

# First a Hen, Then Rooster, Hen Again

Biology

## Students of Biology are Puzzled by Freak Fowl

A HEN that became a rooster and then exercised the prerogative of her former sex and changed her mind, becoming a hen again, is the freak fowl described in the *Journal of Heredity* by Drs. R. A. McCance and A. Walton of the pathological department, King's College Hospital, London.

The bird, a light Sussex pullet, was hatched with seven other pullets in March, 1925. In October of the same year all eight commenced to lay and continued to do so till the spring of 1926. All then moulted and while the normal birds soon put on their new plumage this freak remained practically nude all summer and autumn.

Early in 1927 she slowly assumed male plumage and grew spurs, but no comb. She also put on additional height, becoming two inches taller than her sisters.

She (or "he") commenced to rule

the farmyard. She called the other hens to food, escorted them to the nest boxes, shepherded them about the yard, and in general conducted herself like the "cock of the walk". And she laid no eggs at all. In the autumn of 1927 she failed to moult with the others.

During the following spring she was seen going to the nests and clucking. A dozen eggs were placed under her as an experiment. Still wearing her male feathers, she faithfully sat on them, hatching out eleven chicks and proving an excellent mother afterwards.

Subsequently, still in male disguise, she began to lay eggs again. That autumn she moulted, resuming female feathers, but keeping her spurs. Throughout the winter of 1928 and spring of 1929 she laid regularly, mostly double-yolked eggs.

Usually when a hen reverses her sex, an examination of her internal organs will disclose some diseased condition, most probably in her ovaries. But when this hen-rooster-hen was killed and all of her glands subjected to minute examination nothing whatever could be found wrong with them. She remains an unsolved physiological riddle.

The editor of the *Journal of Heredity* adds a note telling of a somewhat similar case recorded a couple of years ago in this country. A hen assumed male feathers, but continued to lay. While she was still disguised as a rooster she was mated to a real White Leghorn male bird, and produced fertile eggs. She did not, however, raise her own family. Subsequently she moulted and her new feathers were those proper to her female sex.

*Science News-Letter, July 12, 1930*

### In Caleb's City

RUINS of the palace which once rose above the Canaanite royal city of Kirjath-Sepher are to be excavated this summer by a joint expedition from Xenia Theological Seminary of St. Louis, and the American School in Jerusalem. Dr. W. F. Albright of the Johns Hopkins University and Prof. M. G. Kyle of Xenia Theological Seminary will direct the work of this third campaign to unearth Kirjath-Sepher's history.

Kirjath-Sepher figures in Biblical record as the town which Caleb so desired to capture from the Canaanites that he offered his daughter's hand to the Israelite who would take the stronghold. The mound which represents this historic city lies about fifty miles south of Jerusalem.

Ruins of six settlements, in layers one above the other, have been found in earlier expeditions.

*Archæology*

*Science News-Letter, July 12, 1930*

### The Answer Is In This Issue

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### Fish's-Eye View

A POET once wished for the gift to see ourselves as others see us. An artist has achieved it. Wilfrid Swancourt Bronson, of New York, has cultivated the ability to see things from the fish's point of view, taking into account the squeezed perspective one gets through the little "window" in the water directly overhead, the "breaking" of poles sticking into the water by refraction, and the dead mirror-surface of the "top" of the water outside the limited cone through which the upper world of the air is visible. The picture on the cover of this issue of the SCIENCE NEWS-LETTER is from "Fingerfins", a charming little book of which Mr. Bronson is author as well as illustrator. It depicts the capture of the little Sargassum fish that is the hero of the tale.

*Ichthyological Optics*

*Science News-Letter, July 12, 1930*

People of this country spend more on medicines than on doctors' bills, a survey indicates.



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