

PSYCHOLOGY

Swindlers Depend Upon Weaknesses of Victims

SEX and greed and other weaknesses common to all men are used as the levers by which the swindler separates the "innocent victim" from his hard-earned cash.

From internationally notorious "con" man to humble thrower of phoney dice, the swindler is likely to present a typical picture, psychologically, and to operate in much the same sort of "swindle situation," it was found by Drs. Walter Bromberg and Sylvan Keiser, New York psychiatrists, who studied 50 swindlers in the Psychiatric Clinic of the Court of General Sessions.

Suave of manner, elegant in dress, talkative and companionable, the swindler ingratiates himself and makes an impression on the victim. Foreign accent, titles, professional degrees, may be the "props" with which the swindler dresses his stage.

Like a lover he woos the victim. Artfully he plays upon his emotions until they over-ride and cloud his judgment. The victim, although ordinarily a sensible person, is then ready to be taken in by the most blatant trickery.

It is a common trick for the swindler to build up sexual tensions in his victim until his judgment is blinded, these investigators note in their report to the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. A burlesque show, a few drinks, and a party for the entertainment of women are often the preludes to a card game in which the victim is relieved of his cash.

Another class of swindler, working on impressionable women, marries the victim preparatory to making off with all her money.

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PALEONTOLOGY

Mass of Whale Fossils Near Vienna Explored

LITTLE whales once swam warm seas where Vienna now stands. They were ancestors of modern giant whale species, but were only a fraction of the size of their modern descendants.

The greatest deposit of fossil whale remains in the world has been found near the ancient Austrian capital, in an area formerly worked for clay by a brick manufacturing concern. The clay was the sea bottom of some tens of millions of years ago. The deposit has been studied by Prof. Julius Pia.

Notable are the skeletons of finwhales, ancestors of seventy-footers that swim the seas today. But these ancestors were only from nine to fifteen feet long. Other skeletons, representing ancestors of present-day right whales, are so small that they were first thought to be dolphins. Only careful comparative anatomical studies established their real identity.

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"Deep in the psychology of every victim can be glimpsed the presence of two infantile tendencies," the psychiatrists found. "First, the universal wish for unlimited money, and second, the feeling of personal infallibility. The swindler, we feel, is aware of these deeper psychologic currents in the victim and utilizes them in his technique.

"He woos the victim, but in so debasing himself, is able finally to outwit the victim. It is common for the offender to complain that his victims themselves literally begged him to take their money. The swindler feels himself, and often is, the sought-after party to the transaction."

Science News Letter, August 27, 1938

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Wilson, Henry Van Peters, 1863-
University of North Carolina

1938. Behavior of the epidermis in sponges (Microciona) when treated with narcotics or attacked by aquarium degeneration

J. Exp. Zool., v. 79, no. 2, Oct. 5

The epidermis including the marginal films, peripheral sheets of cytoplasm with a single layer of nuclei, is syncytial in reunion sponges (Microciona). The cytoplasm is, typically, reticulate in appearance.

Under the influence of chloral the syncytial epidermis may break up into cell-like pieces, owing to excessive vacuolar degeneration between nucleated regions. The degeneration is traceable to changes in the microscopic architecture of the cytoplasm. In such cases the nuclei seem to exert a directive influence on the progress of vacuolation. The cytoplasm eventually loses its optical structure and the nuclei also degenerate. Vacuolar degeneration may be diffuse without the production of cell-like pieces.

Chloretone has a similar but not identical effect. A non-nucleated area may divide into pieces, showing that nuclear control over vacuolation and consequent cytoplasmic division is unnecessary for such division. Aquarium degeneration may lead to results very similar to those induced by drugs.

Epidermal lines are again recorded and interpreted as structures produced through rearrangement of the meshes (alveoli probably) of the epidermal membrane.

Histology, epithelial tissue

Microciona

Physiology, degeneration

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