

Canterbury Tales from A Smoking Car



BY CHARLES W. DUKE.

HAS the old American pioneer spirit died? Has modern American youth anything to fight for, what with the plains peopled, the ranches staked off to cattlemen, the mountains girded with railways, the corners of the country explored and exploited.

Have science and modern progress dulled the edge of initiative? Have ease and luxury, wealth and improved avenues of opportunity lessened the desire to get out and dig for gold and glory? In other words, has the country gone soft?

Come with me for a few minutes into the smoking room of a palatial 20th century Pullman. Listen to some modern Canterbury Tales. They are unfolded by the Boy with the Golden Smile. He and I are fellow travelers on the Wolverine Express bound for New York out of Detroit, the metropolis of this young new America of the middle west.

Some one has just been reading from a Cincinnati newspaper a little news skit under the caption "Puts It Over." The story:

"Well, then, wait a minute and I'll sing for you right now!" And Virginia Rae of Louisville, Ky., at one end of the telephone wire, started to sing the Bell song from "Dinorah" to William Wade Hinshaw, concert director, at the other end of the wire.

Hinshaw was starting on a trip when Miss Rae called him. He hadn't any time to listen. He was busy! And what did a little unknown amount to anyhow! But Virginia sang!

Virginia is now a recognized coloratura soprano.

"That's a fine young press agent yarn," exploded the automobile tire salesman.

Everybody smiled, including the Boy with the Golden Smile. Yet the smile passed quickly from his face. He was deliberating something manifestly serious.

"But young folks are doing those things these days just the same," he offered. Did we want to hear some stories that were not press-agent yarns? We did. And we got them.

Here is a youth by the name of Skinner. In real life he was a "skinny" of the caricature kind. Like Topsy he just grew up in the streets and market places of Detroit. He had no special training of any kind. He sold newspapers and ran errands. Old enough to hold down the wheel of an automobile, he became a taxi-driver in the Michigan city of motorcars.

When the war came along he was one of the first to enlist—a dare-devil will-o'-the-wisp, melting quickly and with facility into the martial type. He enlisted the day after the United States declared a state of war with Germany and went abroad to serve faithfully and efficiently with the A. E. F. He emerged from the trenches with the shoulder stripes of a lieutenant.

"Rolling the bones"—a game he had picked up in the side streets and on the docks of Detroit—was his favorite pastime. After the armistice, with a back payroll in hand, he drifted down into the Riviera, intent upon seeing something of the continent before returning home. He had plenty of time and nothing to hurry him.

Monte Carlo was just to his liking. Skinner "cleaned up." When he embarked finally for Hoboken he had a huge roll. En route to the states he enlarged his stake at the expense of the luckless doughboys. Arriving eventually in Detroit young Mr. Skinner had more money than he ever dreamed one lucky taxi-driver could have—of his own.

But the taxi business palled on him. Detroit looked out of proportion. He had seen a lot of the world and was not content to settle down. The wanderlust possessed him like many another ex-doughboy, who found it hard to settle again into a life of routine. So he bought a "flivver" and started out to see the country.

