

## ETHNOLOGY

**Ethiopians Do Not Wear Plugs in Their Lips**

"HORROR" pictures circulating in this country to show Ethiopian slaves wearing long bones driven through their lips are misleading. So declares an ethnologist, Dr. J. P. Harrington of the Smithsonian Institution.

As a matter of scientific information, says Dr. Harrington:

1. Bones are indeed worn in the lip, upper, lower, or both, by some African tribes, in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, for example, and Kenya. They are admired ornaments, no badge of servitude.
2. Neither Christians nor Mohammedans of Ethiopia follow this custom.
3. If there are people in Ethiopia, slaves or otherwise, wearing lip plugs, they are "foreigners" from parts of Africa where these ornaments are fashionable.

In Dr. Harrington's opinion, a photographer would have a hard time finding such subjects in Ethiopia.

Moreover, African lip plugs are not driven by force through the lip, as is reported, the ethnologist explains. Instead, the lip is perforated with a knife—never with the bone ornament—and plugs of increasing size are worn. In south Central Africa, so exaggerated is the style that both upper and lower lip may be stretched into a duck-bill, to hold big disks.

"Lip plugs are no more a badge of slavery than are the earrings worn in pierced ears by Europeans or Americans," says Dr. Harrington.

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## AVIATION

**Airplane Flight is Like Flying Fish, Not Birds**

CREDIT for human flight has been given where it is not due, claims Dr. Carl L. Hubbs, of the University of Michigan, in a new Smithsonian Institution publication. Man does not fly like a bird, though he claims to (in Latin) when he speaks of "aviation." Man flies like a fish—a flying fish.

No bird flies on rigid wings, like a man-built, man-operated airplane, excepting only when it is gliding or soaring, Dr. Hubbs points out. Early attempts to imitate birds with flapping-winged flying-machines all ended in complete failure.

Flying-fish, however, always hold their long glider-fins rigid, and get their flight-energy by lashing the wa-

ter with their tails, which might be considered analogues of airplane propellers, except that they do not function in the air. They push the fish along the surface of the water, "taxi-ing" like an airplane about to take off, and when sufficient energy has been built up in this way, the fish "hops off" for a long glide through the air.

Watched from behind, a flying-fish is seen to hold its wide fins always steady, never flapping them at all. They move only when the fish wishes to change its course in the air, just as an airplane moves its ailerons for a bank or a turn.

Since flying-fish have no means for sustaining themselves in the air, their flights, or more properly glides, are relatively short. Dr. Hubbs has never observed one lasting more than twelve or thirteen seconds.

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## HORTICULTURE

**Drought Effects on Apple Trees Cured by Hypodermic**

HYPODERMIC "shots" of boracic acid are recommended by Dominion horticulturists, for use in western Canadian orchards, particularly in British Columbia, to cure physiological diseases of apple trees that are "hang-overs" from the years of severe drought. The injections are given through holes bored into the tree trunks with an ordinary brace and bit.

Following the great drought, many apple trees in irrigated districts developed disease symptoms that made the fruit unmarketable and left the trees themselves in chronically sick condition. These ailments got the names of drought-spot, corky-core and die-back, the manifestations being misshapen fruit, brown cores and a sparse development of undersized leaves.

Injections of many kinds of chemicals were tried, but all were useless or even harmful except the boron compound. Following successful experiments with this treatment under the direction of Supt. R. C. Palmer of the experiment station at Summerland, B. C., recommendations for general use have been made.

It is emphasized, however, that just as the physician resorts to hypodermic needle only in emergency, so the boracic acid injections must be used only on trees that are really in a bad way. Good cultural methods and proper distribution of irrigation water are preventives which will make such emergency treatments unnecessary.

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**IN SCIENCE**

## ARCHAEOLOGY

**Tibetans Use Butter To Calk Their Boats**

AN ANCIENT-type Tibetan buttered boat has been added to the exhibits of the Field Museum of Natural History. It consists of a frame of bent willow rods covered with hides; the seams were calked with butter, which the Tibetans use for a general-purpose grease as well as for food.

Although of modern date it is of very ancient pattern, resembling the Gaelic coracles of western Britain and the skin boats used centuries ago on the Tigris and Euphrates. It is practically circular in outline, so that any direction is forward. But in spite of its awkward shape it will carry surprising loads; the late Dr. Berthold Laufer used this identical craft on an expedition in Tibet, and found it would carry a couple of men and 200 pounds of goods.

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## MEDICINE

**U.S. Leads World in Birth Control Clinics**

THE UNITED STATES has more birth control clinics in proportion to its population than any other country, Dr. Eric M. Matsner, medical director of the American Birth Control League has found in the course of a survey he has just completed. There are more than 225 such clinics under medical direction in the United States, an increase of 80 since last November.

Birth control clinics are not only more numerous but more effective in this country, Dr. Matsner reported at the fall meeting of the league's board of directors.

"Theoretically, Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries and the Soviet Union are in advance of America, since they regard birth control as a public health measure," he stated. "Practically, they are not in advance, since the methods available to birth control clinics there do not surpass and seldom equal in effectiveness those used in American clinics. In Russia the materials are of definitely inferior quality."

