

Navy no refuge for snake-fearers, for the flat-tailed sea snakes (no kin to the mythical sea serpent!) that swarm in the warm seas around southern Asia are real snakes, all right, and highly venomous. Just one member of this group has some-

how found its way into tropical American waters.

Dr. Cochran's discussion of venomous reptiles is offered in a new Smithsonian Institution publication, tenth in the series listed as War Background Studies.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

PSYCHIATRY

War Nerves Predicted

Considered inevitable for three out of four merchant seamen who have been torpedoed or bombed. Men need gentle care when first rescued.

➤ WAR NERVES are inevitable for at least three out of four of the merchant seamen subjected to torpedoing or bombing.

This is the finding of four New York physicians who have made a special study of seamen waiting their turns to go to sea again.

Many of the men do go back to sea in spite of persisting difficulty with war nerves, it is stated, and repeated catastrophes at sea will add cumulatively to the troubles of a man who has not yet recovered from his last tragedy. A period of convalescence in a rest camp is recommended in the report which appears in *War Medicine* (April). The physicians reporting are Drs. Sydney Margolin, Lawrence S. Kubie, Mark Kanzer and Leo Stone, all of New York.

The doctors give this advice: If you

should ever help in the rescue of seamen from a torpedoed ship, do not be afraid that a show of patience, sympathy and gentleness will "coddle" the men into an increase of emotional outburst. Gentle care does not encourage emotional upsets, as the layman often imagines, but is essential to their relief and prevention.

"The men should never be bullied or shamed into suppressing their feelings," the physicians warn, "but should rather be encouraged to go off by themselves for a chance to blow off steam alone so that one man's upset will not become a source of disturbance to the others."

The ordeals faced by these seamen ranged in severity from having their ship torpedoed without being sunk or with little or no injury to the personnel up to the major catastrophes in which the men were severely hurt or burned and

suffered prolonged exposure to cold, hunger and thirst; were trapped by fire or debris; watched other men killed or injured all around.

"Perhaps the worst situation occurs," the physicians state, "whenever a group of men are trapped in a spot from which only a few can escape. Escape from such a predicament leaves the survivors haunted by the memory of those who were left behind, with a sense of guilt as great as if they had murdered them."

The severity of the case of war nerves is not matched to the severity of the experience as closely as would be expected. In some cases there was little or no effect. In the most severe cases there were persisting symptoms that make it inadvisable for the man ever to go back to sea.

Some men faced with tragedy at sea are calm and self-possessed, make a careful choice between various possible avenues of escape, weigh the relative risks rapidly and act freely. Other men show blind confusion and panic, child-like states of terror, rage or stupor-like trance states. Some men clung to a red hot rail, or buried their heads between their arms. Some leaped blindly into a blazing sea when they might have escaped in another direction where there was no burning oil.

Later symptoms include terrible nightmares in which they re-live the catastrophe with details so vivid and terrifying that the men are waked up and driven out of their rooms "to seek the comfort of human companionship much as a terrified child climbs into a parent's bed." During the day, the men may have sudden "startle" reactions. There are sudden attacks of intense restlessness which drive them to get up and dress in the middle of the night and to walk endlessly, blindly seeking human companionship or oblivion in drunkenness.

Seamen who show signs of being disturbed should be treated if possible before they are allowed to go home or to their usual haunts, the physicians recommend. Otherwise the undischarged neurotic disturbance will attach itself to their everyday walks of life, interfering with their ultimate return to sea and becoming more resistant to treatment.

After a period of rest and convalescence, seamen who have had serious disturbances should have a graded return to sea duty, the physicians urge. The first trip should be on a safe route such as inland waters or shore waters, proceeding from this to convoys in not too exposed areas and finally to routes which are exposed to full danger.

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The men should have drills in mutual aid such as firemen's drills in carrying unconscious or injured men up and down ladders, how to leap into the sea alone and with injured men, breaking the hold of panic-stricken men on other men or on a sinking ship and how to care for men with severe burns or other injuries. All this will generate a sense of individual security and group solidarity under stress.

The physicians also urge the preparation and distribution of a booklet on psychiatric as well as physiologic first aid.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

PSYCHIATRY

Patient Sees Everything As Growing Small

► THE STRANGE case of a seventeen-year-old boy who saw objects around him getting small and even felt himself get small, just like the heroine of Alice in Wonderland, was reported by Dr. Ernest Lewy of the Menninger Clinic, Topeka, Kansas, at the meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association.

