

PLANTS THAT CURE DISEASES

Leader of Scientists

LEAGUE OF NATIONS HISTORY.

Australia's Natural Remedies

VALUE OF THE FEVER TREE

Many people are unaware of the valuable medicinal properties possessed by different species of plants and bushes growing in Australian forests.

When the Australian Association for the advancement of science meets in Perth in August, a paper will be read by Professor Rennie, of the Adelaide University, on the commercial exploitation of Australian plants.

Due attention will be given to the medicinal side of the question and the review will deal with the past, present and future investigations.

The reading of the paper will mark the first serious step that has been taken to determine the disease curing properties of Australian plants and herbs, and it is anticipated that an impetus will be given to laboratory investigations. While the aborigines have not been diligent in availing themselves of the forest herbs and plants, the white man, except for those who have lived outback, has not paid much attention to them.

Mr. J. M. Black, of Adelaide, who is writing a book on the flora of Australia, is keenly interested in the attempt that is being made to determine the medicinal qualities of certain of the native shrub and plants.

A probable reason for their non-use as medicine, he believes, is due to the fact that the Commonwealth was colonised late in the history of the world that the medical faculty and the big drug manufacturers were probably not anxious for innovations. However, experiments have been made by explorers and others.

If the fever had not occurred Australia's bushlands might have won world wide recognition, for just prior to 1914 one of the big German chemical manufacturing companies had placed orders for a large supply of their crude wood of the Duboisia Myoporum plant, from which to manufacture a compound used among other things in the treatment of diseases of the eye. The war, however, put an end to their investigations, which up till that time had been most satisfactory, and since then enquiries have ceased.

Eucalyptus Oil

Even that setback has not placed the usefulness of Australian trees and plants out of bounds, and there are few people in South Australia who have not at one time or another used of the medicinal treatment of colds and other ailments.

While the medicinal properties of the eucalyptus have been successfully extracted, little has been done with other plants possess disease-curing qualities. South Australia, unfortunately, is not blessed with a great number of these plants, but in the vicinity of Lake Torrens and in districts in the far North, is to be found a shrub called by the natives "fittur," which is known to botanists as Duboisia Hopwoodii plant.

Cure for Dyspepsia

Extract made from the leaves of this shrub is said to have a mildly narcotic action, and the leaves are chewed by aborigines because of their slightly stimulating effect, and also because they enable the person chewing them to go for comparatively long periods without food and without feeling in any way tired. It was thought for some time that the leaves had a tendency to produce a feeling of bravery and courage, but investigations have proved that assumption is incorrect.

To the white man, though, their value lies in the fact that the extract from the leaves is a valuable remedy for dyspepsia, for which it has been prescribed with remarkable results, it is said.

Another point common to the State penny rail, which is to be seen in the plains of the lower Murray and even in the districts surrounding Adelaide, is an oil is distilled which has medicinal qualities.

Fever Tree

One of the most common ailments of the tropical portions of Australia is malaria fever, but Nature has provided a remedy in the tree locally known as *Alstonia Constricta*, more commonly called the Fever Tree. From the juice prepared as a result of immersing pieces of bark and leaves of the tree in water a medicine is available which is said to banish the most malignant attacks of malaria within a few hours. Again it is stated to be extremely useful in treating dengue fever, while that scourge can be kept away altogether by its employment as a prophylactic.

Even in places where quinine is to be had, suffers, it is said, prefer the liquor made from the fever tree. While the Australian medical profession does not know the remedy, it is an official preparation in at least two foreign countries.

Another extremely valuable member of the Australian flora is the broad leafed fig tree. From this shrub, which grows profusely in Queensland and in portions of the interior of Australia, there is obtained an essential oil whose action is stated to be of great use in the treatment of tuberculosis. Some years ago a medical man who drew attention to the plant, reported that he had seen a case of tuberculosis and long standing cases of emphysema with the oil obtained from the shrub, and that in each instance the most pronounced success had followed, the patients rapidly putting on weight and improving generally in their health.

Valuable White Gum

The white gum, which flourishes in the dense forests of the north, yields an exudate, in the form of a clear, sticky substance, not unlike gelatine, which when clarified can be successfully employed in the treatment of sores and ulcers, which have resisted every other method used against them.

It is believed that there are scores of other plants, trees, and shrubs scattered in the forests of Australia awaiting investigation on the part of scientists and chemists to determine their medicinal properties, and the lead given by Prof. Rennie in this direction may result in an organised attempt being made to prove their worth.

The outcome of the discussion at the meeting last evening in Perth no doubt will be eagerly awaited, not only in Australia but in other parts of the world.

ADV. 20-1-26

RAILWAY FARES FOR SCHOLARS.

An alteration in the schedule of concessionary fares granted to school children and students has been made. It is stated that the changes have been made in order to bring South Australia into line with the other States in this matter. In the past the concession given was a reduction to one-quarter of the full fare to all school children and students under 13 years of age, and half fare for those over 13 and under 25, who used the railways to attend their studies. The new rates are now applicable to most of those who can avail themselves of them (says the "S.A. Teachers' Journal"), but more favorable to a comparatively small number. The new rates are one-third of full fare for students up to 16 years of age, and half fare to all above that age, with no age limit.

