

other places of a like nature. It appears like an introduced species, and I suspected it was *V. arvensis*. So far as I know, it has not been previously recorded here, and there is no specimen in the herbarium of the botanical society. The other specimen also referred to *V. arvensis* was collected in the Allegheny Mountains near Altoona, and differed from the first in the size, shape and abundance of the leaves. It was growing on a hillside in the woods, far from any house or road and at some distance from cultivated ground, so that it appeared to be indigenous.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

* * Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as a proof of good faith.

On request in advance, one hundred copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

FEIGNED DEATH IN SNAKES.

It was I who suggested to Professor Kilpatrick the possibility of the apparent biting of itself by *Heterodon* being in mimicry of that which was claimed for the rattlesnake. But I do not at all *know* that the rattlesnake *has* any such habit. I have often heard it from the herdsmen on our prairies in an early day concerning our short Massasaugas, *Caudisoma tergeminum* (Cope). I have repeatedly heard persons say that they had taken a small switch and teased a rattlesnake till, in its anger, it would bite itself and die. But after reading Dr. Mitchell's statement that he had often injected the snake's own poison into its circulation without any apparent effect, I grew skeptical on the suicide theory. Professor Kilpatrick's narration to me recalled the traditions, and, knowing that this spread-head often mimicked the ways of poisonous kinds, it occurred to me this might be another manifestation. Cannot someone inform us whether it be true that any of the *Crotalidæ* have, or pretend to have, this suicidal habit, and can we not have some further statements from herpologists as to whether in any serpent its poison is fatal to itself or its fellows? Analogy would indicate that it might be. Bee stings are fatal to each other, and it seems well established that scorpions commit suicide by their own stings under certain circumstances of torment.

Apropos of the conduct of Professor Kilpatrick's snakes being a "*faint*, instead of a *feint*," it is perhaps well known that Dr. C. C. Abbott, in "Rambles About Home," claims that the similar conduct of the opossum is really a spasm from fear (rendering the creature unconscious), instead of a shamming of death.

J. N. BASKETT.

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A PECULIAR FLORA IN CHICAGO.

WHILE in Chicago last July I spent some little time in botanizing in the vicinity of the Fair grounds, and I was much struck with the peculiar flora of two vacant lots in that neighborhood. One of these is at the corner of Oglesby avenue and Sixty-second street, and is very dry with the grass cropped short by grazing animals. Here I was surprised to find the ground covered with *Potentilla anserina*, which I have never found previously in any but very marshy places. Indeed, until I had analyzed it, I could scarcely believe that it was not some

other species. The plants were all very dwarfed, presumably from their unfavorable environment, but otherwise agreed perfectly with *P. anserina* from other localities. On the edge of this same lot was a thriving specimen of *Habenaria leucophaea*, also a plant of the marshes, and so out of place here. I am inclined to think, therefore, that before the extension of the city so far south these lots were marshes and the plants are but survivors of the former flora.

In the other lot, however, at the corner of Woodlawn avenue and Fifty-ninth street, the peculiar flora does not admit of as easy an explanation. In this field the soil was rich and moist (though nowhere wet) and covered with a good growth of grass and sedges. Here I found several specimens of *Galium boreale*; and *Calamintha nuttallii* was abundant. The former, according to Gray, is an inhabitant of the "rocky banks of streams," while the latter occurs only on "wet limestone river banks." So unlikely a place did it seem for *Calamintha* that I sent a specimen to the Gray Herbarium at Cambridge, but Mr. Fernald, who very kindly examined the plant, assures me that my identification was correct. He suggests also that the species may have been introduced in that place, but I must say that this seems improbable to me. Perhaps some one more familiar with the botany of Cook County may be able to explain the occurrence of these two species in such an unlooked-for locality.

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ESKIMO TRACES IN NEW YORK.

SIR DANIEL WILSON once suggested a connection between the Eskimo and the Iroquois, founded on physical structure. The habits of the two were so different, however, that this is probable only in a slight degree. That the Eskimo once roamed where the Iroquois afterwards lived seems certain. If the Northmen reached the shores of New England, the Eskimo must even then have dwelt along the coast, and archæology makes it probable that a large part of the Middle States had not then been occupied by the so-called Indian tribes.

The recent collections made far north have been especially interesting to me as bearing upon some relics found in New York and Canada, and in a less degree in New England. The one-sided harpoon of Alaska differs in no respect from those which the Mohawks and Onondagas used three hundred years ago. The half-circular slate knives found all through the territory mentioned are like those of the Eskimo women now. The Ninth Report of the Bureau of Ethnology contains other suggestive material. Through central New York, in portions of the Province of Ontario, in Canada, and along Lake Champlain occur double-edged polished slate knives, arrow-like in form, almost identical with those on page 151 of the report and some following pages. Rarely have I seen them single-edged, and, as they usually occur near streams, I have thought they were used in opening and cleaning fish. Almost all those I have seen in New York and Canada have slight barbs, a feature which seems lacking in the Eskimo knife. With us they are made of various kinds of slate, and I have one very broad form of red slate. Usually they are dark grey. The flat tong is always bevelled, and often notched. A very delicate and beautiful one I recently figured from the Oneida River.

If the Iroquois used combs at all before European contact, they were very simple, but some of their later examples remind one of those of the Eskimo under similar circumstances. The wooden and horn spoons are also suggestive, the broad wooden spoon occurring