

NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone



Kinsfruits

THERE is a lot of easily-done botany in a mixed basket of fruit or berries. One can get considerable amusement determining relationship or lack of it, by picking them to bits—not neglecting to eat the specimens after the scientific exercise has been finished, of course.

The kinship between apples, pears and quinces is quite obvious, or that between oranges, lemons, limes and grapefruit. But it may take a little more ingenuity to show that cherries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, and the dry “seeds” that follow such flowers as agrimony, are all cousins.

Let us start with the cherry and the raspberry. Pick the raspberry into the small pieces naturally marked off in its flesh. Cut or bite into one of these pulpy fragments, and you find a single hard little seed. The raspberry is a tight-packed cluster of tiny “cherries.”

Between raspberry and blackberry the likeness is more obvious. A blackberry is solid in the center where the raspberry is hollow, that is all. The solid, edible center of the blackberry is the same thing, essentially, as the tough little stem-end that remained on the bush when the raspberry was plucked.

Now imagine the same pulpy stem-end greatly increased in size, while the “cherries” on its outside have shrunk and shriveled until nothing but their pits remain. That is the strawberry. The strawberry is all edible stem-end, as the raspberry is all outside fruits.

Finally, consider the possibility of the “cherries” being like those of the strawberry and the stem-end being like that of the raspberry. Here would be a fruit all dry and hard, not edible at all. Such is the fruit of the agrimony flower.

Science News-Letter, July 12, 1930

Scientists Begin to Study Perseveration

Psychology

WHEN little Junior finds absorbing interest in some monotonous task, such as transferring endless marbles from one box to another, and when he refuses howling to come away from such aimless pursuits to eat his dinner, young Junior is displaying “perseveration,” a trait of human nature that has been very little explored by science.

Experiments with children, conducted by Dr. Hazel M. Cushing, at Columbia University, show that individual children differ conspicuously in the amount of this trait that they possess. Perseveration may be explained simply as the tendency of a child, or an adult either, to continue an activity when there is no goal in view. The adult who hums the same tune over and over is not very different from little Junior with his boxes of marbles.

Experiments with seventy children between two and five years have led Dr. Cushing to conclude that an individual has a certain amount of this trait as an inborn characteristic, and he continues to display that degree of perseveration throughout

life. Boys are slightly more inclined to it than girls, judging by the seventy youngsters tested.

Dr. Cushing points out that possibly “much of the behavior at present ascribed to stupidity, disobedience, defiance, stubbornness, lack of cooperativeness, might be better explained on the grounds of the presence to a high degree of a perseverating tendency.”

Further exploration of this trait, which has been recognized by psychologists for some years but has never been intensively studied, is advocated by Dr. Cushing, who believes that it may be important in understanding adults as well as children, and that it may be important in vocational pursuits.

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To teach children to select balanced lunches in a cafeteria, three public schools are giving the children tickets as they pass with their luncheon trays, healthful lunches being graded “A,” while others get tickets marked to indicate deficiencies.

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