

How To Keep Scraps

By EDWIN E. SLOSSON

One of our readers writes to inquire the best way to keep a scrap-book. It was lucky that the letter was sent to me instead of somebody else, because this is one of the things that I think I know and that I think most people do not know. At any rate, I can give our correspondent the three fundamental principles of the science of scrapping and let him apply them to his own and then, if the system does not work, it is not my fault. Whatever he does he should not buy a scrap-book.

The primary requisites of a useful system of scrap-keeping are, first, celerity; second, mobility; third, classification by subjects. The scrap-book in any form is practically ruled out of consideration by all three rules, for it requires some bother to paste clippings in a scrap-book even if ready gummed, and still more to take them out for rearrangement, and it separates the clippings from all matter in other forms bearing on the same subject. The data that one collects in the course of weeks or years for some article or lecture come in all forms, pamphlets, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, letters, notes and perhaps maps, diagrams and pictures. It is of the utmost importance that these be brought together. To keep

Bibliography

them in different places because they happen to be in various shapes is like classifying a library by putting the octavos in one case and the duodecimos in another, or arranging them according to the color of their binding. With books, in fact, it does not so much matter, for few of us are blest with such a large number of them that we cannot find the one we want in the dark, but scraps and clippings are more numerous, more fugitive and more valuable than books. A book that is lost can usually be replaced for a dollar or so, but an item you cut from an unknown newspaper or a note you jotted down *à la* Pope on the back of an envelope may be worth much more to you and is irrecoverable. Formerly librarians in large libraries used to despise pamphlets, while clippings were altogether beneath their notice. Nowadays they no longer despise pamphlets, they merely hate them, and they are beginning to take notice of clippings. One of the most valuable of the assets of a large daily is its "morgue," which, starting as a repository for obituary material collected in advance of the occasion for its use, has become an elaborate clipping bureau in constant requisition. In fact, it may be said that the morgue contains the live matter and the library the dead.

One rarely knows in advance just why he is collecting along a certain line; it is a sort of instinct like that of a squirrel gathering nuts for winter. It may turn out a song and it may turn out a sermon. The mind and the "scrap-book" should develop together, expanding, ramifying and rearranging until some day comes the occasion or the central thought, and the whole mass of material arrives at its conscious reason for existence. Mobilization and segregation must be continuous processes, and that is why I object to such a scattering of forces as is involved in the system used by many persons whom I otherwise respect, those who keep their notes in a card index, letters in letter files, clippings in scrap-books and pamphlets in boxes.

The best way of keeping together all the material on a given subject, "printed or written or partly printed and partly written," as the lawyers say, is to put it in manila envelopes and these in a vertical letter file. The envelopes should be large enough to hold typewriter paper unfolded, that is, about 9 by 11½ inches. Some will prefer the folders without sides, such as are generally used in filing letters, instead of envelopes, as being a little easier of access. If clippings alone are filed (*Turn to next page*)

New Pterosaur Found

Paleontology

A fossilized wing-bone of a pterosaur, recently sent from Oregon to the U. S. National Museum for examination, has given the first indication of how these great flying lizards of dinosaur days lightened their bones to combine a maximum of strength with a minimum of ballast. Birds, the most successful of modern flying vertebrates, have thin-walled, hollow bones with air spaces inside, on the plan of the tubular metal braces and struts of the larger airplanes. The pterosaurs, this specimen shows, had not evolved so highly perfected a device. Their bones were not completely hollow, but the cavity was filled with a very light, spongy webwork of bony tissue, which served as cross-braces to strengthen them.

All bones of flying lizards hitherto found have been crushed flat, Dr. J. W. Gidley, paleontologist of the Museum, explained. This gives the present specimen (*Turn to next page*)

Man's Origin Sought in China

Anthropology

The footsteps of Marco Polo will be followed by Prof. George B. Cressey, Shanghai College geologist, who is now en route to Kansu and Inner Mongolia, where he will study the ancient past of those remote districts of China.

New evidence of the origin of man may be unearthed by Prof. Cressey, although his principal studies will be upon the climate of Asia during the past ten millions of years.

Whether the people of the overcrowded plains of China will be able to emigrate to the great expanses of empty land in Mongolia, as some writers have urged, may be determined by agricultural studies to be made by Professor Cressey.

The area to be explored lies in Western Inner Mongolia, north of the Great Wall from Kansu. Except for irrigated strips along the Yellow River all of this region is a desert.

In the center of the area lie the great Alashan range of mountains which rise to over 10,000 feet and divide the desert into two distinct regions; the Alashan desert on the west and the Ordos on the east. The Ordos includes the district within the great northward bend of the Yellow River outside the Great Wall.

Although an ancient Mongolian trade route crosses this district, it has seldom been followed by foreigners. Except for the few trails most of the Ordos and Alashan is quite unknown, both geographically and geologically. Marco Polo crossed the area on his journey to China, and during much of the summer the expedition will be following in his footsteps. The Chinese city of Ninghsia and the Mongol trade center of Wang Yeh Fu will be the headquarters for work.

