MEDICINE

"Ginger Jake" Victims of 1930 Still Disabled

WHAT ever happened to the much-discussed "ginger jake" victims of 1930 and 1931? Remember how the paralytic illness due to drinking adulterated Jamaica ginger in the days before repeal was a front-page story?

At the time, physicians hoped and believed the shocking effects would be only temporary but at the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association it developed that the disability is permanent.

Dr. William M. Bevis of the Veterans' Administration Facility at Mountain View, Tenn., told his colleagues that the former "ginger jakers" are now unable to get about enough to earn a living.

Dr. Bevis described sixty-seven cases of patients he has examined in the past three years who are still disabled. In the majority there has been very slight if any improvement since they first were paralyzed by the adulterated drink. Marked weakness of the legs and back, waddling gait, wasting of hands and legs, ape-like looking hands, hardened muscles and shortened muscles and tendons are the present results of the condition. Dr. Bevis showed motion pictures of some of the men to illustrate their condition.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

VOLCANOLOGY

Steam at Mt. Lassen, Only "Live" Volcano in U. S.

AN ERUPTION of continental U.S.'s only live volcano, Mt. Lassen, in California, would not be surprising following earthquakes and 200-foot high steam jets reported by Superintendent E. P. Leavitt, to U. S. National Park Service headquarters.

Lassen first erupted, within historic days, in 1914 and activity continued until 1918. In the 18 years since there have been steam outpourings and fumaroles in the area around the peak, but the happenings in the past weeks have been more important. They may be warning of what is happening beneath the ground.

First, a steam jet 200 feet from the crater was reported and four vents issuing vapor were found. Then followed earthquakes recorded on the seismograph at Manzanita Lake. First shocks came on Wednesday, May 6; a total of 23 with nine stronger than the rest. One at 6:30 a.m. Friday lasted 1 minute 37 seconds. It is known that local earthquakes have often preceded volcanic eruptions.

Mount Lassen continued to show signs of activity during the first ten days after the new steam jets began to spurt from its slopes. Up to May 14, 124 distinct earth tremors had been felt, and had recorded themselves on the seismographs maintained at headquarters in Mount Lassen National Park.

The 1914 eruption of Lassen, epoch-making because it was the first volcanic eruption within the borders of the U. S. proper known to have taken place in historic times, was on Memorial Day. It was an explosion of ash-laden steam within the summit crater. Almost a year later, in late May, 1915, there were two terrific eruptions, with a mud flow on the northeast slope of the mountain which devastated the valleys of Hat Creek and Lost Creek for twenty miles.

Before 1914 Lassen was just another old volcano cone. Then it became one of America's wonders under control of the National Park Service. It was surrounded by a national park and good roads carried thousands to its area. It has scientists and instruments to watch its least unrest.

If after 20 years it now becomes active, Lassen will again make the front pages of newspapers. And visitors to California will be able to motor to a live volcano in comparative safety.

Uncle Sam is fairly rich in volcanoes, active and extinct, but the live ones, except Lassen, are in his territories.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

CHEMISTRY

Chemistry Honor Awarded To Inventor of Bakelite

FIRST award of the Pioneer Cup of the Chemical Foundation and the Chemurgic Council, a new honor in American chemistry designed for the recognition of research and discovery in this country, was conferred upon Dr. Leo Baekeland, noted Belgian-American chemist who invented Bakelite, at the Second Dearborn Conference of Agriculture, Industry and Science. In Dr. Baekeland's absence, it was accepted on his behalf by Dr. C. H. Herty.

The cup is a replica of one made in Massachusetts before 1700, by Edward Winslow, an early American-born silversmith, who is rated as the artistic peer of Benvenuto Cellini.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

IN SCIEN

VITAL STATISTICS

Death Rate For 1936 Increased Over Last Year's

THE DEATH rate is higher for 1936 in all but 17 of 130 major cities of the nation than it was in 1935, figures released by Bureau of Census of the U. S. Department of Commerce reveal. The comparison period is the first 18 weeks of each year.

Deaths from motor vehicle accidents are appreciably less for the 18-week period than they were last year, however. The figures for 1935 are 2,949 deaths in vehicle accidents while for the same period in 1936 only 2,503 motor vehicle deaths have occurred.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

RADIO

High-Frequency Waves Bounce Off Skyscraper

RADIO waves of the kind to be used in television have been flying over New York City in recent months between two of the metropolis' greatest skyscrapers, the Empire State Building and the RCA Building.

These waves, completely out of all range of ordinary broadcast receivers, have a frequency of 177,000,000 cycles a second. They are in the range used for experimental television broadcasts, declared P. S. Carter and G. S. Wickizer of R.C.A. Communications, Inc., before the joint meeting of the Institute of Radio Engineers and the International Scientific Radio Union in Washington, D. C.

The high-frequency signals received, said the radio scientists, came by several paths besides the direct one between the two skyscrapers. Some of the signals arrived after reflection off the ground and after reflections from other nearby buildings. This reflection characteristic of the high-frequency waves is typical, for it is known that they can be propagated in straight lines; have difficulty in bending around intervening obstacles; in fact, have a transmission distance limited quite largely by the curvature of the earth.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

CE FIELDS

MEDICINE

Many Lives Saved by Identifying New Disease

MANY LIVES have been saved since the identification of a new disease called terminal or regional ileitis, it appears from a report of Dr. O. J. Hagen, Regent of the University of Minnesota, to the Minnesota State Medical Association meeting.

