January 25 Cents

The New American MERCURY

MY CHRISTMAS WITH BUGSY SIEGEL

REVOLT OF MAMIE STOVER

Part I of a New Novel

THE TROUBLE WITH THE IRISH

EDITED BY

William Bradford Huie

90103

JAN/JUNE 1951

THE NEW AMERICAN

MERCURY

Vol. LXXII • January 1951 • No. 325

Published monthly by American Mercury Magazine, Inc., at 25 cents a copy. Annual subscription $3.00 in U. S. and possessions, Canada and in the countries of the Pan American Union; $4.00 in all other countries. Publication office, Concord, N. H. Editorial and General offices, 32 East 57th Street, New York 22, N. Y. Printed in the U. S. A. Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Concord, N. H., September 29, 1936, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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In the Mercury's Opinion

AS WE CONTEMPLATE the New Year of 1951, of this we may be certain: it will be a year of many conflicts. It will be a year in which we individuals who have inherited the responsibilities of freedom will often be confused. For the conflicts of our time are numerous and various and complex. The decisions as to where one must take his stand are seldom easy.

Perhaps, at the beginning of a New Year, one of the ways in which we may dispel our confusion — one of the ways in which we may gather assurance — is to begin by understanding and accepting the *essential* conflict of our time. There is an essential conflict, a conflict from which all the lesser ones depend.

For ourselves, there was a night in Westminster Abbey during World War II when the essential conflict was explained clearly to us, and we pass on this explanation.

It was on an evening in June, 1944. The Abbey was closed to the public. We had never been inside it, but we were standing in front of it and, perchance, one of the Abbey's canons came out and offered to take us inside. We went in expecting to stay half an hour, but the Canon was a remarkable man: he had been a chaplain in both wars, he was a student of western and Abbey history, so we talked most of the night. And it was the Canon who gave us our understanding of the essential conflict.

It was during the V-1 blitz, and every ten minutes or so one of the robot bombs would come droning in from the southeast, sputter out, dive and explode. Exploring the Abbey, we ducked into sand-bagged passageways whenever a V-bomb came close. One such time, we asked the Canon how much the Abbey was insured for.

"Oh, the Abbey isn't insured for anything," he replied. "The Abbey is priceless."

We were so struck by this answer that we had to stop and consider all that the Canon had meant by it.

"Insurance is for relatively unimportant things," he continued. "It's for material things which can be priced and replaced. The really important things in the world can't be insured. Who could set a price on the Abbey? The Abbey has relatively little material value; the Abbey's value is in what it stands for. The Abbey represents, not the accomplishments alone, but the aspirations of a whole race of men. It embodies our western ideal of the individual man, responsible, noble, godlike, and worthy to be free. Who could set a value on that? How could Lloyd's insure the graves of Chaucer or Browning or Gladstone?

"The Abbey's insurance," he said, "is not in pounds or dollars; the Abbey's insurance is in the hearts of these men who wear many different uniforms and who speak the English tongue with many different inflections, but who know what the Abbey stands for and are willing to die for it."

As we stood at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior with its much-too-long inscription, we asked the Canon what sort of memorial was being planned for the men who died in World War II; and he told us of plans for the Battle of Britain window to contain the insignia of all the RAF units which fought in the Battle of Britain.

"How is the window to be created?" we asked. "Will you commission a committee of your ablest artists?"

"Heavens, no," he replied. "Only one artist, not a committee. Committees of men never created anything. Look about you in the Abbey and see if you see any monuments to committees of men. No committee of men ever painted a great picture or wrote a great poem or composed a symphony. That's something else you must understand about the Abbey. The Abbey stands for the importance of One Man. The Abbey knows that the individual is the creative unit among men. The Abbey values one man, not masses-of-men. Each man is a separate entity with an immortal soul for which he alone is responsible. The Battle of Britain was not won by men-of-a-mass, but by individual men each with his heart and hand set against the enemy. A memorial worthy of such men can be created only by one man."

When we came to Robert Browning's grave in a ghostly half light in Poets Corner, the Canon said: "There was a man who loved and understood the western ideal. 'Ah, but a man's reach must exceed his grasp, Or what's a Heaven for.' " We added: " 'Leave Now for dogs and apes, Man has Forever.' "

"He knew the value of greatness."

