

## Stone Age Irishmen

*Archæology*

The scientific word battle as to whether Ireland was inhabited by cave men in the prehistoric Old Stone Age appears to be settled, with the Irish cave man's existence victoriously established. E. K. Tratman, of the University of Bristol, has reported the discovery of a human skeleton deeply buried in the earth floor of Kilgreany Cave in Southern Ireland. A stalagmite layer which slowly formed over the body contains bones of the wild boar, Irish giant deer, reindeer, brown bear, wolf, Arctic lemming, and other animals that roamed northern Europe at the end of the Ice Age when the glaciers were retreating to the Arctic regions.

Previous discoveries of crudely chipped stones in Ireland have been hotly argued over, some scientists holding that the stones were tools hacked into shape by primitive human beings of the Old Stone Age, and other scientists maintaining that the stones were chipped by nature or that they were not very ancient. A group of well-known archaeologists, including R. A. S. Macalister, who pronounced adversely on previous discoveries, have announced their "complete acceptance" of Mr. Tratman's discovery and "full appreciation of its importance".

There is absolutely no evidence of any disturbance of the stalagmite layer by the burial inserted from above, Mr. Tratman states in a report of his discovery in *Nature*. Hence, the cave dweller must have been a contemporary of the animals of the Ice Age. No stone tools or weapons have been found in the cave to show the stage of material development attained by the Stone Age Irishman.

In upper layers of earth which accumulated over the burial are remains of later inhabitants of the cave. One layer contains part of a polished stone axe and a number of human skeletons. These men probably lived at the end of the New Stone Age or the dawn of the Bronze Age, it is reported. Still nearer the surface was a hearth of late Bronze or early Iron Age.

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The population in British local prisons has dropped from 20,000 in 1878 to 8,000 today, and the population in convict prisons and preventive institutions has dropped from 10,000 to 1,600.

## 10 Point Type Most Easily Read

*Psychology*

Large-sized type does not save the reader's time. On the contrary, it is read more slowly by adults than is type of a medium size. This strange conclusion, which is contrary to the supposition of many advertisers, was reached by Prof. Donald G. Patterson and Miles A. Tinker as a result of a test given by them to 320 sophomores at the University of Minnesota.

The test material consisted of paragraphs of equal reading difficulty printed in 6 point, 8 point, 10 point, 12 point and 14 point type. All the lines were of equal length, 80 millimeters, a little over 3 inches, wider than the newspaper column.

## Maya Dentistry

*Archæology*

Mayan Indians who lived in Central America more than 1,000 years ago practiced dentistry and knew something about the technique of drilling holes in teeth and filling up the cavity with metal. Two teeth containing circular holes filled with iron pyrites are among the significant discoveries reported by J. Eric Thompson, leader of the Capt. Marshall Field Archaeological Expedition to British Honduras, which has just returned to the Field Museum of Natural History.

The teeth were found in a vaulted burial chamber in the ruins of the Mayan city of Tzimin Cax, which means "Mountain Cow." A good collection of Mayan painted pottery was found in the chamber. Other burial chambers yielded skeletons and pottery types hitherto unknown in the Mayan art, also jade ear-plugs and apple-green jade beads.

While digging in a large mound in the ruins of the city the expedition made the first authenticated find of a mirror from a site of the Old Empire of the Mayan tribes, that is, from the period between 400 and 800 A. D., Mr. Thompson states. The object consisted of a number of small squares of iron pyrites, which apparently had made a shiny metal looking-glass with a pottery back. Heretofore, it has been generally supposed that the inhabitants of the early Mayan cities were unacquainted with the use of mirrors.

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The students' speed of reading was determined for each different size of type, and it was found that the material in 10-point type was read more quickly than either the smaller or the larger type. The difference in number of words read per minute was quite large, especially for the extreme sizes of type. The number of words read per minute from 10 point was 6.2 per cent. greater than from 6 point, 5.2 per cent. greater than from 8 point, 5.8 per cent. greater than from 12 point, and 6.9 per cent. greater than from the 14 point. The 10-point type is the size commonly used in well-printed books, and in the SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER.

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## Starlings Here to Stay

*Ornithology*

The European starling is here to stay, whether we like it or not, according to the U. S. Biological Survey. From the 160 birds released in New York City in 1890 and 1891 have come the flocks of unnumbered thousands that are seen periodically roosting in the shade trees of eastern villages and towns. This quarrelsome, untidy stranger is now a thoroughly naturalized member of the North American bird population in regions east of the Mississippi.

Thus far the starling has not developed the destructive food habits that make the bird a pest in Europe and Australia, official records show. Judged by food habits alone, he is a not undesirable citizen. Having a pugnacious disposition, however, he has acquired considerable unpopularity because he drives off other more desirable bird neighbors from bird houses, holes in trees and other available nesting sites, particularly in the vicinity of houses.

If you do not want these noisy gregarious fellows hopping in and out of your dooryard, put up nest boxes with holes less than one and one-half inches across. Experiments have shown that the starling cannot enter a hole of such dimensions so that it is possible to save home sites for some of the smaller birds in this way.

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Wireless transmission of pictures and thumb-prints of criminals from Berlin to other German cities has been tested for a year and found satisfactory.