The disease involves a part of the digestive tract called the ileum and before its identification was undoubtedly diagnosed as cancer, tuberculosis, ulcerative colitis or appendicitis, because it closely resembles these in symptoms.

In practically all cases of terminal ileitis, the patient recovers if the disease is discovered and treated early. Before it was known as a separate disease, however, it is likely that many patients died who could have been saved by proper treatment, which is surgical operation. X-rays make it possible to tell this from other intestinal diseases. The cause is probably invasion by some unidentified germ.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

MEDICINE

Refute Idea That Allergic Diseases Are Hereditary

THE prevailing idea that the allergic diseases such as hay fever, asthma, hives and eczema are inherited was refuted by Dr. Bret Ratner, clinical professor of children's diseases, New York University College of Medicine, at the meeting of the Association for the Study of Allergy.

Susceptibility to these diseases is not transmitted through the germ plasm, or the genes which are the carriers of hereditary traits, Dr. Ratner concluded from investigations covering a period of fifteen years. The allergic diseases are acquired by the individual under certain circumstances from the inhalation of pollens, animal or vegetable dusts, or contact with them, or from the ingestion of foods.

Dr. Ratner studied 250 allergic children and 315 normal children and their respective families. Allergy was found about as often in the families of allergic children as in the families of the normal children. Only rarely, Dr. Ratner found, is there a so-called allergic family in which a large proportion of the members suffer from hay fever, asthma, hives or other allergic disorders.

The development of allergy is to a large extent a matter of chance. It depends on the amount of protein to which a person is exposed, the state of permeability of the mucous membranes of nose, breathing and digestive tracts which ordinarily act as a barrier, the ability of the body to rid itself of invading protein substances, and the intervals at which such exposures occur.

This idea of how allergy develops is borne out by research in which Dr. Ratner and his co-workers actually produced asthma in the guinea pig. They also showed that a child may become sensitized during the period before birth.

The hope held out by the studies, Dr. Ratner indicated, is that since susceptibility to hay fever and other allergies is not inherited through the germ plasm, proper preventive measures can be instituted to control and to a large extent eradicate this common ailment, which is present in every tenth person.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

AVIATION

Aviation Medal To N.A.C.A. Director

DR. GEORGE WILLIAM LEWIS, director of aeronautical research of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, has been awarded the 1936 Daniel Guggenheim Medal, one of aviation's highest awards. This is the eighth year of award, with Wright, Prandtl, Lanchester, de la Cierva, Hunsaker, Boeing and Durand as previous medalists.

Dr. Lewis has steered N.A.C.A. research since 1919. This government agency has one of the best equipped aeronautical research laboratories in the world at Langley Field, Va.

Among the outstanding contributions to aeronautics made by the Committee under Dr. Lewis's leadership are: The N.A.C.A. cowling; the N.A.C.A. engine-nacelle location; important data on the air loads on aircraft in flight, forming the basis of strength requirements for aircraft design; determination of means of reducing landing speeds; determination of improved methods for the lateral control of airplanes, especially at high angles of attack; and the development of airfoils of improved characteristics.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

GENERAL SCIENCE

British Scholars to Study At American Universities

THIRTY-ONE scientists and scholars of the British Empire will study in American universities in the next two years, it is announced by the Commonwealth Fund.

These men are the eleventh annual contingent of Commonwealth Fund fellows who have just been selected by a British Committee of Award whose chairman is Sir Walter H. Moberly.

Among the fellows is a New Zealand meteorologist who will take postgraduate studies in weather forecasting for aviation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Harvard University will have a college principal from Ceylon studying technical education. And a veterinary scientist from South Africa will study the insect carriers of animal disease at the University of Minnesota.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936

MEDICINE

Lack of Sex Hormone May Cause Nervous Exhaustion

RELIEF of nervous exhaustion in women by sex hormone treatment and a kidney extract that benefited patients suffering from nephritis were reported at the meeting of the Association for the Study of Internal Secretions.

Nearly half of a group of 250 women who suffered from chronic nervous exhaustion were relieved of most of their symptoms and another 24 per cent were improved by treatment with a female sex hormone preparation, Dr. L. F. Hawkinson of Brainerd, Minn., reported. The symptoms of nervous exhaustion in these women included nervousness, lassitude, exhaustion after exertion, irritability, depression and crying spells. Many cases, Dr. Hawkinson believes, are the result of deficiency of the ovarian hormone, estrin.

Treatment of nephritis by kidney extract was reported by Dr. Benjamin Jablons of New York City. The substance he used was extracted from kidneys immediately after their removal from the body and seems to be a kidney hormone. Lack of this hormone in nephritis is responsible for some of the symptoms of this type of kidney disease, in Dr. Jablons' opinion. When he gives this extract to nephritis patients, their blood pressure drops, convulsions are relieved, shortness of breath is improved, and other symptoms clear up.

Science News Letter, May 23, 1936