For Our Youth.

IN WAIT WITH AN ANACONDA.

An Unexpected Rival.

BY W. THOMPSON.

On my second expedition into northern Brazil some years ago, we camped for several weeks on the Rio Branco, about 100 miles above its junction with the Rio Negro, one of the principal confluents of the Amazon.

The rainy season was past, and, although we were almost on the equatorial line, the weather was not unendurably hot, the constantly-blowing eastern trade winds greatly reducing its temperature and rendering our big tent, pitched in the shade of an immense caman tree, a comfortable abode.

Our party consisted of eleven men—ten Americans and a newly caught Irishman—"Teddy" O'Brien by name, who, more for the sake of "divilment and divarshun" than $40 a month, as he had said, had engaged with us as cook. And a truly wonderful cook he was!

However, as we all survived his ingenious experiments in that line, it would, perhaps, be ungrateful to specify them. Anyhow, the fellow earned his salary twice over by the inexhaustible flow of merriment that kept our digestive organs in condition to assimilate the most erratic of his culinary creations.

While some members of our party were amateur botanists, geologists, naturalists or taxidermists, we were all enthusiastic explorers and hunters, and we fairly reveled in the wealth of animal and vegetable life about us.

Our six-ton boat moored in the river, was fast becoming a museum. Representing the country's flora, we had dried plants, shrubs and flowers without end; in the way of reptiles, a stuffed cayman, several striped rattlesnakes, one twelve-foot boa, and a great variety of lizards, while in insects our collection was exceedingly rich. Of the feathered tribe we had almost everything from the mighty condor of the Andes down to minute humming birds; and of fishes—besides a fine electric eel—one or more specimens of nearly every kind found in the island waters of the tropics.

Of wild beasts we had already shot and set up the jaguar, red wolf, cougar, peccary, oulot, tapir, tiger-cat, wild dog, three kinds of deer, the sloth and armadillo, as well as six varieties of monkeys and a number of other small arboreal creatures.

But there was one amphibious animal, the manatu, and a semi-amphibious reptile, the anaconda, we had not yet obtained. We had seen scores of the first while ascending the river, but had never secured one, though it is a somewhat sluggish creature, and not at all difficult of approach, as it feeds upon aquatic plants at the bottom of still water and comes frequently to the surface to breathe.

One evening we were bemoaning our bad luck in this respect when Teddy observed: "An is it the quare baste that's a cross becune a mermaid an' a fish that ye're afther wantin'? Faix, it's meself can put ye ahn to the craythur thin in no time."

"All right, Teddy. Let's have your plan," said Tom Alden.

"It's aisier nor rowlin down hill, me bhoe. Up beyant there's phwat yez call a lagoon, an' the ar ind av it runs up loike a late intil thim thick woods. Schure it's not tin schteps across; an' be the same token Oi seen a man—manistee, is it? an' a good lump av a young wan frolickin' round there bright an' airly this same blissid mornin'. The wather in thim parts is mighty shoal, I'm thinkin', for whin the old baste was feedin' ahn the bottom, the baby 'ud schramble up ivery now and thin an' roosht ahn her back, kapin' its own wee paddle av a tail in the wather, koind of sochible loike. Sorra bit av thruble for some av yez to consale yersilves ahn both sides av the lane an' bag the two crathurs."

Teddy's idea seeming a good one, at daybreak next morning four of us, taking our rifles, a barbed grappling iron and a coil of rope, set off for the lagoon, a grass-grown stretch of stagnant water lying parallel to the river, and, at its nearer end, about a half-mile from our camp.

Just as Teddy had said, we found its further or northern extremity to consist of a narrow creek, and this was closely bordered on both sides by water palms, gum, rubber, saman trees and gigantic tree-ferns, with a dense undergrowth of bushes, while, running through all, reaching to and binding together the loftiest tree-tops, was a wondrous network of liana vines, amid which, when we arrived, innumerable monkeys were just beginning their morning sports.

