

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

H. G. F. and D. N., Vicksburg, Miss.: Please settle a friendly argument by giving the width of the Strait of Dover, and stating whether any other swimmer besides Captain Webb ever succeeded in swimming across it?

The Strait of Dover is the channel between England and France, connecting the English Channel and the North sea, whose tides meet here. It is 18 to 26 miles broad, and 6 to 29 fathoms deep. On August 24, 1875, Matthew Webb, better known as Captain Webb, the noted English swimmer, accomplished this wonderful feat of swimming from Dover to Calais in 21 3-4 hours. Captain Webb some years afterwards perished while attempting to swim the rapids and whirlpool of Niagara. In recent years the feat of swimming the channel has been frequently attempted, but was only accomplished on September 5, and 6, 1911, by T. W. Burgess, on his sixteenth attempt, in 22 hours, 35 minutes. On July 26, 1909, M. Bioriot made the first aeroplane journey across the Strait, starting from Baraques, near Calais, and landing at Dover.

H. L. B., Plaquemine, La.: Kindly inform me what is meant by a corduroy road?

A corduroy road is so called because its ribbed surface resembles corduroy. Such roads are usually built across a swamp or mry ground, and constructed of small logs of wood laid transversely.

H. G. S., Tangipahoa, La.: Kindly tell some friends and myself in what direction Canal street in New Orleans runs. Some of us contend that it runs more nearly north and south than east and west?

Canal street in this city runs northwest and southeast.

A. J. F., Houma, La.: Please tell us something of the location, area, and population of the islands whose purchase from Denmark by this country is now under consideration?

The Virgin Islands, so named by Columbus in honor of the 11,000 virgins who were supposed to have been massacred with St. Ursula, form the most northern group of the Lesser Antilles, consisting of the following large islands: Crab or Vieques, Culebra, St. Thomas, St. John, Sainte Croix, Tortola, Virgin Gorda, and Anagada. All are mountainous and rugged, and Vieques and Culebra, already belong to the United States. The remaining islands are divided between the Danes and the British.

The islands whose purchase from Denmark by the United States is now under consideration are as follows:

St. Thomas, which lies 36 miles east of Porto Rico, has an area of 33 square miles, and a population of about 12,000, mostly negroes. English is the language spoken by the educated classes. The surface is hilly and the soil poor. The cultivation of vegetables, guinea grass, and a small quantity of cotton employs the scanty rural population. The port, Charlotte Amalie or St. Thomas, was in former times a busy emporium for the European trade with the West Indies, but the island has now been superseded by Barbados as a trade-distributing center. The island was colonized by the Dutch in 1657. The British held it in 1687-71, 1801, 1807-15.

Sainte Croix lies 40 miles southeast of St. Thomas, and has an area of 33 square miles, and a population of about 10,000. Sugar, rum, and cotton are the chief products; the capital is Christianstadt. The island was discovered by Columbus on his first voyage, and held by the Dutch, English, Spanish, French, and the Knights of Malta at various dates, and was bought by Denmark in 1733.

St. John, which lies four miles east of St. Thomas, is 10 miles long and 2 1-2 miles wide, with an area of 21 square miles and a population of about 1000. It is a mass of rugged mountains, the highest of which is Camel mountain (1270 feet). Although one of the best watered and most fertile of the Virgin group, it has little commerce. In Coral Bay it possesses the best harbor of refuge in the Antilles.

E. S. T. and L. J. R., Bayou Sara, La.: In order to decide an argument among several of your readers, please inform us whether the salute to the Union and the national salute are given with the same number of guns, and kindly give us some information in regard to the various salutes with cannon and their significance?

The salute to the Union is one gun for each state, and is commemorative of the Declaration of Independence. It is fired at noon of the Fourth of July at every military post and on board commissioned naval vessels belonging to the United States. The national salute is twenty-one guns. This is the salute for the national flag, the President of the United States, presidents of foreign republics or sovereigns of foreign states visiting the United States. The vice-president of the United States and American and foreign ambassadors are saluted by nineteen guns. The president of the Senate, speaker of the House of Representatives, members of the cabinet, the chief justice, a congressional committee, governors within their respective states or territories, viceroy or governor-general of provinces belonging to foreign states, general of the army, admiral of the navy, and the same ranks in foreign armies and navies, are saluted by seventeen guns. American or foreign envoys, or ministers plenipotentiary, assistant secretaries of the navy or war, lieutenant-general, or a major-general commanding the army, and corresponding ranks in the navy and foreign armies and navies, by fifteen

guns. Ministers-resident, accredited to the United States, major-general, rear admiral, and corresponding ranks of foreign armies and navies, by thirteen guns. Charges d'affaires, brigadier-general, and corresponding ranks in foreign armies and navies, by eleven guns. Consuls-general accredited to the United States, by nine guns.

