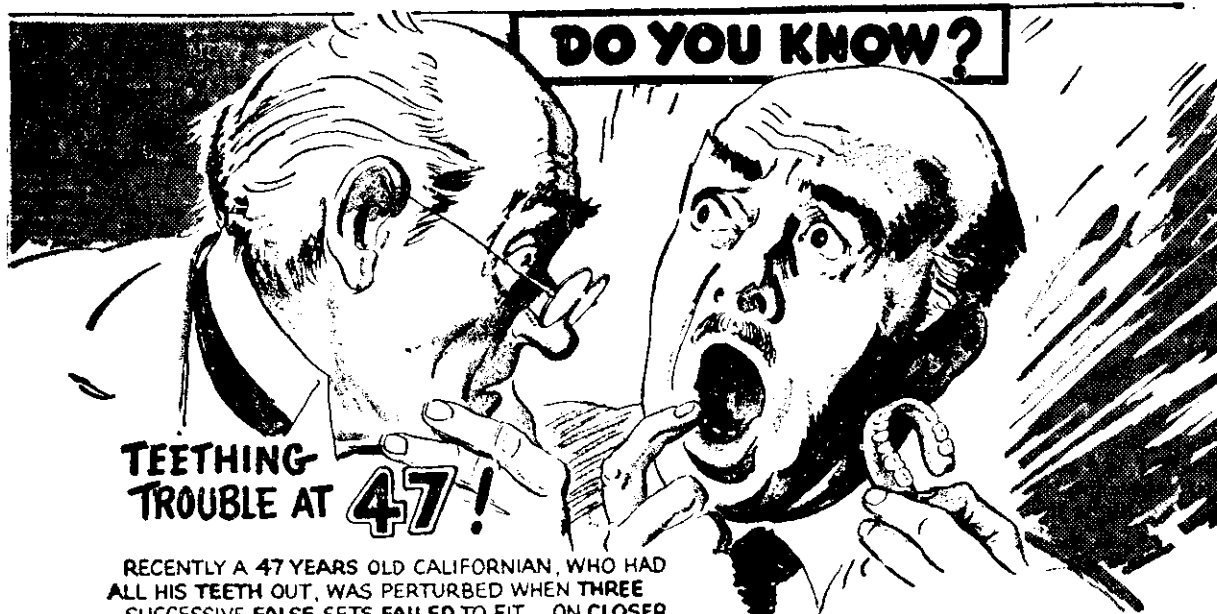
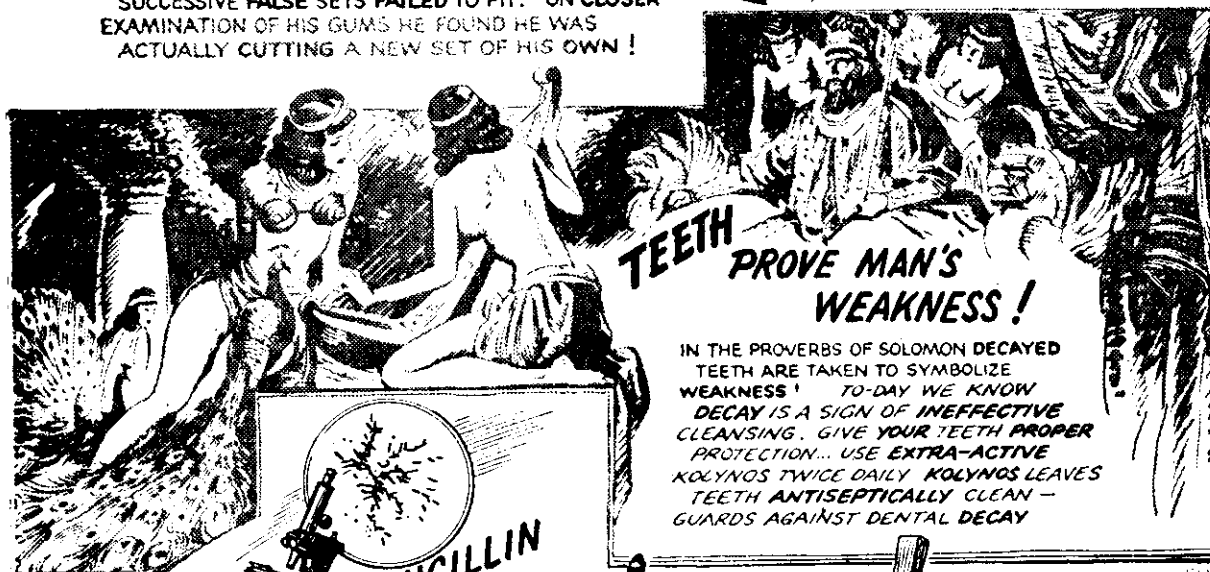




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THE FARMERS

(continued from previous page)

almost impossible not to become involved in the quarrels that were apt to occur among the inadequately clothed and fed; and that if he could not dispose of his surplus products, there was always the chance that the possible over-production would be followed, as had happened before, by poor seasons. Most perhaps he feared that the other farmers might be tempted to adopt Mr. R's forceful methods to cope with their extremely difficult position.

In his own interests, then, Mr. A. was more or less convinced that he could not stand aloof. What then should he do? Should he lend them some of his produce they so badly needed? We might perhaps say that he could lend them money to pay him back for his produce, but mention of money would again convert a simple story into a very complex one. So we say simply that Mr. A. could lend them the goods, not of course that he would expect to get the goods back as such, but he would have the vague hope that he might some day be repaid in produce by the other farmers.

However the difficulty was that, as he wanted little of their produce now, it was unlikely that in the future he would need enough to repay him for the present loan, as well as for future current exchange, if not also for future loans. So that it seemed that he would continue to become merely more and more wealthy, thus aggravating the difficulty of the present position. With the help of Mr. A's equipment to restore their farms and his food to nourish their families, the other farmers should, of course, be able to increase their own production, and so might need fewer and fewer of Mr. A's goods in the future, except in the course of normal exchange; but that still would not solve the problem of their present debt. So Mr. A. suspected that such a loan would be in fact a gift, though he would be unlikely to call it so explicitly.

However as he realised the power of his position, one idea that occurred to him was to make conditional loans to those farmers who were prepared to run their farms according to methods he approved and to shun those of Mr. R.; but many of the farmers would rather remain in poverty than submit to this kind of dictation. A more hopeful suggestion was that Mr. A. should help, possibly without severe conditions, a group of farmers in one particularly hard-pressed district to restore together their farms to good working order, arranging together how best this could be done, so that the district as a whole might become flourishing to the benefit of them all. But first they would have to be persuaded to agree to make their plans together.

* * *

IN the meantime the problem of poverty and plenty continued. Many of the farmers were beginning to realise that however munificent Mr. A. might be, or whatever other solution was found, it would be useless if it merely re-established them in their old way of living, each man for himself. Some of them remembered how it had been said that together they could feed and clothe

(continued on next page)

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