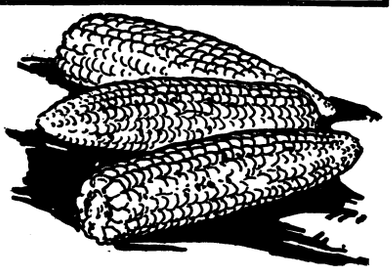
NATURE

NATURE RAMBLINGS *by Frank Thone*



Improper Names

HOW unimaginative human beings are in naming things!

When we go into a new land, or new products of foreign lands are brought to us, we are exceedingly prone to the lazy habit of giving them names of more or less similar things with which we are familiar, with perhaps a qualifying adjective. Very seldom does a new acquaintance from abroad run this gantlet of misnaming and come out with anything resembling its own original name.

We have tropical fruits called custard-apples which are not the remotest kind of kin to apples. The alligator pear is somewhat pear-shaped, but there the similarity ceases. Jerusalem cherries are not cherries, except in size, and they don't come from Jerusalem. Grapefruit resembles grapes only in that the big yellow globes are often borne in close-clustered bunches.

Potatoes were originally called earth-apples, just as tomatoes were called love-apples until only a few decades ago. That misnaming of the potato has become permanent in French, as *pomme de terre*. In German, too, the tuber is called *Erdapfel* almost as often as it is called *Kartoffel*—which latter name, incidentally, seems to have originated as a corruption of the French truffle.

Common corn, which in the Carib Indian language heard by Columbus was known as *mahiz,* somehow was first called Turkish corn on the Continent and Turkey wheat in England. Only later did its proper title, modified to "maize," overtake it in Europe. And in this country only professors wanting to be very exact in their language call it by the name to which it has a right.

Sometimes it is not shape or color that brings on misnaming, but taste or odor. Thus, almost any seeds or fruits that are hot and pungent to the tongue will come to be called pepper, regardless of degree or lack of kinship to the true pepper of the East Indies.

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PUBLIC HEATH—RADIO

Loud Noises Injure Health Of Both Old and Young

Anti-Noise Compaigns Should Not Be Confined To Battling Night Rackets That Disturb Sleep

MOTHERS may not agree, but children do not thrive on noise any more than do adults.

Scientific experiments have demonstrated that loud noises affect the health and lessen the efficiency of children at school as well as of workers in the office and factory, Dr. Shirley W. Wynne, former Commissioner of Health of New York City, stated in discussing the subject of "City Noise" at the noise abatement session of the Acoustical Society of America, in New York.

Noise is not merely a nuisance; it is a health hazard, declared Dr. Wynne, who lamented that city health departments confined themselves mostly to suppressing loud noises at night, solely because they disturb sleep. They do more than this. Loud noises at any time are injurious to health. As soon as the public realizes this, Dr. Wynne predicted, the engineers will find a way to reduce noise.

Measurements of the magnitude of noise in various parts of Chicago and its suburbs, made by the Noise Reduction Council of Greater Chicago, were described by H. A. Leedy of the Armour Research Foundation. The average noise level over a period of ten minutes and the maximum and minimum noise levels were recorded by a noise meter. Wherever possible, the source of the louder sounds was determined. These measurements aroused considerable public interest in noise abatement and promise to lead to plans for noise reduction.

Two groups, the National Noise Abatement Council, with support of manufacturers that make noise-deadening and insulating materials, and the Noise Committee of the Acoustical Society, are working to coordinate the sporadic and scattered efforts at noise abatement throughout the country into a national movement. They are seeking to enlist public interest and to find practical ways to reduce the noise nuisance.

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High Fidelity Not Wanted

THE PUBLIC does not care for high fidelity radio reception; they prefer low and mellow tones, Ernest La Prade of the National Broadcasting Company told the Acoustical Society.

A survey made in 1940 by Samuel E. Gill showed that owners of radio receivers equipped with tone control devices seldom used them to obtain the whole range of frequency available. Except for trained music lovers, most people preferred to tune out the high pitched notes, Mr. La Prade said.

However, faithful reproduction of music is not merely a question of pitch. It involves such factors as dynamic range, studio acoustics, balance and perspective. And Mr. La Prade concluded that higher fidelity in these respects would be more acceptable to the public than increased frequency range.

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