Correspondence

CLEARING HOUSE FOR CUTANEOUS FUNGI AND BLASTOMYCES *

To the Editor:—The editorial in the April number of the ARCHIVES in regard to the "study of ringworm in America" has struck a responsive chord in the staff of this laboratory. It is most timely and likely also to stimulate others who have been prying into the edges of mycology, but who have received no encouragement because the importance of the subject did not appear to be as generally appreciated as it should be, and because they felt comparatively isolated in their work. The end-effect under these circumstances would be a decreasing interest in, and finally a cessation of, such investigation in many cases. We welcome the editorial, therefore, as calculated to reveal and focus these scattered activities in mycology and to open avenues of communication between them that will encourage and sustain the work in each center.

The main purpose of this communication is to announce that this laboratory has been working along these lines and will cooperate with others (it is hoped many) in the study of cutaneous fungi. This course has, as a matter of fact, been in our minds for over two years and has produced some small results, which we would like to contribute at this time as a beginning in the movement and as an earnest of our desire to cooperate in it, but which on account of their scope must be postponed to some future time.

We have acquired the following organisms from various sources and have living cultures at present on hand. Some we have cultivated ourselves and others have been donated. Among others, Professor Sabouraud, with whom we have an exchange agreement, has contributed a number: *Achorion schonleimii*, two strains; *Achorion gallinae*; *Achorion quinckeanum*; *Microsporon lanosum*; *Microsporon audouini*, two strains; *Microsporon fulvum*; *Trichophyton niveum radians*; *Trichophyton rosaceum*; *Trichophyton plicatile*; *Trichophyton fumatum*; *Trichophyton gypseum*; *Epidermophyton inguinale*, nine strains; *Sporotrichum schencki-beurmannii*; *Sporotrichum councilmani*; *Sporotrichum hamburger* and several animal strains; *Actinomyces bovis*; *Penicillium brevicaulis* (Brumpt and Langeron).

While this list does not appear long in print, it is an ample one for the study of general mycology, and is doubtless larger than any other in this country. Professor Sabouraud tells me that he has sent as many cultures as he has on hand and will forward others as they come in, so that the list is likely to become notably lengthened. The first task indicated in the editorial, namely, the building up of a collection, has thus at least been started here, and we will be glad to undertake the second task, namely, to receive cultures, keep them going and supply subcultures on application. We do not feel in the position at present, however, to identify all organisms in scrapings, hairs, etc., that might be sent to us, as we might be overwhelmed with work and forced to recant.

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As stated before, we should at this time like to call attention to a number of technical points which have halted our progress, and which might save much time and annoyance to others who may be stimulated by the editorial, for the first time to undertake this work, but that is beyond the scope of this note, and will be reserved for a communication to be made in the near future. Suffice it to emphasize the editorial's admonition to comply with Sabouraud's recommendations. Let this book be a guide, not only in regard to ingredients of mediums but also of containers. Unless this is done, we shall all be working at cross purposes, and mycology—certainly cutaneous mycology—will not properly advance.

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WHITFIELD'S OINTMENT

To the Editor:—I was somewhat surprised to see, in a discussion on tinea cruris in the February issue of the ARCHIVES, page 225, the opinion stated that Whitfield's ointment was in action a salicylic acid ointment and that the benzoic acid was inactive. The observers said the salicylic acid alone was effective, and apparently based their opinions on its use without the addition of benzoic acid.

I have not claimed that the formula used by me was the most powerful possible, but merely that it was on the whole effective and certainly cleanly. My first experiments were carried out with 5 per cent. benzoic acid, without salicylic acid and I found, as I think other observers will also find, that in tinea of parts supplied with a thin horny layer the eruption disappeared in four or five days. The salicylic acid was afterward added, especially for the tinea of the toes and fingers, with a view to furthering penetration of the benzoic acid. Strong salicylic acid is undoubtedly beneficial but the 3 per cent. strength contained in my formula is much too weak to be effective in severe cases.

In conclusion, I do not share the optimistic opinion that "Dhobi itch" is easily curable by salicylic acid ointments of any strength. The disease in the feet is common in this country now, and some of my patients have had a relapse after being treated for a year with chrysarobin, strong salicylic acid, my ointment in double strength, strong solutions of cresol and iodine mixed and copper salts deposited by means of the galvanic current.

I am constantly searching for an application which will reach the mold through the thick horny layer of the foot and hand but so far I have not had complete success.

ARTHUR WHITFIELD, London.