



Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn M. Watkins

Some Believe in The Root That Shrieks

If your reading has been something more than an occasional "comic book," you have probably read sometime or other of the fantastic belief entertained by some people that certain flowers, at a particular stage of their development, become birds that detach themselves from the parent tree and fly away.

Or that there are certain trees whose fruit upon becoming ripe turns into sheep or a bunch of leaves; from some, shrubs that develop into living, feathered geese. Ancient literature contains many references to vegetable-sheep, vegetable-geese, or even vegetable-men.

Ridiculous as it is, such beliefs existed and the idea isn't exactly dead either, even in this enlightened age, for there are folks who believe that certain plants that grow strange root systems, roughly resembling human figures are "vegetable-men" or at least semi-vegetables.

Common Plant

Such a myth exists regarding a common plant found growing in rich, moist woodlands throughout some parts of the U.S. The plant is the mandrake, or May-apple. A peculiar twist is credited to this plant. Those who believe, say the root of the mandrake, when shaped like a human form, emits a shrill shriek or scream when it is torn from the ground.

Can't be the early American Indian ever heard the scream, as the Red Man used the root of the mandrake as a medicine in the treatment of many diseases. The early American pioneer found uses for the poisonous leaves and

roots of the mandrake. Both the leaves and roots are known to possess a strong narcotic quality.

Coming up in the early spring from moist, rich forest floors, the mandrake raises its umbrella-like leaves a foot or so above the woodland ground. In the fork created by the dividing of the upper stem into two branches, a single white unpleasantly smelling flower appears. Later, an egg-shaped fruit containing several seeds, develops. The shape gave someone the idea it was like a lemon, so the common name "wild lemon" found favor with some folks. Children often gathered these fruits calling them "may-apples."

Strange Looking

Down in the dark, moist earth, a strange looking root forms, sometimes roughly in the shape of a sprawled human figure. Sometimes it startlingly does resemble the general shape of a man, enough so that superstitious folks could get the idea that here, in fact, is a real "vegetable-man." How the shrieking business started is rather vague but it is unusual enough to appeal to some, and the myth received enough nourishment from the uninformed to persist.

Peculiar that a common woodland plant, such as the mandrake, should become the basis of such a silly idea or that its roots would scream as if in torment or pain. Peculiar, too, that more often than not, those same roots grow in the shape of a human figure. Still, a vegetable-sheep or goose or a "vegetable-man" have been real to many peoples. Just as peculiar there are still folks that believe the root-system of a plant should grow "like a man underground."

(Released by The Register and Tribune Syndicate, 1959)

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UN Committee To Meet Monday

United Nations, N.Y.—UPI—The General Assembly's Steering committee was summoned today to meet Monday to decide on a new and full airing of the 1956 Hungarian revolution and its bloody suppression by the Soviet Army.

Assembly President Victor Andres Velaunde reversed a decision taken Wednesday night, when a meeting scheduled for today was canceled because of Soviet objections, and set the meeting of the 21-nation group for Monday.

Diplomatic sources said it was a foregone conclusion that the Steering committee would vote to put the Hungarian issue on the Assembly's agenda, with only the three Soviet bloc members of the 21-nation group, Russia, Romania and Czechoslovakia, opposing the move, and with the Afro-Asian members joining other "neutral" countries for a total of perhaps seven abstentions. The Assembly was expected to concur in its Steering committee's action.

With the Steering committee meeting off, the main business at the United Nations Thursday was the Assembly's Main Political committee debate on the Indian-led 23-power demand that all nations forego nuclear tests.

Picket Patrols Dock Beside Pilot Schooner

Astoria—UPI—A single picket patrolled the dock alongside the pilot schooner Peacock here Wednesday after Local 17 of the Masters, Mates and Pilots Local 17 called a strike against Columbia River Bar Pilots association.

A spokesman for the striking union said agreement had been reached on money matters but that the association wanted to eliminate the recognition clause and the arbitration clause. There also was disagreement on posting of working rules.



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