

The United States Geological Survey is sending north a party to explore for oil in the Arctic. Whalers discovered oil in that region years ago.

A Toronto weather expert predicts that we are due for fifteen years of cold and damp weather. Many complaints are made about the weather, but as Mark Twain said, "Nothing is ever done about it."

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## OLDEST EGGS IN THE WORLD

The oldest eggs in the world were preserved, long but very good, not by cold, but in the burning sands of the Gobi desert, where they lay for a period estimated at ten million years—a record for hot-storage that it will take cold-storage several eons to surpass. They were laid by a dinosaur and were recovered by the American Museum of Natural History's third Asiatic Expedition. Roy Chapman Andrews, its leader, tells the story of this remarkable fossil find—perhaps the most unusual and interesting in scientific history—in an article entitled "Where the Dinosaur Hid its Eggs," contributed to Asia (New York, Jan.). The expedition found also, in the same locality in Mongolia, one of the most extensive deposits of reptilian skeletons ever unearthed by geologists. Mr. Andrews' speculations about how they came there, and in particular about how such fragile objects as eggs came to be preserved, are contained in the following excerpts. In his own words:

"Ten million years ago a goblin-like creature stood on the edge of a shallow basin in what now is called Mongolia. Its great round eyes stared unblinkingly from a thin, hatchet face, ending in a hooked beak. Its head sloped up and back into a circular bony frill, which formed a solid armature over the slender neck and almost covered the shoulders. Low in front and high behind, with its ten-foot body ending in a thick tail, it seemed like a horrid nightmare fantasy. It gazed across a fertile

upland with lush grass, where forest patches broke the sky-line and dotted the open savannas with islets of vivid green. Slowly it waddled down the slope and settled itself into the sand. And there in the hollow it left ten elliptical white eggs, fated, though warmed by the sun's rays, never to be hatched.

"But it and its kind laid other eggs, which did hatch, and they lived their allotted span and died. They never could know that their progeny, after thousands of generations, would wander into Siberia, cross the land-bridge to America and spread inland from its western coast.

"It was on a brilliant day of mid-summer, ten million years after the reptile had made its nest in the sandy hollow, that we pitched our tents on the rim of a great depression just above the spot where the eggs were laid. Since that far, dim day when they were left to be hatched by the Cretaceous sun, hundreds of feet of earth had drifted over them and, through the action of wind, frost and rain, had been worn away again, leaving them half exposed. Some showed only as bits of broken shell, but four remained intact. They were no longer white; during their long entombment they had changed to a delicate brown.

"The dinosaur that laid the eggs never would have recognized the surroundings of the nest could it have seen them in 1923. A great depression a dozen miles in width and more than that in length had been scooped out of a plain as hard and smooth as a tennis-court, which swept in gentle undulations to the base of the Altai Mountains, thirty miles away. The plain dropped abruptly into the basin, its edge a vast complex of ravines and gullies, red battlements and rounded turrets. Sheer walls and gigantic chimneys stood isolated on the sandy floor like the ruins of a war-swept city. Among these wandered two humped camels, and sheep drifted in snow-white patches over the green reaches of a dying lake-bed.

"It was a great day for the Third Asiatic Expedition when we arrived at the red-beds this year. It was impossible to keep the enthusiastic fossil-hunters from immediately exploring the fascinating basin that lay before them.

"One by one they wandered down the steep bluff, and soon they all were scattered among the ravines and along the sides of the sculptured buttes. In less than an hour Albert Johnson reported the discovery of a large white skull. In a few moments Kelson hurried up the slope for his collecting materials, and, when we gathered about the dinner-table in the mess-tent that evening, every man had begun to excavate a dinosaur skull.

"Our real thrill came on the second day, when George Olsen reported at tiffin that he was sure he had found fossil eggs. We joked him a good deal, but nevertheless all of us were ference suddenly evaporated, for we curious enough to walk down with him after luncheon. Then our indifference realized that we were looking at the first dinosaur eggs ever seen by a human being. That they must be those of a dinosaur, we felt certain. True enough, it never was known before that dinosaurs did lay eggs, but, since most modern reptiles are oviparous, it was considered probable that their ancient ancestors followed this method of reproduction.

"These eggs could not be those of a bird. No birds are known from the geological horizon in which the eggs were found, and the elongate shape of the eggs is distinctly reptilian. A

bird's egg usually is much larger, one end than at the other, because it is deposited in a nest, from which it might roll out unless it revolved on its point. Reptile eggs, which often are buried in the earth or sand, usually are elongate and similar in shape to the specimens that we found. These eggs were in a great deposit fill of dinosaur skeletons and containing, so far as we could discover, no remains of other animals or of birds.

"Three of the eggs lay in a cluster and evidently were in the exact spot where they had been deposited by the dinosaur. The broken shells of several others were partially embedded in the rock. Just under a low sandstone shelf, beside which they were lying, we could see the projecting ends of two others. While all the members of the Expedition were on their hands and knees about those ten-million-year-old eggs, George Olsen began to scrape away the loose rock on the summit of the shelf, and to our amazement he uncovered the skeleton of a small dinosaur, lying eight or ten inches above the eggs. Was it the reptile that had laid the eggs, or was it a predatory dinosaur that had come to feed upon them? We can not tell, but we like to think that some sudden catastrophe overtook the animal when on a visit to its nest."

Stool pigeons in Kansas police circles have no plumage. They are known as "under cover" men.

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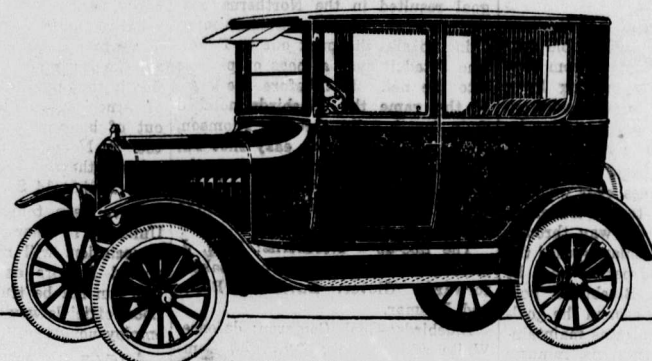
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