

# CANCER HAS NO FAVOURITES

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Dept.)

CANCER is the greatest problem facing medical research. Searchers all over the world are seeking the answer. So far, it seems that this work is along dark alleys. Yet cancer was first adequately described to doctors 104 years ago. It was a German, Johannes Muller, who detailed its nature in 1838: "Cancer is an abnormal growth of the body cells. For some reason, usually late in life, normal body cells turn into a wild, deadly growth. That is called cancer."

Although the actual cause escapes discovery, our defence against cancer steadily consolidates. Since early Egyptian days, surgery has been used. In 1895, a new weapon was discovered, the X-ray. Some years later, in 1903, radium was found to have the power of destroying certain types of cancerous cells.

In the earlier years of this century, facts began to replace belief about cancer. The belief that cancer arose only in civilised communities disappeared as more extended inquiries proved its frequent occurrence in primitive races. Cancer was shown to have local origins, and not to be a constitutional disease. That is why the removal of a growth sufficiently early may completely eradicate the disease.

## Experiment In Japan

In 1916, in Japan, it was demonstrated that cancer could be produced in the laboratory. Chronic irritation was used, rabbits' skin being painted with tar over a long period; cancer developed. Laboratories the world over have worked on this problem since, but still the question awaits answer as to why irritation causes normal body cells to run wild.

But facts are emerging! The specific substances in tar that cause cancer are

known. Others related to them have been made artificially. These cancer-producing substances are akin chemically to natural body substances — for example, to the sex hormones. It has been shown in experimental animals that prolonged administration of a sex hormone encourages glandular cancer, especially cancer of the breast. And contrariwise laboratory work has shown that by giving yet another hormone at the same time, this result can be prevented. Other research workers are delving into the curious phenomena of tumors produced by a virus. Gradually, facts about the nature of cancer are accruing, and as everybody knows, success in treatment is growing with the doctor's growing skill and equipment.

## Can It Be Cured?

The modern unit for treating cancer consists of a team of skilled workers, who collaborate in the study of each case, and decide which of the available methods—surgery, X-rays and radium—or what combination of methods should be used. Can cancer be cured? The answer is bound up with appreciation of the fact pointed out above, that cancer is a local disease. It begins and grows locally at one spot, and at first is limited to that spot. Later, secondary growths occur. Now if cancer can be caught early before it has extended to second growth, and if it is accessible to surgery, X-rays and radium, it can be stopped and cured.

As yet, no preventive is known. Cancer in its early stages can be cured. In its early stages, cancer causes little or no pain. Therefore, to guard against it, every person, especially over 35 years of age, should have periodical medical examinations. Don't be guided by any-

body except a thoroughly competent physician. There are many lay agencies in our country that portend to give health guidance and treatments. Danger signals appear sometimes as a lump, an irregular bleeding or discharge, a sore that does not heal, or as indigestion with loss of weight.

## Is It Hereditary?

Is cancer hereditary? Mice—generations upon generations—have been used in laboratories until research workers can say on the one hand that cancer itself is not handed down a family tree, but on the other, that the tendency or

susceptibility to develop cancer can be hereditary. No germ has yet been found growing in or causing cancerous growths. It is definitely not "catching."

Cancer has no favourites. In 1939 in New Zealand, it was the second greatest cause of death, 1815 people succumbing, 92 per cent of these at 45 years of age and upwards. It affects more females at the younger ages, more males at the older ages. Keep a sharp look-out for any suspicious condition, have a medical overhaul, and be optimistic—cancer can be cured—if you get it early enough.

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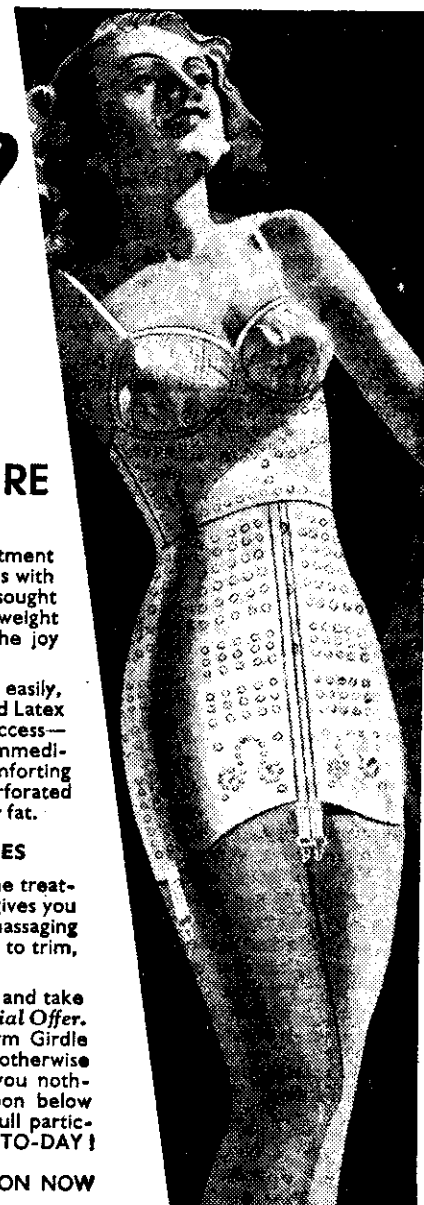
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## JAPANESE IN CHINA

(Continued from previous page)

Haimen, a Japanese controlled port, which was the limit to which we were allowed to go. We dined about seven, and the captain then asked if we would mind turning in at once or having all lights put out; he suggested early bed, as we might be awakened during the night. At about nine we up-anchored and in complete darkness steamed away. Two or three other ships of Portuguese, German, and Italian nationality did likewise, and it was weird to see their shadows stealing along with us in complete silence and darkness. They were all shallow draught boats drawing only four or five feet of water and we hugged the river bank. At midnight we dropped anchor off a little creek which led to the small township of Hsin Kong. Suddenly in the moonlight it became possible to see shapes moving down the creek, and sampan after sampan came creeping out, laden with huge grey bales of cotton. We opened the side

hatches, and in silence loading began. Feverishly they worked till four o'clock. It was cotton from the free Chinese forces and we were running it through the Japanese blockade. Then again we up-anchored and stole back to Haimen. When dawn broke we were at our original anchorage and resumed our pleasure cruise functions for the day.

For four nights we worked like this, but on the fifth night the end came. We had hardly re-anchored off Hsin Kong when we saw the lights of a Japanese gunboat coming up mid-stream. Hastily with lights we signalled the guerilla forces to keep away. A shot was sent across our bows. The gunboat could not get near us for she was not of sufficiently shallow draught, but an armed trawler was sent out and circled round and round us as we lay innocently at anchor. Before dawn we steamed back to Haimen. That morning when daylight came we watched the shelling of Hsin Kong by the Japanese: a reminder to the Chinese that they were not to trade with the foreigner.