UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.

From "INTERESTED," Roslyn Park:—Once again the question arises whether the University examiners are setting a speed test or a knowledge test? A bright and thoroughly prepared student who had set his heart on a high place in the intermediate, told me that although the history and mathematics papers were well within his compass, the time limit was so short that he was unable to do them justice. This was a disappointment to an ambitious boy. He is a fairly rapid writer, but the nervous tension caused by his knowledge of the time limit causes him (and doubtless others) to make slips which would never be made if sufficient time were given to attack the paper calmly. Why this need on haste? Slow writers or nervous children have little hope, however sound their knowledge of the subject.

NEWS 5. 12. 27

HOLIDAY READING

OLD BOOKS ARE BEST

Views of Sir Archibald Strong

This is the time when teachers and pupils are dispersing for the vacation. What shall Varsity men and women and the great reading multitude do with their leisure hours during midsummer?

This question was put to Prof. Sir Archibald T. Strong. He would not be drawn, preferring to give his own experience. Since he is one of the most famous critics and one of the leading students of modern literature, in which he takes infinite delight, his opinion will doubtless guide the reading public of Adelaide.

He said, "I shall give my own experience in the hope that it may be of some general use. It may be old-fashioned to say—but I believe it firmly as a result of my own experience both recent and earlier—that the old books are the best. They are not only more profitable to the reader but more exciting than all but the very few among the new books."

"Lately I have been rereading Balzac, and I am more convinced than ever that he is one of the two great masters of fiction. The second is undoubtedly Dostoevski. Dickens, I should be inclined to place with these if I thought he had quite their tragic gift. He certainly excels them both in humor, and I should unhesitatingly put him first of English novelists."

Books Recommended

"Among French novelists Stendhal, I notice, is extolled by many critics of his own race as the best of them all. He certainly has astonishing psychological power, but his output is small compared with that of Balzac; and he has never seemed to me to have Balzac's sweep and gusto. Balzac created a whole portrait gallery and you may trace his different characters from novel to novel, and find that he has realised their portraiture perfectly throughout."

"Those who have not read him, but intend doing so, should peruse 'Lost Illusions' and 'Splendor and Misery of the Courtesan,' as perhaps the two best to begin with. These novels turn mainly on the fortunes of the brilliant, unscrupulous, and ill-starred youth of Lucien de Rubempré."

"I am not sure, however, that these novels represent Balzac at his greatest, although Mr. George Moore thinks they do. I am rather inclined to agree with Remy de Gourmont that the greatest work of Balzac deals not so much with Paris as with the provinces, inasmuch as the Parisian scene has changed out of all recognition since his day, whereas provincial life in France, as elsewhere, changes comparatively little. It is in such novels as 'Beatrice' and 'The Country Curate' that Balzac is able to isolate human emotions and to describe them, not only with superb insight, but with minute scientific accuracy. I do not think that even among French authors who pride themselves on feminine psychology there is one who can equal him in the portrayal of women."

"Our own Henry James possesses a great deal of that subtlety which accounts for much of his force, but James' canvas is not nearly so large as Balzac's, nor is his sweep so vast."

Greatest of Russians

"Among modern French novelists by far the greatest appears to be Marcel Proust, whose huge and mainly auto-biographical novel is available to English readers in an excellent translation. He, however, cannot rank as a world master of fiction, because he tends too often to lose the universal in the particular. Although the best of his portraiture—as, for example, in his creation of the Baron de Charlus—is astounding, he is too often inclined to subtilise the obvious, and thus become boring."

"A very great French novelist still living is Georges Duhamel, whom I regard as something of a much more natural force together with a finer and surer style than any other living French writer of fiction—such as Cocteau, Morand, or Girandoux. One would like to say something about modern French lyric poetry, but this is

not at all a popular study in Australia, although it deserves to be.

"To revert to the Russians. I cannot feel that Tolstoi is a great master. Dostoevski knew life far more deeply than Tolstoi. He could come down into the arena of ordinary existence where he strove and suffered, while Tolstoi spent his life in seclusion and wrote his fiction under conditions of comfort and isolation which most writing men would have found delightful, but which never could have given him the power or the experience necessary for the creation of Dostoevski's great four—'Crime and Punishment,' 'The Idiot,' 'The Brothers,' and 'The Possessed.'"

"I regard Tchekov as a great master," added Sir Archibald. "It seems to me that his supreme achievement is to have taken the tenuity of life which is usually boring in fiction as in fact, and to have shown the poem and tragedy of it, thus raising it to the level of great art."

ADV. 5. 12. 27

PIANO RECITALS AT THE UNIVERSITY.

From J. G. REIMANN, Acting-Director of the Conservatorium of Music, the University:—I desire to express to you my sincere thanks for the appreciative notices written on a series of three piano recitals given by my students in the south hall of the Elder Conservatorium. The reports have proved a great incentive to the young students concerned, and I am most grateful to you for your kindness.

REG. 5. 12. 27

Dr. W. A. Hargreaves (Director of Chemistry and Chief Inspector of Explosives) left for Melbourne on Sunday to attend a railways conference in connection with explosives and dangerous goods, and also a harbours conference in connection with inflammable oils. He expects to return in a few days.

REG. 6. 12. 27

ST. MARK'S COLLEGE.

The third year of St. Mark's College has been one of progress, and has been marked by a great increase in the size of the college, as a new section of rooms was built, and 34 tutors and students were in residence during the year. The results of the University examinations were again satisfactory, as of 26 candidates, 17 passed in all their subjects; and four passed in two-thirds or more of their subjects. The college also gained 10 credits and three first places. Among those who gained the best results were:—Mr. L. C. Wilcher (Arts), who received the first credit in British history A, and credits in economics and French; Mr. J. H. Reynolds (Arts), first credit in British history B; Mr. L. A. Symons (Arts), first credit in mathematics, year III, elementary geometry; Mr. A. M. Bills (Arts), credits in English literature I, and French I; and Mr. F. H. Finlayson (Engineering), credits in physics II, applied mathematics II, and strength of materials. In medicine and dentistry six candidates out of eight passed in various years, and Mr. W. A. Nairn and Mr. A. T. Harbison gained the M.B.B.S., and Mr. J. V. Christopher the B.D.S. degree. In law, three students passed in a total of eight subjects, and in science Mr. A. Walkley gained the B.Sc. degree. Besides working for the examinations, members of the college took an enthusiastic part in University life and sport. Mr. J. H. Reynolds was a joint-editor of the University Magazine, and Mr. A. Trickett and Mr. F. H. Finlayson treasurer and assistant treasurer of the University Sports Association. The college contains three University "blues" and nine men who played for University first teams. During the year rowing developed strongly, owing to the energy of Mr. A. Walkley and other members of the college who went to Sydney with the University crew, and in the third term the college had an eight and three fours in training. The eight, which challenged the University eight, was beaten, but only by a length and a third, after an excellent race over the Henley course; and a college four, representing the University Club, reached the semi-final of the maiden tub fours at the Henley-on-Torrens regatta.

REG. 6. 12. 27

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENT.

MELBOURNE, Monday.

The Melbourne University Council today appointed Mr. K. H. Bailey, M.A., B.C.L., to the Chair of Jurisprudence at the university. Professor Bailey has had a brilliant scholastic career. In 1919 he was elected Victorian Rhodes Scholar, and at the end of that year he entered Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Later Professor Bailey was Vice Master at Queen's College. On Sir Harrison Moore's recommendation, he was invited to write the chapter on "Responsible Government in Australia, 1860-1900," in the Cambridge History of the British Empire. He was also an outstanding figure in college athletics.