

Bones Bear Out Evolution Prediction

Paleontology

New Extinct Horse Fills Gap Left by Scientists

FOSSIL bones of a new species of extinct horse, discovered in Idaho by J. W. Gidley of the U. S. National Museum, have made an evolutionary prediction good, just as the recently found planet Pluto made an astronomical prediction good.

When paleontologists arranged all the fossils of the many extinct horse species in the order of their geologic age, some years ago, it was found that they also fell into a structural order. They showed graded series of characters that fairly shouted "evolution." Most notable were the step-like increase in size, and the decrease in the number of toes from five in the little *Eohippus* to one in the modern horse.

There were three gaps in the series, however, and scientists predicted from the characters of the species on either

side of each gap what the animal would be like that filled it when it was finally discovered. Two of the gaps have now been filled, Mr. Gidley's find constituting a new species of the genus immediately below the modern, one-toed horse.

The skeletons and skulls of the horses found by Mr. Gidley were buried in what seems to have been a bog-hole in a watercourse. There was a great mass of plant material along with the bones, consisting principally of leaves and twigs of trees, of species as yet unidentified. It is unusual to find fossil plant and animal remains in the same place, for the conditions required for their preservation are not always alike. In the present instance, the plant remains influenced the character of the fossils, for the bones from the lower part of the pit are darkly stained with bog-

iron, leached out of the leaves.

Other animal remains found in the pit with the horse skeletons represent a species of giant peccary or wild hog, a large beaver, a mastodon, an animal that is probably a badger, an otter-like animal, turtles, frogs and fish. Outside the pit but in the same neighborhood and in the same geological horizon Mr. Gidley found a small mastodon, only seven or eight feet high, and a cat about the size of a small mountain lion. Both of these may be new species.

In addition he found bones of two species of camel, one of them about the same size as the modern camel and the other much longer-legged and longer-necked. There were also bones of a small sloth, of the giant peccary and of beavers, pocket gophers and field mice.

Science News-Letter, July 26, 1930

Poison From Rice

A POISONOUS substance known as lyso-lecithin has been found in ordinary polished rice by a Japanese investigator, Dr. Motoe Iwata, working at the biochemical laboratory of the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research in Tokyo.

The poisonous substance was only obtained after repeated extraction with alcohol, so that it could hardly have any effect on human beings through ordinary consumption of the cereal. However, it may have some relation to the factor in polished rice which causes the nervous disease, beri-beri. This will be investigated later, Dr. Iwata said.

Beri-beri has previously been thought due to absence of vitamin B in polished rice, when the latter has been the chief food of affected persons.

Chemistry

Science News-Letter, July 26, 1930

The Answer Is

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A Year For a Gram

BECAUSE of a year's delay in obtaining radium for the Marie Curie Radium Institute of Warsaw, for which Madame Curie was given \$50,000 in 1929 by a group of Americans, the hospital will not be able to open its doors until December.

The delay has had its advantages, however, for the interest on the money will be sufficient to purchase platinum screens for the radium when it becomes available. Madame Curie said that the demand for radium was now so great that the producers are far behind in filling their orders.

Only one gram is required for the Warsaw hospital, and although it was ordered last November when Madame Curie returned with the purchase money, its delivery will require another five months.

Medicine

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