

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### TONICS GIVEN HYPODERMICALLY

DEAR EDITOR: It is always interesting to see the various methods of treatment in the different countries. When I was first in Paris it seemed curious to me that the doctor ordered the tonic given hypodermically for a patient who went out daily but after several years of observation I have come to the conclusion that in many cases the French method is a good one.

In America we feel that the patient must be seriously ill, if not dangerously so, when a daily hypodermic is ordered but in France the most common tonics, such as strychnine, arsenous acid and glycono-phosphates, are given hypodermically as is "Serum Fraisse," a well-known and much used tonic which is a combination of the three. Of course we know that in medicine taken by mouth, about one-third is lost; the action is slow and with a patient whose digestion is not of the best, a tonic by mouth is sometimes of little service. In France tablets are never used for the hypodermics but instead each dose is sterilized and put up by the chemist in a tiny glass bottle called an ampoule. By this method one is certain that the solution is sterile and the dose exact. The fluid can only be drawn up into the syringe by breaking one end of the ampoule. Camphorated oil seems to be one of the most popular and generally used of the stimulating hypodermics and by placing the ampoule in a medicine glass of boiling water for five minutes, the oil runs freely and is less difficult to handle. Caffeine and ether are also widely used, quinine sometimes, in fact all the medicines given in America by mouth are used in France hypodermically if so desired. The only drawback to these little ampoules is the expense, a dozen ampoules of strychnine gr.  $\frac{1}{4}$  costing eighty cents.

I have never seen any bad result to the skin from these frequent *piques*. The doctors abroad always have the syringe, as well as the needle, boiled each time even for an absolutely clean case. The needles in France are different from ours in America. They cost anywhere from fifty cents to one dollar each but are well worth the extra money, for they can be used indefinitely, sometimes as long as two years, can be boiled repeatedly and after two or three months' use, can be sent to the instrument maker to be sharpened, when they are as good as new.

Another stimulant which with us is used only as a last extremity is oxygen. In France this is used as a daily tonic with excellent results. It is frequently ordered three times a day for five minutes. Another tonic that seemed curious to me when administered to a child of seven years, was a small cup of black coffee, about a dessert spoon given after luncheon. This last is a favorite tonic of one of the greatest of the Paris specialists for children.

New York.

M. G.

### TO ENTERTAIN THE SICK

DEAR EDITOR: I take pleasure in submitting a conversation held with an invalid friend of mine which might suggest ideas of use to nurses during long cases.

"I take great delight in outdoor sports," said an invalid to an inquiring caller. The caller looked mystified and the invalid explained: "When I first

began to notice things, lying idly here in my bed, inert and helpless, my eye roamed about the room picking out the flaws, counting the spots on the wall, noting every little disorder and magnifying all these trivialities into keen irritations. One day, in looking at a picture across the room, doubtless to see if a new fly-speck had been added to the three I had already found, I noticed instead, that a reflection of outdoor life was taking place. I became interested. I could see clearly a cat at play with her tail, later on I noticed a chicken stalking along in the grass, for a bit of grass was reflected too. From that day on, I spent much time in looking at these little reflections of outdoor things. I never quite figured out how they could be shown in that picture glass but I did not bother my head that way.

"Finding such rest and forgetfulness of self in this little glimpse of outdoor life, I had the dressing bureau moved so that its mirror would reflect another phase of the out of doors. Sometimes, when feeling especially despondent, I have caught a glimpse of a cat or dog; I have seen a bird mirrored in the glass; I have seen a bit of blue sky or a fleecy cloud, and my despondency would disperse 'til I fell asleep, smiling at the pictures in the mirror. Then, too, I could sometimes see the arrival or departure of a carriage or people and, taking it all in all, I have had more comfort in the reflected outdoor life and sports than in anything else, since being confined to this small room.

"A rapidly growing plant is another great source of satisfaction. I had a bit of German ivy sent me in a bouquet and somehow, I think a God-given way, it sent forth little roots so that, when the bouquet was thrown away, the little ivy was put in a flower pot and placed where I could see it. For a while it did not grow much but after a time it began and the wonder of it! It was astonishing how it covered the little trellis devised for it. In the morning, waking especially weary, my dull eyes sought for my thrifty friend, the ivy, and I could nearly always see a little elongation of a branch, a new leaf started or possibly a protuberance that promised even a new branch. That little ivy plant spoke of life and health to me, of God's great goodness and His care and it taught me many precious lessons. When someone brought me a bunch of flowers, from the ivy's teachings, I thought about their growth and spent much time in conjecturing their surroundings and just how they had grown and bloomed.

"If I had a gift of fruit, oranges or bananas or any tropical fruit, I thought many times of their growth and pictured to myself their beauty, the sunny skies, the warmth and all the strange things that attended their growth and production. I thought of how many people had probably helped towards the perfection of that little gift of fruit and I really learned many things in that way. I could read a little and I have kept myself from myself in many, many ways."

The above testimony came from a woman who had been an invalid for seven years but who subsequently recovered her health and usefulness. It seems worth passing along.

*South Dakota.*

R. S. M.

#### WORK IN A SMALL TOWN

DEAR EDITOR: Sometimes the experiences of a nurse working in a small community are instructive as well as amusing. I would like to submit this little chapter of my experience while nursing in a small Western lumber camp, in the hope that some young nurse, coming from a well-equipped hospital, may realize that adaptability and versatility are not the least of the qualifications for a country nurse.