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Do You Know?

Perhaps You Do Perhaps You Don't

FEW people are familiar with the fact that the sacred beetle of the old Egyptians was nothing more or less than our tumblebug. It was no doubt the arduous labors of the insect that won their admiration. Eggs are laid only one at a time, and as soon as one is laid the scarabæus makes its way to the droppings of some herb eating animal, takes away a small mass, and places the single egg in the center. Later it forms with it a spherical ball the size of which is often larger than its own body. When the ball is finished the insect takes it with its two crooked hind feet and, pushing it backward, rolls it in every direction.

By dint of much labor and perseverance the ball becomes smooth and rounded and tolerably hard. Sometimes, however, if the place is hilly, the ball gets away and rolls into the tall grass and is lost. In this event the insect searches diligently in every nook and corner, and if no success crowns its efforts another egg is laid and the process repeated. The ball, when quite smooth and in what the scarabæus considers proper condition, is placed in a hole previously dug by the insect, and the work is finished as far as it is concerned.

It was because of these remarkable labors that it became the sacred scarabæus and symbol of fecundity among the Egyptians, and its image lives to-day in thousands of sculptured rocks from the mouth of the Nile to hundreds of miles inland. Its labors also reminded the ancient Egyptians of the labors of their gods, Isis and Osiris. Therefore, it is seen everywhere on the bottom ornaments of their temples, having the earth ball, which is the emblem of the globe, placed between its legs.

The images of these beetles, carved in precious stones, are often found in the sarcophagi, and sometimes even dried remains of the insects themselves. It is only right to say, however, that the Egyptian variety is claimed to make its earth balls from the mud of the Nile. In almost every conceivable place in ancient Egypt this sacred beetle was displayed. There are stone ones in the British Museum from three to four feet long, and they have been found carved in marble, agate, garnet, and gold.

LAW OF GRAVITY VIOLATED

WATER seeks its level." is an expression heard so frequently as to be almost trite, and yet the law has its exceptions. There are conditions under which water actually flows upward and rises above its source. If a glass tube be dipped into water, the column inside will be above the level of the surrounding surface. Moreover, if a tube of half the diameter be substituted, the column doubles its height. The water creeps along the inside of the tube, owing to the adhesion, and forms a cup shaped depression at the top.

An explanation is not difficult. It can be proved mathematically that if the diameter of a circle be diminished one-half, the circumference is also reduced to that extent, while the area is one-fourth of its former value. The circumference of the column of water being reduced one-half, its contact with the glass, and hence the adhesive force, is also diminished that extent, while the cross section, and hence the weight, is decreased to a fourth of what it was before. Therefore, the second column can be twice the height of the first without exceeding the lifting power.

Remarkable as the underlying principles of this phenomenon undoubtedly are, Nature made use of them long before man made their discovery. Every tree and flower adds its testimony. The core of a tree or plant, instead of being a single open channel, consists of a spongelike substance containing many miniature tunnels, through which the sap and moisture collected by the roots flow upward in small rivulets, rising higher and higher, in sheer defiance of the great law of gravity.

"ANOTHER'S SHOES"

THE expression, "stepping into another's shoes," like many another common phrase, had its origin in an ancient custom.

The old Norse law required that a person to be adopted must step into a previously prepared shoe. This shoe was made from the skin taken from the right hind leg of a "three winters old bull."

The skin was flayed from above the hock, and out of this the shoe was made. The person to be adopted stepped into this shoe, taking into his arms, one at a time it is presumed, the younger sons of the man making the adoption. If there were also sons who were of age, they stepped into the shoe afterward, by this sign showing their consent to the adoption.

A man in this way could adopt an illegitimate son, making him his lawful heir; but in that case the father was obliged to step into the shoe first. If there were any full grown sons, they stepped into the shoe afterward; if there were no full grown sons, then the next of kin did the stepping, and, without his consent, by the way, this special adoption could not be made.

Witnesses to the ceremony in the use of the shoe were required to establish its legality.

It will be seen that this was considered an important ceremony, and, since so much "shoe stepping" was done, it is not strange that the expression as now used passed into common speech.



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