

EMBRYOLOGY

**"Good Egg" Compliment
To Be Taken Literally**

IF YOU call a man a "good egg" the compliment is to be taken literally. He probably did start out in life as a better-than-average egg cell, and has kept this advantage throughout his development.

This was among the points developed by Dr. George L. Streeter, director of the department of embryology of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, in a lecture delivered in that city. The exhaustive studies on mammalian ova conducted by his department have shown that these first cells in the development of the body are of very uneven quality. Many ova get started but never reach birth. Others are responsible for puny infants that die off during the crucial first year.

"If we reach the fifty to sixty years figured on by insurance actuaries, we can count ourselves as average eggs," said Dr. Streeter. "And if a man attains fourscore, we can regard him as an extraordinarily good egg."

In Dr. Streeter's laboratory the difficult task of finding and studying the eggs of various mammals has been conducted with more success than it ever has been elsewhere, and many facts about the earliest stages in the development of the higher animals and man which have hitherto had to be inferred from the embryology of non-mammalian animals are now being ascertained by direct study.

The eggs of such animals as rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, cats and hogs have been obtained in considerable numbers; and two weeks ago the researchers succeeded in finding for the first time the living dividing egg of a monkey consisting of 12 cells. As yet, however, no human stage younger than about eleven days has been found. At this stage the embryo already contains some hundreds of cells and has made a considerable advance in its development.

A powerful weapon in this research has been the motion picture camera. Focussed through a high-power microscope and taking its exposures at the slow rate of six a minute, the camera has produced a film that condenses hours of development into minutes of projection, enabling the scientists to study changes that in nature proceed so slowly that they would not be seen by direct observation.

Science News Letter, December 6, 1930

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