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#### Nutmeg or mabi bark?

SIR: Hassiotis & Taylor (*Journal*, September 1992, **161**, 404–407) ascribe a psychotic state in a West Indian woman to the consumption of a large quantity of mabi bark tea. This, they state, is the first

such case. They note that large amounts of nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) were consumed simultaneously, but this was not discussed as a cause of psychosis by the authors. This is interesting when one is dealing with a 'first'.

Myristicin comes from nutmeg tree oil. In 1576, Lobelius (O'Shea, 1979) wrote of poisoning by nutmeg in a pregnant woman who became intoxicated and "ran wild into the forest". The victim is more usually visually hallucinated, and severe depersonalisation is common. Incidentally, nutmeg has been advocated as an aphrodisiac.

Surely, nutmeg is a more likely cause of this woman's illness.

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### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

#### Retrospect of criminal anthropology. By Havelock Ellis. *A Museum of Psychiatry and Criminology*

The deeply interesting and instructive Museum of Criminal Anthropology, founded by Lacassagne in the noble university on the banks of the Rhone, is well known to all medical visitors to Lyons. It is now proposed by the Faculty of Medicine at Turin to establish a museum somewhat similar in character, though of wider scope, at the university with which Lombroso has so long been connected. All the material, so far as it can be collected, for the study of the causes, symptoms, and therapeutics of insanity and criminality will here be brought together. The medical man, the lawyer, and the philosopher will be able to examine the "palimpsests" of the asylum and

the prison, the data concerning the aetiology of crime and mental perturbations, the geography of crime, etc., and the skeletons and brains of the insane and criminal will demonstrate the close connection between mental aberrations and corporal abnormalities. Such a museum must form a most valuable source of instruction in psychiatry, and it is to be hoped that the initiative of France and Italy may before long be followed in England. I may add that a Museum of Psychology – not of morbid psychology especially – was founded a few years since at Florence by Professor Mantegazza.

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