

First Glances at New Books

SAVAGE GENTLEMEN—Mabel Cook Cole—*Van Nostrand* (\$3.50). Mrs. Cole and her husband penetrated to the remotest parts of the Philippine Islands in the service of anthropology, for science has its adventurers and even martyrs as well as the Christian missions. Fortunately, while they found savages indeed, they found also that rightly approached your head hunter can reveal himself as a very courteous and hospitable gentleman who will even permit his strange white guests to take a plaster cast of his face.

Science News-Letter, October 26, 1929

AIR PIONEERING IN THE ARCTIC—Amundsen and Ellsworth—*National Americana Society* (\$35). A splendidly illustrated commemorative volume on the two polar flights of Amundsen and Ellsworth. The excellence of the photographs and their reproductions together with the fact that this is Ellsworth's tribute to his explorer-companion, the great Amundsen, will give this book a lasting niche in the records of exploration.

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TULAREMIA—Walter M. Simpson—*Hoeber* (\$5). The story of the new disease, its history, diagnosis, treatment and pathology are given in "a clear, complete and authoritative manner" in the words of Dr. Edward Francis, one of the foremost investigators of the disease, who has written a foreword for this text. The book will be welcomed by physicians, bacteriologists, pathologists, and other scientists, but is too technical for the average reader.

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THE MIGHTY MEDICINE—Franklin Henry Giddings—*Macmillan* (\$2). Not medicine at all but a new theory of education is the theme of this book which will be valuable for all who are interested, professionally or otherwise, in education, even though many may not agree with the author's ideas. By "Mighty Medicine" is meant the "medicine" of the magicians, priests and sorcerers of primitive tribes, which finds its counterpart in modern prejudices and superstitions.

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Nature Treats Soil

When a farmer plants a clover crop on a piece of poor land for the purpose of enriching it, and later on puts the field into some other crop, he is only duplicating a process that happens without human assistance wherever there are raw or impoverished soils. This is indicated by the results of observations by Dr. Elmer Campbell of Transylvania College.

Dr. Campbell studied a series of raw gravel exposures in Indiana and also a number of exhausted and abandoned fields in various parts of the South. He found that in all cases the larger proportion of legumes in the total vegetation was found on the poorer soils, and that as legumes increased the nitrogen content they were gradually replaced by other wild plants. For instance, on the Indian gravel he found the plant population to be 100 per cent. sweet clover on a three-year-old exposure, but on a ten-year-old strip sweet clover made up only 20 per cent. of all the plants present.

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Stone Forest Found

A newly discovered petrified forest, the only one so far found with the trees lying as they fell millions of years ago, is reported by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation. It was found by a roadbuilding expedition on the Lower Yellowstone reclamation project, about three miles southwest of Savage, Montana.

The petrified forest covers several acres. Some of the trees are ten feet in diameter and over 100 feet long. They all lie with their tops pointing in the same direction, indicating that they may have been blown down by a storm. The shape of the trunks suggests that they belonged to the same forests that supplied the materials for the nearby beds of coal.

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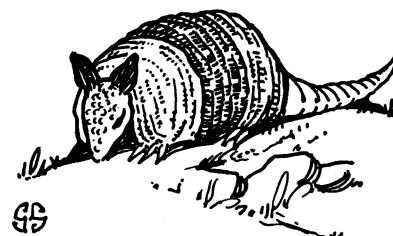
Leaf-Growing Record

A giant-leaved waterlily of Japan and China probably holds the world's record for speed in leaf-growing, according to a note in the British scientific journal, *Nature*. This plant, a relative of the *Victoria regia* of South America, expands its four-foot floating leaves in less than nine days, increasing their diameter at a rate of nearly a half-inch an hour. At that rate of growth they produce between 15 and 25 square inches of leaf in sixty minutes.

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



Armadillo

Suits of armor as house ornaments are too big for present-day apartments and too costly for any but wealthy persons; yet you may hang up a suit of armor in your modest domicile at no more than the curio shop's price of an armadillo basket. For this queer little animal of the American tropics and subtropics is no less a wearer of armor than was doughty old Charlemagne himself. When the Spaniards first climbed up on the plateaus of Mexico they found these creatures in coats of mail and gave them the name by which they are still known. "Armadillo" is a Spanish word that translates as a whole English phrase: "little fellow in armor."

However, the armadillo is armored not because he is a warrior but because he is a pacifist. He has neither the will to fight nor weapons to fight with if he would. His claws and teeth are alike negligible as offensive armament. All he can do when attacked is roll himself up in a ball and wait for his enemy to tire of the siege and go away. If the enemy is more persistent than the armadillo, or if he can penetrate the armor wherein the armadillo trusteth, then there is just one less armadillo in the world. And if the enemy is a man, the walled-up armadillo is just so much the more convenient to pick up and toss into a truck. And presently there is another armadillo basket in the curio shop.

To compensate for the losses to the tribe wrought by such aggressors, the armadillo is very prolific. Mrs. Armadillo will probably be the last mammal in the world to be converted to birth control: her babies invariably arrive as quadruplets.

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