

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

RECURRENT LARYNGEAL PARALYSIS IN CASES OF MAMMARY CANCER

TO THE EDITORS,

Journal of Laryngology and Otology.

SIRS,—Sir St Clair Thomson's excellent article in your January number concludes by stating, "In future I will look for surgical scars on the chest of any female patient with recurrent paralysis."

May I venture to suggest that even the presence of these scars may lead to a wrong diagnosis.

A woman, aged 55, married, was referred to me from the Eye Department complaining of intense pain over the left frontal sinus. She had been unable to sleep for the past ten days, but the swelling had been coming on gradually for about three months, without pain or nasal discharge. She was in great distress and said that unless something were done she would "cut her throat."

The eye was pushed forward and she had double vision. The area over the left frontal sinus was red, swollen, and very tender, and I thought I detected crackling. A thin discharge was seen in the left nasal cavity, but the region was so blocked and congested that even after cocain and adrenalin it was impossible to probe the naso-frontal duct. An X-ray showed a large dark left frontal sinus; the Wassermann reaction was negative.

On examining the chest I noticed the absence of the left breast and the presence of surgical scars. She said she had "cancer five years ago and the breast was removed." I thought I was dealing with a recurrent growth in the frontal sinus.

The woman was in such pain that I decided to explore the region, and, at any rate, relieve her present distress. On opening the frontal sinus the growth proved to be a large gumma, completely filling the cavity and pressing upon the roof of the orbit. The bone was much eroded, but eventually I cleared out the mass and removed all the dead bone. Subsequent treatment with large and increasing doses of potassium iodide cleared up everything, and the wound healed by first intention.

I had no reason to suspect syphilis.

The question which occurred to me was whether the surgeon had removed the breast for a gumma!

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