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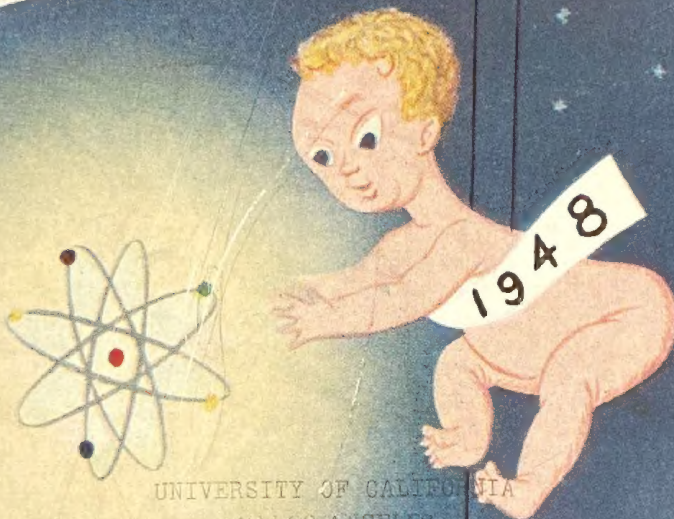
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"LET'S ALL SING LIKE THE BIRDIES SING"



WHEN Charles Kellogg sings, almost anything can happen—and frequently has.

Insects and chickens go into ecstasy. Wild creatures fly out of the woods and gape in open-beaked amazement. Tall steady flames dance excitedly, then crawl back into their gas jets and expire. A dead automobile engine sputters to life. A glass tube shatters into a pile of perfect little rings. Walls of a room vibrate ominously. And women shriek in abashed dismay.

For Charles Kellogg unquestionably possesses the world's most remarkable vocal equipment. Nature, in one of her strange moods, endowed him with the throat of a bird. He has all the half rings of a songbird's syrinx—in addition to his own human larynx.

This rare gift enables him to pitch his voice far into the realm of inaudibility—altitudes detectable only by the Helmholtz tuning forks. Tetrizzini, credited with reaching the highest notes of them all, scaled a glorious three and a half octaves—a full octave above the ordinary individual's range. Kellogg soars to a lofty *twelve and a half* octaves.

To this generation of bobby soxers, musically nurtured on the nasal antics of the Sinatras, the name of Kellogg is instantly associated with a breakfast cereal. But their elders will recall Charles Kellogg with a certain nostalgia as the one and only Nature Singer of the Vaudeville Era—the heyday of the Orpheum Circuit and, beyond that, Bishop Vincent's Chau-tauqua and the Redpath Lyceum. His

name twinkled in Broadway lights with such stars as Nora Bayes, Sophie Tucker, and Claude Gillingwater. His woodsy skit—complete

with warbles that doused flames—was a seasonal attraction in cities and towns across the nation. His records of wild bird calls were in every home that boasted a gramophone.

Kellogg's feats of voice, marvel of scientists and laymen alike, often put him in the headlines as well as up on the marquees. But for years now he has been absent from the national scene. Wearying of the smoke and turmoil of cities, he retired fifteen years ago to the foothills near Morgan Hill, California. There, in a red-tiled ranch-house overlooking the lower Santa Clara Valley, he lives quietly among his bird friends and bulky scrapbooks. His memories range a greater part of the world—treks across Newfoundland and Labrador, a 500-mile hike around Jamaica with John Burroughs, tramps in the High Sierras with John Muir, visits to the Paris home of August Rodin (he once sang to a Parisian multitude from an airplane), and a rare Fire Walking ceremony in his honor on the island of M'Benga in the Fijis.

THE YEARS—he's seventy-eight now—have snowed his great shock of brown hair but his voice has lost none of its magic. For visitors he will haul forth his old stage apparatus—a small gas pressure tank, a length of hose, and a gas jet. Lighting a tall flame he will extinguish it with a single note, properly pitched. And for good measure he will startle a passing magpie into amazed silence—simply by calling it everything in its own lexicon.

One November day in 1945 he spent

several hours conversing with the late Raffles, the famed talking mynah owned by Zetta and Carveth Wells.

"First I tried the inaudible on him," Kellogg recalls. "Raffles was so surprised he broke his good house behavior. He went around the room looking for that other bird. Then I talked to him naturally and he was quite excited to find that bird was I. We had a pleasant chat—not in English, understand, but in mynah."

