

**● RADIO ●**

April 27, 4:15 p. m., E.S.T.  
CAN MAN KEEP UP WITH SCIENCE?—  
Dr. Edwin G. Conklin, Emeritus Professor  
of Zoology, Princeton University.  
May 4, 4:15 p. m., E.S.T.  
NEW INDUSTRIES FOR OLD—Dr. E. R.  
Weidlein, Director of the Mellon In-  
stitute.  
In the Science Service series of radio dis-  
cussions led by Watson Davis, Director,  
over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

## HYGIENE

## Dose Spring Fever With Sunshine and Fresh Air

MODERN scientific medical books do not mention spring fever. Sulfur and molasses and "yarb tea" are hardly to be found in kitchenettes or the modern family medicine chest. Yet the disease or condition for which these were the old-time remedies still exists in our streamlined civilization.

Spring fever is "the popular name for a common experience," says the U. S. Public Health Service. It is made up of a feeling of languor, a desire for more fruits and vegetables, and a longing to play hooky, from business or school, and spend the day out of doors.

No one is immune to this disease and there is no vaccine for it. It afflicts the old and the young, the office worker, the housewife and the school boy.

According to one physician, the condition is due to a depletion during the winter months of the body's store of calcium. Certainly the cold of winter stimulates the average person to work harder and indulge in more strenuous and interesting activity. All this uses up more mental, nervous and physical energy. When warm weather comes there is a let down in activity and energy expenditure which is most noticeable in the first days of spring.

The best remedy for spring fever does not come from medicine bottles or Grandmother's yarb kettle. A modern scientific prescription for a spring fever remedy might be written as follows: Sunshine and fresh air flavored with fishing poles, golf sticks or flivvers; liberal doses, to be taken as often as desired.

If you feel you must have any additional spring tonic, the U. S. Public Health Service advises you to make this the season for an annual physical examination by a physician.

*Science News Letter, April 24, 1937*

## PSYCHOLOGY

# War, Politics, Depression Fail to Influence Insanity

## It's Not the Standards of Society That Determine Whether a Man Is Mad; It's In the Patient Himself

NEITHER a Soviet nor a Nazi form of government will reduce the proportion of insanity among the people under its rule, Drs. James Page and Carney Landis, of the New York State Psychiatric Institute, told the Eastern Branch of the American Psychological Association meeting at Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

Political regimes and even major catastrophes like the World War, the wholesale loss of life in the influenza epidemic, and the great economic depression have no effect upon the incidence of mental disease, these investigators reported.

The explanation for a recent lowering in the number of persons in Germany diagnosed as having the mental disease dementia praecox lies not in the Nazi stress upon national feeling and military lack of self-centeredness, but in the fact that all patients so diagnosed must be sterilized, Drs. Page and Landis indicated. Physicians in Germany today rarely diagnose a patient as having this mental disease.

Discounted by these investigators was the theory that the mental soundness of a person depends upon the standards of the civilization in which he happens to live. Transporting the paranoid person with delusions of persecution to a culture where all persons are mutually suspicious, distrustful and insulting would not result in his being considered normal. Nor would the suicidal patient be thought normal in Japan.

It is not such surface symptoms that determine whether a person is mentally abnormal in our own civilization; it is the fact that these variations from custom are illogical, incomprehensible, and unmodifiable. He can't help himself.

"Our hospitals for the criminally insane are filled with murderers, but a policeman or soldier who kills is often given a medal," said Dr. Page. "Some mental patients are hospitalized because they continually disrobe in public, and so do well paid burlesque stars."

Cure of a nineteen-year-old boy who suffered from fear of the dark so intense

that it amounted to a phobia and made him literally unable to remain alone in a dark room was described to the meeting by Dr. G. Milton Smith of the College of the City of New York.

The young man was also distressed by the fact that he could not remember his father, who died when the son was five, and by his mother's persistent refusal to talk of his father.

Under hypnosis, he remembered the terrifying experience that had produced the phobia. He described in astonishing detail a room in an apartment where he had lived at the age of five and a man, his father, who sat there reading. Without warning, the father jumped up and began to yell and wave his arms about, his face horribly contorted. The child fled in terror down a long dark hallway, the father staggering after him.

The father, it was found, had suffered from paresis and died in an asylum. The boy was cured through the aid of the hypnosis.

### Stuttering Minds

The repetitious speech of a stutterer is an indication of a similar repetition of ideas in his mind—a tendency for ideas to remount into consciousness after they have once occurred, experiments reported by Drs. J. Eisenson and C. N. Winslow, of Brooklyn, indicated.

