Correspondence

Johnson & Johnson's Digestive Tablets.

WHEELING, W. VA., Dec. 14, 1907.

To the Editor:—Every physician doubtless is interested in the surgical supply business. There are men scattered here and there, who, like the majority of hospitals, prepare their own dressings, but they are in the minority, and one can easily imagine their bandage rollers lying with the rusty antique surgical metal in some neglected corner of a seldom used cupboard to be resurrected once in a while to occupy the time of the office girl in the dull season. It is conceded, I suppose, that most of us depend on the manufacturers of such goods for all we use in the hundred and one little and big procedures calling daily for their use. I believe Johnson & Johnson's goods have been found satisfactory, and in many ways the firm has endeavored to be progressive and efficient. It is, therefore, with a feeling of wonder and almost incredible surprise that I ran across a bottle of digestive tablets bearing the imprint "Johnson's Digestive Tablets, New Brunswick, N. J., Johnson & Johnson, selling agents." Two letters addressed to them, for information, did not reach them, since no reply came and I was left in the darkness of ignorance. Inquiry along other lines has always received courteous attention from this firm and it is hardly to be supposed that two letters would miscarry. I therefore, refer the matter to the profession at large, and ask any one interested to go to his drug store and buy a box of "Papoids," or "Johnson's Digestive Tablets," and learn for himself the character of an exploitation carried on by the firm which actually owes its existence to his profession.

Furthermore, it may be possible that as he goes into the drug store he may see the window full of these tablets and, as he walks back, he may, possibly, increase his knowledge of this firm's first aid to the injured or dyspeptically sick by observing two test tubes, one exhibiting food undigested, the other food presumably digested by "Papoid" (no doubt aided by some wonderful agent such as bicarbonate of soda or peppermint). Purchase, therefore, a fifty cent size, and enrich your familiarity with current literature by a perusal of its circular enclosed. If you have a lingering belief that this is intended for the profession, certainly, at the same time, you must then, be belittling it needlessly.

It might be well, too, for the physician so interested to find out from reading the circular in package that there is a larger bottle of these tablets, known as physicians' size which "is for physicians" (?) or (and this comes later) "where it becomes necessary to continue the treatment." The fifty-cent size, it is stated, may, in some cases effect a cure, and before one leaves the subject, it may well occur to some how a firm selling an article with any such claim can be depended on in other directions.

The formula of the tablets is the same as that of many other tablets, and possibly one or two "patent medicines" owe their existence to the same ingredients. That is scarcely the point. But a point one can with propriety dwell on, is why need a surgical dressing firm make only one tablet for physicians' use, and that one with papoid, sodium bicarbonate and peppermint as the formula? Doubtless, in fairness, the tablet possesses value, but surely, too, only when used scientifically. For instance, do Johnson & Johnson as selling agents advise their use in a case of deficient activity of the acid forming function of the stomach?

There is one more thing, too, in passing, why is there any need for a bottle other than the physicians' size if the preparation is for physicians' use only? Below are some extracts from the circular enclosed in a fifty cent package bought in the open market:

JOHNSON'S DIGESTIVE TABLETS.

The essential active ingredient in Johnson's Digestive Tablets is obtained from the fruit of the Carica Papaya. This fruit contains a milky juice which has the property of softening and making tender the toughest meat. Hence the name "Digesting Melon."

The secret of the action of the digesting melon is that it contains a peculiar quality of pepsin, akin in nature to the fluid or ferment given out by the stomach in the act of digestion, and there can be no stomach digestion without this ferment. When the stomach fails to supply it sufficiently—as in dys-

pepsia or in cases of overeating—a substitute must be furnished. Commonly this substitute is a pig pepsin scraped from the stomach of the dead animal. It frequently contains a quantity of poisonous substances, removed with it and afterwards practically inseparable from it, which, of course, go into the stomach every time any preparation that includes animal pepsin is taken. The danger is especially great now that there are so many brands of cheap pepsin on the market, made at the great pork-packing establishments of the west.

Johnson's Digestive Tablets are made from the vegetable pepsin obtained from the digesting melon, a product which contains all the properties of the fruit. . . . Time for administration and directions for employment. . . . Hygienic Hints for Dyspeptics.—In all dyspeptic conditions the good influence of hygiene, especially exercise, bathing and diet, are admitted by all. On the following pages are given brief suggestions condensed from the methods suggested by various writers. . . . (Here follow detailed instructions, as to diet, bathing, exercise, massage, etc.) Johnson's Digestive Tablets are also known as Papoids. These tablets are made according to the following formula: Papoid gr., Soda Bicar. grs. iii.; Sacch. Lactis, Menth. p.p., qs. Dose—1 to 3. . . . Johnson's Digestive Tablets are put up in two sized packages; small size contains fifty doses, enough to do a great deal of good and in some cases effect a cure. They are packed in a fat, blue glass bottle that is convenient to carry in the pocket. The bottle is incased in a yellow paper carton, which bears the distinguishing label, as shown in the cut, and sells for fifty cents. The large sized package, known as Physician's size, is for the convenience of physicians and dispensers or for cases where it becomes necessary to continue the treatment. This size contains one hundred and fifty tablets and sells for one dollar.