"Did you ever read your own Henry James's account of Browning's burial in the Abbey?" the Canon asked. "Mr. Charles Morgan has recently called our attention to it in *The Times*. James defended Browning's burial here because, he said, 'Browning's voice sounds loudest and also clearest, for the things that, as a race, we like best — the fascination of faith, the acceptance of life, the respect for its mysteries, the endurance of its charges, the vitality of the will, the validity of character, the beauty of action, the seriousness, above all, of the great human passion.'

"There's a creed worth fighting for, isn't it? The principles for which this Abbey stands; the things that we, as a race, like best! Notice that in the things we like best the emphasis is on being, not on having; on duty, not on rights; on requirement, not on reward. It's a stern creed, and our materialist enemies despise it.

"*The endurance of life's charges* — what can that mean to the bureaucrat who shouts that the purpose of living is to live easily, and who would let the State assume the charges so that men can deteriorate into dogs and apes?

"*The validity of character* — what can that mean to the levelers who justify means with ends?

"*The fascination of faith, the acceptance of life, the respect for its mysteries* — what can these mean to the thieves who would rob man of his immortal soul and make of him a donkey to be controlled by the carrot and the goad?

"*The vitality of the will* — what can that mean to the New Leaders who would persuade individual men to join herds so that they can shed their identities and eat at a common trough?

"There are some who say that this stern creed of the Abbey has lost its dynamism. I can't believe it. I believe that when men get understanding again this creed will be the dynamic one."

As we were taking shelter in a sand-bagged alcove with a V-bomb passing directly over us, the Canon remarked: "Here we have the perfect illustration

of the essential conflict of our time. You and I are here in this Abbey which embodies our western ideal of the important, godlike, responsible human personality; and over us, threatening to destroy all that we as a race like best, is this materialistic monster of the totalitarians. Who will prevail? We who believe in the integration of the human personality, or our enemies who would disintegrate it? We who believe that man is responsible for his own life and for his own immortal soul, or our enemies who would reduce man to an ox with no responsibility except to obey?

"There is the conflict none of us can avoid. It is the essential conflict of our time."

My Christmas with Bugsy Siegel . . .

by William Bradford Huie

BUGSY SIEGEL, Hollywood's gangster glamor boy, has been dead three years. On the night of June 20, 1947, four bullets in his back reduced him to an obscene mess on a sofa. His daughters are grown: one of them was married in New York last October. His wife, I'm told, is secure. So I suppose it will do no harm now to reveal that because Bugsy interested me I once entered his home as his butler, lived with him for three weeks — I even played Santa Claus at his Christmas tree — and I opened his files, though I failed on his safe.

Detective fiction has been written about this sort of thing — about eager-beaver reporters who sneak into gangsters' homes — but as far as I know, I'm the only writing man ever actually to live with a gangster's family. It wasn't important; I recall it only as an amusing Christmas adventure; and I hope the story doesn't embarrass Bugsy's wife and daughters, or his father — they were all, including Bugsy, extremely kind to me.

My interest in Bugsy began in the Ambassador Hotel bar in Los Angeles around noon on December 16, 1938. I was drinking and reading the *Examiner's* report on "The Strange Voyage of the *Metha Nelson*."

The steamer *Metha Nelson* had been chartered for a "treasure cruise" by a motley group including Bugsy, who was de-

scribed by the Hearst reporters as a "wealthy Hollywood sportsman"; the Countess Dorothy di Frasso, who was said to own the house in which Mussolini resided; and one Marino Bello, stepfather of the late Jean Harlow. These three had assembled a crew and told reporters they were going after a "pirate treasure" buried on some uninhabited island off the coast of Lower California.

But an albatross flew in the wake of the *Metha Nelson*. Hardly had she weighed anchor than the captain realized that his crew had been as foully stacked with cutthroats as had that other crew which once sailed for Treasure Island. They were not armed with cutlasses and flintlocks; they had blackjacks and Thompson guns. Stories drifted back of mutiny aboard, of Bugsy being ashore on various cloudy missions, and of a rendezvous with outlaw gang members who had been hiding on some island. By radio the captain appealed for aid in combating his "riotous crew"; and he hinted that the treasure being sought was of a more common variety than doubloons and pieces-of-eight.*

I sat there at the bar looking at Bugsy's picture. "Old Bugsy sure has changed," I mused. "Last time I saw his picture was in a rogue's gallery — the 'enforcing member' of the old Bugs-Lansky gang in Brooklyn. He still had his buck teeth then. Now he looks like Robert Taylor. Now, at thirty-three, he's a 'wealthy Hollywood sportsman'; and he's kicking around with upper-class dolls. That's interesting."

