

## A DEBT WE OWE CHINA

Many of Our Parlor Games Come From That Country.

Instead of bishops and knights, Chinese chess has a general, secretaries, elephants, horses, chariots, cannon and soldiers. There is also a river between the opposing forces. But otherwise the game is very similar to its distant and—according to Chinese ideas—degenerate descendant played by ourselves. There are sixty-four squares on the board and sixteen pieces on each side. Chess originated in China, B. C. 1120.

Kites in China, says Answers, are generally square-shaped. They are the universal amusement of all ages and classes. Our kite flyers might take many hints in kite flying from Chinese boys. The light silk string and the reel to wind it on are much ahead of our rough cord pulled in by hand. Kite flying comes here as a spring amusement, a custom apparently direct from China, where any one flying a kite at another season would be laughed at.

Pegtop schoolboys owe to Chinese inventors. But Chinese boys always play top in winter on frozen ground or on ice. Many tops are beautifully finished and carved. Humming tops are known as "thunder tops." The origin of the Chinese tops dates back to the mythical period of Chinese history 3000 to 5000 B. C.

No game has crossed to us from the far east less altered than backgammon. Chinese backgammon men, boards and dice are almost identical with those used by ourselves. The Chinese name for backgammon, literally translated, is bottle chess.

Why the Chinese should call dominoes "foreign tablets" is a mystery, seeing that they and the Koreans have played games with dominoes for ten or twelve centuries past. In numerals and size Chinese dominoes are similar to those used in Europe and America. The only difference is that the dots are a little differently arranged, and the number of pieces is not quite the same. A set consists of twenty-one pieces, eleven of which are duplicated, making thirty-two in the complete set. The Chinese have more domino games than ourselves, including a curious one called "tortoise." There seems little doubt that dominoes came to us from the east, instead of being, as claimed, the invention of two French monks.

## SLATE PENCILS

They Are No Longer Cut From Solid Slate.

Slate pencils were formerly all cut from solid slate, just as it is dug from the earth, but pencils so made were objected to on account of the grit which they contain, and which would scratch the slate. To overcome this difficulty, an ingenious process has been devised by which the slate is ground to a very fine powder, all grit and foreign substances removed and the powder bolted through silk cloth in much the same manner in which flour is bolted. The powder is then made into a dough, and hydraulic pressure, which presses the pencil out the required shape and diameter, but in length of about three feet. While yet soft the pencils are cut into the desired lengths and set out to dry in the open air. After they are thoroughly dry, the pencils are placed in steam baking kilns, where they receive the proper temper. Pencils made in this manner are not only free from all grit and of uniform hardness, but are stronger than those cut out of solid slate. For these reasons they have superseded the old kind. Over 25,000,000 of these pencils were made and sold in 1899 by one American concern in Chattanooga.

## THE EARTH'S CHANGES.

Boston Globe.

Until Dec. 18, 1811, the eastern part of Craighead county, Arkansas, was one of the most beautiful and fertile stretches of prairie imaginable, interspersed with tracts of lovely woodland. Pretty rivers ran between high clay banks, and the country was rapidly settling. On the morning of Dec. 19, in place of rivers and rolling prairie, a great lake rippled in the sunlight. In the night the whole region, 120 miles long and 60 wide, had sunk 20 to 40 feet. To-day the weird lakes of the Arkansas sunk lands offer the most beautiful scenery and some of the best sport in all the southern states.

## PAY AT BOTH ENDS.

China has still the old-fashioned system of letter carrying. Letter shops are to be found in every town. If he has a letter to send, the Chinaman goes to a letter shop and bargains with the keeper thereof. He pays two-thirds of the cost, leaving the receiver to pay the rest on delivery.

## AN INSECT ALL APPETITE.

The locust is one of the greatest pests man has to deal with. He is always hungry and lays waste every place he travels over. Of the 52,000,000 square miles covering the surface of the earth, 46,000,000 are more or less subject to the scourge of this insect with the giant appetite.

## OLD GUNS RECOVERED.

On the Northumberland coast fishermen have just recovered two guns from a vessel wrecked seventy years ago. The guns were coated with shells and the metal had become quite soft.

