



Giants of Yesteryear

► WHEN we think about dinosaurs, most of us picture a monster rearing up taller than the treetops, opening a mouth like a cellar door armed with teeth like railroad spikes. Bring that monster down out of the trees until he is able to walk under the branches, and the picture will not be far wrong.

Diplodocus, biggest of the dinosaurs, was the biggest land animal that ever lived. Only some of the modern whales cheat

him of the title of biggest of all earth's inhabitants.

An average diplodocus stood 12 feet high at the hips, and from the tip of his nose to the remote end of his tail he measured more than 80 feet. That is, he was five or six times as long as the family sedan. With the parking problem what it is today, it is more than well that he isn't around today. Even in dummy form, dinosaurs have totally disrupted traffic when museums have moved them from one place to another through city streets.

Diplodocus was a tame creature as prehistoric brutes went. He was the prototype of a whole group of plant-eating creatures of the same general size and shape. These were enormously heavy-bodied animals, probably unable to rise on their hind legs at least more than momentarily. They ate immense quantities of the rank vegetation which grew in their marshy homes. They were stagnantly sluggish and unbelievably stupid.

Their relatively tiny heads held brains that were mere knobs on the end of their spinal cords. For control of their leg and tail muscles and regulation of their vast digestive organs, they had what is termed a "second brain" in the spine at the junction of the hip girdle. This was an enlargement in the spinal cord making a mass of nervous tissue actually larger than the brains in the head.

Just what proportion of all dinosaurs were flesh-eaters is hard to say. There must have been many carnivores, however. The most typical were fashioned on the general lines of the tyrannosaur, and were much more highly developed critters than the vegetarians.

Tyrannosaurs had the biped habit of walking on their hind legs fairly well developed. Their short, claw-armed front legs were probably used for holding their prey while their wide, powerful jaws, bristling with sharp teeth, sought for throat or spinal column.

One of these flesh-eating saurians had a short, blunt horn perched, rhinoceros-fashion, on his nose. It was probably not much more than an ornament, for a weapon such as this would be puny alongside the great battery of teeth. But it served to distinguish him from his fellows, and gave him the name Ceratosaurus, which means "horned saurian."

Science News Letter, January 20, 1951

MEDICINE

New Drug from Soil Gives Dramatic Results

► NEOMYCIN, new drug from the soil, is proving "dramatically effective" in wiping out disease germs from the human body. This was shown in treatment of 10 patients with infections, chiefly of the urinary tract, which had resisted treatment with penicillin, aureomycin, chloramphenicol and streptomycin.

The results in these cases are reported

by a four-man team of medical scientists (JOURNAL, AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, Jan. 13). They are Drs. Garfield G. Duncan, Carl F. Clancy, John R. Wolgamot and Barkley Beidleman of Philadelphia.

Neomycin is thus living up to the hopes of its discoverers, Drs. Selman A. Waksman and Hubert A. Lechevalier of Rutgers University who discovered it a year ago in a search for a drug that would stop germs resistant to streptomycin and other antibiotics.

Dr. Duncan and associates consider it significant that in no case in which germs were eradicated by neomycin did they return after the drug was stopped. Some kinds of germs, however, showed signs suggesting they might develop resistance to neomycin.

Only one of the 10 patients showed signs of any poisoning from the drug. These consisted of impaired hearing and a change in blood chemistry. The hearing improved when the drug was stopped but the blood change remained.

Science News Letter, January 20, 1951

CLIMATOLOGY

Sun Is Making Earth's Climate Warmer

► THE SUN'S heat reaching earth is greater than it was two decades ago and the Smithsonian Institution says that while the increase is only a quarter of one percent:

"In light of the enormous amount of solar radiation falling on the earth, it means enough extra heat to have affected the climate to an observable degree."

Dr. Alexander Wetmore, Smithsonian secretary, reported solar-constant values to the Smithsonian Board of Regents. Measurements were made on the summit of Mt. Montezuma, Chile.

Other evidence has accumulated of climatic changes in various localities over the earth, the report points out. On the whole, these changes indicate that average temperatures have increased somewhat over the past century, with an accelerated increase in recent years.

Science News Letter, January 20, 1951

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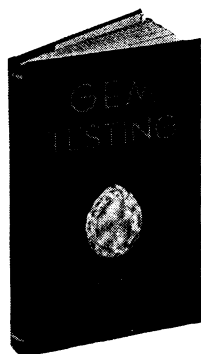
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