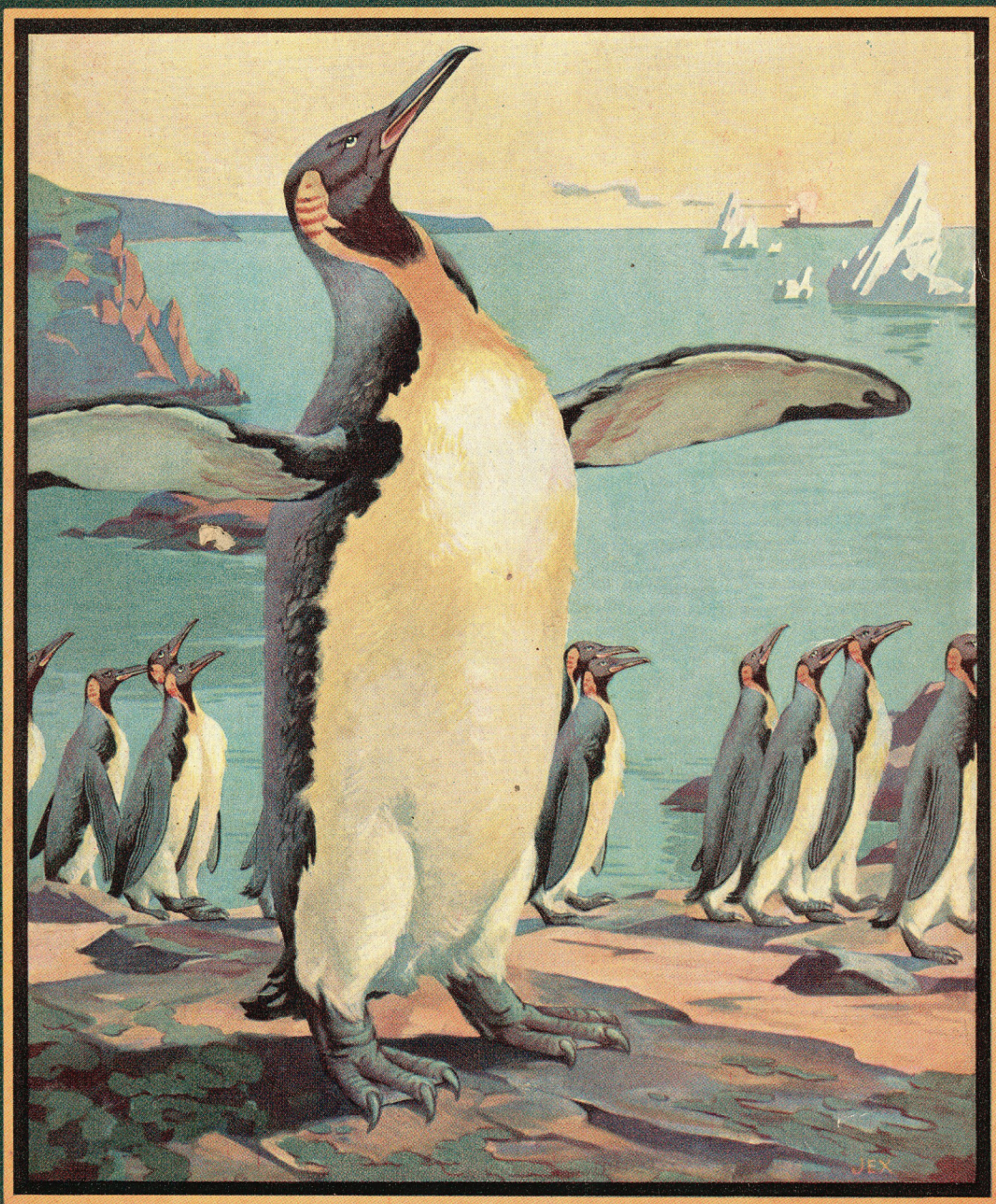


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ORCHID-LOVER

SAMUEL UNTERMYER, WHOSE FLOWERS ACCOMPANY HIM TO COURT

BY ADOLPH L. FIERST

This is the first of a series of stories about the Nature hobbies of people prominent in many walks of life. This group emphasizes the general interest in Nature that may be found, often in the most unexpected places and on the part of men and women whose callings are in totally different fields. An interesting group of stories is in store.

