

SORRY, YOUR MISTAKES!

WHAT a practical age! No imagination, no sentiment, no longer any faith in Old Mother Hubbard or Alice in Wonderland. An American, Dr. August A. Thomen, now overturns a whole cartload of cherished beliefs and superstitions.

For instance, the idea that people who are very hairy are possessed of great physical strength is exploded. In none of the accounts of famous strong men, either of ancient or modern times, is there any mention of undue hairiness, since Samson's locks were as natural as a Chinaman's pigtail.

It is equally nonsensical to believe that a receding chin is a sign of a weak character. Nor is there any significance in the fact that a man may have a square jaw and a scowl like Mussolini's. Of course, it is to be admitted that if a boy gets the idea that a square jaw is a sign of physical superiority and dominance he may get into many a fight in order to prove it, and in this way may acquire a reputation for pugacity.

While physiognomists may agree that Hitler has a weaker face than Mussolini, his whole career shows that he is not a less forceful character. In fact,

the idea that one can read character by the shape and structure of the face is illusory. For instance, if a high forehead were an indication of intelligence and culture, the palm might have to be awarded to Eskimos.

It is a relief to learn that to scratch oneself with a rusty pin or nail is not particularly dangerous, because most of us have a dread of this kind of infection. The rust is merely iron oxide which could not of itself make any wound more dangerous. The danger from such a scratch comes from the germ which may be introduced into the wound. So it makes no difference whether the nail is old and rusty or new and shiny.

Neither is whisky a cure for snake-bites. Nor is there much difference between whole-wheat bread and ordinary white bread in the matter of starch content. Nor does Dr. Thomen believe that meat should be chewed more thoroughly than bread, vegetables, or fruit. The digestion of breadstuffs, etc., is begun in the mouth, and therefore, if they are not chewed well they will not be mixed with ptyalin, and will be so much dead weight in the stomach.

It is an error to suppose that the drinking of medicinal waters at health springs is in itself a cure for all ailments. The truth is that these waters have nothing but a more or less laxative effect. The benefit derived at health springs is from simpler diets, change of habits, and the avoidance of excesses.

The belief that fish is a brain food probably was started by the fish industry many years ago. One food is the same as the other so far as the brain is concerned. It is to be noted that at the time when the human brain has its most extraordinary development the child is not eating fish, but is living on its mother's milk.

The belief that people falling from a great height are dead before they strike the ground has been dispelled by aeronautic experiments and parachute jumpers.

Drowning persons cannot be relied upon to rise to the surface three times. Very often they sink at once. Sometimes they rise several times, depending on the amount of water they have taken into their lungs.

The human eye has no power to daunt animals. Nor if you touch a toad you are likely to get warts.

There is a common belief that normal blood pressure should be 100 plus the age of

the individual. The truth is that there is no fixed normal blood pressure as there is a fixed normal temperature. Blood pressure depends upon many things, and what might be alarming in one person may have no significance in another. Generally speaking, any person over 150 is abnormal. For healthy individuals between twenty and thirty the normal pressure is between 110 and 125; between thirty and forty, 115 and 130; between forty and fifty, 120 and 135; and between fifty and sixty, 120 and 140.

Do you think that an electric fan when turned on lowers the temperature of a room? If so, you are far afield. Outside the area of the current the temperature of the room remains unchanged. The cooling is produced by the increased evaporation of moisture from the surface of the body and not by lowering the temperature of a room.

Again, everybody has sugar in the blood. It is not therefore a sign of diabetes. People in good health have about a teaspoonful of it in the blood. Without foundation also is the superstition that to swallow seeds of fruit, is likely to bring on appendicitis. So rarely does a surgeon find a seed in a diseased appendix that when he

does his first impulse is to write the medical journals about it.

As for heart disease, it is not generally the cause of pains in the left chest. They are more likely to be produced by muscular spasms, rheumatic twinges, pleurisy, and aches associated with influenza and the common cold. They are often acute and stabbing, but brief, and not

connected with previous efforts. Pains associated with genuine heart disease are almost always precipitated by effort, physical or emotional. They are not likely to be stabbing or piercing, but distinctly dull, deep-seated, and often vice-like, lasting for a variable time and diminishing gradually.—*Archibald Erskin, condensed from Evening Express, Liverpool.*

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Japanese War Diary

THE stock picture of the Japanese soldier in China is a uniformed fanatic who is taught from birth that dying for his Emperor automatically gives him a ticket into the Shinto heaven. At home, his relatives are pictured as accepting with happy little Japanese smiles the news of his death at the front.

That war morale among the Children of the Rising Sun may not be quite that bright is strongly hinted in a Japanese war diary, not yet published in English, called *Wheat and Soldiers*, written by Sergeant Ashibeï Hino. In it Japanese readers got their first realistic, human picture of fighting in China—a day-to-day account of thirst, hunger homesickness; of no heroes, but plain men fighting desperately for their lives. And between the lines was something that looked suspiciously like anti-war sentiment:

"We feel," wrote Hino, "that the enemy soldiers who we are killing look so much like us that we could be neighbors." When his company narrowly missed annihilation, he confessed: "I was seized with violent rage that precious life could be damaged so easily . . . We soldiers are not only sons of men, but also husbands and fathers. We are human beings . . . This is not the first time for me to have this sort of feeling. It is one of the most commonplace thoughts on the field of battle."

Six months after publication *Wheat and Soldiers* had become Japans' most spectacular best-seller (almost 5,000,000 copies).—*Time*.