March 1, 1947

Dr. L. J. J. Nye,
Brisbane Clinic,
Wickham Terrace,
Brisbane B 17,
Australia.

Dear Dr. Nye:

First let me thank you for your interest in my having a copy of your book. Despite the fact that this did not come directly from you, it is your work, and therefore I feel a considerable personal and professional gratitude to you for having done it. I feel I should not have been able to obtain a copy except through the generosity of Dr. Fairley.

I am quite frank to say that I am not as certain as you are, even after having read your excellent book, that the problems you are dealing with are due in any primary sense of the word to lead absorption or lead poisoning. I agree that the evidence is strongly suggestive. I do not agree, in view of our ignorance of the mechanisms involved, that either arteriosclerosis or kidney disease of the type described owes its origin to the effects of lead. It is a difficult problem to get at experimentally or clinically, but I feel that the pathological physiology, if I may call it that, of these diseases must be better understood before we can be certain of our position. All too frequently things that happen together in time have been associated by medical men as cause and effect, only to find later with better understanding of the problem, that these were coincidental relationships only. The problem of arteriosclerosis has been talked about and investigated extensively for many many years. We do not appear to be much closer to the answer than we were long ago. On the other hand, an accumulation of physiological and clinical facts is probably building the background on which the understanding of this problem, or I should say, this series of problems, will finally rest. I cannot find it in my make-up to accept either the experimental or clinical evidence which suggests that lead absorption has an important relationship to arterial disease. In my own observations on industrial workmen I have not seen any evidence which in any way convinces me that protracted lead exposure, even when severe, materially changes the incidence and severity of arteriosclerosis in an industrial population. It may be that something happens to children that does not occur in the case of the adult. My experience, or rather my lack of experience, does not entitle me to an opinion, but on general clinical and historical grounds as well as pathological considerations, I still find myself in considerable doubt.

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Despite this point of view, or perhaps rather more on account of it, I hope that I shall be able to visit your country in the not too distant future, and I shall certainly look forward to the opportunity of talking with you.

Sincerely yours;

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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