

A TALK ON ASBESTUS

SOME LIGHT UPON HOW LONG IT HAS BEEN IN USE.

A Man With a Mine of Information Astonishes Another Who Knows All About the Mineral, but Who Would Not Take a Tempting Bet.

An elderly man, with a gray mustache, looked up from a plate of spaghetti which he was eating in a restaurant and spoke to three others: "Say," he said, "what do you people know about asbestos?"

Two of his companions preserved a modest silence, but the third, who was a little man, spoke up: "I know all about asbestos," he said.

"Do, eh?" queried the man with the spaghetti on his plate. "Then how long's it been in use?"

"Well," said the little man, hesitatingly, "it's 80 years."

"You're away off. Of course you didn't know that Charlemagne had an asbestos tablecloth?"

"Who's Charlemagne?"

"Well," said the elderly man, "Charlemagne was king of the Franks and emperor of the Romans about 1,100 years ago. He was a great fighter and owned an asbestos tablecloth."

"Don't believe it," said the little man. "I never heard of asbestos until the Centennial."

"Well, Charlemagne had the cloth all right," said the elderly man. "He used to astonish his friends from the interior by throwing the tablecloth into the fire after dinner, and of course it didn't burn. Asbestos became quite fashionable after that for towels and napkins. It saved laundry bills. All a man's wife had to do was to throw the week's wash into the stove and it came out as clean as chalk."

"Say," said the little man, incredulously, "do you think you can string me like that?"

"It's so," declared the elderly man. "But of course you never heard that Benjamin Franklin had an asbestos purse?"

"No. Had he?" asked the little man, with a sneer.

"Of course he had. He took it over to England with him and sold it to a man in Bloomsbury, London, for a big sum."

"I suppose," said the little man, with a wink, "that the Englishman was a friend of yours, and you know his name?"

"No," replied the first man, "I never saw him, but he was called Sir Hans Sloane, and he had a museum."

"Dime museum?" grinned the little man.

"Not a bit of it," smiled the elderly man good naturedly. "It was a sure enough museum, and as a matter of fact it constituted the nucleus of the British museum. I dare say that Benjamin Franklin's asbestos purse is there yet."

The little man looked a little crestfallen, but the elderly man consoled him.

"Don't worry," he said, "there are lots of people besides yourself who are shy on knowledge regarding asbestos. It wasn't much used during recent centuries. In 1878 an asbestos handkerchief was shown to the Royal society as a great curiosity by Dr. Plot, who had bought it from a traveler on his return from China. They called it salamander's wool. Dr. Plot saturated the handkerchief with oil and threw it into a fierce charcoal fire. The oil burned off, but the handkerchief remained intact. The fellows of the society were much interested and were not greatly surprised when the price of asbestos in Chinese Tartary was quoted at \$400 a Chinese ell, which isn't much more than an English yard. It's likely that the price had risen since the days of the ancients, for those old fellows had big sheets of asbestos, which they would around corpses before cremating them."

"That's a long time ago," said the little man sententiously.

"Well," continued the elderly man, "if you want to come down to later years, there was a book published in London, 40 years ago, giving accounts, among other things, of remarkable experiments previously made at Milan, in Italy, by the Chevalier Aldini, who had used asbestos in the construction of a suit of fireproof armor. The coverings for arms, legs and body were of heavy cloth which had been soaked in a strong solution of alum. The helmet, gauntlets and stockings were of asbestos. Then there was an overdress, covering the body, thighs and feet, of wire gauze, 20 meshes to the inch. With this armor on, men stood on a big gridiron over a blazing fire for ten minutes and buried their heads in piles of burning hay and shavings, but nevertheless they came out unharmed. They also handled bars of white hot iron and did other things which seemed quite miraculous. That was over 40 years ago."

"Well," said the little man, "it's hard to believe that for several hundreds of thousands of years the world was so full of clumps that there wasn't room for a man smart enough to utilize asbestos. On the whole, I guess I'll go on doubting."

"All right," returned the elderly man. "I've got \$5,000 that says I'm right. Perhaps your doubts are strong enough to uphold a bet of \$10 against it."

But the little man wouldn't bet.—New York Times.

The Money They Bring.

Statistics in regard to the amount of money brought to this country by European immigrants show that the German is the richest, with an average of \$53.56, while the Englishman is a close second, with \$52. The Frenchman has \$47.35 and the Belgian \$45, while the Irishman brings but \$15, the Russian \$13.50 and the Italian \$10.

Probably the Italian takes more back to his native land, however, than any of the others.—New York Tribune

Enthusiastic Pupil.

