

## PUBLIC HEALTH

**Release of Cured Lepers Cause For Celebration**

**E**LEVEN patients at the National Leprosarium, Carville, La., are awaiting the arrival of the order from Surgeon General Hugh S. Cumming of the U. S. Public Health Service which will release them from the institution and permit them to return to their homes and normal occupations. These patients have been pronounced cured of the disease and no longer a menace to the community. They come from eight different states and have been here for periods ranging from six years to eleven months. Since the U. S. Public Health Service took over the institution here ten years ago, 89 patients have been so released, including these eleven.

The release of patients from the leprosarium here is always the occasion for a celebration. Garlands of flowers are hung about the necks of the lucky men and women who are returning to the outside world, and there are other festivities.

Who the released patients are is generally kept a secret. Many of the patients register here under assumed names and this is one place where the U. S. Government conspires with people to help them conceal their identities. No one need give his own name unless he wishes, and no one need submit to photography.

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## CHEMISTRY-ENGINEERING

**Life Of Books Depends On Condition Of Air**

**T**HE RIGHT atmosphere is necessary for the health of books as well as of humans.

Too much heat, certain gases, dust, and improper lighting all tend to shorten the lives of volumes on library shelves, recent studies conducted at the Bureau of Standards of the U. S. Department of Commerce have shown.

Cabinets in which the atmospheric conditions can be varied at will are being used in the experiments. Preliminary findings indicate that the drying out effect of heat is an important cause of the aging of paper.

Harmful effects of sulphur gases on paper are now being measured. It is thought that sulphur dioxide of the air is readily absorbed by paper and changed by chemical reaction to sul-

phuric acid which hastens the process of decomposition.

Sulphur dioxide in the air has been found to be an important factor in the sudden deterioration of clothing in laundries in some communities, where industrial plants involve the burning of quantities of soft coal. That sulphur gases may have a similar damaging effect on books in city libraries is suggested by the fact that the sulphur pollution in some industrial centers is known to be equivalent to a downpour of 100 tons or more of sulphuric acid per square mile.

As a means of lengthening the life span of books and documents, the government investigators foresee a day when libraries will scientifically control the atmosphere surrounding their shelves. Regulating the heat and humidity, removing the dust and acid impurities and minimizing the chemically active light rays are suggested improvements for the future.

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## AGRICULTURE

**Rice May Rival Corn As Fodder For Pigs**

**T**HE RICE-FED hog of bottomland farms may some day be a rival for his corn-fed brother who now rules the uplands.

This is suggested by experiments on the lower midwestern floodplains, described by Prof. W. C. Etheridge of the University of Missouri who was here recently for a conference called by the National Research Council.

Rice, Prof. Etheridge reported, has been successfully grown on a large experimental scale 60 miles north of St. Louis. Ten acres of rich bottom land under rice cultivation yielded 877 bushels. Some of the rice varieties tested ran 125 bushels to the acre.

Feeding experiments on cattle and hogs were successful. Cattle did almost as well on a straight rice diet as they did on corn, and on a feed of rice plus corn they put on weight as rapidly as they did on a mainstay diet of corn alone. With hogs, rice alone gave results equal to those obtained with corn alone.

Prof. Etheridge believes that we should begin to prepare now for a future in which farmers will slowly desert their present holdings on the hills and settle more and more on the rich but now largely neglected bottom lands.

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**IN SCIENCE**

## ANATOMY

**New Circulatory System Is Found In Brain**

**A** NEW system of blood circulation in the brain has been discovered by Dr. Gregor Popa and Una Fielding of University College, London.

These investigators find that besides the system by which blood flows from heart to brain and back again, there is a secondary system conveying blood directly from the pituitary gland to the mid-brain. This is called a portal system of circulation. The only other such system in the entire body is the portal system between the liver and the intestines.

What part the newly discovered system may play in the distribution of the pituitary hormone, which exercises a powerful effect on the body, has not yet been determined.

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## GEOLOGY

**Lake Superior Level Was Once 54 Feet Lower**

**I**F THE level of Lake Superior now stood where it apparently once was some time after the close of the Ice Age, Duluth and all the other cities on its shores would find themselves high and dry, and there would have to be a new set of lake ports.

In dredgings brought up from under forty feet of water and fourteen feet of sand, L. R. Wilson of the University of Wisconsin has found a stratum of well-preserved peat, indicating that at some time in the past there was a marshy shore at that place, and that the lake level stood still long enough for a great accumulation of vegetable matter to take place.

He says that the state of preservation of the leaves and other plant parts strongly indicates that the bed was formed after the Ice Age, rather than in a warm period between two advances of the glaciers.

