WATER RUINS CROPS EITHER WAY

Too Much—An alfalfa cutter stands isolated by water in a field flooded by a cloudburst, deluging it with over six inches of rain. Kansas farmers are complaining of too much rainy weather. The wheat crop has suffered over-moisture and the potato crop is imperilled.

Too Little—Here's what the eastern drought means to the corn crop. Farmer William Hookstra, compares two stalks, the one on the left from a field under irrigation, the other stunted stalk from a field that depends on rain. Atlantic coast farmers face multi-million-dollar losses through the prolonged drought.

THE FARM FRONT
by John Russell

Somebody's always taking the joy out of life. Here I was going along, doing my best and stealing agricultural information from here and passing it along to you when, all of a sudden came a blast from the mouth of Dr. J. Gordon Taggart, deputy minister of agriculture down at Ottawa.

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Too many "experts" — and the word experts was in quotes — are telling the farmers what to do about soil conservation was the way the dailies started off their story of Dr. Taggart's speech at the annual conference of agricultural representatives at the O.A.C. in Guelph.

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If a high-grade production program is maintained and only the best agricultural technique used by farmers, the worthy doctor asserted, the much talked-of conservation plan will take care of itself. He went on to deplore the theory that a great many of the ills of mankind and many of the difficulties of the farmers are attributable to farmers' misuse of the land.

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"The world is full of people who think they know what's wrong with agriculture and how to cure it," he said. "But they forget that the average farmer himself realizes the need for conservation of his resources." He further urged that emphasis be placed on a positive rather than a negative approach.

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"The farmers themselves know that they cannot possible live and prosper by destroying their own resources," Dr. Taggart insisted.

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Well, when I think of some of the ruined farms I've seen and heard about that have been slowly brought back to life and full production, just through taking such so-called "expert" advice, I feel like tell Dr. Taggart to—well—well—accept my thanks for giving me material for part of a column, I guess I'd better make it.

* * *

Another soil specialist has been making certain statements that are, to put it mildly, open to question. He's Wallace Micheltree, associate extension specialist in soils at the College of Agriculture, Rutgers University, and he says that lots of farmers and gardeners are doing more harm than good by cultivating the soil during dry spells.

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Because of lack of rainfall, soil is not crusting, explains Micheltree, and unless some of the more hardy weeds got by the last cultivation, there's no point in cultivating. On the harmful side, cultivation now turns up moist soil with unnecessary loss of moisture. Furthermore, it disturbs root systems of plants and kills some of the root hairs that are necessary to pick up the moisture and plant food.

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A farmer or gardener believes he is doing good by cultivating because he sees moist soil where he works. He thinks he is drawing up the moisture, but actually, the only effect is to expose more soil to the effects of evaporation.

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That's the finish of what I'm going to quote from Mr. Micheltree. As I said three or four paragraphs back, what he says is open to question. I wonder if any of my readers would like to express opinions on this or any other agricultural matter.

* * *

If so, all you have to do is address, John Russell, Box 1, 123 Eighteenth Street, New Toronto, Ont. And if you don't want your name used in anything I might print in this column, just tell me so when you write.

Ottawa To Get That "New Look"

Canada is to have a new national capital.

The name will still be Ottawa, and the location will be the same—but the city will be given such a new look that it will not be recognizable by the end of the century.

The plan, as laid before Parliament by a special National Planning Committee, calls for wide highways to be cut through and around the city.

Railroads, which now run through the heart of the capital, will be moved outside the urban area.

Slums will be demolished, and great new blocks of flats and government buildings erected.

Broad parks will be developed throughout the city and on its outskirts.

Present bridges across the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers will be abolished, and replaced by new thoroughfares.

About the only feature that will remain the same is Parliament Hill.

Rare Documents

In the famous Cathedral of St. Paul's, London, visitors will find a remarkable collection of historic documents which has just been added to the library. These documents belong to the Tudor age—to the beginnings of the Reformation under Henry VIII and its establishment by his daughter, Elizabeth.

Dr. Norman Sykes, an expert in ecclesiastical history, has said that the documents show how seriously the age took religion.