With some difficulty our quartet, comprising Tom Alden, two other men and myself, gained the westward margin of the watery lane, where we esconced ourselves in the matted brushwood, deeming it prudent to take opposite sides, for fear of accidents in possible cross-firing.

We were perfectly concealed from all observation except that of the jeering monkeys, who, looking down on us from their leafy heights, kept up a ceaseless clamor of derisive cries.

For nearly an hour we crouched, watching in motionless attention the pond's surface, seeing a lazily-floating capman or two, but no sign of the game we sought.

Directly fronting us, on the east side of the creek there lay, not more than nine yards away, the fallen trunk of a laurel tree, from which rose several broken and partly decayed branches, the whole being in deep shade, as the sun had not yet risen high enough to fully light that part of the island.

While we were patiently waiting, Alden nudged me and whispered: "See what beautifully variegated moss covers one of those limb stubs. We must gather some of it before we go back to camp."

I was about to make some commonplace reply, when, thirty or forty yards south of us, I noticed a slight undulation of the water, and presently there appeared above its surface, first the head and then the back of a full-grown monster, followed immediately by a like emerging of a calf, a comical looking little creature not half as long as its mother.

The Caymans Were Coming.

After inhaling air for a half minute or so, the pair sank again and, as we plainly saw by the ripples, began to feed on bottom-growing plants, along the east shore and directly toward the head of the lagoon.

The next time they rose for air they were twenty yards near us than before, and I whispered to Alden: "Wait till they get into the shadow between us and the big log; then, when their heads show, you take the old one and I'll take the youngster, shoot straight for the brain and they'll never know what hurts them." Tom nodded assent and we waited in silence.

The water shoaled so rapidly now, that by the time the animals were abreast of us, and within three feet of the laural log the mother's rounded back appeared above the surface, and the little one using its handlike flipper to climb with, scrambled upon it, riding exactly as I have seen the young of an African hippopotamus.

In another moment the old monster lifted her head; and making a sign to my two other companions not to shoot, Tom and I quietly thrust our rifle barrels through the bushes, took careful aim, and were about to fire.

That instant, however, Tom's "beautifully variegated moss" leaped into sudden life. A flashing streak of black, tawny brown and yellow shot out from the dead branch, and in the twinkling of an eye the calf's muzzle was fast between the recurving fangs of a monstrous anaconda.

Then while the helpless creature rolled off its mother's back, there was a gleaming whirl of circling rings, a cyclone of concentive coils, a churning of the center into foam, and almost before we could realize the startling scene the mighty serpent had crushed the life out of its prey.

But as the reptile compressed its overlapping folds tighter and tighter, two simultaneously fired bullets shattered its flat head, and its great length, slowly uncoiling, straightened out along the blood-stained surface of the creek.

Apparently paralyzed by fright, the mother still stood with her head above water, staring at the floating serpent and her dead calf. One of us, with more presence of mind than the rest, put the beast out of misery by a shot through the brain.

Thus, most unexpectedly, we had killed at one time the several specimens we were anxious to obtain. The next thing was to secure the bodies, for already attracted by the scent of blood, no less than five caymans were making for the spot.

Leaving our riflemen to dispose of these—an easy task with his repeater—the other three of us forced our way round the head of the creek to the laurel log, and, by the aid of grapnel and rope, towed the carcasses a little way down the east side and hauled them up on a projecting sandbar, where they could readily be reached by boat.

From the point of the curiously cleft upper lip to the extremity of her flatted tail, the old monster measured eight feet and four inches, while the calf's total length fell a fraction short of three and one-half feet. The anaconda was the largest I have ever seen, proving to be twenty-one feet and eight inches long.

Though the reptile rarely attacks man, unless indeed, he is in or very close to water, we could not, while measuring him, express some shudders as we reflected what might have happened in case we had killed the monsters when we first leveled on them, and then, without noticing the lying in-wait monster, had gone round to the log to draw in the bodies.

