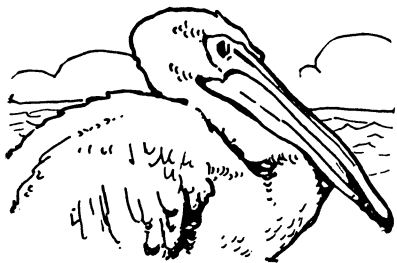


EVOLUTION
**NATURE
 RAMBLINGS**
 by Frank Thone



Admirals Wearing Spurs

HOW MANY things survive past any imaginable usefulness!

We are accustomed of course, to having evolutionary tag-ends about ourselves pointed out to us: the vermiform appendix, useful to no one except surgeons; the tonsils, accused of the same class favoritism; even our little toes under suspicion.

Less known, but evolutionally just as anachronistic, are the valves in the veins that run parallel to our ribs. Such valves are useful to prevent back-flow of the blood, in quadrupeds whose ribs are normally more or less vertical; but our ribs and their veins are now approximately horizontal, so that the valves serve no known use.

Such useless or seemingly useless structures may rouse our wonder and speculation; but after all there is nothing we can do about them. They are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. So unless they get into mischief, as the appendix sometimes does, about all we can do is let them alone and ignore them so far as possible.

But what shall we say of our conduct, as allegedly rational beings, when we preserve, for years or generations, objects or ways of procedure that once possibly had uses of their own but now are quite obsolete?

The familiar buttons on the back of a man's coat-cuffs at once recur. Supposedly put on the front of soldiers' cuffs to keep them from untidily wiping their noses on their uniforms, these buttons have somehow slipped round to the back, and there they survive, decade after decade, profiting button-makers and tailors, and no one else.

The Sam Browne belt, a World War invention, has already begun to slip into this category of more or less useless survivals. The diagonal strap over

the shoulder was a mighty fine practical thing for the war-time officer, helping to distribute better the weight of pistol, ammunition and other necessary objects he had to hang on his belt. But now, belts of the Sam Browne type, carrying no load at all, are worn by everybody from bus drivers to volunteer schoolboy traffic cops.

Similarly, spurs are a part of the field artilleryman's uniform, even in motorized outfits. During the War, new-fledged young cockerels of the air service, regarding their dashing selves as the natural successors of the scouting light cavalry, for a time wore spurs—until it got too much for their graver senior officers and they had to take them off.

It is even alleged that certain stout admirals of the Navy, with desk jobs in Washington, used to wear spurs—to keep their heels from slipping out of the inkwells. One spur would always be blue-black, one always red.

But this is probably an exaggeration.

Science News Letter, March 30, 1935

ARCHAEOLOGY

Have Found Over 1,000 Weapons of First Hunters

TAKING stock of the trophies that science can now show from its long, persistent search for the earliest inhabitants of America, Jack Cotter, graduate student of the University of Denver, reports that well over a thousand weapons of the earliest known Americans have been recovered. Recent discoveries bring the total of stone weapons up to 1,149, Mr. Cotter figures.

Ancient big game hunters, who pursued great bison and other animals long extinct, have been trailed by their stone handiwork through the greater part of the United States. The familiar small clues to their presence are pointed tips of stone of characteristic patterns which they bound to their darts and hurled at animals or at their enemies.

These dart points, known scientifically as Folsom and Yuma types, have been found in greatest profusion in Colorado, Mr. Cotter reports. Out of a total of 295 Folsom points, 189 are from Colorado; and of 854 Yuma points, 647 are from this state.

From reports of responsible scientists, says Mr. Cotter, Folsom weapon points have been found as far spread in the East as New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Science News Letter, March 30, 1935



"No summary with which this reviewer is familiar approaches Professor Millikan's in comprehensiveness and clarity."—says Waldemar Kaempffert in the *Times Book Review*, of the new book by

ROBERT A. MILLIKAN

"A succinct and logical presentation of what has happened to the familiar cosmos since Thomson, Einstein, Rutherford and Millikan himself made it necessary to change our conception of the universe and matter completely . . . No advanced student of physics can afford to be without it."

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