



Stingers Debunked

SCORPIONS and spiders come in for a drastic debunking at the hands of Prof. W. J. Baerg, University of Arkansas entomologist. (*Natural History*, June) For all their dreadful reputation, there are no really deadly scorpions in the United States, and the only dangerously poisonous spider is the already notorious Black Widow. Scorpion stings, declares Prof. Baerg, are no worse than those of wasps, and tarantula bites are about on a level with the jab of a dull pin.

Scorpions are ready to sting on slight provocation. The effect is immediately painful, but passes in about half an hour. Tarantulas are not quite so aggressive, though if you really want one to bite you she will usually accommodate, upon sufficient provocation. But some tarantulas won't even do that. Prof. Baerg mentions appreciatively a curly-haired Honduran tarantula that has never yet bitten him, despite all kinds of coaxing. He seems to be very fond of Curly, as he calls his pet.

The Arkansas biologist is willing to

venture one categorical statement with regard to tarantulas: "No tarantula has a poison that produces dangerous general symptoms in man. A few tarantulas are poisonous to man but the effect is local."

Outside the United States, and confined to Mexico so far as now known, there are a very few species of scorpion whose sting may result in death. One of them, ironically enough, prefers to live in the neighborhood of human habita-

tions. Since the development in Mexico of a serum treatment for scorpion sting, the number of cases ending fatally has been much reduced.

Even the dreaded Black Widow, although admittedly able to cause extreme pain and violent discomfort, rarely kills, says Prof. Baerg. "The patient always recovers (excepting possibly infants) unless hampered by serious complications such as a very weak heart, or a syphilitic condition."

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Carbon Disulfide Poisoning Attacks Workers in Rayon

SIX new cases of carbon disulfide poisoning among workers in rayon manufacturing plants are reported by Philadelphia scientists. (*Journal, American Medical Association*, May 7.)

This insidious form of poisoning, widespread in Europe, has received little medical attention in the United States, according to Dr. Samuel T. Gordy and Max Trumper, who two and one-half years ago urged a federal survey of the rayon industry. Such a survey is now being made.

This country is one of the largest rayon manufacturing countries in the world, having produced 290 million pounds in 1936.

Of the 25 rayon factories with 50,000 employees now operating in the United States, 19 are viscose plants using carbon disulfide.

For every three pounds of rayon produced, one pound of carbon disulfide must be used. In 1936 more than 33 million pounds of carbon disulfide was consumed by one large viscose plant.

The poisoning makes physical and mental invalids of those it attacks. Headache, stomach trouble, muscular cramps, motor palsies, wavy vision, irritability, horrible dreams, hallucinations, primary increase in libido and later diminution and loss of sexual function are some of the manifestations of the poisoning. Women are affected more often than men, the medical literature shows.

The poisoning is of both the acute and chronic types. Tolerance is not established, or rarely so, according to Dr. Gordy and Mr. Trumper. On the contrary there is increased susceptibility to poisoning on further exposure. The psychosis may be permanent, they state.

Until the introduction of artificial silk, the rubber industry was the principal origin of disulfide poisoning.

That the condition is not more generally known of in the United States is strange, the Philadelphia scientists state. Industrial diseases have not had the study in America that obtains in many European nations where they are reportable and compensable, is a possible explanation, they believe.

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WIEGNER, GEORGE: Ion Exchange and Structure—*Transactions of the Third International Congress of Soil Science*, Oxford, England, 1935. Nelson J., Translator. Doc. 1114. 55 pp. 75c.

LAHY, J. M.: An Educational and Psycho-technical Bureau in Cooperation with a Psychopedagogical Clinic in a Rural Community—*Le Travail Humain* 5^e Année—No. 2 Juin 1937. Walsh F. G., Translator. Doc. 1115. 64 pp. 84c.

Copies of microfilm documents may be obtained from Bibliofilm Service, Care Library of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. (*See SNL*, March 5, 1938)