

## WITCHING FOR WATER.

An Ancient Superstition Described in a Government Report.

The idea that a forked twig, so-called divining rod, is useful in locating minerals, finding hidden treasure, or detecting criminals is a curious superstition that has been a subject of discussion since the middle of the sixteenth century and still has a strong hold on the popular mind, even in this country. This is evident from the large number of inquiries received each year by the United States geological survey, department of the interior, as to the efficacy of such a twig, especially for locating underground water. To furnish a reply to these inquiries the geological survey has published a brief paper, by Arthur J. Ellis, on the history of water witching with a bibliography that includes a truly astonishing number of books and pamphlets on this uncanny subject.

In the summary the paper states: It is doubtful whether so much investigation and discussion have been bestowed on any other subject with such absolute lack of positive results. It is difficult to see how for practical purposes the entire matter could be more thoroughly discredited. It is by no means true that all persons using a forked twig or some other device for locating water or other minerals are intentional deceivers. Some of them are doubtless men of good character and benevolent intentions. However, as anything that can be deeply veiled in mystery affords a good opportunity for swindlers, there can be no reasonable doubt that many of the large group of professional finders of water, oil or other minerals who take pay for their "services" or for the sale of their "instruments" are deliberately defrauding the people and that the total amount of money they obtain is large. To all inquiries the United States geological survey therefore gives the advice not to expend any money for the services of any "water witch" or for the use or purchase of any machine or instrument devised for locating underground water or other minerals.

## History of the Superstition.

In tracing the history of the subject it is found that divining rods have been used (1) to locate ore deposits, (2) to discover buried or hidden treasure, (3) to find lost landmarks and re-establish property boundaries, (4) to detect criminals, (5) to analyze personal character, (6) to cure diseases, (7) to trace lost or strayed domestic animals, (8) to insure immunity against ill fortune by use as a fetish, (9) to locate well sites, (10) to trace the course of underground streams, (11) to determine the amount of water available by drilling at a given spot, (12) to determine the depth at which water or ores occur, (13) to determine the direction of cardinal points, (14) to determine the height of trees and (15) to analyze ores and water.

The origin of the superstition is lost in antiquity. What is believed to be the first published description of the divining rod contained in Georgius Agricola's "De re metallica," which was published in 1553. The device became common first in Germany as a means for locating mines and also for discovering buried treasure, a matter of rather common interest in those days, when the practice of burying money and plate for safe keeping was very general. It was introduced into England by German miners during the reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603), and before the end of the seventeenth century it had spread through the countries of Europe. Everywhere it aroused controversy. The rules prescribed for the cutting of the twig partook largely of heathen sorcery and astrology. There were indeed, to some extent, unconscious reminiscences of the old Scandinavian and even of the Aryan mythology. But this heathen influence was offset when the rod was duly Christianized by baptism, being laid for this purpose in the bed with a newly baptized child, by whose Christian name it was afterward addressed. It is readily conceivable that the motive for surrounding this practice with a religious atmosphere might not have been altogether a belief in its divine character, for at that time anyone found engaged in mysterious works was in danger of being charged with sorcery and burned to death.

## Its Use in Detecting Criminals.

The divining rod continued to be a favorite subject with alchemistic writers until about 1660, when a new turn of affairs was brought about by a Jesuit father, who denounced it as in instrument controlled by the devil. The subject was then taken up by the church, and for more than 100 years it was hotly debated by churchmen. Some approved of it and authorized its use on church property; others condemned it and threatened those who used it with excommunication. In 1692, the year of the Salem witchcraft, its notoriety was greatly increased by the arrest and execution of a criminal

## CORN MEAL.

By Carl Vrooman, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

Corn meal is a cheap and valuable food stuff which is not in as general use in the American home as it ought to be. A pound of dry corn meal provides about five times as much energy and five times as much tissue-building protein as does a pound of raw potatoes. At present prices, a pound of corn meal costs from one-third to one-sixth as much as a pound of potatoes.

When potatoes are scarce or expensive, corn meal makes an excellent substitute. Corn meal is not however, a perfect substitute for potatoes because it is prepared by modern milling methods; it contains fewer minerals and other valuable substances than do potatoes. When, consequently, corn meal is substituted for potatoes, the diet should be balanced with another vegetable, a salad or a fruit.

