

# CAN NEW FLOODS BE PREVENTED?

## As Soil Erosion Service Reviews Causes of Recurring Disasters Along Rivers, Uncle Sam Lays Long Plans for Future.

By WILLIAM C. UTLEY

BECAUSE the super-flood and the widespread havoc left in its wake have all but disappeared from the scare headlines, newspaper readers outside the flood area itself are rapidly forgetting all about it. Citizens along the Ohio and Mississippi valleys probably wish they could, too, but they are destined to keep thinking about it for some time.

The job of rehabilitation now that the flood has subsided is so enormous as to be unimaginable to one who has never lived along the levees. The task of simply clearing away the debris and making at least livable hundreds of thousands of damaged homes is by far the greatest task of its kind that ever has faced the country. And this doesn't even begin to touch what is the most important problem—that of long range planning and building to prevent such a disaster's occurring again.

Salvation Army officials, the Red Cross and other agencies have estimated that in some places their work—which is more of an emergency nature than that of the government—will keep on for two years.

There were about a million persons chased from their homes by the rising waters. They have to be returned or resettled somewhere. The layer of mud and refuse which has settled over the entire area is rapidly being washed away by an army of workers using mops, brooms and hoses for weapons. During the twelve highest days of the flood some 400,000 homes were damaged. It will take until the middle of the summer before all of those homes not beyond repair are even given a thorough cleaning—at an estimated cost of \$250 a home.

### Washington Sees Necessity.

The terrific cost of such a flood in actual money as well as in loss of life and morale demands that its recurrence not be repeated. Floods in the United States have been setting new high water marks year after year and the progress they have made in 1935, 1936 and 1937 is at last effecting a change in the flood control agencies so that they are beginning to think on long range construction lines, rather than planning simply to stop the gaps here and there as they manifest themselves.

The real necessity for flood control is nowhere made more apparent than in the records of the soil erosion service at Washington. Annually, these records show, losses of rich topsoil have in recent years reached three billion tons, or enough every year to fill a freight train 925,000 miles long! Most of this loss can be attributed to floods resulting from careless or unintelligent use of land ever since the days when the first pioneers began to work inland from the seacoasts.



An after-the-flood scene on Broadway looking toward the exclusive Queen City club in Cincinnati.

When the topsoil is lost, the runoff from rains is very greatly increased, floods are speeded, human suffering increased and more rich farm lands lost.

### How Dust Storms Start.

The cultivation of rural America extends roughly over three centuries. Within that time vast slopes once forested, with networks of interlocking roots that once retained a large share of any rainfall, have been denuded of their trees. The coming of the plow brought with it further careless destruction. Yet who can blame the early pioneers, scanning what seemed limitless horizons of verdant prairie, for failing to grasp the effect their mis-cultivation was to have upon generations of the future? They plowed downhill instead of around the slopes on lines nearly level. And billions of new gullies were added to speed the flood waters on their way.

The cost of such short-sighted policies is to be seen in the hun-

dreds of photographs in the office of the soil erosion service. Vast fields now stand burned out, ugly and abandoned. Where the corn and beans were planted down the slopes instead of following the contours of the land there are now deep gullies. The topsoil has been eaten away down to the clay by too rapid drainage. Because as each new strata of soil worn away bared a new strata of less absorptive earth, the runoff became faster and faster. The unfertile lower strata re-



Some idea of the great clean-up job which remained after the flood may be gleaned from this picture of a street in Portsmouth, Ohio.

duced crops and soon the land was deserted.

Great winds came and licked the sterile lands once protected by buffalo grass or forest. They blew the dust from these lands in great storms to lay waste to better farm lands many miles distant. Then the floods came again, gaining greater momentum because the natural barriers were further worn away as the years rolled on. Some of the high marks were in 1884, 1913 and 1927. Still the speed and the destruction continued to mount until

east need for reservoir protection more often lies in areas where farm lands are of high value, where the cities are built close to the rivers. And it is not very often that you will find nature aiding the cause by providing huge mountain reservoir walls in locations where it is possible to make use of them for flood control.

### Control 200 Years Old.

The answer would seem to lie in seeking permanent relief by the construction of many smaller reservoirs. Lying along the headwaters of streams they may be employed to lessen the impact of flood waters on the lowlands by leveling out the rate of flow. Often they are also useful in the manufacture of electricity and benefit river navigation.

Flood control was first attempted along the Mississippi more than 200 years ago. La Salle in 1684 told of seeing the Father of Waters at flood



(Photo © Universal Newsreel From International)

stage, but the floods were held back in those days by the heavy vegetation along the stream. These forests and grasslands have since been rendered far less potent by cultivation.

