

The Cup of Warm Water

HE WHOSE BIRTH we celebrate on Christmas Day once assured us that he would remember even a cup of cold water given to the least of his creatures. That he loved birds is evidenced by his frequent references to them during the recorded years of his life. Charity to the birds would seem, therefore, a most fitting Christmas benevolence.

We often think to give birds food in winter. It involves no more than scattering table crumbs on the snow; though if our benevolent instincts be more fully developed we may build feeding trays more or less elaborate. But water is no less necessary to birds than food, and they are often harder pressed for something to slake their thirst than they are for something to eat. This is especially so in severe weather, when the chance pools that usually afford them a supply are frozen solid. It is then that a pan of water set out in a sheltered spot (but one clear of cat-danger!) will be most welcome to the birds.

And do not set out merely a pan of cold water, if the weather be freezing. It will immediately seal itself with the ice, perhaps before all the bird clients that visit your yard shall have had a chance to drink. Let it be warmed up—make it as warm as you like your own tea or coffee. Then it will be a long time freezing, for water has an astonishing capacity for heat and loses it more slowly than any other common substance. Birds do not have the same prejudice American humans have in favor of ice water, especially in winter. They are glad to get something warm to drink. There is no charity bought so cheap that can make so many living creatures happy as a cup of warm water.

Science News Letter, December 26, 1931

Tree Rings Extending American Dated History

archaeologists, in Indian pueblo ruins. When dates were established for the tree-ring specimens, the age of the pueblos was also known. Seventy-five pueblos have been dated.

Now Dr. Douglass is working with tree-ring specimens gathered by Earl H. Morris, archaeologist, in ruins and caves of early pueblos and late Basket Makers. The tree rings cover six hundred years of time, and do not appear to fit into the tree-ring calendar of any centuries since 700 A. D. When a piece of wood is found containing rings that overlap the eighth century and the earlier undated material the age of the six hundred rings can be told.

Dr. Antevs' researches into the passage of time go back to the ages when the great ice sheets advanced from the north and covered large portions of the earth. For measuring time in this distant era, Dr. Antevs uses the layers of clay deposited in ancient lake beds. These thin twin layers, alternating dark and light, were deposited annually in the wake of retreating glaciers.

Dr. Antevs reported that he has obtained records of the clay layers or varves, for considerable parts of the age

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when the North American ice sheet was dwindling from its farthest south point of advance.

The ice sheet began to withdraw almost immediately after reaching its southernmost line, he stated. From Long Island, it retreated to Hartford, then into Vermont and New Hampshire. Tracing this retreat by examining the annual layers of clay, Dr. Antevs found that it took the ice 4,100 years to melt back 185 miles between Hartford and St. Johnsbury, Vt. Around Amherst, Mass., the ice border halted and re-advanced.

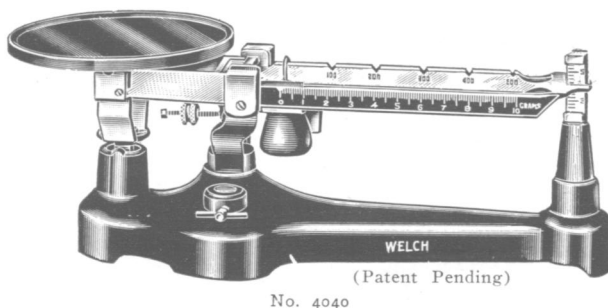
The tree rings and the clay varves not only measure time but offer science excellent material for the study of long, and short, temperature cycles. In clay deposits and tree-ring growth, the earth recorded both rainy years and droughts.

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The Babylonian king Hammurabi has been called the "father of canals" because he built so many in his kingdom.

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