The anaconda, called by the natives of Brazil the great water serpent, must not be confounded with any other member of the boa family proper, from which it greatly differs, not only in coloration, but also in structural form, habits and size. The South America boa seldom exceeds thirteen feet in length, while the anaconda not infrequently attains the length of thirty feet, being excelled in this respect by only one variety of the Asiatic python—a tree and rock haunting reptile, said by some writers to reach the length of sixty feet. It may be so, but the largest one I ever saw, or was creditably informed of, measured a scant thirty-two feet.

When John Harding, the cayman killer, rejoined us, Tom Alden and I set off for camp, leaving him to guard our prizes from possible attack of wild beasts.

Besides our heavy boats, we had a large but very light cedar skiff. Embarking in this, with our two best taxidermists, and taking Teddy O'Brien along, we returned by way of the river to the lagoon, the intention being to skin the three creatures where they lay.

We had duly posted our fellow sportsmen, but had purposely refrained from telling Teddy about the anaconda, as we wished to see how he would act.

Necessarily in rowing, our backs were turned toward the bow and it was not until the boat grounded on the bar that the honest fellow dropped his oar, looked around, and saw the great serpent. Then we almost regretted our trick, for with a wild cry of "mother! mother!" he sprang to his feet and would have plunged overboard but for restraining hands.

Being at last convinced, however, that the monster was really dead, he ceased trembling and exclaimed: "The Lord be bechune us an' harrum! An' is it riptoils like that yez have in Amerikay? Sure the blissed St. Pathrick spint his stringth in the wrong shpot entoirely! It's himself wud a hed a foine stiddy job here whoile he wus thriflin' wid thim weeny shnakes in ould Oireland, not to minshun the sthray toads and sich loike insex'. Begorra! and sorra wan ov me'll ever wandther be me lone silf in them wuds agin, barrin' there's a moighty sthrong lot av ye bhyes wid me!"

And he kept his word.

The Terrific Shock.

LORD BYRON'S SCOTCH BOYHOOD.

A Poor Lad in Scotland Until His Tenth Year.

BY FRANK POPE HUMPHREY.

Lord Byron was the descendant of a king, and that king was a poet and a Scotchman, and Byron was always prouder of his Scotch blood than of his English forefathers. He was born in London, but was fond of calling himself in his poems, "a young Highlander."

His mother, an Erden, was a Scotch woman of the royal Stuart line, descended straight from a daughter of James I, and James I wrote that famous old ballad found in all collections of ballads, "The King Quhair."

Lord Byron's father was a spendthift and married the Scotch heiress with a view to the payment of his debts, and in ten years her money and her estate were gone; her castle and her ancestral lands were sold before her child's birth.

There is a ballad about this bad marriage in an old Scotch song collection:

"O where are ye gean, bonny Miss Erden,
O where are ye gean so bonny and braw?
Ye're married, ye're married wi' Johnny Byron
To squander the lands o' eight awa'."

His mother's castle is now a gray, ivy-clad ruin, the property of Lord Aberdeen.

HOW HE CAME BY HIS TEMPER.

Byron came naturally enough by his spendthrift disposition. He came as naturally by his ungovernable temper, as we shall see. He entered life handicapped.

He was brought up solely by his mother. A hundred years ago he was living with her in lodgings in Aberdeen, a little lame fellow five years old. His father had died when he was only three.

Byron had even in those childish days "silent rages." Reproved for tearing his frock, he seized it with both hands and tore it from top to bottom. But his mother when in a fit of passion would do the same with her caps and gowns.

She was short and fat and rolled in her gait, and when angry with her boy, and trying to catch him, the little scamp would dance around her just beyond her reach, laughing and mimicking her movements. At such times in her rage she forgot her motherhood, and taunted him with being "a lame brat."

Yet there is sufficient proof that she really loved him, and his published letters to her show an affection on his part and a constant care for her comfort and happiness.

Yet the man could not forget the experience of the child. To a friend in Genoa he said not long before his death that he "traced the first feelings of pain and humiliation he had ever known to the coldness with which she (his mother) had received his caresses in his childhood, and to the frequent taunts upon his personal deformity with which she had wounded him.

