

regard to which priority is, naturally, a matter of interest, will you kindly put on record the following data.

Feb. 9, 1897, I used gelatin capsules containing reduced iron for this general purpose, having had the matter in mind for some months. This experiment was a failure, on account of lack of power of X-ray apparatus, so far as the stomach was concerned, though the capsules could be plainly seen in the mouth. July 13, 1897, this method succeeded with three or four patients, using both iron and bismuth in the capsules. These experiments are more fully reported in *Medicine*, February, 1898. Yours truly, A. L. BENEDICT, M.D.

### Collective Investigation on the Action of Cold in Pneumonia.

PHILADELPHIA, PA., Feb. 26, 1898.

*To the Editor:*—My three collective reports already published on local cold applications in the treatment of acute pneumonia give a record of 299 cases so treated, with ten deaths, or a mortality rate of 3.35 per cent.

Being desirous of pursuing this investigation still further, I take the liberty of asking those who have tested this measure to kindly give me the result of their experience. Full credit will be given to each correspondent in the report which I hope to publish soon. Blanks for the report of cases will be cheerfully furnished by me, with postage for return of same, on application. THOMAS J. MAYS, M.D.

1829 Spruce Street.

### Concerning Squirrels.

SANTA CLARA, CAL., Feb. 19, 1898.

*To the Editor:*—I wish to add a few observations and facts, regarding squirrels, gathered about the inhabitants of the trees of southwestern Michigan.

During the breeding season squirrels like other quadrupeds are very apt to fight. During this time the males battle violently. Their mode of battle is to chase each other until a favorable opportunity presents itself for one or the other to dart beneath the flank of his adversary and bite off his testicles. Sometimes both males share the same fate at the same time. The chisel-shaped teeth together with the ability to take a large round object into the mouth of the squirrel, makes it an easy matter for this animal to maim his adversary in this way almost instantly.

Instead of gray or fox squirrels castrating their own male young the credit must more often be given the agile little red squirrel who is the hardest fighter of them all. He is much quicker than his larger brothers of the other varieties and being smaller and shorter than they, can dart under them, perform his operation and escape before they can harm him. However, the red squirrels deprive each other of the testes during the breeding season. The chipmunk does the same thing. There is no mistaking a female squirrel for a castrated male, as the penis of the male is located under the belly instead of in the perineum, as in the cat. More than that, like the dog and the raccoon, the squirrel has a small bone in his penis which I have verified by dissection in an old male squirrel. The testicles of any old male of the squirrel are larger than those of the cat and hang in a pendulous manner. It is not strange that they should be bitten off readily by members of their own kind, when we consider the teeth and habits of feeding, etc.

I will conclude by showing that castration of his adversary is the squirrel's customary mode of warfare. I once captured an old male red squirrel alive and unharmed. I put him in a box with a large male ferret, expecting of course that the ferret would make short work of the squirrel. Instead of that the ferret had a very narrow escape from losing his testicles. It was only by backing into a corner and crouching down hard that he managed to protect himself until I came to his rescue

with a stick. The squirrel makes no other attempt to bite or harm his adversary in combat than to castrate him. He is an expert at it too, as the very large number of eunuchs among male squirrels will testify. I have seen them fighting many times. Yours truly, E. H. SMITH, M.D.

### How Squirrels Become Eunuchs.

CRAIG COLONY, SONYEA, N. Y., Feb. 22, 1898.

*To the Editor:*—Relative to the discussion now going on in the *JOURNAL* on the above subject, let me say that many years ago it was my pleasure to spend several weeks each fall for five successive years in squirrel-hunting in the eastern section of middle Alabama. My daily tramps in the sport were made with an elderly companion, a man of 60 years, who all his life had been an ardent lover of the sport, and who loved nothing better than the daily rambles through the great forests where the tallest trees grew and where gray and red squirrels (the latter also known as the fox squirrel) abounded.

One day I shot a young male and on picking him up was surprised to find the entire scrotal sac missing, with evidence of a recent injury to the parts. I called my companion's attention to it. "Castrated," he promptly replied. "How?" I asked. "By an old male squirrel," he said, and added that he had often found the same thing, and that he felt convinced that it was done by the old males before the young males left the nest, and that he had on more than one occasion found two young castrated squirrels in one nest. On asking what he thought the old male's motive was for doing it, he answered like the born philosopher he was: "I don't know; you had better ask the old male squirrel." Very respectfully,

WM. P. SPRTLING, M.D.

### Eunuchism of Squirrels.

ELLCOTT CITY, MD., Feb. 25, 1898.

*To the Editor:*—The theory has been advanced by many hunters I have met that during the absence of the mother squirrel, the young utilize the male appendages as teats and in their kind effort to produce something that is not there, cause in time an atrophy of the organs. Personally, though I have killed many squirrels, I have never seen a male minus his testicles, due, probably to the fact that I have never searched specimens for their presence or absence, save as I skinned them for use on the table. I very much doubt the theory of the older males castrating the younger ones; there is no reason why this should be done, and betrays more sense than the animal's gray matter or habits would warrant. A study of the incisor teeth of the squirrel would also suggest a difficulty in performing the operation in the clean manner suggested by your correspondents, or in a manner that would render the operation anything but fatal.

Could it not be a congenital absence of the organs, or failure of the organs to descend into the scrotum, in many of the reported cases when they are absent?

SAMUEL J. FORT, M.D.

### A Coroner's Perquisite.

ELIZABETH, ILL., Feb. 1, 1898.

*To the Editor:*—One of your "Selections" in which the *London Lancet* is quoted has no doubt found many readers who will profit thereby. And as the medical profession can do much to dispel erroneous ideas, the writer would continue to call attention to errors in the manner of calling a coroner's attention when his services are needed. In my jurisdiction good judgment is not lacking in freeing a body found suspended, etc. Quoting from the article in the *JOURNAL* of January 29, p. 263, "If life remains a medical man should be sent for and afterward the police." The sending for a medical man while life still exists may at times be forgotten, hence the necessity