



Living Fossil

► **DINOSAURS** belong to a past so remote that we are apt to think of them as inhabitants of another and fantastic planet. All the other backboneed land animals of their time have vanished with them, and the vertebrate population of the earth has changed a dozen times over between their day and ours.

Yet if we could transport ourselves back into the woods that the later dinosaurs walked through, we would see leaves on many of the trees and other plants that would remind us strongly of "home". There would be things looking for all the world like elms, sycamores, cottonwoods, willows, walnuts, hickories, grapevines, beeches, birches, alders, hazelbrush—the list could be strung out to considerable length. Going even farther back are trees belonging to several conifer groups.

All these would look familiar enough, but there is one tree genus that has survived from that day down to this that

strikes us as almost as much of an oddity, when we first see it, as would a live dinosaur. Presumably because it is now so exotic, the ginkgo looks to most of us like a fossil that has come to life.

Of the several genera and fairly numerous species in the once widespread ginkgo family, only one species, known botanically as *Ginkgo biloba*, is living today. It would probably have perished centuries ago, too, but for the fact that Chinese priests fostered it in their temple grounds. It has now become fairly well distributed as a street and park tree in this country, though it is still not as generally appreciated as it deserves to be.

A ginkgo tree has a somewhat columnar shape when young, becoming bush-

ier as it reaches full size. Its glossy green leaves are wedge-shaped, usually deeply cleft. They turn a beautiful pale-gold hue in autumn. As an ornamental, the ginkgo has only one drawback. Male and female flowers are borne on separate trees, and the large-seeded, plum-like fruits that follow the female blossoms have a thin pulp that reeks like rancid butter. For this reason, only male trees should be planted—if you can be sure of their sex in advance.

A great virtue of the ginkgo is its almost complete freedom from the fungus disease and insect pests that bedevil practically all of our other ornamental trees. Perhaps the last thing that ever wanted to chew its leaves was a herbivorous dinosaur.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1947

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Metal Throat Saves Girl

► A **NEW** spare part for the human body, an artificial throat made of vitalium metal, was announced by Dr. Sam H. Sanders of Memphis at the meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology in Chicago.

It was developed for a 10-year-old girl whose throat was almost closed by scar tissue. For months someone had stayed with her to keep her awake day and night because her mother was afraid she would stop breathing and die if allowed to go sound asleep.

After wearing the artificial throat for over seven months and a skin grafting operation, she recovered. Today, four years later, she is a perfectly normal girl with every prospect of a career as a singer. Nose and throat specialists at the meeting heard a record of her soprano voice which won a superior rating in a state high school contest.

The metal throat is technically termed an artificial oropharynx. The oropharynx is that part of the throat, below the soft palate, where the openings from mouth and nose come into the throat.

Scars from burns by caustics such as lye, diphtheria, syphilis and throat infections may close this part of the throat. In the case reported, the trouble started two weeks after her tonsils and adenoids had been removed. The operation was performed by a competent, well trained specialist. The little girl, J. M., was evidently one of those persons who are prone to develop an excessive

amount of scar tissue for no apparent reason.

Since there are others who may have such trouble, Dr. Sanders suggested that the artificial throat may have further usefulness.

The appliance consists essentially of a jointed tube which is attached to the upper teeth and continues down the throat past the constriction. The mouth and throat sections were at first connected by welding a strap, or connecting bar, cast for this purpose, on each side. Later this was replaced with a ball and socket joint to allow free movement of the head in all directions.

The metal throat was used at first to prevent the scar tissue from growing back and drawing the throat together. Before the appliance was developed, this scar tissue had been repeatedly cut out, but always grew back rapidly.

After the appliance had been worn by the girl for seven months, it was removed and a piece of skin from her thigh was applied by collodion to sponge rubber glued to the vitalium tube. This was again inserted in the girl's throat. Two weeks later when the appliance was removed the graft had taken and there was a nice large opening in the throat. With the graft in the throat, there was no chance for scar tissue to grow over and close it.

Dr. O. H. King, a dentist, E. A. Denton, a dental technician, and Dr. Milton Adams, plastic surgeon, assisted Dr. Sanders in developing the metal throat and placing the skin graft.

Science News Letter, October 25, 1947

YOUR HAIR AND ITS CARE

By O. L. Levin, M. D. and H. T. Behrman, M. D.

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