

MEDICINE

Job's "Boils" Diagnosed As Rare Disease Pemphigus

THE "BOILS" which afflicted Job have now been diagnosed from a study of Job's case history as revealed in the Biblical account of his sufferings.

Job suffered from a very grave and puzzling disease known as pemphigus, stated Dr. David I. Macht of Baltimore in a report to the American Oriental Society. This disease is not common, but is found in every part of the world.

All the symptoms of Job's malady fit in very well with this disease, says Dr. Macht. Pemphigus starts suddenly without any relation to hygienic conditions, to venereal excesses or any other faults that could be attributed to the victim's carelessness. It is characterized by watery blisters on an inflammatory base which, on opening, become secondarily infected and lead to the formation of scabs, foul odor and pigmentation of the skin. Apparently Job aggravated his condition when he scraped his "boils" with a potsherd.

Pemphigus may also affect the mucous membranes lining the eyes, throat and mouth, Dr. Macht points out. The patients retain clearness of mind but suffer intense agonies. They are subject to sleeplessness, become gradually emaciated and weak and usually die. Poor Job suffered from all these symptoms, according to the Bible.

"The rate of mortality of this disease is almost as high as that of cancer," Dr. Macht stated. "Statistics indicate that it is more prevalent among Jews."

Dr. Macht and Dr. Isaac Pels, a skin specialist of Baltimore, have recently found that pemphigus is due to a poison circulating in the blood which can be demonstrated by special pharmacological methods.

"In the light of modern medicine, Job's disease could not possibly be identified with either leprosy or syphilis, because both these diseases are of a venereal character and obtained through sexual contact and the whole purpose of the book is to show that Job was an upright, moral man afflicted by a disease of unknown origin and not the result of his sinning," Dr. Macht stated.

"Smallpox and plague are not to be considered because of their contagious

character and rapid course, which would preclude any long conversation between Job and his friends and would have led to a greater isolation of the victim in those days than at the present time. Ecthyma and eczema are not at all as severe in their manifestations as the sufferings described in the Book of Job."

Science News Letter, June 2, 1934

CHEMISTRY

Anti-Rickets Vitamin D Now Put in Evaporated Milk

A NEW method for increasing the vitamin D content of evaporated milk on a commercial scale has just been developed by K. G. Weckel and H. C. Jackson of the University of Wisconsin. The usual commercial methods of manufacturing evaporated milk are followed prior to and after irradiation.

The new process includes the use of a specially devised machine which permits the hot evaporated milk to flow in a thin film over an inner corrugated surface while it is being exposed to the ultraviolet rays produced by a carbon arc lamp. After irradiation, the milk is homogenized at the usual pressures, is cooled, canned and sterilized in the normal way.

Mr. Weckel and Mr. Jackson also found that cream can be irradiated without losing its natural and desirable flavor, which was formerly doubted. The irradiated cream is then recombined with the rest of the milk and handled in the customary commercial way. Both processes are now commercially possible and evaporated milk companies are producing such milk under license.

When this new irradiated evaporated milk is diluted with an equal part of water it has the same amount of rickets-preventing vitamin D per quart, which is 50 Steenbock units or about four to five times that of normal milk, as is required for the ordinary irradiated whole milk now on the market.

Science News Letter, June 2, 1934

Two British army doctors who studied air-conditioning in the tropics reported that costliness of such plants precludes their wide use, except in hospitals.

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