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# E FIELDS

## PUBLIC HEALTH

### Childhood Ills Decrease As U. S. Grows Older

**M**EASLES and whooping-cough, both serious diseases of childhood, are on the decrease, it appears from figures reported by Dr. Haven Emerson, of Columbia University, to the American Public Health Association.

The decrease has been particularly marked during the past five years, Dr. Emerson found. Deaths from both diseases and the number of cases of measles have been much fewer.

This is not because of any improvement in measures to control the diseases, Dr. Emerson indicated. Instead, the decrease appears to be the result of a change in the age distribution of the population. Fewer children and more adults in the United States within the past decade is reflected in the decline of these childhood diseases.

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## PHYSIOLOGY—AVIATION

### Twitching Fingers Danger Signals At High Altitude

**W**HEN a pilot flying at high altitudes notices his fingers beginning to twitch, it is time for him to seek the safety of lower levels, it appears from the experience of a U. S. Navy pilot.

The incident which showed twitching fingers to be a danger signal is reported by the Navy Department's Bureau of Aeronautics almost simultaneously with reports that flight surgeons of the War, Navy and Commerce Departments are planning tests which will show the effect of stratospheric conditions on flyers and passengers.

The incident occurred during an altitude flight by Fighting Squadron Six of the U. S. S. Saratoga.

"One of the oxygen regulators," states the Bureau of Aeronautics report, "began to economize a bit and the pilot became non *compus mentis* in such short order that he was unable to leave the formation voluntarily before becoming not only a hazard but a menace to the rest.

"As leader of the second section he calmly crawled up and tried to sit in the skipper's lap, then lost distance quite notice-

ably and finally ended up by flying around in a wide left circle, gradually losing altitude. His wing men saw his shoulders heave as he bravely pulled at the nipple to coax more oxygen into his starving lungs. After descending to 18,000 feet, he regained control of his senses and responded more or less intelligently to the signals of his left wing man, who finally coaxed him back into formation.

"After landing, he could not remember clearly what happened, but about a half hour later, while eating lunch, the memory started coming back. He then reported the following symptoms which may be of interest and value:

1. Slight twitching of the fingers.
2. Twitching of muscles in the wrists.
3. Difficulty in controlling the hands.
4. Eyesight apparently O.K. but range of vision very short.
5. Feeling of annoyance when squadron commander made a turn.
6. No apparent discomfort or loss of breath.
7. No knowledge that anything was wrong.
8. No sense of hearing (had radio but did not respond to repeated calls)."

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## MEDICINE

### TB Cases in Rural Areas Come from Outside Contacts

**I**N RURAL areas more new cases of tuberculosis develop from contacts with tuberculous persons in schools, factories or other work places than from contacts within the home and family, it appears from a report by Jean Downes to the American Public Health Association.

Miss Downes, working under the Milbank Memorial Fund, investigated the spread of tuberculosis in Cataraugus County, N. Y. She found that in this region for every case resulting from a family contact there were two in the community as a result of contact outside the family.

"Tuberculosis in that rural area has been acquired chiefly through contact in the small centers of life, the family, the factories and other work centers, and the schools," Miss Downes reported.

"The individual living in the tuberculous family has a definitely higher personal risk of contracting the disease than other individuals in the community, but the spread of serious disease from the tuberculous family into the community at large is probably as great as the spread within the family."

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## MEDICINE

### Describes Operation For One Type of Epilepsy

**A**N OPERATION, in which part of the brain is removed, relieved the symptoms, apparently permanently, in nine cases of one type of epilepsy, Dr. Ernest Sachs of St. Louis reported to the Second International Neurological Congress.

The condition for which the operation was used is known medically as Jacksonian epilepsy. Because sufferers from this ailment may go for a number of years without having convulsions, Dr. Sachs hesitated to say that his patients were "cured." They have been free of all symptoms for a number of years, however. One of them has been well for eleven years and for the past five or six has been able to carry on his work as professor of physiology in a medical school.

In operating on these patients, Dr. Sachs removed an entire convolution of the brain, using a special technic devised by Sir Victor Horsley of London. In this operation the pia, which is the innermost membrane of the three that cover the entire brain, is detached and laid back first, and then the single convolution, which is the seat of the disturbance that causes the convulsions, is removed without encroaching upon a neighboring area.

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## MEDICINE

### International Serum Center is Established

**T**HE ROYAL Danish Serum Institute at Copenhagen will become a sort of international clearing house for serums used in treating or preventing disease, as a result of action taken by the eleventh Congress of Biological Standardization held in connection with the League of Nations Hygiene Congress.

The Danish Institute has been appointed the international center for preparation and standardization of serum for such diseases as dysentery, lockjaw, diphtheria, pneumonia and wound fever.

London will similarly become the international center for vitamins, insulin and the sex hormones.

International standards for the preparation and composition of twenty-five of the medicaments to be distributed from Copenhagen and London have been agreed on by the Congress.

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