Correspondence.

A RARE DANGER OF ETHER ANESTHESIA.

Philadelphia, Pa., March 20, 1916

Mr. Editor: In my Ether Day address on "The Dangers of Ether as an Anesthetic," I failed to note one rare, but important, danger, to which a correspondent has just called my attention. The reason why it did not occur to me was that I had never personally experienced, nor heard of, any trouble such as my correspondent describes. His personal case is as follows: He was operated upon at a large hospital by one of its best surgeons. The anesthetist, however, was a medical student of little experience and evidently more interested in the operation than in his duties as an anesthetist. He carelessly poured a quantity of ether into the patient’s right eye. Unfortunately the patient was blind on the left side. Naturally he struggled. This was, again unfortunately, mistaken for resistance to the anesthetic and still more ether was forced upon him. The result was a "severe burn to the eye, with the formation of an ulcer, blindness for six weeks and glasses ever since."

My correspondent writes that he is cognizant of another similar case. My own anesthetists almost always have been careful to avoid any such accident, and in addition to that have had a bowl of warm boric acid solution at their elbow. From time to time they have bathed the eyes so as to protect them even from the vapor of ether, and very often have put a pledget of absorbent cotton wet with the boric acid solution on the eyes, during the administration of the anesthetic.

Yours very truly,

W. W. Keen, M.D.

COCCYGDYNYA AS A MANIFESTATION OF SYPHILIS.

Boston, Mass., March 21, 1916

Mr. Editor: To suspect syphilis as a common cause of this painful complaint would be manifestly an exaggeration of the possibilities. At the same time it is wise to keep an open mind on the subject. The occurrence of this symptom in obscure cases, which later have proved to be unrecognized syphilis, has happened a sufficient number of times to make the matter more than a coincidence in my opinion. Unexplained "neurasthenia" has of late been proved to be unrecognized syphilis more than once. It has been found that patients suffering with pain in the back of the head and at the "base of the brain," seemingly typical neurasthenes, are really suffering from high vertebral syphilis.

The probable explanation of these cases of coccygodynia is similar: they have a definite pathologic process to account for their pain. The coccyx is a "bone of stress," similar to the tibia, and we are dealing with a true osteo-periostitis, often started up by one suffering with pain in the back of the head and at the "base of the brain," seemingly typical neurasthenes, are really suffering from high vertebral syphilis.

Very truly yours,

William Pearce Coues, M.D.

ERRATUM.

We regret exceedingly that, by an inadvertence in proof reading, the word "cows" was printed instead of "horses" in Dr. Walcott’s article in the issue of the Journal for March 9, 1916, (Page 338, column 2, line 14). The clause in question should read, therefore: "we were able to verify the diagnosis by means of one of the horses."