Corn meal mush for breakfast or supper is a standard and palatable dish. Fried mush is an excellent substitute for fried potatoes. There are dozens of corn meal dishes in addition to the different varieties of corn bread. What is known in the North as Boston brown bread is composed of about half rye meal and half corn meal. Polenta is another corn meal dish, extremely popular throughout southern Europe and in certain parts of the United States. The tomale is another corn dish which is in high favor when well made.

If speculators corner the potato crop, or if the potato crop—as was the case in 1916—should be short, corn meal is the next best thing. Of course, rice is also a partial substitute for potatoes, but rice at present costs more than corn meal.

Corn meal is a wholesome and typical American food.

## The Allies' Fight for Democracy.

The outbreak of the struggle took the president, in common with practically all Americans and most Europeans, by surprise. It was only after neutrality was announced that there was time to begin to study into the causes and possible effects. The public in the United States immediately crystallized its opinion about the responsibility for starting the war and the merits of the two sides. With the exception of a German-born, a portion of the Jews, and a part of the Irish, America hoped then as now that Germany would be defeated. But this hope was founded mainly on the belief that Germany and her satellites were wrong in their quarrel with the rest of Europe. It was founded very little on the belief that the struggle concerned America or American institutions. In various quarters, however, as time went on it became plain that, whatever other characteristics the struggle had, one thing was certain—if Germany won, world democracy would receive a terrible blow; if Germany were defeated, democracy would receive a tremendous impetus.

Out of this perception grew the phrases that the allies or that England was fighting our battle—the battle of democracy.—World's Work.

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through the agency of a peasant who used a divining rod. Interest in this case was intense and widespread and called forth a large amount of literature. As late as 1703 this peasant was employed to point out with his divining rod Protestants for massacre under the plea of punishment for crimes they had committed. The divining rod was in some respects closely related to witchcraft, as is suggested by the use of incantations in connection with divining, and to this relationship may be ascribed in some measure the strengthening of belief in it. Witchcraft at that time had become a frenzy, and anything which by any stretch of the imagination could be suspected of implication with witchcraft became a subject of discussion and the basis of firm opinions and beliefs. In 1701, however, the inquisition issued a decree against the further use of the divining rod in criminal prosecution, and this use of the device rapidly came to an end.

## Recent Discussions.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century an attempt was made to explain water witching as an electric phenomenon, and later it was discussed as a psychic phenomenon. At almost every step in the advance of science some one has attempted to explain its supposed operation by means of the latest scientific theories.

Before the present war there were several societies in Germany whose sole object was said to be the study of the divining rod. In 1910 the department of agriculture of France appointed a committee to investigate the subject, and in 1914 this committee was still investigating.

## LAND MIGHT GO DRY.

No Steps to Bring About Prohibition Unless Crop Failure Demands It.

Washington, April 20.—Final determination of the government's attitude on the production of intoxicating liquors during the war will await the return to the United States of Herbert C. Hoover, now in Europe, who will head the food board named by the Council of National Defense.

Administration officials consider the question pressing only as it concerns the protection of soldiers and sailors from liquor.

No steps to bring about general prohibition will be advocated unless the grain shortage makes such a course essential.

## Scraps.

Thousands of Mohammedans know the Koran by heart.

Vienna reported a saving of \$142,000 worth of gas under last year's new time schedule.

Rudyard Kipling and Conan Doyle are confident speakers, and do not seem to be troubled with nerves.

The Talmud enumerates rue among the kitchen herbs and regards it as free of tithe as being a plant not cultivated in gardens. The name rue occurs only in Luke xi, 42.

A blow on the jaw by his cousin, John Liskas, in a friendly boxing match at Newcastle, Pa., brought Mike Liskas's voice back to him after he had been unable to speak for a year.

The million-dollar insurance fad didn't last long among Gotham's gold kings. It's the two-million-dollar habit now. J. P. Morgan took out \$2,500,000 and H. P. Davison, his partner, took out an extra million.

