

Nobody can doubt that the following Babylonian dialog between a yes-man slave and a changeable master was meant to be funny. It is funny to read now, and it is exactly the same style of comedy that Shakespeare used in scenes between Kate and Petruchio in "The Taming of the Shrew."

A bit of the Babylonian satire goes somewhat like this:

Master: Slave, obey me.

Slave: Yes, my master, yes.

Master: I want to love a woman.

Slave: Love, my master, love! A man who loves a woman forgets pain and worry.

Master: No, slave. I don't want to love a woman, after all.

Slave: Love not, my master, love not! A woman is a pit, a hole, a ditch. Woman is a sharp iron sword which cuts off the neck of a man.

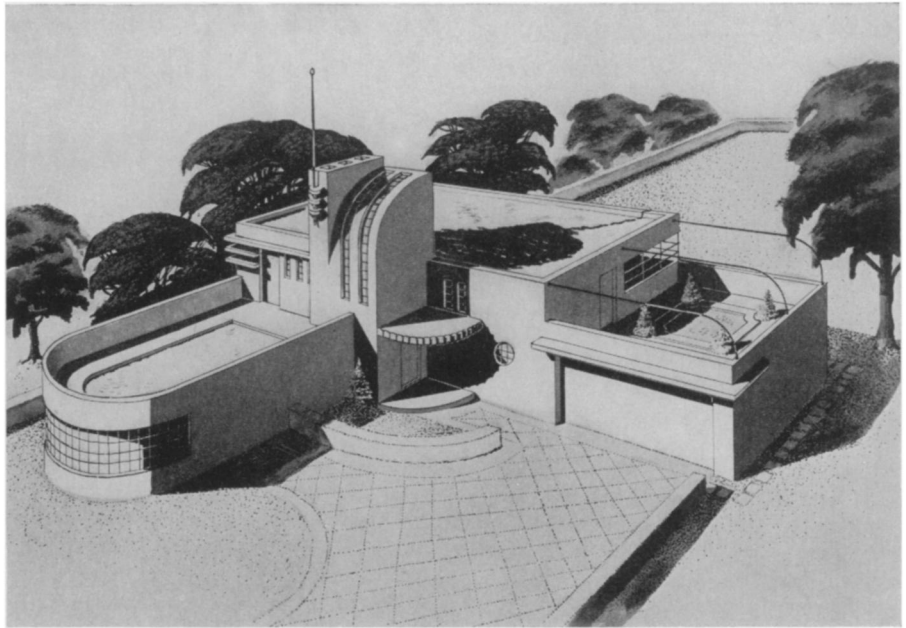
It ends by the master concluding, what's the use of it all, and deciding to kill himself and the slave; then changing his mind, as usual and saying he will kill only the slave. The yes-man gets in a last word. Still amiable, but with a neat dig, he sweetly hopes his master will live three days after him.

Ancient Gag-Lines

That the Babylonians and Assyrians had a sense of humor is also the verdict of Prof. E. A. Speiser, University of Pennsylvania specialist in Mesopotamian antiquity. He regards the master-and-slave dialog as an equivalent of our own comic gag lines. And very likely if the writers of ancient Mesopotamia had gone in for committing humor to clay tablets as painstakingly as they did their business records, historic events and didactic literature, there would be some good stories—maybe some that our own wise-crackers have missed. It is a pity that Babylonians didn't have barber-shop quips recorded. Prof. Speiser says that the barber shops were hotbeds of gossip, and many were the stories and plots circulated there, to judge by references in cuneiform writings. Some of it must have been funny.

A report that a clay tablet records the story of a Mesopotamian husband seeking his wife upstream during a flood, because she was so contrary, could not be confirmed either by Prof. Dubberstein or Prof. Speiser. Never heard of that joke in clay writings, they said.

Compared to the Stone Age or to Babylonia, Greek and Roman jokes seem scarcely old. Only 2,000 years or thereabouts; though some of the cracks that amused Athens and Rome may have ac-



ROOF POOLS

Don't be surprised to see placid pools of water on rooftops of the future, and don't charge them to faulty architecture. Modern roofs will be designed with water layers upon them for insulation, turning back sun's heat in summer and reducing the escape of inside heat in winter. One pound of water evaporated dissipates 1,100 B.T.U. of the sun's heat. A new type of roof, developed by the Koppers laboratories in Pittsburgh, holds pools of water for insulation, reducing the temperature of upper stories as much as 10 degrees in summer—the equivalent of air conditioning without the cost.

tually been far older than the jokers, if we only knew the whole truth. The life expectancy of a good story is something to awe even a statistician.

Most impressive feature of Greek and Roman humor is that we still have it with us. They even laughed about the snake that bit the dowager, with a result exactly like our modern jingle:

"The man recovered from the bite,
"It was the dog that died."

Greeks and Romans liked to pin their funny stories on famous people, as we do. They told it on Diogenes the Wise that he seated himself beside a target when a very bad archer was going to shoot.

"So he won't hit me," quipped Diogenes.

And orator Cicero, they said, was responsible for this one:

When told a certain lady was just 30 years old, Cicero nodded.

"It must be so," he agreed, "for I've heard it these 20 years."

In war, the Greeks kept up their spirits by soldier wit, some of it in Irish bull style. Soldier-historian Xenophon, describing a battle with King Croesus,

for example, told of an officer briskly commanding:

"Now, Hystaspes, we want quick work; for if we kill the enemy before they kill us, not one of us will lose his life."



NATURE CAMP

Study Out of Doors

Improve your health while increasing your knowledge of Nature. Study of birds, wild animals, and rare plants directed by experienced field naturalists. Science teachers may engage in special field work. Graduate and undergraduate courses. Picturesque mountain environment. Excellent food. Recreational opportunities. Expenses reduced. Enroll now.

FIRST SESSION—June 27 to July 18
SECOND SESSION—July 17 to August 7

Send for illustrated, descriptive catalogue. Address:

PROFESSOR GEORGE R. GREEN
Director of the Nature Camp
Room 31 Education Building

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE
State College Pennsylvania