And what would a man and a mynah talk about for two hours?

"Well, we talked of love for one thing. Certain notes will excite a bird in a romantic way, just as certain words spoken softly into the ear of a young woman will bring a response. But mostly Raffles and I just sang mynah melodies."

Many years prior to that chat, Kellogg's gift of bird gab astonished the great naturalist Burroughs, who wrote: "We had gone for days into the primitive jungle of the Cockpit country of Jamaica, when Kellogg set up a curious mixed chatter. Presently an answer came back from here and there as some denizen caught a familiar note. Gorgeously plumed birds, many of a species such as Kellogg never could have seen, appeared on branches close at hand and raised a chorus that was at once ludicrous and amazing."

Kellogg, who believes his bird throat is a "gift absolutely unique" to him, was even more lavishly endowed than a bird itself. The half rings of the finer songbird's vocal organ range from sixteen to thirty. Kellogg has at least thirty-nine!

David Wood, blind organist at a Broad Street church in Philadelphia some years ago, heard the Nature Singer in the early days of his career. Wood was startled to detect a multiple of tones and got word at once to Richard Zeckwer, head of a private music school. Zeckwer had a set of

Helmholtz tuning forks and arranged a Kellogg songfest in his home.

Zeckwer was amazed. The tuning forks clocked Kellogg's vocal vibrations from a lethargic fifty-four per second to an astounding peak of 49,560 per second. The average person can't vibrate above 4,000—if that much. A bird's vibrations begin at 14,000 and hum into the inaudible. Kellogg vibrates so rapidly men stone deaf have often "heard" him.

It was on Zeckwer's set of tuning forks that Kellogg first knew he could climb to a dizzy twelve and a half octaves.

IN ADDITION to the full-throated warbles and chirps, which he can produce through the nostrils with his mouth tightly shut, Kellogg has the unique ability to trill as a bird trills. A bird trills by vibrating only the upper part of its beak. Kellogg can do likewise—vibrate his upper lip at humming-bird speed while he keeps the lower lip rigid. (Easy, you say? Try it—right now!)

Another uncommon fact about Kellogg is the absence of a frenum, that restraining fold of flesh beneath the tongue. And speaking of this, Birdman Kellogg warns: "Never cut a bird's tongue to make him talk. Simply ruins a bird. Instead, cut his frenum."

"People often call me a whistler of bird tunes," he says. "I'm not. I've tried my darndest to whistle but, to save my soul, I can't. Listen—" He essayed a whistle but it sounded more like a poor imitation of a Bronx cheer.

"They say I imitate birds. I do not imitate; I reproduce. I can reproduce the song of any bird I've ever heard. I do not sing *like* a bird, but *as* a bird."

Medical men have peered beyond his tonsils—and come away shaking their heads. Late in the last century, before the miracle attending his birth had catapulted him to vaudeville fame, Kellogg went to London on a lecture engagement. His talk on American wild life was interspersed by bird songs. His peculiar talents aroused the curiosity of Sir Morell Mackenzie, the noted English throat specialist. Sir Morell ran a laryngoscope down the Kellogg gullet and began clucking in amazement. He counted not only thirty-six birdlike half rings in the trachea but three others in the bronchial tubes.

LEGENDS have already sprung up around his infancy. He was

born at Spanish Ranch, a gold town in the Feather River country of the High Sierras. When he was three weeks old—so one legend goes—burly miners tiptoed, hat in hand, into the cabin to hear the Kellogg baby's strange little cry. It was more of a whispering warble than a cry.

His mother died when he was still a toddler and little Charles, under the tutelage of the Digger Indians, became a sort of Child Tarzan. He spoke Digger Indian before he spoke English, and from these Redmen he learned the secrets of the wilds.

"My earliest recollection," Kellogg says, "is sitting with the Indians about their campfires and whispering bird songs, singing always through the nostrils as I had seen the birds do—watch your canary; he does the same. Much later I found that I could open the lips and chirp and sing full-throatedly. I felt perfectly free singing to the Indians, but the moment a white man appeared I would instantly stop. It was not until I was sixteen or seventeen that I could overcome my shyness and sing in public."

He then gave nature talks to school groups, sang to Chautauqua tent audiences and, along with Jack London, appeared on Redpath Lyceum platforms as the "famous California bird warbler."

