**Belief**

**According to the Greeks, as an awful lot of things were, the amethyst protected its owner from getting loaded. The word itself means “not to intoxicate." It's a violet or purple variety of quartz. Don't count on it to prevent a hangover. (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 340)**

**Aroma folklorists insist believers can get rid of depression by sniffing cotton balls dabbed in peppermint oil. And can hurry themselves off to sleep by sniffing lavender. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Believers in the 14th century thought mild-mannered people who chewed catnip would become violent. So it became the custom for the royal hangmen to take a bite or two of it before going to work. (L. M. Boyd)**

**A Romanian village is enjoying a tourist boom, thanks to “humping hill" that is believed to help couples conceive. The mayor of Horea, Corneliu Olar, is determined to promote the hill as a tourist attraction, and has planted extra bushes to provide privacy for couples. “It has been a tradition for more than three centuries," Olar says. “Romanian kings have come and gone, but the humping hill has always been there." (The Week magazine, June 16, 2006)**

**In his innocence, man held his own special planet to be the center of the starry universe until Copernicus, 431 years ago, dared to challenge this dogma. The earth moves around the sun, he said, not vice versa.  It was a profound and troubling idea.  Yet it was still far from the whole truth, for it kept the sun at the center of things. And that misconception persisted in the minds of most until the coming of photography and the large telescopes of the 20th century. *(Kenneth F. Weaver, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Old-time Americans tossed salt over their left shoulders as some sort of token gesture, but I forget why? To hit the devil in the eye. Some believed spilled salt indicated the devil was at hand. The left, shoulder throwers mocked the notion. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Early beliefs:**

**Aztecs – “dead warriors become hummingbirds"**

**Incans – “gold is sweat of the sun"**

**Incans – “stars, moon, and sun arise from lake"**

**Ancient Egyptians – “human's created from tears of sun"**

**Mayans -- monkeys are “protectors of artists and dancers"**

**Incans – “moon goddess under attack during eclipse" (by a giant snake; Inca people made loud noises to scare it away). (Philip Wilkinson, in DK Illustrated Dictionary of Mythology)**

**When you first were told the earth is round, did you think that meant it's round but flat like a pancake? Researchers say this is the belief of more than half of all youngsters under 10. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Spanish soldiers in Francisco Pizarro’s expedition to Peru, in 1532, found emeralds as large as pigeon eggs. In the mistaken belief that true emeralds could not be broken, they pounded their finds with hammers and decided, when the stones shattered, that all they had found was colored glass. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 17)***

**Fortune tellers of old India smashed hens' eggs against a special egg-breaking board, then interpreted the patterns of shattered shell fragments thereon. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Stonewall Jackson let it be known to a few that his feet were cold almost all the time. He thought lemon juice might improve the circulation. So he sucked lemons all through the Civil War. Historical footnotes say he was rarely seen without a squashed lemon in his hand. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The Pilgrims refused to eat lobsters because they thought they were really big insects. (*Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 65)***

**Something else Sylvester Graham claimed about his invention, the Graham cracker, was that it dulled lust. Maybe that was a selling point at the time. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Once it was believed that nature simply wiped the slate clean every winter, a kind of yearly apocalypse followed by a miracle rebirth each spring. Mice were thought to regenerate spontaneously from rag piles. Frogs and turtles climbed out of puddles, spawned by magic spring rains. Birds changed into other animals to get through the frigid months. (Jeff Rennicke, in Reader's Digest)**

**For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time, and surely he would not be wrong. Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects, one heavy and one light, and dropped them from a great height to see whether or not the heavier object landed first. But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death. In 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong, however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**It's said early Seneca believed their prayer words were carried to the Great Creator on rising smoke. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Some Malaysians protect their babies from disease by bathing them in beer. *(Noel Botham, in The Ultimate Book of Useless Information, p. 163)***

**Legend has it that unless the ravens remain at the Tower of London, the structure will fall and the British Empire with it. Currently, eight ravens are in residence at the site, and their maintenance is provided by the Department of the Environment. Each bird is named and has its own heated cage. A Yeoman Warder with the title of Ravenmaster cares for them. To keep the birds from flying away, the flight feathers on one wing are clipped. But since ravens court in flight, the Tower birds weren't able to breed, and replacements were brought from Scotland, Wales or west England. That is, until 1989, when the first raven in over four hundred years was actually born at the Tower. His name? Ronald Raven! (L. M. K., in Reader's Digest, March, 1991)**

**Women wear engagement and wedding rings on the third finger of the left hand (not counting the thumb), because an ancient belief held that a delicate nerve runs directly from that finger to the heart. *(Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 21)***

**Ancient Greeks thought they could neutralize a snake's venom by feeding it evergreen berries. Didn't work. Those who found out it didn't work were the Greeks who fed the berries to the snakes. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Many a chimney on houses in Britain's Channel Islands has a large stone sticking out of it. Like a seat. That's what it was put there for. To give passing witches a place to rest and warm themselves. Better outside than in, the builders believed. (L. M. Boyd)**

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