

First Glances at New Books

LIVING MACHINERY—A. V. Hill—*Harcourt, Brace* (\$3). The 1926 Christmas Lectures for Children at the Royal Institution with two chapters added when Dr. Hill gave the whole set as the Lowell lectures at Boston in 1927. The mechanism of the human body set forth objectively in a way that makes one understand the popularity of the famous Christmas lectures with children as well as their elders.

Science News-Letter, November 5, 1927

THE METHODS OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY—C. W. Porter, T. D. Stewart, G. U. K. Branch—*Ginn and Company* (\$2). A laboratory manual prepared by three members of the faculty of the University of California.

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THE SONG OF SONGS—Translated by Theophile James Meek—*University of Chicago Press*. A little book of limited edition that contains in modern translation the famous songs of Solomon. It is part of the project of making the Old Testament readable.

Science News-Letter, November 5, 1927

THE BRITISH COAL DILEMMA—Isador Lubin and Helen Everett—*Macmillan* (\$2.50). Here is a study of a great industry made by economists as if they were entomologists looking down upon an ant hill. It is encouraging that an Institute of Economics is now considering political, sociological and industrial problems as though they can be solved by scientific methods—which they can. In this study of British coal there is considered by analogy America's own problem and the plight of all British industry.

Science News-Letter, November 5, 1927

EXTENSION SERVICE HANDBOOK ON AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS—Compiled by T. Weed Harvey—*Government Printing Office* (\$1.50). A blocky little pocket-size volume containing an amazing mass of information on all imaginable agricultural topics, leather-bound for hard use and exhaustively indexed for quick reference.

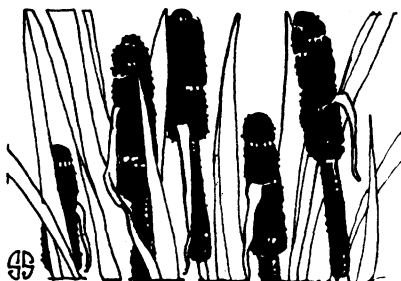
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CHEMISTRY AND RECENT PROGRESS IN MEDICINE—Julius Stieglitz—*Williams and Wilkins*. A report of important advances made in medicine with the aid of chemistry.

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BIOLOGY NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Cat-tails

The pretty bright eyes of the little field mouse

Looked far o'er the meadow one day,
And he said to his sister, "Don't stay in the house—
Let's travel!" His sister said, "Yea."

They passed by white daisies and cardinals red,

Till they came to the region of bogs;
"Oh, see that high grass with brown tops,"
sister said;

"Those are cat-tails," quoth one of the frogs.

"Ho-ho!" and "Ha-ha!" laughed the two little mice,

"Cats delight in our innocent blood;
"If those really are cat-tails, how awfully nice:

"All those cats must be stuck in the mud!"

Cat-tails have appealed to the imagination of children for ages. The name has a most decided appearance of having been thought of by a child. Their brush-shaped seed-heads are used for all sorts of implements in the serious occupations of childhood: they are brushes and brooms in play-houses; they are cattle in mimic herds; they are sausages in pretended butcher-shops, they are gun-rammers in imaginary warfare. Soaked in surreptitiously obtained kerosene they become torches and fireworks at night.

Fortunately for children, cat-tails are found in practically every land where children exist. What games little Kalmucks or Athabasca Indians may play with them we do not know, but that they play some games is practically certain. At least they do not lack the opportunity. Even the youngsters of the desert-dwelling Bedouins know them, for oases almost always have marshy spots where cat-tails may flourish.

Some day, when the pressure becomes great enough, the children may find cat-tail contributing to their breakfast porridge as well as to their amusements. For cat-tails store quantities of starch in their thick rootstocks down underneath the mud, and this starch is perfectly

good for food. At present the trouble of extracting it would not be justified by the returns. But if the time comes when we have to exploit our bogs the cat-tail is ready for us with a full bread-basket.

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MEDICINE

Antitoxin For Erysipelas

Erysipelas is on the high road to becoming a vanquished disease. An antitoxin for this painful inflammation of the skin has been tried out with great success by Drs. Douglas Symmers and Kenneth M. Lewis at the Bellevue Hospital, where one of the largest erysipelas services in the world is maintained.

The antitoxin was developed by Dr. K. E. Birkhaug of Rochester, N. Y., and first announced to the medical world about a year and a half ago. His results were so encouraging that Dr. Symmers decided to try out the treatment on patients at the Bellevue. The erysipelas cases were divided into two groups, one half of which received the antitoxin while the other half were treated by the usual methods followed in the past. Progress in the first group was so notable, however, that the physician in charge of the controls, a man of many years' experience in the treatment of the disease, requested after a period of critical observation that all the cases receive the antitoxin.

In a report of his results to the American Medical Association, Dr. Symmers stated that mortality for erysipelas at the Bellevue in the past has been around 10 per cent. while that for the present series was about five per cent., a reduction of nearly one-half.

"The antitoxin treatment of erysipelas," he declared, "marks an advance, the results of which are commensurate with those obtained in the treatment of diphtheria."

The treatment has obvious economic advantages both to hospitals and patients, Dr. Symmers pointed out, since it reduces the period of cent. It effects great saving as well of bed linen and sleeping garments by doing away with the destructive results of ointments and local applications. The antitoxin is given by intramuscular injection. Erysipelas of the face yields to treatment more readily than that of the body, it is stated.

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The wading bird is about 14 inches tall, 11 inches of it being leg.