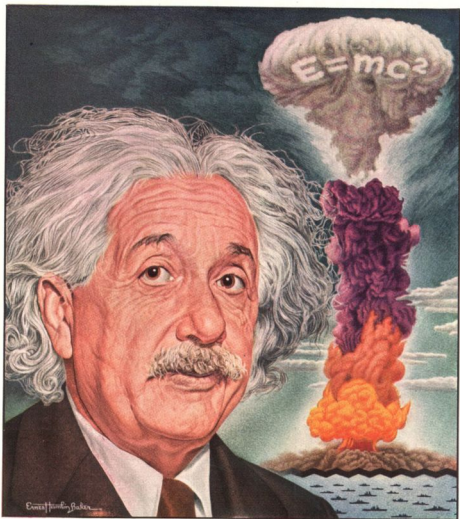


TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



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MEDICINE

Full of Years

The average length of life of the U.S. people now exceeds 65 years. So declared the ruminant statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. last week after cud-chewing their latest (1944) figures. Corollaries:

¶ The average 20-year-old now has "as many years of life remaining as the newborn child had in 1900."

¶ "For white females . . . the average length of life [is] 68.95 years, almost exactly one year short of the biblical three score and ten which . . . was not intended to represent an average, but rather the extreme of life."

The Clyster Craze

A Brooklyn specialist, Dr. William Lieberman, is one of the foremost U.S. authorities on the history of the enema. Last week, in the *Review of Gastroenterology*, he wrote with scholarly authority on his cathartic theme.

Ancient Art. The origin of the enema is veiled in the mist of antiquity. The Hindu Vedas hint of its use in 2000 B.C. In the 5th Century Herodotus noted that "the Egyptians clear themselves on three consecutive days every month." The Egyptians learned the art, said the Roman Naturalist Pliny, from the long-beaked ibis, who "washes the inside of his body



CARTOON OF STREET SCENE, 17TH CENTURY
For aristocrats, tints and scents.

Ciba Symposita

Shock for Strangulation

Insulin shock, already used to snap schizophrenics and morphine addicts back to normal, may be a cure for bronchial asthma. In the current *British Medical Journal*, Dr. Z. Godlowski of the Polish Medical School in Edinburgh reports seven out of eight successes.

He injected insulin into eight half-strangled asthmatics, repeatedly throwing them into tremors, convulsions and even unconsciousness. Recovering from the series of paroxysms, seven found "complete disappearance of symptoms to the present time—i.e., from eight months to 2½ years." The eighth was relieved for five months, then relapsed. All the cured asthmatics were allergy victims (cases of non-allergic asthma were not helped at all by shock).

Probable explanation of the cure: the shock permanently increases the output and even the size of the adrenal glands, pouring greater amounts of adrenaline into the patient's blood to relax his constricted bronchial muscles.

by introducing water with his beak into the channel by which . . . the residue of our food should leave."

Hippocrates preferred enemas to purges, but the Greeks rejected the strange concoctions of bile, vinegar, etc. used by other peoples in favor of water or simple salt solutions, perhaps with a little oil or honey added. Centuries later, physicians in medieval Spain described the nutrient enema and the first bulb syringes.

French Fashion. The 17th Century was the Golden Age of the enema, or clyster as it was then called. The crude instruments of yesteryear—tubes of bone or wood attached to animal bladders or silk bags—were replaced by a formidable piston-&-cylinder device. An apothecary or doctor's assistant, marching through the streets with a clyster tube on his shoulder (*see cut*), became a common sight, as a mania for enemas swept France.

Fashionable Parisians, convinced that inner lavements purified the complexion and produced good health, took as many as three or four enemas a day. The craze

was often burlesqued on the stage, notably by Molière, and it was a lively topic of elegant discourse in the salons.

Louis XIV had over 2,000 enemas during his reign, sometimes holding court while the ceremony progressed. Aristocratic enemas were delicately tinted and scented. They were also so widely used as a means of poisoning that Louis XIV set up a special detective agency to combat the wave of enema-murders among his nobility.

Scientific Sobriety. About 1800 the carnival spirit dwindled sharply, and the age of scientific sobriety began. An extension of the enema principle came in 1895 with the invention of colonic irrigation by Professor Ismar of Berlin—a controversial treatment which Historian Lieberman dismisses as very rarely necessary and “on the wane at the present time.”

Simplicity is the enema keynote in the Atomic Age. Best ingredients: “plain lukewarm water, or perhaps just a trace of bicarbonate of soda or ordinary salt.” Warns Dr. Lieberman: “Soap is a very popular ingredient now, unjustly so, because in most cases it is unnecessary and irritating.”

Benzedrine for Barbiturates

*Razors pain you;
Rivers are damp;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful;
Nooses give;
Gas smells awful;
You might as well live.**

These drawbacks to self-destruction, as ticked off by Dorothy Parker, do not apply to an overdose of sleeping pills. In recent years the barbiturates have enjoyed alarming popularity as a painless means of suicide, especially among women who are repelled by the more violent forms. Accidental as well as deliberate overdoses kill hundreds yearly.

Knowing no reliable antidote, doctors too often stood by helplessly as a victim sank from coma into death. Last week, when a “suitable antidote” was finally announced, it seemed obvious—benzedrine, a stimulant as widely used as the barbiturates.

The two drugs simply counteract each other, explained Drs. Abraham Freireich and Joseph Landsberg, in the *A.M.A. Journal*. Dr. Freireich, a Long Island county toxicologist, directed the treatments which revived 19 would-be suicides with massive intravenous injections of benzedrine. (The reviving dose of benzedrine would be equally poisonous to any but a thoroughly doped victim.) Benzedrine, he also found, prevents the pneumonia which frequently follows an unsuccessful barbiturate poisoning.

Dr. Freireich's discovery was anticipated by bored Broadwayites, who have made a pastime of “bolts and jolts”—mixtures of barbiturates and benzedrine which knock them for a loop, then slap them to.

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