Suddenly, for the hell of it, I decided to drive out to Bugsy's place. The paper gave the address: 250 Delfern Drive, Holmby Hills. I drove along Sunset through Beverly. Holmby Hills is between Beverly and Bel-Air. Many movie folk had homes there; and I believe Norman Taurog, the director, was building a home directly across the street from Bugsy's. Bugsy's place topped a terraced knoll about two blocks off Sunset. The house was a new, two-story, white brick costing perhaps $150,000. The inevitable swimming pool was in the back yard.

I drove past the place a couple of times and decided to have a look inside. I found a drug store, bought an armful of magazines, parked my car, and came back walking, seeking magazine subscriptions. I went around to the service entrance

* For a detailed account of the voyage of the *Metha Nelson* read Florabel Muir's just published "Headline Happy": Holt, $3.00.

and pushed the bell. When a servant answered, I inquired for Mr. Siegel.

Mr. Siegel was in New York on business. And Mrs. Siegel? She was in Westwood shopping. Well, could I, please, have a drink of water? A few sallies later I was sitting in Bugsy's kitchen eating a salami-on-rye sandwich and listening to the woes of his household.

The madam had just returned from Palm Springs, and the gardener had whispered to her that the butler and the upstairs maid had been staying upstairs too much during her absence. So the madam was casting out the two sinners just when all the in-laws were arriving from New York for Christmas!

"This is a good sandwich," I said. "I believe I'll take the butler's job so I can eat plenty of this salami."

The servant thought I was kidding. I thought so, too — at first. But why not? I could hang around two or three days until Bugsy came back. Then I could stay a day or so with him and observe how a Brooklyn gun-boy pushes himself up among the stars. It ought to be interesting to a novelist. I could be out of there before Christmas. When I left I had the address of the agency which supplied the Siegel help.

"You'll have to move fast," I was told. "She's been calling the agency all day, and they've promised to get somebody out here. And you'll have to have references."

I moved fast. I drove to my apartment near the Ambassador and called my wife in Birmingham, Alabama. I told her she was my reference for a job as a butler. I rehearsed her in what she was to say if anyone called her. When she remarked that obviously I had gone nuts, I didn't bother to deny it. I obtained the help of Jim Richardson of the *Examiner*, one of the last of the great city editors. Then I tried to dress as I imagined a job-hunting butler would dress and headed for the agency.

At the top of some ancient stairs on Spring Street I found it. Crowded into the waiting room were cooks, maids, gardeners, valets, butlers and chauffeurs. They were German, Irish, Scandinavian, Negro, Filipino and Japanese. Standing at the rail was a stern woman of perhaps fifty frustrated winters.

"Are you registered here?" she demanded.

When I said no she gave me a card to fill out. For a name I wrote "Robert LaSalle." It was a wild-oat name I had once used on hotel registers, and I chuckled to notice that Robert

was to become a respectable serving man. For my talents I listed that I could drive, garden and serve. Yes, I had a butler's and a chauffeur's uniform. And yes, I could pay the agency in cash if a position was obtained for me. It must have been this last which earned me a prompt interview with the proprietress.

I'LL never forget the story I told that woman. A wealthy family down South had reared me. All my life I had worked on their estate. But recently, the master having died, the madam had sold the estate and moved into a hotel. She had been generous with the help, and so anxious was she to aid us in obtaining good positions, instead of giving us the usual letters she had instructed us to have prospective employers wire or call her at her expense. She could be reached at her Birmingham hotel.

The proprietress was impressed. She thought she could place me. Just what type of family would I prefer?

"I believe I'd like a younger family," I said. "I'm fond of children, and having spent my life with older people, I think I'd like a change."

"That's most unusual," she said. "But commendable. I can't understand why most domestics now seem to loathe children."

She discussed three or four prospective jobs and each time I had to think of a reason to object, or to hesitate. Finally she cleared her throat.

"Would you . . . uh . . . would you object to working for *nouveau riche*?"

I hesitated. I knew I had to be careful on that one. "Well . . . uh . . . I don't think so. I don't know much about them. It would depend, of course, but I don't think I'd object."

