

MINERALOGY

International Mineral Control May Check War

► INTERNATIONAL knowledge of where minerals are, and international control of their distribution, may serve as a brake on the waging of war, suggested Prof. C. K. Leith, University of Wisconsin geologist.

Realization of the vital military importance of certain key minerals is at present causing some of the nations that have them to be very reluctant to let go of them. Some of the possessing powers have gone so far as to nationalize their critical mineral resources and place an embargo on exports. Other controls are less drastic.

Admitting that "as yet, anything approaching agreement on any form of international control of minerals remains in the field of wishful thinking," Dr. Leith nevertheless expressed the conviction that such controls will eventually come, and he sees a worldwide trend toward it, regardless of political ideologies or conditions of war or peace.

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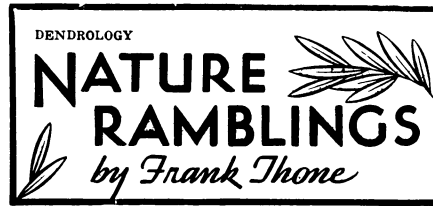


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Neglected Natives

► WITH AUTUMN well advanced, and most leaves fallen, now is a good time to look about and take stock of the offerings of our native trees and shrubs. There is a great abundance, but nobody seems to want more than a nibble of it.

A peculiarly American tree, at least so far as edible fruits are concerned, is the hawthorn. Some of our species produce soft-fleshed haws that are really a unique experience in tangy taste; yet except for omnivorous small boys, and a very little local jam-making, they are neglected altogether. It should be worth some patient plant breeder's time to work on this fruit with an eye to larger size, and perhaps better resistance to worminess.

Every year our wild crabapple trees produce immense crops of fruit, practically none of which gets eaten. There is good enough cause for this neglect, for these wild crabapples are very hard, and overloaded with puckery tannin besides. Yet our prize Jonathans and Wealthies and Grimes Goldens came from Asiatic ancestral stock that was not much better to begin with.

Our wild persimmons really are appreciated, though never systematically cultivated. When American orchardists decided to grow persimmons, they sent to Japan for trees that produce fruits that get to be as big as baseballs, though the flavor is scarcely equal to that of our native species.

American wild grapes have fared rather better. Several native species, notably in the East and Southeast, are really quite good in their wild state; with selection and intercrossings they have provided such standard cultivated

stocks as Concord, Scuppernong and Catawba. Even European viticulturists have not been too proud to introduce American strains into their hybrids.

Only one native American nut tree, the pecan, has won its way into large-scale cultivation. Its botanical second cousin, the shellbark hickory, has meat that is at least as good; but there are no shellbark "orchards." Nuts with thin, easily cracked shells seem to be the decisive factor, for we also find our native black walnut, with delicious meat but a case-hardened shell, left uncultivated while thousands of acres on the West Coast are planted to the English walnut, which is easily opened but not nearly as good eating.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Science and Art Are Allies, Not Competitors

► POETS, ESSAYISTS, humanists generally should lay aside their traditional aversion to exact science, an astronomer told the Princeton bi-centennial conference on the humanities in Princeton.

Dr. Harlow Shapley, director of Harvard College Observatory and president of Science Service, confessing that he had at one time aimed at a literary instead of a scientific career, declared that the sciences and the humanistic tradition are not too far apart, "if we lop off or ignore at one end the unthinking mechanist and at the other end the unthinking dilettanti."

"The sympathetic approach by the non-scientist toward the contents and goals of science should pay well in units of philosophic comprehensiveness as well as in artistic material," Dr. Shapley said.

Our introspective artist should reorient himself in the content of present human knowledge, Dr. Shapley argued. He should contemplate deeply, not superficially, "the vibrant oscillations in the electron tubes, the geometries of protein structure, the sculpture of beetle backs, and the majesty of the cosmic processes that play with bursting stars, with radiation that penetrates bones and iron, with time-scales for galactic evolution that tempt the unwary to speculate on creation."

The artist would then find, Dr. Shapley assured the conference, that modern science is his cooperative ally, and not his heartless opponent.

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