## TURNS RED EVERY TEN YEARS.

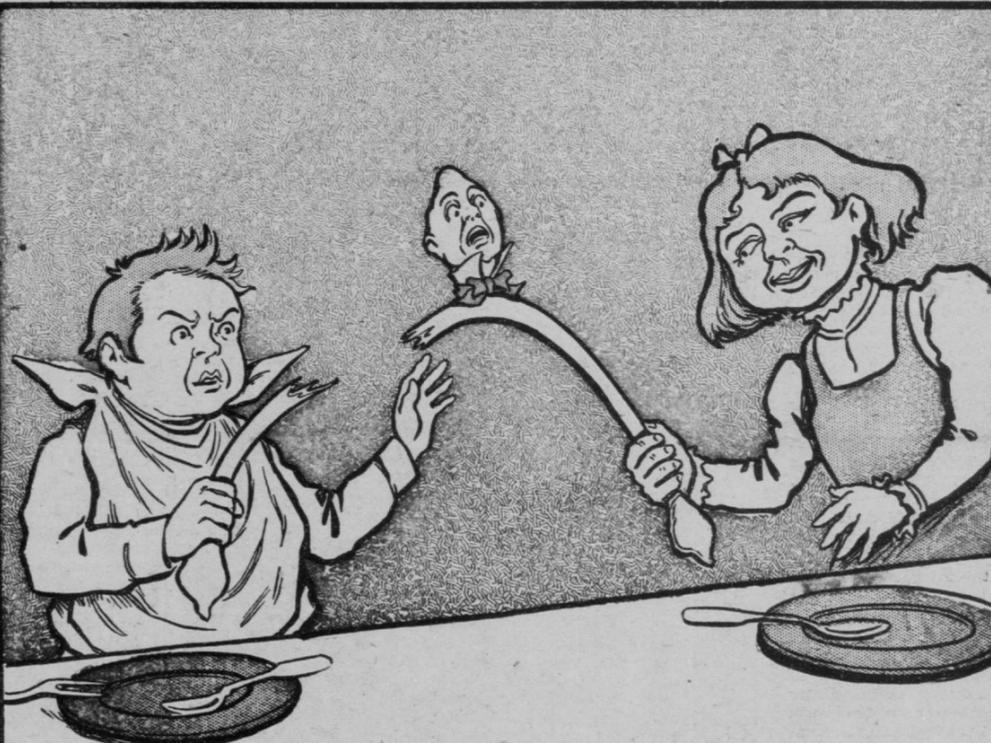
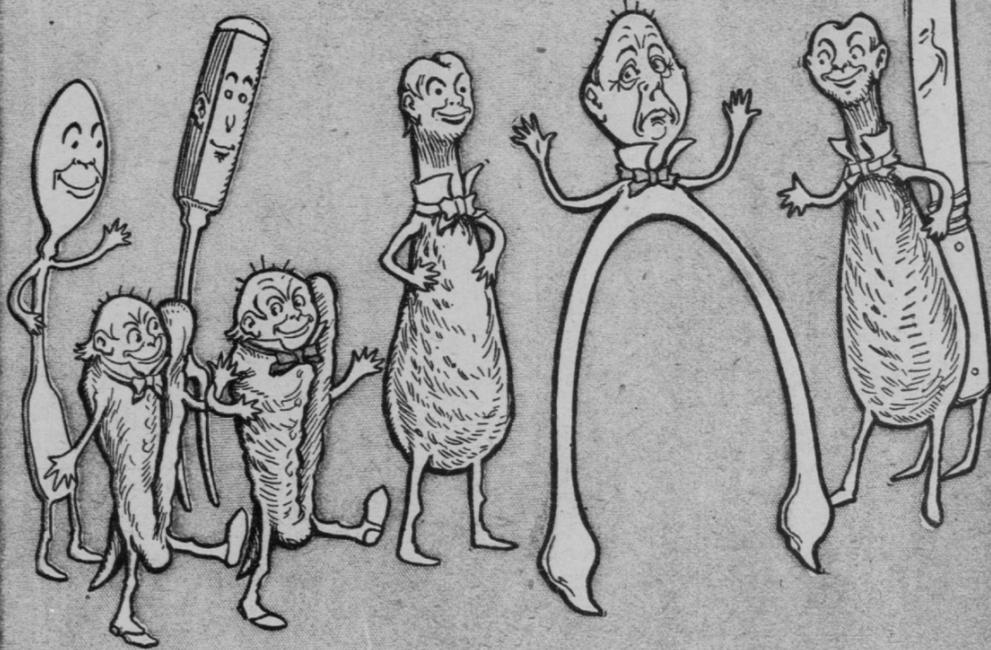
Lake Morat, in Switzerland, has the curious property of turning red every ten years, owing to the presence of certain aquatic plants which are not known in any other lake in the world.

## A BIRD OF GREAT STRENGTH.

The golden eagle has great strength. It lifts and carries off with ease a weight of sixty pounds.

