

PHYSIOLOGY

Fellowship for Research On Origin of Tumors

A \$1,500 research fellowship has been granted to Dr. Frances Dorris Humm, research zoologist at Yale University, by Sigma Delta Epsilon, national organization of women in scientific research. Dr. Humm's researches, which are concerned with the origin and physiology of the pigment cell in chicks and rats, have bearing on the problem of pigmented tumors, among the worst of malignant growths. Work under the fellowship will be carried on at the laboratories in New Haven.

Science News Letter, May 17, 1941

PUBLIC HEALTH

Medical Care System Theme of New Novel

WAR and national defense activities have pushed the problem of state or socialized medicine to the background of public attention. Most of us, unless recently faced with the bills for a serious illness, have stopped talking about how much it costs to be sick and how hard it is for many sick people to get adequate medical, nursing and hospital care. The whole huge problem of providing and paying for good medical care for all the population, however, has not yet been solved.

The breathing spell which national interest in defense activities has given to interest in the medical and health situation may prove salutary if it dispels or lessens the bitter feelings that have been aroused by discussions of health insurance, state medicine or socialized medicine. The breathing spell, however, would be far from healthful if it allowed interest in the situation to drop to the point where people generally failed to think about the problems involved and let themselves be unthinkingly swept by some emotional appeal into endorsing a defective or dangerous program of medical and health care for the nation.

A good antidote to the danger of thoughtlessness comes in a new novel, *That None Should Die*, by Frank G. Slaughter (*Reviewed, SNL, this issue*). The author is a young surgeon who has written an exciting story so well that he could be sure of a successful literary career if he ever abandoned his chosen profession of surgery.

The reader, besides being entertained by an absorbing story, will get a vivid and accurate picture of many phases of the doctor's and surgeon's work. He

will get a sympathetic but accurate picture of the good and bad features of the present system of medical practice and of the need for changes. Most important, he will get a striking object lesson of the horrible situation that could develop if medical and public health practice is not kept free of political control. Dr. Slaughter gives his own plan for a medical care system which avoids this danger, and his book should serve to awaken many to the danger and to its insidious nature.

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MEDICINE

Patients Must Eat When Taking Sulfanilamide

PATIENTS must eat when they are taking sulfanilamide or one of its chemical relatives, Dr. John J. Shea, of Memphis, warned fellow ear, nose and throat specialists of the American College of Surgeons.

"Taking sulfanilamide on an empty stomach is as bad as taking alcohol on an empty stomach, he explained. Without food, the medicine, like alcohol, can make a person dizzy and even 'put him out.'"

Sulfanilamide, sulfathiazole and sulfapyridine are medicines but the surgeons welcomed them because they are saving many patients from operation. Many fewer mastoid operations, for example, have been performed since ear specialists have had these drugs to use for treating discharging ears which formerly required operation in many cases to save the patient's life.

In war surgery, sulfanilamide is destined to play a major role in clearing up the dangerous infections that almost always occur in battle wounds.

"The high point in the treatment of wounds today will be sulfanilamide, as the high point in the World War was the Carrel-Dakin solution," Dr. George P. Muller, of Philadelphia, declared in his address as retiring president.

Patients getting sulfanilamide treatment, however, must not only be fed. They must be put to bed and must be seen every day by their doctor, Dr. Shea warned. Blood tests should be made daily to guard against such high concentrations of the drug as might produce symptoms of poisoning. Some patients with discharging ears will have to be operated on for mastoid infection, in spite of sulfanilamide treatment, it was pointed out. Doctors must therefore continue to watch for symptoms of mastoid infection even if the patient's fever and earache disappear under the treatment.

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IN SCIEN

ANTHROPOLOGY

Alaska Was America's Original Melting Pot

ALASKA was America's original melting-pot. Here one may trace the unity of the existing Eskimo population with the dark-skinned Asiatics who live on the other side of Bering Strait, and here can be found traces of an ancient people who resemble the Siouxian Indians of the present-day western United States, Dr. Ales Hrdlicka of the U. S. National Museum told the American Association of Physical Anthropologists.

In prehistoric times there were seven distinct racial groups in Alaska, instead of only two as at present, Dr. Hrdlicka said. Each of the seven differed physically as much from the other six as the Eskimo and Indian populations of Alaska do today. Each also had its own distinctive culture.

Underlying the cultural differences there was a basic unity. This can only be expected, the veteran anthropologist explained, since the way of life had to be much the same. All seven of the vanished peoples were hunting and fishing folk, who lived mainly along the coast, so that they had similar problems to face and similar means for solving them. Even when they moved into the interior they remained essentially coastal, for they moved along the shores of great rivers.

Present-day Eskimos are not completely homogenous, so far as physical traits go, Dr. Hrdlicka continued. In physical measurement, and especially in size and shape of skull bones, the Eskimos of southwestern Alaska differ slightly but quite distinctly from those of the northern groups.

