Cundumana

By W. L. McAtee
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An R.C. girl is alleged to have prayed, "Oh Holy Mother, who didst conceive without sinning, grant me the grace of sinning without conceiving." She would understand at once the virtue that lies in the cundum but protagonists, early and late, have preferred to dwell upon its antiseptic value. It was a guard against the "French disease" or syphilis, which was a far more serious thing in early cundum days than it is now, especially under penicillin treatment.

Gabriello Fallopio (1523-1562), Italian anatomist, (but also canon in a cathedral), who specialized on the sexual organs of women, and for whom the falloipian tubes are named, appears to have been the inventor of these protective sheaths, which are described in his work "De morbo gallico" Venice, Ed. 2, 1565, chapter 88. His were made of linen.

Their use spread rapidly especially in "high" society. Eric Partridge (A Dictionary of Slang ... New York, Ed. 2, 1938) informs us that in 1667 the "three aristocratic courtiers, wits and poets, Rochester, Roscommon and Dorsett, issued a Panegyric upon Cundum." I have not seen this reference, but in "The works of the Earls of Rochester, Roscommon and Dorset: The Dukes of Devonshire, Buckinghamshire" ... London, 1739, Vol. II, is "A Panegyrick upon Cundums" (pp. 207-212) the authorship of which is not clearly stated. These men were in the court of Charles II, in the ribald restoration years of 1660-1685. The author or authors of the "Panegyrick" attribute invention of the cundum to Colonel Cundum (Partridge adds "in the Guards"). Unless as an independent inventor, this claim is too much, but at least the Colonel gave the name by which the device is most widely known in the English-speaking world.

A panegyric, by definition, is extravagant laudation and this one does not fail to meet the specification. Its style may be illustrated by some of the opening lines:

"O all ye Nymphs, in lawless-Love's Disport
Assiduous, whose ever open arms
Both Day and Night stand ready to receive
The fierce Assaults of Britain's am'rous Sons!

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Hear and Attend: In Cundum's mighty praise
I sing, for sure tis worthy of a Song.
The utility of the article is sketched in the following passage:

"Cundum I sing, by Cundum now secure
Boldly the willing Maid, by Fear awhile
Kept virtuous, owns thy Pow'r, and tastes thy joys
Tumultuous; Joys untasted but for Thee
Unknown big Belly, and the squawking Brat,
Best Guard of Modesty! She riots now
Thy Vol'ty in the Fullness of thy Bliss.
Happy the man, who in his Pocket keeps
Whether with Green or Scarlet Ribband bound,
A well made Cundum; He, nor dreads the IIs
Of Shankers or Cordee, or Buboes Dire!"

The supposed inventor of the Cundum is placed in the Hall of Fame, above Sir Isaac Newton, great mathematician and discoverer of the Law of Gravitation.

"Hall, happy Albion, in whose fruitful Land
The wondrous Pimp arose, from whose strange Skill
In inmost Nature, thou reap'd more than Fame,
More solid Glory, than from Newton's Toil;
Newton who next is England's noblest Boast."

We can usually count upon the revered antiquarian, Francis Grose (c. 1730-1791), to add an interesting bit to any recondite subject. In "A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue" (1785), he agrees with the ascription to "one Colonel Cundum" and goes on to say:

"These machines were long prepared, and sold by a matron of the name of Philips, at the green canister in Half-moon-street, in the Strand (London). That good lady having acquired a fortune retired from business; but learning that the town was not well served by her successors, out of a patriotic zeal for the public welfare, returned to her occupation, of which she gave notice by diverse handbills, in circulation in the year 1776." Would that some of these bills were available; they would teach us not only of that time but doubtless would give us lessons in ordinary frankness and honesty.