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# E FIELDS

## PUBLIC HEALTH

## Parrot Fever Appears In New York City

**D**EVELOPMENT of five human cases of parrot fever with one death in New York City has been reported to the U. S. Public Health Service.

The disease has been traced to six lovebirds which arrived in New York on Jan. 4. Three of these birds are now dead, one is under investigation at the Rockefeller Institute and two have escaped. The human cases have all been traced to two birds.

Just a year ago, the U. S. Public Health Service banned the importation of any parrots, lovebirds or similar birds, following a severe outbreak of parrot fever. In October, 1930, this ban was modified so that birds could be imported subject to certain restrictions, among them a stay of two weeks in quarantine for observation. The six lovebirds in question were held for the two-week quarantine and no signs of disease were observed. Apparently they harbored the germ or virus of the disease, without being affected by it. Students of the question think that the change to a cold climate causes the development of the disease in birds that are infected.

No change will be made in the importation restrictions if no further outbreaks occur, officials of the U. S. Public Health Service stated.

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## PALEONTOLOGY

## 50-Million Year Old Whale Skeleton Found

**A**FIFTY million year old whale skeleton, nearly complete and in excellently preserved condition, has been found in the San Rafael Hills, near Los Angeles.

The huge skull, eight feet long, with its lower jaw in place and the whole perfectly preserved, together with a large part of the skeleton, has been excavated by J. W. Lytle of the Los Angeles Museum, assisted by William Strong, H. A. Wylde and Lydia Bowen.

It is now under preparation at the museum, where because of its unusual completeness it is regarded as a most important find.

The creature belongs to the group of whalebone whales, whose modern representatives were a source of materials indispensable to the dressmaking industry back in the days of crinoline and wasp-waists. Their small throats, adapted to swallowing only the minute sea-animals strained out of the water by the great sieves of whalebone were the cause of much theological controversy during the same period.

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## ARCHAEOLOGY

## Chapel and Goddess Are Latest Finds at Ur

**A**WAYSIDE shrine where travelers four thousand years ago paused to ask the aid of their patron goddess is the latest discovery at Ur of the Chaldees. Four thousand years ago the last worshiper went out and left the door half open. The imprint of the door is still there in the earth. Word of the shrine discovery has just been received in this country from C. Leonard Woolley, field director of the joint expedition of Ur sent out by the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the British Museum.

The goddess of the chapel was a little-known deity, Pa-Sag, called the protector of desert paths. Describing her house of worship, Mr. Woolley writes: "It is a small, humble place, with a single room into which opened a tiny sanctuary. In the sanctuary niche stood a white limestone statue of the goddess Pa-Sag, which had been broken and mended with bitumen in antiquity.

"In the main room was found a larger limestone statue of the goddess, fallen to the ground and with the head broken off. This statue shows to perfection the flounced dress of the period, and on the head is represented the gold ribbon headdress such as the expedition found in the much earlier graves of the Cemetery at Ur."

The chapel is surprisingly complete, and undisturbed since the day it was last used, excavations have revealed. Various votive objects lay about the place. In front of the door was a limestone pillar crudely decorated with figures of men and birds. In the street outside the shrine lay a terra cotta relief, two feet high, of the bull-footed demon who guarded the door.

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## PUBLIC HEALTH

## Survey Reveals 1930 as Country's Healthiest Year

**H**EALTH workers are now wondering whether the health record for 1931 can be made to equal or better that of 1930.

In spite of business depression and unemployment, 1930 was the healthiest year this country ever enjoyed, according to statistical reports of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., just issued. The company's reports refer particularly to the industrial wage-earning population of the United States and Canada.

Notable reductions in the death rate for tuberculosis, typhoid fever, the principal diseases of childhood, and pneumonia were found. The number of deaths from tuberculosis, diphtheria, and diseases of pregnancy and childbirth reached new low points.

Suicides increased markedly, but this death rate was lower than previous high figures recorded in the period from 1911 to 1916.

The cancer death rate increased very slightly.

Deaths from accidents were fewer during 1930 than in the previous year. This includes automobile fatalities which for the first time in 20 years showed a decline in the company's reports. However, the drop was so small as to be considered of slight significance.

The U. S. Bureau of Census has just reported an increase of 2 per cent. in automobile fatalities.

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## MINING

## Rock Falls Prevented By Cooling Mine Air

**T**HE FALLING of coal from the roofs of coal mines can be prevented by cooling the intake air, J. H. Fletcher and S. M. Cassidy, Chicago engineers, have reported to the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers.

The continuous falling of roof coal in an Indiana mine during summer months, which endangered safety, hampered haulage, choked airways and broke trolley wires was shown to be due to the high temperature and not to the high moisture content of the air. A cooling plant installed there caused greater safety improvement in comfort and efficiency, and considerable reduction in operating costs.

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