

ENTOMOLOGY

Insect Zoo in Paris

What might be called an insect zoo has just opened in Paris where the public is turning its attention from the lions and tigers in the menageries to see the new vivarium in the *Jardin des Plantes*. Here it has the extraordinary experience of watching insects in their natural environments, each group shown in an indoor glass cage fitted up to seem like home to the inhabitants.

This somewhat unique accomplishment has not been so easy as it might seem. The insects come from various climates and their requirements are naturally vastly different. Thus a complicated heating system is necessary to simulate the African desert in one cage and a coolish temperature in the next. Heat, humidity, and light have all formed tremendous problems solved by the ingenuity of Dr. Jeannel, director of the vivarium.

In some cases it has been necessary to fool insects for the benefit of the public. In their desire to establish the closest possible contact with objects about them, the scorpions, if left to their own devices, would completely disappear from sight by burying themselves and leave the public to look at a seemingly empty cage. However, they seem very well satisfied to hide beneath plates of transparent glass through which they can easily be seen.

A pair of giant phasmas have shown that hens are not the only ones whose reproduction is affected by electric light. For two months they failed to reproduce but the day an electric light was put in their cage they responded accordingly.

Several cages are devoted to exhibits of insect mimicry. There are the giant phasmas just mentioned which look like the green leaves they feed upon, and others which exactly resemble the straw colored branches to which they are clinging. The observer must watch closely for some movement to tell which is which.

The vivarium is for the purpose of exhibiting all cold blooded animals in their natural environments, but the insect exhibits are the most unusual part of the program.

Science News-Letter, January 21, 1928

“Thousand legs” really have about 200.

Eighteen feet is now considered the minimum width for main highways.

HYGIENE

Sunlight Lost by Smoke

Manhattan's great smoke screen cuts out 42 per cent of the morning sunlight that is every Gothamite's just due on winter days. At noon the loss is 18 per cent. The figures for this indictment of the smoke nuisance in large cities have been compiled by experts of the U. S. Public Health Service. Loss of efficiency from decreased lighting is not the only result of excessive smoke in manufacturing centers, they maintain. It also cuts out to an appreciable extent the ultra-violet rays necessary for good health.

The importance of getting rid of smoke is emphasized for the preservation of eyesight and health generally, as well as prevention of accidents. On foggy days the loss of light runs even higher than the figures quoted, it was stated.

Science News-Letter, January 21, 1928

PSYCHOLOGY

Healthy Children Hear Best

Health and nutrition may play a part in determining keenness of hearing, according to an investigation made by Dr. Dana W. Drury, of Boston.

Using an audiometer, Dr. Drury measured the acuity of hearing of four groups of children. The best hearing was found among a group of boys in a school where care is taken to maintain high physical and nutritional standards. The next best hearing average was made by children at an institute for the blind.

One hundred children from the Boston public schools averaged just a little lower than the blind children, and a group of children in a Massachusetts institution for state wards who are crippled and deformed had the least keen hearing of all.

Of the numerous groups of different ages studied by Dr. Drury, the Harvard football squad at the close of the playing season exhibited the highest level of auditory keenness.

Science News-Letter, January 21, 1928

Anacondas in captivity have been known to refuse food for almost a year.

Aluminum nails, to replace copper and brass, have been put on the market.

The experiment of raising marten and mink on farms for their fur is being tried.

ARCHÆOLOGY

Tomb Shows Barbaric Scene

A royal chariot 5,000 years old, the two asses that once drew it, and three grooms, each slain at his post, are the latest revelations from a royal tomb in ancient Ur of the Chaldees.

The newest treasures from Ur show that in 3500 B. C. Mesopotamia was far in advance of Egypt in material civilization, according to a report from C. Leonard Woolley, director of the joint archæological expedition of the University of Pennsylvania and the British Museums.

The body of the king has not been found, but bodies of his musicians, servants, and gold decked women of his harem have been discovered in the burial chamber. A harp adorned with gold and lapis lazuli was the first clue to the royal burial. Against this harp, Mr. Woolley reports, was crouched a body, the arm bones actually mingling with the decayed wood of the sounding box, as if death overcame the harpist as he played.

In a trench near the chariot lay the bodies of five men servants, and in two parallel rows lay ten harem women and two children. All the women were dressed alike, wearing the same elaborate headdress, huge crescent shaped gold earrings, and other ornaments—decked gaily for their venture into the next world with their royal master.

A box, considered to be a clothes chest, was surrounded with piles of vases and bowls, copper tools and weapons, a scepter of lapis and gold, two gold lamps, a chalice, and a little gold toilet set. Around the chest, even under the piled offerings, lay human bodies, not properly laid out for burial, but huddled up as if death had overtaken them suddenly.

“There is no question here of the faithful servant dying and being buried with his master,” Mr. Woolley writes. “The grooms at the asses' heads were killed in cold blood. They were chattels which the king took with him in case he might have need for them hereafter, just as he took his silver and gold vessels, his heavy copper adze, a set of spears with golden heads, the women of his harem, and his gaming board and dice.

“In one part of the shaft area we found no objects of any kind, but here was a rectangle of large rough limestone imbedded in clay. It may well be that this was the altar on which were sacrificed the human victims to the king's majesty.”

The moral aspects of the early civilization which the grave presents
(Just turn the page)