NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE

Osage Orange

The generation that was young before barbed-wire and woven-wire fences became common in the country will be much better acquainted with the osage orange than the present-day youth, though the latter, in their wider-ranging motor-cars, can still find osage hedges. But before the coming of the persuasive barbed-wire salesman, the farmer who wanted to put a good, tight fence around his field would think first of this quick-growing, tough shrub, with its bristling armature of sharp thorns. In a few years the hedge would be fifteen or twenty feet high, and then he would hack it off to breast height, and the tops, after drying, would make a bonfire worth crossing half a township to see. But the hedge had the drawback of "robbing the land" for twenty feet or more on either side, so that when better artificial fences became available progressive farmers had their hedges grubbed out.

It is to be hoped that landowners generally will keep at least a few specimens of osage orange going, if only for sentiment's sake. By a little judicious pruning, the plant can be induced to grow into a rather shapely small tree, which will be ornamented in late summer with the great golden globes—quite inedible and reputed to be poisonous—that give the species its name. What man is there who was a country or suburban boy twenty or thirty years ago, that does not recall what a magnificent splash these false oranges made when you slammed them against a tree trunk or a barn door?

Curiously enough, although the osage orange is strictly American, with its center of distribution in the Ozark mountain country, its nearest relative is the famous breadfruit tree of the South Seas.

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Evolution Makes Facts Fit

Evolution

Evolution was re-asserted as the fundamental faith of present-day biology by Prof. D. M. S. Watson of University College, London, in his presidential address before the section of zoology of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

"Evolution is accepted by zoologists not because it has been observed to occur or is supported by logically coherent arguments, but because it does fit all the facts of taxonomy, of paleontology, and of geographical distribution, and because no alternative explanation is credible," Prof. Watson declared.

"But while the fact of evolution is accepted by every biologist the mode in which it has occurred and the mechanism by which it has been brought about are still disputable."

Adaptation, or the structural changes brought about to meet functional needs was the chief topic of Prof. Watson's address. The pioneer evolutionists, Lamarck and Darwin, made much of adaptation, and cited numerous well-studied cases in support of their respective theories. But the present generation of biologists has a tendency to assume a given structure or organ to be adaptive and to build on the basis of that assumption, which subsequent study may prove to be incorrect.

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The Scientific Medical

Medicine

THOMAS STEPHENSON in *The Prescriber,* reprinted in the *Journal of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*

(*With apologies to the shade of W. S. Gilbert*)

I am the very model of the Scientific Medical,
I know each nerve and artery, each ligament and pedicle;
My knowledge has been built by evolutionary processes
From Galen and Hippocrates to present-day Colossuses.
I've studied all the endocrines and know the various offices
Of pancreas and thyroid, or of thymus and hypophysis;
I know the suprarenals too, and all that they're related to—
(—lated to, —lated to—ah!)
How benighted were the medicos who lived in 1882.

I know the pH value of ionical acidity;
I calculate percentages with wonderful rapidity;
And when it comes to artery or ligament or pedicle
I am the very model of a scientific medical.
I'm particularly expert at a Wassermann analysis;
I hunt for protozoa in a patient with paralysis;
The chemistry of insulin's a subject that I revel in,
And antitoxin therapy I'm just the very devil in.
I know the role of calcium in various forms of tetany;
I understand trypanosomes, although I've never met any;
And I've the latest news on perineural sympathectomy—
(— pathectomy — ectomy — ah, I have it!)
My knowledge often bringing in a good substantial cheque to me!

I'm very strong on vitamins and matters dietetical;
I know the graphic formulae of remedies synthetical;
And when it comes to artery or ligament or pedicle
I'm just the very pattern of a scientific medical.

(*More slowly*)
When I've acquired some knowledge about matters pharmaceutical,
When I can diagnose a little deeper than the cuticle,
When simple indigestion has become a trifle clear to me,
When babies with the colic are no more a source of fear to me,
When I can write a recipe with ord'nary galenicals,
When I have learned the doses of the various arsenicals,
When highbrow scientific lore no longer needs a missioner—
(missioner—condi- —practi- —I've got it!)
You'll then consult me safely as a general practitioner!

For my scientific knowledge, though I'm always up to date with it,
Has kept me back in practice, and I'm just a little late with it;
But when it comes to artery or ligament or pedicle
You'll find I'm just the model of a scientific medical.

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