Prof. Edward H. Rennie, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S., who has held the Elder Chair of Chemistry at the University of Adelaide for more than forty years, will be the president of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science to meet at Perth, Western Australia, next month. Dr. Rennie was born in Sydney on August 19, and will celebrate his seventy-fourth birthday four days before the Perth meeting begins. This will be the eighteenth meeting of the association, which is the most important scientific body in the Commonwealth, and New Zealand. It corresponds to the British Association in the motherland. The Australasian Association was founded by Prof. Archibald Liversidge, LL.D., F.R.S., Emeritus Professor of Chemistry in the University of Sydney, and is residing in England. He is now in his seventy-ninth year. The distinguished president-elect is a worthy successor to a long line of illustrious Australasians. Previous Adelaide University professors who have occupied the presidency of the association are that eminent man Sir William Bragg, F.R.S., and the late Prof. Ralph Tate, geologist and botanist, the first occupant of the Elder Chair of Natural Science at Adelaide from 1876 till his death in 1907. After achieving distinction in Sydney University, where he took his M.A. degree, in 1876, Prof. Rennie graduated Doctor of Science at London University in 1881, and was the first Australian to take this degree in an English University. He was renowned throughout Australia as a teacher and professor in his science.

Professor E. H. Rennie

Submitting a request that matters relating to the formation and history of the League of Nations should be included in the curriculum of the State schools, a deputation was introduced to the Minister of Education (Hon. L. Hill) by Mr. S. R. Whitford on Monday morning. The deputation was composed of Messrs K. Bowman and Darnley Naylor (representing the National Council of Women), and Professor Darnley Naylor, and Mr. P. H. Nicholls (representing the League of Nations Union). Mr. Whitford said it was desired that the subject of the League of Nations should be included in the school syllabus, so that teachers would be required to give serious consideration. He did not think it was necessary to stress the importance of the spread of knowledge regarding the League. It must be apparent to all that everything possible should be done to prevent a recurrence of the upheaval of 1914-18. He had been pleased to read the speech of former Senator Drake-Brockman, who had shown that the League had already averted conflicts between nations, had righted the wrongs of others economically, and had re-established other nations. It was generally admitted that it had already justified its existence.

Mr. Bowman said the National Council of Women throughout the world had decried the League of Nations since its inception and the desire was that its aims and objects should be included in the curriculum of State schools. They did not desire that the bitter experiences of these times should be lost to coming generations. They believed the League was imbued with the spirit of the history of the past decade, means of preventing warfare.

Mr. Darnley Naylor said the history of the League of Nations had formed a large portion of the history of the past decade. They knew that the teachers had not the time to instruct children on subjects unmentioned in the examination list. At the conference of the National Council of Women in Brisbane it was intended to make the same request to all the State Governments in Australia.

Professor Darnley Naylor, who apologized for the absence of Mr. J. H. Vaughan (president of the local branch of the League of Nations Union), stated that already in the legal honors examination at the Adelaide University two text books concerning the League had been written. It would be seen that they were beginning at the top, and now it was desired that the preparation should begin at the roots of the young tree in the schools. He had been pleased to notice the statement made by former Senator Drake-Brockman, and also that of Lord Birkenhead, since the necessary sum of £100,000, which like these gentlemen had been converted to the League of Nations, he thought these were great possibilities in connection with the State. Even if the League broke down to-morrow it would be their duty to teach what had been attempted, and had failed, and how to set it in the future.

The Minister said he sympathized with their request. The Education Department had included Dr. Eddy's pamphlets and Fanshawe's "Reconstruction Since the War" in lessons to the children. There seemed, however, to be an impression that the minds of the children in the sixth and seventh grades were rather young to follow any lengthy or intricate National League of Nations. He suggested that the Director of Education (Mr. W. T. McCoy) and Professor Darnley Naylor might confer with a view to having a brief outline of the formation and history of the League added to the history books used in the schools. Reports he said were indicated that there was not much interest taken in the subject in the schools.

Mr. Darnley Naylor explained that the League of Nations Union had offered prizes in the schools for essays on the League, and there had been keen competition. She understood more than 1,000 essays had been submitted, and 84 had been sent on to her for final decision.

The Minister expressed pleasure at the statement, and it was understood that Professor Naylor and Mr. McCoy would confer on the lines suggested.

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UNIVERSITY LECTURES FOR TEACHERS.

The Government has provided for the delivery of lectures in arts for teachers at the University during a term in 1927. The University council has been granted the necessary sum of £100,000 to work the scheme, which will enable teachers to take University subjects from 7 to 10 o'clock in the evenings. The Public School Teachers' Union is making arrangements to employ teachers to obtain notes of lectures in subjects they desire.

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The Rev. K. Julian F. Bickersteth, headmaster of St. Peter's College, who is now in England, expects to reach Adelaide by the end of September. When he wrote on June 13 he had been to Chichester, where he preached in the school chapel (the headmaster, Mr. H. H. Hardy, being an old school and Oxford friend), and to Marlborough and Charter House. He was hoping to see Clifton and Rugby in a few days, as well as some of the other London schools.