



**LOCUST MERRY-GO-ROUND**—British scientists have fastened locusts to this hoop in order to see how long and how far the insects can fly. When they are thus suspended, the locusts turn the ring that hangs from strings attached to a free-spinning cork.

## GENERAL SCIENCE

## Sickness of Rumor

► WHEN THE president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Warren Weaver of the Rockefeller Foundation, introduced Dr. Edward U. Condon, a consultant for Corning Glass Works, to make the address of retiring president at the AAAS meeting in Berkeley, Calif., he made the following remarks:

"There is at present a sickness in our country—a sickness of rumor and anxiety, of suspicion and distrust, and at its worst, of fear and tragedy.

"In part this sickness is due to over-emphasis on caution for the past, rather than constructive courage with respect to the future.

In part it is an anti-intellectualism, a strange and dangerous lack of faith in scholarly competence.

"In part it is, we all realize, the misguided groping of sincere persons who really want to be good citizens, but who have been misled as to what good citizenship is.

"In its worst part it is the horrid result of political pressure, of personal selfishness, and of the pathological arrogance of demagogues with small and nasty minds.

"One of the most dangerous and wicked results of this disease is the destruction of confidence—confidence that honest, capable, and devoted service will be rewarded as such; confidence that governmental prom-

ises can be trusted to be stable, confidence that the precious Anglo-Saxon tradition of due process will be observed.

"This sickness attacks our society at all levels, and in all fields of activity. Science is in a position to be particularly aware of the dangers of this sickness, but science asks for no special privilege or protection. Science voices its concern; but primarily because the problem is a universal one.

"Many of the dread disorders of men's bodies involve the production of antibodies which furnish future immunity from the disease. But a most irrational and discouraging fact about our society's present disease is that apparently one can never stop worrying, can never be sure that the disease will not strike again and again and again.

"Some of us—partly only because of the accidental character of our activities, partly because we attest to our liberalism in more discrete (or should I say more timid) ways—have so far avoided this disease. But no one of us is immune.

"The time has been reached, many of us are convinced, when it is no longer defensible to fail to take a stand. We must use all our wits and patience, all our reasonableness and courage, to see to it that we take a really sensible, constructive stand, and in particular that we do not fight fire with fire.

"Although there often is much incentive

to protest without restraint, we must not do this. Freedom is too precious to deserve rash or stupid support.

"There is some encouraging evidence that this past year may have seen the worst of this disease. There are promising signs that at appropriately high levels in our government, a concern now exists to improve the whole loyalty-security-secrecy set-up. If this is in fact done with promptness and candor, then we can hope that the disease will also begin to wane in other places and in other fields of interest.

"So there is a chance that, at this particular session of the AAAS, we are actually celebrating the upturn, the over-due rededication to liberal decency. If so, then there is a poetic appropriateness to this occasion. . . ."

Science News Letter, January 15, 1955

## STATISTICS

## More Girls Than Boys Stay Out of Hospitals

► LITTLE GIRLS manage to stay out of hospitals as patients better than little boys, a report from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's statisticians in New York shows.

Counting all under 18 years as children, the statisticians found that one child in every 12 is admitted to a hospital during the year. The sex ratio is three boys to two girls. The average stay in hospital is five days.

The figures come from the experience of children of the company's personnel who are insured under the company's group insurance program.

The study covered the period from August, 1953, through July, 1954, and included 2,153 hospitalized children in virtually every section of the United States.

Surgery, including the treatment of fractures and dislocations, was performed on 70% of the hospitalized children, with tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies accounting for over half of the surgical cases. The average hospital stay for all surgical cases was 3.6 days.

Among the nonsurgical cases, for which the hospital stay averaged 8.6 days, diseases of the respiratory system headed the list. Pneumonia and influenza were the most common. Almost two-thirds of the victims of respiratory diseases were under five years of age.

About one-eighth of the nonsurgical cases were treated for accidental injuries, including head injuries, poisoning, contusions, lacerations, and sprains or strains. Altogether, there were twice as many claims for hospital treatment of accidental injuries among boys as among girls.

The nonsurgical cases included 12 of acute poliomyelitis, five among girls and seven among boys. One child died soon after admission to the hospital. The average hospital stay for the other 11 was 87 days. Eight of the 12 victims were less than 10 years old.

Science News Letter, January 15, 1955