

cover, even in zero weather, are appreciably higher than they are up in the wind. The mountaineer in his snow-buried hut, the Eskimo in his snow-block igloo, don't worry so long as they have something to keep up a bit of fire. The snow, caging quantities of air between its fluffy flakes, is an excellent heat insulator—less durable than asbestos or felt, but of a comparable order of efficiency.

#### Protects Plants

Snow's function in protecting plants in winter is not so much in keeping them warm as in preventing too rapid fluctuations between freezing and thawing, which is very damaging to plants, and also in shielding them from dry, cold winds that might deprive them of vitally necessary water. Winter drought can be the cruellest drought. Farmers with winter wheat in their fields worry when the snow cover disappears, even though the temperature may not be severe. But the mercury can drop to fifty below zero, for all they care, if the crop is safely blanketed under a foot or so of snow.

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#### PENITENTIAL SNOW

*"Nieve penitente" is often found in mountain regions. Unequal melting leaves steep mounds that look like white-robed figures bowed in prayer.*

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

## Possibility of Parrot Fever Vaccination in Mouse Studies

PROTECTIVE vaccination against parrot fever or psittacosis might be possible in the future by using parrot fever virus made inactive by formalin, it appears from studies reported by Dr. K. F. Meyer, of the University of California's George William Hooper Foundation, at the meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine.

Three injections of a specially pre-

pared vaccine, Dr. Meyer reported, protected 90 per cent. of a group of mice against deadly doses of parrot fever virus.

Resistance to parrot fever is extremely variable and difficult to understand, it appears from Dr. Meyer's report. An attack of the disease does not always protect against a second attack. Two cases of second attacks have been reported in laboratory workers. Children have a definite resistance to parrot fever, which seems to get less as they grow older. Bird breeders are supposed to be immune to the disease but probably are not. Investigation showed that they often are sick with a malady like influenza which Dr. Meyer believes really is parrot fever. The symptoms of the two diseases are so much alike that parrot fever has probably often masqueraded as influenza.

Not all those exposed to the disease get it. One member of a family may die from parrot fever caught from a pet bird and others of the same family hardly seem to be ill. On the other hand, the disease has occurred in laboratory personnel when every effort was made to protect them from it during parrot fever investigations.

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A botanist observes that poison ivy was very little used by Indians, but tribes in Iowa did use it to poultice some kinds of swellings.

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