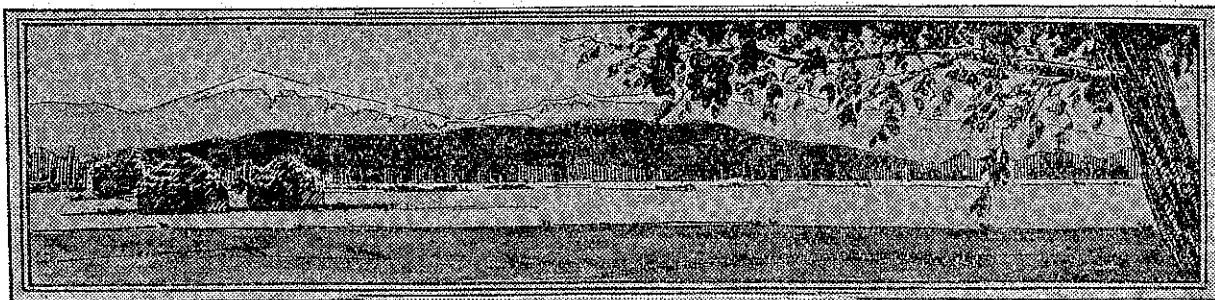


An interesting series has been inaugurated from 2YA by Mr. Victor Lloyd. Under the title of "Strange as it May Seem," or "Things that Have Interested Me," he will relate from time to time peculiar oddments. The first of his chats is given below.



Strange as it May Seem

by

Victor S. Lloyd

I SUPPOSE most of you occasionally come across facts about people and places and things which strike you as being, shall I say, curious. And you say to yourself: "Well, now, that's a peculiar thing!" I know I do. Anything out of the ordinary has a very strong fascination for me, and for some time now I have been collecting little bits from here and there which strike me as being unusual. Possibly they may be of interest to you. Here are a few of them.

For instance, I was very surprised to learn that whistling is something that is simply not done by the Arabs. Some of us sing in our baths—I suppose it is the only place where people can't stop us, and that's why we do it—and some of us whistle. But the Arabs consider whistling the most unlucky sound that can be made by human lips. There is an old Arabic proverb to the effect that after whistling the mouth is not purified for forty days.

After learning this about the Arabs, I made a few inquiries and found that there were other people who disliked whistling. In the Tonga Islands, for instance, whistling is quite "tabu," and the people who live in Iceland strongly object to it; they believe it to be a violation of the Divine Law. Whistling is quite unknown too among the descendants of the Peruvian Incas. A Cornishman told me the other day that the miners in Cornwall are very superstitious about whistling, and they will not permit it whilst they are underground. The old hands think it a fertile source of evil, and the young hands are soon brought to think the same after they have been clouted once or twice by their elders.

A FRIEND of mine once told me that kissing used to be prohibited on a Sunday once upon a time. I was a little incredulous. Of course I didn't tell him he was a—er—that I doubted his word—he is larger than I am—but I looked up some old laws and found that my friend was quite right. Kissing was once prohibited on a Sunday. And not in Arabia, either. In England, and Scotland, and the American Colonies.

The laws for the observance of the Lord's Day were almost ferocious in their strictness during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth

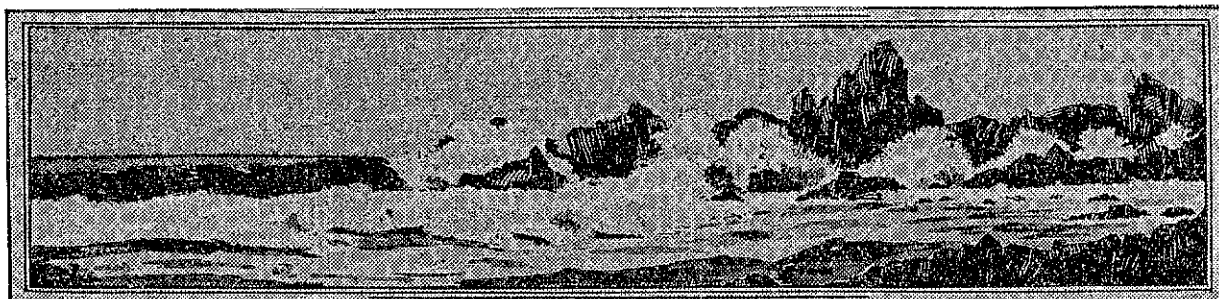
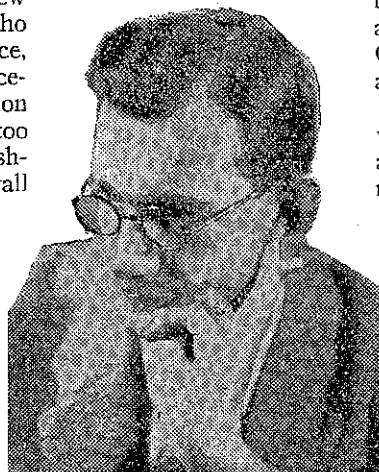
Centuries. It was a punishable offence in Scotland to walk farther on a Sunday than was necessary for a man to get from his own house to church, and it was even legal for houses to be searched during the service hours so that absentees might be brought out and punished. And a man was not only prohibited from kissing his wife, but even his children on the Sabbath. The most absurd restrictions were once placed on personal liberty. A certain Captain Kemble, for instance, who had been away at sea for three years, was actually put in the stocks for twenty-four hours on the day he arrived home.

HIS offence was described as "lewd and unseemly behaviour for that he did publicly kiss his wife on the doorstep of his house on the Sabbath Day. In a book called "Introduction to the History of Civilisation," by a gentleman named Buckle, you will, if you care to look them up, find many instances of a similar nature. Less than fifty years ago, twenty men were arrested in the village of Winstead, Connecticut, for having their dinners cooked on Sunday, and thirteen more for kissing their wives.

Laws are peculiar things, aren't they? Particularly when they are dealing with the relations between men and women. For instance, eloping couples to-day incur no more than their parents' disapproval—or their thanks—according to the kind of children they are. But in some countries elopement is punishable by death. This law holds good in all Mohammedan countries in theory, and is actually carried into practice in some of them—Morocco for one—where civilised usages have not caused the ancient law to fall into desuetude. In Turkey, some years ago, when a daughter of the Sultan was reported to have escaped with a boy friend, it was stated that she dared not return within her father's jurisdiction as the death penalty would most certainly have been enforced had she done so.

In China, where parents have the power of life and death over their children, the law would sanction similar punishment, if the eloping couple did not have the sanction of their parents. At least this was true of China before the war. It may be altered now. I don't know. Even in England, elopement was punishable by death up to the thirteenth century. We've progressed a bit since then, haven't we?

Fathers nowadays are only too anxious to get their daughters married, or so it seems.



Portrait—Victor S. Lloyd, well-known to 2YA listeners as a dramatist and producer, whose new series of narratives provides something quite out of the common.