

On the Topic of Cancer

By Victor G. Heiser, M. D.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IFOR THOMAS, COLLIER'S STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Science can, and does, save the lives of thousands of cancer victims each year, and modern X-ray apparatus like the above is one of its weapons

Tiny in size, mighty in effect, these radon-filled tubes send their destroying emanations deep into cancer tissue. They must be handled from behind lead screens and their intensity of radiation is carefully measured (top)

CANCER is the most dread of diseases; a note of horror has always clung about the very word. "He died of cancer" sounds more shocking than "He died of heart failure," though heart disease is the first, cancer the second cause of mortality. The long-drawn-out suffering and the virtual certainty that the pain would continue to inevitable death have made cancer Vergil's personification of fear—"An immense, misshapen, marvelous monster, whose eye is out."

The great blanket of fear that swathes the public is largely a heritage from the conviction of even a few years ago when cancer was incurable. When I was an interne nobody was cured. We all believed it was perfectly hopeless, that nobody ever got well. But last November I attended a meeting where the most recent developments in the treatment of cancer were fully discussed and I was simply amazed at the progress. Within the last decade cures have been made in ever-increasing numbers. The layman rarely hears of them.

Among the strange features of cancer are that it is never epidemic but always with us; that its onset is slow and insidious, not one in which the telephone summons the doctor to an emergency, though a doctor is sought for hundreds of lesser ailments. Many of the specters conjured up would be exorcised if people were informed enough to seek examination at the slightest suspicion, instead of hugging their misery to themselves.

"Fight Cancer with Knowledge," is the cancer crusader's slogan. The time

has come to let in more light on the whole subject, even though little enough light, in spite of all the theories of centuries past, has as yet illumined the shrouded mystery of its inception.

Cancer, named for the crab by Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, who observed how this growth stretched out tentacles in all directions, is among the oldest of known diseases. Evidence of bone tumor has been found among the fossils of prehistoric reptiles—of dinosaurs and plesiosaurs that lived millions of years ago in the Mesozoic era.

