

How Eyes of Races Differ

Pharmacology

From the annual meeting of the American Pharmaceutical Association at Portland, Maine, this week.

The familiar "drops" which the doctor puts in your eyes before examining them do not have the same effect of enlarging the pupils in eyes of other races, members of the American Pharmaceutical Association were told at their annual meeting. Chinese, for instance, and negroes are not so affected, Dr. K. K. Chen and Edgar J. Poth of the Johns Hopkins Medical School discovered. The reason for this peculiarity of Chinese and negro eyes is not known.

In the study a very delicate instrument, called a filar micrometer, which measures to one-hundredth of a millimeter, was attached to a telescope and used to measure very accurately the dilation of the pupils under controlled illumination. Five kinds of "drops" were studied—synthetic, natural and pseudo-ephedrine, and cocaine and ephthalmine. The last two are in more general use.

For the examination of Chinese and negro eyes there remain two solutions, homatropin and atropine, which do dilate the pupils. However, these two are dangerous for persons who have an eye disease called glaucoma.

Polar Expedition Lost

Exploration

No word has been heard since March from the scientific expedition which set out for the Taimyr Peninsula, one of the most remote points in northern Siberia. The expedition, consisting of Tolmachev, the Secretary of the Polar Committee of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Zoologist Rogosov, and Astronomer Malzev, set out early in the year to reach this Arctic peninsula by crossing the Siberian plains. It was the first attempt to gain the Taimyr region overland.

Inquiries have been sent to all parts of the region where the expedition may be traveling. No northern station of the U. S. S. R. has been in communication with the radio station of the explorers.

The only inhabitants of the peninsula who might aid a stranded party are a few wandering Mongols.

Science News-Letter, August 25, 1928

"Alliances between pure and applied sciences are as dangerous as those of spiders, in which the fertilizing partner is apt to be absorbed."

—William Bateson.

Of the 1,177 different kinds of trees that are found in the forests of the United States, 137 have special medicinal virtues, Prof. Ernest F. Stuhr of Corvallis, Oregon, told members of the American Pharmaceutical Association. Prof. Stuhr has made a comprehensive investigation of all the trees in the country which are now or may be of medicinal value.

Synthetic ephedrine has little difference in action from the natural product made from the Chinese herb Ma Huang.

Dr. Chen reported the results of investigations on this drug, which is used extensively to relieve hay fever and asthma, to dilate the pupils of the eyes before examination and to contract congested membranes of the nose.

Qualitative and quantitative tests indicate that the two drugs have almost the same properties. In the treatment of asthma, the synthetic drug appears to have a weaker action than the natural. In the effect on the membranes of the nose the two products are similar.

Science News-Letter, August 25, 1928

Mathematical-Minded

Psychology

Born mathematicians, who think easily in mathematical terms, are to be sorted out from ordinary mortals who think in words, by tests now being developed at Cooper Union by Dr. Carl Brigham, of Princeton. The tests on which Dr. Brigham is working are designed to pick out promising engineering students from applicants who are destined for failure.

Success of students at engineering courses cannot be predicted by testing their general intelligence, he has concluded. Most of the intelligence tests depend on verbal thinking.

"We are now hot on the trail of a good test for mathematical thinking," said Dr. Brigham. "We believe it is quite possible for a student to study algebra and geometry in high school and to pass satisfactory examinations in those subjects just after he has studied them, without incorporating any of the mathematical methods of thinking into his own intellectual organization."

Science News-Letter, August 25, 1928

The rate of twin births is unusually high in Ireland.

NATURE RAMBLINGS

BY FRANK THONE

Natural History



Kingfisher

Late summer brings a relative silence in avian musical circles, and we are apt to forget about the birds, or to think they have already gone away. Nevertheless, they are still here, only now, like well-behaved children of a past generation, they are to be seen (if you look sharp) and not heard. The summer bird observer still uses his ears, but his eyes have a larger proportion of the work to do than they had in April and May.

An easy object for this "birding by eye" is the kingfisher. He is no shy lurker in coverts, nor does he camouflage himself in mottled brown or gray to blend into a treetop or dry pasture background. He shines boldly in enamel colors, and sits out on a jutting stump over the water where anybody can look.

He's not there for the purpose of getting himself admired, of course. He is doing some looking himself—looking for his dinner. For the kingfisher is a fisher in fact as well as in name, and as patient and motionless while waiting for his quarry as St. Izaak Walton could wish the best of his featherless worshippers to be. Silently he sits there for many minutes, until a fish of a size he thinks he can handle swims within range. Then, literally a blue flash, he dives. A white splash, and the kingfisher emerges, the captured fish in his strong beak. It is seldom that this living fish-spear misses.

The kingfisher does not confine his diet entirely to fish. Crayfish, frogs, even large beetles and other insects, all find their place in his larder. One or two species of kingfisher even do considerable foraging in the woods for the more usual insect prey of other birds. Due to his occupation, the kingfisher must be a solitary. Fishing is not a gregarious occupation.

Science News-Letter, August 25, 1928