

PSYCHOLOGY

Adults Learn Better

A man or woman under 50 years of age should seldom be discouraged from trying to learn anything which he or she really needs to learn by the fear of being too old, Dr. E. L. Thorndike, professor of educational psychology at Columbia University, declared at a meeting of the American Association for Adult Education. To a lesser degree, this is true after 50 years also, he added.

Dr. Thorndike presented results of experiments in which persons 35 years and over, averaging 42 years, were compared with persons 20 and 24 years old, averaging 22, in their ability to learn acts of skill and to acquire various kinds of knowledge.

In learning Esperanto, an artificial language constructed on logical principles, the older group learned about five-sixths as fast as the younger. Both groups learned more rapidly than children.

In learning reading, spelling, arithmetic, and other elementary school

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ORNITHOLOGY

Yellowstone Given Eagle

A large golden eagle, a bird even more fine and majestic than the bald eagle shown on the American coat-of-arms, has been presented to Yellowstone National Park by Harry E. Boughers, of Fort Wayne, Ind. Park Naturalist E. J. Sawyer tells the circumstances of the gift. Mr. Boughers found the eagle with its wing injured, apparently by gunshot, and kept it several weeks until its wound was healed. Anxious that the bird should not be exposed to any more pot shots in a densely populated region, he sent it out to the park at his own expense, requesting that it be kept and fed well for a short time and then released to find its own home in the mountains.

Yellowstone National Park has frequently figured as the source of donations of such animals as bison and elk, but this is one of the few cases on record where the process has been reversed. This is at least partly due to the fact that the National Park Service has steadily adhered to a policy of refusing to introduce animals or plants not native to the region. Inasmuch as golden eagles do live in the mountains surrounding Yellowstone Park, Mr. Boughers' gift was considered appropriate and very welcome.

Science News-Letter, August 27, 1927

EVOLUTION

Worse Than Monkeys

Since Darwin's day, full many a jape
About our ancestor the ape
Has filled the comic paper's pages
And doubtless will for many ages.

But having got *that* story told
The scientists become more bold
We hear from Doctor Elliot Smith
A tale most eloquent, the pith
Of which is just that he and you
Are both descended from a shrew:
A nasty tempered little shrew!
Worse than an ape, if that be true.
And then from Africa there looms
This theory of Robert Broom's,
Whereby our ancestry is led
Back to the ancient Karroo bed
To primitive reptilian fonts
In horrid old Theriodonts!

It's bad enough to have an ape
For ancestor, but you could do
Much worse, for now we have a shrew
To head our family tree, or place
A crawling reptile for our race
To worship as our ancestor
Our deified progenitor!

But now the scientists with pep
Have taken still another step
And Doctor Gregory insists
We place on our ancestral lists
Some ancient fishes primitive
That in primeval seas did live.
A clumsy, awkward, slimy fish,
Not fit to serve upon a dish!

Then Doctor Stensio will trace
The fishes to an earlier race,
Ostracoderms with names so shocking
You can't pronounce them without
choking.

And next the scientist will find
The evolution of our kind
Goes back to arthropod or worm
That in the Cambrian slime would
squirm.

Oh must this be, my learned friend?
My geneology to end
In writhing worms—whose better fate
Is use as Presidential bait?

Oh come! let's stop it at the ape
At least he's got some human shape.

—W. D. Matthew.

Science News-Letter, August 27, 1927

Every civilization acts as a poison
upon those who have not been properly
inoculated; it would act that way
even were it perfectly pure and did
not contain (as it always does) evil
elements.

—George Sarton.

Science News-Letter, August 27, 1927

GEOLOGY

Oil Overproduction

Cheap gasoline is pleasing to the man who owns a car, but it is a menace when it means, as it does at present, vast overproduction and economic waste of a natural resource upon which a large part of our industrial life, national defense and domestic comfort is dependent.

The United States produces more than 70 per cent. of the world's supply of crude oil and consumes about the same amount. The production is now at the rate of some 2,486,000 barrels of crude oil daily, or nearly a gallon to every person in this country. Each year the production has been growing until the point has been reached where the entire world is concerned over the exploitation of this valuable and irreplaceable natural resource.

According to the Federal Oil Conservation Board, "the total present reserves in pumping and flowing wells in proven sands has been estimated theoretically as but six years' supply" at the present rate of production and consumption. An oilless future is not necessarily prophesied at the end of this time, for all the oil could not be extracted by then, since the gas pressure which expels the oil is diminished with time. The known supply of oil would gradually grow less and

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HYGIENE

Water Available Abroad

Tourists from the land of the free and the dry are assured of receiving pure water to drink when they are in France this summer, if they prefer it. Fearful lest the lack of a purified supply of "l'eau potable" should interfere with the influx of American dollars from the pockets of participants in the great summer exodus now embarked on the high seas, many resorts and watering places on the coast have put in plants to render water fit for drinking.

Electricity is the favored agent for sterilizing the water in most localities, especially in those sections where neighboring waterfalls are a cheap source of power. The typhoid bacilli and other water-borne germs are not electrocuted but are done to death by the liberation of ozone, a super-powerful form of oxygen. The method is said to be so efficient and cheap that the city of Paris is considering the feasibility of introducing the system.

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Oil Overproduction

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less. New fields may at any time be discovered, of course, except in certain areas where this would be geologically impossible. However, discoveries of new fields cannot be counted upon to save the situation.

The fact remains that the overproduction in oil is a menace because it is unnecessarily depleting an important natural resource and dissipating gas pressure. This dissipation of gas pressure, says the Federal Oil Conservation Board, "leaves in the upper sands oil which well might have been recovered to an amount equal to that actually taken out under the rush methods of competitive drilling and producing."

Science News-Letter, August 27, 1927

The brown rat, which came from Europe about 1775, now inhabits every state of the Union.

Glaciers that creep down the sides of Mount Rainier are slowly grinding the mountain away.

By using modern machinery, one man can dust with poison powder 100 acres of cotton in a night.

MEMORANDUM

This blank space serves a dual purpose. It allows you to clip out the article on the reverse of this page without destroying any other article. It can also be used for notes and the recording of your own observations.

Adults Learn Better

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subjects, adults of 42 progressed about five-sixths as fast as the adults of 22. Both groups probably learned faster than they would have learned the same things as children at the age of 12, Dr. Thorndike said, for they learned more per hour of study than children comparable to them in brightness are able to learn.

"Extensive experiments with adults learning algebra, science, foreign languages, and the like in evening classes, and with adults learning shorthand and typewriting in secretarial schools, support the general conclusion that ability to learn rises until about 20," he stated. "Then, perhaps after a stationary period of some years, learning ability slowly declines. The decline is very slow, however, roughly about one per cent. per year."

The chief reason why adults seldom learn a new language or a new trade is not the lack of ability, but the lack of opportunity or desire, Dr. Thorndike concluded.

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Deer cause considerable damage to orchards in New England.

Deep under the sea, volcanoes are undoubtedly producing lava.

Synthetic wood can now be made from chips of sawmill waste.

The National Museum at Washington has 10 million specimens.

Japanese peppermint is being raised in this country as a valuable source of menthol.

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