

forks now, but their gesture is eloquent of more primitive table manners.

But would you know what it meant if somebody tilted up his chin and then flicked his hand under it, back outwards? It means, "I don't care!" Formerly, when all men were bearded, a flick of the beard signified indifference; now it is used even by clean-shaven men. The French know and use this gesture, too: they call it "la barbe."

Equally cryptic, to a non-Italian, is this one: hand at coat-pocket level, horizontal, palm up; then drop it suddenly three or four inches, keeping same position. That stops any kind of financial approach. Without the addition of a spoken word, it means, "I'm broke!"

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PSYCHOLOGY

## Mothers-In-Law May Cause "Hay Fever" of the Mind

**T**HE MIND can have "hay fever" too. It is not caused by ragweed, that obnoxious pest that brings on so many sneezes this time of year. But it can be caused by a mother-in-law.

That the mind can become supersensitive to certain irritants just as the unfortunate hay fever victim is supersensitive to certain pollens is pointed out by Dr. Wallace Marshall of Appleton, Wis., (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, July). He explains this parallel between mind and body in reacting to persistent irritations as a long-sought link or common ground for both biology and abnormal psychology.

The effect of ragweed pollen on the person sensitive to it is well known. This peculiar sort of sensitiveness to what is harmless to another person is called "allergy" by the physician. The similar sort of sensitiveness in the mind is termed by Dr. Marshall "psycho-allergy."

Bombardment by pollen will sensitize the allergic person so that thereafter the least whiff of that pollen will start a paroxysm of sneezing. In a comparable way, Dr. Marshall explains, overexposure to an irritative mother-in-law may make a person supersensitive to that particular irritation. Thereafter even a mention of the mother-in-law may be sufficient to start a paroxysm of rage or a tirade. The father-in-law, in this case, does not precipitate any violence any more than daisies cause hay fever.

The hay fever victim can be relieved of his symptoms by a process of desensitizing. He is given gradually increasing doses of the pollen in the form of injections until he is taking it in such large amounts that he is rendered immune to the ordinary irritation of pollen-laden air.

Likewise, Dr. Marshall encourages, the son-in-law can obtain mother-in-law "immunity" by psychoanalysis.

The "mental ragweeds," or psycho-allergens, as Dr. Marshall calls them, can be revealed by the psychiatrist's word-association test, one sometimes used with the "lie-detector" to trap those suspected of a crime.

When the person hears a key word, the "lie-detector" shows his response in the form of a change in the electric potential of his skin. That is because he has previously become sensitized mentally to that particular word. It has become for him a psycho-allergen. The record made by the "lie-detector" is an index of the emotional upset that word produced in him. In the investigation of a crime, the response may indicate the

suspect's guilt. In the patient with "mental hay fever" it identifies the irritating mental factor, as a scratch test identifies the pollen in true hay fever.

Other examples of psycho-allergy are mentioned by Dr. Marshall:

"The respiratory embarrassment which the stutterer suffers, is a psycho-allergic reaction which may have an inferiority as its basis.

"The individual who faints at the sight of blood suffers a psycho-allergic reaction which can be traced to a specific emotional upset caused by a specific psycho-allergen.

"The criminal, who kills people without the slightest sign of an emotion, may develop a refractory period and lose his nerve completely.

"The dyspso-maniac (drunkard) seeks a flight from reality in liquor. He does not drink for the sport of drinking; he imbibes because he needs a retreat from the definite psycho-allergens to which he has developed a state of hypersensitivity."

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CLIMATOLOGY

## Mountain in Hawaii One Of World's Wettest Spots

**D**ROUGHT-WORRIED Uncle Sam Downs at least one bit of real estate where there is no lack of rain—the top of Mt. Waialeale, in the middle of the island of Kauai, westernmost of the larger islands of the Hawaiian group. There the average annual rainfall piles up to the impressive figure of 451



**NO DROUGHT HERE**

Near the top of one of Hawaii's mountains is this "lake." Here it is always wet.