# The Proud Wishbone

The wishbone was a haughty thing  
And high he held his head;  
The Wing twins were but "common trash,"  
And Drumsticks too, he said.  
"It's just as plain as anything  
That this is so," quoth he,  
"For there are two of each of them  
But only one of Me."



And when two children at the feast  
Each for the wishbone cried  
The Wishbone said "I told you so"  
And oh, he swelled with pride.  
They took him each one by a foot  
As children often do,  
Then each one gave a sudden tug  
And broke him right in two.

## SARDINES SQUEAK

The Moment They Are Taken From Water.

The sardine fishing season commences early in May and lasts until late in the autumn. When the fish are plentiful in the nets quantities of scales appear upon the surface of the water. The nets are then lifted, and the contents are dumped by the fishermen into their boats. The fish make a little squeak when taken from the water and die almost instantly. An ordinary catch of sardines gives to each boat anywhere from 2,000 to 6,000 fish, the price of which is about \$1.25 per 1,000, according to the quantity of fish that are being caught.

Arriving at the packing house the fish are carefully cleaned. This operation over they are sorted according to size and carried into another part of the establishment, where they are put into pickle.

The length of time required by this operation varies according to the size of the fish. After this the fish are washed and placed with care upon wire nets, called "grills," on which they are sent to the drying-room, where they are dried by means of large fans or ventilators run by powerful machinery. When dry and while still upon the grills the fish are cooked by plunging them into tanks containing olive oil.

After this cooking the sardines, still upon the grills, are left to cool, and when cold the work of placing them in cans filled with olive oil is begun. This done, the tins are sealed with solder and are ready to be put in cases holding 100 cans for the market.

## ANTS USE SHUTTLES

Larvae Are Actually Used as Spinning Machines.

E. G. Green, government entomologist at the botanic gardens at Peradeniya, Ceylon, tells a most curious story about the red ant. Desiring to confirm the reported web-spinning habits of these ants, he separated some leaves that had been recently fastened together by them. The ants quickly drew the edges of the leaves together, and in about an hour afterward he noticed that small white grubs were being passed backward and forward across the gaps. Two ants held each a grub in its mouth and directed its movements as required, while from the mouth of the larvae a continuous thread of silk proceeded and was used to repair the damage—the larvae were actually used as spinning machines. There were no larvae in the disturbed enclosure. They were most likely obtained from a nest a short distance away, and this, no doubt, accounts for the length of time that passed before the rent was repaired.

## THINGS YOU CAN'T DO

They Look Simple, but in Reality Are Not.

You can't stand for five minutes without moving if you are blindfolded.

You can't stand at the side of a room with both of your feet touching the wainscoting lengthwise.

You can't get out of a chair without bending your body forward or putting your feet under it, that is, if you are sitting squarely on the chair and not on the edge of it.

You can't crush an egg when placed lengthwise between your hands, that is, if the egg is sound and has the ordinary shell of a hen's egg.

You can't break a match if the match is laid across the nail of the middle finger of either hand and pressed upon by the first and third fingers of that hand, despite its seeming so easy at first sight.

## A STREET THROUGH A CHURCH.

One of the best known instances of church with streets through them is that of St. John the Baptist church in Bristol, Eng. The church is situated right over the ancient gateway into the city on the Avon, and the towering spire standing high above the neighboring houses and streets, is a remarkable sight, as one surveys it from the roadway below.

## A MELODIOUS TOWN.

There is more melody in Andersburg, Prussia, in the Hartz mountains than in any other town in the world. There 250,000 canaries are annually reared, and four-fifths of them are sent to the United States. "Professor birds," perfect singers, are placed among the young birds, so that the latter may imitate the trills of the experienced warblers.

## A TOUR OF THE ESCURIAL.

It requires about four days to make an investigation of the Escorial, the great Spanish palace, there being such a multitude of rooms and apartments. To traverse all the halls, chambers, corridors, lengths and depths of the great palace would require a tour amounting to over a hundred miles.

## DIED ON THE FOURTH.

Three of the presidents of the United States died on the anniversary of the signing of the declaration of independence. Jefferson and John Adams died on the same day, July 4, 1826, and only an hour apart. James Monroe died on the 4th of July, 1831.

## ROARS NEAR THE GROUND.

Naturalists say a lion always places its head near the ground when roaring. The beasts probably do so on the principle that the earth, being a conductor of sound, the other lion or animal he is roaring at cannot fail to hear him.

## AN INDO-CHINESE VENICE.

Bangkok is a city of waters. It is an Indo-Chinese Venice. More people live in floating homes on the Menam, "the Nile of Siam," and the many canals than in permanent buildings.