

GENERAL SCIENCE

• Notebook of Science

No Honor Among Some Parasites

THERE is no honor among thieves in at least some parts of the world of parasitic fungi that prey on plants. Scientists at the Rothamstead Experimental Station, England, have discovered parasites preying on closely related parasites in cultures kept in their laboratories. Even sister-strains derived from the same original parent will indulge in this vegetable cannibalism.

Mice Have St. Vitus Dance

A PECULIAR condition, like St. Vitus' dance in human beings, has been found in mice, Elizabeth M. Lord of the Carnegie Institution of Washington and Prof. William H. Gates of Louisiana State University have reported to the *American Naturalist*. The condition appeared suddenly in individuals in two families in a stock of normal albino mice. The scientists have reported it as a new mutation which they have called "shaker."

The mutation shows itself principally

in the form of nervous head movements. The condition is hereditary. Apparently a new species of mice has developed from the common house mouse.

Bird's Song Timed

TWILIGHT in some instances too dim to favor human activities in some unexplained way times the first morning song of birds, a study of Washington birds has convinced H. A. Allard, of the Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

While the different birds start their songs at different hours of the early dawn known to scientists as "civil" or "astronomical twilight," each species starts singing at a relatively constant time before sunrise.

Amateur Lightning Photographs

AID of amateur photographers throughout the world is invited by M. Em. Touchet, vice-president of the French Astronomical Society, in securing the photographs of lightning. Announcement has been made that such pictures could be sent to the society at the Hôtel des Sociétés Savantes, 28 Rue Serpente, Paris. Especially desired are photographs of ball lightning and stereoscopic photographs that will show a flash in perspective.

All that is necessary is to point the camera to the region where most of the flashes are occurring, at night, and open the shutter.

Inland Crabs

REPORTS of sea crabs and salt water fish caught far inland in rivers of the Atlantic seaboard are entirely possible and credible, U. S. Bureau of Fisheries authorities say in passing judgment on these 1930 model fish stories now current.

Would Save Surgery

A PLEA to save the practice of surgery from becoming too much of a product of the machine age was voiced by Dr. C. Jeff Miller of New Orleans in his presidential address before the first general session of the annual clinical congress of the American College of Surgeons held in Philadelphia.

Wrench as Meteorite

WHEN a farmer near Perkasio, about

thirty miles from Philadelphia, recently heard a roar, a whistling sound and then saw a cloud of dust arise as something hit the ground, there was some justification for thinking that he had seen the fall of a meteorite. When Samuel G. Gordon, associate curator of minerals of the Academy of Natural Sciences, went to investigate he found that something actually had fallen from the sky. But it wasn't a meteorite, it was a wrench accidentally dropped from an airplane at considerable altitude!

Science News Letter, November 15, 1930

SEISMOLOGY

New Orleans Earthquake Located by Old Method

AFTER nearly three weeks of work, collecting reports from people who felt it, Capt. N. H. Heck, of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, has located the position of the earthquake near New Orleans on Sunday, October 19. Capt. Heck, who is chief of the survey's division of terrestrial magnetism and seismology, said that the determination of the center of this quake was delayed because of the lack of reports at the time from seismograph stations. The center was about 65 miles to the west of New Orleans, not in the Gulf, as was supposed at first.

This quake was located by the old method of isoseismals, that is, lines of equal force of the earthquake. By collecting information from a large number of people who felt the shaking, it is possible to form a good idea of its intensity at various locations. These can be plotted on a map, like the isobars, or lines of equal air pressure, on a weather map. The intensity of the quake weakens as one gets away from the center, so the isoseismals are roughly circular. Their center then marks the center of the quake.

To collect and plot these data takes considerable time, but if the quake is recorded by a few seismograph instruments at scattered points, the location of the center can be made with much greater speed. The Louisiana quake, however, was not a very violent one, and so was not detected on many instruments.

Science News Letter, November 15, 1930

The Mayan Indians of tropical America probably smoked their tobacco in the form of cigars more often than in pipes, says J. Eric Thompson, ethnologist of the Field Museum.

MESOPOTAMIAN ORIGINS

by
Ephraim A. Speiser

An important theory of the oldest population of Hither Asia which throws new light on Biblical traditions. The author has identified a third non-Semitic, non-Sumerian group in Mesopotamia which he claims was the ethnic and cultural foundation on which invading tribes built their civilizations. Dr. George A. Barton says: "It is the best contribution to Babylonian prehistory that I have ever seen."

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