



ZOOLOGY



Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

KIPLING celebrated a friend of his, a mongoose named Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, an active, restless, rather quarrelsome little fellow who ruled the house and kept it free of rats and snakes. This relative of the weasel is a much-appreciated house animal in India and elsewhere in the East, where he performs the functions assumed with us by the cat. Only Tabby doesn't undertake snakes, which are said to be Rikki's favorite dish. He has the further advantage of being able to follow his vermin prey into many cracks and holes where the wider-bodied cat could not squeeze herself.

But if he has more than the household virtues of a cat, Rikki also has more than her vices. He was transplanted to the West Indies many years ago, and like most immigrants who take hold at all he has thriven better in his new home than in his old. There he has developed into an inveterate chicken-thief and bird killer; so much so that in parts of the island he threatens to wipe out the native bird population.

Under his more classical name of ichneumon, Rikki was known to the Greeks and Romans, at least to such of them as travelled in Egypt. They propagated the story about him, that he kept down the crocodile population, in spite of his diminutive size, by the simple expedient of finding their eggs in the sand and eating them. Modern zoologists disagree on this point.

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Wall paintings showing ancient Mound Builder Indians in full regalia and color are installed in the Archaeological Museum at Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass.

ENTOMOLOGY

Corn Acreage Reduction May Reduce Pests

REDUCING corn acreage in accordance with the program of the Department of Agriculture may bring the farmer indirect benefits in addition to the promised Government pay-check. He stands to get rid of at least a part of the insect pests that prey on the roots of his corn. How this may come about is explained by J. H. Bigger of the Illinois Natural History Survey.

In ordinary farm practice in the Corn Belt, corn is planted two or more years in succession in the same fields, and then other crops, especially clover, alfalfa or other legumes, are introduced into the rotation program. The succession of corn immediately after corn gives the insect enemies that are left in the soil from the previous year's crop altogether too good feeding, until the introduction of a crop whose roots they cannot eat checks their multiplication.

In several rotation experiments de-

scribed by Mr. Bigger, it was demonstrated that long successions of corn encouraged root-feeding insects, while short successions kept their numbers under control. He feels that when the farmer is pledged to produce less corn he will give a more prominent place in his rotation schedule to legume crops, thereby cheating his enemies out of their accustomed easy feeding.

A further advantage that will accrue to the farmer is the smaller quantity of seed he will need when he does plant corn. When an insect-infested field is planted, a certain excess of seed has to be put into the ground, to allow for the killing that the enemy insects can be counted on to do. This extra seed of course costs extra money. If he does not need to pay this tribute to the insect pests the farmer can keep this money in his pocket.

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•First Glances at New Books

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Astronomy

SUNS AND WORLDS—W. H. Steavenson—*Black*, 104 p., \$1. This is an excellent little introduction to astronomy, an addition to the How-&-Why Series edited by Gerald Bullett. Dr. Steavenson, a medalist of the Royal Astronomical Society and past president of the British Association, tells his story in a simple, straightforward style that might well be emulated by other scientists writing for popular consumption.

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Education

YEAR-BOOK OF THE NEW YORK INSTITUTE FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE BLIND, 1933, 51 p., free. This year-book should find a wider circle of readers than year-books and annual reports usually get. The Century of Progress in the education of the blind which it pictures, both verbally and photographically, will probably be an eye-opener to many of the seeing public who have not yet learned, for instance, that all games, track meets and dancing classes are part of the regular activities at schools for the blind as well as at schools for the seeing.

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Ethnology-Technology

NAVAHO WEAVING—Charles Avery Amsden—*Fine Arts Press*, 261 p., 123 pl., \$7.50. A very fine book, covering the subject of Navaho weaving technic, dyes, and the uses of Navaho textiles, and following with a history of Navaho weaving from "the first sheep" down to a prediction of what the future holds for the Indian weavers. The illustrations, many in color, include photographs of more than a hundred old, authentically dated blankets. While a specialized subject can rarely hope for a wide circle of general readers, this book is sufficiently attractive, so that any one who has ever taken a second look at an Indian blanket would find much of interest inside the very decorative covers.

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Paleontology

A POPULAR GUIDE TO THE NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE FOSSIL VERTEBRATES OF NEW YORK—Roy L. Moodie—*Univ. of the State of New York*, 122 p., 49 illustrations, 45c. This appears as New York State Museum Handbook No. 12.

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