

New Use for Laughing Gas

Mental patients are now being helped by its calming effect. With this treatment the patient gains insight into his trouble through conscious mental processes.

► THE use of "laughing gas" to calm excited mental patients and even to help some toward partial recovery from their illness is reported by Drs. H. Lehmann and C. Bos of Montreal in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, (Sept.).

The gas used is nitrous oxide, which many persons know from taking it when a tooth is pulled. The Montreal doctors give enough of it to the mental patients to get them past the "slap-happy" stage but not to produce a serious degree of oxygen lack.

The treatment is safe, they find. It lasts about two to four minutes. After it the patient wakes up in a much better mood for talking to the doctors and discussing his problems.

This phase of "mental facilitation" was unexpected. It is this which is apparently responsible for the treatment helping the patient toward some degree of recovery, since it makes the patient better able to gain insight into his

trouble and accept psychiatric treatment.

But even apart from this, the treatment helps by calming the patients. The calming effect lasts for several hours, and patients get a good night's sleep after the treatment. It was this calming effect on excited patients for which the doctors first used the treatment.

Some patients are given the treatment as many as four times a day, though for many one treatment a day is enough.

The "laughing gas" treatment is something like electric shock treatment, the doctors believe, but is less severe, safer and easier to give. It differs somewhat also from another modern psychiatric

treatment called narcoanalysis. In this narcoanalysis, drugs are given to put the patient to sleep or in a hypnotic state which makes it possible for him to remember and talk about repressed feelings and experiences. With narcoanalysis, the doctors can get at unconscious factors in the patient's mental illness. With the "laughing gas" treatment, the patient gains insight into his trouble through conscious mental processes.

The doctors are now studying the effects of this gas treatment in patients in the early stages of manic-depressive illness who have not yet had a complete mental breakdown. The speed and ease with which the treatment promotes mental activity and the feeling of well-being and increased confidence it gives may, they think, be valuable at certain stages of psychiatric treatment.

The treatment may be given to patients in the doctor's office without interrupting their ordinary activities.

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METEOROLOGY

Greenland Essential Now

► AMERICAN weather, radio and airport stations on Greenland, which played an important part in the recent war, are now essential for the peacetime navigation by air or water from the United States to European ports by way of the Great Circle route.

It is the short route to much of Europe. Planes from New York to West Europe pass over Newfoundland, then south of Greenland. Ocean liners follow a parallel route, particularly during the non-iceberg season. Both, on the eastern half of their trip, are subjected to weather bred in Greenland. In fact, all western Europe is affected by Greenland-bred weather.

Greenland is a Danish possession. By treaty with Denmark these essential stations can remain indefinitely under peacetime conditions. Some believe that Greenland should be purchased from its present owner and become property of the United States. The stations would then be secure. Russia is said to object to the American operation of such stations either under treaty or ownership of the island. Hitler objected to them during the war. Weather reports from them assisted the Allied Armies in their invasion of France and Germany. They

also were of great help to the American convoys which carried food and war equipment to the Red Armies by way of Iceland and northern Russian Arctic ports.

Greenland is the largest island in the world, not counting the Australian continent. It is estimated to contain 736,518 square miles of territory, about one-fourth that of the continental United States. But most of Greenland is covered with ice; only about 31,000 square miles, along the southeast and southwest coastlines and south of the Arctic Circle, is free of ice and suitable for settlement. It is along these coasts that most of Greenland's 21,000 people live. Practically 20,000 of these are native Greenlanders.

Economically, Greenland is not important. It produces a few vegetables for home consumption. It has a few cattle, but is growing in importance as a sheep-raising country. It exports considerable cured fish and some whale and seal oil. It has some coal and iron. Its most valuable mineral is cryolite, a mineral found only there and used in the United States in the manufacture of aluminum by the electrolytic process.

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