

PERUVIAN FEVER GERM DISCOVERED

The Rockefeller Institute is responsible for the isolation of another germ. This time it is the microbe that causes oroya fever, a curious, highly fatal disease that occurs only in restricted localities of the Andes at altitudes above 6000 feet.

In a recent issue of Science, Dr. Hideyo Noguchi and Dr. T. S. Battistini gave a preliminary report on their work on this organism which they have succeeded in growing for the first time in artificial cultures. It is known as Bartonella bacilliformis and has been recognized for sometime as the cause of Peruvian fever but no one has ever before been able to grow it in the laboratory or to inoculate animals with it. Dr. Noguchi and Dr. Battistini have produced typical forms of the disease in monkeys and have recovered the organism from the red corpuscles of the blood of the diseased animals with which they have infected others.

Since oroya fever can now be produced artificially in the laboratory it can be studied constructively to ascertain protective measures. Its restriction to dark, narrow mountain valleys of Peru has suggested that it is spread by an insect carrier whose range is confined to this particular region. The disease is of long duration characterized by several weeks of fever and a marked destruction of red blood cells similar to pernicious anemia. After several weeks or even months of fever, eruptions occur on the skin which have given rise to the name of Peruvian warts.

The percentage of fatality is fairly high and early accounts of the Spaniards attribute many deaths to this cause. Pizarro is said to have lost 700 men by it. Like tetanus, infection must occur through the blood stream, an additional reason for believing that it must be contracted from an insect bite.

TRAINING FOR MORONS: NOT STERILIZATION

The problem of mental deficiency need not be the great bugaboo we have always thought it, according to Dr. George K. Pratt, assistant to the Medical Director of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

Medical science has established, he maintains, that approximately fifty per cent. of the cases of feeble-mindedness are not congenital. This means that the social menace of the mentally deficient is not half so great as the gloomy family trees of the Jukes and the Kallikaks and such notorious clans have tended to make us believe. Feeble-mindedness, when it does not directly originate in the faulty germ plasm received from either father or mother, is due to birth injuries or infectious disease. Spinal meningitis and several of the infantile diseases may result in permanent injury to the brain tissue. The ensuing mental lacks are just as complete as in hereditary cases, but there has been no evidence to prove that they can be transmitted to the next generation.

Less than ten per cent. of the whole number of feeble-minded are of the potentially vicious class. These, it has been found, are comprised almost entirely of neglected types who have grown up in bad environment. In other words, many of the mentally deficient when properly trained and supervised can be fitted in the community as more or less useful citizens.