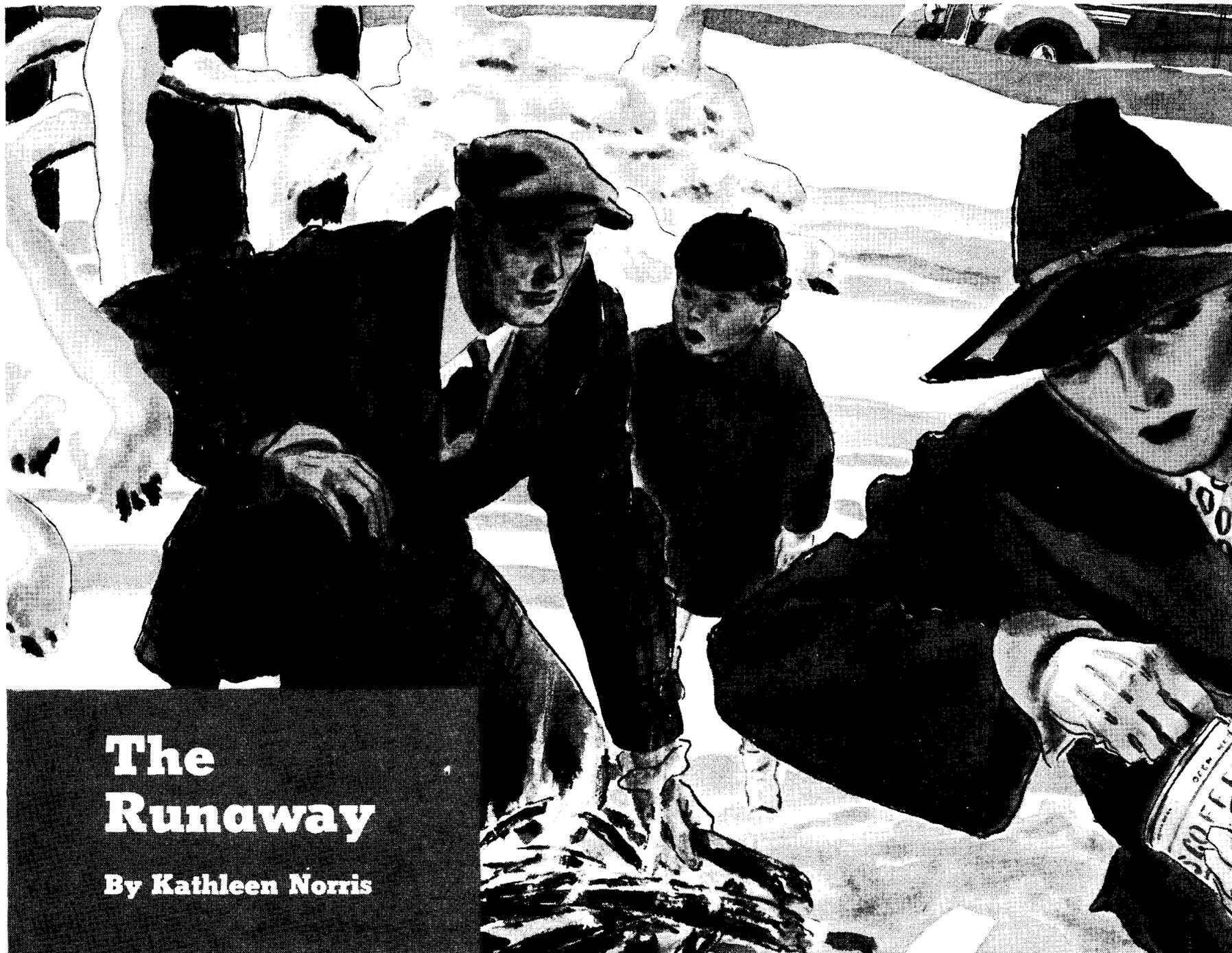
Almost everything has been recommended by way of cure. Surgery was suggested as far back as the Hindu Ramayama of 2000 B. C.; the Ebers Papyrus, 1500 B. C., also proposed a salve of arsenic and vinegar, and this "Egyptian Ointment" was in high favor until the sixteenth century.

Galen said a disease can never be controlled until the causes and origins of it are known. The old master has been proved wrong. The search for the true cause of cancer has gone on unceasingly and has not yet been found. Meanwhile, we are accomplishing much through our knowledge of its pathology.

A brief description may clear up some popular misbeliefs. Tumors merely mean swellings. These, however, can be of three types—the bump on the head, the "benign" form and the heretofore death-dealing "malignant" tumor, or cancer. The first is the result of some injury or inflammation, which ceases as soon as healing takes place.

The second is more complicated.

(Continued on page 52)



The Runaway

By Kathleen Norris

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WALTER KLETT

The Story Thus Far:

SHORTLY before she dies in Chicago, a woman who does not reveal her identity gives the young Spencer Gibsons twenty thousand dollars with the understanding that they are to take care of her baby, a girl, and move to California.

The Gibsons live up to the agreement. They adopt the baby, name her "Rebecca Gibson." And they tell her nothing of her past, until just before her marriage.

Her marriage—to handsome Gavin Flood—does not bring her happiness. Gavin drinks, gambles, makes no effort to support her. When her baby, "Gibbs," is born Becky decides to run away, and not tell Gavin where she is going.

As soon as Gibbs is old enough to travel, Becky goes to New York City. There she finds a job; and there, two years later, she meets a man—middle-aged Doctor Stephen Dinsmore—who knows her history. It is not, however, until Laurence Moulton, a stepnephew of the noted artist, Duane Fox, falls in love with her, that Dinsmore tells her who she is. This is the story, in brief:

Years before, Dinsmore had been in love with a fascinating girl: Madeleine Satterlee. Madeleine, fond of him but in love with another man, had declined to marry him. The other man—Duane Fox—had loved her; but, already married and unable to secure a divorce, he had finally drifted out of her life.