"During the Glacial Period in Europe and North America, Asia was free from ice," (*Turn to next page*)

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a long envelope, about 4 by 9½ inches, holding a column, is more convenient. The vertical filing cases may be obtained in sections and expanded as desired. Or you can make your own box to fit the envelopes and get some kind friend to pyrograph or carve it with your book-plate. The envelopes may be saved from the mails fast enough if you do not care to buy them.

The best system of classification and arrangement for most people is none at all. When you cut a paragraph from a paper or copy a quotation or note a reference or invent an epigram, run your hand along the top of the envelopes, reading their contents until you instinctively find the one where it belongs, drop it in and write the title or key-word of it on the envelope. If it does not seem to be irresistibly attracted by any of the existing envelopes, do not hesitate to give it one of its own and it will not long remain lonely. Hundreds of envelopes and thousands of scraps can be kept accessible at a moment's notice. The only points to be observed are to list every item, however small, on the envelope unless already covered by a title there, and to scratch it out when you remove it. A slipping on divorces in France would be safely lost in an envelope marked "Sociology, continued," but if it is in

an envelope with "Divorces in France" written on it you can find it no matter what its companions may be. When you get hold, no matter how, of a good story, illustrating, say, partisanship in politics, do not put it into an envelope marked "Humorous III," but in one containing some other political material, however serious, and scribble "Party Politics (Anecdote)" on the outside; then when you are called upon suddenly for a toast, as you usually are, there are the story and its point side by side. But don't forget to mark on any clipping the name and date of the periodical or paper from which it was taken, so you can cite it if necessary.

The Science News Letter is planned primarily for clipping, for the news articles are so printed that any of them can be cut out without damage to any other and each bears the source, date and department of science. This classification is based upon that of the Library of Congress, which has come into common use in this country since the Government prints index cards of all the new books. An "Outline Scheme of Classes" of the Classification of the Library of Congress may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, for ten cents.

If your local library uses the Dewey Decimal Classification you may find this preferable for your own files. We print occasionally in the SCIENCE NEWS LETTER the outline of the main classes and key letters or figures of both the Dewey and the Library of Congress system.

Of course, if you have nothing to do but keep a scrap-book, or if you have a private secretary or a large family of unusually careful and helpful children, you can work out your own system of classification and index and cross index *ad libitum*. But unless you have the stamina to keep up a diary do not undertake a card index.

We do not say that the old-fashioned scrap-book has not its uses. You will find it convenient, for example, to keep one, as handsomely bound as you please, as a sort of family record, for such kindly references as it has pleased the press from time to time to bestow on you and yours. You may put into it the praise your book or your speech received, the biographical sketches of yourself, the banquets you have attended, and all such memorabilia, for the purpose of handing it down to posterity, for you may be sure that your grandchildren will pore over it as frequently and lovingly as you do over your grandfather's letter book.

Science News-Letter, July 28, 1928

Man's Origin Sought in China—*Continued*

Professor Cressey explained. "Mongolia, furthermore, apparently had a much more moist climate. This problem is of more than theoretical interest for climate controls vegetation, and thus influences animal life. Since Asia seems to have been the center of human evolution, climate throws light on the habitability of this area. The record of climate is written in sediments and erosion cycles, and the preliminary studies made in 1924 indicate that this area contains critical information. While no direct search is to be made for ancient man, it is important to note that the best evidence of early man so far found in Central Asia is on the borders of the Ordos.

"The desert is the geologist's paradise. All the agents of erosion and transportation are actively at work, for, despite the limited rainfall with which they carry on their work, there is no protecting vegetation. Geologic processes are demonstrated on every hand, often in text-book perfection.

"Geologically the map is white, and

large areas are geographically unknown as well. Prejevalsky and Obruchev, two Russians, visited the region sixty years ago, and most of our knowledge dates back to them."

Professor Cressey has over 2000 miles of travel in Inner and Outer Mongolia to his credit. Both the Ordos and the Alashan were visited by Professor Cressey in 1924 on the return from an expedition to Koko Nor in Tibet. There was no opportunity for detailed studies at that time, but hasty examination indicated several promising areas. Since that time the few available reports of earlier explorers have been examined and definite projects mapped out.

An attempt to continue work in 1926 resulted in an attack by brigands before the area was reached. Mongolia itself is characteristically peaceful, but the Chinese borderlands are often in an unsettled condition. Reports indicate that conditions along the route which it is now proposed to follow are quiet.

Science News-Letter, July 28, 1928

New Pterosaur—*Continued*

unique interest and importance. A further note of interest is found in the fact that this pterosaur comes from Oregon, and represents the farthest west of all flying reptile finds to date.

The find consists of the humerus or upper arm-bone and two vertebrae. The humerus is about eight inches long and one and one-half inches in diameter at its ends. At the slenderest part of the middle of the shaft it is three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

The upper arm-bone accounted for a relatively small part of the wingspan in the flying reptiles. The forearm bone was somewhat elongated, and what corresponded to the finger-bones of one of the fingers were greatly exaggerated. Only one of the fingers supported the wing; the others were short and apparently of use in clinging or climbing.

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There are high mountains in the Sahara Desert.