

No Danger in State Medicine

Medicine

The dread ogre of physicians, socialized or state medicine, was brought into the light, examined and shown not to be so fearful after all, at the dinner of the Board of Counsel of the Milbank Memorial Fund. Practical steps for a solution of the great controversy of public health vs. private practice were presented by a physician, Dr. James Alexander Miller.

Dr. Miller advised his fellow physicians to acquire a broader outlook on public problems and to consider the matter of the public health as well as the curing of individual patients. At the same time, health departments and other health organizations were advised to enlist the aid of private physicians in putting over their health programs, rather than to spend public funds for work that rightfully should be done by the private physician for the people of his community.

Mexico to Hold Workers

Sociology

While United States authorities are occupied with the case of the Mexican worker in American fields and factories, the Mexican government on its part is investigating the home angle of the problem and devising means of keeping the emigrant at home.

In the last century and a half, while the population of the United States has increased more than forty fold, that of Mexico has hardly quadrupled, and Mexico is as anxious to keep her nationals at home as some American groups are to keep them out.

Dr. Manuel Gamio, who has made a study of the problem, has already pointed out that Mexican emigration is a modern movement, but one which has worked so fast that it could practically empty the country in another 50 years if nothing stopped it.

Unemployment and economic misery at home are back of the migratory movements, and one of the first recommendations of experts working in the Mexican Department of the Interior, according to an announcement of Minister Felipe Canales, is to stop the entry of Slovenes, Italians, Albanians, Hungarians, and groups that form undesirable competitors of the Mexican at home, or those that use the country merely as a stepping stone to the United States. (Turn to next page)

The sympathetic individual touch that exists between doctor and patient is important and should be saved, Dr. Miller declared. Clinics and dispensaries, insurance companies and health departments cannot give this, although they can do much good work. However, from the ranks of practicing physicians are arising men who have not lost touch with individual, curative medicine, but who have also interested themselves in preventive medicine. Such men, leaders in their profession, will become connecting links between the medical profession and the public and private health organizations, Dr. Miller prophesied.

"The growing knowledge of causation of diseases has forced preventive medicine into the foreground," said Dr. Theobald Smith. Research has become the fountain head of advances in both curative and preventive medicine, he pointed out in a discussion of how research (Turn to next page)

Device Aids Cleft Palate

Surgery

A new device which successfully overcomes the thick, sometimes unintelligible speech of persons afflicted with cleft palate has been made by two Viennese scientists, Dr. Albert Schalit and Prof. Emil Froeschl. The new device was recently demonstrated to the Vienna Medical Society by a dialogue between a normal person and one afflicted with cleft palate treated by the new method. Physicians present were unable to tell which of the two speakers was the sufferer. The device is based on a new theory held by the two scientists about the cause of speech difficulties in cases of cleft palate.

This condition is relatively one of the most common deformities arising out of abnormal development of the human body before birth. It occurs in about one in every 1,000 births. Cleft palate is in most cases complicated by harelip. It consists of a gaping palate which, lacking the roof of the normal one, brings the interior of the nose into direct communication with the mouth. While the harelip can be easily handled by a simple operation, the cleft palate is very difficult to correct by surgical means. Even if the closing of the palate is successfully accomplished, the chief difficulty, inability to produce articulate speech, is not overcome by the operation.

Many attempts (Turn to next page)

Whooping Cough Danger

Medicine

Whooping cough still ranks as a deadly disease, in spite of efforts to check it. The general belief that it is merely an annoying but necessary evil of childhood is all wrong. Scientists and public health officials are warning mothers not to take it lightly and to be ready to guard their children against the usual spring and summer outbreaks.

"No other common infectious disease of childhood takes so large a toll of life among children under two years of age," said Dr. Matthias Nicoll, Jr., New York State Commissioner of Health. Whooping cough is dangerous in itself and also because it is frequently followed by pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Various vaccines and sera for preventing the disease have been developed. None of them has been entirely satisfactory, although some physicians have reported success with them. One of these which does not entirely prevent the disease does reduce its severity and the fatalities resulting from it, and is recommended by health officials. (Turn to next page)

Synthetic Diet for Plants

Botany

Feeding plants on a synthetic chemical diet will be achieved long before human beings are in a position to subsist on concentrated synthetic foods, Dr. W. S. Landis, vice-president of the American Cyanamid Company, indicated here in a communication to the American Institute.

In fact that day of pure chemicals as plant nutrients has already arrived through the use of concentrated chemical fertilizers. Synthetic nitrogen chemicals, such as cyanamid, urea and nitrate of lime, are blended with other chemicals, such as ammonium phosphate, potassium phosphate, potassium nitrate and other like combinations that place in the fertilizer nitrogen, phosphate or potash in a form that plants can assimilate. Plants can not live on these chemicals alone, as small quantities of manganese, zinc, vanadium, titanium and many other elements are needed, besides carbon dioxide and water, from which the bulk of plant foods are manufactured by the plants themselves.