### Gullibility

Gullibility, or the willingness to swallow whole anything one hears, is a mat-

## VITALISM and MECHANISM A Discussion

between

HERBERT V. NEAL  
Professor of Zoology, Tufts College

and

JAMES F. PORTER

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ter not alone of intelligence—or rather lack of it—but also of training and special ability. Thus an intelligent person may be versed in psychology and hence not gullible, but uninformed and gullible in mathematics or physics. So Dr. S. B. Sells, of Columbia University, told his colleagues.

### Startled Twins

Left-handed twins jump more when they are startled by a revolver shot than do their identical brothers or sisters, Drs. William A. Hunt and Frances M. Clarke, of Connecticut College for Women, told the meeting. The explanation for this has not yet been determined, but it was suggested that it might have to do with the side of the brain that is dominant.

The typical movements of startle—hunched shoulders, bent elbows, drawn up arms, bent knees, contracted abdomen, and so on—are shown by children as well as grownups and are much stronger and regular in the children. The younger ones also run away; the older ones show, instead, curiosity and attention to the source of the sound.

### Cats See at Night

Cats prowling at night can see in only one-fourth the amount of light that is necessary for the human eye, tests of feline vision made by Dr. Charles S. Bridgman, of the University of Rochester, revealed.

Most important in helping the sight of the cat that prowls at night is the large area of her dilated eye pupil, Dr. Bridgman said. When it is at its largest it is double the size of the human pupil's maximum. The eye is like a camera; it lets in more light and takes the picture quicker when the aperture is large.

Tabby cannot distinguish changes in illumination so well as you can, however, according to tests reported by Dr. L. C. Mead, who worked with Dr. Bridgman at the University of Rochester.

### Thrift Taught Chimpanzees

Lessons in thrift are the latest accomplishment of the famous Yale chimpanzees who have already learned to work for "money" discs and to spend them in a "chimpomat," a machine which automatically yields raisins and other chimp tidbits as familiar slot machines give up cigarettes or gum.

Now the chimpanzees have learned to save their pay until a hoard is accumulated and will then carry it from the work room to another room serving as market place where the chimpomat is located and where they can spend their savings. The thrift lessons were described by Dr. John T. Cowles, of Yale.

The desire of the chimpanzee baby for "comfort" in the arms of mother or caretaker or at least nearness to them is so strong that it can serve better than hunger as a reward and motive for the young animal to learn what experimenters want to teach him, Dr. T. L. McCulloch, of the Yale Laboratories of Primate Biology, told the meeting.

### First Heart Beats

"Heart interest" was featured in a motion picture film shown before the meeting, in which the important first heart throbs of a young life were shown upon the screen. The young life pictured was that of a baby chick from the time when heart beats alone were visible up to the time just before hatching.

The film was a presentation of Drs. Z. Y. Kuo and Leonard Carmichael of the University of Rochester.

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"Worts, Worts, Worts!"

**M**UCH folk-wit and folk-fancy are monumented in old common names for plants.

There is an almost endless list of "worts," for example. "Wort" is an ancient English word, long since obsolete, meaning simply a plant or herb. The old wort-names seem to indicate real or fancied resemblances to other objects, medicinal values, place of growth, etc. We have liverwort, lungwort, spleenwort, toothwort, milkwort, butterwort, soapwort, feverwort, lousewort, spiderwort, sandwort, pearlwort, pennywort, starwort, ragwort, mugwort, St. John's wort.

There are also a good many "banes"—presumably once considered good for getting rid of pests, or on the contrary harmful to oneself or one's livestock. Thus we have bugbane and fleabane, and also dogbane, catsbane, henbane, cowbane, and baneberry.

Familiar animals, both domestic and wild, have their share of plants assigned: cowslip ("cow's lip," originally), cowbane, cow-herb, horseweed, horsemint, horseradish (but that's a corruption of "harsh radish"), horsetail, horse-chestnut, goatsfoot, goatsbeard, buckwheat, sheep-sorrel, lamb's-quarters, duckweed, foxglove, bearberry, wolfsbane.

Some folk-names of plants are of distinctly American origin, since the plants they belong to, or the animal sponsors, are not known in Europe. Thus for example Jack-in-the-pulpit, butter-n-eggs, buffalo-berry, rattlesnake root, compass plant, shooting star. We see, then, that folk-names are not things of a quaint and finished past, but are continually being thrown off by the reaction of folk-mind to the contact of new things.

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