Some years ago a well known American pianist gave a concert at which he played a duet for two pianos with a pupil. The pupil, a young man of great talent, had come from a small town, and one of the well to do natives of the town went to the city for the sole purpose of attending the concert. On his return he was asked what he thought of the young man's musical achievements.

"He's doing as well as anybody could wish, and he'll do better yet," replied the prosperous townsman, with decision.

"He played a piece with his teacher that was 20 pages long. He gave the teacher the start by five minutes, and then he clipped in, and they came out at the end nip and tuck, if you'll believe me. Well, sir, when I heard that, I made up my mind we needn't worry another mite about how George would succeed."

"His teacher's considered the best piano player in this part of the country, and if George could do what he did at that concert it won't be many years before he'll beat him out and out. You can just rely on that."

"I'd be willing to bet, if I was a betting man, that in two years' time that teacher won't dare to undertake one of those two piano pieces with George unless George gives him a good ten minutes' start of him!"—Youth's Companion.

Can't Twiddle Their Thumbs.

The gorilla and chimpanzee, which belong to the higher order of apes, have many points of resemblance to man, but there is one thing they cannot do—that is, twiddle their thumbs.

In the gorilla the thumb is short and does not reach much beyond the bottom of the first joint of the forefinger. It is very much restricted in its movements, and the animal can neither twiddle his thumbs nor turn them round so that the tips describe a circle.

There are the same number of bones in the hand of a gorilla as in the hand of man, but the thumbs of the monkey have no separate flexor or bending muscle. This is why a monkey always keeps the thumb on the same side as the fingers and never bends it round any object that may be grasped.

In the gorilla the web between the fingers extends to the second joint, the fingers taper to the tips, and there is a callus on the knuckles on which the animal rests when walking on all fours.

There are many other strong points of resemblance between the ape and man, but—well, we wish to be charitable to our fellow man and will therefore drop the subject.

A Sarcastic Congressman.

Ex-President Benjamin Harrison at a banquet told the following story on himself:

"Judge Martindale has recalled the time when I was the very youngest and very smallest elder, which reminds me of an occurrence at Washington when a number of very anomalous bills for public improvements were introduced. I decided to veto some of them. I remember that there was a New York representative who had an interest in an appropriation of \$250,000 for a public building on the Hudson. A friend learned from him that it had been vetoed. 'See the president,' suggested his friend. The representative responded that that was his intention, and next day went to the White House, where he was informed by the secretary that the president could not be seen. 'Good gracious!' exclaimed the representative. 'Has he got so small as that?'"

Cornish Diamonds.

"Please God," said Aunt Mary Bunny, "if I live till this evening and all's well I'll send for the doctor."

"I shan't name no names," said Uncle Billy, "but Jack Tremeneere's the man."

John Carter, the famous smuggler of Portleath, went throughout Cornwall by the name of the King of Prussia. A Mousehole man, on hearing news of the real king of Prussia's defeat at Jena, remarked: "Misfortunes never come single. I'm sorry for that man. Not more'n six weeks ago he lost 800 keg of brandy, by information, so I'm towid."

All the crew had been saved, but one poor fellow was brought ashore unconscious. The carter turned to the bystanders:

"How do you proceed in the case of one apparently drowned?"

"S'arch his pockets."—Cornish Magazine.

Willow Baskets.

The question is sometimes asked why some willow baskets soon become brown and discolored while others keep white so much longer. Those that discolor are made from willow from which the bark has been removed by steaming. The imported baskets, made where labor is not such a big factor in cost, are woven from willows that have been peeled with knives, and these hold their clean white color to the close of their existence, which is a much longer period than that of the domestic product. If one only knew how to distinguish "t'other from which," now!

True Greatness.

The fellow who dwells within his little eight by ten creed can see the whole thing at a glance, but the man on the high hill of truth realizes there is much that lies beyond the range of his vision and the power of his comprehension.—L. A. W. Bulletin.

Easy.

Sea Captain—Now, Pat, what would you do if you were left on a barren rock in the middle of the ocean?

Pat—I'd pull out me teeth an live on their roots.—Harlem Life.

French judges and judicial officials are prohibited by the etiquette of their profession from riding in an omnibus.

About 400,000,000 pounds of soap are used in Britain yearly.

FORESTS OF STONE.

They Exist in Various Parts of the World.

Old forests are apt to get into the most impossible places and to turn into the most preposterous shapes. All our coalfields are ancient forests far underground, then crushed and cooked into a hard mineral substance. The are forests of plants which once grew as mighty trees, for outside of fairyland who would ever imagine a majestic woodland of club moss and reeds and the little sand weed called the horsetail!