In their middle age, cundums were made largely from the caeca (blind guts) of sheep and calves, less often from those of deer and other ruminants. These were treated repeatedly with alkalies to remove fatty and fleshy tissues, then bleached, formed and dried. Thus the caecal cundum was essentially a blind tube of connective tissue—an animal membrane, through which when wet, according to one Lott's researches, spermatazoa may pass in ten minutes. Alas! for human confidence.

However, ten minutes may have provided a sufficient margin of safety, as the manufacturer of caecal cundums continued to grow. In Lyon, France, in 1877, some ninety female and male workers prepared from 18 to 20 thousands daily. Damage to the skin of their hands by the alkalies was an occupational hazard. Four grades of the product, derived from sheep were sorted out a according to the thickness of the wall, varying from a hundreth of a millimeter, or a little less, to three hundredths. Those from calves were slightly thicker, from .015 to .04 mms. These grades were sold as free from defects and brought from 8.65 to 25.20 marks per gross. At the old rate for the mark (23.8 cents), these prices were equivalent to about two to six dollars per twelve dozen—much under modern prices, even considering devaluation of the dollar. Surprising as it may seem, there was a market also for cundums damaged in the process of manufacture, and then patched, although it was admitted that the patches might be loosened by moisture.

Caecal cundums are still made in France and Spain and are claimed to retain their effectiveness better in tropical countries than do those of rubber. Cundums have been (and still are) formed from the air-bladders of fishes and they have been made also from fine silk, and linen fabrics. They are mostly of test-tube form, but some have a teat end; and short ones (acorn cundums) to cover only the glans have been (we should think precariously) tried. Also some have been equipped with fricative devices designed to increase pleasure of the female partner. The prevailing modern material is a soft, silky rubber tissue of surprising thinness. Cundums are used in the United States to the extent of millions daily. Current (1954) prices for mail orders run from $1.50 to $3.00 per dozen for rubber goods and from $4.00 to $5.00 for "fish skin" protectors. There appear to be no statistics as to total production.

**Synonomy**

Variants of the common name, known to me include: condom, condrum, cundum, cundum, cundrum, and cundum.

Synonyms are: Acorn cundum (one covering only the glans); American letter; American tip ("acorn c"); bout American (French, American tip); capote (French, cloak); capote Anglaise (Fr., English cloak); fishskin (made from the air bladder of a fish); French letter; French skin (caecal cundum); Grecian cap (acorn cundum); Italian letter; Malthus cap ("acorn cundum"); Merry Widow (In her distinctive era, no flapper would have considered

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1 Information in this, and the succeeding paragraph is chiefly from A. Meyerhoff (pseudonym. Hans Ferdy), Die Mittel Zur Verhütung der Conception, Berlin, 1895, 76pp.
herself completely equipped unless she had a few merry widows tucked in her purse.); preventive, prophylactic, or safety sheath, or simply, sheath ("Sheaths that make light love safe," Robinson Jeffers, Selected Poems, New York, 1938: 360); Spanish letter; Spanish skin (= caecal cundum).

Cundum, in military slang, is used for a false scabbard for a sword; and for the oilskin case employed to protect the colors of a regiment.

Trivia on Cundums

Shortly before the Centennial Exposition of 1876 at Philadelphia, importation of contraceptives had been banned. Samples, nevertheless, came in with the exhibit of the Republic of France. The apparent breaking of the regulation was glossed over by labelling the cundums as "boots americains" (American tips).

News photographers learned that cundums serve perfectly to protect their negatives during shipment. This led to possible misunderstood entries in expense accounts. If the item, "one gross cundums," occurred frequently, some question as to the activity, indicated might arise in the home office.

A newly imported English maid called the attention of her mistress to a cundum between the sheets. "Well", said the mistress, "don't you do anything like that in the old country?" "Yes", replied the maid, "but we don't fly⁴ them."

A recently bereaved American in Paris was purchasing a mourning outfit. Wishing a black hat (chapeau noir), his French failed and he said "capote noir" (black cundum). The young lady clerk who was waiting on him was thrilled at the American gentleman's beautiful sentiment.