The question which to me appears a vital one is this, how can a firm guilty of just such a thing, really, at heart be a friend of the profession any more than a big pharmaceutical house that does the same thing? Are not all firms whose business depends on the physician doing the profession a grave injustice when they cater to the casual and frequent buyer of "patent medicines" by manufacturing tablets which only enter into competition with "patent medicines" and as rarely do any appreciable good for anybody?

Perhaps, too, in the case of Johnson & Johnson their "first aid" manuals have appealed to you as a case of benevolence and philanthropy! Some day too you may be called on to witness some employes allowing a life to ebb away turning the pages of just such a book to see what to do. The firm says, "send for a doctor and do this while waiting" but it is well for us to remember the circular of the digestive tablets of which they are the selling agents when considering any attitude they profess.

It is not my intention to criticise the legitimate operations of any corporation but one can not help asking why the need of this deviation to manufacture a digestive tablet, or act as its selling agent. I trust that the firm will somewhere or other explain to the profession its connection in this case, and hope, too, that the explanation will be satisfactory.

H. M. HALL.

Fifth Pan-American Medical Congress.

NEW YORK, Dec. 28, 1907.

To the Editor:—The next Pan-American Medical Congress will be held in Guatemala, Central America, the second week in August, 1908. The international executive committee hopes that you will give it the same efficient support that you have heretofore given to the former meetings. We are sending a news item which is the invitation to be sent out to the medical journals of the western hemisphere.

It must not be thought that Guatemala is an undesirable place to visit in August and that it will be very hot and the rain constant. August is the time of the year called the canicula when, although hot, there is but little rain. The heat does not, however, compare with our summer heat, as Guatemala is situated on a plateau which is comparatively cool. The trip down from New Orleans or from New York by steamer to Porto Barrios is an agreeable one. The trip to the congress and back will be in the hands of the committee on transportation. Excursion trips can also be made in connection with this congress to Mexico or to the various islands of the West Indies. The excursions will be in the hands of Thomas Cook & Co. or of any one who chooses to organize one. There will be no charge for transportation in the Republic of Guatemala.

RAMON GUITERAS, Secretary.

To the Medical Profession:

Gentlemen:—The government and the people of the Republic of Guatemala, as well as the national committee of the Fifth Pan-American Congress, are actively endeavoring to do

all in their power, in a sure and efficient way, to make this meeting a great success. With this object in view the committee will be pleased to invite you personally to attend, as well as the members of the society or medical fraternity to which you belong, in order that through your presence and works the certain success of the congress that science expects of its representatives will be assured.

The committee hopes that you and the other members of your institutions will meet at Guatemala Aug. 5 to 10, 1908, and sincerely begs that from now on you will not hesitate to keep yourself in fraternal relations with this committee, and also that you will let us know beforehand if you intend to attend the congress in person or to send some scientific contributions.

The committee hopes to receive a reply shortly to the invitation to this meeting, which should serve as an incentive to unite professional interests, to stimulate the advance of medical science and to contribute to the preservation of the health and the prolongation of the life of the people of the Americas.

We take advantage of this opportunity to express to you the best regards of
Yours truly,

JUAN J. ORTEGA, President.

JOSE AZURDIA, Secretary.

National Committee for the Republic of Guatemala.

Sudden Death After Injection of Diphtheria Antitoxin.

[A report of a death of a man in a physician's office, immediately after receiving an injection of diphtheria antitoxin, had wide circulation in the newspapers. A request for information addressed to the physician referred to has brought the following reply.—Ed.]

NORRISTOWN, PA., Jan. 6, 1908.

To the Editor:—On the evening of Dec. 12, 1907, Ely Weitzel, aged 34 years, a man of splendid physique and apparently in the best of health, came to my office and asked that I give him an immunizing dose of antitoxin, saying that he had on that morning kissed his little daughter, who was found, less than two hours afterward, to be suffering from diphtheria, both throat and nose being filled with the membrane.

A few minutes before 8 p. m., after having carefully sterilized the right side, I introduced the needle about four inches above Poupart's ligament, and slowly injected nearly all of 1,000 units of diphtheria antitoxin. He said that neither the introduction of the needle nor of the serum gave him any pain, but spoke of the "lump that raised" when I withdrew the needle.

