

And if it's proof you want, I have plenty. Why is it that all fish swim under water? Why is it that people go to Florida in the winter and Quebec in the summer, or vice versa? Why is it that a person will never open third hand vulnerable unless he's got three-and-a-half tricks? Just ask anybody who thinks the world is round these questions and see what he answers.

I don't expect you to catch the meaning of what I have just written until you have reread the above paragraph a number of times. Personally, I think you'd be a sucker if you did. I read it six times myself, and I still don't understand it.

While we're fiddling around in the 15th century, it would be absurd to overlook one of the greatest discoveries of all time—America, the Beautiful. The credit for this must go to one Christopher Columbus, a Genoese sailor who was firmly convinced that the earth was a sphere and that his only mission in life was to prove it to himself and the world.

In despair, he solicited help from Spain and Portugal. Portugal didn't even answer his letter. However, Queen Isabella of Spain, who was nuts about bearded sailors, agreed to supply him with three ships and 88 men. This meant 22 quartets if they could all sing, or 29 trios if one of them couldn't.

Just after Columbus set sail from Spain, Queen Isabella heard some nasty gossip about him and began to entertain doubts as to what he was really after. It later developed that the real reason for his voyage was not to prove that the earth was round but to see a dame in America whom he'd contacted through a "Lonely Hearts" column. They'd even swapped photos. He had sent her one of Valentino, and she sent him one of Tuesday Weld. (She was no fool, either.)

WHEN THIS SCANDAL BROKE, Columbus, fortunately, was far out in the ocean. He sailed on for 62 days and 60 nights (he lost two nights in the Azores in a poker game), and finally one bright morning a member of the crew sighted a branch of berries floating nearby. This meant land—or a marine fruit store.

When the sailors disembarked at San Salvador, they were hungry for both food and love. You know how it is when you're on a transatlantic liner for five days and you don't meet anybody but three buyers with trench coats and trench mouth and four schoolteachers who are seasick all the way over. As for how the sailors felt when they trooped off that mud scow, it goes without saying—well, I guess I won't say it then. I'll tell you about it at the proper time and place. How about your house next Wednesday afternoon?

But now let us leave Columbus and his crew and jump back to Europe for a moment. (I'll pay half the fare if you'll pay the other half.) Although most of Europe's attention was drawn to this new promised land across the sea, we must not lose sight of the fact that great things were happening at home.

Italian cities were beginning to attain positions of importance. There was a definite historical reason for this, but in an outline of love you can't fool around with historical reasons, definite or otherwise. (And if I did happen to feel in the fooling-around mood, I'd be crazy if I picked a historical reason.)

Of these Italian cities, Venice, which was easily the most important, was built on a mudbank. Don't ask how. It just was, that's all. I don't know anything about any other kind of banks, either, as I learned the hard way in 1929, when they folded up with my dough inside of them.

All I know about mudbanks is that in the early Venetian days mud was used for money, thus mudbanks. Curiously enough, we still require mudbanks even in these modern times. For example, when gold was discovered in the Far West, it was called "pay dirt."

*I know this sordid discussion of money hasn't much to do with sex—but just try to take a girl out when you're broke and see how far you get.

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