

## Land of Contrasts

*Sociology*

JOHN HERMAN RANDALL, JR., in *Our Changing Civilization* (Stokes):

. . . Europeans still laugh at our inexperience; for their upper class has had longer to learn the wise use of riches than we sons of pioneers. But though we are still a curious blend of crudity and insight, we are gaining knowledge. We spend millions for sanitation and public health. We have reduced the infant mortality rate to unprecedented figures. We love outdoor sports. Though we tolerate vast stretches of ugliness, we are keenly aware that beauty exists. We may dance to weird strains, but we flock to the best music, listen to famous musicians, and throng the conservatories. Though we flood the world with horrors from Hollywood, we eagerly snatch the great paintings of the past, and even raise up artists ourselves. We perpetuate slums and suburbs, but our architects are as creative as any in the world. We underpay learning, but we have amassed huge libraries, and our scholars are tireless. Though we consume the *Saturday Evening Post* and Harold Bell Wright, we are also the chief support of many a European writer who despises our barbarism. We may devour Frank Crane and Eddie Guest, but our best poets are worthy of their great English heritage. Our theater is a commercial enterprise, but it is as interesting as any in the world. We live

on the tabloids, but our news services are unrivaled. We stage monkey trials, but we create tremendous endowments for scientific research. We may not know what it is all about, but we flock to college and we have an unreasoning passion for education. Our schools may be regimented and ridden by politics, but we are trying a thousand experiments. We have an overwhelming self-esteem, but we are our own severest critics. In all these things Europe is aping us as fast as she is able; for our follies and our sophistications are but the natural results of the industrial wealth that is flooding the world. Give us another generation or so, and we may acquire the wisdom to use our vastly greater material resources with something of the discrimination the citizens of ancient Athens or Florence applied to the wealth trade brought them.

For that is the real moral problem that faces us. Where is the wisdom and the intelligence to use the power of science and the machine aright? In our whole moral tradition there is no answer. In all its profound plumbing of the human spirit, Christianity never faced that question. Of what avail is it to tell us to renounce the world, or to abstain from pleasure? We need an ethics of achievement and mastery; we have only an ethics of consolation.

*Science News-Letter, June 22, 1929*

## Real Sea-Serpents

*Zoology*

E. G. BOULENGER, in *Animal Mysteries* (Macaulay):

The genuine sea-snakes of the "accepted" variety which swarm off the tropical coasts of Eastern Asia are entirely aquatic and extremely poisonous, a property which they possess in common with their not very distant terrestrial relations the cobras and coral snakes. Some fifty different kinds of sea-snakes are known, none of which measure more than six feet in length. They are all possessors of much flattened paddle-shaped tails which as a rule are prehensile, enabling the serpents to secure a firm hold by twisting these organs around coral reefs, sea-weeds, and other objects.

Although they usually are found floating on the waves they can dive to great depths owing to the dilatibility of their lungs which are ca-

pable of storing large reserves of air. The nostrils, which are valvular and placed on the top of the head, are opened when inhaling air from the surface, and closed when under water. Their prey consists almost entirely of fish which are killed by the action of the poison before being swallowed. A deadly poisonous serpent having free range of the seas might well be regarded as invincible, but sea-snakes have many enemies.

Albatrosses and frigate birds fearlessly seize them and carrying them to some convenient crag or even mast-head, peck and beat them with their wings until they cease to protest, and pass away down the crops of the adventurous birds. Attempts to keep sea-snakes in captivity in northern climes have not been very encouraging.

*Science News-Letter, June 22, 1929*

Staff of Science Service—Director, Edwin E. Slosson; Managing Editor, Watson Davis; Staff Writers, Frank Thone, James Stokley, Emily O. Davis, Jane Stafford; Librarian, Minna Gill; Sales and Advertising Manager, Hallie Jenkins.

Board of Trustees of Science Service—*Honorary President*, William E. Ritter, University of California. Representing the American Association for the Advancement of Science, J. McKeen Cattell, *President*, Editor, Science, Garrison, N. Y.; D. T. MacDougal, Director, Desert Laboratory, Tucson, Ariz.; Dr. Raymond Pearl, Director, Institute for Biological Research, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md. Representing the National Academy of Sciences, John O. Merriam, *President*, Carnegie Institute of Washington; R. A. Millikan, Director, Norman Bridge Laboratory of Physics, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, Calif.; Dr. David White, Senior Geologist, U. S. Geological Survey. Representing National Research Council, Vernon Kellogg, *Vice-President and Chairman of Executive Committee*, Permanent Secretary, National Research Council, Washington, D. C.; C. G. Abbot, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.; Harrison E. Howe, Editor of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry. Representing Journalistic Profession, John H. Finley, Associate Editor, New York Times; Mark Sullivan, Writer, Washington, D. C.; Marlen E. Pew, Editor of Editor and Publisher, New York City. Representing E. W. Scripps Estate, Harry L. Smithton, *Treasurer*, Cincinnati, Ohio; Robert P. Scripps, Scripps-Howard Newspapers, West Chester, Ohio; Thomas L. Sidlo, Cleveland, Ohio.

### BINDER COVERS

FOR

### SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER

Many subscribers have expressed a desire for a convenient binder in which to file their copies of the Science News-Letter. We therefore have prepared an attractive and durable loose-leaf binder-cover of gray leather-like stock, printed in dark green and complete with fasteners. Each binder-cover will hold one volume (six months or 26 issues).

To facilitate punching the issues of the Science News-Letter to fit this binder-cover, a pattern showing where holes should be placed appears each week on the back cover page.

To obtain a binder-cover, send 20 cents in stamps (make them 2s, please), together with your name and address (please print) to

SCIENCE SERVICE

21st and B Sts.

Washington, D. C.