Although naturally sensitive on the subject of his lameness—and in his childhood he was very lame, having two club feet—yet he used sometimes to say laughingly of himself and a little Aberdeen playfellow similarly afflicted, "Come and see twa little laddies with twa club feet going up Broad street!"

There is little left in Aberdeen immediately connected with Byron. The grammar school has disappeared and is replaced by the fine art gallery.

The sea which he always loved is the same, and there is a bit of old Aberdeen that will always have an interest for Byron's readers, viz: the old Brig of Don or Balgarine, to which he refers in "Don Juan" canto X, and then in a note he tells how fascinating he was with the awful prophecy:

"Brig o' Balgarine black is your wa'
With a wife's ae son and a mare's a foal
Down shall we fa'."

You may still hear this prophecy; a Deerside wife repeated it to me one day.

As Byron was an "only son," it had for him added fascinations. And his superstitious feeling in regard to its was shared with those older than himself. A former Lord Aberdeen who was an only son, and whose favorite saddle horse was "a mare's ae foal," always dismounted when he came to this bridge and had his horse led over in advance of him.

The boy Byron used to hang over its walls, fascinated with the depth and blackness of the salmon pool forty feet below. The Don here makes an abrupt turn, forming the pool. Steep wooded banks, the haunts of innumerable songbirds, slope down on one side, while on the other cluster antique cottages with gardens. An attractive spot, and of a charm sure to have stirred the latent poetic feeling in the boy's mind.

Ballatrick Farm.

The little lad had to undergo much suffering in the attempts made to straighten his feet, and his nurse, when adjusting the bandages at night, used to sing to him to sleep or relate stories and legends. This was his nurse Agnes Gray, to whom and her sister Marjory who succeeded her, Byron was always deeply attached. Agnes taught him to repeat many of the Psalms, the first and twenty-fifth being the first committed to memory. He learned from her to read the Bible. In late years he writes to Murray, his publisher: "I am a reader and admirer of those books (the Old and New Testaments) and had read them through when I was 8 years old * * * in Aberdeen in 1796.

To Sir Walter Scott he writes in 1822: "I was bred a canny Scot * * * My heart warms to the tartan, or to anything of Scotland which reminds me of Aberdeen, and other parts not so far from the highlands of that town, about Invercauld and Braemar where I was sent to drink goat's fey, in 1795-6, in consequence of a threatened decline after scarlet fever."

It was to Ballaterich farm, up Deerside, that he was sent, about two miles from Ballater. It lies in a deep glen. The present farm house is new. That of Byron's day was a long, low, one-storied, thatched biggin, such a farm house as may still be found in the remoter highlands; what we should think the acme of discomfort. Of this house only a portion of the wall remains. A fire consumed the rest a few years ago, together with the "box-bed" in which the boy Byron used to sleep and which was shown to visitors many years as "Byron's bed." The box-bed, as perhaps the reader knows, is the common cottage bed of Scotland, built into the house and shut in with doors in the daytime.

HE WAS A MISCHIEVOUS LAD.

Some years ago there died in this valley the last individual who had any personal recollections of Byron, an old woman of 93. Rev. Mr. Michie, who knew her and had frequently talked with her gave me some account of these recollections.

"He was a very takin' laddie, but no easily managed. He was very fond of coming up to see my father's shop (a carpenter's shop), and particularly a turning lathe; but he wid na hand his hand frae ony o' the tools and he spoiled them completely before he would let them go.

"My father could na lay hands on him, and he wid tak' na telling; so at last he always set some o' us to watch when we wid see him coming up the brae frae Ballaterich; and when he got word that he was coming he would lock the door and gang awa' out about. There was nae ither way o' delin' wi' him."

"He was a very takin' laddie, but no easily managed," is a delightful and accurately descriptive bit of Byron both as boy and man.

A young girl at the farm house told me of an old woman, probably this same one, who used to tell "us children" about the boy Byron. But of what she told, that he was "a mischievous laddie" seemed to be the chief reminiscence.

ATHLETIC IN SPITE OF HIS CLUB FEET.