"The future fertilizers will be much more concentrated in the three common plant foods than even past history would lead one to suppose," said Dr. Landis. "The older organics of animal (Turn to next page)

Whooping Cough—*Cont'd*

The best prevention still consists in keeping children away from those who have whooping cough. This is difficult because the characteristic whoop does not develop until a week or more after the onset of the disease. Consequently one must keep the children away from those who have colds or coughs to be safe.

Reduction of whooping cough has lagged far behind reduction of other communicable diseases chiefly because of the popular attitude that it is not a serious disease.

"Deaths from whooping cough occur just as often as they did 25 or 30 years ago," stated Dr. Nicoll.

The cause of whooping cough is generally accepted as being the Bordet-Gengou bacillus, named for the two Frenchmen who isolated it in 1906. It has been the basis of most of the attempts to produce an anti-toxin or preventive vaccine.

Ultra-violet and X-rays, alkalis, blood serum and even ether have been used more or less successfully in the effort to find a cure or preventive of the disease.

Science News-Letter, March 23, 1929

Synthetic Diet—*Cont'd*

or vegetable origin will disappear to still greater extent and will be replaced by newer synthetic salts mostly of inorganic nature. Process limitations existent today will disappear in so far as they eliminate essential plant foods and the science of compounding will be greatly elaborated as we acquire better knowledge of plant requirements and soil deficiencies."

Science News-Letter, March 23, 1929

A new artificial wool process has been patented in France and is creating international interest.

The practice of washing apples and pears before shipping them to market is becoming general in the Pacific Northwest.

The little gorilla now at the National Zoological Park, in Washington, is the eighth gorilla to arrive in America.

At a recent London conference on street noises, the topic of liveliest interest was what kinds of automobile horns are objectionable.

Agricola, famous sixteenth century mining expert, declared that the divining rod was a useless device.

State Medicine Not Dangerous—*Continued*

has brought the practice of medicine and public health activities into closer relationship. While the conflict between the two wings of medicine is natural, both wings are really needed by the public, he said. The physician is the outpost for the public health officer, discovering new diseases and their cause and new means of treating and preventing them. Health demonstration programs may be considered as a kind of research experiment in themselves in proving how good our knowledge of disease prevention is.

The demonstration program sponsored by the Milbank Fund has given the world knowledge of the machinery needed to suppress certain diseases in a community, declared Dr. William Charles White of the National Research Council. He added that the latest feature of the demonstration has been the development of a means of evaluating the methods used in health demonstration work, so that they may

Cleft Palate—*Cont'd*

have been made to correct this defect by inserting devices into the mouth but so far they have failed. Dr. Schalit and Prof. Froeschl found that the thickness of articulation is caused not so much by the fissure of the palate as by the resonance of the open fissures of the nose. Dr. Schalit did not bother with attempts to close the palate surgically but inserted a wedge-shaped piece into the nasal cavity, which completely closes it from the mouth. To this part, other necessary minor parts are fixed.

Science News-Letter, March 23, 1929

Ultra-violet rays are the main cause of fading in paintings, a lighting expert says.

Turquoise was mined extensively in ancient times because it occurs near the surface and is readily cut and polished.

The distance around the earth at the equator has shrunk at least one and one-half miles in the past century, says a German astronomer.

Among Indians of the southwest, the pumpkin blossom holds a place in legends somewhat like that of the lotus in Oriental lore.

Twenty-eight states have completed the marking of highways in accordance with the standard signs approved by federal road experts.

be arranged according to their relative importance. This has been done through statistical studies carried out by Edgar Sydenstricker, formerly statistician of the U. S. Public Health Service.

A mere desire on the part of the county medical society to develop or guide the public health activities of the county is not enough to accomplish anything, Dr. Linsley Williams observed. An effective course, as developed in New York, is to have one member of the society devote a large share of his time to ascertaining the facts in regard to the particular activity the society wants carried out. This individual can then advise the local health department with a good chance of achieving results. Frequent meetings between the state medical society, state health department and state lay organizations have also been valuable in New York, Dr. Williams said.

Science News-Letter, March 23, 1929

Mexican Workers—*Cont'd*

Statistics now being gathered on unemployment, indicate an abnormal concentration of population in cities and other centers where means of livelihood are scarce, and a practical desertion of rural regions where resources are frequently abundant, but where the population concentration is at times as low as one inhabitant in each hundred square kilometers.

This desertion of the country for the city has decreased the cultivation of the earth and the exploitation of its resources, and forms a problem that confronts the nation. A plan for the cooperative exploitation of natural resources by groups of workers and unemployed is now being worked on by the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Labor Ramon P. de Negri.

Such a plan would not only provide work at home for Mexicans who might otherwise emigrate to the United States, but could otherwise help to initiate an era of Mexican national enterprise such as is now practically nonexistent. Minerals, oil, coffee, sugar, banana, cacao and other of Mexico's sources of wealth are today almost exclusively exploited by foreign interests, and do not therefore form the powerful stabilizing force on national politics as is the case when industries are national.

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