**New Books and Articles, Briefly Noted**

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The Bombing and the Breakthrough: How a chemical weapons disaster in World War II led to a US cover-up and a new cancer treatment by Jennet Conant

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From time-to-time, in our PROS newsletter, I call your attention to new books or articles that may be of interest. In the September 2021 issue of Smithsonian Magazine you will find a summary of Jennet Conant’s book The Great Secret. The magazine article is easily found on-line.

Conant tells the story of the German air force’s attack on the Italian harbor of Bari in December 1943. The British Navy had secretly stockpiled drums of nitrogen mustard aboard a ship in the harbor for potential use in chemical warfare. When the ship exploded under bombardment the mustard was liberated into the oil slick in the harbor which quickly formed - bathing sailors trying to swim to safety in mustard. Skin desquamation, mucositis, neutropenia, and death ensued from alkylating agent toxicity.

US Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Alexander, a US Army medical officer trained in chemical warfare, investigated the event, uncovered the British cover-up, and reported his findings. The tragedy of the event led to the generation of new knowledge about the value of nitrogen mustard as a chemotherapeutic agent for the treatment of cancer and its employment for the treatment of leukemia and lymphoma shortly after the war.

Conant is an effective storyteller weaving together medicine and mystery to tell the tale.