EDITORIAL

We plan—with varying success—to prepare the numbers of the Journal well in advance of publication. It thus happens that today (5th November) we are writing the Editorial for our January issue. Not unnaturally our thoughts have wandered towards Guy Fawkes night and the burns and injuries resulting which now receive so much publicity. Our thoughts have also been turned to this subject by the excellent paper on the aseptic treatment of burns published in this issue under the feature "60 Years Ago."

As an amateur historian we have always been interested to note how frequently "new" problems are only new in their modern settings and have appeared many times in the past. Guy Fawkes Night injuries are a case in point—to read our press one would think this is a present day hazard but the Royalist Surgeon—Richard Wiseman (1622-76)—deals with such injuries in his famous "Treatise on Wounds". Here is his account of such a case:—

"A young Gentleman of about ten years of age, boarded at a School a few miles off, the Evening before the fifth of November having filled his right Pocket full of Squibs and Crackers, threw one of them into the Chymney amongst the Embers. It took fire: but whether it scattered the fire, and some parts of that flew into his Pocket, or whether it was the Cracker, but those in his Pocket took fire also, and his Cloaths burnt. At the sight thereof his little Chamber-fellow ran out for help. In his absence a little boy from some other Apartment took the alarm, came in, and seeing his School-fellow in flames, catcht up a basin of water and threw it upon him; than ran away for help. Others came in and rescued him out of his burnt Cloaths. A neighbouring Chirurgeon was sent for, who dressed him. The next day they brought the Patient to Town. I found him burnt into the Flesh from a hand’s breadth below the Arm pit down that Side, with part of his Belly, and from thence it spread from down to the Os ileon and Glutens, and along the Thigh almost to the Knee. And by endeavouring to free his Pockets of the Cracker, he also burnt his hand from the fingers ends along the side of his Arm to the Elbow-joynt."

Wiseman treated the case conservatively and merely dressed the burns and snipped the blisters. He records the result this "I healed this young gentleman’s ulcers even and smooth without the least inequality nothing remaining but the red colour to make them discernable"—a result any of us might envy.

Colonel Commandant, R.A.M.C.

Major-General A. MacLennan, O.B.E., M.B., R.A.M.C. (Retd.), has been appointed a Colonel Commandant, R.A.M.C., with effect from 16 September 1971.