

AEQUANIMITAS

NOR HEAT, NOR GLOOM OF NIGHT

The postal strike wasn't all bad. If you had a questionnaire in the works or if you have to distribute 22,000 copies of this Journal, it did present problems. But it did provide a measure of relief from the direct mail advertisements, the bills were delayed and the postman's bites, blisters and abrasions got a chance to heal. However, I conduct a fairly active correspondence and I did miss hearing from friends, far and near. In my extremity I recalled the fellow at C.M.A. House who saves for me the communications which the officials find to be unanswerable. If you can't have new mail, a bundle of mature missives will tide you over.

The collection contains the usual quota of incoherent messages from the frankly psychotic. I don't propose to expose their pitiable letters, but I would remark that a very real sense of persecution drives these poor people to communicate. A surprising proportion comes from the United States, maybe because far fields look green, or maybe because the Canadian profession has a good reputation for compassion. Whatever it is, I find it depressing to read about the malice and plotting which they relate. All my experience forbids even an acknowledgment, but I can't help wishing for the magic words which would convey some reassurance and help to dispel the feelings which assail them.

Closely akin is the disturbed lady who describes in abundant detail her presenting symptom of pain in the hip and the accompanying sign of blood in the stool. She is frustrated because she can't find a doctor who will agree with her theories although she has been trying them out for over 15 years. I remember her now because she used to call in person and by phone and once during the absence on vacation of her current physician, I was rash enough to arrange for a barium enema. The negative report of the radiologist worked wonders for several months, but her last letter advances the view that her troubles are related to fluoride in the water.

A search for identity is the theme of four pages of copybook script by a writer who describes herself as "a deliberately respectable person". Her trouble is that the birth certificate indicates that her daughter was born on May 8, 1947 whereas she knows that it was actually May 7. We are urged to consult the perpetual calendar, subpoena the obstetrician and the hospital authorities, proclaim the true facts and right a grievous wrong. To assist in this we are provided with a meticulous description of the young lady, including her eyes "they have the colour of beer—or ale—in them". The reason for all the fuss is that the mother fears that with erroneous birth and citizenship records, her daughter might be saddled with "an offensive persona non grata identity" if she should ever choose to go to the States. This problem is bad

enough, but it does not compare with the mix-up which involved another correspondent when her big baby boy was removed while she slept and planted "into Mrs. Butler's womb". The experience has shaken her faith in doctors and hospitals and she looks with suspicion on her other four children, who, unlike her common-law husband and herself, do not have much hair on their arms and legs.

The cause of research is advanced by a 23-page handwritten report from the practical nurse in Nova Scotia. Multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, anemia, the menopause, temper tantrums, mental retardation and marital infelicity are all caused by the disease Allergy. The Body Chemistry is obviously upset and this relates to alkalinity and acidity, both of which are controlled by Allergy Pills. This correspondent is glad to turn over this information for our further investigations, and she promises to report any new observations that may come to light.

Mimeographed communications are well represented in my bundle. They range from vehement expositions of the views of the Socialist-Labour Party in the United States, through mystic messages entitled Ministers of Apostasy, to tracts on Sex Education, Delinquency, Rape and Murder. Vehemence is characteristic of these effusions, but my friend in Winnipeg surpasses them all in volume and violence. He's against smoking and drinking, two of my favourite weaknesses, and I feel that if I can disregard the strictures of our Committee on Cancer and those of the Alcoholism Research Foundation, I'll not be moved by his turgid prose.

There are many others in the current collection of odd-ball mail and I'll not attempt to say why the National Medical College of Cuba did not receive an answer or why the scurrilous appraisal of that nurse in the O.P.D. was consigned to oblivion. Like you, I'm getting fed up with this used mail and I welcome the new models. I hope that nothing "stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds" until the next difference with the Postmaster General. A.D.K.

ERRATA

In the case report entitled "Ventricular Arrhythmias Treated by Diazepam" by C. R. Van Loon (*Canad. Med. Ass. J.*, 98: 785 [April 20], 1968) the legend for Fig. 1 should read: "Electrocardiographic tracings, taken after defibrillation in the Emergency Department, show evidence of anteroseptal infarction."

In the case report, "Lithopedion", by Lillian A. Chase (*Ibid.*, 99: 226 [August 3], 1968) there is an error in the acknowledgments on page 230. Dr. Lalia B. Chase of Port Williams, Nova Scotia, made possible the publication of the colour plates.