ONE DAY he dived into a pond—and broke surface into Keith's big-time vaudeville. At the time, he was appearing before classes of Boston school children as a singing naturalist at five dollars a recital. One day, as he left the auditorium, a stranger who had regarded him with special interest on several previous occasions approached Kellogg.

"He was Berton Kinraide, a wealthy amateur physicist," Kellogg recalls. "He invited me to his home in Jamaica Plains and led me down to his laboratory three stories below ground. There he lit a carbon flame and asked

me to stand facing the wall, twenty-five feet away. Then he directed me to sing."

Kellogg sang—and Kinraide shouted. Kellogg pivoted. "Why did you turn the light out?" he asked.

"I didn't," Kinraide replied. "You did!"

Kinraide re-lit the flame and led Kellogg into the next room, closing the door. "Now," he said, "sing like hell."

Again Kellogg sang. They ran back into the lab—and found the flame extinguished.

"I knew it!" Kinraide exclaimed. "You sing like a bird."

Kinraide explained a theory of his that the high pitch of a bird's song—if sustained—could put out a sensitive flame, but he was never able to get a bird to sustain a given pitch. Kellogg had both the voice of a bird and the power of a man, so he was able to sustain the proper pitch.

For some reason Kinraide failed to explain at the time, he hurried Kellogg to his estate at Sandwich near Cape Cod, where there was a pond with a diving board. Kellogg got into a bathing suit, while Kinraide set up an apparatus on the springboard and lit a flame. Then, at Kinraide's suggestion, Kellogg dived into the pond and sang as a bird would if it ever had occasion to sing under water. The flame went out.

Just what Kinraide proved is not clear from this distance, but it did land Kellogg a more lucrative job. For just then—as if by pre-arrangement—out of the bushes came three men: Bob Larsen, reporter for a Boston paper; B. F. Keith, the vaudeville king; and Harry Houdini, who could also do things under water.

Kellogg repeated the stunt.

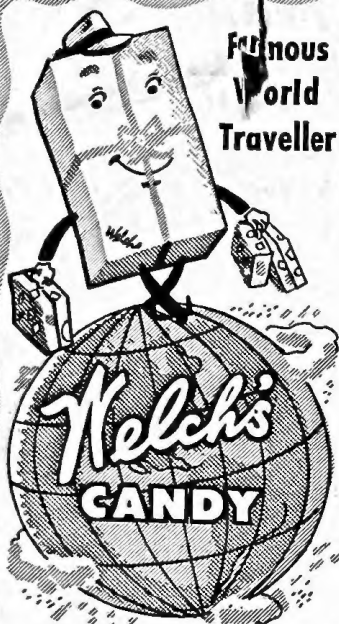
"Mr. Kellogg," said Mr. Houdini, "you can't keep this thing under a bushel."

Kellogg didn't. He accepted a Keith contract—at \$900 a week.

IN TIME he built his famous act into four features: He filled the theater with the songs of a hundred birds. He doused gas flames with his powerful voice. By pitch he shattered a tall glass tube into small perfect rings which he tossed to the audience. And for a little camping flavor, he created fire by rubbing sticks together.

At first his flame quenching act met with official frowns. He was scheduled to appear at the Palace Theater in
(Continued on Page 50)





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Birdman Kellogg

(Continued from Page 15)

New York on December 12, 1924 (Sophie Tucker was on that bill), but they refused him a fire permit. Too dangerous, said Inspector of Combustibles John F. Dixon.

Too dangerous? Kellogg took his apparatus to Dixon's office and turned up a tall, steady flame. Then he walked out of the room, carefully closing the door. He sang—in a high, inaudible pitch. The flame on Dixon's desk danced excitedly, then crawled back into the jet and went out. Kellogg got his permit from an astonished inspector of combustibles.

This ability to extinguish flames by his voice—and to transform a yellow carbon flame into a blue Bunsen jet—attracted scientific interest. He demonstrated it in a radio broadcast for University of California scientists on the evening of September 6, 1926. Professor A. T. Jones introduced Kellogg before the microphone of Station KGO,

then located in Oakland, and briefly explained how the "sensitive flame" is affected by only the very highest vibrations. He added that what Kellogg hoped to do that night had never been done before.

