

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Experimental Credentials of Vitamin D.

At the first meeting of the Society of Hygiene of Johns Hopkins University, on Nov. 17th last, Dr. E. V. McCollum described his "experimental demonstration of a vitamin concerned in calcium metabolism." The demonstration was carried out on a series of groups of little rats, six or eight in each group. In one group xerophthalmia was produced by feeding a diet satisfactory in all respects except in its deficiency of any foods known to contain vitamin A. The xerophthalmia was curable by all vegetable oils except one, namely, cocoanut oil. Liver oils were highly effective. The second series of little rats were fed on a diet deficient only in calcium, but so deficient therein that growth was not possible. The fats and oils used in the first series were used again in the second. It was found that the addition of cod-liver oil to the extent of 2 per cent. of the diet produced a normal growth curve. A normal curve was also obtained by the addition of 10 to 12 per cent. butter fat, though this fat was not effective in the proportions that were successful with cod-liver oil. The only vegetable oil that was effective in producing a normal growth curve was cocoanut oil, and this only in a proportion of 20 to 25 per cent. of the diet. These results were confirmed by examination of bone sections stained with silver nitrate. With cod-liver oil (2 per cent. of diet) there is clearly visible deposition of calcium in five days. With cocoanut oil (25 per cent. of diet) this deposition is visible after 15 to 25 days.

A further chemical test was next undertaken. The fats to be used were previously boiled, air bubbles being passed through the boiling liquid. After this treatment none of the fats retained their power of curing xerophthalmia, though those that had been effective in promoting growth lost none of their efficiency by this treatment.

A Visitor from Denmark.

Prof. Krogh, of Copenhagen, recently gave a most instructive lecture on the anatomy and physiology of the capillaries. By no means the least interesting part of the lecture were the illustrations of his experiments by means of a cinema film. The film showed capillaries of the tongue, web, lung, and nictitating membrane of the frog, the capillaries being enlarged on the screen to a diameter of at least 3 inches. The effects of eurethane and adrenalin, of electrical and mechanical stimulation, were thus shown in dramatic detail to the audience. Of the substance of Krogh's lecture it is superfluous to write, since his researches are to be published in English, and will no doubt be available by the time these lines are printed.

The Pasteur Centenary.

Preparations are being made in all the important medical centres of the United States to celebrate the centenary of Pasteur's birth. The celebrations will not be synchronous—e.g., at New York they are to be held on Jan. 10th, in Philadelphia on Dec. 27th. Dr. Simon Flexner is to speak on Pasteur's contribution to medicine, Dr. Welch on his contribution to biology, while Dr. Biggs will give some personal reminiscences.

Delinquency and Feeble-mindedness.

In a recent address given under the auspices of the Maryland League of Women Voters Dr. Francis L. Dunham made several strong points against the commonly accepted belief that a positive correlation exists between low mental age as measured by the ordinary intelligence tests and moral delinquency. There is quite a high proportion of dullards in every community, yet "so well does the dull but stable" (i.e., emotionally stable) "person manage himself in our varied civilisation, with its constantly increasing public health care, that we tend to forget him as a

good citizen, and only recognise him when he is bad. Among several hundred delinquents who have come under Dr. Dunham's observation during the past five years about one-sixth represented a grade of intelligence which in the usual child of corresponding mental age would not assure enough insight, judgment, or coördinative capacity to keep out of harm's way and to carry out ordinary hygienic requirements." One-third of the remainder were not so backward, but that with proper vocational guidance they might not have become useful citizens, and the rest of the delinquents were ranged all the way from a mental age of 13½ years to those with unusual intelligence and a college training. Altogether Dr. Dunham concludes that while "standard statistics in social hygiene tell us that one-third of all prostitutes are feeble-minded," the statement that "the percentage of mental defect among prostitutes is no greater than it is among other commercialised groups is probably nearer the truth. . . . The mere fact that our ingenuous snares catch dullards is no sign that all offenders are stupid enough to be caught."

The important consideration is, of course, emotional instability. This is not, as Dr. Dunham shows, necessarily an inborn characteristic, but quite frequently results from suppression or perversion of normal sexual tendencies during a girl's adolescence. Hence the importance that the general public should be brought to a sane comprehension of the physiology and psychology of sex.

Nov. 29th.

BUCHAREST.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Present Position of Workmen's Sickness Insurance in Roumania.

THE parts of the country recently included in Roumanian territory, and particularly Transylvania and Bukovina, had before the war a complete system of workmen's insurance, founded on the systems of the Western nations. In Transylvania, which formerly belonged to Hungary, workmen's insurance had been established for half a century; the system was perfected in 1907, when the first important Hungarian social legislation was enacted. The establishment of workmen's insurance organisations was encouraged in all towns, particularly in industrial Transylvania. In this way the State authorities wished to develop means whereby the labouring classes could obtain medical help, medicines, sanatoriums, and everything else conducive to better sanitary conditions.

The working of the organisations has been far from perfect, but great progress has been made since 1907. In that year employers and employed were summoned to confer, and, despite differences of principle, they agreed on the importance of the sick workman's interests. After the territories referred to were transferred beneath Roumanian rule, the first enactment of the Roumanian Government was the nationalisation of the insurance offices—that is to say, they all were brought under State control, being deprived of their right to elect their own doctors and officials; the latter are now appointed by the State. This Government action has, to a certain extent, had a paralysing effect on the insurance system. The Transylvanian insurance centres have worked more or less independently under boards appointed in 1913; since 1919 they have been prevented from holding a general meeting. In some towns the position is now very unsatisfactory; at Oradea-Mare (formerly Nagyvárad), an industrial centre, where there are about 15,000 members of the workmen's insurance clubs, some members of the board have died and others have been repatriated to Hungary, so that no board meeting has been held since April, 1919. Nationalisation of the insurance organisations would be acceptable if it profited the health of the work-people—that is, if the subscriptions collected were