

NATIONAL MUSEUM GETS FAMOUS BEETLE COLLECTION

The insect collection of the National Museum, already one of the most valuable in the world, has been enriched by the well known beetle collection of the late Col. T. L. Casey, whose study of these insects had earned for him an international reputation.

For several decades Col. Casey collected beetles, large and small, for he had a preference for those of microscopic size, at the numerous army posts at which he was stationed in the United States and in the different countries in which he saw foreign service. The resulting collection comprises an accumulation of North American beetles which is one of the most complete in existence and contains as well many rare specimens from South America and other parts of the world. Col. Casey published in all twenty volumes and many shorter scientific papers on the beetles to which he devoted so much of his life.

Being a private collector of independent means, Col. Casey was able to indulge his fancy and at the same time add to the sum total of scientific knowledge, by studying many rare, little known species for which most specialists can spare little time from their investigation of insects of greater economic importance.

The Casey collection does include, however, many economic species that attack standing timber as well as numerous genera of weevils that are injurious to the roots and seeds of crops. These groups are being rearranged and made available for study in the Museum; those of greater economic importance receiving earlier attention so that specialists may have access to them for study at as early a date as possible.

This collection brings around 6,000 type specimens to the National collection, including nearly 4,000 not in its possession before, and opens up to scientists a wealth of valuable material for study.

IS TOBACCO INJURIOUS?

"To smoke or not to smoke, that is the question". Sir Humphrey Rolleston of the medical faculty of Cambridge, in a recent lecture before the Harrowgate Medical Society, has summed up the existing evidence pro and con as to what tobacco actually does to one, with the conclusion that it is not so bad as many would have us believe.

There are several outstanding features, however, that are not so reassuring. Psychological tests show that smoking lowers mental efficiency from 10 to 23 per cent. While these results are not conclusive, said Sir Humphrey, it shows a definite lessening of capacity to work. It is also suggested that premature senility is induced in heavy smokers by the sedative action of nicotine on the nervous system.

Experimentally it produces definite degeneration of the arteries in rabbits but authorities believe that if tobacco smoking is really a cause in arterio sclerosis, it is a slow one, so mingled with the general conditions of old age that discrimination of the actual factors are almost impossible.

"The effect on the stomach," said Sir Humphrey, "is important; X-ray bismuth

meals have shown that after a short period of increased contractility the motility of the stomach becomes paralyzed for an hour or so; as the subjective feeling of hunger very probably depends on contractions, the relief of hunger by smoking may thus be explained; it is said that dilation of the stomach may thus result."

Those who chew and take snuff may rest in peace. These practices are "attended by so little absorption of nicotine as to be comparatively free from untoward symptoms."

Sir Humphrey is of the opinion that tobacco has ousted alcohol as a sedative and narcotic. There is little doubt, he thinks, that the injurious effects of smoking are materially augmented by, if they are not in part due to, simultaneous alcoholism.

OIL MUST BE MADE TO DISAPPEAR FROM SEA

Representatives from twelve nations attended the recent International Conference on Oil Pollution in Washington to see what can be done to make the oil discharged from vessels vanish from the high seas.

The rapid increase in the number of oil burning ships has rendered the matter of water pollution from the waste oil a matter of world importance, for the discharge, being insoluble in water, is driven ashore by the wind with serious detrimental effects on bathers and fish alike.

All attempts to pass regulations effecting total prohibition of discharge of oil at sea have been abandoned in favor of a system of permanent zoning. Vessels will only be allowed to make such a discharge not less than fifty miles off shore and not farther than 150. Zones can be established by a nation only with the consent of its neighbor nations, which in actual practice means that each country will have to work out its own particular zoning problem.

There was considerable discussion during some of the sessions of the installation of separating machinery that would reclaim fully 40 per cent. of the waste oil, it was said, which could be used over again. Since apparatus of this sort would pay for itself in a few years several delegates strongly advocated this solution of the difficulty. The high initial cost as well as increased tonnage, however, were felt by the majority to be arguments against oil separators.

The rest of the time allotted to the conference was taken up with the problem of enforcement of the regulations just passed, a question of major importance since legal jurisdiction over a vessel out at sea beyond the reach of observation is difficult to maintain.

Twenty million pounds of explosives are used yearly on farms in this country.