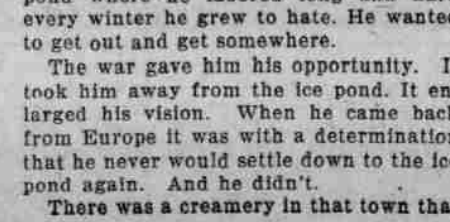
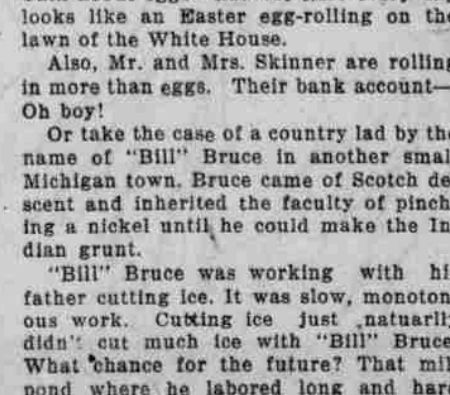
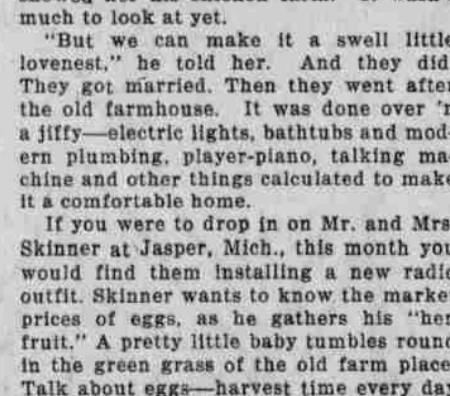
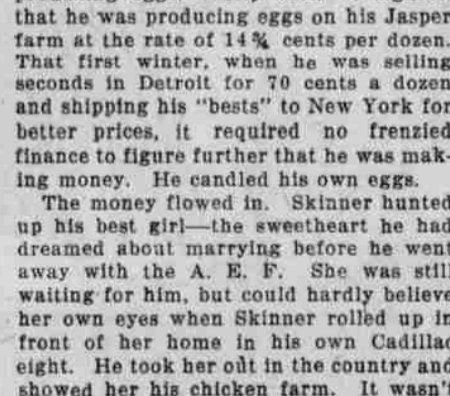
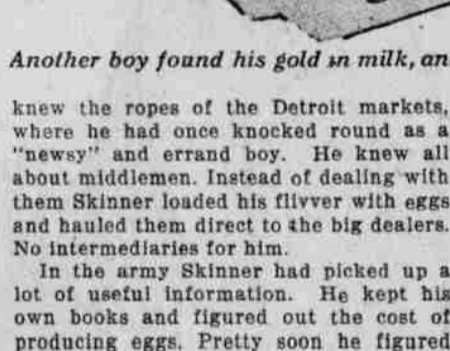
One day he stepped at the front gate of an old dilapidated farm on the outskirts of the village of Jasper, in Michigan. The throat of his radiator was parched nor was he averse to some fresh country buttermilk. A man bent from drudgery on the farm came out to greet him, followed soon by his wife. They were all of 60 years, and alone on the farm. All the boys and girls had drifted away—gone away to hunt up the white lights of the city. The place was out of whack and run down. With a hundred chickens, a couple of cows and several pigs, the old folks were just eking out an existence.

But it had possibilities. Skinner looked the place over as he sat drinking his buttermilk and conversing with the old folks. They were anxious to get out.

"How much will you sell for?" asked Skinner.

They named their price. It was less than \$6000—for 40 acres of land, old-fashioned farmhouse, livestock and all. For a moment Skinner turned the proposition over in his mind. Next day he came back and bought the place—paid for it with \$6000 cold cash, his Monte Carlo, doughboy-transport "earnings."

That was the beginning. Skinner went in for chickens. From 100 he ran his brood up to 10,000 by the simple expedient of hiding eggs in incubators. Skinner



falor of New York restaurant today probably came from this creamery out near Detroit. It is literally booming. Just as the war ended the creamery was on its last legs; owing to the initiative and energy of "Bill" Bruce and his brother it is at this moment a distinctly going concern, with prospects altogether bright.

"Bill" Bruce was willing to take a legitimate chance. The old pioneer spirit was with him.

Just another story to clinch the point. Out in the little town of Tecumseh, Mich., lived a family consisting of father, mother, two daughters and one son. Two years ago this summer the father died very suddenly, leaving the boy the sole support of the family. The boy had just come home from the war and was on the point of "breaking loose" when his parent died. Nothing was left him but to stay at home with mother and the girls.

when the lad went to war. He wanted to marry her, but couldn't run away and leave his widowed mother and sisters.

One day this chap got an idea—they still say necessity is the mother of invention. In the process of butter-making the boy farmer noted that much of the buttermilk was going to waste. Some of it was fed to the pigs, but the quantity was much more than was required for hog consumption, yet the buttermilk in itself was not marketable. The labor and transportation costs were not worth the return.

Do something with the buttermilk—that was the idea. But what? For a time the boy turned it over in his mind. And then came the answer—feed it to the chickens.

The Tecumseh farmer boy set out immediately to engage in the chicken business. Hundreds of young chicks scamped round that spring. New coops were built. The butter business was carried on as formerly, but herein and hereafter no more buttermilk was spilled over the landscape. It was fed to the chickens.

When the chickens grew up the boy

started to make butter in greater quantity than his father had ever attempted. He got a good price for it, too; and was making headway.

But the boy couldn't get away from that bugaboo of bad debts—and that mortgage. It was taking too long to dispose of these liabilities. Something had to be done to get ahead. The urge was a pretty girl—"the girl I left behind me"

to kill and ship buttermilk-fed chickens. They are still killing and shipping buttermilk-fed chickens as fast as they can fatten them. The supply for their product is unequal to the demand. This summer the youth built more coops and hatched more eggs than ever before. Not a drop of buttermilk is being wasted. The old debts have disappeared, the mortgage has been burned, the lad is married to the girl of his dreams and they live in a little palace of their own overlooking the dairy and the chicken farms. Mother and one daughter are well cared for, while the other daughter has married and moved away.

Once again the pioneer spirit.