Unlike Alice, this patient did not have to get small to fit the shrunken size of things around him, though he did report that he was afraid to put his underwear on because it seemed so small. He saw things small, Dr. Lewy explained, as a defense mechanism against feeling small himself.

The state of seeing things small is called micropsia. Dr. Lewy's patient experienced it during the onset of a severe mental illness and also when he was recovering from it, but not during the illness itself. It occurred when he was feeling "low" and losing his sense of reality, and seemed to represent a feeling or fear of imminent disintegration of the ego.

The feeling of smallness has a parallel in everyday life as shown by such expressions as "cutting him down" or making another person feel small, Dr. Leo H. Bartemeier, of Detroit, commented. His explanation of the patient's feeling and seeing small was that it was dictated by a sense of guilt as a method of appeasing his conscience which threatened him with the fear of losing his masculinity.

When Lewis Carroll wrote of Alice seeing small and growing small in her dream, he was, Dr. Lewy said, using the intuitive knowledge which poets and novelists sometimes have of conditions psychiatrists see in their patients.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

• New Machines and Gadgets •

⚙️ A **MINIATURE** wind tunnel and wing section now on the market can be used by school students taking a pre-flight course. It shows what makes a plane spin or stall and just how the ailerons and flaps work.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ A **NEW SIGNAL LAMP** for aircraft operates by "black light" thrown on a fluorescent indicator. It shows up in sunlight or total darkness and is said to improve vision in night flying.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

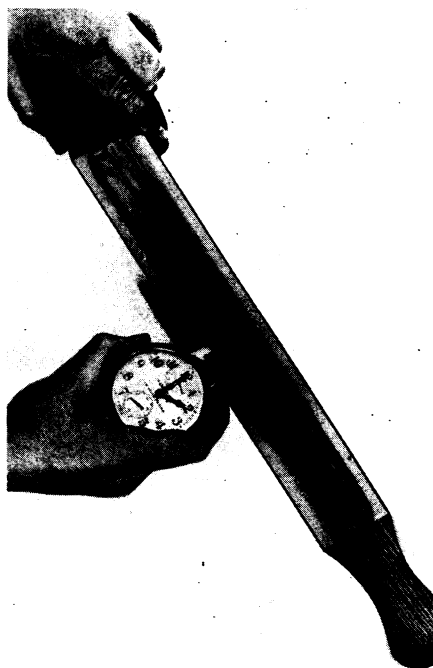
⚙️ **PLASTIC HINGES**, strong and lightweight, may be cut in any length and attached by adhesives, rivets or screws. One aircraft producer uses the new hinges on tool boxes, radio, map and chart cases, and other equipment.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ **SPECIAL REFRIGERATION** equipment installed in army and civilian flying fields is used to kill moths in aviators' wool and fur-lined flying suits. Killing results from shock cycles of repeated heating and cooling treatments.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ A **NEW DEVICE** reduces the daily time-consuming task of winding your watch to about two seconds and eliminates "finger fatigue and calluses." In watch testing laboratories, where many



watches must be wound each day, it has a real practical advantage. The device is a strip of fabric-backed polyvinyl plastic on a paddle a foot long. Along this, the winding stem is drawn in one motion.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ AN **IMPROVED** electronic device is used by the Army to standardize camouflage colors. It can distinguish between 2,000,000 different colors.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ A **LEAF SPRING** landing gear for training planes has been drop-tested, flight-tested and approved, and will be installed on 25 training planes for further testing, it is reported. When the airplane hits the ground the spring gear spreads out and the wheels dampen the rebound. Made from non-critical steel plate, the gear is cheaper than the present strut and saves time in construction.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ A **NEW TRANSPARENT** phonograph record has a glass base and a smooth plastic surface. It is reported to reproduce tones with a high degree of accuracy.

Science News Letter, May 22, 1943

⚙️ **IMPROVED GLASS** gages are replacing steel gages in Army factories and arsenals. The new glass gage is more easily handled, furnishes greater visibility, does not rust, and has better wearing qualities.

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If you want more information on the new things described here, send a three-cent stamp to Science News Letter, 1719 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C., and ask for Gadget Bulletin 157.

The world's more important **phosphate** reserves are in the United States, Russia and North Africa, all territory under control of the United Nations; without phosphates German farms will produce decreased crops.

The dairy industry is asking that dry **skim milk** be known as dry milk solids or defatted milk solids because of a wrong belief that skim milk has little food value.

A new rip-proof **fabric** called five-harness sateen, has been developed for the Army mountain troops; it is claimed to have high tearing strength and superior wearing qualities.