

Census of Agriculture Planned

Agriculture

Plans for the first international census of agriculture ever taken, are practically complete, according to Leon M. Estabrook, director of the census, who recently visited Washington to make arrangements for the work in the United States.

The census will be conducted in over 200 countries under the auspices of the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome. The figures to be compiled will give the number and size of farms, the area and production of important crops, and the number of each kind of livestock by age and sex classifications, for every farm in the countries cooperating. The census will be taken during 1929 and 1930 and the results are expected to be compiled and published in 1931 or 1932.

Each country will take the census with its own organization and methods, following a standard form furnished by the Institute of Agriculture.

The countries which have already agreed to cooperate include 90 per

cent of the surface of the globe, 95 per cent of its population, and about 98 per cent of the agriculture of the world, according to Mr. Estabrook.

The purpose of the world agriculture and livestock census as stated by the director, "is to obtain more complete data regarding agriculture throughout the world than has ever been collected before. The need for such data has been felt, especially since the war, by all statisticians and economists."

According to figures compiled by the Institute, only 60 of the 200 countries listed have ever taken an agriculture census, and of these fewer than 40 have had a census since 1900. In all but three or four cases the figures were taken in different years so as to be of little comparative value.

Mr. Estabrook has been loaned to the Institute by the United States Department of Agriculture. He was formerly chairman of the crop reporting board of the department.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Saber-Tooth Toothaches!

Paleontology

Studies now being carried on at the Los Angeles Museum show that the saber-tooth tiger traditionally associated with the struggles of early man, had tooth disturbances, which they bore without the benefits of painless dentistry.

More than a thousand jaws of this mighty feline are in the possession of the museum, and some thirty observations are being made on each jaw. A difficulty in the work is that so many teeth dropped out after the animals left their bones in the asphalt pits, at Rancho la Brea. Scarcely a half-dozen jaws in the whole thousand possess full complements of teeth.

Caries, or tooth cavities, have not been found in the saber-tooth jaw, although there are many jaws where the teeth are greatly worn. Pyorrhea is probably present, but rare. Impaction, the bane of modern human "wisdom-tooth" sufferers, is clearly shown in jaws of the saber-tooth. Alveolar abscesses show clearly in some of the X-rays.

Dead teeth are known in which the root-canal is filled in. The root itself becomes bulbous, and acquires excessive growths, as in human teeth. The dead teeth are always blackened.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Pueblos Got Few Vitamins

Anthropology—Medicine

The cliff dwellers who lived in the canyons of the southwest in prehistoric times never heard of vitamins and fresh air, but a lack of these undreamed-of necessities was a main cause of their downfall. This is the theory presented by Dr. Walter Hough of the Smithsonian Institution.

The decay of a race is one of the great problems of the world, Dr. Hough showed. The reasons for the passing of ancient cities and tribes may point a valuable and timely warning to modern civilizations.

A study of the food supply of the pueblos was made in order to see whether it would account for the mysterious dwindling of the pueblos beginning about one thousand A. D., long before the white men disturbed their country. Corn was their great food, and their diet was about eighty-five per cent grain, the rest being meat and vegetables. The ration was adequate for sturdy adults, but in winter the diet must have lacked in fat and vitamins, and the children suffered, the scientist stated. Lack of fuel must have caused insanitary huddling in dark rooms of the pueblo in winter.

"Infant mortality was probably an important cause of the decrease of population," Dr. Hough concluded.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Goods for Ultra-Violet

Physics

The health-giving ultra-violet rays of sunlight, which everybody wants nowadays, pass through cotton, linen and rayon fabrics about equally well when these are of equal weight and closeness of weave. Fresh, white, natural silk is almost as transparent toward the rays as bleached cotton, while wool is only about half as transparent.

These are some of the results obtained in a study of the transmission of ultra-violet radiation through various fabrics, conducted at the U. S. Bureau of Standards by Dr. W. W. Coblenz, Dr. R. Stair and Dr. C. W. Schoffstall, and reported in the Bureau's new *Journal of Research*.

"In all cases when the fabric is dyed, or slightly yellowed with age, the ultra-violet transmission through the thread is greatly decreased," the investigators state. "Hence, as is to be expected in comparing various kinds of dyed fabrics, the one having the largest openings between the threads transmits the most ultra-violet."

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Soap Explosion Hazard

Physics

Soap flakes and soap powders, being extremely explosive, take their place as the latest industrial hazard. Certain kinds of soap dusts when suspended in air are more violently explosive than most other industrial dusts, according to tests made at the Pittsburgh experiment station of the U. S. Bureau of Mines. These soap dusts are easily ignited and explode violently, accompanied by much flame and large quantities of heat. This is in spite of the fact that soap is a compound of semi-organic nature and that sodium compounds in general have a cooling effect on the flames of explosives.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928

Spanish Easy for Parrots

Comparative Psychology

Parrots learn the Spanish language more easily than English or German, dealers in birds and other pets in the Southwest declare. Species of parrots from the tropics that are brought here when young are said to acquire the habit of saying the soft words of the Spanish language quicker than the rather harsh words common to the Teutonic languages. In the bird house at the Dallas municipal zoo a parrot speaks Spanish words picked up from countless Mexican visitors and has never spoken a word in English.

Science News-Letter, November 3, 1928