

FADS ARE DRAMAS ON WORLD STAGE

WIDESPREAD IN EFFECTS

Bulletin of Nat. Geographic Society Tells How Many of Them Started and Notes Their Brief Popularity

Yen Fu Chien, of Foochow, is puzzled about Americans.

He has never been to America but he has decided that Americans must be astonishingly changeable, says a news bulletin of the National Geographic society.

Yen Fu Chien left a job ornamenting fans to paint polished bone and bamboo chips for mah jong sets. He couldn't paint them fast enough for the Americans. Then, all of a sudden, America did not want so many mah jong sets. Yen Fu Chien lost his job.

He could not know that the fad of cross word puzzles had cut into the fad of mah jong in America. And he did not worry much. The changeable Americans developed a taste for Chinese parasols. These also needed ornamentation, and since Yen Fu Chien was a decorator he ate again.

Hair for Parasols
Yen Fu's sister was not so fortunate. Just about the time her tresses were long enough to market the bottom dropped out of the hair net trade because bobbed hair was "all the go" 5,000 miles from Foochow. She had to accept a low price. Her hair is now being used to tie the lacquer paper covering to the bamboo ribs of the parasols her brother decorates.

All the world's a stage for the "Fads of 1925" or any year. Their first acts may be laid in Foochow or in some other strange, out-of-the-way place: Arctic Islands, tropic jungles, deserts; the second act on Broadway or Michigan avenue. The third act may reveal a high ceiling room where grave diplomats draft a treaty—or may be "same as Act I."

The opening curtain of "Platinum," a 20th century comedy based on Charles Lamb's famous roast pig story, rises on a street scene in Quibdo, Columbia. As a prologue it is necessary to point out that the mothers of most of us were as proud as peacocks of their engagement diamond in its gold setting. Ask a 1925 "flapper" to wear anything but platinum filigree and you will probably stay single for life.

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Buried Treasure Hunt

The demand for platinum jewelry has helped to shoot that metal to well over \$100 an ounce and, with the Russian field cut off, Columbia is the principal producer. Washing for gold is an ancient industry for Quibdo natives, but they long regarded as a nuisance the heavy lumps they had to separate from the gold. The lumps were platinum. When they realized that platinum was worth four times as much as gold they began frantically to pan the creeks which are the town's streets for the discarded nuggets. The government laid claim to the streets, so they panned their gardens and door yards. Finally one patriot burned his house down. Panning the ruins he obtained enough platinum to build a new house and still have \$4,000 in the bank, thus coming off much better than Lamb's Chinaman.

With all the enthusiasm of Kansas farmers in a good wheat year natives of Cape Colony, South Africa, are hailing an obscure American news item. It is an announcement from Detroit, Michigan, that a great percentage of automobiles now sold are closed cars. What connection can there be between the rocky, drought-ridden tip of Africa and sedans? To find the root of the rejoicing the first act must be seen again.

Ostrich Feathers and Autos

In the last part of the nineteenth and the first part of our century royalty in Europe took to ostrich feathers. By 1910 the "willow plume" was one of the dearest possessions of American womanhood. South Africa discovered that raising ostriches was its special vocation and nearly a million birds stalked its pens. An attempt was made even to start ostrich farms in California. With the war the bottom dropped out and tens of thousands of ostriches had to be slaughtered to save them from starving. South Africa says that the arrival of the open automobile spelled downfall for the ostrich feather as a hat ornament—but the closed car is their "rainbow of hope" for the revival of the trade that brought them \$15,000,000 in one year.

At the foot of the modern monument to the streamline six are said to be the wrecks of two other minor

gods of civilization—the "plug" hat and high shoes.

Birthplace of Many Fads

China is the chief hunting ground for civilization's "enthusiasms." It has given by turns everything from willow ware to Pekinese pups. Sandwiched between these extremes are the curly yellow karakul lambskin coats, rugs, bonbon baskets, fans, "Spanish" shawls, tulip bulbs, lanterns and goldfish. The tink Pekinese, which Chinese legends say are descendants of a marriage of the marmoset and the lion, once were owned by Chinese monarchs alone. When the Pekin Royal palace was captured in 1860 five Pekinese were found and taken to Europe, thus introducing the glossy lap dog to the west.

Fads probably rise more rapidly and die more quickly in America today than in any other country in any other age. To fads civilization owes much for they, rather than necessities, often have been the first springs of international trade. Mediterranean people blazed their first trade routes to north Europe for amber, the ancients' most precious substance. Lapis lazuli, with which King Tutankhamen's tomb was richly ornamented, was to old Egypt what diamonds are to the twentieth century. Egypt traded her emeralds for Persia's lapis lazuli.

Brazilian Fad in America

The United States serves other countries with fads just as they supply us. Richly ornamented watches are "Made in America" for China. It is often immaterial to the Chinese purchasers whether the watches keep time or not for the purchasers prize them chiefly as glittering pendants. Brazilians have a curious legendary character called "Sacy," who is supposed to bring good luck. He is brown, has only one leg and that ending in a cloven hoof, smokes a pipe and wears a bright red cap. Sacy may also bring good luck to some American manufacturers who are now preparing to make a fad in Brazil of Sacy Balloons, Sacy celluloid buttons, Sacy watch charms and even Sacy radiator caps.



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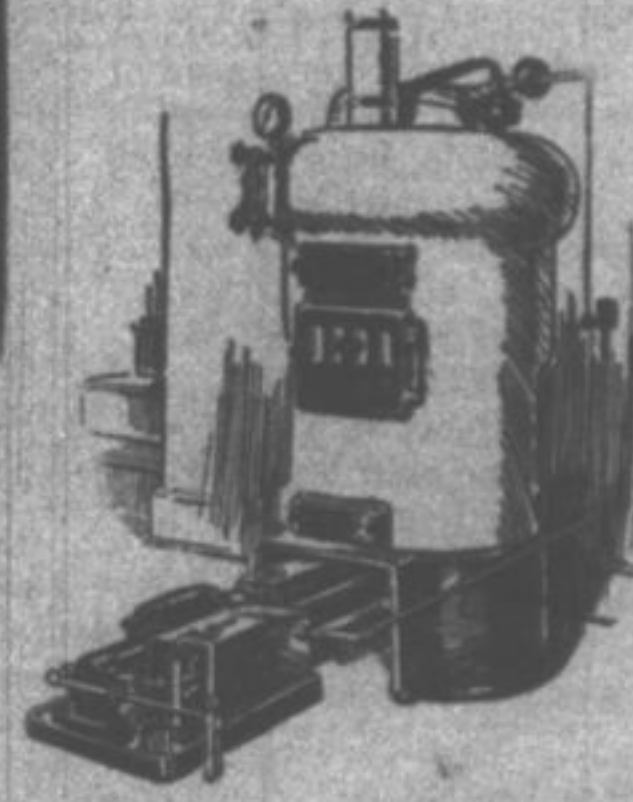
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