



In Chewing Gum

by
Hugh Russell Fraser

UNTIL the advent of the commercial sale of chewing gum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, psychologists had looked in vain for an infallible yardstick of intellectual mediocrity. With the introduction of chewing gum, however, the problem was solved. Habitual gum-chewers, it was discovered, were invariably of below-average intelligence; no individual of imagination and culture above the age of 18 was found in this group.

Gum-chewing is a peculiarly American custom, but it has spread to Europe and now large parts of that continent have become infected. State Department experts concede that 97.5 per cent of anti-American feeling abroad can be traced to the antics of gum-chew-

ing tourists. One survey made by the State Department is reputed to be sensational. It is rumored that the magazine *Confidential* has secured a copy and will soon publish it for 4,200,000 gum-chewing readers.

Whence came this habit which has exasperated the civilized world? Fallacious is the claim made in some quarters that gum-chewing dates from antiquity. Gum itself, of course, was known to the ancient world. It was used to caulk boats. Samples of it have been found hardened in ancient tombs. But it was not used as a masticatory.

Likewise, the suggestion that the Indians introduced it to early New England settlers is without his-

torical evidence. Not a single contemporary letter, diary or newspaper mentions it, although reference is made to cherry and spruce resins for caulking purposes. Perhaps the legend that gum-chewing was known to antiquity grew from the fact that the Greek historian Herodotus described chewing the betel nut, seed of the widely cultivated betel palm, an item of diet that was reputed to be very nourishing.

Myths die hard. It is also said that in the United States as early as 1848, one John Curtis and his brother of Bangor, Maine, made a confection partly from the gum of spruce trees which today the youngsters would call "all-day-suckers." They prepared it over a solitary Franklin stove, but the product attained no special vogue and was looked upon as candy.

The real crime was not perpetrated until after the Civil War. The person responsible was none other than General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the Mexican commander who shot down the prisoners of war at Goliad, who massacred the defenders of The Alamo, and who was defeated by Sam Houston at the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836.

WHY General Houston did not execute him after taking him prisoner is one of the mysteries of history. Houston himself claimed the safety of the little scoundrel was necessary to insure peace between

Mexico and Texas. At any rate, Santa Anna lived to cause more trouble in his native country, until finally he was exiled in 1867.

Having discovered Uncle Sam to be an easy mark, he came here. Secretary of State William H. Seward furnished him with a ship to sail for New York. Santa Anna brought along a large chunk of chicle, a solidified latex of the sapota tree, which the Aztec Indians used for chewing gum. He always kept several pieces of it in his pocket.

Shortly after his arrival, he met an American inventor named Thomas Adams. Adams lived in Jersey City, and one day he invited the General to visit him at his home. The diminutive Mexican showed up and together they spent the evening talking in the library. Every once in a while Adams noticed he would take something out of his pocket, place it in his mouth and chew it. Puzzled, he asked what it was.

Santa Anna thereupon produced a large hunk of it from his overnight bag and presented it to Adams, remarking it was a gum for chewing purposes. Adams was dubious. He sampled some of it, did not like it and dropped the subject.

But Adams' oldest son, eavesdropping on the conversation, listened with considerable interest, and after his father and the General had retired for the night, stole into the library and examined the

hunk of chicle. Cutting off pieces with a knife, he liked it. Suddenly, an idea hit him. He had a friend a little older than himself who owned a small candy store in the city. Why not place this chicle on sale—the youngsters might buy it!

Next morning, young Adams was at his friend's store in Jersey City. He showed the samples of chicle and suggested that the friend could sell two little pieces for a penny. Willing to try anything once, the owner called the attention of the kids to it as soon as they began trooping in before school opened. He didn't expect many sales, and young Adams had said the supply "would probably last three months." He was hardly prepared, however, for what happened. Word spread rapidly, and before noon he was sold out!

FRANTICALLY he tried to get hold of Adams for more. When young Adams learned of the rapid sale, he told his father what had happened and the elder Adams, quick to sense an opportunity, immediately went to see his old friend, Santa Anna. The general gave him a new supply from his ship and wrote to his sources in Mexico for more. Meanwhile, working in his kitchen over a stove, Adams cooked the chicle to a more even consistency, then cut it up in small hunks like taffy and began to sell it to candy stores. They took all they could get.

News of the product speeded westward. In Ohio, in the little town of Mount Vernon, a salesman by the name of William F. Semple worked over a stove to perfect something he called "a combination of rubber with other articles in any proportions adapted to the formation of an acceptable chewing gum." With this vague description and some samples, he took out the first patent on chewing gum, U. S. Patent 98,304.

The Semple patent was so mixed with the idea of rubber, however, that Adams had no difficulty going ahead with his own experiments, finally manufacturing on a substantial scale his own product. It consisted of long, thin strips, notched conveniently so druggists could break it off in penny lengths.

The idea of flavoring gum did not come until 1875. Then John Colgan, a Louisville druggist, hit the jackpot of popularity when he tried adding an aromatic balsam. He called his product "Tolou-flavored Gum." It prospered until 1880, when the first modern flavor, peppermint, was introduced.

In the years since 1880, chewing gum has become a daily habit of the mediocre. Except in the case of children, who chew it as a candy, it has afforded Science the most infallible yardstick of mental incapacity thus far known. Not all dullards chew gum, but all gum-chewers are dullards. At least no exceptions are known to Science!

The Clergyman's

Ghost

by
William Oliver Stevens

ONE of the best-known Baptist ministers of the last hundred years was Russel H. Conwell, whose lifetime was filled with good works. He was pastor of the Baptist Temple in Philadelphia; he founded two hospitals; he created Temple University, of which he became president. He was the author of many books, but was best known throughout the country for his lecture "Acres of Diamonds," which he delivered nearly 6,000 times.

His famous ghost story was published in the *American* magazine for July, 1921, as part of an interview conducted by Bruce Barton. In the course of their conversation, Barton asked Dr. Conwell whether he had seen instances in which a dying person's face became suddenly transfigured, just before the end, as if he were looking upon another world. Dr. Conwell replied that he had witnessed the phenomenon lit-

erally hundreds of times, when the soul evidently "hovers hesitantly between two worlds."

The speaker paused a moment, then said: "Some years ago I had a dream that recurred every morning just before I awoke. It seemed to me that the figure of Mrs. Conwell appeared and sat smiling at the foot of my bed. I said nothing about it; it is, I thought, a delusion of age, yet the figure was as real as life, smiling, and asking questions and answering my own.

"One morning I said, or seemed to say, 'I know you aren't really there.'

"'Oh, but I am!' she replied.

"'But how can I be sure?' I persisted. 'Are you willing that I should test you?'

"She nodded, still smiling.

"'All right,' I said, 'tomorrow I will ask you a question. Will you be ready for it?'

"She nodded again and, with another smile, disappeared. Next morning she was there again.

"'I see you have come,' I said. 'Are you still willing?'

"She smiled and nodded.

"'Tell me, then, where is my army discharge paper?' I had not seen it for years, and to the best of my knowledge was utterly ignorant of its whereabouts.

"In a voice that seemed as distinct as if she had uttered the words aloud, she answered, 'Why, it is in the black japanned box behind the books in your library.'