

Vest Pocket Essays

By GEORGE FITCH
Author of "At Good Old Biwash"

WATER

WATER was first discovered and investigated by Noah, who succeeded in living on it for forty days.

Most men admire Noah for his bravery, but very few have any desire to break his record. Water is one of our most useful and necessary possessions. Without it the earth would be a desert and worthless, stocks would only yield a beggarly six or eight per cent, and mankind would curl up and die. A great many men avoid water and try to get along with a substitute which they claim is just as good. But their widows and creditors seldom speak of the experiment as a success.

There is an unlimited supply of water on the planet, but most of it is badly seasoned and is unfit for drinking purposes. There are five great oceans, containing 150,000,000 square miles of water and surrounded by 200,000 miles of sea beach, giving room for 2,000,000,000 bathers at one time. And yet a great many people in this world are no cleaner than they should be.

Water is very thin and transparent, except in the Chicago and Missouri Rivers. It is very restless, and is continually climbing up into the sky and falling down on baseball games and picnics in the summer, and on new millinery in all seasons. Water is very gregarious, and loves to collect in ponds, rivers, lakes, gulfs, oceans and corporations. It is very unstable, and the man who tries to wander around in it without a life preserver soon sinks and dies from swallowing too much of it. Too much water is just as fatal as too little.

Water is useful for running steam engines, making soft drinks, soaking soiled citizens, increasing the supply of milk, putting out fires, making Baptists and insulating Americans from kings and dukes and Waldorf Astors. Among the

most noted collections of water in the world are the Great Lakes, which are 1,000 miles long over all and entirely drinkable; the Mississippi River, the father of waters; the



Jonah used Noah's houseboat idea with modifications.

Amazon River, the greatest female river in the world; the Great Salt Lake, the Dead Sea and Wall Street. Niagara Falls and the Old Faithful geyser are the two most athletic bodies of water. The most industrious water is the Colorado River, which has burrowed its way 6,000 feet into the ribs of the earth. The most imposed upon water is the Chicago River, which was turned around, loaded full of sewage and made to run backward. The most restless water is the Missouri River, which changes its bed every night. The most neglected water is found in Kentucky, where it is not used for anything but storing catfish. And the most over-advertised water in the world is Minnehaha Falls, which only falls when a stout man in overalls turns on a spigot and begins to pump.

BRICKS AND CEMENT SWELL

Absorb Moisture and "Grow" to a Considerable Extent, According to English Publication.

How much has your house or the wall at the bottom of your garden grown?

Houses and walls, indeed all things made of bricks, do grow, and this fact is known to architects, who sometimes have to allow for it when making plans for building, says London Answers.

In the old days, when the clay of which bricks were made was mixed with water before being baked, the amount of growth was not noticeable; now that no water, or very little, is mixed with the clay, which is therefore said to be dry baked, the bricks absorb moisture and swell sometimes to a considerable extent.

Some years ago in a garden at Ely a pier was built of dry baked bricks and the garden hose was turned onto this pier for a considerable period every day for some weeks. At the end of this time the pier was measured, when it was found to have grown some inches.

Cement is another substance which grows. That is why you may often see on station platforms and on wall copings built of cement one of the joints missed out here and there.

The greatest growth naturally takes place where cements and bricks are used together, as happened in a house of which the parapet was built of bricks placed endways and cement supported on iron. The growth in this instance was so great that quite large spaces were visible between the iron supports and the parapet.

USE FOR LUMINOUS PAINT

Material Found Almost Invaluable in War Might Also Be Well Employed in Peace.

Here is a wartime application of luminous paint that should be useful in summer camps, on the hikes of boy scouts, in peacetime maneuvers of citizen soldiers, in marking the landing places of aircraft, etc.

The British army had disks or buttons two or three inches in diameter, coated with luminous paint and having a sharp spike on the under side. These were stuck upon the sides of trenches, buildings, fences, etc., or were swung by hand to give signals in the well-known code where bright lights were dangerous or where silence was golden.

The luminous disks were visible from 30 to 60 feet, so they formed valuable landmarks. Luminous ribbon also was used for marking trails through the woods, and luminous patches were attached to the backs of stretcher bearers to prevent them from being fired upon by their own troops.

The Scientific American suggests that the names and numbers of city streets might well be marked with this luminous paint.

The Fanciulla d'Anzio.

One of the gifts that President Wilson received in Italy was a silver model of the statue known as the Fanciulla d'Anzio, presented to him by the Roman municipality. The original is a Greek statue, discovered not long ago at the villa of Nero, in the seaport town of Anzio, near Rome, and purchased by the Italian government for 450,000 lire. Admirers of art and students of archeology had traveled from all over Europe to see it, and the youthful draped figure, carrying a platter from which the object it long ago held had been broken, was named the Maid of Anzio. Then somebody noticed that the long robe was lifted a little, as if to avoid tripping over it, that the biceps muscle of the bare arm was more boyish than girlish, and so on, until modern judgment has decided that the title Fanciulla d'Anzio is a misnomer, and that the unknown sculptor was really modeling the figure of a handsome youth performing some service in an ancient temple.

