

alysis. Airplane pilots in particular can learn to read more readily from the mapping frame than from the ordinary surface map or cross-section the information they wish to know; it should

be better in this regard than a series of upper air maps laid side by side, if the glass frames be large enough, well drawn and properly illuminated."

Science News Letter, April 4, 1936

PUBLIC HEALTH

New Surgeon General Plans Vigorous Health Program

Wiping Out Tuberculosis and Syphilis Heads List Of His Goals; National Health Insurance Not Approved

HEALTH insurance for the nation as a whole does not meet with the approval of the newly-appointed Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service, Dr. Thomas Parran, Jr.

"I am convinced," he said recently, "that an integrated plan of public health, public medical service and private practice is preferable to health insurance."

This statement was made on methods of securing health for the people of New York State while Dr. Parran was Health Commissioner of that state. Under his direction a system was built up for securing adequate medical treatment for all the people without recourse to health insurance. Here is how it works in the case of pneumonia, for example:

The practicing physician sees his patients and takes care of them himself. For those patients who have only a little money to spend on medical care, the state health department makes free tests of the patient's serum to determine the type of pneumonia he has. A new, better, concentrated serum, costing at retail from \$20 to \$100 per patient, is supplied without charge by the state department of health to any physician requesting it. In addition, the state health department, either through its own nursing service or through other nursing agencies, supplies nursing service free of charge to all patients who are being treated in their own homes instead of in hospitals.

Post-Graduate Training

Another feature of the New York plan is that the State medical society volunteers to give its own members up-to-date, post-graduate training in the treatment of pneumonia. Deaths from pneumonia will, according to conservative estimates, be cut down by at least

one-fourth within the course of a few years of this concerted effort on the part of public health and private medical agencies.

Dr. Parran believes this system should be extended to other kinds of illness and to other states. It is not state medicine, for the private physician takes care of his own patients. The states merely extend their health service to include laboratory tests, treatment materials and nursing service for those private patients who cannot bear the cost of these in addition to the doctor's fees.

"Under such a combination, the doctor would retain everything now satisfactory to himself and his patient," Dr. Parran points out. "He would be aided by public accessories to practice and by compensation for the present unbearable load of free service; there would be no disruption in the physician-patient relationship for the large sector of medical practice in the home and in the doctor's office.

"For those above the job insurance level there would be no change in present methods.

Evolutionary Process

"This plan would represent an evolutionary process based upon considerable experience. It would provide care freely for the catastrophic and expensive illness of the low-wage group now poorly served or served at the expense of the physician. It would remove the major economic hazards of illness. It would reduce present high disease and death rates from important preventable causes and advance the public health tremendously."

The American people may as well get ready to take syphilis out of the category of unmentionable, darkly whispered words and put it into everyday speech along with gallbladders,

cancer and infantile paralysis. For they are likely to hear a lot about syphilis from the newly-appointed Surgeon General.

Syphilis is a disease which Dr. Parran considers one of the greatest enemies to public health. (*See SNL, Mar. 21.*) In this several thousand other health and medical authorities agree with him. For years Dr. Parran has been active in the fight against this health menace.

When you meet Dr. Parran, he will impress you as a forceful person, keen of thought, independent, a fearless fighter against all diseases and conditions that are unfavorable to health.

Dr. Parran is a young man to shoulder the responsibilities of his new position—he was born in Leonardtown, Md., in 1892—but he has had extensive experience in administrative public health work. His academic training was received at St. John's College, Annapolis, Md., and he received his medical degree from Georgetown University, Washington, D. C., in 1915. He entered the U. S. Public Health Service in 1917, winning first place in a competitive examination for entrance.

Since entering the federal health service he has served as medical officer in charge of Muscle Shoals Sanitary District and chief medical officer at the government nitrate plant; as state director of rural sanitation in Mis-



DR. THOMAS PARRAN, JR.

