BIOLOGY

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone

Northern Neighbors

Many terrifying tales have come down to us about the blood-thirstiness and malice of the panther, or catamount, or mountain lion, all popularly accepted names for the puma, the largest of our native American cats. Recent investigations, however, have exploded most of these, and it now appears that under ordinary circumstances the mountain lion is an arrant coward.

Not so the smaller cats, however. They are of a different breed, being all of the genus *Lynx*. The smaller species is the wildcat, or bobcat; the boast that a man can "lick his weight in wildcats" is proverbial, and a deserved compliment—to the wildcat. No hunter who really values his dogs will venture them against a wildcat.

Even less so will he venture them against the big Canada lynx. This tuft-eared pussy, with harsh bristling fur and mean yellow eyes that fairly spit fight at you, is far and away the most formidable thing of its poundage in North America. Not even a grizzly bear could lick its weight in Canada lynxes.

Not only can they sell their lives dearly when brought to bay; the lynx tribe is mighty hard to bring to bay. Their keenness of sight and adroitness of action are so proverbial that the members of the oldest scientific society now in existence, the Italian Accademia dei Lincei, proudly named themselves the "Academy of Lynxes" when they were organized several centuries ago, and bear upon their insignia the figure of one of these sharp-eyed cats.

Whenever one sees a moose, whether a mounted specimen in a museum or sportsman's trophy room, or alive in his native woods of the North, it is hard to suppress a feeling that we are looking at an animal that belongs by rights to the past. He is so portentous, so monstrous, and his strangely shapen head and even more strangely shapen horns so grotesque, that we instinctively set him back among the shaggy cave bears of the

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ETHNOLOGY

Indians' Religious Tortures

By Albert B. Reagan

The author of this article is a well known authority on Indian life and customs.

The Yaqui Indians, whose surrender to the Mexican government, ending generations of relentless hostility, was announced a few days ago, are commonly thought of as utter savages, living lives of unrelieved and unredeemed paganism. This, however, is far from being the case. In the early Spanish days, when their relations with white men were better, the tribe was visited by devoted missionaries, who made a very good beginning at converting them to Christian faith and civilized ways.

But the missionaries were compelled to leave, and during the past two centuries, as the creed has been handed down from father to son, it has been greatly distorted. By easy stages it has finally slipped into three major dance ceremonies. The most elaborate of them is the "Penitente-Matachina," though only a little less interesting and weird are the dances known as "Pascola" and "Baila de Venada."

The Penitente-Matachina ceremonies are held during the month of December until Christmas time, and during the latter part of June. At this time especially in the southern part of Sonora, down near Santa Ana, many young Indian men undergo excruciating torture annually to atone for the sins of their community, volunteering their flesh for the elevation of their people.

In each community one is selected, who, garbed only in a breech-cloth, leads a procession composed of every inhabitant of the village, and he seldom returns alive.

The Indians arm themselves with cactus, and each in turn pricks the "penitente." The more cruel the torture, the more nearly have the people of the community been forgiven for their sins during the year, they believe. The suffering subject, bleeding and generally dying, is then carried back to the Yaqui church, where protracted weird ceremonies are conducted.

This human offering is followed by the "Matachina," which lasts four days and is performed in celebration of the birth of Christ. It is a dance ceremony of great joy, for it is supposed that after a young man has been thus sacrificed the Indians should be unusually happy.

In this ceremony the Yaquis line up in two rows, with the chief of

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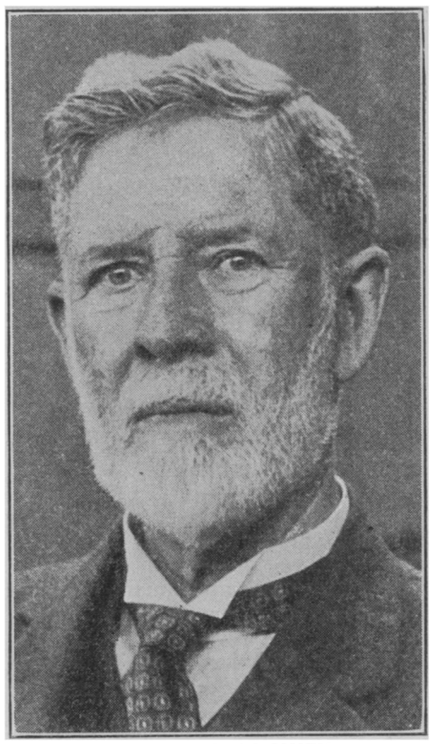
PLANT PATHOLOGY



ERWIN FRINK SMITH

Pioneer Pathologist

What Robert Koch was to the early days of human and animal bacteriology, that and more has Dr. Smith been to the bacteriology of plant diseases, in the estimation of his colleagues. One of the pioneers in this field, he has done much to bring together into close relationship the pathology of both plants and animals. His studies on the parasitic origin of plant tumors has had a significant bearing on the scientific research on cancer in animals and man.

Born at Gilbert's Mills, N. Y., in 1854, Dr. Smith received both his undergraduate and doctor's degrees at the University of Michigan. In 1889 after finishing his graduate work he came to the U. S. Department of Agriculture as pathologist and he has been there ever since. He has published many papers both in America and in leading European journals and is a recognized authority in his field. He is now in charge of the laboratory of plant pathology at the Bureau of Plant Industry and occupies an outstanding place both here and abroad in associations devoted to cancer research.

Notwithstanding the impression he has made on the field of experimental biology he has never lost sight of the humanities, so often neglected by scientists, nor of the beautiful things of the mind and the world without.