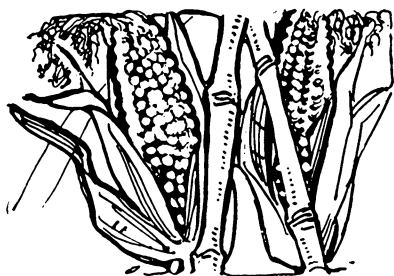




AGRONOMY



Pretty Corn

CURIOS, how long farmers insisted on raising merely "pretty" corn, rather than corn that would give them the highest possible yield per acre.

For two or three whole generations after the first sod-breaking plow was stuck through the tough roots of the grass of ages on the upland prairies of Illinois and Iowa, farmers thought of corn in terms of the handsomest individual ear. In their county and state fair contests, they had the standard types gradually worked out and finally firmly established for them: so many inches long, so many in diameter, so much for depth of grain, so much for diameter of cob; grains neatly turned over butt, as neatly filling up the tip. An array of "points" as formidable as that faced by "bench" dogs or chickens—and as formal.

That these big, artistic-looking ears did not necessarily give the farmer most bushels for the labor and money he spent on each acre seems never to have occurred to him—certainly not to the corn judges at the fairs or to the seedsmen in the towns. The big ear, not the big yield, was what counted.

Then there came upon the scene a young farm paper editor, son and grandson of other editors of the same paper. He had been to college, had heard of the basic discoveries of the Austrian monk-scientist Mendel, of the experiments of the Danish plant breeder, Johannsen, of the pioneer work of the American geneticist Shull. He took up certain experiments in corn breeding where Shull had laid them down, crossing and re-crossing scores of the most unpromising-looking "pure lines" of corn, with only

one thing in mind: more bushels to the acre, not prettier ears at the fair.

Finally he succeeded. His "Hibred" strains of corn proved themselves time after time able to out-yield the best of the "handsome" corns by from four to ten bushels to the acre. His critics were silenced, the farmers increasingly convinced. They began to plant his corn.

Now by a strange ironical twist of fate that same young editor, Henry A. Wallace, sits as Secretary of Agriculture in President Roosevelt's cabinet. And one of his most stressing problems is to find out what to do with too much corn!

Yet no man with even elementary sense would advocate sending the farmer back to the old low yield per acre. It may be necessary for a time to administer economic artificial respiration to agriculture; but it would be idiotic while doing so to bleed the patient at the same time.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

ENGINEERING

British Dry-Dock Could Handle 100,000 Ton Vessel

BRITAIN now has a gigantic dry-dock, claimed to be the world's largest, capable of accommodating a vessel of 100,000 tons if such a ship should ever be built. It is located at Southampton and holds 260,000 tons of water. The huge concrete structure is 1,200 feet long, 135 feet wide and 59 feet from cope to floor.

The extension of Southampton docks, begun in 1924 and just completed, ranks as one of the great civil engineering feats in recent times. The large dry-dock is just one of the features of this development. Dredging of 20,000,000 tons of mud, gravel, sand and clay from the harbor, the reclamation of 400 acres of land, and the building of a massive quay wall over a mile and a third long were features of the development.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

• First Glances at New Books

See Also
Page 128

Botany

THE FRESH-WATER ALGAE OF THE UNITED STATES—Gilbert M. Smith—*McGraw-Hill*, 716 p., \$6. Teaching botanists, as well as research botanists specializing in fields other than phycology, have long felt the need of a single, complete, convenient yet authoritative volume on the fresh-water algae. Prof. Smith now fills that need most admirably. His discussions are compact and to the point, and give all the information which the botanist will ordinarily need. Determinations are carried as far as the genus, which is enough for usual purposes; illustrations are simple and clear. The book automatically becomes a necessity for reference shelves of college and university botanical laboratories.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

Ornithology

HISTORY AND PRESENT STATUS OF THE BREEDING COLONIES OF THE WHITE PELICAN—Ben H. Thompson—*U. S. National Park Service*, 82 p., 2 maps. A detailed examination of the recent history, present status, and probable prospects of one of the most picturesque, albeit one of the most argued-about, of our native birds. This publication constitutes No. 1 of a new series: Occasional Papers of the Wild Life Division of the U. S. National Park Service.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

Child Care

HOW TO CARE FOR THE BABY—Violet Kelway Libby—*Plymouth Press*, 110 p., \$1. A convenient and helpful manual for the use of the new mother in everyday care of the healthy, happy, sun-bathed, and cod-liver-oil fed 1933 infant.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

Health Education

A SUGGESTED TEACHING UNIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON TUBERCULOSIS AND ITS PREVENTION—Jean V. Latimer—*Massachusetts Tuberculosis League*, 27 p., 20c. Designed to give school children "an attitude of objective curiosity" about tuberculosis so that if symptoms of the disease appear in themselves or members of their families, prompt steps will be taken toward early and accurate diagnosis. The pamphlet should be helpful to teachers in attaining this object.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933

Entomology

RESULTATS SCIENTIFIQUES DU VOYAGE AUX INDES ORIENTALES NEERLANDAISES—V. Van Straelen—*Mus. R. d'Hist. Nat. de Belgique*, vol. IV, fascicules 4, 5, 6 and 7. These monographs describe coleoptera, hymenoptera, lepidoptera and diptera collected by the expedition.

Science News Letter, August 19, 1933