Still adoring Fox, a charming, cynical, careless fellow, she had at last married Dinsmore. Then, on their wedding evening, Madeleine had received a cable from Fox—a message informing her that Fox still loved her, and was coming to her.

A short time later, she had run away with Fox. And she had not been happy. Just before the birth of her baby, Fox's child, she had disappeared. It was she who had paid the Gibsons to undertake the care of her little daughter—Becky!

All this Laurence Moulton had known. Herebefore Becky had fancied she loved him. Now, shocked by his failure to tell her the story,

she devoutly hopes that she will never see him again.

Following a number of long talks with Doctor Dinsmore, Becky returns to California. She finds her home, near the town of Salletts in the San Joachim Valley, much the same as it had been when she had gone away. She finds Gavin a changed man—he is no longer drinking, and he is struggling hard to make a little money. . . . Dinsmore, in San Francisco to perform a difficult operation, pays Becky a visit. As he greets the various members of the Gibson household, Becky—radiantly happy—feels as though she must be dreaming!

Conclusion

THREE days later, coming out of the Exchange, with Gibbs beside her and with her arms full of bundles, at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, Becky was surprised to see Gavin waiting at the wheel of her parked car.

"Gavin, I thought you'd gone up to the camp yesterday!"

"Nope," he said. "Harry's up there. But I stayed overnight at Joe Martin's."

"Oh? You didn't telephone?"

"Nope. Going home?"

"On my way." She bestowed her parcels in the back seat, which was already packed with boxes and bundles. "You've put some things in here?" she asked.

"Things Harry wanted." Gavin's hand in its heavy driving glove was playing with the gas feed, but he did not start the car. "I hear what's-his-name's coming back," he said.

"Doctor Dinsmore? Coming tonight. And he flies east tomorrow," Becky answered.

"I see." Gavin stressed the first word as if there were something difficult to understand in the statement.

"Are you coming home for dinner, Gavin?"

"Nope. Once was enough." He was speaking with deliberate rudeness, with a deliberate lack of sympathy. He had joined the family for dinner on the occasion of Stephen's first visit; had been civil; his manner just on the edge of boredom through the meal. Afterward he had said that he must go uptown and had vanished, leaving a much relieved atmosphere behind him. Since then Becky had scrupulously refrained from mentioning Stephen in his presence.

"He's in love with you, isn't he?" he said now.

"Who? Stephen? He—why, no; what would make you think that?" Becky stammered uncomfortably. "He likes me."

"I wonder!" Gavin said dryly. "I thought he was an old doctor with a beard," he went on.

"He's forty-nine."

"And a lot more than that!"

"No; that's all. His sister told me in reference to something else."

"How d'you mean 'in reference to something else?'"

"Well, I mean that she didn't think I was especially interested; she didn't say it just for my benefit!"

"But you were especially interested, eh?"

"I don't know that I was."

Becky approached with her coffee tin. "You'd picnic in a jail!" Gavin observed admiringly

Gavin said "I see" again, and appeared to ruminate.

"Mother wants these things, Gavin; she's making upside-down cake and everything."

"All right, we'll get started. I suppose she's having a regular party for him. She thought he was just about tops, didn't she?"

"She likes him," Becky agreed simply. Least said, soonest mended, when Gavin was like this.

"I've got to go by Sadlers'," he said, "and leave a message."

"Well, I don't want Gibbs out too late in this weather. It feels as if it is going to rain again."

They drove southeast, passing the straggling outskirts of the town.

"So he can afford to bring a car and a man all the way up from the city, can he?"

"Apparently." Gibbs comfortable and quiet in her lap, Becky looked at the cold winter landscape. The little houses seemed to have withdrawn into themselves, shriveled somehow. Bare little yards, garbage barrels with their covers half on, children's red- and green-wheeled toys abandoned among the frosted toppled chrysanthemums and

(Continued on page 39)