

## PSYCHOLOGY

## Small Children Setting Fires Follow Biblical Reasoning

**D**ESIRE for excitement may lead 13- or 14-year-old adolescents into fire-setting, but when small children turn to firesetting, they are expressing their aggression toward a hostile world and their reasoning is "startlingly like Biblical teachings."

Firesetting is much more common among boys than girls.

These are among the findings of a study reported by Dr. Helen Yarnell, of Bellevue Hospital and New York University Medical School, to the American Orthopsychiatric Association meeting.

The study was made on 60 children seen chiefly during 1937-1938 who had a history of firesetting. This seems like a small number compared to the number of children under 16 years admitted each year to the psychiatric division of Bellevue Hospital—1,755 in 1937 alone—but Dr. Yarnell explained that no effort was made to include every possible case.

Younger children are rarely brought to the hospital just because of their firesetting activities and these are usually discovered only incidentally, so there may be many more such cases. Pyromania is not considered a serious problem with any of the children's courts and the New York Fire Department records for the six-year period 1933-1938 showed only 72

formal charges of incendiarism preferred against children under 16 years.

There seem to be two ages for firesetting: one at about six to eight years and another at 13 or 14 years, Dr. Yarnell found. There were only two girls among the 60 children she studied.

The six- to eight-year-olds generally had an unhappy life, deprived of the love and care of parents or other guardians, often shifted from one foster home to another, and showed other forms of anti-social behavior like running away, truancy and stealing. The fires they set were made in or around their own homes, caused little damage and were usually put out by the child himself.

"Children who set fires have suffered even more severely than the average neurotic child," Dr. Yarnell said, "and are those who find it necessary to use the magic power of fire to assist themselves."

"Though few of these children have had much religious training and cannot tell a single story from the Bible, they show a reasoning which is startlingly like Biblical teachings," Dr. Yarnell continued. "Anyone who is bad is doomed to destruction by fire which purifies them, and in the end everything is made over new and perfect."

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*Medical Association* in commenting on the subject in its current issue:

"If any of the committees can undertake to make a survey to locate such openings, a certain number of refugees can be absorbed with a minimum amount of disturbance to the rights of American physicians.

"The chief difficulties that have arisen in this situation come from the fact that some of the refugees are poorly trained or of low ethical standing, that some find it difficult to adapt themselves to American ways in the practice of medicine, and that many tend to settle in large cities already overcrowded with physicians.

"Perhaps the difficulties of adaptation can be overcome by well planned instruction. Only the coordinating committees already mentioned or groups of a similar character can aid in solving properly the problem of suitable distribution of refugees to places where they may be useful rather than a foreign body setting up irritation and forcing extrusion."

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## ZOOLOGY—ETHNOLOGY

## Tax Records and Payrolls Studied by Zoologists

**I**F YOU grumble, while you pore over your income tax return, that "they're taxing the skin off you," that will be only an echo of a possible taxpayer's plaint of 150 years ago, back in the State of Franklin, established shortly after the Revolutionary War in what is now eastern Tennessee.

Only the Franklinian citizen would have grumbled in the plural: he paid his taxes in skins. And if he added that the Governor and other state officials "had it pretty soft" he would have been literally right again. For they were paid not in pelf but in pelts—usually the beautiful soft skins of beaver.

## MEDICINE

## A.M.A. Asked to Establish Committee to Aid Refugees

**T**HE American Medical Association has been asked to establish a special committee to aid the refugee physicians. The request has come from six distinguished leaders of American medicine: Drs. David L. Edsall and George R. Minot of Boston, John A. Hartwell of New York, Warfield T. Longcope of Baltimore, Howard C. Naffziger of San Francisco, and Dallas B. Phemister of Chicago.

Thus far the only action taken by the A.M.A. House of Delegates has been a recommendation to the state boards of medical registration that citizenship be the requirement for license to practice. The right to regulate the practice of

medicine rests with individual states.

Requesting A.M.A. cooperation with the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Physicians, the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming From Germany and the Boston Committee on Medical Emigres, the six physicians point out that "in the field of general practice and in the specialties also numerous openings exist for which it is difficult to find qualified American physicians; for example, poorly paid full-time physicians and practices in rural communities."

Says the *Journal of the American*

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These curious sidelights on both history and zoology have been uncovered by Drs. Alexander Wetmore and Remington Kellogg of the Smithsonian Institution, in a study of the birds and mammals of Tennessee. They found much valuable zoological information in the old tax records and official payrolls.

The Governor was paid 1000 deer skins a year, the Chief Justice, 500. County clerks got salaries of 300 beaver skins each, and the clerk of the state's House of Commons, 200. Beaver and deer skins in those days had a cash value of six shillings apiece, which was also the value of the now almost unobtainable otter.

Taxes were paid in raccoon and opossum skins. Possum pelts were not worth much. Grafting tax gatherers had the thrifty trick of debasing the currency, by cutting off the tails of 'coon skins, sewing them on the opossum skins which they kept in the treasury, and then selling the raccoons for their own profit.

