"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 smallpox 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,

have proved one of the most baffling of ancient peoples to understand. The beauty of their bronze craftwork and their other possessions, and their alphabetic writing—which is still incompletely understood—have lured scholars to try persistently to learn more about Etruscan civilization. A new bit of information about a single Etruscan alphabet letter is apt to be heralded as news of importance.

Dr. Eva Fiesel of Yale University has been studying three Etruscan inscriptions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the University Museum in Philadelphia, and she has learned something new about the letter X in Etruscan. This letter has heretofore been recognized in its place in the Etruscan alphabet, which, by a curious Etruscan custom, was often inscribed on vases or other objects. But how the letter X sounded in Etruscan words no one could say.

From the three American inscriptions, Dr. Fiesel finds evidence that early Etruscans before 600 B.C. pronounced X as S or Sh, or in some similar way. This pronunciation ties the Etruscans, by language, to ancient Asia Minor, suggesting that the Etruscans brought their alphabet with them when they migrated to Italy. At the same time, it suggests that the Latin alphabet was borrowed elsewhere, for in using this strategic letter X the Romans gave it a sound value familiar to Greek colonists in Italy.

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PHARMACY

Vitamin Experts Confer on Standard for Vitamin B_1

THE NATION'S vitamin experts recently sat around tables in a hotel room in Washington, D. C., for an entire morning and attempted to draw up a standard for one of the B vitamins to put in the next revision of the U. S. Pharmacopoeia.

This volume is the legal standard in the United States for medicines. It is revised every ten years by a committee of physicians, pharmacists and other medical scientists. It is instrumental in preventing the sale of inferior medicines to the public.

The revision committee of the Pharmacopoeia called in the leaders in vitamin research to give advice on which method of determining the presence of vitamin B_1 in food and drug products should be made the official standard. Sitting in at the conference was Dr. Katherine H. Coward, one of England's leaders in vitamin research.

A tremendous number of food and drug products, claiming to be of health value because they contain vitamin B_1, are now on the market. At present there is no way for a physician to be sure which of these is best for his patients, because there is no standard to judge them by.

Since the original discovery of vitamin B and its importance for health, scientists have found that there are some four or five, or maybe six B vitamins. All of them are necessary for health. One of them prevents pellagra. Others have other effects on the body. The one chiefly discussed, known as B_1, protects against nervous ailments and particularly against the serious disease, beri-beri. It is found most abundantly in whole grain cereals (refining or polishing removes it), in yeast, egg-yolk and liver.

Standards for vitamin B_1, unlike standards for chemical medicines, depend on animal studies. Scientists may test for B_1 by determining the amount of a vitamin-containing substance, such as yeast or rice polishings, that will cure beri-beri in a pigeon or in a rat, or the amount that will promote normal growth in the animal or bird.

The experts meeting here agreed that it would be helpful for the U. S. Pharmacopoeia to recognize one method of determining vitamin B_1, but that it should not be made the legal standard until it had been tried generally by vitamin researchers and manufacturers of vitamin products. They seemed to favor using pigeons for test animals. Yeast as a test material was not favored because it contains too many of the other B vitamins which might interfere with the results.

The consensus of opinions expressed will be used to guide the revision committee in deciding whether to adopt a vitamin B_1 standard for inclusion in the U. S. Pharmacopoeia. Physicians, general public and manufacturers will all benefit from such a standard.

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ORNITHOLOGY

Mallard Duck Built Nest In Tree Instead of Grass

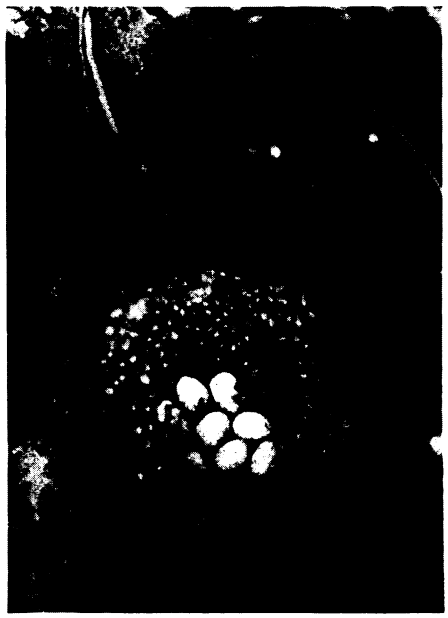
By GEORGE A. SMITH

SPRING is here, and the wild ducks are coming back. And I am wondering whether the pair of mallards I got acquainted with last spring will repeat their strange behavior, and build another nest in a tree.

One morning early in the season, while taking a walk along the shore of Jones Lake, just south of the New York State Fish Hatchery, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York, I noticed a mallard duck fly out of a tree. Knowing that mallards seldom alight on trees, I guessed that the duck had built her nest in it, so I climbed the tree to satisfy my curiosity.

On an overhanging branch about ten feet from the ground, directly over a path, and only a few feet from the lake, I found a nest lined with down and containing nine duck eggs. It is rather uncommon for mallards to build nests in trees. They often lay their eggs and hatch their young in a field, or even close to a thoroughfare, or in some secluded spot in a park, but the nest is usually on or near the ground or in very low bushes.

I watched the eggs every day or two until the young ducks hatched. The



A HIGH HOME

These mallard duck eggs in the nest were found on a tree branch ten feet above the ground where this kind of bird usually builds its nest.