"Musts" on Health Program Of New Surgeon General

The newly-appointed Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service, Dr. Thomas Parran, Jr., has six "musts" on his program for securing better health throughout the nation, based on his philosophy that "the greatest need for health action is where the greatest saving of life and suffering can be made." They are the following:

- 1. To finish the job of wiping out tuberculosis.
- 2. To wipe out that unmentionable disease, syphilis, the end results of which "crowd our jails, our poorhouses and our insane asylums."
- 3. To make available to people everywhere facilities for the proper diagnosis and treatment of cancer, which in Dr. Parran's opinion would reduce by 20 per cent. the deaths from this disease.
- 4. To reduce the "disgracefully high" death rates of mothers in childbirth and of babies in their first month of life.
- 5. To correct the conditions resulting from improper diet.
- 6. To restore crippled children to lives of usefulness.

souri; in charge of the Tri-State Sanitary District of Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma; and as director of county health work in Illinois. For four years he was assistant surgeon general in charge of all venereal disease control activities of the U. S. Public Health Service and during this period inaugurated many important research studies on these diseases.

When President Roosevelt was elected Governor of New York State in 1929 he desired a reorganization of the health department of that state. A request was made to the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service

for the assignment of an experienced, capable officer. Dr. Parran, because of his unusual experience, was selected for the assignment, and his outstanding record as State Commissioner of Health of New York for the last five years has justified this assignment and promises much for his future as Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service.

Dr. Parran has been called the foremost authority in the country on the public health aspect of syphilis control, but he has also taken an extensive interest in rural health work and in fact in all problems affecting the public health.

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PUBLIC HEALTH

United States Lags In Fight Against Smallpox

By DR. J. P. LEAKE, Medical Director,
United States Public Health Service.

SMALLPOX should be an unknown disease. It is certainly the disease most completely preventable by the "defensive armor" of making people immune to attack.

We have to admit, however, that the United States lags behind other civilized countries in vaccination protection.

Doctors have commented on the fact that a medical student may go through four years of training in a city which has fair vaccination protection and a good health department, without ever

seeing a smallpox case. In parts of the country where vaccination is routine, smallpox is uncommon.

Yet, from 5,000 to 50,000 cases of smallpox occur each year in this country.

Effectiveness of vaccination against smallpox is demonstrated by experience. Time after time, health officers actually responsible for repression of smallpox find households, jails, and institutions with a large proportion of the unvaccinated attacked by smallpox, and the recently vaccinated spared. This is practically uniform experience.

To show how commonplace small-

pox used to be, it is said that if the police wanted a man, the fact that his face was not scarred and pitted by smallpox would be an outstanding mark for finding him. Smallpox was almost as common, before vaccination was introduced, as influenza is today, and far more deadly.

The work of eighteenth century doctors and others, who developed the means of preventing this disease, provide one of the classic stories of medical history.

A child should be vaccinated within a few weeks after birth, when the effects are mildest. Then, the child should be revaccinated when he starts to school. And thereafter it is best to be vaccinated again every five to twenty years.

If this is done, the individual will practically never have a sore arm from vaccination, and will always have the best possible protection against a disease which may be very dreadful.

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ARCHAEOLOGY

Etruscans Did Not Figure In Direct Descent of ABC's

THREE inscriptions by the ancient Etruscans, preserved in New York and Philadelphia museums, are helping to clear up one of the puzzles of how the alphabet was evolved.

The three pieces of writing, now among museum treasures of this country, suggest strongly that the Romans got the alphabet direct from the Greeks.

This has been one of the weak and uncertain links in the long chain of evolution through which scholars trace the modern alphabet. From modern letters—in which this magazine is printed—the evolutionary changes go back through Latin alphabet, Greek forms, Phoenician, even farther back toward a still somewhat mysterious origin, perhaps near 2000 B.C. in the Near East.

For many years, language students have argued over two rival theories as to where the Latin alphabet was borrowed. One faction said the Romans caught the idea from Greek colonists in southern Italy. Another faction thought that Rome's near neighbors, the Etruscans, were the people who gave Rome inspiration for an alphabet.

Now, it appears that the Etruscans can be left out of the alphabet picture in this direct line of succession.

The Etruscans, who rose to power in Italy about 800 years before Christ,