

"We all have it in varying amounts. My idea is simply that if it becomes excessive there is danger. I don't know that it would by itself start cancer, but at any rate, after cancer is started and the substance is present, the cancer would grow very rapidly."

Is there no anti-toxin?

"No; the substance does not belong to the class of bodies that give rise to anti-toxins. We have to seek in other directions for something to neutralise its action. I have been carrying out a number of experiments recently with that object in view. All my work, I may say, is done in conjunction with a colleague, Dr. T. C. Burnett, who is also at the University of California, and he is carrying on the researches while I am away. We have not by any means finished our researches in the direction of trying to neutralise the action of that substance."

Once you discover that I suppose it will be possible to make people immune from cancer?

"It is conceivable, but one cannot predict that. It depends upon whether this cholestrin, as the substance is called, is absolutely essential to the growth of cancer. That has not yet been determined."

What is your personal opinion?

"I have no opinion until I have found the facts."

Probably you have hopes?

"One always has hopes, but, unfortunately, facts have a way of upsetting hopes."

From the way he spoke I judged that Dr. Robertson considers he is upon the right track. But extracting anything out of him commendatory of his own work was like picking winkles out of their shells with a pin. I asked him if he had discussed his discoveries with Professor Loeb, who, it may be mentioned, for the last three years has been at the Medical Research Institute, New York. Dr. Robertson replied that he had talked the matter over with him last Christmas, when Professor Loeb was in California. What Professor Loeb had said he did not think was his to divulge. I asked him if he believed science was getting any nearer to a solution of the cancer problem.

"Undoubtedly," he replied. "I think the time is not far distant when we shall be able to control cancer thoroughly."

Without the aid of the knife?

"I would not like to say that we shall ever be able to dispense with the knife entirely. Certainly all our present knowledge points to a quick employment of surgery in the very early stages as being an absolutely necessary thing."

What of the case in which the disease has gripped a vital organ.

"There are such cases," he replied, with a note of sadness in his voice, "where nothing can be done, and for that reason it is particularly necessary to supplement surgical methods."

But the main thing is early diagnosis?

"That is so—early diagnosis; and then if an operation is possible the surgeon comes in."

You are sure this substance you have discovered does not accelerate other diseases as well as cancer?

"We have experimented on people with other diseases to see if they also have cholestrin, but Dr. Wacker, who made the analyses, has never been able to discover the same amounts in other diseases than cancer."

Dr. and Mrs. Robertson will be in Adelaide for three or four months longer, and will then go for a tour of the world. He has 12 months leave of absence. Probably Dr. Robertson will see Dr. Wacker in Germany. He has two or three things "going," but apart from the cancer research they are rather technical and difficult to explain. He will lecture in August before the students of the Scientific Society upon "Some Economic Aspects of Scientific Research."

AIDING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH.

A new country such as Australia is essentially a field for experiment and innovation. Novel conditions demand novel methods, and that necessity stimulates the origination and inventive faculties of a pioneering people. Australians have not been backward in adjusting their methods to their environment, or in initiating fresh processes where the situation has required that course. The invention and utilization of the reaper is an excellent case in point, and is, moreover, only one instance in a single branch of enterprise. Many other discoveries testify to the presence of inventive genius in the people; but much more could have been accomplished in this direction if adequate facilities for encouraging and rewarding original research had been available. Lack of assistance has probably frustrated the hopes of many a struggling investigator, and withheld from the country the fruits of his talents. It is to remedy this deficiency that the Royal Society of South Australia—a body too widely and favourably known to require introduction—has devised a praiseworthy scheme of grants in aid of scientific research. Through the generosity of a few patriotic citizens, a fund has been established which, substantial as it is, may reasonably be hoped to represent merely the nucleus of the enterprise, and to prove a rich and lasting source of profit in a purely scientific, as well as in a practical, sense.

In outlining the scheme, the society points out that "there must be many persons, both in the centres of population and in the outlying districts of this State, who have both the intelligence and the will to devote some of their leisure to the investigation of phenomena, the knowledge of which might be not only of considerable scientific interest, but also of great economic value," but who are unable to incur the expenditure required for making the experiments and so obtaining definite results. Accordingly, "with a view to assist and encourage such Australians as are anxious to devote their leisure and thought systematically to any definite line of research," the society is prepared to make small grants of money to assist in defraying the outlay involved in such investigations. The society will welcome applications for aid from any individuals who consider that they could further their enquiries in the manner indicated, although the applicants will naturally be required to satisfy the council that they are competent to carry out such investigations, and that any grant made will be usefully expended, strictly for the purpose specified. Successful applicants will further be obliged to furnish the results of their researches, whether positive or negative in character, in writing to the society, which also reserves the right "to distribute the information gained by the worker, with due acknowledgment, in any way it deems to be for the good of the community"—a provision which, if intended to cover the patenting of any practical invention, will need to be couched in more definite terms. The scheme as a whole is admirable, and reflects the highest credit upon the public-spiritedness of its promoters. South Australians will await its development with keen interest.

Mr. Oswald Rischbieth, B.A., ex-classical master at the Adelaide High School, who is now an undergraduate of Merton College, Oxford, where he is studying for his classical degree, is worthily upholding the records of South Australian sport. He has now stroked two eights on the Isis—the Merton torpids last winter, and the Merton second eights during the summer term. His oarsmanship was so satisfactory in the latter event that the selectors have asked him to stroke the Merton senior eight in the Henley-on-Thames contests now in progress.

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Dr. T. Brailsford Robertson, son-in-law of Professor Stirling, C.M.G., who eight years ago took the B.Sc. degree at the Adelaide University, and has since gained in the United States the superior degrees of Ph.D. and D.Sc., has returned for a holiday visit to South Australia. Dr. Robertson is now an Associate Professor of Physiological Chemistry at the University of California. At that institution he is assistant to a famous biological investigator Professor Loeb, and he has also, in collaboration with Dr. T. C. Burnett, at the same university, made researches into the causes and nature of carcinomas and sarcomas growths that give promise of having an important bearing on the question of the discovery of a cure for cancer. He is hopeful that before long patient enquiry may result in something being found that will obliterate that malignant trouble without the use of the knife—which he is careful to caution sufferers is yet the one step to be relied on, if taken in the early stages of the disease. Dr. Robertson and Dr. Wacker, of Munich, each working on separate lines, noted that a certain substance—cholestrin—was unusually abundant in the tissues of cancer patients, and the present investigation is largely on the lines of ascertaining whether this, singly or with any other agents, is a factor in causing the disease; and whether, if that is so, its action in that connection can be neutralized to the benefit of the patient and of humanity. Dr. and Mrs. Robertson will remain in Adelaide for three or four months. They will undertake a tour of the world before the doctor returns to his duties at the end of his year's furlough.