



Figments of Fancy

► **DON'T WORRY** too much about that friend or kinsman who may be in the snake-infested jungles of the tropics, where the creeping vines are almost as deadly as the serpents that hide in them, craftily waiting for their victims to pass. They're all myths, concocted by travelers who want to make some innocent newspaper reporter's eyes bulge out, declares Prof. E. D. Merrill, Harvard University botanist.

Prof. Merrill ought to know, for he spent 22 years in the Philippines, with a number of excursions into Malaya, Java and Borneo, and has had some experience in the American tropics besides, on half a dozen trips to Cuba.

"On many trips lasting from two to six weeks each," states Prof. Merrill (*Science*, Jan. 8), "on some of them being constantly in the forests and jungles, and seeing no other persons than the members of my own party, I have never actually seen a single snake, poisonous or otherwise; on other trips one might average seeing perhaps one snake in a week. The snakes are there, but if one is interested in snakes one must know where, how, and when to look for

them. They are mostly timid and disappear at the slightest disturbance."

Friends who have had experience in both Old and New World tropics confirmed Prof. Merrill's opinions when he queried them. Among them was Col. Arthur S. Fisher, who saw active service on Bataan and was evacuated from Corregidor just before its fall. He saw exactly four snakes in three months, and two of these were brought to him by soldiers.

As for the deadliness of jungle plants, Prof. Merrill declares that he has never run into any that could cause as much trouble as our common poison ivy. There are some members of the nettle family that can sting pretty badly; but "they are not dangerous, and not even a cub Boy Scout, once stung, would touch a plant a second time."

Curiously enough, some tropical plants that may cause skin rash by contact with sap or leaves bear fruits that are highly prized by natives and white men alike. Most familiar of these, perhaps, are the mango and the cashew nut.

All in all, therefore, the most poisonous things likely to be encountered in tropical trees are the Japs — and our soldiers and marines know how to use the proper antidotes for them.

*Science News Letter, January 23, 1943*

#### MEDICINE

### Health Pick-Me-Ups For Tired Business Man

► **NINE HEALTH** mandates for tired and rundown business and industrial executives were given by Dr. Walter Alvarez of the Mayo Clinic at the Congress on Industrial Health.

The scarcity of good brains in the community is bad enough, Dr. Alvarez said, but worse is the fact that even these good brains are unable to stand for long the strain of constant and heavy use. They need more rest and peace

than they get in modern industry.

The nine health mandates for executives are: 1. Slow down; 2. Take a month's vacation or at least shorter rest periods; 3. Delegate authority to others; 4. If you cannot sleep, a soporific will be helpful; 5. Do not smoke too much; 6. If you do play, do not play too intensely; 7. Do not get angry; 8. If you are gaining weight, avoid fats and sugars; 9. If your heart muscle is not so good, walk and live at a slower pace.

A man can tell when his nervous system is beginning to break down, Dr. Alvarez said, by such common symptoms as a sense of impaired health and energy, getting up tired in the morning, petering out by noon, feeling a need for forcing the brain, having difficulty reading through a long report or remembering what was read, impatience, ill humor, increasing irritability and "a desire to snap peoples' heads off."

*Science News Letter, January 23, 1943*

#### VOLCANOLOGY

### Smoke Above the Clouds Landmarks Airmen's Flights

#### See Front Cover

► **THEY THAT GO DOWN** to the sea in ships, wrote the Psalmist, see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. They that go up into the ocean of air in the newer ships of today see works and wonders no less strange and marvelous. Aviators on patrol along the long Aleutian peninsula and island chain landmark their flights by volcanic peaks that are often smoke-beacons, sending forth their perpetual plumes of light ash from hearths far below the snow that lies on their flanks and the clouds that float about them. The cover picture, typical of the Aleutian scene, is from a photograph taken by a U. S. Navy pilot.

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