There were elk and bison in the state at that time, but by 1820 the flood of settlers had driven them all out.

The studies of Drs. Wetmore and Kellogg show that present-day Tennessee has 180 species of birds and 87 of mammals. Of bats alone there are 11 species, most of which are rarely seen.

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acquire the easily cured skin cancers as protection against possible internal cancers that are more likely to prove fatal. He and Commander Stephenson, however, do suggest that the theory be tested by studies of cancer in animals.

More statistical studies are also needed, these scientists believe, to help solve the cancer problem. Such studies as have previously been made are based on data from hospital groups, not from total population groups, they point out. Their studies are said to be the first in the history of cancer research made on a group for which such complete medical records are available. The Navy records covered each cancer patient's medical history from entry into the service until death.

Cancer does not always give a warning in time for treatment to be successful, the study also showed. In spite of annual thorough medical examinations of officers, frequent examinations of enlisted men, and the constant availability of adequate medical attention in the Navy, many cases of cancer were not discovered until too late for cure and even sometimes not until after the patient's death.

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The National Assembly in the Philippines is taking steps to establish a national language based on Tagalog, one of the many native languages.

#### MEDICINE

## Navy Medical Statistics New Lead for Cancer Research

### Prevalence of Skin and Lip Cancer in Service Is Accompanied By Low Rate of Internal Cancer

**A** PROMISING new direction for cancer research is suggested by a study of medical records of the U. S. Navy. The study, covering nearly 1,000,000 man-years, has just been reported by Dr. Sigismund Peller, of the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health, and Commander Charles S. Stephenson, M.C., U. S. Navy. (*American Journal of Hygiene*).

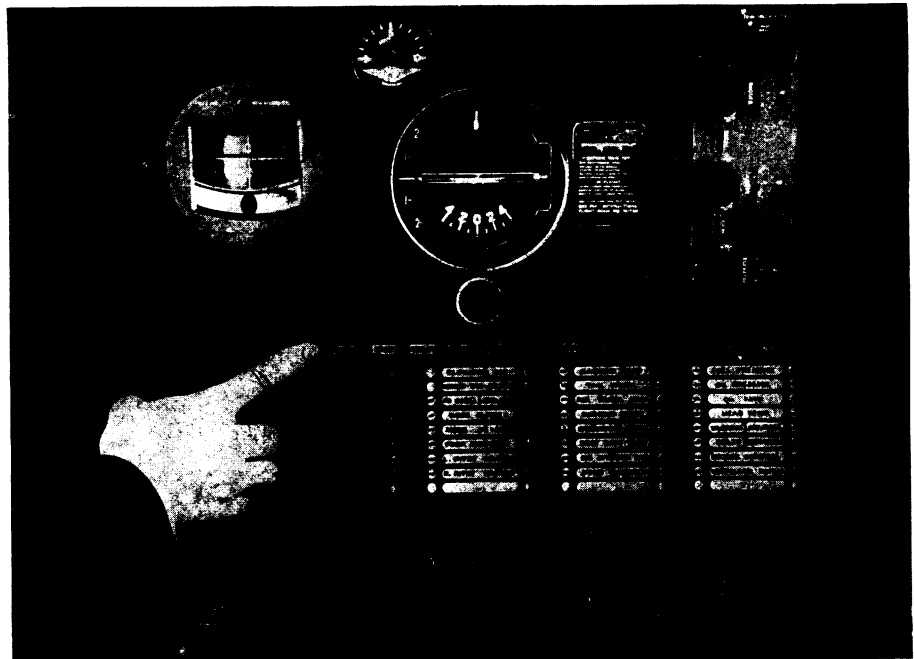
Between the ages of 25 and 64, these scientists found, the mortality from cancer is about 50 per cent. lower among the Navy personnel than would be expected from cancer rates in New York in 1930 for the same age, sex and color groups. The physicians explain this as probably being due to the greater frequency of skin and lip cancers and lesser frequency of internal cancers in the Navy personnel as compared with civilian populations in New York, London and Vienna, where cancer surveys have been made.

Skin and lip cancers occur at several times as high a rate among the active Navy personnel as in the civilian population, the study showed. This is believed due to greater exposure to skin irritants, especially sun, salt water and wind. But these external cancers are easily cured, only about 12 in every 100 cases ending fatally, according to the Navy records. So the total cancer mortality in the Navy remains low.

The irritation which causes the in-

creased number of external cancers, Dr. Peller believes, acts as a protection against the occurrence of cancer elsewhere in the body.

Dr. Peller does not go so far as to suggest that the entire population try to



**AUTOMATIC TROUBLE SPOTTER**

Here is the new robot pilot which flashes on 90 different lights to warn the airplane pilot of trouble in as many different parts of his machinery. (See SNL, Feb. 18) This new "tell-tale indicator" almost literally watches the instruments for the human pilot.