Bran Muffins.

Roger W. Babson of the department of labor said at a dinner in Washington:

"Speaking of labor, it has been a tough job to eat some of the health foods that were turned out during the war.

"A young lady said to a young man at a Washington dance:

"Are you the same young man who ate so many of my bran muffins at the Red Cross last fall?"

"No," he answered, "and what's more, the doctor says I never will be."

The Sign on the Church.

Many a pedestrian and motorist looked, observed and smiled Wednesday night as he passed a church on Clinton hill. Obvious and elaborate preparations for a wedding were under way. Coaches and florist wagons were bustling. The unmistakable canopy was being erected from sidewalk to door. And in big letters on the front of the church was blazoned the minister's subject for an approaching service: "This Is the Life."—Newark News.

Spoiled Her Pleasure.

Husband—Have you had a pleasant afternoon?

Wife—No; Mrs. Wilkinson and Mrs. Jenkinson came together and left together. I had a lot of things about Mrs. Wilkinson I wanted to tell Mrs. Jenkinson, and I had a lot of things to tell Mrs. Jenkinson, but, of course, when they were both together it was no use.

BLUBBER A DELICIOUS VIAND

Said to Be of Immensely Pleasant Taste, When Eaten Raw From the Seal.

It has always been a mystery to me why the word "blubber" should carry such a disagreeable connotation to millions of people, though not one in a million has ever tasted it, writes Vilhjalmur Stefansson in Harper's.

I am often asked what seal meat tastes like and am driven to saying that it tastes like seal meat, for it does not resemble any commonly known type of meat. But neither does mutton resemble any meat known to me, and still mutton is good eating, and so is seal. But the fat is much easier to describe. When the blubber is eaten raw, as we commonly eat it by preference, it has a flavor very similar to that of fresh cow's cream, but when boiled it closely resembles the fat of mutton. For that reason Mr. Wilkins, who came from the sheep district of Australia, was that member of our whole expedition who most readily fell into the eating of the seal fat.

In general most men refrain from tasting blubber because it is named blubber, until they become so fat hungry that they are eventually driven to trying it, and when they try it, to their surprise they invariably find it so delicious that, if not restrained, they overeat and, as is well known, overeating any form of fat causes nausea and other distressing symptoms. After one or two experiences of this sort I am now careful never to allow a man to eat all the blubber he wants the first time he tries it, for he gets sick he is almost certain to blame the seal and not his own gluttony.

NEED NOT TRANSFER GERMS

Disease Will Not Be Transmitted if Soiled Hands Are Kept Away From Mouth.

It is glaringly obvious that the biting of finger nails, the moistening of fingers in turning the pages of a book, and similar half-conscious acts greatly enhance the opportunities for planting undesirable germs where they can multiply," says the Journal of the American Medical Association. "On the fingers they may be harmless; transferred to the mouth they have a wide field for development.

"The soiling of the hands is impossible to avoid altogether, but the swallowing of germs from one's own soiled hands is largely under individual control.

"It may fairly be assumed that the most useful safeguards against this form of disease transmission are to be found in such practices as hand washing and in refraining from using the tongue or the lips as a moistening-pad, rather than in hysterical attempts at avoidance of all hand contamination. Children are best protected through the inculcation of similar desirable habits at an early age. In a word, some degree of hand-contamination is unavoidable; but the transference of the contaminating germs to the mouth is largely under individual control and is subject to the powerful influence of early-formed habit."

First in the Field.

The mild surprise with which one occasionally notes the name of a foreign city on a penny box of matches purchased in the United States may before long include boxes of matches bearing the far-away name of Dairen, Manchuria. The world's appetite for matches is apparently insatiable. An American company has been studying Manchuria and Siberia from the match manufacturing point of view, but so has a large Japanese concern, and this concern, it now seems, will be first in the field at Dairen, the chief Manchurian port. But then if Japan were not first in the field in Manchuria, where would she be first in the field?

Dodging Shop.

They struck up a conversation in the hotel lobby and finally one man suggested a trip to the movies. The other politely declined.

"Don't you want to see Viola Vampire?"

"Nope."

"Nor Yorick Hamm in his latest comedy?"

"Nope."

"What's the matter, my friend? Aren't you interested in the various stars?"

"Not this evening. I'm an astronomer taking a night off."

Probably Dogfish.

Blank had had a day off, and when he returned to the office the following morning his pals wanted to know why he looked so disgruntled.

"Everything went wrong!" grumbled Blank.

"How was that?" one asked.

"Ever go fishing with a girl?"

"Once."

"Did she protest against hurting the fish?"

"No. She said she was sure they were perfectly happy, because they were all wagging their tails."—London Tit-Bits.

One at a Time.

