

A PUZZLING PAST

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The year is 1896. You live on a small farm in upstate New York. The cows have been milked, the pigs slopped, supper eaten and the dishes washed, and you and your wife sit down by the light of a kerosene lamp and several candles to read the latest issue of the weekly newsmagazine, *The American Agriculturalist*.

How small the print is, and you strain your eyes in the dim light to read of the latest developments in swine breeding and of new techniques to prevent peach rot. The ads for Victor incubators, the Columbia Chilled Plow, and the Acme Pulverizing Harrow seize your attention, and your wife wonders aloud whether Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will really cure every female complaint as advertised.

A contest was announced a month ago for the best bill of fare for a "hard times" Thanksgiving dinner, "one that should be as economical as possible while making the mouth water," and the winning entry, which earned its author five dollars, was:

	Celery cream soup	
Pigeon pie		Mock macaroni
Roast suckling pig		Apple sauce
	Mashed & browned potatoes	
Escalloped tomatoes		Stuffed onions
	Southern baked sweet potatoes	
	Celery salad	
Pumpkin pie		Amber pie
Farmers' fruit cake		Fruit blanc mange
	Apples, pears, nuts	
	Sweet cider	

Thinking it might be time to turn the farm over to your son and retire to the city, you study with interest the architectural plans for a modest three-bedroom house with sitting-room, parlor, kitchen and pantry which can be built for under one thousand dollars. Of course it has no bathroom, but who needs one of those new-fangled things when the little house out back serves perfectly well?

A letter to the editor catches your wife's eye and she insists you read it. "When I hear of a man and a farmer 'supporting' his wife, it gives me 'that tired feeling' that no patent medicine can cure. Did you, any of you, fellow citizens support her? Indeed! If she were the hired girl he'd have to pay her at least \$2 per week and she would do nothing but the housework. But our

average farmer's wife raises poultry enough to clothe herself and the children, and the eggs she sells provide the groceries and household expenses. He puts his money into fine stock, farm machinery or more land, rarely giving any of it to her and he growls like a bear if she needs anything or 'just a little money.' But then, he's supporting her, she's his wife, and he's a right to be hateful ... If a woman does the housework, cares for the poultry, takes care of all the sickly pigs and lambs and a calf, raises a man's children and teaches them all the virtues she knows, doesn't she earn every blessed cent she gets? Let her die and him hire a housekeeper, and then he'll see what a helper he has lost; that she saved him money and earned as much as he did and he wasn't supporting her at all: that it was a partnership affair and she earned fully half, but didn't get it because he was enjoying 'the manly privilege of supporting her.'" The letter was signed "Joe" - clearly a man ahead of his time.

Your wife would have liked to pursue the matter further, but to still her diatribe, you turn to the puzzle column. Here are offered one to five challenges - mostly word puzzles - and if you correctly solve all the puzzles offered in one month, usually 15 to 20, and are a paid-up subscriber to the magazine, you can win a top prize of \$2 (enough to pay that hypothetical hired girl) or one of 14 lesser prizes guaranteed to be "good ones."

There are a number of basic puzzle types which repeat week after week, for instance Anagrams (or more properly Transpositions since no attempt is made to relate the anagram to its base):

1. LE BIT A QUE
2. OUR RARE SPOUTS
3. U CART FAN IN MUG
4. OH! POOR SIR HUZ
5. IF I RAIL CAT

There are Rebuses, some of which are fiendishly complex:

1. Memoir of Caesar SUM AREx2/3 5¹⁰⁰⁰00 United States
Biography of Washington c AN 1000 K 3600 sec 50 - 444 $\frac{L1}{1000}$ E

& LEDAV ourselves E

$\frac{YARD}{3}$ T pr S $\frac{S}{THE}$ &&& oft view myself

2. 5 N WE & Mothers R to be correct **

Others, called Geographical Rebuses, are more transparent:

3. $\begin{array}{c} \text{R} \\ \text{GA} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \text{D} \\ \text{AARK} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \text{IRW} \\ \text{O} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \text{B} \\ \text{O} \end{array}$

There is the occasional cryptogram, this one with the clue that it is a couplet from Pope:

