

## PSYCHIATRY

## Gangsters Use Metaphor As Escape From Reality

WHEN the gangster calls his machine gun a "typewriter," or his lethal bomb a "pineapple," he may be trying to soften with poetic metaphors the unpleasant reality of his life.

The speech of the criminal is filled with metaphor and substitute words. With many of them the public is familiar; many more are never heard outside the circles of crime.

In adopting his lingo, the criminal may also be motivated partly by the same human trait that makes the physician write his prescriptions in Latin and the scientist compose his speeches in technical terminology. It is the motive back of the secret grip of fraternal organizations—a way of identifying oneself with a certain group and aweing or mystifying the uninitiated.

But in addition the euphemistic language of the crook is a mechanism of escape from hard facts. In a report to the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr. Mandel Sherman, of the University of Chicago, quotes a prison conversation illustrating this type of escape wording:

"As soon as I got out of the bird

cage (cell) this morning," said the prisoner, "I went to the mess hall and tanked up on mud (coffee) and bread. Then at noon we had rubber heels (slices of meat loaf) with some fish eyes (tapioca) after. Sundays we get mountain goat (mutton) or sometimes leather (beef). If I don't get a hooker (warrant for immediate rearrest) I'll soon be out of this can (prison) with at least a pocket full of rattles (silver money)."

Gangsters do not kill their victim, they take him for a ride or bump him off. They are not imprisoned for their crimes, they take the rap or go up the river.

Escape or evasion of reality is the diagnosis of psychiatrists.

The unfamiliar words of European news articles of recent months make one wonder whether statesmen may not be similarly attempting escape in euphemism from unbearable reality.

Is this the reason why we hear of "quarantine" instead of embargo, "sanctions" instead of reprisals and "plebescite" instead of conquest?

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during religious strife. They left inscriptions and drawings on the walls. And they took over, apparently, the duty of forecasting the flood. They remained in this refuge for nearly a century.

Egypt has kept up efforts to measure the Nile. There are long, though incomplete, records from a Nile-meter in Cairo from 622 A. D.

But such records lack precision of modern observations, comments Dr. H. E. Hurst, who discusses the recent flood year in the British journal, *Nature*. It is only since the present century began that current meters have been introduced in Egypt.

Analyses of available records indicate that in the past 70 years the Nile has had a high term of 30 years followed by 40 low years. But, Dr. Hurst points out, we still do not know whether the Nile is entering on a term of high floods. Its ways are still far from completely predictable.

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## CHEMISTRY

## Science Resourceful in Making Paper Tell Age

THE papers!

Many a false clue in crime has hinged on "the papers" having been faked and given a look of authentic age.

Many a questionable first edition book has turned out to be a forgery, on paper of recent make.

And yet, paper experts have received far less attention than ink experts. Somehow, it was hard to be sure and definite about the age of a scrap of paper.

But that situation is changing. New ways of analyzing paper have been found. Obscure facts in paper history have been ferreted out. And these two developments were what experts needed.

A British paper expert, Dr. Julius Grant, believes that this line of research will become increasingly valuable.

It is possible now, he reports, to an-

## ARCHAEOLOGY

## Nile-Meters Are Ancient But Floods Are Still Studied

THE Nile flood of 1938 was exceptionally high. It is believed the highest in 40 years.

The curious thing about that—if you pause to consider—is that there should be doubt as to what is a record-breaking overflowing of the Nile. Why, for thousands of years, the rise of the Nile has been the greatest reality in Egypt's welfare. No records? Incredible!

Actually, there have been records.

Even in ancient Egypt, certain priests had Nile-meters in their mysterious precincts. One of these Nile-meters was discovered a few years ago near the Nile beside a temple a pharaoh built about 1300 B. C.

This Nile-meter building had a reservoir in a central court. As the Nile began to rise in July, priests recorded the

height of water in the reservoir for two months, so as to report to the wondering people the revelations from the river god.

A strange incident occurred at this Nile-meter, when Christians in the fourth century A. D. took refuge there

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