

the front became incapacitated by it. The same disease occurs in the stress of civilian life. The condition resembles mild hyperthyroidism, especially in cases in which there is a goiter, and is also sometimes confused with purely mental diseases such as psychoneuroses, psychoses, hysteria and maladjustments. These latter conditions, however, are not relieved by the operation, Dr. Crile reported.

The operation itself consists in severing certain nerves as they emerge from the adrenal glands. These small glands lying above the kidneys exert a powerful effect on the body. In emergencies, through a substance they secrete, they speed up our body processes so that we can act quickly and efficiently enough to save ourselves from whatever danger threatens. In the condition known as soldier's heart, the glands are overactive and cause stimulation which is not needed. After the operation, the feeling of nervous tension, rapid heart action and cold sweat which have accompanied the overstimulation become gradually less and less. The operation is performed in two stages. If improvement does not follow the first operation, Dr. Crile stated, it would be because the condition had been wrongly diagnosed. One patient has remained well for fourteen years after the operation on one side only, Dr. Crile reported.

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## PHYSIOLOGY

## Sensory Reactions of People Found to Be Widely Different

**D**IFFERENT people live in different worlds, so far as their sensory reactions are concerned, Dr. Albert F. Blakeslee of the Department of Genetics, Carnegie Institution of Washington, at Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y., told the meeting of the National Academy of Sciences at New Haven.

Dr. Blakeslee reported experiments testing the ability of different individuals to taste a chemical, phenyl-thio-carbamide. Some persons find very weak solutions of this substance extremely bitter; others detect no taste in even the crystals themselves. Taste deficiency for the crystals appears to be inherited as a Mendelian recessive, he has found.

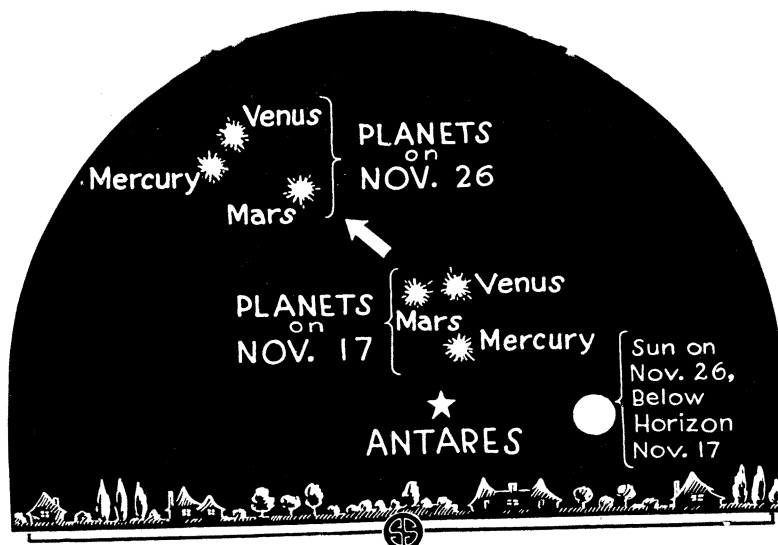
The inability to detect the bitterness is not a complete "taste blindness," as was at first supposed. For it has been

found by Dr. Blakeslee that the chemical is also bitter to the "non-tasters" if only it can be gotten to their sense organs in a sufficiently concentrated form.

"Most 'non-tasters' can detect bitterness if a cold saturated solution is used," Dr. Blakeslee told the scientists. "The few who are still negative to this test have been found to taste bitterness in a saturated solution in hot water or still better in hot weak alcohol."

Inability to taste the crystals may have something to do with differences in salivas as well as to differences in sense organs, Dr. Blakeslee believes. He found no close relation between acuteness of taste for this chemical and for another bitter compound—picric acid—or for a sweet or an acid.

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VENUS, MERCURY, AND MARS

*Diagram of a portion of the western evening skies showing how close these three planets are to each other at present.*

## ASTRONOMY

### Three Planets Together From November 17 to 26

**W**ITH the combination of keen eyesight and a very clear sky in the west at sunset, an interesting conjunction of three bright planets can be seen between Tuesday, November 17, and Thanksgiving Day, November 26.

On the first date, just after the sun has descended behind the western horizon, the planet Venus can be seen a short distance above. Just to the left of it is the planet Mars, considerably fainter. Directly below Venus is Mercury, brighter than Mars, but inferior to Venus. The star Antares, in the constellation of Scorpius, is below Mercury, but is practically invisible.

## Positions Change

On successive evenings the relative position of the planets changes. As they move through the sky to the east, Mercury will pass Mars and catch up with Venus. On November 26, Venus will be the highest, Mercury just below and to the left, and Mars several times as far below and to the right.

Unfortunately, these planets will be so close to the sun that they will set before the sky is very dark, but with slight optical aid, such as a pair of opera glasses, they may be seen more easily. After November 26, the sun will be so close that they will be invisible even with such assistance. A more satisfactory triple conjunction, of Saturn, Venus and Mercury, will be seen in 1935, from February 1 to 3.

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Statistical tables show that malaria has been increasing in the southern states in the past few years.

The U. S. Post Office Department is interested in a newly perfected device which weighs mail and records the amount of postage to be paid.