

Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., November 4, 1927.

Ginger Most Popular

Tonic of Middle Ages

Ginger is the oldest spice known. It figures largely on the tables of the Romans. They probably took it to England, for gingerbread was known in England long before the Norman conquest. In the old leech books of the Eleventh and Twelfth centuries ginger is often recommended for medicinal purposes. It was in the Middle Ages that there arose the custom of making gingerbread cakes in the shape of dolls, horses and other objects. In the markets of old times stalls filled with these gingerbread shapes occupied a prominent place. At the fair of St. Bartholomew, in London, the chief articles of merchandise were "peppermint drops, 20 a penny; wooden babies; cakes of gilt gingerbread; and also gingerbread horn books, gingerbread women and gingerbread husbands, of all sizes."

The old fashion of gingerbread toys lasted to the last century. In some books of children's stories of the Victorian era may be found allusions to "a gingerbread horse" or "a little gingerbread man." Large quantities of gingerbread "babies" were baked and given to the people to celebrate the birth of an heir—afterward the ill-fated Richard II—to the Black Prince.—London Tit-Bits.

Science Explains How

Israelites Were Fed

The nature of the Biblical manna is thought to have been established by an expedition which recently returned from central Sinai.

The traditional theory was that the Biblical manna was identifiable with the tamarix mannifera, a species of the tamarix shrub which exudes a sugary secretion called manna. It was thought that manna was a natural secretion from the twigs or buds which were pierced by rodent insects.

The expedition has determined that manna is an excretion of the insects themselves, which produce clear syrup-like drops that, if sufficiently abundant, fall to the ground, forming whitish grains from the size of a pin's head to the size of a pea. The quantity of this secretion depends on the rain, but in a good season a man can collect about three pounds a day.

A Free-For-All

Pat was on an ocean liner bound for America. It was his first trip on the water and every ordinary event on the boat was a new one in Pat's experience.

On the third day out the ship burst into flames. The fire was rapidly consuming the boat.

All the passengers were appropriating the life preservers, life savers, and life boats. Pat stood by for a few minutes, watching the mad rush. Finally, perplexed and disgusted, he exclaimed:

"Well, if everybody is goin' to steal stuff off o' the ship, O'll be gosh darned if O'll don't get in on the stealin' myself."

So saying, Pat grabbed a crowbar and jumped overboard.

Frozen Eye Glasses

Optical glasses cannot be cut unless fixed immovably. To this end they are glued to iron frames of different sizes and various shapes. Until recently, when finished the plates of glass have been knocked from the frames with a light mallet, cautiously struck upon the edges of the plates. The work was hard and as the least shiver of the edge, though imperceptible, disqualified the lens, the workman needed a very light, skillful hand. The discovery was made by an expert optician that the blocks of crystal separated more easily when they had been exposed to the cold during the night. This discovery has effected a revolution in the manufacture of special glasses.

Shakespeare Pall-Bearer

In a corner of an old cemetery near Fredericksburg, Va., says Capper's Weekly, a gravestone has been found lying flat on the ground under a tangle of weeds and creepers. The inscription, in old English, is quite dim, but still traceable. It reads:

"Here Lies the Body of
"Edward Heldon

"Practitioner in Physics and Surgery. Born in Bedfordshire, England, in the year of our Lord, 1542. Was contemporary with and one of the pall-bearers of William Shakespeare, of the Avon. After a brief illness his spirit ascended in the year of our Lord 1618, aged 76."

His Early Training

Two men had met on the beach at Shrimpsa. Both were attired in swimming costume, and the conversation turned toward this sport. After a few remarks the elder man said:

"I'll race you to the end of the pier and back."

"Right you are," agreed the other, who was a professional at the game. "Bet you ten bob I win."

They plunged into the surf, and the professional swimmer was badly beaten.

"My stars!" he exclaimed. "Where did you learn to swim?"

"Me?" said the other. "I used to be a newsboy in Venice."—Exchange.

Monastery in Russia

Place of Pilgrimage

The most strongly fortified monastery in the world is at Solovetsk, in Archangel. This monastery is enclosed on every side by a wall of granite bowlders, which measures nearly a mile in circumference. The monastery itself is very strongly fortified, being supported by round and square towers about 30 feet in height, with walls 20 feet in thickness.

