Nicotin Affects Milk Secretion

Pharmacology

Large doses of nicotin suppressed the secretion of milk in the cat and the cow and, in one case, in the human mother, investigations carried out by Dr. Robert A. Hatcher and Hilda Crosby of the Cornell University Medical College have revealed. The experiments were undertaken to discover any effects on either mother or child when the nursing mother smoked.

"Little is known concerning the excretion of nicotin in the milk of lactating women who smoke. Our attention was directed to the problem by the occurrence of symptoms in an infant which were thought to be due possibly to nicotin in the milk of the mother who smoked many cigarettes," the authors stated in their report to the *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*.

Smoking mothers have recently come in for considerable censure by members of the clergy and other reformers on the ground that smoking injures both mother and nursling. As a matter-of-fact, no very exact scientific knowledge of the subject is available, except for the recent experiments of Dr. Hatcher and Miss Crosby. Physicians have not found any effect on the child that could be attributed to nicotin poisoning from cigarettes smoked by the mothers. These experiments bear this out. Kittens who nursed from the cat which had received large doses of nicotin were not affected. Dr. Harvey C Williamson, Dr. Howard S. McCandlish and Dr. Ogden Conkey, all of the department of obstetrics and gynecology of Cornell University Medical College, and consequently men of vast experience with mothers and new-born babies, told the investigators verbally that they never had observed any dimunition in the secretion or supply of milk, or any effect on a child that could be attributed to smoking of cigarettes by mothers.

Tobacco is known to affect different people in different ways. Some are extremely susceptible to nicotin. Partly because of this but largely because pregnancy is a precarious condition calling for every precaution, physicians generally advise expectant mothers to refrain from smoking. This is done largely to protect the mother herself from any possible ill effects.

In the experiments of Dr. Hatcher and Miss Crosby, it was found that large doses of nicotin suppressed the secretion of milk in cat and sow for longer periods than those required for the elimination of the greater part of the poison from the body. The human subject of the experiment was a young woman aged 25. She smoked from 20 to 25 cigarettes a day. The secretion of milk had been abundant but decreased rapidly during the last two days of the experiment. A specimen of the milk was then examined and found to contain just a trace of nicotin.

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Dog-Poisoning Toad

Zoology

Toads are stoutly defended by naturalists against the ancient charge that they are "ugly and venomous." And now, just as most folks have about become convinced and converted, comes a scientist from the Southwest with a report of a toad poisonous enough to kill a dog and to make a man sick.

It is M. E. Musgrave of the U. S. Biological Survey who brings the story of the dog-poisoning toad.

He says: "I lifted a large dark green toad out of a standpipe in front of my house. A wire-haired terrier dog standing by jumped at the toad, which swelled up and hissed. The dog then grabbed the toad and killed it. In the meantime a large police dog ran up and just put his nose on the toad. Within two minutes' time the police dog was partially paralyzed, staggering, and falling, unable to control its body and legs. Within three minutes from the time the dog first attacked the toad, the wire-haired terrier was dead, evidently from congested lungs, as she was apparently unable to get air into her lungs from the time I picked her up, which was not more than a minute after she killed the toad. I became very sick myself, having a peculiar lifting feeling in my lung cavities and a swimming feeling in my head. I wanted to keep going, walking, and did so for about thirty minutes and the sickness wore off. The big police dog recovered about an hour after it put its nose on the toad and apparently suffered no after effects."

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Hunt Elephants

Paleontology

An expedition on an almost military scale, to hunt elephants and rhinoceroses in the Arctic northern portion of Siberia was the project advocated before the American Philosophical Society by Prof. I. P. Tolmachoff of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh.

It is not a wild-goose chase that the Pittsburgh scientist projects, but a frozen-elephant hunt. The mammoths and rhinoceroses that once roamed the plains that are now the home of the reindeer have been extinct for anywhere between 10,000 and 50,000 years, but their remains are so perfectly preserved in the perpetually frozen soil of Siberia that not only their bones and teeth but even their skin and flesh can be taken out intact. There is a stuffed mammoth now in a Leningrad museum. About half of the ivory of commerce, Prof. Tolmachoff said, is from Siberian "fossil" tusks, and the supply seems to be inexhaustible.

Because all modern elephants and rhinoceroses are creatures of tropical habitat, we have unconsciously imbibed the notion that these Siberian representatives of the two animal families were warm-climate beasts as well, and were pinched out by the coming of glacial cold. This, Prof. Tolmachoff declared, is quite erroneous. They were Arctic animals, adapted for life in a climate differing little or not at all from the present climate of Siberia, and feeding on the same plants that now support the reindeer. The cause of their extinction is still a mystery, but probably they died from sheer evolutionary over-specialization.

An expedition to make a thorough scientific study of the frozen remains of these great beasts would present many difficulties, Prof. Tolmachoff stated. The party would have to operate under Arctic conditions, thousands of miles from a railroad. But it would be worth while because of the practically untouched fields that lie open, both in the mainland and on the New Siberian Islands. Results of great, and possibly sensational, interest might be expected.

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The bald eagle is so called because the white plumage on its head and neck suggests baldness.

A recent invention is a "talking post-card" which has its greeting on a tiny phonograph record.