"Here we may read the very words and grounds of their objection to various rules and orders of the church; and if some of the matters which aroused in them such warmth—such as the lawfulness of the ministers wearing surplices at church, of the giving and receiving of a ring in marriage, and of kneeling to take the Holy Communion—seemed to us of trifling, if any, importance, we may remember that only 20 years ago our modern House of Commons was roused to great excitement by debates on a proposed further revision of the Prayer Book which centred on points not very different.

"In the days of Elizabeth, however, the dangers of foreign invasion from abroad and of civil strife at home seemed too great to permit of differences in religion being tolerated, and so to the authority of the Church was added the force of the state to compel conformity. Some of the Puritans, as the objectors were called, suffered loss of office, imprisonment, and even death for their principles.

"A glimpse of the nature of the foreign danger is given in a series of documents relating to the soldiers, to be provided and maintained by bishops and clergy during the perils of the Spanish Armada and the rebellions in Ireland."

New and Useful Too

Sealing Strip

Sealing strip of plastic seals and covers cracks at junctions of wall and bathtub, wash bowl and stall showers and prevents steam of the water from entering and causing damage to walls and woodwork, according to maker. The strip is white, will not craze or crack and is unaffected by water, cites maker; will not harden and is resistant to normal alkali solutions, acids and alcohols; not affected by common household cleaning solutions, soaps and deterents. Said to adhere readily to porcelain, wood, clay-tile, plastic-tile, lino-wall or any other types of surface materials uesd in bathrooms. May be painted if desired.

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Plastic Rolling Pin

Rolling pin made entirely of plastic has eight small rollers which give more rolling area than single large roller, maker states. Since they travel faster over dough, it doesn't stick. The increased rolling action and the non-porous rollers combine to flatten the dough uniformly, leaving no lumps or holes. Comes in variety of colors, costs about the same as conventional rolling pin.

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Eliminate Odors

A small, compact odor absorber or air purified for commercial-type refrigerators, protects and preserves food quality by keeping air sweet and clean and preventing flavor "transference" between foods, maker states. Device uses activated carbon as filter to remove gases and odors from refrigerator air and is similar in design and operation to larger and more elaborate equipment in general use in air conditioning and industry.

Three Minutes of Fiction Fun

SHORT SHORT STORY

Mister Gill

By Richard Hill Wilkinson

At first, Mr. Otis Gill had seemed to take a liking to young Arthur Forbes. But he changed his opinion when the champion began to buck the choppy seas of the open Atlantic. She was not a large liner, and the waves were running high. Arthur Forbes turned away suddenly and, clutching the deck rail for support, shaped an unsteady course for the companionway.

Mr. Gill burst into guffaws of laughter.

"Seasick!" he said, addressing a young couple near by and nodding toward the companionway. "Should have stayed home and tended to his knitting."

The young couple smiled politely, but with a lack of enthusiasm. Neither of them felt equal to the task of getting up and following on young Arthur Forbes' heels.

Mr. Gill was sober now; his face pale, his eyes glassy.

The dining salon was located beneath the forward deck; Mr. Gill's table was at the extreme end, near that section where the vessel's bow began to narrow. He had hardly seated himself when he saw that young Arthur Forbes was placed two tables away and slightly behind. There was a plate of food on the table before the youth, but it was untouched. Like one in a trance Mr. Forbes was sitting with eyes widened greatly beyond their normal size, cheeks as pale as death.

After a time, Mr. Gill saw that the youth at the other table was staring toward a port-hole, and his grin broadened. The port-hole was located far forward, and with each dip of the vessel, one could see the entire sloap of a wave, from trough to crest. Then for a space there would be nothing but open sky. It provided a sensation similar to riding on a roller coaster.

Mr. Gill knew that as long as young Forbes continued to stare through the port-hole, his seasickness would steadily grow worse. And he chuckled at the thought.

After a while, Mr. Gill found it was easier to tarse straight ahead than to sit half-turned in his chair in order to watch young Forbes, who, after all, wasn't the most pleasing sight in the world. And in staring straight ahead, Mr. Gill found that he was looking directly through the porthole at the swishing seas.

