

and forth in the basin by the wind, whereas stream sediment and dissolved matter travel in one direction only. It is well known that in drawing conclusions regarding the rate of denudation account should be taken of the material transported by wind. Attention was called to this factor of the problem by E. E. Free in an article published in *SCIENCE*, March 12, 1909, but it is difficult to comprehend how conclusions as to the "rate of lowering of the continental surface through stream corrasion" are affected by aerial transportation. (Erosion rather than corrasion is probably here meant, for corrasion does not include transportation.)

In the fourth paragraph of his article Mr. Keyes speaks of wind-blown dust and then says:

In recent geologic times also, the western half of the basin has actually had deposits laid down upon its surface to a thickness of not less than 1,000 feet.

Now if "recent geologic times" means most of the Tertiary and Quaternary periods (of which *Recent* time is but a small part); if the "western half of the basin" means a part of the western half of the basin; and if "deposits" means not only wind deposits (loess and sand) but also and predominantly aqueous deposits, the statement would appear to be in accord with the facts. Nevertheless it might still be characterized as trite and irrelevant, for the existence of Tertiary and Quaternary strata in the western part of the basin is well known and the commonly accepted conclusion that the great western tributary, Missouri River, carries 150 to 200 million tons of mineral matter out of its drainage basin every year is on just as firm a basis as before.

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ALBINISM IN THE ENGLISH SPARROW

TO THE EDITOR OF *SCIENCE*: The note in *SCIENCE* of January 1, concerning albinism in the English sparrow recalls several observations made by the present writer at various times. Semi-albinism, or spotting, or mottling with white in the plumage of these birds is not at all rare, though of course not particularly conspicuous unless one is especially

used to the study of birds in the open. I have seen this feature among these sparrows both in this country and in Europe at several times and places. But complete albinism is less common, though not so rare as the note referred to above might imply. A number of years ago in Oxford, Ohio, I found in a brood of sparrows just in flight from the nest three specimens which were perfectly white, and with the characteristic pink eyes of the pure albino. Two of these birds I was able to capture, the other escaped. Two of the same brood were quite normal in plumage. Neither of the parent birds was an albino, and so far as one could know the phenomenon was quite spontaneous in this brood. Another case which came to my knowledge quite recently was in Syracuse. In this case a single specimen was observed by school children of one of the grammar schools of the city who at once ran to the teacher with the news, and the teacher having seen it communicated with me as to the significance of a feature quite new to her. While I did not see this specimen myself, the validity of the case is beyond doubt and may be accepted as another example of the phenomenon.

In this connection it may be well to call attention to several cases of partial albinism which I have noted in the common robin. Several years ago I found such a female robin brooding a nest near my house and I took pains to watch the outcome. None of the young gave any indication of white plumage. Another case has come under observation in a park adjoining my present home in Syracuse. Here again, the robin was a female, and had a conspicuous patch of white feathers on the back and shoulder. The specimen has been noted now for three successive summers, and though careful attention has been directed to the young no evidence of similar markings has been noted. Albinism being a recessive character tends to disappear under ordinary conditions of mating, hence its comparative rarity in a state of nature.

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