At the time of the injection he was reclining in an office chair, having removed his coats and vest. As near as I can judge, he remained in the chair for from two to three minutes after the injection. Just as he got out of the chair he said: "What is in that stuff? I feel as though it were blistering me." He reached for his clothing, and as he did so he said: "My scalp and face itch and burn terribly," and with both hands he began to scratch his head vigorously. His next remark was: "I can not breathe." I observed that his expression denoted anxiety, and that his lips began to swell and turn dark. I told him to sit down, which he did. He then complained of the itching all over his body, and in a moment said: "I am on fire inside." His breathing was now very labored; his lips, face and neck were much swollen and very dark. A thick heavy froth began pouring from his mouth. He was apparently paralyzed, for he made no voluntary motion of any part of his body. He had a slight convulsion, lasting but a few seconds, after which he ceased to breathe. The action of the heart continued for a considerable time after the breathing ceased.

Soon after he sat down I realized that his condition was alarming and had three physicians called, all of whom live within a few yards of my office. They responded immediately, and we used all the recognized means to re-establish breathing, but did not succeed.

The time elapsing between the introduction of the serum and his death was not over five minutes. He did not speak again after saying: "I am on fire inside," except to mutter: "I—am—dying," nor did he seem to be conscious after that.

The serum used was sent to my office a few minutes before

I injected it, from a neighboring drug store. The date limit was "March 7, 1908."

I have used diphtheria antitoxin in over sixty cases and have never seen any untoward symptoms, except in one instance—an attack of urticaria.

No autopsy was made in this case. I might add that this man from childhood could never be about horses without suffering from symptoms of asthma.

It would be a Herculean task to answer personally the many letters I am receiving from physicians in all parts of the country, so I trust this will answer them through your columns.
S. N. WILEY.

The Inventor of the Guillotine.

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 4, 1908.

To the Editor:—In THE JOURNAL, Jan. 4, 1908, page 68. I note that Dr. William Pepper is reported to have said: "Dr. Guillotin, the inventor of the guillotine, had his own head chopped off." If Dr. Pepper has been correctly quoted, the value of his paper on "Diseases of Great Physicians of the Past," which was read before the Philadelphia County Medical Society on Dec. 11, 1907, is much lessened. Dr. Guillotin lived until the year 1814, and died quietly in his bed. Furthermore, he did not invent the machine which bears his name.

The use of a beheading machine can be traced to the middle ages. In Genoa it was known by the name of "manuaja," and it was by means of the manuaja that Beatrice Cenci was beheaded at Rome in 1605. The "maiden," an instrument resembling the guillotine, was long known in Scotland. In the reign of Elizabeth it was used in Halifax and in Yorkshire.

Joseph Ignatius Guillotin, an eminent physician, was a deputy for Paris in the constituent assembly. In 1789 he prepared the draft for a law to the effect that the mode of inflicting death on criminals should be the same for all alike, without any distinction of nobles or plebeians. The bill proposed by Dr. Guillotin was voted and the assembly enacted, Jan. 21, 1790, that: "the criminal should be beheaded by means of a simple machine." In October, 1791, the same assembly voted that: "the penalty of death shall consist in the simple taking away of life without the accompaniment of any sort whatever of torture; and the convict so condemned shall be beheaded."

Having decided on decapitation, the committee of legislation directed Dr. Louis, the perpetual secretary of the Academy of Surgery, to make a report on the best method of decapitation. He suggested the plan on which the instrument should be made, and was empowered to have one constructed. A German named Schmitt was employed for the purpose. On April 19, 1792, Louis informed Roland, then minister of the interior, that experiments had been made with Schmitt's machine on three dead bodies and that: "the heads were cut off with such precision that he was astonished at the strength and celerity of its action."

The machine was first used on May 27, 1792, to execute a highway robber. The first political execution was that of Collenot d'Anglemont, on Aug. 21, 1792.

The beheading machine was at first popularly known by the name of Louison or Louise, from the name of its inventor. By some caprice it was soon called the guillotine, although Dr. Guillotin had nothing to do with its invention or construction. Dr. Guillotin was opposed to cruel and unusual punishments, and in this he showed himself to be a true physician and a humanitarian.

JAMES MOORES BALL.

Warning Against an Insurance Agent.

MARSHALL, MICH., Dec. 24, 1907.

To the Editor:—I wish to warn the members of the profession against an insurance agent who gives his name as Herbert Squires. He represents himself as an agent of the Home Accident and Health Insurance Company of South Bend, Ind., and his object is to get some physician in each city to represent the company. On the payment of \$3 the physician is given a policy for one year and is to treat the policy-holders at the regular rates to be paid by the company. The agent leaves town and nothing is seen of the policy, nor any word from the company. He claims to be a Knight of Pythias, and