



### Houses Divided

**F**AMILY resemblances sometimes persist even though the families are long divided.

You may have among your own acquaintances a pair of cousins of about the same age whom strangers will mistake for twins. Such cases are not particularly rare, even in kinships that have long lived apart.

Even more striking are the "twin cousin" species of plants that can be found on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Prof. M. Victorin of the University of Montreal has pointed out a number of such almost identical paired species that still persist, though the last land bridge that connected Europe and North America, making the boreal flora a continuous unity, vanished during Tertiary time, a good many millions of years ago.

Among trees, Prof. Victorin pairs off the famous English elm with the slippery elm of this continent, the graceful American or white elm with a similarly shaped tree native to Continental Europe, our eastern white pine with the Balkan pine, the Scotch pine with our jack pine. Among smaller trees, perhaps less known to non-botanists, there is an even more strikingly close resemblance between the American and European species of ironwood. Prof. Victorin remarks, "The segregation is so slight that the two might be regarded as conspecific, according to certain standards."

Prof. Victorin's favorite botanizing ground is the Gaspé peninsula and adjoining areas, near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. In this region, nearest to Europe of all American lands really hospitable to a rich and varied development of plant life, he has found several genuinely European species that do not occur elsewhere in North Amer-

ica at all. Notable is one kind of sedge, that grows only in limited shoreward areas on Newfoundland and Anticosti Island.

In striking contrast to these conservative cousinships of the old, undisturbed regions, where long-continued stability of environmental factors may be presumed to encourage persistence *in statu quo*, are the settled lands farther up the river, where human colonization came early and where the land has been cleared of its primeval forest and cultivated for two centuries and more. Here, the revolution wrought by ax and fire, plowing and grazing, has seemingly offered freer opportunity for the deployment of new evolutionary forms. Very striking is the wide range of species or varieties in the hawthorn, a shrub of pasturelands and semi-open country that had no chance at in the old, tightly closed forest.

Prof. Victorin expresses the view that "the critical study of the flora of north-eastern America has undoubtedly supplied fresh evidence that vegetable life continues a development initiated very long ago, that new systematic entities, species and varieties, are actually in the making."

*Science News Letter, March 6, 1937*

#### MEDICINE-ECOLOGY

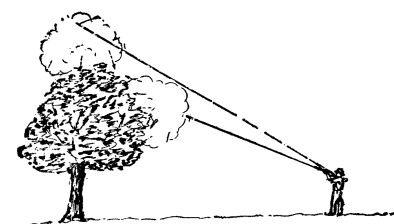
### Spring Floods May Bring Late Summer Sneezes

**W**ILL there be a greater-than-normal amount of hayfever in the Ohio Valley flood area this summer?

Possible connection between floods and sneezes seems fairly reasonable on theoretical grounds at least, as a corollary to a thesis recently advanced by a New York pollen specialist, Dr. R. P. Wodehouse. (See *SNL*, Feb. 27.) The ragweeds, chief causes of hayfever, follow the plow and the scraper, he pointed out; they are first and foremost weeds of the newly disturbed soil left by agricultural and engineering operations.

Dr. Wodehouse did not mention the thick deposits of fresh alluvium left on river bottoms by receding floods, but these also are first-order breeding grounds for ragweeds, particularly the tall ragweed. Anybody who has ever tramped river bottom lands in the Midwest will remember their towering thickets, with tall shafts running up like the spears of Alexander's famous phalanx.

Vast areas of lowland have been overswept by the recent flood, and the



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