

FOOLISH QUESTION: WHO IS GOLDBERG?

His Cartoons all Come Under
the Head of Pleasure

By Joseph Edgar Chamberlin



REUBEN L. GOLDBERG

the apparently inexhaustible cartoonist

A **RATHER** pale, unaggressive, mild young man of twenty-four came into the New York "Evening Mail" office one day, seven years ago, and asked for a job as a funny cartoonist. The City Editor, who seemed to be the only man he could get at, glanced at the drawings that the young man had in his portfolio—drawings that he had been doing for a San Francisco paper. The City Editor thought that they were the most awful things he had ever seen. "Not for us; we don't want 'em," he said. The young man was leaving, as he had already left several other New York newspaper offices. But the City Editor suddenly thought of the grudge that he had against the Sporting Editor. "On your way out," he said to the young man, "you might look in at the sporting department and show those things to the man there."

With that "on your way out" hanging around his neck like a millstone, the young man passed the drawings to the Sporting Editor, who happened to be Fred Wenck. Wenck was busy and bored, but he is indomitably kind, and he looked at one of the sketches. He whistled a little in surprise, paused, and then a joyous wonder came into his eyes. He took another sketch, and grinned widely. Another and another—grinning more all the time. Then Wenck took the whole bunch of drawings, rushed in to the managing editor, and said: "See here, Mr. Niles,—here is a young man that we want to hire."

REUBE GOLDBERG

The fact was that the young man was Goldberg, and these were Goldberg pictures; and Wenck had recognized in them the Goldberg twist and curve; the absolutely original Goldberg thing; the touch of broad yet incisive ridicule with nothing but good nature and joy in it. In a few days Goldberg was hired, and began making his funny pictures for the "Mail" and for a syndicate of papers.

This is the way he got his start in New York. The start was all he wanted. The public found the pictures immensely funny; and the high-brows, who liked them just as well, accounted for their liking by saying—which is true—that Goldberg is not like the other funny artists—that his things have a significance—as art and literature.

Goldberg, by the way, having intelligence and thinking powers, can write as well as he can draw. In his drawings, his lines are all funny—every one of them. His ideas are funny. This is the foundation. On top of that is the trick that he has of selecting, in making a picture, the best aspect to exaggerate in a face or figure. And then, on top of that, is the industry and patience of the man.

He works every day. He works in the office—needs the inspiration of the toil-atmosphere. You can see him hammer an idea out of the cold metal of thought, perhaps heating it up by talking it over with somebody, then pounding it into shape on the anvil of experiment. Fertility—oh, yes; it comes easy to him. He is inspired. But I have seen him putting in some good days' work with his inspirations.

Reuben L. Goldberg is his name, and he was born in San Francisco, where his father still lives. In spite of the fact that he was, like all artists, determined to draw from childhood, and did draw, and took prizes at it; in spite of a consuming hankering for newspaper offices, they sent him to the University of California and made a mining engineer out of him. He threw that off, however, learned to draw, and did funny cartoons for the San Francisco "Bulletin." He did well at it. But he knew that New York was the place for him, and before he got into a rut he came here.

THAT is where the "Mail" started with him; and he is there yet. He is Goldberg. That is about all you can say of him, and about all you need to say. They laugh at his pictures and read his little stories all over the country, and all the rising funny cartoonists are little Goldbergs. He is made to do vaudeville stunts and to make speeches, and to bear most of the other burdens of celebrity.

A quiet fellow, you nevertheless see the eager and scrutinizing intelligence in him when you look at him. He is as American as a blue-jay on a rail fence. He is a part of our Art and our Literature.

Amazing as it may seem he makes a cartoon every day, and not infrequently more than one, for his operations are not confined to a single newspaper, and he writes sporting stories, reminiscences of European travel, and whatever else has amused and occupied him.

He has invented the following thrilling series of the high lights of human nature: "Foolish Questions." "I'm the Guy." "They all look good when they're far away." "What are you gonna do with it?" "Phoney Films." "This all comes under the head of Pleasure." "It's all wrong."