

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone



Click-Beetle

If you chance to catch a dark, moderately slender beetle with a strongly marked crease where the wing-cases join the thorax, hold him tight or he won't stay caught long. There will be a sudden snap and click, and up in the air he'll catapult, flying end over end to many times his height. He comes down most any-old-way, and immediately scuttles for safety.

Like most beetles, he is usually helpless when he falls on his turtle-shell back, but he doesn't need to stay there, kicking impotently, as most beetles do in that unfortunate position. He simply clicks again, and maybe this time he lands right side up after his catapult flight. If he doesn't, he just keeps on clicking and tossing himself up like a flapjack until he finally comes down on his feet.

Presumably this curious behavior is of much the same value to the click-beetle as the ability to make long and erratic jumps is to fleas, frogs and kangaroos. Only unlike these creatures thus blessed with folding hindlegs, the click-beetle uses his mode of salvation only in emergencies.

The method of making such a catapult-jump is simple enough. The body, as is evident from a superficial examination, is a hinge. It is, moreover, a spring hinge, with the tension of the springs under the control of the beetle. When he wants to make use of the spring he raises his thorax at an angle, whacks his forehead sharply on the ground, and thus lifts himself, if not by the bootstraps at least by the spectacle-bows.

Science News-Letter, September 20, 1930

New types of hybrid trees now being grown in New York State are expected to reach in eight years a size equal to that attained by natural varieties in 45 years.

Hazards That Follow The Hurricane

Medicine

TYPHOID fever, malaria, small pox, influenza and dysentery are the chief diseases expected to follow in the wake of the hurricane which has ravaged Santo Domingo.

Typhoid fever particularly may be expected in any catastrophe in which water supplies and sewage systems are disrupted. This is because the germs of typhoid are water borne, and people are infected by eating or drinking contaminated food, water and milk. The same is true of dysentery.

Malaria and influenza were very prevalent in Porto Rico after a hurricane swept that island two years ago. The same diseases may afflict the people of Santo Domingo. Weakness from exposure and lack of food would make a large part of the population susceptible to all diseases, and malaria is prevalent there at all times while a few cases of influenza are reported regularly there as in most other countries.

Diseases Reported

In a health report from Santo Domingo, typhoid fever, malaria, tetanus, dysentery, influenza, tuberculosis, measles, whooping cough, a very little diphtheria and a little yaws were reported to the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau. Under present conditions with the sanitary system broken down and the people crowded together with little or no food and shelter, any of these may be greatly increased. There is some danger of a smallpox outbreak, although this is not as likely to occur as outbreaks of the water-borne diseases like typhoid and dysentery.

Yellow fever once had its home and stronghold in the West Indies, but there have been no epidemics and few cases there in recent years. It is not likely that it will break out now although the possibility exists.

Typhus fever has long been known as the disease of poverty, privation and overcrowding. There is little danger of an outbreak of this disease in Santo Domingo just now because the disease has not been known there in several years.

Other diseases which frequently follow great disasters are plague and cholera. In the East Indies severe outbreaks of both of these might be expected after such a catastrophe. However, neither plague nor cholera occur often in the West Indies and

it is unlikely that outbreaks of either will appear now.

Definite information on the disease picture in Santo Domingo is still lacking. Gangrene from infected wounds and injuries seems to be the most pressing health consideration, the American Red Cross has reported. Anti-typhoid vaccinations will be given as rapidly as possible in the hope of averting an epidemic of that disease.

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A psychologist who looked into children's beliefs about clouds found that many children think that clouds are close enough to be reached from the trees or housetops.

Hurricanes are one of the climatic features of the Antarctic.

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