



Fray Junipero's Flower

CALIFORNIA boosters never tire of telling us that their coast is quite as good as a summer resort as it is as a winter playground. They are right about it, too, if only one keeps close to the water; California valleys can get pretty bad in summer. But the seashore is fine. No rain falls all summer long, and the hills and mesas go brown and desert-like. Yet in among the chaparral, and along the shore dunes, and under the pines at Torrey Hill or the cypresses at Monterey, one can find astonishingly beautiful flowers even in the drought.

High among the flowers in California's crown must be rated the California poppy. Its beautiful golden cups, tinged with red at the bases of the petals, shine bright above the sage-green foliage, and make the plant an ideal one either for natural ground-carpet in the wild or for low borders in the garden. It is one of the best of American contributions to floriculture, the more so since it is still evolutionally plastic and has yielded new varieties in abundance, some of them deep orange or almost pure red.

The California poppy offers an excellent example of the happy guess sometimes made in popular nomenclature. Strictly speaking it is not a poppy, though it is a member of the poppy family. But people of no botanical skill saw the resemblance and applied a most happy and appropriate name.

There is a lovely legend told in California, about the founder of the great chain of old Spanish missions, Father Junipero Serra. It is said that when he saw his first California poppy, with its splash of red at the bottom of the cup, he plucked it up and offered it to God as though it were the chalice at the altar. The story would be worthy of inclusion in the *Fioretti* of St. Francis of Assisi.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Blindness In Children May Result From Depression Diet

LACK of proper food for families hit by the depression may "take a horrible toll" in increased numbers of sightless children, Dr. Emanuel M. Josephson, eye specialist, of New York City, warned the meeting of the Eugenics Research Association.

The public should be warned that unbalanced depression diets, lacking in the proper vitamins, may result in eye disease and blindness, he said. And these diseases may be handed on to future generations, so that America's children yet unborn may suffer if families today are not properly fed.

Inexpensive foods added to the depression diet may prevent the development of this "hunger blindness." Carrots and other vegetables, and cod liver oil are among the foods which protect against it.

A family in which almost half the descendants of one grandmother suffered from cataracts, a condition of the eye which gradually veils the sight, was reported by Dr. Josephson as an instance of how the tendency to eye disease may be inherited but brought on by living conditions. Although so many members of this particular family developed cataracts, some of them beginning before the birth of the child, another branch of the family in better financial condition did not have a single case of this disease down to the third and fourth generations.

Cataracts are not the only eye disease which may result from environmental conditions such as malnutrition, Dr. Josephson pointed out.

Day blindness, a disease common in

the poorer countries of the Orient, which causes the patient to see less by daylight than at night, has become widespread in the United States for the first time during the depression. This disease, and its later stages nightblindness and keratomalacia or softening of the cornea, and xerophthalmia (dry eyeball), are due to lack of vitamin A in the diet.

"If America wishes to take no risk of becoming, like China, a country with a high incidence of blindness and eye disease due to prolonged malnutrition, prompt action must be taken," Dr. Josephson concluded.

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ENGINEERING

Soundproofing Gives Wall Look of Underground Cave

See Front Cover

THE microphone shown on the front cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER is not broadcasting from among the stalactites of some underground cavern. The curious formations shown are nothing more romantic than cotton waste covering the walls and ceiling of a soundproof room in the General Electric Company's general engineering laboratory at Schenectady, N. Y.

The waste is thus used to minimize reflection and resonance of sound generated within the room. Sensitive sound-measuring instruments are calibrated there and then taken to another soundproof room to determine the amount and types of noise prevalent in motors, and other electrical apparatus.

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