

## Untrustworthy Instinct

*Natural History*

WM. E. RITTER, in *The Natural History of Our Conduct* (Harcourt, Brace & Co.):

Our discussion of maladaptive activity among high-cultured peoples has taken no account of the fact that whereas human conduct among such peoples is always assumed to be consciously aimed at the attainment of welfare, in the majority of cases there is uncertainly both as to what welfare is and to what course of action will attain it.

Cultured man has, by the very fact of being cultured, many more things to do than his brute or even savage human ancestors have, and this gives him just so many more ways for overdoing, and so many more chances of doing the wrong things. For the nutritional group of activities, one of the marks of high culture is increased dependence of the individuals on knowledge, common and technical, to protect them from increased danger due to increased complexity of food materials and general nutritional conditions, such knowledge being made essential by the absence of improvement in the inherent defectiveness of the nutritional activity.

Proof of the untrustworthiness of appetite, taste, "instinct," comes from the scientific study of nutrition. Depending on taste alone, anybody is liable to eat foods which though ample as to quantity, are so deficient in some ingredients essential to complete nutrition that illness and death may result. Beri-beri, a disease common among those Orientals whose diet is rice, is a case in point. Polishing the rice to suit the taste of consumers deprives it of essential nutrient constituents. Something comparable to this occurs among all sorts of peoples. The robbing of wheat flour of some of its most important food elements by milling is a notable instance of the same sort of thing. The "new knowledge of nutrition" consists largely in discovering how far we civilized people are led by our tastes and appetites, worked upon by custom and advertising, into eating foods seriously deficient or positively injurious as to certain of their elements.

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The Diana monkey is named after the moon goddess because it has a crescent shaped white mark on its forehead.

A full-grown specimen of the Big Tree of California may bear as many as a million cones a year.

## Elegy on a Lobster

*Zoology*

FRANCES S. MILLER, in *Wellesley College News*:

Far from his native ocean's mud,  
Of friends and family bereft,  
A lobster lies within this pan—  
At least the part of him that's left.

He did not die a natural death,  
A martyr for the cause of knowledge,  
He drew through gills his final breath  
To teach me Zoo in Wellesley College.

Nor has he decent burial,  
These few remains were not  
respected,  
His shell removed, his inmost parts  
Were well inspected and dissected.

The secret chambers of his heart  
Were probed, his very nerve I stole;  
Indeed I would have torn apart,  
Could I have found it, e'en his soul.

Perhaps in lobster-paradise  
He opens wide his mouth and sings,  
His rostrum crowned with halo bright,  
His claws developed into wings.

My sketches of his "brain" and  
glands  
My only souvenirs will be.  
I'm loth to part with him for aye—  
And doubtless quite cut up is he.

Thus passes he (oh, could I too!)  
My life with him forever ceases;  
So dump him out and let him sleep  
If not in peace, at least in pieces.

*Science News-Letter, May 19, 1928*

## Advertising Congestion

*Sociology*

PROF. GEORGE BURTON HOTCHKISS, in an address before the Technical Publicity Association:

A very serious problem confronts the advertiser of today because of the approaching saturation of advertising. The problem is not dissimilar in some ways, to that of the automobile field, which is confronted by the saturation of the roadways, so that increasing production of automobiles is more or less hampered by the difficulty of finding some place to put them. Of course, there is a remedy there—that of building more highways and possibly of increasing the average speed of cars on existing highways. Those physical remedies do not so readily serve the advertiser. He is confronted with the congestion of advertising media and the solution can hardly come through the publication of new media except as those new media reach audiences that haven't been reached before.

*Science News-Letter, May 19, 1928*

## Insect Marriage Customs

*Entomology*

MAURICE MAETERLINCK, in *Mountain Paths* (Dodd Mead):

All said, the marriage-customs are dreadful and, contrary to that which happens in every other world, here it is the female of the pair that stands for strength and intelligence and also for the cruelty and tyranny which appear to be their inevitable outcome. Almost every wedding ends in the violent and immediate death of the husband. Often, the bride begins by eating a certain number of suitors. The prototype of these fantastic unions could be supplied by the Languedocian Scorpions, who, as we know, carry lobster-claws and a long tail supplied with a sting, the prick of which is extremely dangerous. They have a prelude to the festival in the shape of a sentimental stroll, claw in claw; then, motionless, with fingers still gripped, they contemplate each other blissfully, interminably; day and night pass over their ecstasy, while they remain face to face, petrified with admiration. Next, the foreheads come together and touch; the mouths—if we can give the name mouth to the monstrous orifice that opens between the claws—are joined in a sort of kiss; after which the union is accomplished, the male is transfixed with a mortal sting and the terrible spouse crunches and gobbles him up with gusto.

But the Mantis, the ecstatic insect with arms always raised in an attitude of supreme invocation, the horrible *Mantis religiosa* or Praying Mantis, does better still; she eats her husbands (for the insatiable creature sometimes consumes seven or eight in succession) while they strain her passionately to their heart. Her inconceivable kisses devour, not in a metaphorical, but in an appallingly real fashion, the ill-fated choice of her soul stomach. She begins with the head, goes down to the thorax, nor stops till she comes to the hind-legs, which she deems too tough. She then pushes away the unfortunate remains, while a new lover, who was quietly awaiting the end of the monstrous banquet, heroically steps forward to undergo the same fate.

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When the horse was introduced to the Babylonians they called the strange animal the "ass of the East."

A huge exhibition in Berlin is devoted to showing the public what science knows about nutrition and malnutrition.