In Greenland, right under the ice-fields, a buried forest has been found in which the plants were all palms and tropical creepers, proving that once the arctic regions were as hot as the Indies.

In the Wash, between the counties of Lincoln and Norfolk, there is an old forest under the sea, with stumps of fallen oaks and elm still visible in places when the tide is low. This was all dry land in the days of the ancient Britons.

Out in the desert of Arizona there is a dead forest on the surface of burning rock and drifting sand, where no plant save the cactus can now find any water. When the place was first discovered, a negro cook thought it would be an excellent place for camping, so he took an ax and delivered a mighty blow upon the fallen trunk of a big red pine.

His ax was ruined, the haft smashed and his fingers so badly hurt that he sat down and howled, for that tree was changed to massive rock, which looked as fresh as though felled but yesterday. The whole prostrate forest of big timber had been changed into valuable and beautiful onyx, jasper and agate.—Chicago Tribune.

THE TRUE MANIA.

Interesting Facts About a Lichen of the Saharan Desert.

According to M. Chastrey, the true manna of the Scripture is the thallophyte, known to botanists as Canaon esculenta and Lichen esculentus. The nomads of the Sahara and south Algeria call it Ouseeh-el-Ard. It is also found in Persia, Arabia and Mesopotamia. It is grayish, about the size of a small pea, and farinaceous inside. Some say the spores are brought by wind and develop with dew. Others think it leaves a germ or seed behind it when it perishes. It should be collected in the morning of its appearance, because it dries in the sun and is lost in the sand. It can be preserved in a closed vessel. The lichen does not cling to any foreign body, but lies on the sand in a layer sometimes nearly an inch thick and can be collected easily. It is rather sweet in taste.

The Arabs, whose lives it often saves, boil it in water, and thus get a gelatinous paste, which they serve in various ways. To preserve the manna they dry it in the shade or they wrap the paste in skins. Analysis shows that the lichen contains 16 parts of water, 14 of nitrogenous matter, 20 of non-nitrogenous matter, 5 of mineral matter, 32 of sugar and amyloseous matter and 4 of fats. The Arabs of Chaambra and the Algerian douars never fail to gather it after dew and rains as a welcome addition to their diet and a gentle laxative.—San Francisco Chronicle.

Mend Your Bird's Legs.

Young chickens and other birds frequently break the bones of their legs, and if properly attended to these fractures can be easily cured with very little trouble. As soon as the injury is noticed the fracture must be carefully cleaned and washed with warm water and then wrapped with a bit of antiseptic cotton. Splints are then prepared for the fractured limb, preferably of split elder wood, the pith of which is taken out. These splints are fastened to the cotton with a drop of glue, and held tightly in place by being wound with linen thread. The bandage and dressing are left undisturbed for from three to four weeks, then the leg is soaked in tepid water until the bandage comes off easily. The fracture will have completely healed in that time.

Canaries and other pet birds can be similarly treated in case of a fracture of a leg, only the elder splints are substituted by pieces of cardboard and the bandage is left but two weeks on the little winged patients.

Kaffir Swimming Feats.

The Kaffirs are great swimmers. They can do things in the water which other folk would look upon with astonishment. For example, a Kaffir boy can ford a stream shoulder high, running as swiftly as if shot from a torrent.

The way they accomplish the feat is thus: Just before entering the water they get a huge stone, sometimes as heavy as themselves, and with the help of a companion place it upon the head. A weight like this gives the boy balance, and he can keep his footing against the heaviest stream. If he were to drop the stone, he would be so light that the water would sweep him off his feet. And this is just one of the Kaffir tricks to accomplish things against tide and flood.

Quantly Expressed.

Lady Dufferin, in her reminiscences, gives some instances of the variations of the English language as she is spoke by the learned baboo, whose European education has given him a little knowledge which is dangerous. The gratification expressed in the following sentence has something pathetic in it: "You have been very good to us, and may Almighty God give you fit for fat."

A small piece of paraffin wax, which melts and spreads in an airtight layer over the surface of the liquid, is found by a German chemist to prevent change in the taste of milk on boiling.

A Swiss law compels every newly married couple to plant trees shortly after the ceremony of marriage. The pine and weeping willow alone are proscribed.

How to Quiet a Child.

A little girl frequently fancied she saw bears and tigers whenever she happened to awake in the night. Presumably she dreamed of some danger, may be on account of having eaten too much for supper or having eaten the wrong kind of food. At any rate, she frequently awoke crying in the night, and in her fear interpreted the dim outlines of a dress or a curtain as a fearful beast that was about to attack her. The best thing to do is to deal tenderly with such fancies and remove the child as far as possible from the object that has caused her excitement.

