

## GENETICS

# Individual Sneeze Pattern Shown To be Hereditary Trait

## Three Generations, Mother, Daughter and Granddaughter, Always Sneezed Twice; Baby Began at Age of Three Weeks

**Y**OUR WAY of sneezing, if you do it in some peculiar individual fashion, may be inherited, it appears from a report by Dr. Milton H. Erickson, director of psychiatric research and training at Eloise, Mich., State Hospital (*Journal of Genetic Psychology*, June).

Dr. Erickson reports finding double sneezers in three generations of the same family: mother, daughter and granddaughter.

A double sneezer is a person who always expects and usually experiences a second sneeze in rapid succession to the first, usually within one to two seconds, rarely longer. With the hay fever season in full swing, you may be able to observe some double sneezers yourself.

In the group Dr. Erickson reports, the double sneeze pattern was first observed in the young woman of the middle generation. Her relatives and friends thought

it was an acquired mannerism, possibly the result of having as a child copied someone or done it as a trick until it became an ingrained habit that persisted after the trick or the imitation was forgotten.

The young woman herself, however, "regarded it as an innate, rather than as an acquired pattern of behavior over which she had no control, constituting nothing more than an amusing physiological peculiarity. She offered the explanation that it might be similar in character to the frequently encountered sneeze reflex to bright light or temperature changes."

When, however, this young woman's three-weeks-old baby started double sneezing, even making faces after the first sneeze as if expecting another, just as the mother did, Dr. Erickson began to wonder whether the pattern was not inherited. It was not possible for the tiny baby to be imitating her mother, much less double sneeze as a trick.

The baby's mother had thought she was the only one in her family who double sneezed, but after her baby started doing it, she discovered that her own mother, the baby's grandmother, had the identical double sneezing pattern.

This might all be coincidence, rather than inheritance, Dr. Erickson says. In favor of the inheritance idea he refers to the report of two New York scientists, Dr. C. Landis and Dr. W. Hunt, that "complicated bodily responses exist and are exhibited in a pattern-like fashion"—among the responses being sneezing and coughing, and that the general pat-

tern of these responses tends to remain constant regardless of age, sex and race.

"To this may be added," Dr. Landis concludes, "that variations in the pattern may be inherited."

*Science News Letter, August 17, 1940*

## BACTERIOLOGY

## Power to Kill Bacteria Discovered in Molds

**P**OWER of certain kinds of molds to kill bacteria with a substance they secrete is described by Dr. Edwin C. White of the Johns Hopkins Hospital, (*Science*, Aug. 9). Although the nature of the substance is still unknown, Dr. White has developed a means for collecting it, so that analysis should eventually become possible.

The molds in which this bactericidal property were discovered all belong to the common genus *Aspergillus*, one of the frequent causes of spoilage in fruit. Various species and strains of this fungus genus differ widely in their production of the germ-killing material.

Since molds are related to bacteria, though somewhat remotely, the recent discovery of the power of soil bacteria to kill other bacteria, discovered for one group by Dr. René J. Dubos of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and for another by Prof. Selman Waksman and his collaborators at Rutgers University, is considered of interest in connection with the work of Dr. White.

*Science News Letter, August 17, 1940*

## BOTANY

## Hydrocyanic Acid Found In Several Plant Species

**D**EADLY hydrocyanic acid, in concentrations sufficient to be dangerous to livestock, has been found in several species of plants by a three-man research team in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

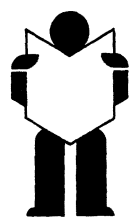
The plants include the wild California almond, two western species of wild flax, a southwestern star thistle, the eastern manna grass, and a widely distributed marsh plant known as arrow grass.

The investigators were Drs. E. A. Moran, R. R. Briese, and J. F. Couch of the Bureau of Animal Industry.

*Science News Letter, August 17, 1940*

Earliest physician honored on a postage stamp is the Egyptian Imhotep of about 2980 B.C., figured on an Egyptian stamp of 1928.

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## ● Earth Trembles

Information collected by Science Service from seismological observatories resulted in the location by the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and the Jesuit Seismological Association of the following preliminary epicenter:

Thursday, August 1, 10:08.4 a.m., EST

Northern part of the Sea of Japan, off Hokkaido. Latitude 44.5 degrees north. Longitude 140 degrees east. A strong shock.

For stations cooperating with Science Service, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, and the Jesuit Seismological Association in reporting earthquakes recorded on their seismographs, see *SNL*, Feb. 24.