

BOTANY

**Shamrocks Bulk Large
In New York Shipments**

LOVE of the Old Sod is strong in the children of Erin who live in American cities. How strong, figures of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, on packages of imported plants inspected in New York, Boston and Chicago post-offices show.

During 1938, more than half of all packages containing live plants inspected in the New York postoffice (92,900 out of 166,644) contained shamrocks. In Boston and Chicago, shamrocks made up more than a fourth of the import packages of plants.

Some of the packages were bulk shipments, intended for sale by florists and vendors. Thousands of shipments, however, contained only small sprigs of the emerald three-leaf, sent by relatives in the "Old Country."

The usually stringent regulations of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine have been modified to make easier the entry of shamrocks. The plants, however, must still be free of any soil.

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MEDICINE—SOCIOLOGY

**Cancer Teaches a
Lesson in Democracy**

CANCER, ruthless killer that it is, can yet do mankind a service. It can teach the lesson of democracy. This aspect of cancer is set forth in the pages of a new book, *Civilization Against Cancer*, written by one of America's cancer fighters, Dr. Clarence Cook Little. There is much else in the book, but the lesson in democracy seems especially timely.

Cancer is the great equalizer, Dr. Little points out. It neither respects nor favors any group, class, race or creed. It is just as likely to strike the most intelligent and learned as the most slow-witted and ignorant. It is just as likely to strike the banker, dictator or other influential person at the height of his power as the struggling clerk, the day laborer or the man on relief.

This fact about cancer should, Dr. Little believes, make all of us pause for a moment or two and stop to consider true values in life.

"For some years," Dr. Little points out, "we have been spending most of our time and energy in a blind and ineffective struggle for individual, group, class, creed and race preference. A good deal of the trouble so created has been visible

and obvious. Much more activity, however, has gone on quietly and, in a sinister way, beneath the surface."

In our absorption in material interests, we have forgotten, Dr. Little suggests, that the real enemies of mankind are common to all men.

"All the milling about in a wild search for personal gain," he states, "and all the benefits so obtained can be negated in a few weeks by a really effective threat like cancer.

"If men would spend their major efforts in fighting common enemies instead of undermining each other's stability, we should all be much happier. It seems strange that it must take a ruthless killer like cancer to bring home that fact."

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STATISTICS

**Domestic Quarrels Deadlier
Than Gangster Slayings**

DOMESTIC quarrels over trifles are responsible for more than three times as many slayings as gangster killings, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has found from an analysis of 500 homicides reported among a group of its policyholders.

The domestic quarrels that led to 11.6 per cent. of the murders were not triangle cases. Jealousy or thwarted love accounted for 17.6 per cent. of the killings, but these came third on the list. Second greatest cause of killing was quarreling over money or property, sometimes as little as 25 cents being involved.

The disputes over domestic or family affairs that led to murder were of the following type: "An irate husband beats and kills his wife because his dinner is not ready on time; a drunken youth shoots his mother for remonstrating with him about his drinking to excess; a man shoots a friend after an argument over being the last to be served a glass of beer in a neighbor's home."

The lesson to be learned from this study of 500 murders is summed up in the report as follows:

"This review of 500 recent homicides brings out strikingly that practically all killings arise under the stress of emotions of fear, hatred, anger, jealousy, or greed. And, absurd as it may seem, by far the majority are due to disputes or quarrels about trifles. Surely under such conditions it should be possible to reduce the number of homicides to the point reached in other civilized countries."

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IN SCIENCE

AERONAUTICS

**Land Plane Will Make
Atlantic Test Flights**

THE OLD argument over whether land planes or flying boats are most suitable for ocean air transport will receive intensive experimental study by Pan-American Airways this summer, when a four-engined land plane will make regular mail flights between New York and London.

The Boeing 307, designed as a 33-passenger plane for domestic airline use, will be used for one or two round trips a month in order to give exact information on comparative performance.

No passengers will be carried, as the payload for transatlantic flights is much too small to be practical. Passengers would be undesirable anyway, since its flights are in the nature of an experiment. The fact that the land plane would be used for over-ocean service became known for the first time when it was included in tentative schedules filed with the Pan-American Airways' application for a transatlantic license.

The plane has a gross weight of about 44,000 pounds; it is little more than half as large as the clippers which will make regular passenger flights. It will, however, make the New York to London trip in six hours less than the clippers will require.

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MEDICINE

**Ear Trouble Prevented
By Helium and Oxygen**

THE EAR trouble which is the "most common subjective complaint of both airplane pilots and passengers" can be relieved or prevented by inhalations of helium and oxygen, Drs. W. R. Lovelace II, C. W. Mayo and W. M. Boothby, of the Mayo Foundation, have found.

They suggest inhalations of these two gases whenever possible during periods when marked changes in elevation of the plane are occurring, especially when descending for landings. This is especially important for persons who have difficulty in opening their eustachian tubes voluntarily as by swallowing or yawning.

