

Ancient Man in Florida

Anthropology

Digging along the edge of a country club golf course at Melbourne, Florida, Dr. J. W. Gidley, paleontologist of the U. S. National Museum, has discovered new and important evidence that men inhabited America more than 50,000 years ago.

Dr. Gidley has just returned from Florida, bringing with him an arrow point found four feet below the surface of the golf links and 20 inches down in an undisturbed deposit of Pleistocene age. A few feet away, in the same layer of compact sand, were the scattered bones of mastodon, one of the great elephants generally supposed to have disappeared from this country long before man appeared on this side of the world.

Careful study of the geologic features of the region has convinced Dr. Gidley that both the arrowhead and the prehistoric elephant were deposited there in the Pleistocene period, in the age when northern America was in the icy grip of great glaciers. There is no possibility, he said, that the arrow could have found its way into this layer of sand, at a later time, without leaving traces in the layers of swampy soil lying above the Pleistocene layer.

Immediately upon making the discovery, Dr. Gidley telegraphed to the Smithsonian Institution; and Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr., of the Bureau of American Ethnology, hurried down to Melbourne to see the arrow before it was removed.

Dr. Gidley states that his chief achievement in the expedition was the geologic study of the area which proves conclusively that the human skull which he found at Melbourne in 1925 was deposited there in Pleistocene times and could not have been intruded into the ancient layer at a later date.

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Chickens Battle Snakes

Zoology

German poultry is able to maintain its own "Watch on the Rhine" against invading enemies. The country around Geestemuende, in Hanover, has recently suffered from an outbreak of vipers. These snakes are troublesome poisonous, though their bites are not often fatal. The farmers' best snake alarms were their hens, which always set up a clatter when a viper appeared. A number of cases were reported of battles between a snake on one side and a flock of hens on the other, in which the reptiles were invariably pecked to death.

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

BY FRANK THONE

Natural History



Baltimore Oriole

When the colonists sent out by Cecil Calvert, Lord Baltimore, in 1633, landed on the beautiful shores of Chesapeake Bay, they found among the forests one of the loveliest birds they had ever seen, and because it was marked on back and breast with the colors of the coat-of-arms of their noble patron it received the name Baltimore oriole.

And the great house of Calvert need feel no shame to have such a herald. The Baltimore oriole comes as near being a perfect bird as any creature that flies with feathers. It is gracefully shaped, and its colors are the combination of richness and restraint that mark the taste of a blood-aristocrat. It loves the woods, yet does not disdain to dwell among the houses of men—provided they have enough respect for themselves to provide decently broad lawns for elm trees to grow on. And it pays ground-rent, or rather air-rent, both with charming song and industrious warfare on man's endless army of insect foes.

The nest of the Baltimore oriole is one of the miracles of bird architecture. How a pair of these birds, beginning with nothing but a forked twig swinging in the breeze and an odd lot of grasses, string and hair, can weave such a secure pocket with such utterly unsuited tools as a bird's beak and feet, is still beyond the understanding of naturalists. There is no particular system or pattern about the weaving, yet the nest fibers are so thoroughly interplaited that one could trust one's money or jewelry to such a pouch. Here the young orioles grow up with never a thought of the fear of cats, or even of thieving squirrels, that must torture birds whose instincts limit their nest-building to the comparatively stiff and accessible larger branches and limbs.

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New Pneumonia Serum

Medicine

A new serum for treating pneumonia, developed by Dr. L. D. Felton of Harvard University, has given very promising results in combatting this highly fatal disease.

The serum marks an advance in that it can be used for all four of the recognized types of pneumonia, according to Dr. Russell L. Cecil of the Bellevue Hospital, who has obtained very efficacious results from its use in the pneumonia clinic of that hospital. It works best with types one and two, the two groups that comprise the majority of pneumonia cases. The recoveries after its use with type one have been very encouraging, indeed, Dr. Cecil declared, though the deadly type three which always has had a very high death rate has proved the least amenable of any group.

Pneumonia serums used in the past have been specific for each type. Since certain laboratory procedures have to be followed out before the type from which the patient is suffering can be determined, precious time often has to be lost before the doctors know which serum to give. The Felton serum of mixed cultures can be administered on admission to the hospital and frequently a gain of many hours can be made in checking the course of the disease.

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Oldest Medical Book

Medicine

Skilled surgeons in the valley of the Nile knew more about human anatomy than their descendants of the middle ages, thousands of years later.

This is one of the surprising facts revealed by the translation of the Edwin Smith Papyrus, the oldest scientific book in the world, which has been completed by Prof. James Henry Breasted, well known Egyptologist of the University of Chicago. The manuscript is now being printed for the New York History Society, the owner of the document, by the Oxford University Press.

The papyrus is regarded as the most important document in the history of all science that has come down to us from the time before the ancient Greeks. It is remarkable in that it shows an amazing approach to the attitude of the present day scientist, in striking contrast to the long lists of mingled charms and recipes that constitute a large share of the medical papyri of ancient Egypt.

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