IN an immense, sunlit, private office on the twenty-third floor of the Equitable Building, in the heart of New York's financial district; in his apartment on Fifth Avenue; in a pent-house atop the President Hotel, in Atlantic City; and in a great pile of masonry at Greystone, near Yonkers, New York, stand great vases filled with magnificent orchids. Wherever the master of these widely separated places may be, he has his fresh orchids. Samuel Untermyer, at seventy-two, is almost as famous for his flowers as for his unparalleled career in law, finance, and civic welfare.

It is doubtful whether anyone, during the past thirty years, has ever seen the great lawyer without an orchid in his lapel. He has one great hobby—flowers—and on them he spends hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. To say that Mr. Untermyer derives more personal satisfaction from his hobby than from his legal and civic activities would be an exaggeration; but it is most assuredly true that this man of superior intellect—he has been called a man of genius—derives more pleasure, stimulation, and inspiration from his thousands and thousands of plants than an average individual could draw from any recreation or hobby under the sun.

Mr. Untermyer turned to horticulture because he is passionately fond of flowers, and always has been; because he felt he could best express his pleasure in Nature by surrounding himself with her most beautiful productions.

Why did he select orchids as his special and personal flowers? Because, as he himself says, "the orchid is the king of flowers; because it is superior to all other flowers in beauty of shape and color, in delicacy and aesthetic appeal; and *because it is most difficult to cultivate.*" The difficulty appeals to him almost as much as the beauty. It is obvious that a man of his temperament, who has launched successful attacks against vast wealth and power requires something to stimulate constantly his instinct for battle. In his orchids he has found the one recrea-



WITH THE TRADITIONAL ORCHID

One of America's greatest lawyers, noted for his fights against privilege, gains inspiration from flowers

tion which satisfies completely the pleasure of the senses and the keener pleasure of the intellect.

On his hundred-and-seventy acre estate at Greystone, Mr. Untermyer has plants from all over the world. In all, he has about sixty thousand—a staggering total, an incredible number for a private collector. Orchids from the steaming glades of Africa, giant cacti from the Mexican deserts, immense tropical blooms from the lush banks of the Amazon—flowers from the ends of the earth pay tribute to his marvellous Nature hobby. The tulips of Holland and the velvety, purple, grapes of Italy are equally at home at Greystone which appears from a distance more like a forest primeval than a beautifully planned show place on the Hudson, so numerous are its trees.

Mr. Untermyer's orchids have won, literally, thousands of prizes in various contests. The pleasure the famous lawyer derives from winning these competitions is complementary to the pleasure of raising the delicate blooms. In his greenhouses—where he raises tropical delicacies like figs and dates, and out-of-season fruits as grapes and peaches and pineapples all the year round—he employs, at the present time, twelve horticultural experts. To care for his rolling acres of trees and plants he employs an additional fifty.

It is a legend in New York that orchids keep this almost legendary man at the top of his form during great legal battles and important civic struggles. He never appears in court without his orchid; but it is not generally known that the orchid must (Continued on page 57)

ORCHID LOVER

(Continued from page 32)

always be dewy fresh; that when its delicate petals begin to wilt, the power of his attack is said to weaken. There is this much of—call it sentimentality, if you will—about a man who, at the age of twenty-one, was earning more than seventy-five thousand dollars a year!

Even in an office where some of the most important transactions in American legal and financial history have taken place, one receives an impression, primarily, of flowers. You open the door and look into an immense square room. And above a great flat-topped desk your glance is caught by a pair of astonishingly bright, clear, blue eyes in a leonine head which appears to be framed in an arch of orchids—the head of a man the late William Jennings Bryan always called "America's greatest lawyer."