MNOBAF SON VODAE, MT IQSKYNE PDIFAT AQR
 WANQENF RDSO Q YQSSAN SDVPANF RDSO Q ESYQR

You could test your knowledge of literature with this puzzle of Shakespearean characters clued as charades (some parts phonetic):

1. Numerous, and judicial remedies
2. A domestic animal and an exclamation
3. Male and an animal
4. A piece of cured meat and to allow
5. A blemish and ourselves
6. An animal and a mound
7. Timid and to confine

Or you could try your skill with a biographical acrostic:

1	-	-	-	-	2
3	-	-	-	-	4
5	-	-	-	-	6
7	-	-	-	-	8
9	-	-	-	-	10
11	-	-	-	-	12
13	-	-	-	-	14
15	-	-	-	-	16

From 1 to 2: English poet
 From 3 to 4: King of Visigoths
 From 5 to 6: French painter
 From 7 to 8: Mexican statesman
 From 9 to 10: Noted Speaker of the House of Commons
 From 11 to 12: English poet
 From 13 to 14: French theologian
 From 15 to 16: German sculptor (all of six letters)

From 1 to 15: Prussian musician
 From 2 to 16: American general (all of eight letters)

Be warned that few of these names (possibly only the Visigoth king) are familiar to the present-day reader.

A rare puzzle type asked you to look for nine hidden flowers in the following paragraph:

John, who was the hero, settled himself in his now dropped-back chair and told us about making a call at his girl's house. She was writing, and being afraid she would drop ink on the carpet, she had covered the floor with crash and put the ink in a viol. Etiquette, she said, required this. He said she was so engaged in what she was doing, that the carpet would never be nasty, for she was only chewing the end of the penholder and thinking. He said she was prim, rose early in the morning, and always looked sweet, peaceful and happy.

Charades are common, as are puzzles designated Sentence Making.

Charade: My first is always present, but seldom seen by day; my second often holds food, and my whole is all right.

Sentence Making: Fill the first blank with a word, and the others with the same word beheaded for each subsequent blank:

The ----- struck the bell, making a ----- that lasted --- minute

More challenging are the puzzles called Geographical:

One pleasant day in June I took my best girl whose name was (a town in Georgia) for a stroll by the (city in California). She was a splendid (county in Alabama) and we went several miles. She was rather timid, and when a (town in Pennsylvania) ran across our path, she nearly fainted. I gave her some (county in Alabama) that I had in my pocket, and we sat down on a (town in South Carolina) to rest. She would have been all right if a (town in Indiana) had not jumped from a tree over our heads. I had all I could do to quiet her fears, but after giving her some (town in North Carolina) leaves to chew, she seemed better, and I got a (town in North Carolina) and we started for home. We had not gone far before we struck a (town in South Carolina) and were both thrown out into a (town in North Carolina). We were soaking wet, but not hurt, and when we got to a (town in Illinois) we again sat down to rest and look over the situation. After awhile we crossed a (town in Massachusetts) in which there were some cows, but they did not molest us, and we finally arrived home safely. My girl was inclined to blame me for the chain of accidents, but I convinced her that it all came about because she insisted on walking when I wanted to hire a (town in Ohio). She finally said she would not say any more about it, but next time we went out to walk she thought we had better take the (town in New Jersey) path, and so keep out of danger.

A Cross Word Enigma catches your eye:

My first is in dog but not in cat.
 My second is in mouse but not in rat.
 My third is in collar but not in button.
 My fourth is in eating but not in glutton.
 My fifth is in monkey but not in ape.
 My sixth is in berry but not in grape.
 My seventh is in elder but not in parson.
 My eighth is in fire as well as in arson.
 My whole denotes the time of year
 That brings to us such right good cheer.

Going through your back issues of the Agriculturist, you find other challenges to tempt you: numericals, word squares, forms, word-changes, and drop-letter puzzles. But the candle gutters, your wife yawns, and it is time to wind the clock, go up to your unheated bedroom and hunker down under a goose-feather comforter. As you trim the lamp, you wonder what kinds of word puzzles your great-grandchildren will be doing 90 years from now, and you marvel at the ingenuity of the puzzle editor. Just how, you ask yourself, will he or she make a rebus out of "Three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl."