

## Science Notes

BY WILLIAM G. HAYNES.

### Poisoning by Automobile. (By Edwin F. Bowers, M. D.)

"I have heard that automobile gas is dangerous. Is this true, and why?"  
When a gas engine is running it generates a variety of deadly gases. One of these is unexploded gasoline or benzene vapor, another is carbon-monoxide—which is the same deadly gas that human beings or animals throw off from the lungs.

Last spring a Chicago doctor was overcome by this vapor while in his garage "tinkering" with the engine, and died before help could reach him. Dr. Mary O'Malley, speaking recently before the International Congress on Hygiene, reported the case of a patient overcome by gas poisoning. This patient recovered from the immediate toxemia, but became mentally unbalanced a week later.

The chief danger, of course, lies in working with the engines in close, unventilated rooms or cabins, where the victim gets a large and concentrated dose from the engine exhaust.

And lately it has been contended that many of the fatal accidents sustained by aeronauts occur as a result of loss of control over the aeroplane from temporary unconsciousness caused by inhaling the poisonous gases generated by their engines.

One peculiar thing about this gas poisoning is that resistance to it does not depend upon mere physical strength. A weak slip of a woman may withstand a saturation in gasoline fumes that would completely "floor" a robust man.

In the event of one being overcome by gas poisoning, the same measures should be taken as with any other case of asphyxiation. The clothing should immediately be loosened, and if a pulmotor and its crew is not available, artificial respiration should be resorted to.

The face and chest should be slapped smartly with towels wrung out in cold water, and stimulants—such as black coffee—should be administered, pending such time as a doctor or a nurse with hypodermics of strychnia or nitroglycerin may reach the patient.

But it were far better to prevent the condition. So, if an automobile engine proves refractory, open the garage door while working on it. Or, better still, run the machine out into the open air."

The preceding clipping was taken from the Sunday Magazine of one of the large papers in the east. The article is illuminating in more ways than one.

The effects of benzene vapors were described some time ago in a newspaper article under the heading, "A Gasoline Jag." The patient under examination had been overcome by vapors from gasoline, and exhibited symptoms very closely resembling alcoholic intoxication. As a warning to those of an experimental turn of mind, it might be mentioned that slightly dangerous results are likely to follow this "automobile method of 'boozing'" by users of cigars, cigarettes or pipes.

Another point deserving mention is that Dr. Bowers informs us that carbon monoxide is emitted from the exhaust of an automobile, and that this same deadly gas is given off from the lungs. The source of this information is desired, for the limited references at command do not substantiate this statement. It is commonly stated that carbon dioxide, a comparatively

harmless gas—as evidenced by its presence in soda water and decomposing baking powders—is the product thrown off from the lungs.

### Radioactivity of Musk.

In one of the recent science journals it was reported that experiments had been made on the well-known substance, musk, which resulted in the discovery that it has some of the properties exhibited by radium compounds.

Musk is one of the very old substances used as a perfume, and is characterized by its very strong and lasting odor. It is obtained from the musk deer of Asia.

When the compounds of radium are allowed to be near the body for too long a time, they often result in the production of sores upon the flesh. This is one of the dangers to be

avoided in the use of radium salts in medicine. These same sores were found to develop when musk was kept in proximity to the body for any considerable length of time. Investigation showed the activity of musk to be similar to that of radium, but in a smaller degree.

The powerful odor and carrying power of musk are attributed to this radioactivity. This fact is important in that it opens up a new field of investigation in perfumes and odors.

Beyond the years the soul shall find  
That endless peace for which it pined,

For light appears,  
And to the eyes that still were blind  
With blood and tears,  
Their sight shall come all unconfined  
Beyond the years.

—Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

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