Notwithstanding his extreme lameness, Byron was very active. It was said of him at the Aberdeen grammar school that he was fonder of athletic sports than of study. And his poems show an astonishing acquaintance with this region for one so handicapped.

He was always a fearless horseman, and may have made some use of highland ponies; but his intimate acquaintance with the hills could only have been attained by vigorous climbing.

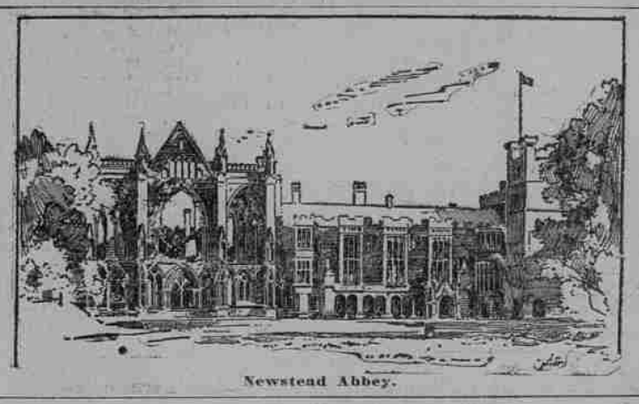
He was also an expert swimmer, an accomplishment of which he was rather proud, and he acquired that expertness while wrestling with Sea's strong tide, as well as with the ocean waves on Aberdeen beach.

The second summer of his stay at Deerside, his mother took him eighteen miles further up the valley to Invercauld and Braemar. And to this visit we probably owe "Lachin Y Gair," one of the best of his short poems, and of which Ruskin says in "Prateritu," "whatever Pope might have gracefully said or honestly felt of Windsor woods and streams was mere tinking cymbal to me compared with Byron's lore of Lachin Y Gair."

It was while at Braemar, that Byron came so near losing his life at the Linn of Dee. His foot caught in the heather growing on the edge of the narrow ravine through which the water forces its way, and he was barely saved by his servants.

"BYRON'S MARY."

The Mary of one of Byron's most famous poems has generally been understood to have been Mary Duff. But there is good grounds for believing that she was Mary Robertson, a daughter of the Ballaterich farmer. Mary Robertson was six years older than Byron, about 15 at the time of his stay there. She would naturally have taken to the handsome, affectionate little laddie so painfully afflicted, and he evidently regarded her with that loving devotion to a lad of his years is likely to feel for a girl so much older.



Newstead Abbey.

She was not generally considered so handsome as an elder sister Jane, but, says my old woman again, "She was a bonnie lasie for a' that." She was the little Byron's daily companion, and he was often heard to say: "This is my Mary," with that glad sense of possession with which a child claims his own. And I am told that she was known in the valley ever after as "Byron's Mary."

The scenery of the "Highland" song too, is clearly that of this valley, which fact further establishes her claim to the "Sweet Mary" of the poem. Furthermore, it is not a love poem.

Mary Robertson married an exise officer stationed at Crathie, now the queen's parish. She was early widowed, and lived to a great age. The little churchyard where she lies is in the heart of a silent moor, not far from Ballaterich.

BECOMES LORD AT TEF.

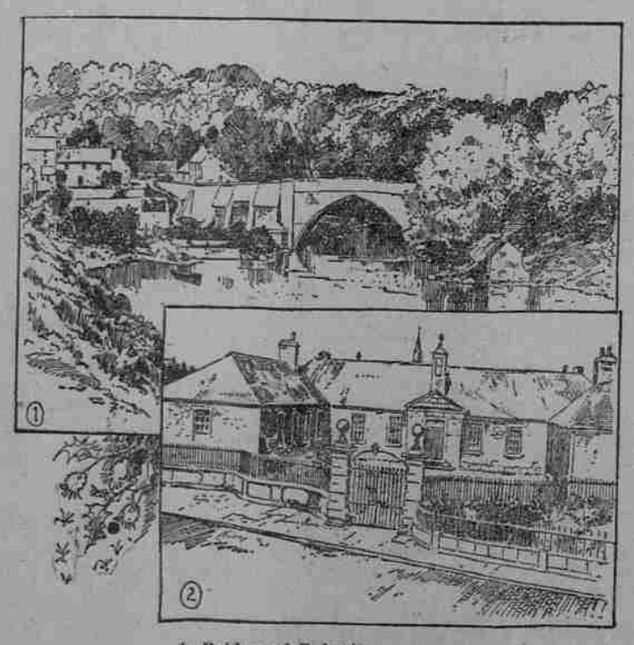
In May, 1798, Byron became "his lordship" at the death of his great-uncle, the fifth Lord Byron.