He watched idly for a few moments and then looked away, conscious of a feeling in his stomach not wholly normal. The sensation passed and he looked again at the port-hole, feeling more comfortable in this position. Instantly the same strange sensation attacked him again.

Mr. Gill was sober now; his face pale; his eyes glassy. Realization of what was happening to him came like a shock. He was seasick! Helplessly, miserably ill. Never in his life could Mr. Gill remember feeling so utterly at the mercy of anything.

Miraculously, Mr. Gill reached the doorway and disappeared up the stairs. Instantly, the dining salon was a bedlam of laughter. Up toward the bow, young Arthur Forbes was wiping some white substance from his cheeks and grinning broadly. Several men came over and spoke.

"I'll change your order, sir. Bring you some hot food."

Mr. Forbes smiled. "Thanks. And say, steward, that was a smart idea of yours—asking me to play the role of the helplessly seasick passenger and placing Gill at that table directly opposite the port-hole."

The steward nodded, his eyes atwinkle. "We have a man like Mr. Gill on board every voyage, sir. And we have that table placed there for just this type. No one else is asked to sit so far forward."

Mr. Forbes chuckled. "Think of everything for the comfort of your passengers, eh? Well, if you didn't, I'm afraid this voyage would have proved almost intolerable — with Gill talking the way he was."

"Loaded"—Movie actress Vera Ralston sports a young fortune in jewels. The ear-rings, necklace and bracelets, from a Hollywood antique collection, are valued at $250,000. They are supposed to have been given to the Empress Josephine by Napoleon. The necklace alone contains 20 square-cut diamonds ranging in size from two to five carats each.

City Of The Sands — Timbuktu

In the midst of the desert sands of Africa, more than a thousand miles from anywhere in particular but a small world unto itself, is a place few tourists have seen but all would like to—or think they would. Its remoteness is proverbial. For have you not heard this man or that say, upon being queried as to his destination when he sets forth upon a journey, "Oh, maybe to Timbuctoo?" In other words, maybe anywhere at all.

For that is how we think of the city of the sands, Timbuktu, as it is properly spelled. A thousand miles south from the Moroccan border, an equal distance from the Atlantic coast, it has perhaps known less of change from, been less affected by, the frantic activities of the world in war and peace through the past quarter-century than any community of similar size anywhere. It is still the half-fanciful, Alice-in-Wonderland city of the sands.

On the Niger, down which come big, heavy-laden trading canoes from a hundred native villages and towns. Timbuktu is likewise such a camel-caravan center as perhaps does not exist today anywhere else in the world. The amount of trading is enormous. Salt is the principal commodity and the people of these regions prefer it to the commercial varieties imported from Europe. It arrives at Timbuktu by camel-train twice a year, coming from Saharan salt mines 500 miles in the heart of the desert. The immense caravans have been known to run as high as 4,000 beasts.

Yet Timbuktu is cosmopolitan, no doubt of that, though it is an African cosmopolitanism rather than a European. The people of scores of African tribes, most of them speaking different languages, rub elbows with Arab nomads from all over the Sahara in the teeming, sun-drenched streets where few European buildings of any sort have yet made their appearance.

Unbelieveable color against blazing white light blends in a hundred shades in tribal costume, in garish adornment, in native markets, in the armament of far-come "untamed" nomads on their camels. These, especially the fierce, heavily veiled Touaregs whose long swords are decorated with hilts in the form of a cross, sullenly resent the presence here, the political control of the "unbeliever." How and when they may try to implement that resentment if, out of the current political confusion in Africa and adjacent Asia, they think they perceive an opportunity is a question of the immediate tomorrow clothed with some uncertainty.

Dog Taxes—107 Pounds A Year—Annual receipts for dog taxes in the City of Toronto back in 1845 were 107 pounds, according to an old handwritten Canadian account book contained in the Queen's University historical collection. This year book, dated 1845, is part of the R. S. McLaughlin collection recently donated to the Queen's archives department. Here, Nancy Kingston examines the precious old account book with Queen's Librarian, H. Pearson Gundy.

JITTER — By Arthur Pointer