Nor was the lad who told me these real stories right out of every day current life a slouch himself when it came to the initiative and the pioneer spirit. He, too, had gone through the World War. Returning to Detroit he slipped into the old groove alongside his brother, a produce merchant in the Detroit markets.

But it was no fun working for someone else. The business belonged to that someone else. Every Saturday night the pay envelope came along O. K. He owned a flivver of his own with which to take his best girl joy-riding. But something was lacking.

The lad decided to burn his bridges behind him and live forth in quest of his own fortune. Several weeks ago he told his brother he was through. Going to the savings bank he drew down all the money he had saved.

"My brother has staked me to a little pile on the side," he told the writer. "He can afford it, for he has made a lot."

"And what are you going to do?" was asked.

"I'm on my way to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania," he smiled in reply. "Me for a farm in Wyoming valley. You know, it's a great location. Right at a strategic point on lines of transportation. One road leads

to Philadelphia markets; the other leads east to New York markets.

"I'm going in for chickens and dairy products like those fellows I was telling you about. If they can do it I can do it." And he will.

You don't have to be born in America to catch the idea, either. It's in the air. Down in Washington sits a man who, 50 years ago, came here as an immigrant boy from Wales. Today he bosses all United States immigration. He's "Jim" Davis to his friends; otherwise the Hon. James J., secretary of labor.

Such are the ways of the modern pioneer.

At Monte Carlo Skinner cleaned up.

Another boy found his gold in milk, and it was the color of gold, too, yellow butter.

had failed just about the time "Bill" Bruce came back from glimpsing the wide expanses of the ocean and the great cities of his own and other countries. Even before he doffed his khaki Bruce had his eye on the creamery. He set out to buy it, but, unlike Skinner of Monte Carlo, he had no big roll of bills.

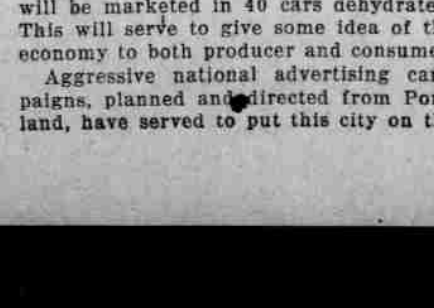
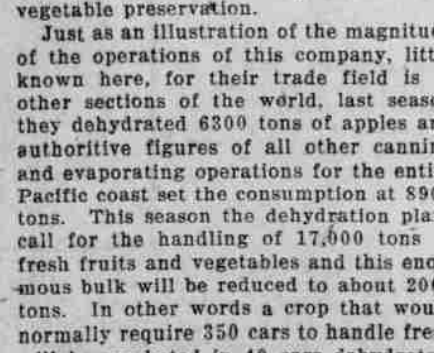
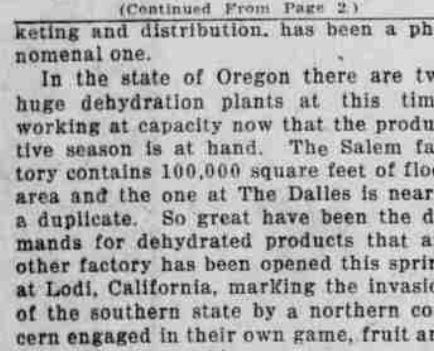
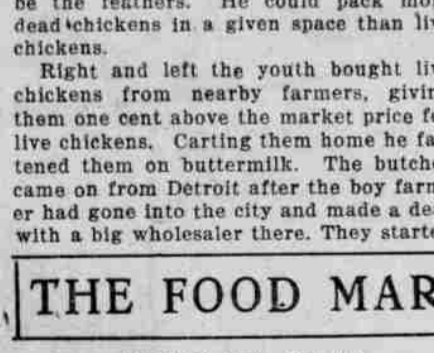
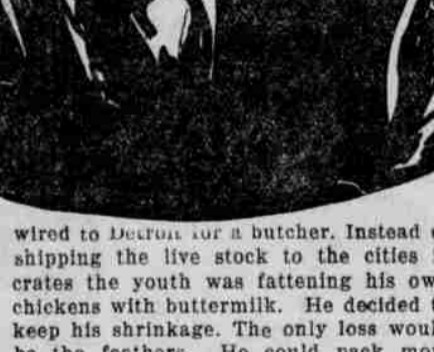
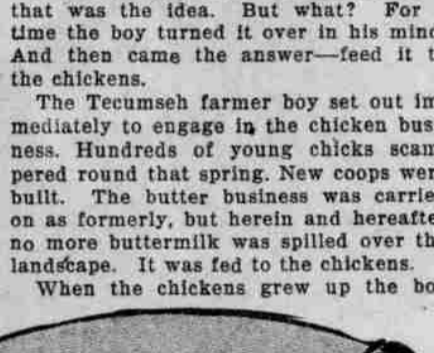
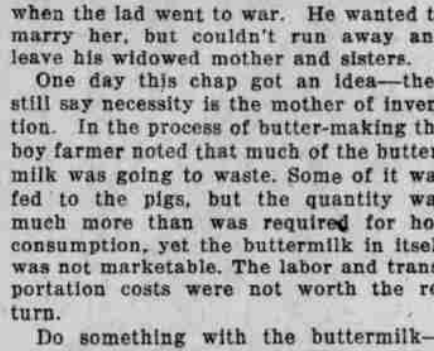
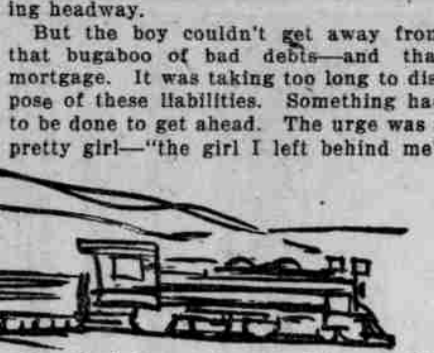
"Bill" asked his dad for a small stake and got it. But it was not enough to swing an equity in the decrepit creamery. "You lend me \$500 and I'll get the rest," "Bill" told his father. And he did. He went 50 miles away from home to get the rest of his stake—in the home of a doughboy pal whose father was president of a bank. Frankly "Bill" Bruce put his proposition to this bank president; told him how much he had and what he intended to do. The credit was forthcoming and Bruce went back home and bought the creamery. Honest "Bill" Bruce's father had a good name and that helped.

