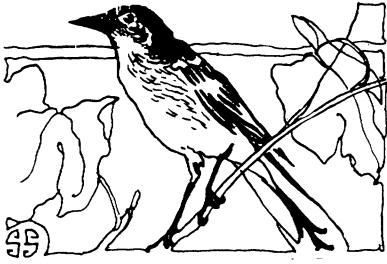


## NATURE RAMBLINGS

By Frank Thone



Mockingbird

THE South is favored in many ways. There are magnolias in the spring, for example, and heavy-scented jasmine flowers. In summer the indolent Spanish moss moves languidly on its live-oak branches, encouraging one in the praiseworthy art of waiting until tomorrow. It is better today to listen to the mockingbird.

The mockingbird is most especially something to be thankful for. Many other birds, most of them in fact, sing industriously during the mating and nesting seasons, and then shut off the supply. They give us plenty of a good thing—sometimes rather too much—during a utilitarian period, and then stop, almost abruptly.

Not so the mockingbird. He is an artist, and his song is not merely a means to a living but an end in itself. He will tinkle and coruscate and whistle his own scintillating music, and for variety ring in bits from the repertoires of other birds, with catcalls and rusty-hinge squeaks by way of scherzo interludes. And he is apt to give us a recital at almost any time and for any reason or no reason at all.

Like all talented artists, he quickly learns the tricks of other artists. The late Edward Bok told a good story at his own expense. When he had built his bird sanctuary about his "singing tower" in Florida, he imported some European nightingales, hoping that they might become established there. Like all such experiments in the past, this one failed; nightingales somehow will not live in America. But even when all his exotic songsters had died, their songs still continued. The mockingbirds that had been their neighbors had learned them!

*Science News-Letter, July 26, 1930*

## Science Still Needs Martyrs

Medicine

OPPORTUNITIES to join the noble band of martyrs of science still exist. Those who would enroll their names in company with Lazaar, Noguchi, Stokes and the rest may yet be called on by the investigators who are seeking to control human disease.

When Drs. William C. Finnoff and Phillips Thygeson of Denver reported on their recent trachoma studies, they concluded that it may be necessary to resort to experiments on human beings to prove finally whether or not they had identified the germ of this disease. Whether these human volunteers will be recruited from the ranks of the unemployed who may be paid for their martyrdom with the means of subsistence, or whether they will be drawn from condemned prisoners who may save their lives in order to sacrifice them for science and humanity, is a question for society to decide.

The Denver scientists have isolated a germ which they believe to be the cause of trachoma, dreaded eye disease prevalent among eastern moun-

taineers and Indians of the Southwest. This germ is similar to the one reported as the cause of trachoma by Dr. Hideyo Noguchi. So far the work has been done with monkeys, but the scientists are not satisfied that they really have the germ of the disease in humans.

"Because of the fact that trachoma in monkeys is not identical with that in human beings, it may be necessary to resort to human inoculations to prove or disprove conclusively the etiologic relationship of *Bacterium granulosis* to trachoma," they said.

From New Mexico comes reports that a Chinese convict, condemned to die, was told his sentence would be commuted if he would volunteer to be a subject for trachoma investigations. He refused.

More recently a jobless man, desperate, is reported to have offered himself to the scientists in the hope that he could gain a bare living for his starving wife. But the scientists had no funds to guarantee the wife's support, he found.

*Science News-Letter, July 26, 1930*

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