



Hell-Diver

THE GREBE gets its infernal nickname not in mockery or derogation, but as a compliment. It is the champion submarine of freshwater birds, the "down-deep-divin'est, long-under-stay-in'est" of feathered swimmers. Wary and easily alarmed, it disappears in a split second, leaving scarcely a ripple to show where it has been. And if you can guess where it is coming up, you are better than any hawk or hunter. For it has a habit of staying under until you think it has metamorphosed into a fish, and then popping up for a look-see a hundred yards away. And if it doesn't like the look of things, it is under again before you are sure it is there.

The hell-diver spends its time so little in the air and so much in the water that it has given up almost all of that very important flying organ, its tail. But its twin propellers, its feet, are ideally adapted for work in the water. Instead of being fully webbed, as a duck's are, it has a separate web for each toe. This makes its feet "feather" more easily than those of a duck, and also permits it to have longer toes with freer movement.

These large feet act more or less like snowshoes when the bird goes ashore on soft mud, which it frequently does. It seems to like this kind of terrain, and builds its semi-floating nest of reeds on the oozy margin of its stream or pond. This habit has earned the grebe its other nickname of mudhen.

The hell-diver is one of the most widely distributed of American birds. It is found all over both North and South America, excepting only the very extremities of the continents.

Science News Letter, July 25, 1931

The United States' forest acreage has shrunk from 800,000,000 acres to 140,000,000.

MEDICINE

Laughing Weakness Treated With Potent Chinese Drug

A SUCCESSFUL method of treating a strange, serio-comic disease has just been reported to the American Medical Association by Dr. John B. Doyle and Dr. Luman E. Daniels of the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn.

Some people who suffer from this disease fall down when they laugh or get excited. This would be funny if the cause were not a serious disease and if this behavior were not a symptom of it. Physicians call this symptom cataplexy. Suddenly, when anything arouses the patient's emotions, his muscles become weak, and he cannot stand.

Another symptom seen in this disease is an irresistible desire to sleep. The afflicted person may be conducting business, he may be driving an automobile, it makes no difference what. He must sleep, and he does, whatever the consequences to himself and others may be. The name for the entire disease, including both the weakness and the sleepiness, is narcolepsy.

Not Sleeping Sickness

This is not to be confused with the disease generally known in this country as sleeping sickness, or lethargic encephalitis, a different thing, in which the brain, to the trained eye of the pathologist, has an abnormal appearance.

In most cases of narcolepsy no cause for the condition has been found. Consequently, in the fifty years since the disease was identified and named, many treatments have been tried, none of which have had very striking success, unless, perhaps, the glandular treatment of Dr. J. Ratner and of Dr. Beyermann, two German physicians.

Recently, however, Drs. Doyle and Daniels have employed ephedrine, a vegetable drug, introduced into this country less than ten years ago by a Chinese physician, Dr. K. K. Chen. Six patients whom Drs. Doyle and Daniels have treated, and two who were treated after their method by Dr. H. A. Collins, have been relieved of symptoms, most of them completely.

The discoverers of this treatment do not claim that they have a cure for this disease, for the patients must continue to take the medicine, and some possibly would have to take more of it than would be good for them, for the drug is powerful.

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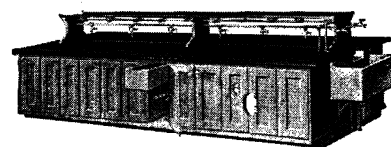
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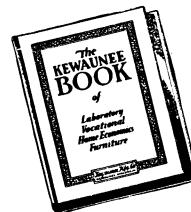
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Chemistry Table No. D-794

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