It is said that the day after his accession to that title, he ran up to his mother and asked did she "see any difference in him since he had been made a lord, as he perceived none himself."

I would not repeat the familiar story of how when his name was called at school with the "Dominus" prefixed for the first time he was overcome with emotion and unable to respond "ad sum," and burst into tears, were it not that this incident has been so often cited as a proof of Lord Byron's inordinate vanity! So little is human nature understood? Is he the one human being, pray, who has burst into tears under the overwhelming sense of good fortune?

It was a great change, indeed, for the boy of ten, from the narrow income and lodgings of Aberdeen, and comparative obscurity, to rank and Newstead abbey.

Mrs. Byron and her little son at once left Aberdeen for England, and the sale of all their household furnishings, exclusive of linen and plate, brought munificent sum of £74 17s. 7d.!



1. Bridge of Balgeine.
2. School in Aeberdeen.

THE MECHANISM OF TOUCH.

Phenomena of Nerve Telegraphy—Curious Experiments.

BY EUGENE MURRAY AARON PH. D.

As the reader holds this paper in his hand, there are two ways by which he is made aware of its presence therein. One of these is sight; the other is the sense of touch, or "tactile sensibility," as the scientists call it.

Touch is, probably, the least complex of the five senses. Yet examination shows it to be far from a simple system by which the tactile sensibility of the finger tips is conveyed to that portion of the brain with which the reader "knows" that the paper in his hand.

Throughout the surface of the skin and mucous membranes there are numberless papillae—highly sensitive points rising above the surface. These are outposts of the sense of touch. They may be plainly seen under a powerful lense, and are best observed on the tip of the tongue. In many of these papillae are minute, bulbous organs, known as "tactile corpuscles" or "terminal bulbs." The bulbs themselves are again divided into several portions.

These bulbs are the telegraph keys whereby messages are sent from all parts of the body to the main office of the brain. Nor does this analogy with telegraphy end here; for, just as the electrician will tell you that the "electric fluid or current" is set in motion along the wire, and then admit his inability to explain this, so the physiologist must confess his ignorance of some of the details of the nervous telegraphy of touch.

However, this we do know: when some of these bulbs are compressed by pressure on the tip of the finger, the sensation of touch is sent coursing through the hand, the forearm and arm, across the shoulder, under the collar bone, to join with many others in that great highway to the nerves, the spinal cord, and thus reach the brain.

It is not alone the intricate and little-know mechanism of touch that is interesting; the different and remarkable manifestations in the various surfaces of the body, and in the same surfaces in different individuals, are equally so.

The curious tests and experiments with the sense of touch have been made, mainly by the use of a very simple instrument devised by Drs. Weper and Valentine. This is a pair of compasses, capable of fine gradual adjustment, tipped with small pieces of cork.

If the points of the touch-testing instrument be applied to the centre of the back, at very short distances apart, the two sets of being but one point. And this will usually be true in that region until the ponits are separated quite two inches. A long series of experiments, made on many persons, at all ages and under various conditions, waranted Valentine in compiling the following table of distances at which the two points may be separately distinguished on various parts of the body.

Tip of tongue	.04 inch.
Tips of fingers, average	.08 inch.
Under surface of middle joint of finger	.13 inch.
Middle surface of tongue	.21 inch.
Back of fingers	.32 inch.
Center of cheek	.38 inch.
Back of hand	.58 inch.
Great toe	.63 inch.
Instep	1.04 inch.
Over breast bone	1.32 inch.
Fleshy part of thigh	1.78 inch.
Middle of back	2.02 inch.

