



Chancellors and Cockroaches

IF YOU don't like the Chancellor (no matter: *any* chancellor) maybe you call him a cockroach, or perhaps an old crab. Even if he does happen to hear you, he shouldn't feel insulted: chancellor, cockroach, and crab all had the same descent.

Not merely in the bio-evolutionary sense. The Chancellor will admit that, if he isn't too proud or too Fundamentalist. The three words, and many others besides, had the same philological origin, states Prof. A. L. Melander, New York University entomologist, in a new book. (SOURCE BOOK OF BIOLOGICAL TERMS—Axel Leonard Melander—*College of the City of New York*, 157 p., \$1.10.)

In addition to giving definitions and examples and tracing origins of all the more commonly used words, prefixes and suffixes that crop up in writings on the life sciences, Prof. Melander goes off on some very interesting excursions into the field of word-meanings and word-origins, proving himself competent as both entomologist and etymologist.

In his search into the philological origins of chancellors and cockroaches, Prof. Melander constructs an evolutionary tree in approved biological fashion. At the bottom is the Greek word SKAR, meaning a scratch. As he remarks, "Chancellor, Crayfish, and Cockroach started from scratch."

First derivative is the Greek word KARABOS, meaning either crab or beetle—both of them scratchy creatures. Easily recognizable is the Latin derivative *scarabaeus*, whence our own scarab. From the same line of descent, through Portuguese and Spanish, we get first the Spanish *cucaracha*, which modifies easily to cockroach.

KARABOS is nearly related to the ancient Teutonic word *chrebiz*, meaning a crab, whence modern German *Krebs*, French *crevice*, and English crab and crayfish.

A third main line of word-descent starts from the same ancient Greek crab-beetle word and passes over into the Latin word *cancer*. Somehow (possibly through its many, ranked legs) a crab suggested a grill or grating, *cancelli*, in the Latin. Behind such a grill an officer often sits: it becomes a chancel, and the officer a chancellor.

Not all words have such clearly traceable and legitimate descent. Mistaken derivations give us such things as tuberos, which is neither a rose nor tubular in shape; the flower has the specific name *tuberosum* from its tuberous base. Similarly the plant known in French as *vermout* and in German as *Wermut* became first Early English *wermod*, and then wormwood!

Science News Letter, January 22, 1938

Almost one-third of the land surface of Britain is hill land, at present producing little or nothing for the British people.

PHYSIOLOGY

Saliva From Vampire Bats Contains no Anti-Coagulant

SALIVA taken from the mouths of blood-feeding vampire bats, tradition to the contrary notwithstanding, contains no agent that prevents the blood from clotting, two Columbia scientists report. (*Zoologica*, Oct. 7.)

Four vampire bats, of the type that tradition says are blood suckers but fact says are not, at the New York Zoological Park were studied by Barry G. King and Robert Saphir. They checked the clotting time of blood taken from wounds the bats had made on experimental animals they were feeding on with blood obtained from the animals by laboratory methods. In addition, they measured the clotting time of blood mixed with specimens of the bat's saliva.

The blood drippings commonly seen in tropical regions where the vampires live can be traced to massaging of the wound by the bat, which uses its tongue for that purpose if the blood is not flowing freely enough.

The victims of the vampire bat do not seem to be particularly disturbed by the bats feeding on them, the two scientists also found. The wounds are only skin-deep.

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PHYSICS

Ship's Officer Saw Two Setting Moons

ORDINARILY, if a seafaring man in the tropics sees two moons he discreetly says nothing about the matter, lest a cynical world raise an eyebrow and murmur something about too many swizzles. But Third Officer R. T. Lewin of the American steamer Yorkmar saw a double image of the moon recently for which an abnormal refractive condition of the earth's atmosphere was responsible.

Mr. Lewin observed the strange phenomenon during a run from Balboa, C. Z., to San Pedro, Calif., while his ship was off the tip of Lower California. The crescent moon was going down through a thin haze, when it appeared double, the lower crescent scarcely touching the upper. Twenty minutes after he first noticed it, the moon set, still appearing double.

The observation, which was made on Dec. 6, has just been published in a bulletin of the Hydrographic Office of the U. S. Navy.

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