Animal Graveyards

Zoology

Travelers in the Andean highlands of South America have often reported areas in which the two types of camels, the llamas and guanacos, repair when death approaches, there to leave their mortal parts, often undisturbed by predatory animals. These "dying-places" are said to be desolate places which none but the sick and the aged seek out.

Fossil animals of considerable antiquity are thought by scientists to have had a similar custom. In the sides of a large hill in northwestern Nebraska many skeletons of a small, graceful camel, slightly larger than a greyhound, have been found in such situations as to suggest an ancient practice of the custom of seeking out "dying places" far back in the history of the camels. The fossil animals, called *Stenomylus,* lie extended, in groups and singly, with no part of the body disturbed. Their slender leg bones are about as slender and as fragile as glass tubing. There in the sand, long since converted into rock, these early camels lie in precisely the same attitudes which they had assumed at death in a time when the races of mammals were young. Disease and injury have played no part in the mortality of these ancient camels who had voluntarily selected this spot as their last resting-place.

Science News-Letter, November 10, 1928

Eugenics Society Prizes

Eugenics

Four prizes, two for American authors and two for European authors, are offered by the Eugenics Research Association for the best essays written on "A comparison of both the crude birthrate, the birthrate per 1,000 females 15 to 45 years of age and the 'vital index' of Nordic and non-Nordic peoples" in, respectively, the Americas and Europe. Details may be obtained from the Eugenics Research Association, Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, New York.

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The Hawaiian Islands celebrated the 150th anniversary of their discovery this year.

Government geologists are finding airplanes useful to carry them into the Alaskan wilderness.

New Hampshire is taking steps to drain its coast marshes, where eleven species of mosquitoes are found.

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone

Natural History

Shellbark Hickory

Those of us who have or can remember a rural or semi-rural boyhood background will recall the shellbark or shagbark hickory with mixed emotions. It bears about the finest nuts of any of our native trees—but it also bears the limberest and toughest switches. And as for sawing up a cord of hickory stovewood . . .

Most of us, however, will remember the nuts better than we do the switches, and in most places hickory wood has become much too precious to be sawed up and burned. As a matter of fact, the present lack of hickory trees was one of the few things that ever turned Henry Ford aside from an announced purpose. Mr. Ford a few years ago tried to buy up enough woodland to supply wheelspokes for his vast family of small cars, but in the end he had to give it up and take to wire spokes. The hickories have simply been cut away to such an extent that they can no longer supply spokewood.

The same qualities that made the hickory switch dreaded in the little red schoolhouse days made hickory wood desirable for spokes, tool handles, and a host of similar uses. It combines great resilience with great strength, and can have a load thrust upon it with a jar many thousands of times before it finally begins to loosen up and weaken. The American Indians, lacking the yew wood that made the bows of Old England supreme among pre-gunpowder weapons, used hickory a good deal in making their bows.

The shagbark or shellbark hickory got its name from its habit of splitting and peeling off its outer bark in long, thin chunks. The ground under an old tree is frequently littered like a tanyard with these rags of its discarded garments.

Science News-Letter, November 10, 1928

"Carriers" for Colds

Hygiene

When colds "run in the family" it is no sign that the family is constitutionally subject to colds. It may be that some member of the family is acting as a carrier, just as some people are typhoid carriers, suggests Dr. P. Watson-Williams in a report to the *Practitioner* of observations made on ninety consecutive patients. Sometimes one child is known for starting colds among his brothers and sisters. This same child may become immune to colds himself but still harbor cold germs and be able to pass them on to others. If he grows up and has a family, he may still be starting colds in the family, although they are no longer traced to him.

The reason for this may be an unsuspected infection of his nasal sinuses, the honey-comb structures back of the nose and eyes. This same infection may be the reason for some children growing a second set of adenoids, when the first ones have been removed with the tonsils, Dr. Watson-Williams thinks.

Dr. Watson-Williams also reports a tendency for families that are prone to colds to have infections in the abdomen, for instance in appendix and gall bladder. The body cells that fight disease germs are weakened by resisting the germs always present in nose and throat and become an easy prey to those germs that find their way to the abdomen.

Science News-Letter, November 10, 1928

Trees Without Soil in Cuba

Botany

Huge trees growing without any visible means of support are a striking feature of the great Zapata Swamp of southern Cuba. This swamp, nearly 1,800 square miles in extent, includes an area of limestone that is filled with holes and covered with a variety of tropical trees. Silk-cotton trees four feet in diameter, big mahoganies, and many other kinds are found growing on this limestone area where not so much as a single spoonful of soil could be gathered from an acre. The trees make their start in small pockets and holes in the limestone where collections of leaves and slight accumulations of disintegrated rock furnish them with cover for growth. The roots stray about over the surface of the rock in search of food, finally plunging through holes to find sustenance in soil hidden deeply in the cavernous recesses of the coral stone.

Science News-Letter, November 10, 1928