

Gorilla Carvings Are Maya Mystery

Archæology

Monstrous gorilla-like figures of stone, coming from the gorilla-less land of the Mayas, are one of the unexplained curiosities of the Archæological and Historical Museum in Merida, Yucatan.

There are two of these creatures, legless, but standing more than five feet high on their stumps of thighs. They are rude but powerful works of art, done in rough and pitted limestone. They were brought to the museum a short time ago by Don Luis Rosado Vega, founder and director of the institution, who discovered the stone monsters sitting along at the bottom of a hill near the town of Tekax, Yucatan.

The nearest ancient cities to Tekax are Uxmal, Labna and Kabah, but these are many miles away from where the stone figures were found, and there were no other associated archæological remains which might give a clue to their meaning or origin.

That they are more primitive than

carved warriors and feathered snake figures so commonly found in the ancient cities of northern Yucatan, is apparent. There is no effort at conventionalizing, which is characteristic of the carvings at Chichen Itza and other ruined cities, and the lines are realistic. Whether the unknown sculptor chose the pitted limestone, or whether time and the weather have eaten out the softer parts cannot be told.

One of the figures seems bisexual, for while it has the masculine characteristics, it carries a child, mother-like, in its left arm. Both figures stand in striking ape-like posture. They have beetling brows, broad chests and an anthropoid stoop, and they represent creatures of powerful physiques.

No tales of any kind remain to explain their meaning, and villagers of Tekax merely knew that the stone figures had sat for a long time in the lonely place by the hill.

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Keep Milk Dark

Dairy Chemistry

Milk exposed to sunlight quickly develops a linseed oil odor and cardboard taste, experiments by the Bureau of Dairy Industry of the Department of Agriculture just completed show.

The light acts as a catalyst, causing oxidation much more quickly than milk kept in the dark. In reaching this conclusion the bureau prepared a series of duplicate samples of milk, one set of which was exposed to daylight and the other kept in the dark. In all cases the samples kept in the dark developed no off flavors or odors, even after seven to nine days at near freezing temperatures, whereas the samples kept in the light at the same temperatures developed the characteristic cardboard odor and taste after 20 to 48 hours, of which 8 to 26 hours were daylight.

The experiments were undertaken because of a general supposition that indirect or diffuse daylight had little effect on the milk. The samples in the tests were never exposed to direct sunlight but were placed in a north diffuse light, proving that milk should not be kept in any sort of sunlight.

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The Antarctic continent is larger than Europe.

Horned Toads on Wane

Zoology

Requests for the protection of the horned toad have been received by the Department of Agriculture. The correspondents claim that the business of collecting the reptiles and selling them to tourists and other people has assumed such proportions that they are rapidly being exterminated, and thereby the farmer is losing a valuable ally in killing insects which are destructive to crops.

The Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture has investigated the habits of the horned toad and has found that they feed chiefly on destructive insects, such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, wire worms, blister beetles, leaf beetles, weevils, chinch bugs and harvester ants. Their chief value lies in killing ants, which are so destructive in tropical countries and troublesome in warm climates of the United States.

The horned toad is not a true toad at all, but a fat-bodied lizard in an armor of spines.

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A machine to test the fastness of dyed fabrics during laundry processes has been invented.

Balsa, one of the world's lightest woods, was named from the Spanish word meaning raft.

NATURE RAMBLINGS

BY FRANK THONE

Natural History



Chinquapin

Chestnut blight, which has swept over the old Appalachian forest like one of the plagues of old Egypt, blotting a whole noble species out of existence, leaves an older generation with only the memory of what real chestnuts tasted like, and a younger generation with only traditions of that memory. A very real American tradition passes with the American chestnut.

But the same pallid destroying angel that has slain the chestnuts passed over a lesser relative of theirs, possibly as one too humble for a first-class pestilence to stoop to. We may well offer thanks that the chinquapin has been spared, though as yet its little nuts have not become articles of commerce in competition with the inferior European chestnuts which are now being offered as sorry consolations for our vanished native tidbits. The chinquapin is still a matter of special luck and energy in finding and gathering, or of special favor from boys who have overflowing pockets. These little chestnuts, much smaller than their vanished cousins, are of even finer flavor in the opinion of most of the cognoscenti among our native nut-nibblers.

The chinquapin is a small tree, or more usually a large shrub, with leaves more or less like those of the chestnut. It takes most kindly to hill country, and it likes dry, rocky slopes. It is found from Pennsylvania south to northern Florida, and across the South into Texas.

There is an oak that is called chinquapin in some parts of the Ohio valley; but that is a rank libel on the true shrub, and this misuse of the name should be sternly discouraged.

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Japanese children are engaging in a dental hygiene campaign.