Early records place the first levee at New Orleans in 1717. Within a year it had become a mile long and 18 feet wide. In these early days the king of France would grant river lands only on the condition that the receiver of the grant agree to build levees. It was the custom to require that all persons living within seven miles of the river be on call to furnish labor for their construction. By a time shortly after Uncle Sam's purchase of Louisiana, which then stretched along the entire lower Mississippi, levees flanked the river on both sides for a distance of 340 miles. Now most of the lower Mississippi and the rivers which contribute to it are banked by them.

The federal government was shy about mixing up in river and harbor work until a decision by Chief Justice Marshall in 1824 cleared up the situation. Within a short time afterward, army engineers were charged with most of the details of flood control and have continued to exercise authority over a large share of them ever since.

### Prevention Vs. Control.

Great names were connected with pleas for a more far-sighted attitude toward flood control in those days—among them Abraham Lincoln, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun. Appropriations in that time bordered about \$50,000, but occasional ran into the millions.

Despite all this early attention, it has been only in recent years that the government has been seriously thinking of laying the flood menace by preventing floods rather than attempting to control them. The year after the record flood of 1927, congress enacted a plan which had been submitted by Lieut. Gen. Edgar B. Jadwin, chief of the army engineers. It called for an outlay of \$325,000,000. Extensions and modifications added another \$313,000,000. Balances on hand left an additional \$272,000,000. The full program extended the 1928 plan six years in the alluvial valley of the lower Mississippi, where levees are being strengthened and raised, in some cases, as much as three feet.

But these things are only a beginning of the prevention movement. Added to them must be the appropriations of the present congress and of other congresses to come, which may as well make up their minds that the ante for flood prevention has to be raised and kept up for some time to come.

An important recent application of a device of considerable aid to both control and prevention is that of the floodway. Dramatic illustration of this was the use of the New Madrid-Birds Point floodway, with its "fuse plug," to save the city of Cairo, Ill.

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# Floyd Gibbons Adventurers' Club

## Hello Everybody!



### "When the Sea Came In"

By FLOYD GIBBONS

Famous Headline Hunter

IT HAPPENED a long time ago, but maybe some of you still remember the wreck of the U. S. cruiser Memphis in San Domingo harbor August 29, 1916.

Do you remember how, caught in the disturbance set up by a submarine volcano, battered by a series of tidal waves, she was tossed against the cliffs of a rockbound shore and smashed to pieces in the short space of an hour and a half?

But we're going to have the story of the Memphis told by a man who never saw those waves—by a man who saw the Memphis disaster from the spot where the REAL battle was fought. We're going to hear about the wreck as it was seen by the boys down in the engine room, where some of the most heroic deeds of that historic affair were done.

Charles H. Willey, warrant machinist, United States Navy retired, of Concord, N. H., is the Distinguished Adventurer of today's column.

### Ordered Below to Get Up Steam.

Charley was in his stateroom reading when, without any warning, the ship rolled over at an alarming angle. At the same time the order came for the emergency watch to go below and get the ship under way.

When Charley got below his men were already going about their duties. The steam was up in only two boilers. The job now was to raise it in the other four so the ship could get under way. For, until she was under way, the Memphis would be at the mercy of the raging seas.

The waves, which had been mere heavy swells at first, were getting higher every minute. The ship rocked alarmingly, but inside of ten minutes steam was forming in four boilers and the men in the engine rooms were warming up the engines with steam from the two live boilers.

### Firemen All Worked Desperately.

"There was a fireman at every one of those boilers, working desperately to force it," says Charley. "The ship kept pitching and heaving. Our poor devils down there couldn't see the waves, but we knew we were in their grip."

"Over the voice tube from the engine room came the cry of 'STEAM—Give us steam.'"

"And the steam, thank God, was rising fast. The gauges were showing pressure, but we had to get it to at least 200 pounds. Even 250 would have been little enough in an emergency like this one."

The steam was on the way up. Navy efficiency and discipline were doing their work.

In another few moments the engines would be turning.

And then—SUDDENLY—another violent lurch of the ship and a deluge from above. Water—sea water—COMING DOWN THE VENTILATORS.

### Engines Stopped, Fourteen Men Killed.

Says Charley: "We knew what that meant. The ship was broadside to the waves and those waves were sweeping clean over us. Now water began coming down the smoke stacks, putting out our fires just when we were nearing victory."

"We cut in the four boilers on the main steam line. The engines were turning slowly, but how they ate up the steam!"

"A sudden lurching pitch—a sickening pounding of the ship on the bottom, and then, with a roar the 14-inch main steam line burst in the port engine room killing seven men and stopping the engine."

"There is a mad rush to close the stop valve. Water—tons of it—still pouring down the stacks! Steam hisses from strained boiler tubes. The lights go out. The dynamo has been shorted by sea water and we are left in darkness!"

### Forced to Abandon Stations.

And still those gallant firemen in the engine room of the Memphis stuck to their posts trying to get up steam. There was bedlam everywhere below decks.

Slice bars, hoes, coal buckets were sloshing around the room with every roll and toss of the ship.

