

IN VARIOUS SCIENCE FIELDS

Flu Germ

Reported discovery of the causative organism of epidemic influenza by a University of Chicago scientist, Dr. Isadore S. Falk, has startled and thrilled the world.

Working during the epidemic of 1928-29, Dr. Falk and his associates have isolated an organism of the streptococcus family, where also is to be found the germ of scarlet fever and septic sore throat, and have produced a disease resembling human influenza in monkeys infected with this particular organism. The disease was transmitted from monkey to monkey by keeping them in contact with each other in a common cage. The organism or a closely related one was later obtained from the throats of persons suffering from colds in the spring months following the epidemic. The organisms exist in several stages of virulence, the experiments suggested, and some of the results of the experiments indicated that a preventive vaccine may be established, Dr. Falk stated.

Whether this discovery has actually unearthed the long-sought cause and possible means of prevention of this disease cannot, however, be definitely stated for some time yet. Every influenza epidemic of modern times, at least, has brought forth similar organisms thought to be the specific cause of the disease. One by one, these organisms have failed to measure up to expectations in succeeding epidemics. The value of Dr. Falk's discovery can only be determined by further careful scientific investigations and confirmations, which will require considerable time and possibly even another influenza epidemic for their consummation.

Medicine
Science News-Letter, December 28, 1929

Six Earthquakes

Six severe earthquakes since the beginning of 1929 is the record of the Aleutian Islands now, with a shock that was felt around the world occurring there on December 17 at 5:58 a. m., eastern standard time. The latest quake was somewhat farther west than the previous five, for studies by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey of seismograph records gathered by Science Service have located it at 52.5 degrees north latitude and 170.5 degrees east longitude. This position is about 75 miles southwest

of Attu Island, the extreme westernmost of the Aleutian chain. It is near the Aleutian Deep, a gash in the ocean bed such as frequently indicates a region of earthquake activity.

Though the quake may have produced a tidal wave that reached some distance from the center, it is not likely that any severe damage was caused, as it was so far from civilization.

The quake was recorded on seismographs at Georgetown University, Washington; Fordham University, New York; Harvard University, Cambridge; the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; St. Louis University, St. Louis; Loyola University, New Orleans; Regis College, Denver; the Coast Survey's station at Tucson, Arizona; the Dominion Observatory, Ottawa, Canada, and the Meteorological Observatory, Victoria, B. C.

Seismology
Science News-Letter, December 28, 1929

Pot-Hunters

The American souvenir-hunter must revise his habits hereafter when he visits the southwestern section of his own country, and seeks to gather old Indian relics for the corner cupboard back home.

A new policy of protection for archaeological sites, particularly the Indian ruins of the Southwest, is about to be inaugurated by the U. S. Government.

While there is already sufficient provision by law for protecting valuable ruins from despoilation, field employes are soon to be instructed with regard to the provisions of the law and will be impressed with the importance of enforcing them.

According to recommendations just made in the annual report to congress of Secretary of Interior Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, government field heads hereafter would be authorized to arrest persons who carelessly or wantonly destroy prehistoric ruins. They would also be given permission to take away from such pot-hunters any objects of antiquity which the curio collectors are about to carry away with them.

Neither would Indian traders in the vicinity of such valuable sites and ruins be allowed to purchase and sell archaeological materials or objects of antiquity, under penalty of having their licenses to sell to tourists removed.

Archaeology
Science News-Letter, December 28, 1929

Rheumatism

Preventive medicine has accomplished much in the way of reducing the death and sickness rates of many common diseases, but a large field for further effort lies in the prevention of the crippling deformities of chronic arthritis, or plain ordinary rheumatism, as it is known to the vast majority who suffer from it. The need for such preventive work is emphasized and methods described in a report made this week to the American Medical Association by two Boston physicians, Drs. Loring T. Swaim and John G. Kuhns.

"Correction is possible to a small degree at any stage of the disease," these doctors said of the deformities. However, they concluded as follows: "Correction never compares with the results of prevention, in our experience. Early protection in good position, and rest, with light normal use, are the only measures to prevent deformities in arthritis."

The position during sleep is especially important, and the patient should rest in a position least likely to cause strain or contracture, the physicians explained. Motion should be encouraged but never forced.

Medicine
Science News-Letter, December 28, 1929

Damsites

Belts of dead and blasted trees, standing like macabre processions around the edges of lakes created or enlarged by power and irrigation dams, are now things of the past, Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur announced before a meeting of the President's Committee on Outdoor Recreation.

Such eyesores are being removed where they exist, he said, and all new permits for the construction of dams on the public domain now have inserted in them clauses providing for the removal of all trees likely to be drowned, before the water is allowed to back up over their roots. This action has come as the result of the increasing use of publicly owned lands as recreational and educational areas; for tourists and students of nature alike have found such skeleton fringes as now disfigure the shores of Jackson Lake and other bodies of water most objectionable. The cost of removal is relatively low, if the work is done before the shores are submerged.

Biology
Science News-Letter, December 28, 1929