

FOUR-LEAF CLOVERS

By EMIL SELLA
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Most of us have heard time and again on the radio and elsewhere the current song hit "I'm Looking Over A Four-Leaf Clover That I Overlooked Before," recently resurrected after a prolonged period of dormancy. Not many listeners, however, may have had the good fortune of finding four-leaf clovers. But June is here, and four-leaf clovers, without music, should soon appear.

Have you ever taken the time to look for and find a four-leaf clover? If so, you will agree it is not a very profitable occupation. Nevertheless, for a number of years I have been in the habit of looking into an



'GOOD LUCK' IN ABUNDANCE

A clover plant, pressed for use as a herbarium specimen, reveals an unusual number of abnormal leaves—many four-leaf and even some five-leaf clovers.

occasional patch of clover with the intention of spotting this often elusive variation of the common three-leaf (*Trifolium* spp.).

Originally prompted by curiosity, this acquired practice can easily be recommended for certain occasions such as hot afternoons similar to some we had to endure last summer. All that is needed is a comfortable spot on a shaded lawn or meadow. While one is busy looking for four-leaf clovers, the heat is momentarily forgotten and one's power of observation is not suffering from inactivity.

FIVE LEAVES, TOO!

It was exactly in such a setting that I happened to find a whole plant of clover with at least three-fourths of its leaves other than the customary three-leaf. In fact many of them were five-leaved.

My curiosity being quickly aroused, I immediately decided to look carefully for possible similar plants. To our surprise, my companion and I soon found two more with the same abnormal variations.

Although it is quite possible that such plants have been observed by others, it was the first time I had ever seen anything like them. Believing they were rare enough, two of these plants were pressed for herbarium specimens and later photographed.

For the purpose of further observation, part of one of these plants was potted and kept most of the time in the shade of a garden shrub. The third plant was left

growing in its natural environment and later re-examined. Within a few weeks of cool fall weather, both plants began to unfold new leaves of normal form and continued to do so until frost came to arrest further growth. The potted plant, kept indoors for the time being, is still producing the regular three leaves.

Repeated earlier instances convinced me some time ago that it was more difficult to find four-leaf clovers in the early summer than in August and September or after an extended heat wave.

SIDEWALK INCUBATOR

In addition, I recall distinctly that for several years, while tending our lawn, I could occasionally pick a four-leaf at the edge of a patch adjacent to the cement walk, the heat of which was reflected onto the nearby plants.

On the strength of the findings of last summer, I am more than ever inclined to believe that excessive heat is an important factor in developing abnormal variations, especially since these plants produced the regular three leaves with the return of normal seasonable weather.

These observations agree with the accepted knowledge of many abnormalities, the factors for which may be present in a plant but remain dormant until the plant is exposed to circumstances or environments that allow these same factors to develop.

Palau Expedition Returns

Mr. Henry S. Dybas, Assistant Curator of Insects, has returned from a six-month expedition to islands in the Pacific, sponsored by the Pacific Science Board of the National Research Council, in which Chicago Natural History Museum co-operated. Mr. Dybas' efforts were concentrated in the Palau group and in the Caroline Islands, particularly the Isle of Ponape. While the larger part of the collections will go to the United States National Museum in Washington, the Chicago museum will share in the material.

Pennsylvania Fossil Expedition

Mr. Eugene S. Richardson, Jr., Curator of Fossil Invertebrates, will be in the field from about the middle of June until the end of July. He will collect primarily fossils from several localities in Pennsylvania. If time permits he will visit several eastern museums to examine invertebrate exhibits with reference to the reinstallation of Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall (Hall 37).

Technical Publications Issued

Fieldiana: Geology Memoirs, Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2. *The Vertebrate Fauna of the Selma Formation of Alabama. Part I. Introduction. Part II. The Pleurodiran Turtles.* By Rainer Zangerl. April 30, 1948.

Books

(All books reviewed in the BULLETIN are available in The Book Shop of the Museum. Mail orders accompanied by remittance are promptly filled—The Book Shop pays the postage on shipments.)

THE GREEN WORLD OF THE NATURALISTS. By Victor Wolfgang von Hagen (Editor). Greenberg, New York, 1948. 392 pages. Price \$5.

The "green world of the naturalists" is South America. Mr. von Hagen has made an interesting anthology of selections from the travelers who have contributed to the growth of knowledge about South America from the time of the discovery of the continent by Europeans to the present decade. His introduction makes the clever point that South America was kept hidden behind a "green curtain" by the Spanish and Portuguese for a century after the discovery, and that the final drawing aside of the curtain took place so lately as the nineteenth century. The sketches of the twenty-five authors represented are held to a proper brevity, after which they are allowed to speak for themselves.

The merit of an anthology lies in the bringing to renewed attention and availability something of the half-forgotten, long out-of-print, or rare, and Mr. von Hagen in this anthology (essentially his second for South America) presents some naturalists of great merit, like Felix de Azara and Alcide d'Orbigny, who are quite forgotten to the general public though well-remembered by that esoteric group of zoologists (now mainly confined to museums) who know animals by their Latin names. Azara and d'Orbigny both named animals and had animals named for them. The strictly scientific naturalists are preceded by the early travelers, like Amerigo Vespucci, Oviedo, and Carvajal, and by Lionel Wafer and William Dampier, of the buccaneer century. The era of scientific exploration begins properly with Condamine and Humboldt and continues with the great names of Darwin, Wallace, Bates, and Spruce to their successors of the twentieth century. The literary men whose writings exhibit the background of sea and forest and plains and desert are represented by Melville and Hudson and Tomlinson.

Altogether this is an excellent book to provide the casually interested reader with a comprehensive introduction to its subject. The serious reader will find some guidance to and background for the further exploration of those classics of natural history travels that should be on the shelves of every naturalist and likewise of every would-be naturalist.

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