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Prontosil

Monday, Dec. 28, 1936

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Last month Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, who loves few things better than a big family feast, gave up Thanksgiving dinner at Hyde Park to rush to Boston where Son Franklin Jr. lay abed with what was described to the press as "sinus trouble." The young man did have infected sinuses, and he was in the capable, Republican hands of Dr. George Loring Tobey Jr., a fashionable and crackerjack Boston ear, nose & throat specialist. He also had a graver affliction, septic sore throat, and there was danger that the Streptococcus haemolyticus might get into his blood stream. Once there the germs might destroy the red cells in his blood. In such a situation, a rich and robust Harvard crewman is no safer from death than anybody else.

Not until last week, when his mother and his fiancee, Ethel du Pont, went home, was Franklin Jr. out of danger and fit for Dr. Tobey to operate on his infected right antrum (in the cheek) and ethmoid sinuses (in the brow). Simultaneously, Dr. Tobey let it be known that his notable young patient had been pulled through his crisis by a notable new drug.

When Franklin Roosevelt's throat grew swollen and raw and his temperature rose to a portentous degree. Dr. Tobey gave him hypodermic injections of Prontosil, made him swallow tablets of a modification named Prontylin. Under its influence, young Roosevelt rallied at once, thus providing an auspicious introduction for a product about which U. S. doctors and laymen have known little.

The drug which cured young Roosevelt seems to be a specific cure for all streptococcic infections—septic sore throat, childbed fever, postabortal septicemia. It has helped to cure cases of peritonitis due to ruptured appendix, perforated stomach ulcer or gallbladder. It has been effective in postoperative wounds, endocarditis, suppurative mastoiditis, and tonsillitis. Some cases of erysipelas (also a streptococcic infection) have yielded to Prontosilmedication. The drug also has ameliorated severe cases of carbuncles and cellulitis due to staphylococcus, a different kind of germ.

So far as pharmacologists can ascertain, Prontosil does not attack the streptococci and staphylococci directly in the way that salvarsan ("606") inactivates the spirochete of syphilis. In some undeciphered manner Prontosil* stimulates the production of white blood corpuscles, guardians and scavengers of the blood stream, retards the growth of cocci.

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the Trust's pharmaceutical research at Elberfeld, and Dr. Domagk, a chemotherapist, designed Prontosil's complex molecule of dyestuff. After Dye Trust synthetists made it. Dr. Domagk experimented on mice, found that it did not kill them, that it did cure them of streptococcic infections. Other German doctors tried the material on human beings, began to report success in 1935. Last June two London gynecologists reported encouraging results with Prontosil in cases of childbed fever.

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