grees and over) with only scattered local rains as compensation.

The drought, already called the most severe in the history of the nation, "has been intensified and where rains occurred they afforded only temporary relief, except locally," states the newest report.

Science News Letter, August 22, 1936

PSYCHOLOGY

"Blanks" Occur in Mind Several Times a Minute

YOUR mind "goes blank" several times every minute. During these blank periods you involuntarily stop work for a couple of seconds. If you are tired, the stops occur oftener—maybe eight or ten times each minute—and they may last twice as long.

This automatic putting on of brakes by the brain was discovered in experiments conducted at the psychology laboratory of the University of Chicago, under the direction of Prof. Arthur G. Bills. The "blocks," as Prof. Bills calls these blank periods, are not complete, he explains. The individual does not lose track of what is going on, but he must stop mental work on the task at hand.

Blocks partly account for the "er-r-r" and "ah" which public speakers put between words. These blanks are particularly conspicuous when a person is doing rapid calculating. Every so often, he is unable to proceed and stalls. Fatigue increases both the frequency and the duration of the blocks, causing bunching of responses or spurts of work.

Stutterers Block Often

Stutterers block about twice as often as normal persons and their blocks last longer, it was found.

"It is safe to assume that there is a common neurological basis between blocking and stuttering," Prof. Bills concluded.

Mental blocks are enforced resting periods, he explained. They may account for the fact that continuous mental work does not impair mental efficiency to nearly the same extent that muscular work impairs muscular efficiency, he believes.

By giving his subjects artificial rest periods timed to coincide with their blocks, Prof. Bills found that he could practically eliminate the blocks. He also found that most errors occur just before or just after a block; and that when the tasks are more tiring, the number of blocks is greater.

Science News Letter, August 22, 1936

ASTRONOMY

Tiny "Nearest" Planets Are Given Classical Names

THE TWO tiny planets, or asteroids, which approach closer to the earth than any other known body except the moon, have now been given names to honor two mythological characters who have so far been omitted from the sky. According to the Astronomisches Recheninstitut in Berlin, the one discovered in 1932 by Dr. Karl Reinmuth of the Neu-Babelsburg Observatory of the University of Berlin, has been named Apollo, after the ancient god of the sun, who also concerned himself with prophecy, song, and music.

This little body, probably about a mile in diameter, can come within as little as 3,000,000 miles of the earth.

The second asteroid was found in February of this year by Dr. E. Delporte of the Belgian National Observatory near Brussels. On Feb. 5 it was only 1,376,000 miles away, within 75,000 miles of the closest that it can ever possibly approach. This has been named Adonis, after the beautiful youth who was beloved of Aphrodite.

It has tentatively been called Anteros in the United States, after the god who was opposed to Eros, the god of love. This name was appropriate, because formerly an asteroid called Eros had held the honor of making the closest approach—about 14,000,000 miles. Still another, called Amor, also a discovery of Dr. Delporte, in 1932, comes closer than it, reaching a minimum distance of 10,000,000 miles.

Science News Letter, August 22, 1936

PHYSIOLOGY

An Athlete's Knee Is His Most Vulnerable Spot

IN ACHILLES, it was the heel. In the modern athlete it is the knee.

On athletic fields more injuries occur to the knee than to any other part of the player's anatomy, Dr. Marcus H. Hobart, who for twelve years has been handling athletic injuries at Northwestern University, finds. He presents (*Journal, American Medical Association,* Aug. 15), a review of his experiences, with detailed statistics on the injuries that have occurred in that university in the last five years.

Football, as might be expected, has the longest casualty list of any sport. Dr. Hobart thinks this only natural for "probably five or six times as many students play football as any other sport."

Next to football in frequency of injuries comes wrestling, and after that basketball, baseball, track, swimming, water polo and boxing. Other sports are too safe to merit consideration.

The knee takes the brunt of the punishment for several reasons. Its position is exposed, it can be affected by both direct and indirect force, and since the ankles are well protected and do not give way, the strain is transmitted to the knee. Dr. Hobart thinks it might be better not to strap players' ankles so tightly.

Next in frequency to knee injuries come those to the fingers and toes, ankles, shoulders, nose, face, elbows, back and legs, and feet.

Athletic injuries are either in a class by themselves or in a class with war injuries, the idea being to return athlete or soldier to team or trenches quickly and fully recovered. So that a student may be returned to practice or play only when it will do him no damage, Dr. Hobart states that a physician should be in full charge of the physical side of the team, as the head coach is in charge of the athletic side.

Fractured bones, in Dr. Hobart's athlete cases, are almost always put in a cast rather than a splint, as the cast cannot be easily removed. The general rule, he says, is to use a cast for fractures in children, athletes, idiots and doctors.

Sprains are the most common injuries in athletics, followed by contusions and concussions, fractures, cartilage injuries,