

THE LAVA CONNECTION

Ruegg presents his case very convincingly. One couldn't escape the logic of his arguments, but, if you persisted that it is possible that a proposition may be logically correct and yet not be true, he would take you to his laboratory and demonstrate, by actual tests there is something more than mere theoretical basis for his science of fertilization.

He would show, for example, what mineral elements the sample of soil contains. He would show, too, that chemical fertilizers and ordinary barnyard manure don't contain the elements the soil lacked. Then, he would give ocular proof that the elements lacking in the soil and common fertilizers, can be found in lavas he brought from the sides of volcanoes -- from Vesuvius, Hekla, Aetna, Mount Pelee, Tacoma, Mauna-loa, Timboro, and Chimborazo.

Such a demonstration was evidential. One was forced to admit after witnessing it that the proposition resolves down to one vital question: to what degree does the soil require the mineral elements in the production of healthy vegetation? If, as Ruegg asserted, they are the very life of the plant, and without them healthful growth is impossible, the importance of his discovery is apparent.

Ruegg had another theory -- not so easily demonstrated -- that the health of animal and vegetable kingdoms are so closely related that one may be said to actually depend upon the other.

"Everything in life," he said in explanation, "is a matter of transformation, or progression. This law of progression begins with the mineral and works up to man. It is the mineral that produces the plant. The animal feeds upon the plant. Man feeds upon both plant and animal. That which means health and strength for one means health and strength for the other. That which begins weakness, disease and death to the lower strata of organic life forces the same heritage on the highest organism, or on man himself.

"Thus, given healthful soil, or soil containing the right proportion of mineral elements, we have healthful vegetation, and so on -- up to the scale -- to well-fed looking cattle, and germ-proof human beings. If this law of healthful life is to be kept in operation, however, there must be no break in the chain. Minerals may have been in soil originally, but a few seasons growing crops will impoverish the best soil.

"Cattle eat plants, extracting mineral elements they contain. The rest is discarded, yet farmers endeavor year after year to restore the virtues of soil by giving back to it this residue in the form of manure -- matter in which there are practically none of the mineral elements that make healthful vegetation possible."

Ruegg contended the consumption of such plants is responsible for the greater portion of the ill-health that exists in the animal world, from the beast up to man himself. It was an interesting theory while spade work was done on the Panama Canal, but few listened.

But isn't it interesting to note how slowly the world catches up with its greatest thinkers?
John J. Ruegg accepted the dictates of reason -- and for our time this suggests that the
slow thinkers have a long way to go.

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