

Oldest City on Earth

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made up the Japhethite stock, one may be singled out for brief mention because of a strange misconception that has grown up about it, which Prof. Speiser is the first to explode. This was the tribe known as the Guti. When the Babylonian and Assyrian kingdoms became well established in the valley and the wealthier people could afford servants, a lively slave trade sprang up. Gutians from these hills were in great demand, because they were so healthy and strong. Kurdish porters in the same region today amaze visitors with their ability to carry horse-size loads.

Several written contracts with slave-dealers have been discovered and interpreted. They specify the kind of slave wanted, and add that he or she must be "namru." Earlier philologists tried to puzzle out what kind of a person a "namru" slave might be. An older meaning of the word, they found, was "bright." Hence they jumped at the conclusion that "namru" meant blond. Thereupon, borne on the shoulders of a few slaves, the whole myth of the Noble Nordic invaded ancient Assyria.

Prof. Speiser has re-examined this

"namru" business very carefully, and cannot find that the word has any meaning other than strong, healthy, or in good condition. It is rather difficult to see why a hard-boiled Assyrian slave-dealer should have preferred blonds, any more than did his nineteenth century successor, Simon Legree.

As for the probable modern descendants of these same hill people of six or seven thousand years ago, Prof. Speiser points strongly at the Kurds, Lurs and their relatives. The Guti, he says, were also known in antiquity as Qutians. In connection with the latter name a slightly modified form, Qurti, appears in some of the records; whether as a neighboring and related tribe or simply as a variant of the name Qutians. In later years, Xenophon speaks of the Carduchi, other Greek writers of the Kurtioi. All these spellings and pronunciations fall around the modern "Kurd," like shots around a bull's-eye. There is little doubt, Professor Speiser concludes, that "Guti" has become "Kurd," and that the Kurds are the offspring of the Guti.

This gives us living samples of the ancient stock for physical anthropologists to measure and photograph. But, cautions Prof. Speiser, there are Kurds and Kurds. The stock has become considerably mixed where they have come into contact with outsiders. The best chances, he thinks, are to be found in isolated communities in the hills, where there has been little traffic all through the centuries. Here a reasonably close inbreeding will have kept intact the stock of the ancient Japhethite people, who first taught men how to dwell together in cities.

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PALEONTOLOGY

Alaskan 'Prehistoric Animal' Declared Merely Whale

THE supposed "prehistoric animal" reported to have been discovered preserved in ice in Alaska is almost certainly a whale. Dr. Barnum Brown of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, has advised Science Service that the reported presence of flippers and the dimensions of the skull indicate the carcass is that of the familiar mammal of the sea. Scientists of the U. S. National Museum, Washington, also express the same opinion.

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It is estimated that there are two million child slaves in China.



Teazel Pods

ON walks along autumn roads and across dry pastures you have no doubt seen them; tall, hard-looking, stiff brown weeds, with a few of their harsh, dried leaves still clinging to their rigid stalks, and each stem crowned with a thing that looks like a miniature porcupine—a big bur-like affair radiating long, hook-ended bristles.

This is the teazel, a sturdy vegetable outlaw that has wandered into this country from its native home in Europe and is becoming increasingly established in waste lands. They are interesting, and not wholly unattractive, when viewed at a little distance, but if one endeavors to walk through a teazel patch wearing woolen garments, the innumerable little hooks can make themselves a pretty bad nuisance.

Their ready tenaciousness was once a virtue in the teazel heads, for the ancient and honorable guild of fullers, who dressed and finished cloth after weavers had woven it, used teazels in large quantities, nailed to wooden rollers, to raise the nap on woolen fabrics. Of recent years this work has been stolen from the teazel by machines using brass spring wires, but there are still a few woolen mills where teazel frames have not wholly passed out of use. Occasionally one finds their broken bristles buried in cloth.

There are also a few teazel farms of a few acres each where the yearly crop is harvested, one stalk at a time, with scissors or knives. The demand for teazels diminishes year by year, at least relatively to the great growth of the weaving industry. But as their useful life diminishes they are apparently being pensioned off as ornaments; for gilded and painted teazel heads are now popular as parts of winter bouquets.

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March's Thesaurus Dictionary

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