

Support for Wegener

Geology

America and Europe once were involved in a geographical entanglement, uncounted millions of years before man, with his contested doctrines regarding political entanglements, appeared on the scene. The two continents broke apart like a worn-out hinge and America drifted westward, allowing the Atlantic ocean to flow between her and her sister continent; but geological reminders are still to be found of the time when the mountain-tops of Scotland might have been seen from the mountain-tops of Canada.

At a recent British scientific meeting, E. B. Bailey of the Scottish Geological Survey told how he has traced the similarity between the old mountain chains of Europe and those of eastern America. The ancient mountains of Scotland, Norway, Ireland and northern England and Wales he calls the Caledonian system, from the classical name of Scotland. He finds these duplicated in the northern Appalachians. The old mountain chain running across central Europe from the Harz mountains of Germany through southern Britain he calls the Hercynian chain, from the classic name of the German mountain forest region. This Hercynian chain he finds repeated in our southern Appalachians. Finally, he finds an American counterpart for the younger Alps in our younger Rocky Mountain system.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

A Belligerent Mother

Ornithology

The photograph on the cover was taken by one of California's leading wild-life photographers, Dr. Joseph Dixon, of the University of California. It shows a female long-eared owl defending her nest—in this case, against the strange, gun-like looking device with which humans take pictures. It was made near Mono Lake, in Mono County, Calif.

But this is the time of year in the east also that the summer birds have gone south, and a new set of feathered boarders begins to move in from the north—including some of the owls, retreating grudgingly before the severity of high-altitude winter, but scornful to fly any farther south than they must. The birds for which our northern states are "south" are almost as numerous and quite as interesting as those that shun the frost altogether and spend only their summers with us.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Bay Natural Chemical Works

Chemistry

Six billion tons of the commercially useful chemical, Glauber's salt, is made available each year by a natural evaporation plant on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. This outdoor chemical factory, built by the sea and operated by the sun, is the shallow, narrow-mouthed Gulf of Kara-Bougaz.

Through its connecting strait, which is only about 800 feet wide, the heavily salted waters of the Caspian flow in a steady torrent, for the higher rate of evaporation in the shallow gulf keeps its level about a foot lower than that of the main body. During the summer the temperature of the water is high enough to keep all the salts in solution, but in winter the water temperature drops to a few degrees above freezing, and according to the well-known laws of solution, the least soluble minerals crystallize out first. In this case the Glauber's salt is the only one that comes out; the others, principally common

salt, sodium sulphate and magnesium chloride, remain in solution.

The Glauber's salt crystals settle on the bottom and are washed ashore by the waves. When they dry, they are picked up by the wind and carried still farther from the water.

The deposit of the salt on the shore begins in the middle of November and continues until the middle of March. Then the temperature rises to a point where the water of the gulf will again dissolve it.

Although the presence of Glauber's salt on the shore of this little visited body of water has been known for a long time, nothing was done toward utilization of the deposits until after the war. Now the Soviet government is undertaking their exploitation.

Glauber's salt is widely used in the dyeing and glassmaking industries, and to a certain extent in medicine.

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