Lachnite, mounted and cut in the approved fashion, can scarcely be distinguished from the real diamond. This imitation is said to be able to stand every diamond test—fire, acid and the diamond file.

We know that the 10,000 verses of the Rig-Veda have for 3,000 years been accurately preserved in the memories of the Brahmins, and that not one Brahmin alone, but thousands can today recite it word for word.

An Italian grape grower accidentally discovered that the presence of tomato plants in his vineyard made short work of the phylloxera, with which his vines were infested. This insect destroys both the root and the stem of the grapevine.

Texas produces in the neighborhood of 5,000,000 bales of cotton a year, yet the State turns out only enough cotton goods for her own use. This is not because her mills are so few and far between.

When the authorities of an Alabama town had reason to believe that in certain quarters whiskey was being sold illegally, they started an investigation. This ended in hundreds of barrels of the liquor being dragged out of doors and broken open. The stream of whiskey which flowed down the main street of the town is said to have been worth \$150,000.

"Miss Rose Thibault," known to the employment agencies and the Salvation army, of Fall River, Mass., and Providence, R. I., as a house maid, has turned out to be Arthur Legrasse. The young man, who had been arrested for stealing from his employers, said he found six years ago, when he was fourteen, that because of his frail physique he had to don dresses to obtain employment.

The custom of lifting the hat is traced back to the age of chivalry, when it was customary for knights never to appear in public except in armor. It became a custom, however, for a knight, upon entering an assembly of friends, to remove his helmet, signifying, "I am safe in the presence of friends." The age of chivalry passed away with the fifteenth century, but among the many acts of courtesy which can be traced to its influence none is more direct in its origin than the lifting of the hat to acknowledge the presence of a friend.

## Humane Way to Kill Flies.

I noticed in Sunday's Journal a cut of a valuable device for killing flies invented by Irving P. Lorentz. The idea is excellent, but I have a very serious criticism to make regarding it. Mr. Lorentz instructs that when the trap is filled it be dipped into boiling water. This would be most horribly cruel, and is due doubtless to lack of thought on Lorentz's part. I did this some years ago. I had caught some hundreds of flies in a similar trap and dipped them into a pail of boiling water, and left them in it about an hour. On taking them out about one-tenth were alive. The thought of the agony they endured has not left my memory yet. While they are pests, they are innocent and should be put to death painlessly. Immersing them in cold water and leaving them a few hours will be effectual. I am sure Mr. Lorentz will agree with me.—Milwaukee Journal.

## A UNIQUE RECORD

Very Few Like It In Our Broad Republic.

Home testimony for Doan's Kidney Pills, published in every locality, is of itself convincing evidence of merit. Confirmed testimony forms still stronger evidence. Years ago, a citizen of Bamberg gratefully acknowledged the benefit derived from Doan's Kidney Pills. The statement is now confirmed—the proof more convincing. Cases of this kind are plentiful in the work of Doan's Kidney Pills—the record is unique.

Thos. H. White, Main St., Bamberg, says "I suffered from weak kidneys for several years. My kidneys sometimes pained me and I had a very frequent desire to pass the kidney secretions and had to get up often during the night. Since I began using Doan's Kidney Pills, I am much better. I seldom have to get up during the night and my kidneys are stronger." (Statement given January 25, 1908.)

On February 22, 1915 Mr. White said: "I still hold a high opinion of Doan's Kidney Pills. I haven't taken them for a long time but if I ever have occasion to, I will use them as I know they have no equal."

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## Opinions from Folks Who Know

For malarial headache, Granger Liver Regulator entirely relieved my trouble.—J. Height, Wetumpka, Ala.

Had heavy headache. Vomited twice to six times a day. Four doses of Granger Liver Regulator made me well.—Loundas P. Brindley, Somerville, Ala.

Mother had sick headache. Granger Liver Regulator did her more good than all the medicine she had taken before.—Pearley Davis, Pacio, Ala.

I never expect to be without it in my home.—Jenie Usey, Gadsden, Ala.

It is a great saver of doctors' bills.—Louis N. Kent, Honoraville, Ala.

There is none better.—Dr. T. E. Cothran, Alexis, Ala.

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