The first thing the ambitious youth did was to hire a Danish buttermaker, paying him \$200 a month. Bruce's father looked agast at this, declaring the salary too high and the boy starting too strong. But I've got to have the best buttermaker in the business," he said.

Also he had another reason. Bill took his younger brother into business. "Watch that Dane and learn all his tricks," Bill told the brother. For 30 days they made fresh, good-looking, fine-tasting butter. Bill busied himself with selling the product. Every other day he loaded up the old Ford truck and carted his butter to Detroit. He, too, evaded the middlemen and sold direct.

"Churn one day and you get it the next," was his business slogan.

At Monte Carlo Skinner cleaned up.



THE FOOD MARVEL OF THE AGE

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keting and distribution, has been a phenomenal one.

In the state of Oregon there are two huge dehydration plants at this time, working at capacity now that the productive season is at hand. The Salem factory contains 100,000 square feet of floor area and the one at The Dalles is nearly a duplicate. So great have been the demands for dehydrated products that another factory has been opened this spring at Lodi, California, marking the invasion of the southern state by a northern concern engaged in their own game, fruit and vegetable preservation.

Just as an illustration of the magnitude of the operations of this company, little known here, for their trade field is in other sections of the world, last season they dehydrated 6300 tons of apples and evaporating operations for the entire Pacific coast set the consumption at \$900 tons. This season the dehydration plants call for the handling of 17,000 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables and this enormous bulk will be reduced to about 2000 tons. In other words a crop that would normally require 350 cars to handle fresh will be marketed in 40 cars dehydrated. This will serve to give some idea of the economy to both producer and consumer.

Aggressive national advertising campaigns, planned and directed from Portland, have served to put this city on the

food map of the world until now it is one of the prime factors in feeding the many million mouths on the face of the globe. Who can venture to predict the future of the business or its bearing on the future of the farming industry in the west? One day's orders last week were for \$55,000 worth of the finished product. Their yearly sales go into the millions and they have found it necessary to practically double their capacity this season.

Last year, after coming through the war-adjustment period with flying colors, they gained 48 per cent income over the year before and cut their prices an average of 30 per cent. Nearly a million dollars was paid out to farmers in this state alone and much more will be laid out in the purchase of materials this season.

Cut in Alphabet Suggested.

TOKIO.—With a view of setting a limit to the burdens imposed on school children, the education department has recommended that the Chinese characters in common use be restricted to 2000 words. At present the ordinary school grade of six years contains about 2600 characters, higher grades 3500 and middle school about 5000.

College Talk Overheard.

First College Man—I want you to come to our dance tonight.

Second Ditto—Thanks. Is it formal, or shall I wear my own clothes?

The old pioneer spirit still lives, and while our gold hunters do not always cross the plains in their quest they are at heart Forty-niners.

When it came to settling up the estate it was found there was not only a mortgage on the farm, but a number of bad bills. That boy started to make good.

First of all, he ran over to Detroit and signed up with a big packing house for the butter supply of the farm. Then he