And yet, in the flickering light of the fires, the men were trying to get up steam.

There was another crash—A DEAFENING ROAR OF ESCAPING STEAM.

"And then," says Charley, "I knew we were gone. In another minute she had struck again and the boilers let go at their tube joints."

"I yelled: 'Abandon stations. Every man for himself.'"

"I tried to get to the air lock—stumbled and fell into sea water that was coming in through the ship's bottom. Live steam was filling the room."

"I ripped off my jumper, soaked it and wrapped it around my head."

### How Willey Escaped the Inferno.

"I heard agonized screams from the men who had gone up the ladder ahead of me—up over those hot, hellish, steam-twisted boilers to what they thought was safety in the uptake passage."

"Somehow God gave me strength to reach them in the uptake. Steam had risen there first and they were trapped in it."

"They were breathing it. It was searing their flesh and their lungs and cutting them down before they could open the heavy iron door."

"I kept my wet jumper over my face and reached the door. Frantically I worked at the dogs that clamped it shut. At last I got it open—dragged out some of those dying men—"

And then Charley lost consciousness. He awoke TWO WEEKS later in the Naval hospital in Washington—to learn that he was the only one of that brave fireroom crew of his that had lived!

It was a whole year before Charley was out of the hospital. Now he lives in retirement on a little inland farm in New England. A few years ago he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

"Yet," says Charley, "I have never worn it, for somehow I feel I am unworthy of it. Those men who stuck by me down there in that black inferno till the last—they were the real heroes. THEY PAID WITH THEIR LIVES."

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### Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery was instituted by an act of congress for the interment of United States soldiers and sailors who have fallen in battle, or all men and women who have died in the regular or volunteer military or naval service of the United States, after having been mustered out or honorably discharged. The presentation of the commission warrant, letter of appointment, certificate of discharge, or pension certificate, provided there were no dishonorable charges connected therewith, is sufficient evidence for interment.

### The Isle of Pines

The Isle of Pines has an area of 1,180 square miles and a population of 5,000. It is located about 50 miles south of Cuba, of which it is a part. The land is virtually all owned by Americans. The chief towns are Nueva, Gerona and Sante Fe. The island produces citrus fruits, pineapples and potatoes. Cattle raising is the chief industry.

### Facing the Music

The origin of the expression "facing the music" isn't definitely known, though the expression appears to have come from military sources. Three attempts at explanation—the first of them the most likely—attribute its origin to: (1) The drumming out of men dismissed from the army; (2) the mustering of militiamen, who are drawn up in ranks facing the band; (3) the difficulty in training army horses to remain quiet when placed near a regimental band. Another suggestion is that the phrase is derived from the situation of the actor, who, when before the orchestra, is facing his critics also.

### "Spice," Not Tree Name

"Spice" is not a tree name. It is a classification name used to describe one or more of a group of aromatic substances. Just as the word "vegetable" and "grain" are names of classifications, describing one or a number of things in a special class.

## My Favorite Recipe

By Babe Didrikson Athlete

Plain Cake.  
1 cupful brown sugar  
2 teaspoonfuls of boiling water  
4 eggs  
1 cupful of flour  
¼ teaspoonful of cinnamon  
Pinch of cloves  
Dash of allspice  
2 teaspoonfuls of baking powder

Beat the yolks of the eggs and sugar well. Add spices, mixing well. Add boiling water. Sift flour several times, adding the baking powder. Then add the flour and baking powder to the mixture and bake in layer tins ten minutes in a hot oven. This cake is very delicious if made with a date filling between the layers.

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### Feathered Cosmeticians

Woodpeckers are surgeons; with their strong, sharp beaks they cut down to the haunts of mischief-makers in the wood and extract them with barbed tongues. But there are other, smaller birds that haunt tree trunks in winter—chickadee, brown creeper, and nuthatch—whose beaks are not stout enough for the woodpecker's drastic technique. These birds simply search crevices and cracks in the bark, prying and digging out insects and small cocoons that may be hibernating there. They are skin specialists — cosmeticians.—Science Service.

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets made of May Apple are effective in removing accumulated body waste.—Adv.

### Talent and Genius

Talent is that which is in a man's power! Genius is that in whose power a man is.—Lowell.

### Remember This When You Need a Laxative

It is better for you if your body keeps working as Nature intended. Food wastes after digestion should be eliminated every day. When you get constipated, take a dose or two of purely vegetable Black-Draught for prompt, refreshing relief.

Thousands and thousands of men and women like Black-Draught and keep it always on hand, for use at the first sign of constipation. Have you tried it?

## BLACK-DRAUGHT

A GOOD LAXATIVE

### Happy Exactness

Exactness in little duties is a wonderful source of cheerfulness.—F. W. Faber.

## Miss REE LEEF says:

"CAPUDINE relieves HEADACHE quicker because it's liquid... already dissolved"

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