



CHOCOLATE POCKETS

From:
CLASSIC CLEVELANDERS

By: Shelley Pearsall

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It was a snowy, cold January day in Cleveland in 1896. Edith Miller was upstairs in the Miller household repairing Professor Dayton C. Miller's chocolate pockets—yet again. Now, in case you are thinking that her husband's pockets were MADE of chocolate, perhaps I'd better explain. The Professor was rather fond of chocolates, but also a bit, well, absent-minded, so it was not uncommon for him to begin nibbling on a piece of chocolate candy, and then put it in his pocket to finish later. Usually, the Professor or Mrs. Miller did not discover these half-eaten pieces of candy until it was too late—and a brand-new suit or a coat had a gooey, chocolate pocket.

It amazed Mrs. Miller that someone as brilliant as the Professor could not remember that chocolate MELTED. The Professor was the head of the Physics Department at Case School of Applied Science, for heaven's sake! He had invented all sorts of gadgets and gizmos, yet he continued to put half-eaten pieces of candy in his pockets! Mrs. Miller sighed, shook her head, and began to pull out the stitches on the ruined pocket, one by one.

She wished she could think of some kind of invention to keep the pockets clean. The Professor was always inventing things, why couldn't she invent something?

Downstairs, she could hear the sounds of the Professor working on his latest invention. He was trying to build something he had read about in the paper that morning. Something with a long name that had been invented over in Germany. Some people called it the "death ray", he had said.

The death ray—now that was a strange name. She imagined some kind of black, poisonous rays escaping from a test tube and shivered. You never knew what the Professor was going to try to do next. He'd always been an inventor. When the Professor was a boy, he built a steam engine to power his mother's butter churn, so he wouldn't have

to crank it. He had once read about Alexander G. Bell's invention and built his own telephone in an afternoon. In college, he created his own telescope. There was no stopping him once he got an idea in his head.

An idea! Suddenly Mrs. Miller had an idea. Why not line the Professor's pockets with heavy paper or cloth or something that would keep the chocolate away from the pocket? When the lining got dirty, she could just pull it out, and stitch in a new one. Humming a bit to herself, Mrs. Miller found a piece of rubber material — perfect!, and began to stitch it into the pocket.

When she had finished, Mrs. Miller proudly carried her invention down to the Professor. She found him hunched over a strange-looking contraption with batteries and wires everywhere. A stack of photographic plates sat nearby. Holding up the suit pocket proudly, she showed him how she had solved the problem. "There" she said, "Now you can eat all the chocolates that you'd like."

"I think that I have a few in my pocket right now," he said, sheepishly pulling out three half-eaten, half-melted pieces. "I forgot about these, I guess."

Mrs. Miller shook her head. Just keeping lining in all of the pockets was going to be a challenge, she could tell. And then the Professor would probably start keeping chocolate in his hat or something.

The Professor motioned her over to the maze of scientific apparatus on his work table. "I have a new and amazing invention to show you, as well." The Professor turned out the basement lights and pointed to a small switch on his hand-made contraption. "Right now I am going to use this switch connected to these batteries to pass an electrical spark through a vacuum I've created in a Crookes' tube, and you will see what happens."

The entire area around the glass tube was suddenly bathed in an eerie blue light.

“Now this light can actually see through my hand.”

Mrs. Miller watched nervously as the Professor placed his hand above the photographic plate and directed the blue rays at it. Just a short while later, she was amazed to see the Professor hold up a picture showing all of the bones in his hand.

“Isn’t that stupendous!” he shouted. “It can take pictures of your bones—feet bones, hand bones, leg bones, all kinds of bones—wonderful, wonderful bones.”

Now Mrs. Miller couldn’t really see how useful this kind of an invention would be. Who really wanted pictures of one’s bones? They weren’t the sort of pictures you could send to friends and relatives. Now, if it could see inside of pockets...

“Could you use that light to see if you’ve left any chocolate in your pockets at the end of each day?” she laughed.

“I could try...” the Professor grinned. “But there are limits to some inventions.”

As it turned out, the Professor did find many useful purposes for the blue rays. He discovered that the death rays we now call X-rays could be used to diagnose broken bones, find fractures that hadn’t healed, and locate other medical problems in the bones. And he was the first person to X-ray all of the bones in the human body, including the teeth.

Unfortunately for Mrs. Miller, while the rays were wonderful for bones, they weren’t useful for finding left-over chocolate in pockets; and the absent-minded Professor continued to have chocolate pockets throughout his life.

NOTES ABOUT DAYTON C. MILLER:

Dayton Clarence Miller was born in Strongsville, Ohio on March 13, 1866. When he was 8 years old Dayton and his family moved to Berea where he eventually attended Baldwin University (now Baldwin-Wallace College) and graduated in 1886. Later, Dayton studied astronomy at Princeton University where he received his doctorate degree in 1890. That same year, he became a professor of mathematics and physics at the Case School of Applied Science (now Case Western Reserve University). From 1895-1936, Professor Miller was head of the Physics Department at the University.

Besides his work with the X-ray, Dr. Miller's other interests included sound (he developed a phonodeik which was a forerunner of the oscilloscope), architectural acoustics (he was one of the acoustical designers of many buildings including Severance Hall and the Epworth Euclid Methodist Church — both in Cleveland), and music (he composed 31 pieces for voice, flute and piano; built a pipe organ, made a golden flute, and collected some 1500 flutes which he left to the Music Division of the Library of Congress). Dayton also loved Wagner AND his player piano. He combined the two when he cut piano rolls of Wagner's operas. Dayton cut ALL the roles (AND notes!) himself to make these unusual "recordings" of Wagner's music!

In 1921, Professor Miller met with Albert Einstein regarding Dayton's re-creation of the Michelson-Morley experiments that had led Einstein to the development of his theory of relativity.

Dayton married Edith Easton of Princeton, New Jersey in 1893.
Dr. Miller died of a heart attack on February 22, 1941.

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