



Feudal Fortifications

➤ **WALLED CITIES**, we are told in school, became obsolete with the passing of feudalism. They served their purpose in ancient and medieval times, first as the hard-shelled nuclei of city-states, then as strong centers of resistance to the raids of barbarian hordes and the anarchic attacks of only slightly more civilized robber barons. But with the

firm establishment of modern states and the development of modern arms, the every-town-for-itself idea lost its usefulness.

This may be true in the field of human relations, but when it comes to protection against the wild forces of nature our cities still remain largely medieval. When rivers rise to flood stage in spring, we find river towns becoming increasingly concerned about the height and strength of their river walls. If a neighboring city has a higher and stronger levee there is apt to be a good deal of envious comment in newspaper editorials and radio comment. We even find mile upon mile of embankments along our larger rivers, especially in the South, to protect farm lands. This kind of fortification of whole regions has not been practiced in a military way since the Chinese in Asia and the Romans in Europe built their famous great walls to check the hordes of northern barbarians.

True flood protection of our river

cities and lands, conservationists never tire of pointing out, can be achieved only by stopping the floods where they start—far up on the watersheds, where rivers are still no more than creeks. Reforestation or resodding of sloping lands, to reduce runoff and encourage the absorption of water into the soil and its long-time storage there, will do much to cut down the number of small floods and mitigate the severity of big ones.

These water-conserving measures are also soil-conserving, for they hold the soil in place and prevent it from washing down into the rivers. Once washed into the streams, such ruined soil becomes channel-choking silt and sand, raising the level of the bottom and compelling the building of downstream protective embankments to ever more towering (and costly) castle-like heights. So it is good economics, as well as good civics, to seek your flood protection as far upstream as possible.

Science News Letter, May 15, 1948

HORTICULTURE

Flowers "By the Pound"

➤ **YOU** may never ask your florist for a "pound of roses" for Mother's Day or any other time, but their weight may determine the kind of flowers you get and how much you pay for them.

A new method of grading cut flowers by weight has been developed in the floriculture department at Cornell University. It promises to help the entire flower industry. Many growers are enthusiastic and anxious to put the new system into operation as soon as possible.

"Quality in cut flowers is best expressed by weight which takes care of size and stem length and size of flower display on the stem," says Prof. Kenneth Post.

"Weight cannot take into account color, crooked stems, odd or misshapen flowers, but the poor flowers are easily eliminated by the sorter."

Flowers already graded in research at Cornell include pompom chrysanthemums, carnations, roses, stocks, snapdragons, and iris. Prof. Post believes research can find grade standards for nearly all cut flowers on a weight per stem basis.

Using the standards, both retailer and wholesaler will know the exact kind of merchandise they get and growers will learn what quality the markets demand.

Consumers also will know what kind of flowers they buy instead of getting a bunch of flowers of all sizes, shapes, and quality.

At present, says Prof. Post, poor flowers are included with good ones and prices may be based on the poorest in the bunch rather than the best. Under the weight grading system, the better and poorer specimens can be grouped by themselves.

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Science Service Radio

➤ **LISTEN** in to a discussion about "An Archaeological Race Against Time" on "Adventures in Science" over the Columbia Broadcasting System at 3:15 p.m. EDST Saturday, May 22. Dr. William Strong, professor of anthropology at Columbia University, will be the guest of Watson Davis, director of Science Service. Dr. Strong will discuss the problem of the pressing need for emergency archaeological excavations in our river valleys before dams and other flood projects are constructed.

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