We attended a country wedding and at the conclusion of the ceremony were astonished to see the bride start on the honeymoon alone. When asked the reason the bridegroom explained that both couldn't be away at the same time as there would be no one to feed the stock and he would take his trip down the river shooting ducks when the bride came back.—Chicago Tribune.

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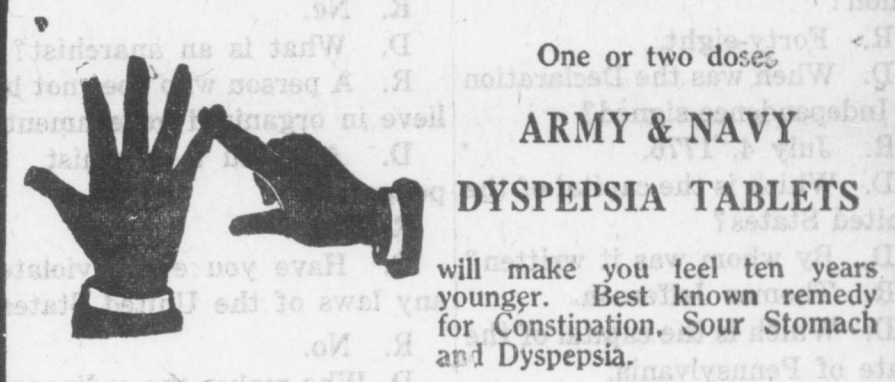


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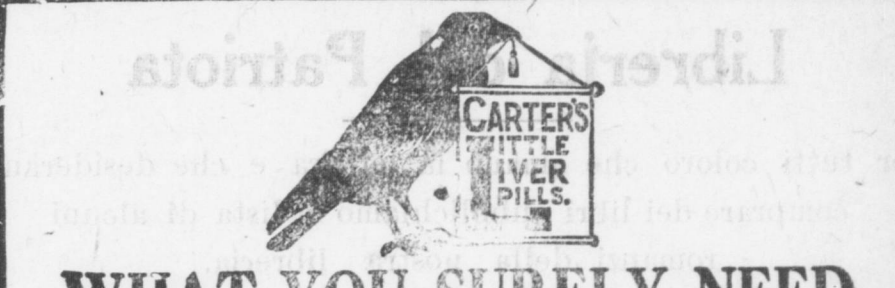
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Maybe You're Rich. Some men are rich and don't know it—rich in health, rich in a large and happy family, rich in friends, rich in influence and standing in their communities, rich in the spirit of charity and brotherly love. These same men may be poor in this world's goods, but they're rich, just the same.—Crossman.

Just a Little One, Maybe. While to be sure we believe George Washington never told a lie we always will wonder how he got around it if Mrs. Washington ever asked him if he didn't think her new way of serving parsnips made them perfectly delicious.—Macon Telegraph.

THE CALL OF DUTY

By NAOMI H. ANDERSON

When Uncle Sam began sending his telegraphic messages to every city and hamlet of the country that stenographers and typists were needed in Washington, Ann Rogers saw them printed in the daily news, read them, wondered if she ought to offer her services, and then forgot them, for her daily tasks at Burr & Marchant's seemed quite sufficient for the sum total of her existence, and for three months she ignored Uncle Sam's constant and urgent appeals. But one day, when one of the stenographers came in and calmly announced that she was going to Washington, Ann Rogers took up the newspapers again, read and re-read Uncle Sam's appeals, and finally decided to follow in the footsteps of the former stenographer.

Two months later, having followed the call of "The Great Adventure" (as she called it), she was happily employed in one of the offices of the war department busily checking names of applicants for one of the branches of the war service, despite the fact that Burr & Marchant's had offered her a larger salary if she would have remained, and quite unaware that beside her an officer, whom she had hardly noticed, would be a great participator in her "Great Adventure," and forthwith treated him with deliberate unconcern. But the days stretched on to weeks, and each day the officer by her side began to loom up of greater and greater interest on the horizon of her happy existence. Finally she admitted even to her co-workers that she thought he was awfully nice; and the days slipped by.

Three months later an order came from the adjutant general's office, ordering First Lieutenant Downs to go to camp, and there he would be assigned to some company for early overseas duty. Ann had known for some weeks that the order was coming through, but the days chased each other so sublimely that she did not realize what the order would mean to her until it came. But when she read the order that within three days he was to report to his commanding officer, she knew. The three days dragged by—they no longer flew—and the nights were an eternity of tears and prayers; but on the morning of the last day when the first lieutenant said good-by, Ann was smiling, and for all the world none would have guessed at the tears and prayers. The week following his departure dragged through its course, but the brightness and novelty of the throbbing, crowded city had died for Ann.

One afternoon when a letter arrived from Mr. Marchant asking if Ann would not come back to her old position, she dispatched an immediate reply to the effect that she would be back in three weeks. The next day she handed in her resignation.

"Oh, she's got the blues on account of a sweetheart back home," confided the sergeant to the corporal, but Captain Downs knew, and accepted her resignation.

CARDINAL MERCIER



Il Card. Mercier che probabilmente visitera l'America quando prima.