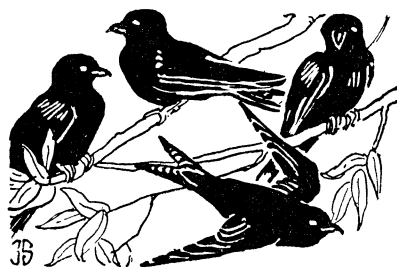


BIOLOGY

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Breaking Up the Rookery

The passing of summer brings with it the massing of bird populations preparatory to their flights southward. Most of our small songsters gather unobtrusively and make their departure so quietly that we take no notice of it until we realize, with a pang of regret, that they are gone.

But there are some birds, attractive and useful enough when they come a few at a time, that make themselves intolerable nuisances when they begin their late summer parliaments in the trees. Such species as blackbirds and martins form flocks of thousands, make whole afternoons hideous with their chatter, and in general inspire a most illegal itching after a shotgun.

A tale is told of a community in Arkansas that got rid of a troublesome treeful of martins, with no trouble and only small expense, and had a gaudy show at the same time. Being informed that it was illegal to shoot the birds, they first tried the effect of streams of water from the nozzles of the local fire department. That broke up the assembly for the time being, but as soon as the wet feathers had been dried out the birds came back again.

Then some one remembered that some of the merchants had stocks of fireworks left unsold on the previous Fourth of July. They brought out all the Roman candles obtainable. Volunteers were not lacking, and soon a flaring barrage of fire-balls was whizzing into the treetop, while owners of pistols and shotguns blazed away with volley after volley of blank cartridges.

The only casualties were a few singed feathers among the birds, and perhaps a few skin burns among the townspeople. But the morale of the martin army was wrecked. They fled in disorder from their leafy stronghold, and the next night chose for their roost a grove in a less volcanic neighborhood.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Cats Live in Gray World

This colorful world of green grass and trees, red meat, brownish gray mice, and yellow dogs is all just gray to cats. At least, so says Prof. F. M. Gregg, of Nebraska Wesleyan University, who has been experimenting with the color sense of night prowling animals. Dogs and raccoons also lack color perception, he finds.

In his experiments the animals were taught to recognize various color combinations. They learned that when certain colors were shown they could come up and expect to be fed. When shades of gray corresponding in brightness to the different colors were substituted for the brilliant rainbow hues, the animals apparently noted no change in the dinner signals. The dog, a fox terrier, was quickest to learn, the cat next, and the raccoon the slowest of all.

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MINERALOGY

Source of Aztec "Jade" Found

The mystery of the source of the jade-like stone used by the Mayas and ancient Mexicans for making images and ornaments has been solved by the discovery of a mass of the rock at Zimapan in the State of Hidalgo. The discoverers are Prof. Ramon Mena, chief of the department of archæology of the Mexican National Museum, and Engineer De La Cerda.

The abundance of objects carved out of this stone, and the absence of any known deposits of jade in Mexico, was long taken as evidence of an Asiatic origin of the Indian tribes of that region, and of a long-continued trans-Pacific traffic. However, it was discovered years ago that the stone is not a true oriental jade, but a mineral known technically as nephrite, belonging to the class of stones known as jadeite, resembling jade but not identical with it. The parent mass of this jadeite was not known, and the only unworked pieces so far brought in have been rounded pebbles found in water-courses.

Science News-Letter, August 27, 1927

I think the name of leisure has come to cover three totally different things. The first is being allowed to do something. The second is being allowed to do anything. And the third (and perhaps most rare and precious) is being allowed to do nothing—G. K. Chesterton, in *The Illustrated London News*.

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EXPLORATION—GEOGRAPHY

Entering Forbidden City

Quotation from MY JOURNEY TO LHASA—Alexandra David-Neel—Harper.

A miracle seemed to protect our entrance into Lhasa.

No sooner had we landed than the air, till then so calm, became agitated. All of a sudden a furious storm arose, lifting clouds of dust high into the sky. . . .

Who would see us coming? Who could know us? An immense yellow curtain of whirling sand was spread before the Potala, blinding its guests, hiding from them Lhasa, the roads leading to it, and those who walked upon them. I interpreted it as a symbol promising me complete security, and the future justified my interpretation. For two months I was to wander freely in the lamaist Rome, and none to suspect that, for the first time in history, a foreign woman was beholding the Forbidden City.

At that time of the year, a large number of people from all the provinces of Thibet congregate in the capital to enjoy the various festivals and merry-makings, which take place there. The inns are full. All those who can vacate a room or any shelter rent them. Travellers sleep in the stables and camp in the court-yards.

I could have gone from door to door for hours, in quest of a lodging, without any other result than showing myself to a number of householders of both sexes and being compelled to answer a lot of questions. Fortunately, I was spared the trouble and danger of this.

The storm abated as suddenly as it had arisen. Newcomers, unacquainted with the city, we stood a little at a loss amid the crowd without knowing where to go. Unexpected help came again to me in the shape of a young woman.

"You want a room, Mother?" she said. "You come from very far. You must be exceedingly tired. Follow me. I know a place where you will be all right." . . .

We followed her like sheep, a little bewildered by the noise and traffic after months spent in the solitudes, and perhaps still more bewildered by our good luck. She led us outside the town to a place from which one enjoyed an extended view of most beautiful scenery, including the Potala. This detail struck me particularly; for all along the road I had wanted to get a lodging from which I could see it.

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