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INVENTION

Can Converted to Pitcher By Use of Plastic Spout

A CAN of evaporated milk may be quickly converted into a convenient pitcher with a little plastic pouring spout. It is stuck into the top of the can, and may be left there until empty. It may be cleaned easily with hot water. (*Canpour Mfg. Co.*)

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CE FIELDS

AGRICULTURE

Oiling Silks on Corn Ears Keeps Out Earworms

IF YOU want to keep those nasty, messy earworms out of the patch of sweetcorn you have just now hopefully planted, carry on chemical warfare against them with mineral oil, advises the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The time for attack is when the ears are shaping up and the silk, having performed its function in pollination, is just beginning to wilt.

Plain mineral oil squirted into the silk at the ear-tip will get rid of earworms if they are still very small. If they have had time to get their growth started, the oil should be fortified with dichloroethyl ether, a chemical readily obtainable on the open market. A quarter of a teaspoonful to an ear is sufficient. It can be applied with an ordinary oilcan, for small gardens; force applicators with larger reservoirs are available for commercial growers. Since earworms travel quite readily every ear in the planting should be protected. This can be done easily in some of the newer hybrid varieties which mature their silks all at the same time; older sweetcorn varieties may require several trips through the patch to insure complete protection.

The oil-dichloroethyl-ether mixture, at a preferred strength of two per cent, works best in warm weather, when the temperature is above 60 degrees Fahrenheit. In cooler weather, a two-tenths per cent mixture of pyrethrin in oil is recommended.

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MEDICINE

Pledges Supply of Eyes From the Dead for Blind

A NOVEL organization, the Dawn Society, has just been formed in northern California of persons who pledge their eyes at death to give sight to the living blind.

As a result, it is hoped doctors will have enough cornea tissue from healthy eyes for people blind because of damaged corneas. This condition accounts for

about 5% of all types of blindness and is often due to industrial accidents.

Doctors have been successful in grafting corneas from one eye to another in recent years, but have been hampered by lack of healthy tissue for the operation. Oral promises to give their eyes to the blind, made by people before death, have not been helpful, as relatives will seldom agree to the operation when the willing donor is deceased.

Sponsored by the International Order of Good Templars, the Dawn Society now has forty members, each having signed a written, legally binding pledge to give his eyes to the blind immediately after death. The plan has the hearty approval and cooperation of the medical profession, and leading eye specialists in principal northern California cities will perform the post mortem operation on members. Both eyes will be removed within six hours after death, and stored in a light saline solution under refrigeration. The tissues will respond to grafting up to two weeks after being removed from the donor. So great will the demand be, however, that it will not be necessary to store the eyes more than a few hours or days.

Blind persons who want the sight-restoring operation will apply to their own physicians, and names of applicants will be listed and served in order of their receipt by the Dawn Society. The "gift eyes" may be sent to other cities, and may serve various people.

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Race Concept Meaningless Anthropologist Declares

THE concept of race, within the human species, is wholly meaningless, declared Dr. M. F. Ashley-Montagu of the Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital, Philadelphia. The bodily characters on which anthropologists rely in making their "racial" classifications are limited to a very few external characters involving a minute fraction of the hereditary units (genes) whose frequencies it would actually be necessary to consider in attempting to make any real, that is to say genetic, classification of mankind, Dr. Ashley-Montagu told the American Association of Physical Anthropologists.

He urged that whereas it is now demonstrable that the race concept "corresponds to nothing real, and is a very poor and meaningless fiction, it is urged that the term be altogether dropped from the scientific vocabulary of the anthropologist."

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ZOOLOGY

National Zoological Park Receives Three Penguins

See Front Cover

THREE Emperor penguins, giant birds standing four feet high, are among the new additions for the National Zoological Park brought up from Antarctica by Admiral Byrd's returning expedition. They were trans-shipped at Valparaiso, Chile, to the liner Aconcagua, which docked in New York. The birds finished their trip by rail.

Along with the three big penguins are four Gentoo penguins, one white giant fulmar and two kelp gulls.

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BOTANY

Try 'Tea-Thyme Tea' Is Botanist's Recommendation

TRY "tea-thyme tea," Prof. Ralph H. Cheney, Long Island University botanist, recommended to his audience at a New York Botanical Garden lecture. This beverage with a catchy name is made simply by adding a couple of crushed thyme leaves to China tea while it is being steeped. The result, with either hot or iced tea, will be a pleasant difference from ordinary tea taste, Prof. Cheney declared.

Twenty-two species of thyme are available for experimentation, he continued, but lemon thyme rates superior to all others in its ability to impart a lemon and spicy flavor to China tea.

The American public isn't getting all it might out of mint, either, in Prof. Cheney's opinion. Spearmint is well known for its use in juleps, he said, "but it is not the mint for the many refreshing non-alcoholic iced teas and fruit juices served during the summer." For these, he recommended applemint, lemon mint, curly mint, peppermint, pineapple mint and anise-flavored spearmint. Curly mint rates as most appropriate for blending with plain lemonade.

In his lecture, on American thirst-quenching plants, Prof. Cheney discussed more than fifty native plant sources for interesting and refreshing drinks. Some, like passion-fruit juice, are already making their way in the market. Others, like Scuppernong grape juice, have high merits which have never been properly publicized. A new combination, recommended by the New York Experiment Station at Geneva, N. Y., is "rasp-apple juice"—75 parts apple juice, 21 parts raspberry juice and four parts sugar.

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