In LeConte Hall on the Berkeley campus ten miles away, a group of physicists and other scientists, headed by Dr. Elmer Hall, gathered around a radio set, before which a sensitive flame burned without a flicker. Waiting with the scientists were wire service correspondents and reporters from the San Francisco Bay Area papers. The stunt had already been highly publicized by KGO.

A telephone line was kept open between the hall and the radio station and at various signals Kellogg was to make the two-foot yellow gas flame dance or become agitated, then turn it into a roaring blue Bunsen, then extinguish it entirely. He did all three, at call.

And not only that. Matches and candles were agitated, then extin-



"I had a grand evening, but I'm leaving before I've had too much!"

SCRIPT

guished in all parts of the western United States and Canada, on ships at sea, and in Hawaii and Alaska. A Chinese merchant of Hilo cabled that Kellogg had put out a candle and three matches as he tried to re-light it. In all, Kellogg received 11,000 letters, 7,000 of them explaining that match or candle flames had been doused in the novel experiment.

Kellogg has great faith in the power that lies hidden in the human voice. On a trip to the Fiji Islands he was invited by the superintendent of schools at Suva to witness a strange performance at the top of a cliff overhanging the ocean. There a group of Fijian girls sang—and out of the Pacific depths rose giant turtles. They hung on the surface and cocked their great heads as they listened. And when the song died out, they quietly submerged. In India, women singing in chorus have caused the surface of a still pond to wave like a blanket.

BUT THAT is nothing. Kellogg goes even farther with this startling theory: "Vocal vibration, intelligently harnessed, could keep the United States out of war for all time. For once aware of the frightful destructive power within the grip of our government, no one would dare make a menacing move." Kellogg will cite you "proof" of his theory in the Bible:

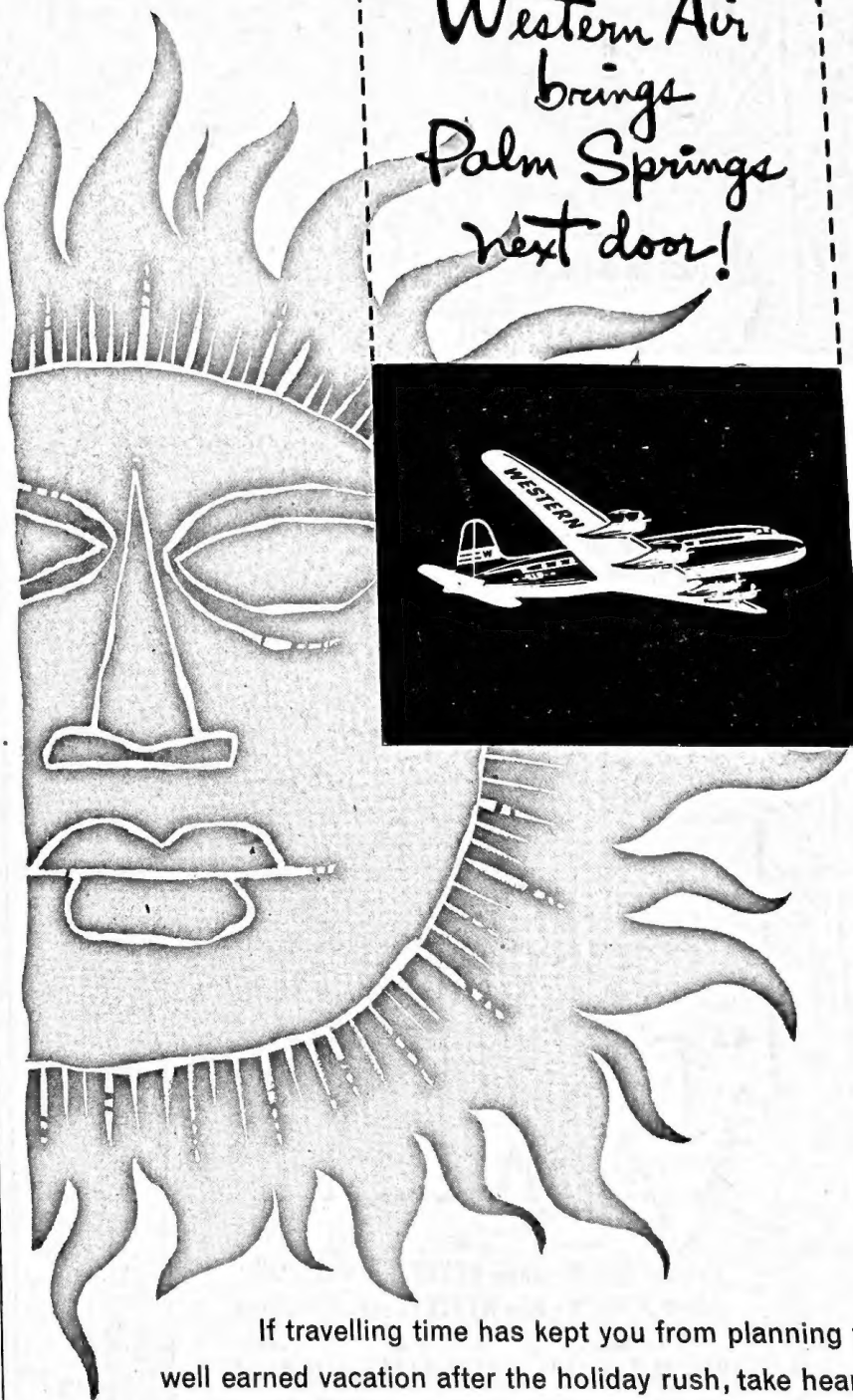
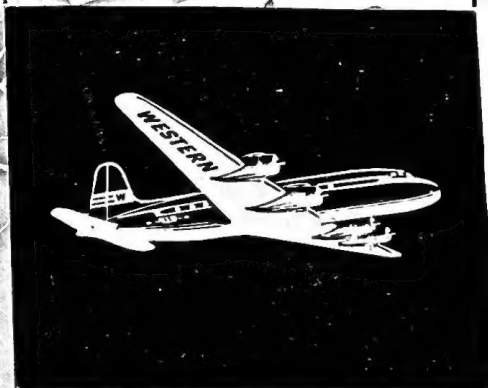
"You remember how the Lord instructed Joshua to proceed on the city but not to besiege it by force of arms. Joshua was told to order the priests to blow their trumpets and the people to shout in unison. Then, as the Bible relates, the walls of Jericho fell.

