Record Meteor

Astronomy

The 70-ton meteor reported from South Africa is the world's largest actually discovered, though it is probably dwarfed by the one which many years ago caused the famous Meteor Crater in Arizona. This is the opinion of Dr. George P. Merrill, meteor expert of the U. S. National Museum. The great meteor which fell in the Yenissei Province of Siberia on June 30, 1908, was also probably much larger, but as yet the main part of neither of these has been located. Another huge crater, due to a meteor that fell some time in the past, was discovered in the Pamir, in central Asia, near Afghanistan. This latter crater is a conical pit 200 feet in diameter and 33 feet deep.

The 1908 Siberian meteor is probably the largest that has ever struck the earth. The region of the fall is over a mile in diameter in a marshy region. The ground is pitted with deep funnels from 50 to 100 feet in diameter, so that probably the meteorite, with a weight estimated at half a million tons, burst to pieces, bombarding the earth with fragments. At the towns of Kerensk and Ilimsk, 250 miles away, great detonations were heard and pillars of smoke and fire were seen. Railroad officials at Kansk, 400 miles distant, felt the air wave and heard a roaring sound, while the seismographs at Irkutsk, 900 miles away, detected the vibration of the earth when it hit.

Though no human being happened to be in its path, one herd of 1,500 reindeer belonging to a farmer was annihilated. Only a few scorched carcasses remained. Houses were badly damaged, and metal utensils were melted. Trees on surrounding hills were scorched and knocked over. An expedition sent out by the Soviet Government studied the general character of the region. Later borings will be made for pieces of the actual meteorite.

This is the first authenticated instance of a meteorite that did damage to man or animals. It is fortunate that it fell in such a sparsely settled region, and not in a large city, like New York or London.

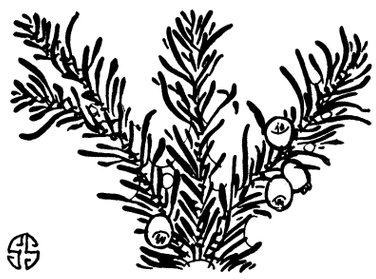
The South African meteor is reported to have been found at Otjihaene, near the head of the Grootfontein railway in the northeastern part of Southwest Africa. Imbedded in soft limestone, its approximate size is 10 by 10 by 4 feet.

Science News-Letter, March 23, 1929

Nature Ramblings

By Frank Thone

Natural History



Yew

"What of the bow? The bow was made in England,
"Of true wood, of yew wood, the wood of English bows."

To those of us who were nourished on the robust romantic fiction of the nineteenth century, the word "yew" is English rather than American; it brings up pictures of an old bowyer shaving at a seasoned stave from the parish hedge, and the terrible hail of arrows sped by the English archers at Agincourt. And indeed the yew as a tree is English and European rather than American, for the native species of yew is confined to the northern fringe of states and never reaches the proportions of more than a straggling shrub. Even the American yew is mainly a British-American plant, for its principal range is in Canada, and its botanical name is *Taxus canadensis*

The yew hedges popular in some parts of the United States are not of the native species, but of the stiffer-stemmed European yew. Though admirably adapted for hedge purposes, its use as such is in part an interesting anachronism; for the cultivation of yew hedges was encouraged in England in the first place as a means of insuring a good supply of the long, tough-fibered, springy bow-staves that served England so well in the heroic days of the Plantagenet kings. The hedges outlived their utilitarian days, and were transplanted to the new world by the early colonists.

In the sentimental "language of flowers" of a past generation, the yew was considered the plant of penitence, probably because of the dark green of its foliage and its frequent use as a hedge around churchyards.

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Earthquakes are most frequent in September.

Infantile Paralysis Cure

Hygiene

The best hope of curing the paralysis and serious crippling which follow an attack of poliomyelitis, or infantile paralysis, lies in early preventive measures, Dr. Lloyd W. Aycock of the Harvard Medical School declared in an analysis of the disease. This means that treatment must be begun before the nerve cells have been destroyed. Hence the plea physicians are making for early diagnosis of the disease.

"The paralysis is due to the destruction of the nerve cells in the spinal cord which govern the movement of muscles," said Dr. Aycock. "When these nerve cells are destroyed, the muscle with which they are connected loses entirely its power to function. It is like a telephone which may be in perfect order itself but which cannot function without a wire leading to it from the telephone exchange."

Once the paralysis has occurred, it is too late to cure it, although patient treatment and care and exercise can do much for the affected muscles. The paralysis is practically always preceded by certain definite symptoms. It is during this pre-paralytic stage, before the nerves have been destroyed, that there is a chance of cure.

Serum from the blood of persons who have passed through an attack of the disease is (*Turn to next page*)

Survey Confirms Hoover

Hygiene

President Hoover's inaugural address statements on public health have been confirmed by the survey just made of the health services in Cattaraugus County, N. Y., and reported by Dr. Reginald M. Atwater, county health officer.

The President pointed out that many sections of our country and many groups of citizens suffer from diseases, the eradication of which are mere matters of administration and moderate expenditures. The returns are a thousand-fold in economic benefits and infinitely more in the prevention of suffering and the securing of human happiness, he said.

In Cattaraugus County a health program similar to that described by the President has been carried on for six years with the aid of the Milbank Memorial Fund. The results are found in lowered death rates from certain diseases, (*Turn to next page*)

Infantile Paralysis—*Cont'd*

the one remedy at present available for treating the disease in the preparalytic stage.

Mothers are always pretty much doctors to their children, Dr. Aycock said, and while they cannot hope to make a diagnosis of this disease unaided, they can learn to suspect its presence so as to call for medical aid in time.

The onset of the disease is usually abrupt, with fever, headache and stomach and intestinal upset and the child is drowsy and wants to be let alone. The child is usually more prostrated than usual with the degree of fever, which is generally not over 102 degrees Fahrenheit. An anxious expression of the face, tremors and twitchings of the muscles and a sort of uncertainty in movement of the arms and legs are characteristic of this disease in the early stages.

The most suggestive sign is stiffness of the spinal column and neck. The latter will be held rigidly and often the child cannot sit up comfortably without propping himself up on his arms.

Every stiff neck is by no means an indication of infantile paralysis, Dr. Aycock emphasized. The stiff neck of this disease is a rather special one. But if the mother finds such symptoms, she should at least suspect the disease and have the matter further investigated.

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Health Survey—*Cont'd*

in lower infant death rates, in better school health and in the improved facilities throughout the community for the protection of the health of each individual living there.

Most important of all is the new attitude of the public toward health, both public and personal. Now the people of Cattaraugus County are beginning to realize that prevention of disease is really better than cure.

"A hundred years hence our generation will seem to have been remarkably slow to realize this fundamental fact," Dr. Atwater declared.

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A baggage car for automobiles has been added to a fast California train to enable travelers to take their cars with them conveniently.

After a severe storm last winter the Ashtabula Lighthouse on Lake Erie was encased in a solid mass of ice two to five feet in thickness.

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