NATURE RAMBLINGS
HORTICULTURE

by Frank Thone

Cranberries

THE approach of Thanksgiving keeps cranberries well to the fore in all the shops and market stalls. These bright berries, attractive to the eye before they are cooked and even more attractive to the palate afterwards, maintain their popularity with generation after generation of Americans, and even a stiffly rising price scale does not prevent ever-increasing consumption.

Cranberries are as American as the noble bird they supplement and garnish. Our European forebears knew them not, but learned to appreciate them under the tutelage of the Indians. Used as they were to having gooseberry sauce with the Christmas goose, they very quickly found that cranberry sauce with the native American turkey was if anything an improvement on their traditional Old-World *pièce de résistance*. And turkey with cranberry sauce we have had ever since.

Until the present generation, cranberries were largely a gift of Nature. The cranberry pickers went out into the bogs in the low-lying coastal country and gathered the berries from the wild bushes wherever they could find them. But with an increasing population and a climbing demand for the berries, it became worth while to cultivate them, and bog-land became berry-farm land.

A cranberry farm is one of the most anomalous plantations in the world. Elsewhere flooding of a crop spells disaster, but here it is often done deliberately. Cranberries are not flooded for the purpose of irrigation, as in the semiarid West. They are covered with water to keep them warm. Freezing is fatal to ripe cranberries, as any storekeeper or housekeeper can tell you. So when frost threatens at the time of harvest, the cranberry farmers simply open the floodgates and shield their crop under a blanket of water until the danger is past.

METEOROLOGY

Stratosphere Balloons Will Go Up to Study Storms

STRATOSPHERE - seeking balloons, going up to study atmospheric conditions 15 miles above the earth, will court stormy weather instead of avoiding it, when the second mass flight launched by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology takes off from Lambert Field airport at St. Louis, Mo., in the near future. They will wait for word of an approaching storm area, and then hop off.

It is expected that every balloon in the flight will be wrecked; indeed it is even arranged that they shall burst. But there will be no human casualties. The 35 big gas bubbles in rubber will all be pilotless. They will carry only featherweight meteorographs, which are instruments that automatically record temperature, humidity and air pressure.

When released, the balloons will not be fully inflated, to allow for expansion as they mount toward the 15-mile altitude they are designed to attain. Finally, when the thin rubber can stretch no farther, the balloons will burst. The meteorographs will then float downward on parachutes, and the slight shock of their landing will be broken by the light cages of split bamboo in which they are enclosed.

Prof. C. G. A. Rossby, of M. I. T. states that of the 38 meteorographs sent aloft on the first mass flight last February, all but two were safely returned, their valuable records intact.

MEMORANDUM ABOUT CHRISTMAS:

What a friendly thing it is to say "MERRY CHRISTMAS."

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WD/TR   Editor.

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