

PSYCHIATRY

# Many Failures do not Stifle Humanity's Desire to Marry

**W**HY HUMAN BEINGS are so eager to get married when they can see so many promising marriages going on the rocks all around them was explained before the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Toronto last week by Dr. C. P. Oberndorf, psychoanalyst of New York City.

Back of every longing for marriage, Dr. Oberndorf said, are vestiges of a childhood tendency to an attachment for the parent of the opposite sex.

"This tendency is known as the Oedipus complex," he added, "a term so popularized in America that it has descended to the musical comedy stage. Every person entering monogamous relationship seems impelled by the desire to possess all for himself one person of the opposite sex in the situation which, as a very young child, appeared so enviable to him. This applies to the repeaters of Hollywood leading their fourth or fifth mate to the altar as well as to the youthful couple."

The child's unconscious impressions and desires regarding married life are

doomed to partial disillusion in actual marriage, the psychoanalyst continued. For neither the partner nor the situation comes up to the childish ideal which the father or the mother had inspired. If the individual has not outgrown normally his infantile attachments, he has difficulty in meeting the problems of married life with its continual adjustments and self-sacrifices.

"The degree to which the Oedipus complex has waned in both parties is the most important single psychological factor entering into the success or failure of the average marriage," Dr. Oberndorf has found. "Popular observation tends to corroborate this notion, attributing the unhappiness of many a young couple to 'too much mother-in-law' especially when that individual happens to be 'his' mother. Censure usually attaches to the mother-in-law, but without the unconscious persistence of a mother attachment in the young man her interference would be short-lived."

The most helpful function which the psychoanalyst can perform in these matrimonial tangles is to bring to consciousness those unconscious factors which are operating in a neurotic manner to produce social discord, Dr. Oberndorf concluded. He added that the analyst cannot either keep the couple together or advise separation.

*Science News Letter, June 13, 1931*



Toadstools

**A**FTER the warm spring rains the woods and fields afford many fine-flavored mushrooms which go to waste because people are afraid of being poisoned. Contrariwise, many people get bad stomach-aches, if no worse, because they rely on an "infallible" test to "tell mushrooms from toadstools."

In the first place, there is no difference between "mushroom" and "toadstool." They are simply two synonymous words for the same class of objects, and refer to the shape of the plants, not to their poison or lack of it. "Mushroom" is "toadstool," and "toadstool" is "mushroom."

In the second place, and more important, there is no test with silver spoon, or salt, or sinking in water, or peeling cap, that is worth anything whatever. By any of these tests, the deadliest mushroom may appear perfectly innocent, and the best mushroom may be unjustly condemned. One must simply know what the good and bad mushrooms look like.

The commonest of the poisonous mushrooms are very plainly marked. They have a ring, or ragged veil, hanging round the stem, and a cup at its base. If both ring and cup are present, that mushroom is absolutely deadly, and there is no cure or antidote. If there is a ring but no cup, or a cup but no ring, the mushroom is safe. The commonest edible mushroom has a ring but no cup.

One of the signs of a safe mushroom (or toadstool) is the blackening of the gills, under the cup. This blackening is incorrectly claimed to be a sign of poisonousness; though it is a character of our commonest edible species, while the gills of the deadliest mushroom are always innocently white.

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