



"Yarb-Doctorin'" data-bbox="154 307 284 321"/>

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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mentally deficient persons in the state have been brought under control during the five years since the program was started, Dr. Willhite reported, and the work is steadily going forward.

Cooperation from all groups has been excellent. Objections of parents or other relatives of the feeble-minded disappears as soon as it is explained that the object of the control program is "to do something for, rather than something to" the defective children.

Chemistry of Intelligence

The chemistry of intelligence, a new science which throws light on the cause of feeble-mindedness and may lead to ways of correcting it, was introduced by Dr. Neil A. Dayton, of the Massachusetts State Department of Mental Hygiene.

Discovery that tall children of average weight have a higher intelligence, on the average, than short, underweight children, led Dr. Dayton to suggest the need for studying this new field of science.

Greater intelligence is found to go with greater than average height, whether the child is normal, mentally retarded, or feeble-minded. This indicates that the basic body chemistry behind growth in height and weight is in some way linked with intelligence. Study of this chemistry of intelligence may lead to ways of correcting the disturbance responsible for the mental defect, as other studies of body chemistry have led to ways of improving the nutritional state of children.

The findings do not mean, Dr. Dayton pointed out, that tall adults are necessarily any more intelligent than short ones, because the findings were made on children who were still growing.

Diagnostic Tool

Brain waves, the written records of electrical currents accompanying brain cell activity, may in the future help physicians to tell whether a feeble-minded child is suffering from a hereditary mental defect or some other type, it appears from the report of Dr. George Kreezer, of the Vineland, N. J., Training School.

At present it is not yet possible to make a brain-wave diagnosis in individual cases of feeble-mindedness or mental deficiency, Dr. Kreezer emphasized. Different types of mental deficiency, however, show differences in brain wave patterns in addition to the individual differences in brain waves from persons afflicted with the same type of mental deficiency.

In certain types of mental deficiency, Dr. Kreezer found an influence of the

intelligence level on the brain wave patterns. The nature of the effect of intelligence on the brain wave pattern was different in the different feeble-minded types.

Mother's Age Important

Mothers past 40 years of age are more apt to give birth to mongoloid imbeciles than younger mothers, it appears from the report of Dr. Adrien Bleyer, Washington University School of Medicine.

Records of 2,822 of these unfortunate children were carefully studied especially with regard to the ages of the parents and the order in which the children were born, that is whether the imbeciles

were the first or last of brothers and sisters, or only children. These records covered the major part of the mongoloid imbecile population of the institutions of the United States and Canada.

Of the mongoloids studied, 870, or 30 per cent., were born to women of 40 years or older, and 68 per cent. came after the optimum period of childbearing, from 24 to 30 years, had passed. All other prenatal factors, such as age of the father or difference in ages of the parents, could be ruled out, Dr. Bleyer said. He concluded that advanced maternal age undeniably plays a part in the development of this condition.

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NUTRITION

Ignored Milling Product Is New Breakfast Food

A NEW breakfast food which is a good source of vitamin B, the appetite vitamin, made its debut before the American Institute of Nutrition.

Dr. Henry Borsook of Pasadena, Calif., who reported it, said it is what millers call "the scalp of the sizings." Dr. Borsook described it as the most palatable of all cooked cereals with the added advantage of being very cheap. It costs from 1 to 3 cents a pound. Large amounts of this food, about a quarter of a pound a day of the dry material cooked up, brought about very rapid recoveries in patients suffering from lack of vitamin B.

Laboratory scientists have split this vitamin into some six parts, each with a different effect on the animal body, but for human dietary needs the practicing physicians who took part in the discussions agreed that all of the vitamin is essential.

Lack of this vitamin was said to be the most outstanding nutritional problem in America. This applies, explained Dr. Frederick F. Tisdall of the University of Toronto, not only to sick persons but to almost the whole population. He estimated that the majority of persons get only a third of the amount of this vitamin that they should have.

Source of Pep

Common signs of this dietary lack are a feeling of fatigue, loss of pep, lack of appetite, indigestion, pain and other signs of digestive distress.

The scalp of the sizings is not on the

market at present, but there are plenty of foods on the grocer's shelves which contain good supplies of vitamin B. Chief of these are whole wheat bran; whole grain cereals or breakfast foods, especially wheat and oats; fresh compressed yeast cakes; bottled and evaporated milk; lean meats, especially pork; and both dried and green beans.

Not Enough Letters

Vitamins have grown so numerous as a result of scientific discoveries in recent years that there are no longer enough letters in the alphabet by which to name them. Some of the nutritionists discussed this at a post-meeting session. No new names were decided upon at this christening party, but certain dangers in selecting names for vitamins were pointed out. The scientists who discover new vitamins are accorded the right of godparents to name their discoveries, but they were warned to select them carefully.

Chief danger is the use of names that suggest a curative effect for the vitamin, as this may lead persons to treating themselves. Self-doctoring is frowned on by the medical profession but not from purely selfish motives. The danger is that the patient may be treating himself for one condition when he is actually suffering from something else.

Valuable and even vital time may be lost before he gets fairly started on the road to recovery.

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