

Trachoma Leading Cause of Blindness

Medicine

The chief cause of the nearly two and one-half million cases of blindness existing in the world today is trachoma, Lewis H. Carris, managing director of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, stated on his return from a world conference on blindness held at the Hague.

This disease is found in nearly every part of the globe, but it is at its worst in Oriental countries. It is most prevalent in Egypt and along the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, in Palestine, China, the Balkan States, India, the hot sections of Brazil, and, in our country, among the inhabitants of the Appalachian and Ozark Mountain districts and among American Indians.

Trachoma is a highly contagious disease. The roller towel has been the cause of many epidemics of the disease in industrial plants. A common family towel is also a potent spreader of the disease among members of the same household. Poverty, crowding and unsanitary living conditions are important factors in the contraction and spread of trachoma.

The disease causes redness, painful inflammation and granular growths, looking something like sago, within the lids. These irritate the cornea, producing ulcers and later scars. The scar formation may produce an opaque layer covering the pupil which results in loss of sight.

In individual cases the disease may be checked by proper treatment, but trachoma is so widespread that it cannot be entirely controlled until more is known of its cause. Dr. Hideyo Noguchi, working at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, thought that he had found the organism or germ causing trachoma. Since his death the work has been continued, but further results have not yet been announced. Other investigators have considered diet a causative or predisposing factor.

The United States has for many years refused admission to immigrants showing symptoms of trachoma. The U. S. Public Health Service has been conducting extensive studies of the disease in the sections of this country where it is prevalent.

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Rocket to Moon

Astronomy

Prof. H. Oberth, a German scientist living in Roumania, has secured the support of UFA, a German film company, for his research on a rocket to fly to the moon.

Professor Oberth was last spring awarded the Esnault-Pelterie-Hirsch prize given by the Astronomical Society of France for the most practical invention designed to promote interplanetary navigation.

Science News-Letter, November 2, 1929

Young on the Theory of Light—Continued

On the whole it appears, that the few optical phenomena which admit of explanation by the corpuscular system, are equally consistent with this theory; that many others, which have long been known, but never understood, become by these means perfectly intelligible; and that several new facts are found to be thus only reducible to a perfect analogy with other facts, and to the simple principles of the undulatory system. It is presumed, that henceforth the second and third books of NEWTON'S Optics will be considered as more fully understood than the first has hitherto been but, if it should appear to impartial judges, that additional evidence is wanting for the establishment of the theory, it will be easy to enter more minutely into the details of various experiments, and to show the insuperable difficulties at-

tending the Newtonian doctrines, which without necessity, it would be tedious and invidious to enumerate. The merits of their author in natural philosophy, are great beyond all contest or comparison; his optical discovery of the composition of white light, would alone have immortalized his name; and the very arguments which tend to overthrow his system, give the strongest proofs of the admirable accuracy of his experiments.

Thomas Young (1773-1829) was a physician by profession, although he took part in most of the scientific life of his time. At the age of 28 he was appointed Professor of Physics at the Royal Institution. During the following two years he gave 91 lectures, in which the famous ones on light were included. At the end of two years he gave up the professorship because it interfered with his practice of medicine.

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To Unite Medicine

Medicine

Closer unity between the various branches of medicine will be brought about by the new Department of the History of Medicine and the William H. Welch Medical Library of Johns Hopkins University, prophesied Dr. Harvey Cushing, professor of surgery of Harvard University.

From being very compact in its early stages, medicine has become scattered among the various specialties of medical practice and of medical investigation and experiment. The medical students are now the only tie that holds all these branches together, Dr. Cushing said. But under the direction of Dr. Welch, in whose honor the new library was planned and named and for whom the new chair of the history of medicine has been created, the unification of medicine will surely begin.

The new library will be cultural, not merely vocational, and an active force rather than a passive collection of books and journals, Dr. Cushing declared. Dr. Welch long ago taught that the study of the history of the various medical doctrines broadens a physician's view and increases his perspective. This will be the guiding principle of the new institutions.

The new department is the first of its kind in America. The inauguration of it and the dedication of the library were made the occasion for the many friends and admirers of Dr. Welch, both in America and Europe, to pay the highest honors and tributes to this remarkable man who for over forty years has been an outstanding figure in the medical profession.

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Drifts 7,000 Miles

Oceanography

Two unusually long bottle drifts have just been reported to the Hydrographic Office in Washington. One bottle, thrown overboard by Officer O. Haugstad of the Norwegian steamer Childar, was picked up among the Marshall Islands after having drifted about 6,000 miles. The second was found among the Caroline Islands after a drift of about 7,000 miles. This bottle was one thrown overboard by Second Officer R. M. Stall of the American steamer K. R. Kingsbury.

The longest drift in the records of the Hydrographic Office is one made between May 31, 1909, and May 19, 1912, of about 11,820 statute miles.

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