

MEDICINE

Conquest of Large Germs

Amebic dysentery, shingles and pemphigus are being checked by aureomycin. No antibiotic had previously been found effective against large germs like amebae.

► AUREOMYCIN, the golden yellow antibiotic drug, is now being used successfully to treat amebic dysentery, shingles and pemphigus.

These new triumphs for the drug have only been achieved within the last few weeks. There has not been time for all the reports to be published in scientific journals or to get them on the program of the American Medical Association meeting. But doctors attending the meeting heard the news from each other.

Considered very significant are the good results in amebic dysentery which Drs. L. V. McVay, R. L. Laird and D. H. Sprunt of the University of Tennessee and the John Gaston Hospital, Memphis, report in the journal, *SCIENCE* (June 10). The drug gets big germs of this widespread disease out of the patient's body usually within three days.

The importance of this finding lies in the fact that this is the first inkling anyone has had that any antibiotic drug would be effective against large germs like amebae, which belong to the class of protozoa. There is hope, now, that other diseases caused by protozoa may also be conquered

by aureomycin. Included in Dr. Sprunt's cases is one patient who recovered even after an amebic ulcer had perforated the intestine.

The excruciating nerve pain of shingles, often requiring narcotics to stop it, is relieved within 12 hours after aureomycin treatment has been started. The skin eruption begins to dry up within 48 hours. Doctors in New York and Boston are getting these results in this long-lasting virus-caused disease, known medically as herpes zoster. They find, however, that the drug must be used early in the disease. If started after two months, it is not so effective.

Pemphigus is a little-known disease that starts with a skin eruption like that of shingles. In one form, the skin sores ulcerate and the germs, believed to be a virus, get into the blood. Patients are sometimes covered with the ulcerating skin sores. They become invalids for life, if they do not die of the disease, as in many cases they do. Skin specialists at Presbyterian Hospital in New York are now sending patients with this disease home, "to all intents and purposes cured" by aureomycin.

Still another disease over which aureomycin is triumphing is the kind of meningitis caused by hemophilus influenza. This is not the germ that causes influenza, but the meningitis it causes was 100% fatal. Serum and sulfa drugs helped bring down the death toll. Dr. Theodore E. Woodward of Baltimore stated that he had cured five babies under a year old of this disease with aureomycin alone.

Good news about aureomycin comes, too, from scientists of Lederle Laboratories who make the drug. The nausea and vomiting that has been a disturbing side effect will not trouble patients getting the drug in the future. This happy result is expected from a change in the production method.

Science News Letter, June 25, 1949

WILDLIFE

Migration Routes of Yellowstone Elk Studied

► ELK HERDS migrate, just as flocks of ducks and geese do, only they do not go so far and they naturally move more slowly. But they do follow regular travel-ways by thousands, stated Victor H. Cahalane, chief of the biology branch of the National Park Service, before the meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists in Washington.

The largest elk herd remaining in the United States spends its summers in the mountains near the southern boundary of Yellowstone National Park, and when the first heavy snows fall in late October or early November the animals start to move toward their winter range in the lower part of Jackson Hole. (See *SNL*, May 14, p. 311). The herd moves southward on a front about 30 miles wide.

Kind of weather has considerable effect on the rate at which the elk move, Mr. Cahalane declared. If the snowfall is light they go at a leisurely pace, taking as much as two weeks to reach their winter quarters. But if a heavy blizzard strikes, they hurry up, making the trek in half that time.

Science News Letter, June 25, 1949

PALEONTOLOGY

Flesh Remains of Ancient Animals Dug up in Alaska

► RUSSIAN scientists did do it first, but their monopoly has been broken.

Officials of the American Museum of Natural History in New York announced that the actual flesh remains of prehistoric animals discovered in Alaska are on display. Included is the body of a young muskox which died some 15,000 years ago and was preserved in a natural deep freeze in Alaska.

These specimens are among the first ever found on the North American continent, though Russian scientists have been digging up this sort of thing in Siberia for years.

Science News Letter, June 25, 1949



LARGE-EARED FOXES—This pair of foxes from Cape Colony, Africa, are on exhibit at the National Zoological Park in Washington.