Then, if you can do so without disturbing the other children, light the lamp and let the light fall full on the thing that has given rise to her fear. Be slow, and express your opinion first as a kind of preliminary assumption that the bear may after all be mamma's skirt or the curtain moving in the draft, and when this comforting probability is understood follow up your advantage and declare it to be a good joke that a harmless piece of cloth should look like a fearful animal. Make the child smile at the incongruity of her fancy, and her laugh will cure the horror of the dream and dispel the nightmare as sunshine dissolves the mist.—Arens.

Luxury, Right or Wrong.

Discussing the right or wrong of luxury in The North American Review, Professor F. Spencer Baldwin, a Boston university authority on economics, comes to these conclusions:

"There are justifiable and there are unjustifiable luxuries.

"In general it may be laid down that a luxury which contributes to the efficiency of the individual in the widest sense and which does not impose on society for the satisfaction of its demands an unwholesome and degrading form of labor is perfectly justifiable.

"This sanction of luxury is not to be stretched to cover unlimited self-indulgence. The part played by rational self sacrifice in the development of character is not to be overlooked. Constant self-indulgence is demoralizing.

"But in general a man has a right to spend money for anything that enriches and diversifies his life, and thus aids in the developing and rounding out of his personality, provided the labor that is required for the production of the articles in question be agreeable and innocuous.

"On the other hand, a luxury that demoralizes the individual or calls for a noxious form of labor is unjustifiable."

Elephant Hunting in Nubia.

When the elephant is pursued on foot, it is invariably sought in the depths of the forest, where it has retired for shelter from the noonday sun and also for the short repose it takes during the 24 hours. The hunter, having tracked his quarry to its retreat, is obliged to use the utmost stealth in approaching it, the elephant being a very light sleeper and awakened by the slightest unusual sound.

The difficulty of moving through a dense, thorny jungle without making any sound dissimilar to those which might be produced by nature, such as the stirring of the branches by a light breeze or the occasional falling of a dead leaf, is greater than can be realized by any one who has not tried it.

On getting within arm's length of his game the swordsman slowly raises himself to an erect position and deals a slashing cut on the back sinews of the nearest foot about ten inches from the ground, at the same time leaping nimbly back to avoid a blow from the animal's trunk. The cut, if properly delivered, bites sheer to the bone, severing the large arteries, and in a short time death ensues from hemorrhage.—Harper's Weekly.

A Sister Lost.

At one time, when two Cheyennes got to gambling, one lost, and luck seemed to be against him. After he had lost every piece of property he had, in desperation he put up his sister and lost her. This aroused great indignation through the tribe, but no one intimidated that the unfortunate girl should not go and live as the wife of the man who had won her in a game of cards.

Over 20 years ago the writer was superintendent of the Arapahoe Indian school at Darlington during a period of five years. During this time not less than four young Indian women came to the school, asking admittance and protection from marriage that was about to be forced upon them. The protection was given, and the young women afterward married according to their own choice. Since then these tribes have been gradually breaking away from their original customs until now they are married with the lawful marriage rites.—Southern Workman and Hampton School Record.

Wanted—A Playfellow.

The Two—Mrs. Reagan, can your little Jamsie come an play wid us?

Mrs. Reagan—Yis. Yez are good byes ter let little Jamsie play wid yer. What are yez going to play?

One of the Two—William Tell. We want Jamsie ter stand wid de apple on his head. Skinny is William Tell. He hain't a very good shot, an I was afeard to stand myself.—Harlem Life.

Declining Love.

Lottie—I'm afraid Fred doesn't care for me as much as he did.

Edith—Nonsense! What makes you think so?

Lottie—I got a letter from him to-day, and there were at least three places where he might have put in a "dear" or a "darling" and didn't.—Boston Transcript.

His Object.

Mr. Bunsby—If that young man's coming here to see you every day in the week, you had better give him a hint to come after supper.

Miss Bunsby—I don't think it's necessary. Pa. That's what he comes after.—Tit-Bits.

Advertised Letters.

List of letters remaining uncalled for in the postoffice at Billings, Yellowstone county, Montana, for the week ending March 13, 1899.

Billet, S.; Chadwick, A. D.; Chapman, C. L.; Conner, Thomas; Drake, E. P.; Finn, Bernard; Finn, J. M.; Forbes, W. G.; Haase, R. C.; Hank, Frank; Johnson, Geo.; McKiernan, Thos. E.; McMahon, Miss Mary E.; Odell, William; Starbird, Mrs. W. D.; Storry, Stanley S.

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