

First Glances at New Books

ESSAYS IN POPULAR SCIENCE—Julian Huxley—*Knopf* (\$4). Professor Julian Huxley of the University of London has much of the geniality, and none of the bitterness, of his famous grandfather, Thomas. And he has much more interesting things to tell about since biology has passed in this generation from an observational to an experimental science. So when they talk about the tadpole, Julian can tell, as Thomas could not, how by the action of certain chemicals it is possible to grow one eye in the middle instead of one on each side, and how development may be hastened or retarded with respect to growth so that a tadpole may be bigger than a frog. He tells us too how certain sea creatures can be made to grow younger, even to revert to an embryonic state. And how an idiot cretin can be transformed into a normal child. This is just the book for any reader who really wants to know what the experimental biologist has found out in the last few years, the determination of sex, the cause of death and the control of life.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

PRE-DEVONIAN SEDIMENTATION IN SOUTHERN CANADIAN ROCKY MOUNTAINS—Charles D. Walcott—*Smithsonian Misc. Coll. v. 75, No. 4*. The late secretary of the Smithsonian Institution was active, as a good scientist would want to be, up to the very end of his life. This document appears as the first of his posthumous papers.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

HYGIEIA, OR DISEASE AND EVOLUTION—Burton Peter Thom—*Dutton* (\$1). A thoughtful essay on the importance of disease as an evolutionary factor, written from an ultra optimistic point of view. Dr. Thom believes that mankind will eventually outgrow disease and attain the degree of immunity which fishes and reptiles now enjoy.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

IMPORTANCE OF ANIMALS IN FORESTRY—C. C. Adams—*Roosevelt Wild Life Bulletin, v. 3, no. 4*. An important feature is a census of the principal game animals, so far as available data make it possible. The tabulated summary of this is especially valuable.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

ARCHÆOLOGY

Ancient Wheat Found

Wheat of a type still cultivated was grown on the plains of Mesopotamia before the days of Abraham, according to a find reported in the scientific weekly, *Nature*, by Prof. John Percival of Reading University, at Reading, Eng. The grains were found in a vase in the ruins of an ancient Sumerian house at Jamdet Nasr, seventeen miles north of Kish, by two British archeologists and sent to England for identification. The date of the ruins was estimated at 3500 B. C. Prof. Percival states that the wheat is unlike any of the types of grain discovered in Egyptian tombs of contemporary date, and closely resembles the modern variety known as Rivet wheat. Needless to say, neither this ancient Sumerian wheat nor that found in Egypt is alive or would grow if planted. No report of the growth of seeds thousands of years old has ever been authenticated.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

MEDICINE

Civilization and Casualties

Merely living in the complicated social system of today is responsible for increasing numbers of cases in the general hospital, says Dr. Groves B. Smith, neuropsychiatrist at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Much of psychoanalysis now practised, he declared, is an attempt to obtain from patients information the old-fashioned family physician knew anyway about all of his patients just from being a member of the community.

Emotional conflicts mask in many guises, said Dr. Smith, and ill-advised medical or surgical treatment often results from failure to give such conditions sufficient consideration. The body and the mind have been looked upon as separate entities but modern research in psychiatry is beginning to show that they are often very closely connected.

The popular idea entertained by lay persons and many physicians that control of nervous symptoms is a matter of will power, is a misconception according to Dr. Smith. He maintained that this was one of the most potent causes of increasing nervous tension. The solution of the problems of the neurotic person, he cautioned physicians, lay in unhurried examinations, humane understanding of social problems, tact and a frank recognition of the patient's inability to understand his own difficulties.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

GENERAL SCIENCE

Why Popularize Science?

By JULIAN HUXLEY

Science herself is over-specialized: her right hand knoweth not what her left hand doeth; scientists in bulk inhabit a city of water-tight compartments; but by the irony of the situation, the compartments are not quite water-tight, and each investigator finds that the results of someone else's investigations sooner or later percolate into his own place, and often transform the whole aspect of his interior in such a way that much of his former descriptions turn out to be useless. . . .

Then there are insistent prophets who foretell the breakdown of scientific knowledge under its own weight; and there is no doubt that the burden of mere fact is enormous. As greatest difficulty of all, however, there remains the relation between scientific discovery and general thought. It takes so long for ideas to filter across in their true form; so often what comes through is the idea without its background—in other words, quite a different idea. But there is even more than that. Whenever the lag in communication between science and general thought grows considerable, whenever science, through laziness, pride, or pedantry, fails to make herself understood, and whenever the public, through laziness, stupidity or prejudice, fails to understand, then we shall proceed to a lamentable divorce. It will not be merely the results of science which will not be assimilated, but science herself and the spirit of science will not be understood; and scientists will become an isolated caste in a half-hostile environment. —Quotation from *Essays in Popular Science*—*Knopf*.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927

EVOLUTION

Anti-Evolution in Florida

By making a slight last-minute concession, the Fundamentalists forces engineering the anti-evolution bill now before the state legislature have succeeded in getting it past the House by a decisive vote, 67 to 24. As introduced, the bill categorically forbade the teaching of any theory of human origin or the creation of the world not in harmony with Genesis, but before it came to a vote its author, Representative Stalnacker, assented to an amendment providing that the doctrine is not to be taught "as a fact." The measure now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

Science News-Letter, May 21, 1927