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E FIELDS

ZOOLOGY

Oysters Not Always Ruled By Temperature of Water

OYSTERS do not always wait until the water is at the "right" temperature before they discharge their eggs, states Victor L. Loosanoff of the U. S. Fisheries Biological Laboratories. (*Science*, Feb. 24)

It has become an established doctrine in the oyster industry that oysters do not spawn at water temperatures lower than 68 degrees Fahrenheit. However, in his studies of oyster beds on the shores of Long Island Sound, Mr. Loosanoff has found spawning activity at temperatures as low as 62 degrees. Prediction of spawning based on the 68 degrees temperature relation no longer seems to hold.

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EUGENICS

More and Better Children Is New Eugenics Objective

FACED with a declining birthrate, particularly fewer babies among those most able economically and intellectually to rear them, our civilization should do something about it.

In totalitarian countries orders are issued. Temporarily the economic opportunities of having children seem brighter. More babies are produced. Simultaneously rigid and ruthless class discriminations are introduced that purge so-called racial minorities not favored by the dictators.

That is hardly the democratic way. A reorientation toward better people in a better world is being proposed. One group, the American Eugenics Society, has a possible program of practical eugenics.

Present knowledge of human inheritance would suggest restrictive measures upon only about four or five per cent. of the population. Those obviously unfit by reason of genetic abnormality (hereditary deafness, other such abnormalities, feeble-mindedness, insanity) should not be allowed to reproduce.

Those physically, mentally and socially inadequate should not be encouraged to reproduce as they often are at present.

Those hereditarily gifted in a marked way should be encouraged to reproduce if any way can be found to do so.

Among the vast majority of "normal" people, it is impossible in the light of present knowledge to scale hereditary capacities and to disentangle influences of heredity and environment. So it is suggested that social conditions be so modified that individual, not class, superiorities have a chance to perpetuate themselves in the population.

Practically, one step toward this would be taken if contraception were equally available to every married couple. This would mean "individual freedom in deciding on the size of family." At present the more active and competent practice birth control, while the least competent find it more difficult.

This would be coupled with reduction in the cost of bearing and rearing children, the benefits being arranged so that they go to the children, not the parents.

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PHYSIOLOGY

Need Mother-Love Chemical For Use of Vitamin B₁

MANGANESE, famous as the mother-love chemical, is again in the science spotlight. This element is needed by the body for utilization of one of the vitamins, B₁, Dr. David Perla, of Montefiore Hospital, reports. (*Science*, Feb. 10).

Without enough of the mother-love chemical to help make use of all the vitamin B₁ eaten, rats after one generation failed to produce milk and nurse their young, showed no maternal instinct, turned cannibals and suffered a progressive loss of fertility. The symptoms cleared up when the rats were given manganese. The rats in the studies Dr. Perla made were being given large amounts of the vitamin.

This vitamin, found in brewer's yeast, liver, whole grain cereals, egg yolk and certain other foods, is the one that prevents and cures beriberi. It has lately been found useful in treating polyneuritis in chronic alcoholism and certain other conditions.

Patients getting large amounts of the vitamin as medicine must also be given a plentiful supply of manganese, it appears from Dr. Perla's report.

Maybe, suggests Dr. Perla, the same protection effective against large amounts of vitamin B₁ can be obtained with cobalt or copper as with manganese. This has not yet been determined.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Child Geniuses Grow Up To Hold Good Jobs

HAVE you ever wondered what happens to child geniuses?

They succeed, is the answer provided by Dr. Lewis M. Terman, Stanford University psychologist, in a follow-up of the greater part of a group of 1,400 gifted children selected in 1922 as being the brightest among 250,000 California school children.

Half the boys entered the professions, law getting the largest number, and a fourth are in semi-professional occupations or business. The other fourth are scattered among such jobs as jazz band players (this is California, remember) Walt Disney artists, ghost writers, radio announcers, movie technicians, salesmen, clerks, seamen, a rare stamp dealer, a policeman and a fox farmer.

Although the depression hit them hard, not one has been on relief rolls.

A further follow-up of these gifted youngsters is provided for by a \$20,000 grant to Stanford University by the Carnegie Corporation.

The scientists now want to know what sort of people these geniuses married and how bright their children are.

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CHEMISTRY

Willard Gibbs Medal Goes to Dr. Van Slyke

DR. Donald Dexter Van Slyke, chief chemist of the Rockefeller Institute Hospital and distinguished authority of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research on the chemistry of proteins, enzyme action, blood chemistry and in medical fields, has been named 1939 recipient of the Willard Gibbs Medal, one of the highest scientific honors bestowed in the United States.

The award is made by the Chicago section of the American Chemical Society.

"By showing that fatal diabetic coma—one of the last stages in diabetes—is preceded by a falling off in the bicarbonate content of blood plasma, Dr. Van Slyke made it possible to anticipate and prevent the sudden onset of coma," the jury of award said in making the announcement. "Such bicarbonate determination is now in general application in hospitals."

Dr. Van Slyke, who will be 56 years old March 29, has contributed also to knowledge of Bright's disease and the kidneys.

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