



"Yarb-Doctorin'" data-bbox="154 306 284 320"/>

FOLK-medicine persists most astonishingly in nooks and corners of this land of ours, for all that we pride ourselves on our national modernity and uptodateness.

A detailed study into the folk-medicine practices and beliefs of people in the Arkansas hills has recently been made by two St. Louis botanists, W. W. Barkley and Fred A. Barkley. They report their odd findings in the *Missouri Botanical Garden Bulletin* (April).

Some of the remedies suggest possible connections, more or less remote, with those still popular on more sophisticated drugstore shelves. Wild cherry bark still has wide credit even in the big towns, as a cough remedy, and down in Arkansas the Barkleys found that sweetened water in which cherry bark had been soaked was considered a sure cure for coughs.

But most of the remedies still considered potent in Arkansas countrysides have long since disappeared from the pharmacopeia of the rest of us. Arkansas rustics use peach-leaf tea for worms—and also as a hair tonic! They chew gum turpentine to stop toothache and to cure sores in the mouth and sore throat. Water allowed to stand in a hollow stump (preferably red oak) will take the wrinkles out of the face.

Teas of various kinds play an important part in folk medication. Red oak bark tea or poultice is used against a number of skin troubles. Wild plum bark tea is an asthma cure. Cottonseed tea, plus a little sulphur, is reckoned a sure remedy for colic. Ground-ivy vine tea soothes babies when they have hives. Willow-bud tea is used for chills and horseradish root tea for colds.

Some of the remedies in the Arkansas folk-practice partake more of the nature

of charms than of drugs. The once universally-used asafetida bag is still worn around the neck, against all manner of ailments. For malaria, however, there is a specific: soak a cotton yarn in turpentine and tie it around the body.

In a country once inhabited by Indians, and where many of them still live, it is only natural that Indian medical lore should survive. So a yellow-flowered ground vine called sarsaparilla (it doesn't fit the description of real sarsaparilla) is used for a kind of convul-

sive fit called "red snake disease," while huckleberry root is the accepted remedy for what seems to be epilepsy. The roots of cottonwood and willow, boiled together, are supposed to cure dysentery.

Negro "yarb doctors" also ply their trade. One, who boasts the degrees D. C. and D. O., labels his herb packages with a statement of ingredients ranging from Dandelion to Senna, and proclaims compliance with the Federal Food and Drug Act.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1937

PSYCHIATRY

First Step in Prevention Of Feeble-mindedness Taken

Strict Supervision With Control of Marriages Found Successful; Chemistry of Intelligence Discussed

FIRST step toward the prevention of feeble-mindedness by bringing it under control as smallpox and typhoid fever are now controlled has been taken in South Dakota, Dr. F. V. Willhite, superintendent of the State School at Redfield, reported to the meeting of the American Association on Mental Deficiency.

Finding all the feeble-minded, supervising them and preventing their marrying unless they are sterilized are the chief measures used to control this huge and important problem.

All the feeble-minded inhabitants of the state are under the control of a state commission, Dr. Willhite explained. This commission, with sub-commissions in every county in the state, is required to identify, register and maintain a continuative census of all the mentally deficient persons in the state. This includes the 10 per cent. of the feeble-minded who are in institutions and the 90 per cent. who are at large and who, until this program was started, were without control or supervision.

Besides helping the feeble-minded and protecting them from the consequences of their mental deficiency, the commission acts to protect the rest of the inhabitants from the burden of caring for ever-increasing numbers of feeble-minded. To this end, the state commission must file with every marriage license issuing agency in the state a complete list of all those in the state found to be mentally deficient.

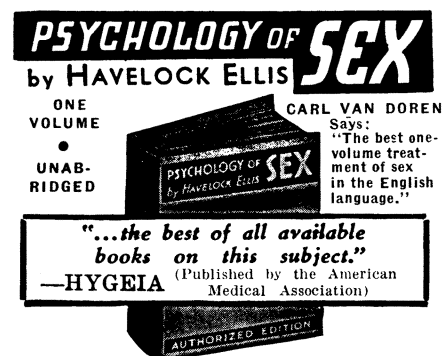
Marriage licenses cannot be issued to

the mentally defective unless satisfactory evidence has been submitted to the state commission showing that one of the contracting parties has been sterilized or is otherwise incapable of having children. If the marriage is contracted outside the state, the partners to the marriage become subject to the sterilization law.

"This provides," Dr. Willhite explained, "for that group of cases in which there is no objection to marriage provided society is protected against the hazard of their defective progeny."

Family relationships are otherwise not disturbed. If the feeble-minded person is getting along all right in his home and at his job, he continues as he is. But if he is not doing well, the state commission must take steps to help him.

Over one-fourth of the total known



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