

## Deadly Gas—Cont'd

on the health were found in any of the subjects after the test. On the mental side the psychologists reported that with the tests now in use no distinct effects due to the gas could be found. A slight tendency to poor performance in the prolonged steadiness test was noticed. However, the psychologists concluded that more delicate tests are needed to find any effects on the mind that may result from long exposure to such small amounts of carbon monoxide gas.

Avoiding exposure to carbon monoxide gas is difficult because in the concentrations usually found the gas cannot be detected by its odor. "However, in its occurrence from most sources carbon monoxide is associated with other gases having distinctive odors, and thus warning is given of a dangerous atmosphere," advises a bulletin from the Bureau of Mines. "Removal of the odorous constituents from illuminating gas in scrubbing the gas is often the cause of poisoning to users through absence of warning odor. The odors coming from domestic gas stoves may or may not be a criterion for judging the presence of carbon monoxide. Mice and birds are more quickly affected than men by carbon monoxide and may be used for detecting dangerous atmospheres. Birds are preferable because they show symptoms earlier and are easier to observe."

Although this gas appears as one of our modern killers, it has been a source of danger for ages and was even known as a killer in very ancient times. "The human race has probably been exposed to this gas since men first began using fires in confined or sheltered places," stated a report of the Bureau of Mines. "A number of cases described in the ancient literature indicate that carbon monoxide was a frequent cause of death by accident, suicide and as a means of punishment or torture. Aristotle, who lived from 384 to 322 B. C., stated that 'animals collapse from harmful odors, as man gets a severe headache and often dies through charcoal vapors'. The Romans knew that smoke was poisonous and used the greenest, most smoke-producing wood to put persons to death. The occurrence of carbon monoxide poisoning has increased in frequency through the years until at the present time it is found in the home as well as in many industries."

Common sources of carbon monoxide gas given by the Bureau of Mines to illustrate its universal occurrence are: Mine fires (*Turn to next page*)

## New Name for Vitamin

*Physiological Chemistry*

In the old days when vitamins were strange and little known, scientists called them, for convenience, by the letters of the alphabet. But since the vitamins have been split up into twins and triplets the matter of names has become somewhat involved. Vitamin B, for instance, might mean any of three definite factors, according to what you were talking about. Scientific literature was becoming confused and the public was very much bewildered.

Now an effort is being made to settle the matter, as far as vitamin B is concerned. A committee of the American Society of Biological Chemists considered the matter and after deliberation has recommended three separate names for the three different factors formerly known as vitamin B.

Bios, a term suggested by British workers, is to denote the factor or factors encouraging the rapid growth of yeast cells. The antineuritic factor which is easily changed or destroyed by heat will retain the old family name of B. The more heat-stable, water-soluble, dietary factor which has to do with maintenance and growth, known also as P-P or the pellagra preventive, is to be called G.

The committee also recommended that when more vitamins or other dietary factors are discovered, they should not be given other than descriptive names, such as pellagra-preventive or antirachitic, until their identity is established beyond question.

To avoid future complications, the committee recommended that the American Society of Biological Chemists appoint a committee on vitamin nomenclature, to act in cooperation with the British and other European committees as a clearing house for information on vitamin terminology and with power to name new dietary factors when they are discovered.

*Science News-Letter, March 16, 1929*

Traffic congestion costs New York more than \$1,000,000 a day, it is estimated.

Women of Greenland still wear hoods similar to headdresses of the middle ages.

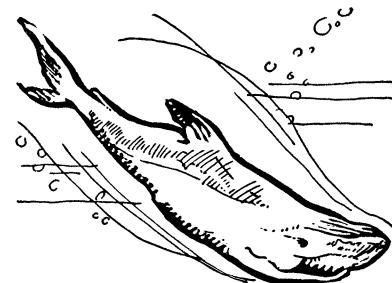
The number of children born in London fell off from 78,825 in 1926 to 73,263 in 1927.

An Arabian legend says that the ostrich traces ancestry back to the camel and the dodo bird.

## NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE

*Natural History*



### Sharks

Timid souls vacationing at southern or southwestern beach resorts will lose a lot of fun unnecessarily if they refuse to go into the water for fear of sharks. Statistically considered, one's chances of being bitten by a shark are considerably less than one's chances of being struck by lightning, and infinitely less than the chances of being struck by a flivver. There are some authentic shark-bite stories on record, but most of the scares are nothing but just what the name implies. Even the six-foot sharks that are frequently seen in the water at bathing beaches are almost without exception harmless scavengers or fish-hunters. The real man-eaters are occasional wanderers from tropical waters, and are two or three times that length.

Sharks are as a whole among the most successful of animal families. They appeared in the world very early, being indeed the oldest of fishes, and the fossil record shows that during all the many thousands of years since their coming they have held their own against all later comers. There are some limestone beds that are as full of the teeth of extinct sharks as a cake is of raisins. For the most part, the teeth, and sometimes the skin scales, are all that is left for the scientists to study; for the skeleton of all sharks is wholly cartilaginous, so that the bones that form the most important parts of most fossil remains, are lacking or at most very imperfectly preserved in the shark records. But some of these old sharks must have been monsters, for four-inch teeth are nothing uncommon in the deposits.

*Science News-Letter, March 16, 1929*

The carved staff carried by a bishop of the thirteenth century was recently unearthed in Greenland in the ruins of a medieval cathedral.