Samuel Untermyer, past threescore and ten, is erect, energetic, sunbrowned—a splendid example of the true Nature-lover. The unceasing enjoyment he finds in his flowers—although he still works twice as long and twice as hard as most men half his age—is a magnificent symbol of the pleasure to be found in the intelligent and zestful pursuit of a Nature hobby.

MY JUNGLE STUDY

(Continued from page 14)

taking him off the beaten ways. The heavy blade certainly stood him in good stead this day. But the trail he was expecting to come out upon did not appear. Hour after hour he slashed and hewed ahead, and when he did emerge, it was to find himself upon an unexpected trail in an utterly different part of the jungle. He had been mistaken about the inlet, and his reckoning with the compass had been wrong, so very possible, and so very unpleasant on a small island, and in only six square miles of the jungle. For anyone except our botanist, the situation might have been attended with serious consequences.

All that sounds scary, and the botanist would pooh-pooh the whole story, though I have barely sketched it here, and with the utmost restraint. But the moon was behind all that, not the jungle. I was speaking of the "atmosphere", of the shapes that move about us here on Barro Colorado Island, and the sounds that break in upon our study. The place is incredibly rich with wild rain-forest life. I may come back tired and excited and alive with ticks from my day in the woods to the privacy of my small study, and shut myself resolutely in with the ticks, seldom managing, however, to hold out to the end of my journal. Night would be something of a protection from the distracting shapes were it not itself all shape, moving restlessly about in a hundred mysterious forms, for all the beasts of the forest do creep forth in the darkness, and every sound prowls just outside my windows, big and black as no real thing can be by day. The great cats come out on the trails then and get their pictures taken, causing the whole Island to jump as the flash explodes with a muffled roar.

[To be completed in the February issue]



PLANTING THE GARDEN, MONTH BY MONTH

By Romaine B. Ware

With the advent of the new year, gardeners eagerly look forward to spring and the awakening of Mother Nature's plant children. We do not begrudge them their long winter rest, but we will not be sorry when it is over. And don't forget spring will soon be here with its countless tasks to be done; so if you would be ready for her awakening, there is plenty to keep you busy in the next few weeks. If you neglect the tasks that may be done now, you may not find time during the spring rush.

Late January is not too early to plant such slow germinating seeds as lobelia, centaurea, petunia, salvia and torenia. Not only are they slow getting started but they grow slowly, and to have good plants when the outdoor planting season arrives you had better get busy. Seed can be sown in pots; the large, shallow ones called bulb pans are ideal and just as soon as the first true leaves are made, the young plants should be pricked out into flats or into tiny pots. As a general thing, flats are the more satisfactory and there is less danger of their drying out or being over-watered. A given quantity of seedlings will take up much less room in a flat than in pots.

The soil for planting seeds must be made very fine and should contain sharp sand and finely sifted leafmold. Both of these will aid in keeping it from packing and the leafmold will help it to retain moisture while still leaving it highly porous. The depth at which you plant seeds will depend upon their size. Tiny ones need to be merely pressed into the surface and larger ones covered about four times their diameter. Seeds do not need light to germinate, just gentle heat and moisture, but as soon as they show above the soil, light and ventilation must be provided. It is well to place a glass over the seed pan to aid in maintaining even temperature and conserve moisture, but as soon as germination takes place the glass must be removed.

Seed kept over from previous seasons seldom germinates as well as fresh seed though some varieties will do very well. If you contemplate using any old seed, it will be wise to test it. This may be accomplished by planting a given number of seeds and checking carefully upon the percentages of germination. Be sure that careless handling and watering do not affect the results and nullify them. Some seeds gradually lose their power to germinate as they become older and then when five years old seem to come back. Some interesting tests are being undertaken along this line. Of course, we know that in the open fields and woods seeds keep for years and then, seemingly by chance, germinate.

(Continued on page 59)

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