In his London Journal (November 25, 1762) James Boswell wrote: "I picked up a girl in the Strand; went into a court with intention to enjoy her in armour. But she had none." By "armour," he meant cundum. March 25, 1763. "For the first time did I engage in armour, which I found but a dull satisfaction." May 17, 1763, "I picked up a fresh, agreeable young girl . . . and I took out my armour, but she begged that I might not put it on, as the sport was much pleasanter without it . . ."

The following limerick is not so good, in my opinion, as that quoted in the succeeding Essay, but it is distinguishable, and may be added for completeness.

There was a young man from Cape Horn
Who wished he had never been born,
And he wouldn't have been
If his father had seen
That the bloomin' French letter was torn.

⁴ I use this term because the expression, "skin the prick," has a technical meaning quite apart from the point of this story.

REFLECTIONS UPON CUNDUMS EATEN BY BIRDS

The appended "Essay" was inspired by the finding of a large, nearly intact cundum in the stomach of a gull that had been collected in California. It was carefully suspended in a round-topped museum jar, which was covered with a paper sheath easily withdrawn. At the unveiling, before a small group in the Division of Birds, United States National Museum in the 1920's, I read the terminal essay and spoke substantially as follows:

When any great discovery occurs, due observance of the event should be made; that principle will serve as my reason for this unveiling. I suggest that the evidence of the present discovery be installed as an exhibit in the United States National Museum, and this jar and contents have been prepared for the purpose. Not the egotistical creature called man, but a bird is to be credited with this find—a fact that cannot fail to be of interest to the present audience of ornithologists. It is a gull recently taken at Hyperion, not far from Hollywood, California.

The object I am about to unveil is in the nature of personal apparel, but that is no objection from the standpoint of the National Museum, which has many such exhibits, including George Washington's pants and, for aught I know, Martha's panties. Here we have an authentic relic of a very famous man, hitherto unrepresented in the collections of the museum. Therefore, gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to unveil, and to present to the museum, a magnificent 10-inch cundum, undoubtedly once used by Rudolph Valentino.

AN ESSAY ON CUNDUMS

These are usually called cundums in the U.S.A.; and although they were named after a military gentleman, there is nothing of the drum about them. They are said to have been invented by Colonel Cundum of the Guards in the days of Charles the Second, nearly 300 years ago. This teaches us that present day flappers and neckers are probably not so swift as they think they are.

When the flapper tucks in her purse the supply for the evening, of these 'capotes anglaise' as the French call them, or 'French lettera' as the English have it, little does she reflect upon various points of interest in the life history of cundums.

First and last, girls have a lot to do with cundums. It is said these useful implements are made almost exclusively by girls and it must be an inspiring occupation to them. The cundums, of course, are packed by girls, and later they are packed into girls. It must be a jolly job to box them, either one at a time in the park, or by the dozen and gross in the factory, dreaming the while of all their romantic activity.
Cundums are very popular in a large city like Washington, and it is said that merely by noting the frequency of them at the sewer outlets it is easy to tell when Congress is in session. Windrows more or less, of cundums are cast up along the historic shores of the Potomac, and little children finding them, gaily puff them up into balloons, and otherwise mouth and masticate them.

Nor do cundums escape the eyes of the birds. At least one crow examined by Biological Survey scientists had eaten a cundum, and lately a fine 10-inch one was found in a gull from the west—out where men are men, you know.

If big toes never slipped and cundums never ripped it would be a brighter and better world. A good reliable cundum can be used over and over again say those who have tried it. We do not know as we have not yet attained that plane of economy.

Persons who prate about their ancestry should bear in mind the following limerick:

There was a young man named Van Horn
Who wished he had never been born,
And he wouldn't have been
If his parents had seen
The place where the cundum was torn.

Cundums no doubt have prevented many a genius from seeing the light of this world. Happily not the writer of this essay.