

Largely as a result of such happenings, some six hundred children under five years of age died in the United States during a three-year period. Census reports make the figure a little less than this, but other reports indicate that it may be higher. In Canada, official statistics show 52 such deaths in a three-year period.

In an age peculiarly devoted to protection of children, it would seem that this wholly avoidable loss of children's lives could be prevented. Besides greater watchfulness on the part of parents, doctors advise more specific remedies for the situation.

Entire removal of strychnine from the formulas of these laxative tablets is one measure recommended by two Toronto physicians, Drs. John R. Ross and Alan Brown, who report to the Canadian Medical Association the extent of this

menace to small children. The same suggestion has been made by physicians in the United States.

Laws requiring a "Poison" label on medicines containing strychnine were recommended both by the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association.

Physicians themselves are taken to task for their share in the present situation by the editor of the Canadian Medical Association's Journal. (March) Doctors have been too ready to consider these tablets harmless, the editor says. Furthermore, patients have drifted into the habit of taking these tablets because doctors have not taken the trouble to prescribe suitable treatment leading to permanent relief of the condition for which the candy pills are taken.

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could read and write, and in all Polynesia they were the only islanders who could.

Attempts to read the writing have given only partial success. And students of man's history want almost even more to learn whether natives on Easter Island made that great invention of a writing system for themselves, or whether they brought or borrowed the invention from somewhere else.

### Where Did it Come From?

Most important of all, scientifically, if the Easter Islanders did import their writing system, from what direction did they get it? It is of great historic interest to know whether a people so remarkable was linked culturally to Indian civilizations of South America or to some Asiatic homeland.

Easter Island, now a Chilean sheep ranch, is on no beaten tourist cruise track, and is not likely to be. One supply ship a year, private yachts, and occasional wandering ships touch on the shores of this world famous island.

Crusoe's Island, Juan Fernandez, on the other hand, is distinctly tourist conscious. Two volcanic islands, less than 500 miles from Chile, compose jointly what is known as Juan Fernandez. Both are included in the park designation, and both have natural features of interest, but it is Crusoe's particular island that attracts the public.

### Memorial Tablet

There has long been a memorial tablet where Selkirk watched day after day through his four years of solitude, waiting for the ship that finally did arrive to rescue him. The tourist steamer is always met by a Crusoe costumed in goat skins and attended by Man Friday. Visitors find that, as castaway islands go, this island has much to recommend it. There are beautiful forest scenes, great ferns, streams, and wild life, including gamey fish and the famous wild goats that Selkirk hunted for food and clothing.

Selkirk and Crusoe blend inextricably into one on Juan Fernandez. Daniel Defoe, who is generally supposed to have based his story on Selkirk's experiences, chose to say that his hero Robinson Crusoe was cast off on an island in the Orinoco River in South America, but that discrepancy in geography never seriously worries Juan Fernandez sight-seers. The shift in geographic location was a mere fictional touch. Selkirk-Crusoe is real, and his island proves it.

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#### ARCHAEOLOGY

## Robinson Crusoe's Isle Made National Park by Chile

**R**OBINSON CRUSOE'S famous isle in the Pacific has been declared a national park by the Chilean government. (*Nature*, Feb. 23)

That probably means a greater wave of public interest in one of the world's romantic islands. More tourists will cruise out on steamers to see what a proper island for castaway adventures should look like. Larger crowds will inspect the scenes where the original lonely Crusoe—Scottish mariner Alexander Selkirk—built his shelter, hunted goats, and watched for the ship that would rescue him.

Meanwhile, Chilean decree has also given national park status to another famous Pacific "sight," Easter Island, where an outdoor art gallery of great stone faces has long puzzled seafarers and scientists.

But this second newly created island park will probably have fewer tourists—souvenir hunting ones, certainly—for the Chilean government's aim is to protect Easter Island, not to make it more popular. The impressive sight of hundreds of stone portrait figures on the island hillsides has been endangered at times by persons damaging or carrying off statues, and other relics as well. Easter Island lies 2,000 miles west of Chile and over 1,000 miles from its

nearest island neighbors. But that long haul over which any prize piece of the island's heavy art must be carried in order to get it anywhere has not always deterred collectors.

With stronger government supervision of Easter Island and its antiquities, science can take renewed interest in clearing up the mysteries of the "loneliest inhabited island in the Pacific." Two scientific expeditions had already made the island their goal this season, in the hope of solving the riddle of the great stone faces. (*See SNL*, Nov. 17, 1934).

It is conceded that natives carved the figures, some of which weigh full 40 tons. Natives pushed and slid the stone giants from the quarry down the hillsides.

But that does not explain enough. Science wants to know whether the stone faces represented gods or native residents, and why they were carved at all, and why some were little fellows in stone, and others towered over 30 feet high. Science wants to know why the statue-making stopped abruptly, as it did one day with an unfinished masterpiece still at the quarry.

Besides the statues, unique in Pacific art, Easter Island had another ancient and mysterious distinction. Its people