

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?

Science News Letter, February 11, 1939

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.

Science News Letter, February 11, 1939

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

Science News Letter Subscription Coupon

To Science News Letter, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D. C.

Start my subscription to SCIENCE NEWS LETTER for 1 year, \$5

Renew 2 years, \$7

Name _____

Street Address _____

City and State _____

(No extra postage to anywhere in the world)

alyze raw material in a piece of paper and to tell whether the wood—if it is pulp paper—was prepared by a chemical or mechanical process. And if the investigator knows his paper history, he can say that the materials and process indicate that the paper was made after a given date.

Dr. Grant tells some paper facts that prove useful. For example, until about 1800 all paper was made of rags, mainly linen or cotton. In the eighteen fifties a rag shortage was so acute that straw eked out rags in paper. Esparto grass was first processed in 1861; wood some twenty years later.

Rosin was used to make paper take ink better, at first in Germany, then more widely about 1835. Paper loaded with titanium dioxide and associated white pigments is later than 1930. Calendered papers date from 1830; coated papers from 1890.

Some landmarks in paper history are still vague, but not the recent ones. Sherlock Holmeses of the paper world keep close track of current changes in the industry.

Science News Letter, February 11, 1939

FOODS

Many New Juices to Join Familiar Ones on Table

FOR the breakfast menu of a few years hence: Rhubarb juice. Passion fruit juice. Guava juice. Strawberry juice. Blueberry juice. These are new products that the giant-infant of the food industry, the juice business, is about to make available for your pantry.

Tomato, grapefruit and pineapple juices are the leaders in this array of liquids. Yet prior to 1925 bottled and canned juices were limited to bottled grape juice and small amounts of bottled apple, loganberry and other berry juices.

Grapefruit juice came in in 1926, tomato juice was packed first on an important scale in 1928 and pineapple juice joined the procession in 1931.

The total quantity of fruit and vegetable juices preserved exceeded 32,000,000 cases in 1937. The volume is still growing and tomatoes alone provide approximately 13,500,000 cases annually.

Canned orange juice introduced in 1930 reached large commercial production in 1934. More recently lemon and cranberry juices have appeared, along with the "nectars" of apricots, peaches and pears. Plum, cherry, papaya, cur-

ETHNOLOGY

Feudal State Preserved On Island of Sark

THE FEUDAL age is supposedly dead. But England has a sample of it left, like a living bit of archaeology.

This feudal state, the Island of Sark in the Channel group, is still held under the charter Queen Elizabeth granted to a Norman in 1565. A Norman descendant, Sybil Hathaway, and her American-born husband, Robert Hathaway, are dame and seigneur of Sark.

Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway—they have long Norman titles at home—have been visiting our shores and giving some Americans a chance to gaze at two amiable moderns who are actually expected to protect an island in return for public duties performed by their loyal tenants.

There is no unemployment in Sark, says Mrs. Hathaway; no automobiles, no street lights. The 600 inhabitants are mainly fishermen and farmers. A parlia-

ment of 52 men and women make laws, which Mrs. Hathaway can veto if she sees fit. The people speak ancient Norman, interlarded by English words like radio and telephone. Education has been compulsory in Sark since 1805, or before England had it. English and French are taught to Sark children. Tourists are a source of revenue, to the tune of 25,000 visitors a year.

People of Sark, Mrs. Hathaway emphasizes, are not British colonists. They are Normans. They are her feudal tenants, and she is the King's feudal tenant. She pays every year a twentieth of a knight's fee.

Asked how she spends her time at the feudal manor, she says she has a farm, is keen about dairying and has a dairy diploma, likes gardening, receives endless visitors. Every problem on the island is brought to her door.

Her husband, who must sign state papers, is nevertheless secondary. He once asked someone to make his position clearer, and was told, "Well, if your wife committed murder, you could be hanged for it."

Science News Letter, February 11, 1939

PSYCHOLOGY

Two Simple Rules Will Help You to Forget

IF YOU have something on your mind that you would like to forget, just follow these two rules:

First, fill your days with new interests, new activities, and these will crowd the old from your mind.

Next, transplant yourself to new surroundings away from all the little reminders that bind you to the past.

New learning or activities and new surroundings, Dr. John A. McGeoch, psychologist of Wesleyan University, told the New York Academy of Sciences, are among the major determiners of human forgetting.

Since in actual life, he said, one cannot, short of a psychological vacuum, escape the destroying effects of new activity, the wonder is, not that we forget, but that we remember anything at all.

The only reason we fail to forget everything is because we learn some things very well indeed.

Science News Letter, February 11, 1939