The monastery in reality consists of six churches, which are the repositories of many valuable statues, and also of precious stones. Upon the walls are mounted huge guns, which in the time of the Crimean war were directed against the British White Sea Squadron.

The monks who inhabited the monastery at that time marched in procession on the granite walls while the shells were flying over their heads, to indicate what little fear they had of an attack by the British fleet.

Thousands of people come annually to Solovetsk from various parts of Russia to view the churches and the relics. They are conveyed in steamers commanded and manned solely by the monks.

No Appeal Possible

From Birds' Judgment

Most people have seen large numbers of birds gathered together in a field or on a hill. But how many know they were probably holding a court-martial on one of their fellows?

These bird courts are held periodically, chiefly by crows, ravens, or sparrows. The prisoner is brought into the court and a general croaking ensues until judgment is delivered.

Should the unfortunate bird be found guilty, it is set on by the rest and pecked to death. Stealing sticks from another bird's nest is, apparently, a crime that does not call for such drastic punishment. Six or so of the other birds simply proceed to break up the offender's own nest!

Should an offender in the sparrows court be guilty of a crime not serious enough to deserve the death penalty, its sentence is delivered by a few sparrows who rush at it and inflict the necessary punishment. It is then forgiven and received back into the fold.

Elephants Put Out Fire

How a herd of wild elephants extinguished a forest fire in Travancore, on the southwest coast of India, was related recently by laborers who witnessed the proceedings, says Popular Mechanics Magazine. A tree had fallen across the road and had been set afire to simplify the task of removing it. The blaze was slowly spreading to the woods near by when the leader of the elephant herd, apparently attracted by the odor of the smoke, appeared, trumpeted loudly to its companions and soon a band of dusky four-footed firemen were squirting streams of water on the blaze from their hose-like trunks. A stream near the road furnished the supply. The wondering natives, who had gone to a house a short distance away, watched the herd put out the fire and then drag the tree into the middle of the road.

Tuning Church Bells

It is said that an English clergyman was the first to call attention to the fact that bells are rarely in tune and that the fault can be remedied if a church bell was originally in tune with itself. According to his theory, a bell must have at least five tones at correct intervals to form a perfect musical chord.

At first the work of tuning was done with a hammer, a chisel and a file, and a magnificent tenor bell in Norfolk, England, was thus reduced three-quarters of an inch in diameter; but modern bell foundries employ a machine with a revolving cutter that shaves the metal near the crown of the bell until the tuner, aided by a tuning fork, has hit the right pitch.

"Everyman" in a Barn

The Fifteenth century mortality play "Everyman" was produced in a strange environment one afternoon recently. Its theater was a barn—the "tith barn" at Great Coxwell, England, a structure reared long ago by builders who can scarcely have dreamed that it would ever be put to use such as this. In its vastness the tith barn resembles, however, a cathedral. The dim spaciousness and hush conspired to create an appropriate atmosphere.—New York Times.

Disguised Compliment

A bond man in New York called to his activities the pose of "gentleman farmer" on Long Island. Before leaving his place for a trip to Europe, he said to his head man:

"Flaherty, I have to be away for a month or two. I hope everything will run smoothly on the farm."

"Oh," said Flaherty, heartily, "ye don't do a bit o' harm, sir, when you're here!"

Too Much for Ostrich

The digestion of an ostrich is said to be about as powerful as that of a goat, yet there are some things that an ostrich cannot digest. This was proved by a recent post mortem examination of one at a zoo. The bird, it was discovered, had swallowed a can opener and this had caused its death. Among other articles found in the ostrich were two staples, a cent and a zoo attendant's hat badge.

Honeydew

There are several kinds of honeydew. One kind is the excretion of aphids or plant lice. Another kind is produced when aphids, leaf hoppers and other insects puncture the leaves of trees. It is a sugar exudation from the leaves. Fungi, and even the ordinary processes of over-turgescence, may also cause such sugar exudations. Bees, wasps, ants and many other insects are attracted by honeydew. Honey made by bees from honeydew usually is of poor quality, being dark and unpalatable. Entomologists say certain species of ants carefully tend colonies of plant lice for the sake of the honeydew they produce.—Pathfinder Magazine.