Salutes are only fired between sunrise and sunset, and not on Sundays, except in international courtesies. The national colors are always displayed at the time of saluting. The salute to the flag is the only salute which is returned, and this must be done within twenty-four hours; United States vessels do not return the salute to the flag in United States waters if there is any fort or battery there to do it. Nor do United States vessels salute United States forts or posts. If there are several batteries or forts within sight or six miles of each other, one of them is designated as the saluting fort, and returns all salutes of foreign men-of-war. In New York, Castle William, on Governor's Island, is the saluting fort.

Algernon: Kindly answer the following questions: 1. What did the legacy left by John McDonogh to the cities of New Orleans and Baltimore amount to? Where can his will be seen?

1. Under appraisement made at the time of his death, much of which depended upon estimates found afterwards to be too high, the estate was valued at \$2,272,406.06, of which \$2,091,374.59 was in real estate. When divided between the devisees in 1857, the whole real estate was carefully appraised at \$1,465,680. The property, when sold in 1859, however, brought (including the deferred payments at a face value) about \$1,800,000, of which sum \$300,000 went into legacies, leaving the gross amount to be divided between the two cities, \$1,500,000.

2. The will may be found on record in the Civil District Court. It is a long and somewhat intricate document, but its principal provisions are given in "The Life and Works of John McDonogh," which can be obtained in the reference room of the New Orleans Public Library.

G. and I., Opelousas, La.: To settle a friendly discussion, please inform us whether it is now considered provincial to use the word sick when a person is ill; and are "ailing" and "unwell" considered the more refined terms?

Sick and ill are general words for being positively out of a healthy state, as ailing and unwell are in some sense negative and therefore weaker words for the same thing. Sick and sickness have been considered until within the present century essentially synonymous with ill and illness. Of late English usage has tended to restrict sick and sickness to nausea, and American usage has followed it so far as to regard illness as rather a more elegant and less definite term, but beyond that it does not seem likely to go; and the word sick in America has continued to have its original breadth of meaning as found in the Bible and in Shakespeare.

H. D. H., Lake Providence, La.: Please advise me if it is not generally conceded to be impossible to produce a perfect vacuum? By what method is the nearest approach to a perfect vacuum produced?

Vacuum literally means space empty of matter, and to empty a region once filled with matter is practically impossible. But, though the real vacuum is unattainable, the air-pump and other appliances enable us to remove from the interior of a vessel a large fraction of the air originally contained therein. Across such vacuums light passes, and magnetic and electrostatic inductions take place with even greater ease than if the region were filled with air at ordinary pressure. Hence we conclude that a vacuum is after all a plenum of some substance capable of transmitting energy. This substance is called ether.

A Reader: Kindly tell me if there is a Swiss consul in New Orleans, and where I may address him?

The Swiss consul is Mr. Emile Hoehn, and his address is No. 535 Iberville street, in this city.

A Subscriber, Gibson, Miss.: Will you please give me a brief sketch of Governor H. S. Thibodaux, and the length of time he served as governor?

Henry Schuyler Thibodaux, the son of Alexis Thibodaux, a French Canadian, was born at Albany, N. Y., in 1780. He was left an orphan at an early age, and was reared by his mother's family, by whom he was sent to Scotland when quite young. From there he came to Louisiana in 1794, settling first in that part of Acadia parish now constituting the parish of St. James. Afterward he moved to Lafourche parish, where he founded the town that is now the parish seat, and which still bears his name. Here he engaged in business as a planter, but entered the political arena as a member of the Territorial Legislature, and in 1808 was elected a Justice of the Peace. He was delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1812, and after the admission of the state was chosen to represent his parish in the state Senate. Upon the resignation of Governor Robertson, on November 15, 1824, he became acting governor, and filled that office until December 13, of that year, when Governor Johnson was elected. Nothing of moment occurred during Governor Thibodaux's brief incumbency. He was twice married, first to Miss Lejeune, and, after her death, to Brigitte Bellanger, a descendant of the French explorer, Jacques Cartier. Governor Thibodaux died on October 24, 1827.