



Hairy Monsters

ABOUT this time of year, banana spiders begin to get into the news.

It's a poor town that can't produce at least one spider scare per winter. Some grocer or fruitseller, unpacking a fresh bunch of bananas, will suddenly jump back with a yell, and when he can get his voice back will tell, with teeth still chattering, of this deadly monster that was "within an inch of my hand." Thereafter the huge spider will be herded into an empty glass jar and kept for a time, for the goose-fleshed edification of the customers, eventually ending up in alcohol or formalin in some local collection of natural history objects.

The thrill we get out of these monster spiders—big as Airedale pups, and quite as hairy—is based primarily on fear. Even if you are one of those who "aren't afraid of spiders, but just don't like to handle them," your reaction is at bottom a notion that you might get bitten, and a dread of the unknown consequences. We are at heart all grandchildren of Little Miss Muffet.

As a matter of fact, it is just as well not to become too familiar with one of these hairy unintentional immigrants from the tropics. Although they are very sluggish, and apparently not over-prone to bite, a bite might make you pretty sick for a while if one of them did fang you. Of course, the notion that you will die instantly if such a spider bites you is sheer fable. For most persons, the result would be severe illness; one with a weak heart might possibly be killed.

Incidentally, it is not quite correct to call these creatures tarantulas. The real tarantulas are considerably smaller spiders that live in burrows in the earth.

A number of species of them are native to the United States, particularly to the South and the Southwest; smaller ones range fairly far up into the northern

states. "Fruit spiders" would be as good a name as any, for the ones we import with our bananas.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

•First Glances at New Books

Research

INDUSTRIAL PROSPECTING—C. F. Kettering—*National Research Council*, 3 p., 25c. "Ket" tells us we are "fifteen or twenty years behind our social and economic development in our scientific development." More Ketterings: "We should all be concerned about the future because we will have to spend the rest of our lives there. . . . Today, as never before, we need new things . . . The calendar is our hardest task master."

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Psychology

HOW PEOPLE LOOK AT PICTURES—Guy Thomas Buswell—*Univ. of Chicago Press*, 198 p., \$3. An interesting report of research on the psychology of perception in art.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Research

ABSTRACTS OF THESES, RESEARCHES IN PROGRESS, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PUBLICATIONS—Graduate School, University of Pittsburgh—*Pub. by the University*, 425 p., Free to colleges, universities and libraries by applying to the University of Pittsburgh.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Astronautics

STRATOSPHERE AND ROCKET FLIGHT (ASTRONAUTICS)—Chas. G. Philip—*Pitman Pub. Corp.*, 118 p., \$1.25. Popular style book on what is coming to be known as the new science of astronautics.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Engineering

THE STEADYFLOW TRAFFIC SYSTEM—Fritz Malcher—*Harvard Univ. Press*, 91 p., 85, xxv, illustrations, \$1. A scheme for making traffic safer by eliminating right-angled intersections of traffic, traffic lights and traffic officers; separating by middle strips all two-way streets and thus leaving pedestrian protection the only concern of traffic con-

trol. The cost of steadyflow highways would be two-fifths that of the stop-and-go highways as an uninterrupted traffic lane would have two and one-half times traffic effectiveness of a similar stop-and-go lane. A posthumous volume, issued as Harvard City Planning Studies IX.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Physics

RELATIVITY PHYSICS—W. H. McCrea—*Methuen & Co., Ltd., London*, 87 p., 2s. 6d. The applications of relativity to the field of physics are fairly familiar to physicists but the standard derivations have been widely scattered. Prof. McCrea collected them in this compact book and derives them without the use of tensor calculus.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1936

Ichthyology

1001 QUESTIONS ANSWERED ABOUT YOUR AQUARIUM—Ida M. Mellen and Robert J. Lanier—*Dodd, Mead*, 450 p., \$3. This book might well be styled, *The Longer Catechism for Fish Fanciers*. The question-and-answer method of imparting information is time-tested and very effective; and the authors have succeeded in packing a veritable encyclopedia of aquarium information into one averaged-sized volume. Many of the half-tone illustrations are rather poor; it is hoped that this defect may be remedied in future editions.

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Geology

THE MODERN FLOOD THEORY OF GEOLOGY—George McCready Price—*Fleming H. Revell Co.*, 118 p., \$1.25. Prof. Price renews his attack on the established tenets of geology, undiscouraged by chill indifference to himself and his diatribes on the part of scientists, and the fact that his literalistic views on Scripture are unnecessary to the thinking of practically all theologians. A Quixote of geology, if there ever was one!

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