

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, YA and YZ Stations of the NZBS by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

(continued from previous page)

it. Some of us have less elastic veins than others. There's a deficiency in the muscle coat. If the tone of the vein muscle is good, the veins stay firm and contracted and the blood goes straight back to the heart. It doesn't fall back between heart pumps because of little one way valves placed nicely along the way. Should these not close snugly and there's weakness in the vein's muscular layers, the blood flow falters, falls back, and naturally there's trouble. The veins bulge. After a while this bulging is more in some places than others, and you ultimately get twisted, knotty veins—so ugly and so feared by women.

Varicose veins usually appear on the inner side of the legs. The first signs may be small spider-web-like splotches of veins, or there may be blue worm-like linear swellings just under the skin. This may indicate that the superficial veins are having to do a bigger job than planned. They are assuming the task of returning most of the blood to the heart because the deep veins are failing. On the other hand, the deep veins may be as good as gold, and the surface system only is falling down on the job. But most commonly it is one of the main trunk veins that is at fault, the saphenous vein almost on the surface of the inside of the leg. It is the longest vein in the body, from the foot to the top of the leg, with a branch coming up from the ankle behind the knee, the two making the saphenous vein. This is the usual culprit when unsightly knobby lumps spoil the lower limb.

This development brings troubles. There is, of course, poor circulation in the legs, pains and cramps and vague aches develop in the legs. The skin becomes waterlogged and puffy, therefore stretched and badly nourished. A brownish patch on the inner side of the leg is a warning that skin breakdown is imminent. Knock, scratch or bruise this patch and it won't heal. The thin walled vein breaks and there's a painful black or blue area, that becomes a large ulcer, known as a varicose ulcer. Such ulcers are very difficult to heal. The wise thing is to admit the presence of varicose veins and have them attended to before ulcers develop.

There is no way of repairing varicose veins. But the falling back or reverse flow of blood can be stopped. If it is early in the trouble and the veins are small, varicose veins can be injected. Substances used irritate the vein walls, causing a reaction that entirely blocks up the vein, and other veins take over the task of the blocked up one. The simplest aid for early cases is an elastic bandage worn round the leg to overcome the back pressure and stop some of the swelling that results. If the big saphenous veins are at fault neither of these methods are likely to succeed, but an operation to remove a piece of the vein and tie it off, combined with injection to seal leaks, may be tried, or even a more drastic removal of the vein.

Moral: The early bird gets the easiest cure. Seek advice before varicosities are marked.

N.Z. LISTENER, AUGUST 27, 1954.

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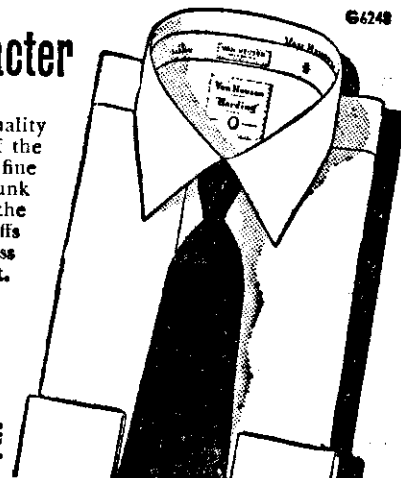
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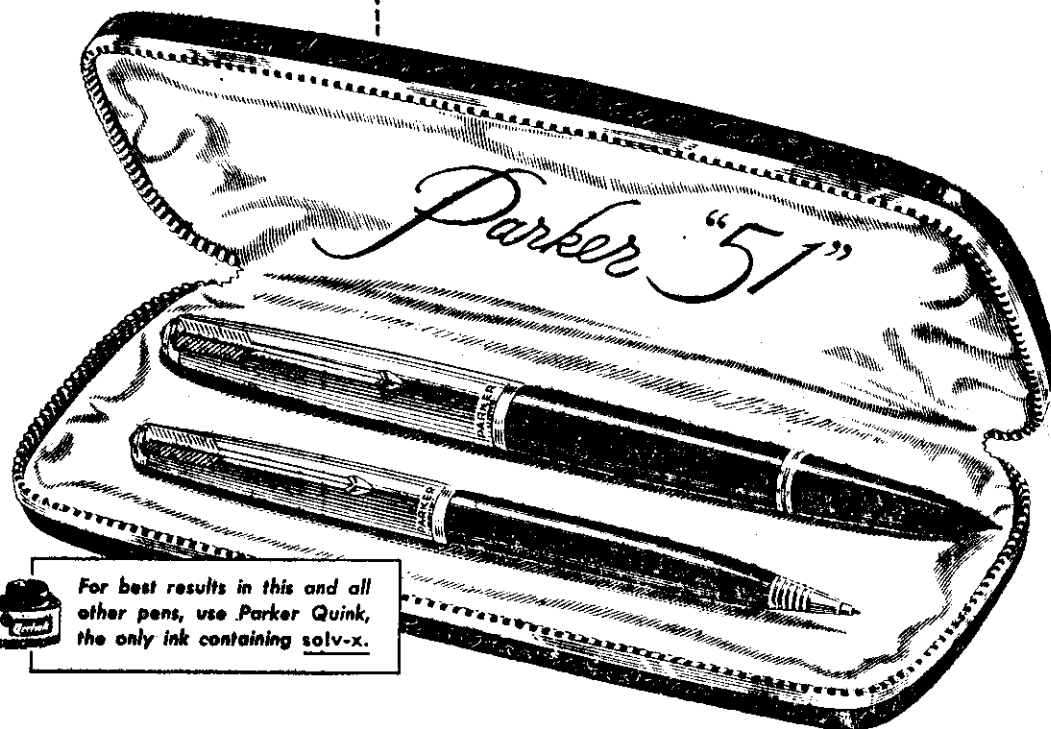


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