



Wolves

➤ ACCORDING to ancient legend, a pair of infant twin boys were thrown into the river. A she-wolf rescued the pair, nursed them, and raised them to young manhood. One of the boys founded a city which survives to this day.

The boys were Romulus and Remus. And the city was Rome.

According to another fable, a little girl wearing a red cloak traveled through the woods to see her grandmother. When she arrived, she found not grandma but a wolf dressed in grandma's cap.

The little girl, of course, was Little Red Ridinghood.

Of the two sides of the wolf's nature which are contrasted so sharply in these old stories, most people would say the second contained the truth of the matter.

However, the Romulus-Remus story, preposterous though it be in reality, has its adherents, even today. Some biologists who have observed wolves closely are of the opinion that the domestic life of a wolf is a shining example of love, kindness and consideration.

Wolf marriages are believed to last a lifetime, and the solicitude shown the young by both parents is supposed to be of the tenderest. When the pups are young and

sportive, and their horse-play overflows into the vicinity of papa wolf, he does not send them sprawling with a snarling backhand blow. Instead, he patiently gets up and moves out of the arena of juvenile rambunctiousness.

This sort of paternal care and thoughtfulness, which extends into the areas of feeding and training the young how to hunt, is a far cry from such philanthropies as rescuing human young from rivers and tending to their every need till the human can fend for himself.

But the two myths, with their contradictory views of this wild relative of the dog, do serve to underscore a controversy about wolves that persists to this day.

Although in great stretches of the United States wolves have been all but exterminated, in the timbered expanses of Canada and Alaska, they survive in considerable numbers. Since they are predators who live by killing wild game (or domestic stock where they can) the northern wolf population exacts a constant toll of mountain-sheep, moose, caribou, and other animals.

The controversy is between one group of conservationists who believe that man must go in and kill the wolves with planes, poisons, guns, and traps to save the game from extinction. The other group maintain that wolves exercise a weeding-out effect, killing the stragglers, leaving the most fit. It is the age-old disagreement, with a new bitterness. Romulus and Ridinghood can't both be right.

Science News Letter, February 18, 1950

MEDICINE

Clue to Heart Disease Found in Body Build

➤ THE man who is a mesomorph is the type most prone to heart disease. Least likely to have an attack of coronary heart disease is the ectomorph.

A mesomorph is of medium stature with broad and bulky limbs and features. Ectomorphic persons are the linear, or bean pole, type.

The finding that mesomorphs are more prone to heart diseases such as coronary thrombosis comes from a three-year research project at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, under the direction of Dr. Menard Gertler assisted by Dr. Stanley Garn.

Though wider, shorter and with a larger chest diameter than the normal group, the coronary heart patients were no more overweight than the control group of patients without coronary disease.

Fatness, the scientists therefore concluded, is not an important factor in the cause of heart disease.

The heart group also differed from the normal in having a high content of cholesterol (a fat-like substance) and uric acid in the blood serum. An inter-relationship of these and other chemicals in the blood serum, rather than any specific chemical, is believed by the scientists to be eventually responsible for coronary heart disease.

Underfunctioning of adrenal and thyroid glands was found in many of the heart disease patients.

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ENGINEERING

Electronic Computers Aid Better Use of Water

➤ ELECTRONIC computers will tell us some of the answers needed for better use of our water supply, Dr. Arthur T. Ippen predicted.

These answers will be available for use while the water such as a flood crest is still flowing, not days or weeks afterwards as would be the case if conventional methods were used.

Under a special grant from the Research Corporation of New York, Dr. Ippen and Henry M. Paynter, Jr., of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, are finding instant answers to many problems of flowing water.

They can determine, for instance, the rise in a river below a reservoir when a flood crest enters the reservoir from above. This calculation requires taking into account the size and shape of the reservoir and its outlet as well as the amount of water in the crest. Such a detailed study can not be made quickly enough by conventional methods.

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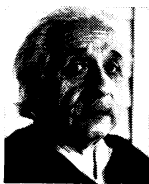
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