

¶Amazing things!

ODDITIES—I MUST SEE

FOR TWENTY YEARS I have been circling the globe, seeking out strange places and people, proving and disproving ancient legends, uncovering bizarre secrets. People have asked me: "Is there anything left for you to see?"

Of course!

I would like to see the Leaping River of Morocçó. This river flows for many miles until it meets another. But it does not flow into the body of water that crosses its path. It leaps across, the natives claim, in order to avoid dilution!

Another oddity that has aroused my curiosity is a Viking in Norway, preserved in an ice brick. He is clad in full regalia, his expression exactly as if he were alive.

The Temple of Badrinath, atop the Himalaya Mountains, in India, where half a million dollars in pure gold goes begging, is a spot that intrigues me. Here is gold bullion in huge piles. Although the natives could easily make off with the ingots, they never touch them, for they believe that anybody who removes the precious metal will immediately be struck dead by the gods.

The giant of Persia, whose

eleven-foot height makes it impossible for him to stand up, is an oddity I'd like to see.

On a bit of land in the Elbe River, Germany, a hardy peasant has built a house, and lives very comfortably, never knowing where he will be when he awakens in the morning. For his residence stands on the only inhabited floating island in the world. Some day I'd like to catch up with this place.

The tomb and mummy of Thais, who actually set a whole civilization on fire, are objects I have tried to see but have never reached. It was she who induced Alexander the Great, in a drunken stupor, to apply the torch to the Persian capital of Persepolis; and in that fire a trillion and a half of gold was consumed.

The one dinner I regret not having attended is that which the professors of the University of St. Petersburg arranged in 1912. It was called The Banquet of the Ages, and was the most fantastic dinner staged since the beginning of time. The bread was made of mummy wheat. Grains of wheat found in the tombs of the Pharaohs were planted and grown to obtain the flour from

which to make the loaves. The meat was from a prehistoric mammoth found thoroughly preserved in ice.

Fachi, Africa, is a city I would like to visit. Every house, pavement, and even the furniture is made of rock salt.

The River of Ink, in North Africa, where millions of gallons of ink flow daily, is another oddity that tantalizes me. You can stop at its banks and fill your fountain pen. Then there is the Temple of the Intoxicated Moon in China. I have been told by earnest Chinese that the Oriental Rip Van Winkle has been slumbering in the cellars of the temple for the last five hundred years. He opens his eyes every century, they say. Not far from the temple is the Bridge of Ten Thousand Centuries. It is a stone span which the Chinese believe will last exactly one million years. Strangely enough they believe that the one million years will be up this year.

I would like to have seen the Ice Wedding of Russia. The

Empress Anna, to punish one of her courtiers for taking a bride of another faith, ordered the marriage annulled. She had a search made to find the ugliest girl in all her empire. The girl was found and brought to the capital, and the unhappy nobleman was ordered to marry her at once. But that wasn't all. The Empress built an ice palace of tremendous proportions, furnished it with a full set of furniture of ice. In this cold abode, the wedding was celebrated. Then the newlyweds were left in it with all exits sealed. The temperature was 40 degrees below zero, but strangely enough they did not succumb. The couple survived and raised a healthy family. Their descendants are still numerous.

There are oddities like these throughout the world. No man could possibly witness them all. But, sooner or later, I must get to see the strange freaks of man and nature which intrigue me most.—*Robert L. Ripley, condensed from The Saturday Home Magazine.*

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