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PANORAMA OF SCIENCE, 1951

Compiled by
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Chestnuts

➤ **GATHERING CHESTNUTS** after the first frosts brought the burrs to the ground was once as traditionally American as a Thanksgiving Day turkey garnished with cranberry sauce. Indeed, the feast day bird was often stuffed with chestnut dressing.

But the American chestnut has been forcibly removed from our forests by a fungus-caused blight and most chestnuts bought on today's market are imported from Italy or Spain. The few homegrown varieties are from Oriental trees imported to this country.

Beginning about the turn of the present century with a little focus of infection around New York, the imported Oriental pest that eliminated the chestnut spread by leaps, until today all that is left of America's once beautiful native chestnuts are a few scattered sick trees in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi. There are also a scattered few healthy trees left in northern Midwest states and on the Pacific Coast.

In the past 40 years government scientists and forest experts have been at work trying to develop a new chestnut to replace the native type.

The nuts are pleasant eating for human beings and important food for such wildlife as wild turkeys, but that is the smallest part of the story. Bark and wood are about our most important source of tanning for making leather, and the chestnut tree is useful for this as well as in places where resistance to decay is important, as in telephone posts and railroad ties.

Tourists through the Allegheny highlands and in other forested parts of this country, see many naked skeletons standing out above the woods, monuments of the great tragedy that struck the American chestnut. These dead stands of blight-killed trees are being "mined" for their wood, but their numbers grow smaller every year.

Although believed to have been spared at first, the fact finally developed that the deadly fungus disease was attacking chin-

quapins, the native shrubby or small tree species related to the chestnut. Working with some of these native small trees, with blight resistant chestnut species brought in from the Orient where the blight itself came from, and with sprouts that have sprung up from killed chestnuts, some fairly resistant hybrids have been obtained.

Within a span of years, it is expected that hybrid American-grown chestnuts may once more be available for their traditional task of stuffing the traditional bird.

Science News Letter, November 17, 1951

MEDICINE

Dandruff Traced to Lack of B Vitamin

➤ **DANDRUFF** AND an associated skin disease known as seborrheic dermatitis are due to lack of a B vitamin, pyridoxine, and can be cleared up within 72 hours by application to skin or scalp of an ointment containing the vitamin, three doctors reported at the meeting of the Central Society for Clinical Research in Chicago. The doctors reporting are A. William Schreiner and Richard W. Vilter of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and William Slinger of Rockford, Ill.

Science News Letter, November 17, 1951

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