While these measurements do not give an absolutely correct idea of the acuteness of touch, they afford an accurate estimate of its delicacy; and together with other experiments make up a fairly exact knowledge of the field.

Cork-Tipped Compass.

The principal other experiments have to do with the different surfaces of the body as to the amount of weight that produces a change in tactile sensation. The simplest apparatus for this purpose consists of a pair of delicately poised balances, so arranged that one arm can be brought to bear on any surface with a pressure varied by the addition or subtraction of weights at the other end.

This instrument for testing the touch sensations of different weights show that for the most part, obtuseness to weight is found in the same areas, and in about the same proportions, as obtuseness to the other tactile sensation. Thus we have the following delicate changes in weight detected by the regions named:

Forehead and temples	.03 grain
Fingers, average	.08 grain
Chin and nose	.62 grain

After which come in order such areas as the back of the foot, its sole, the back of the legs and thighs; and the middle of the back comes as the least sensitive.

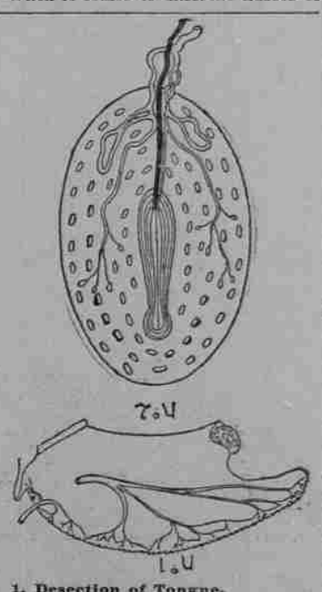
In the light of these experiments, we may readily understand why it is that a surface which feels smooth, when passed across the back of the hand, is found to be quite rough, if either the tip of the tongue or the index finger is passed over it, for the latter have fully 140 times the sensitiveness of the former.

So, too, we can understand why a blow on the back is far less painful than one on the top of the great toe; and realize why the usual method of spanking is much preferred by the spanked one to the application of a ruler across the fingers and palm.

It must be borne in mind that the figures here given are for an average of different ages and varying conditions.

When we compare individuals, we find some very surprising differences. Even among children of the same parentage, marked differences may be observed, as anyone may prove by trying the compass experiments among his acquaintances.

When it comes to different classes of the same race, the differences are more marked. The tactile sense is then seen to be one susceptible of much cultivation; one as capable of training as sight or hearing, or as improvable by use as the muscles of the arm. For example, the sensibility in the finwer tips of a blind person, trained to read raised letters with them, is many times more acute than that of a sailor whose fingers have grown callous by exposure and work. So, too, the arm of a young girl, tender and soft, is far more sensitive to touch than that of a foundryman whose much-thickened skin has suffered the hardening effect of great heat.



1. Desection of Tongue.
2. Actile Corpuscle.

Naturally, as tactile sensibility depends on how close together are placed the papillae containing nerve bulbs, it is correct to reason that pain is acute in proportion to the frequency of these in any area.

This we find to be the case. The acheing tooth or ear, the pain from a splinter under a finger nail, an injury to the tongue or eye, are all exceedingly painful because they involve a region where nerve terminals are thickly placed. A boil on the palm of the hand will involve fully 250 times as many sensative points as will one in the middle of the back, simply because .13 is but one-sixteenth of 2.02, and the square of 16 is 256.

And this brings us to a most surprising fact. By many measurements and experiments made by Professor Lombroso and others, it is ascertained that the average of tactile sensibility in woman is considerably less than in man. Hence we are compelled to reconsider the long-held theory that woman makes less display of suffering because she possesses greater fortitude, greater mental control under agony. Professor Lombroso and a number of foremost physiologists now believe that woman has been endowed with somewhat less sensibility to pain, as a kindly provision of nature, since she is called on to suffer so much.

Be that as it may, we can, as we lay our papers down, now understand how it is that they make so much less impression dropped into our laps than they did held in our hands.

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