Paper Mill Waste

It has been the custom in the paper pulp making districts of Sweden for some years past to use white water—that is, the waste liquor from her numerous sulphite-paper mills—to lay dust on highways. This water has been found to be more satisfactory for this purpose than ordinary water, as it tends, on drying, to bind the dust and to make the roadway smooth. To still further add to its effectiveness, it has been suggested that a quantity of hygroscopic salt, which absorbs humidity from the air, be added to the white water so as to keep the surface of highways slightly moist.

Forehead Is Cracked

"Virginia's mother was preparing the menu for dinner, and her forehead was twisted in a puzzled frown.

"Mother," exclaimed the child suddenly, "what are you worrying about?"

"Whatever made you think I was worrying?" the mother asked her.

"Well, your forehead is cracked!"

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Superstition and Fear

In the early days of shipping there grew up on the west coast of Scotland a strange superstition that some grave misfortune would fall upon a man who took a drowning sailor from the sea. This was at a time when shore dwellers helped themselves to the cargoes of wrecked vessels. This superstition was very widely believed and resulted in some horrible brutalities before it was finally stamped out, writes J. D. Whiting in his book, "Storm Fighters." There is a legend of one wreck on the rocky shores of the lonely Zetland islands where six men tried to get ashore by means of a hawser fastened to a rock. The inhabitants who were gathered on the rocks must have been

good enough to make the hawser fast (unless the shipwrecked sailors had a quite inconceivable skill in the art of lassoing.) However, superstition shared the minds of the coast dwellers with the fear that their winter stock of grain might not go around if they were saddled with six unexpected guests, so they cut the rope and the sailors were drowned.—Detroit News.

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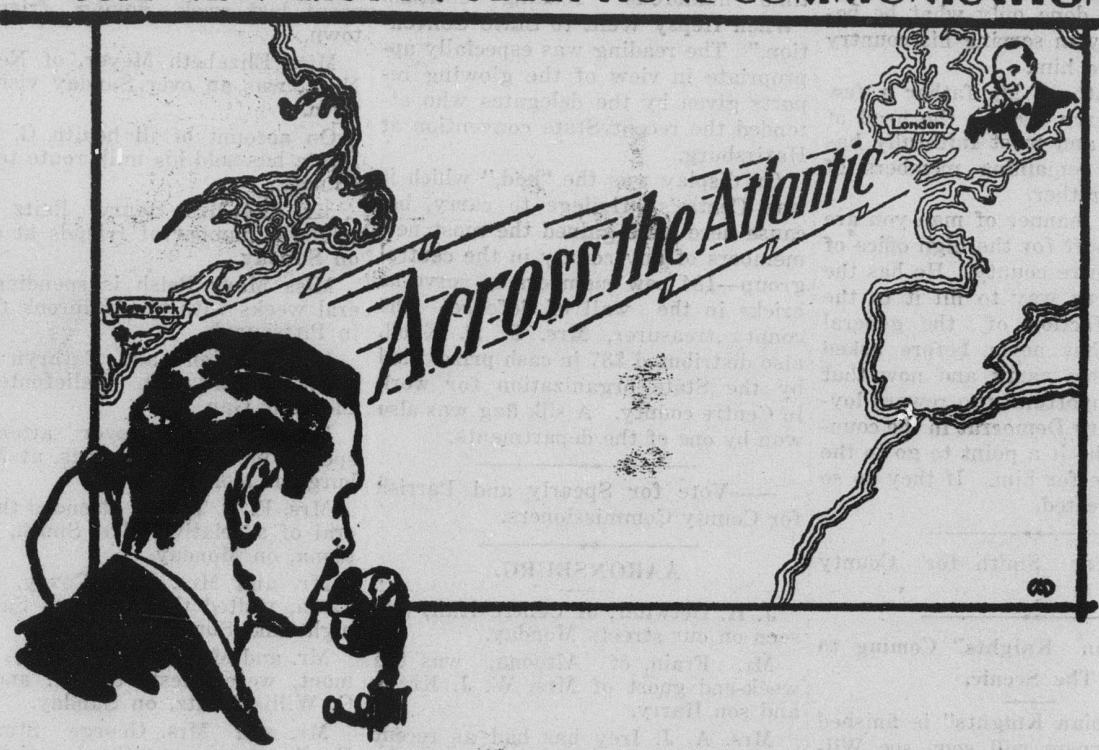
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