"But the tale does not give the explanation, which is that the trumpets of the priests and the shouts of the people *in unison* set up a wave of vibration attuned to the walls of the beleaguered city. As a natural consequence, the walls fell in.

"It was the potent force of pitch. Everything has pitch. I can, by low and intense humming, get the pitch of a room in a skyscraper—say, the Empire State Building. Once I get the pitch, the walls will hum back. Now, if I were capable of sustaining that note long enough, it would set up a sympathetic vibration throughout the skyscraper and cause it to collapse. In fact, the earth itself could be shattered to smithereens by anyone who could cause a corresponding number of vibrations to its own."

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ize on Kellogg's unusual vocal talents. Once a promoter in Denver sought to persuade him to found a religious cult wherein Kellogg would not only hear but produce voices.

"He told me I could make a million dollars," Kellogg says. "Women, he said, would flock to the cult. That may have been so because my voice at a certain pitch had a strange effect on women—just as it did on Raffles. But I've never found a need for that sort of money."

RUDDY faced, energetic, and full of youthful enthusiasms that belie his years, Kellogg likes to talk, laugh, and sing. He has never tasted alcohol nor tobacco. The smell of smoke, even second-hand, makes him woozy. Twice, at club luncheons in Toledo, Ohio, and Syracuse, New York, where he was guest speaker, the halls were so smoky he fainted dead away. "Let people smoke who want to," he says. "That's none of my affair. But if I can get away from the smell of it, let me."

And most of his life he has. He has roamed the air-pure wilds of the hemisphere without gun or compass, with only a camera in his hand. To him, even a snake is a "lovely, graceful, beautiful creature."

"Love—love rules the universe," is his creed. "Learn to love all creatures. Thus only may you hope to understand God."

Kellogg has never celebrated a birthday. He knows the year and the season—the fall of 1868—but not the day of his birth, because no such thing as vital statistics was kept by the pioneers. He is sorry on only one point—he has no candles on a cake to extinguish with one inaudible warble.

And—oddly enough for a man who has always liked to throw his voice around—Kellogg has never spoken into a telephone.

"Listened to one once," he said, shaking his leonine head. "That was enough. It does something queer to your voice."

—J. CAMPBELL BRUCE