She showed such surprise that I feared I had overdone it. Evidently she assumed that an old Southern butler like me would be suspicious of any money that wasn't three generations old. "I believe I have just the spot then. Mrs. Benjamin Siegel is a lovely young woman with a new home. There is a vacancy there now. She has two little girls about five and nine. They are . . . troublesome, but they shouldn't bother you, and the pay is excellent. Being Jewish, Mrs. Siegel has requested that I don't send her Germans. Your French strain should just suit her."

She telephoned Mrs. Siegel. I listened to her sales talk, and I'm afraid it weakened my faith in the integrity of employment agency operators.

"Mrs. Siegel," she gushed,

"we're in luck. I've just found the finest boy I've seen in years. Yes. He was sent to us by our exclusive connections in the South. Yes. You know our agency serves the best families there just as it does out here. He is twenty-seven years old, French, and beautifully trained. You'll adore him. Can you see him in an hour? I'll send him right out."

She turned to me triumphantly. "She'll see you in an hour. Now rush right out there; then come back here and pay me that thirty bucks. We'll be open until ten tonight."

Mrs. Siegel surprised me. She wasn't the movie version of the big-shot gangster's wife. She was a serious, not unattractive blonde in her early thirties. As Esther Krakauer of Brooklyn, she had been Bugsy's childhood sweetheart, and she had married him when he was twenty-two and had nothing but a gun for hire. Now she was working hard at making like a rich woman; but I sensed that she was lonely and worried lest her poor relations arrive and find her with a big house and no servants. She was almost pathetically glad to see me. She hired me much too quickly, and she was disappointed when I told her I couldn't move in until the next morning.

"Wouldn't you like to check my reference?" I asked.

"The agency takes care of that," she said. "I usually just rely on my own judgment. Please be here tomorrow by eight o'clock."

Walking back to my car and driving downtown, I had time to consider what a fool I was being. I was tired and hungry. For six hours I had been careening through traffic, fabricating lies, contriving this crazy adventure. Why are you doing it? I asked. Are you a Boy Scout? Or Sherlock Holmes? Don't you know it will cost you time and money and energy and worry? And what can you get out of it? Dishpan hands and maybe six slugs in your back. I shook my head. I couldn't explain then why I was doing it, and from where I sit now it looks like damn foolishness. But for some reason I kept going. In the next twelve hours I had to convert myself into a "beautifully trained" butler.

I drove back to the agency, paid the beaming proprietress her thirty pieces of silver, then grabbed the most intelligent looking man in the waiting room. He was a tall Norwegian whom I shall call Henrik. He had once been valet to the late Samuel Insull and he later served Cecil B. DeMille. Over a drink

I told him I was in a jam. I had always been a chauffeur down South, but out here I couldn't get a job simply as a chauffeur. My money had run out, so I had been forced to take this combination butler-chauffeur job. Could he give me a one night's course in whatever the hell a butler does?

Henrik could indeed, but first he had a lecture. "Robert," he moaned, "why did you, too, have to come out here? I am only living to get enough money to get back East. Back there in Chicago or New York I can be a valet and you can be a chauffeur. But out here the people are barbarians. They want one man to do everything. The last job I went out on the madam wanted me to be a houseman-cook-gardener-chauffeur-butler-valet-and-chambermaid. I blew up. I told her to take her lousy new money and go to hell. But come on. I'll fix you where you can sling hash and pare the madam's toe nails."

I've never spent a busier night. First we went to the pawn shops on Main Street and bought a butler's suit and a chauffeur's uniform, both second-hand. I was alarmed at the fit, but not Henrik. "I can fix 'em," he said.

Next, the book stores being closed, we went to the public library — the one back of the Biltmore Hotel — and found an Emily Post book with illustrations of how to lay a service for breakfast, luncheon or dinner. There was no time to copy, so I shamelessly slit out several pages and illustrations. I later sent them an anonymous three dollars to pay for that book. Then we returned to Henrik's room on Bunker Hill and got down to work. While I studied my theory he altered the suits. Then, with all the deliberation of an assistant movie director, he set the stage and assigned the roles. I was to be the madam and he was to be the butler.

This lasted an hour. He began with opening windows in the morning and went through every likely exercise of the day. He served meals and reported calls. He frightened me with details about how to clean silver, wax floors and dust draperies. He was as stern as a Prussian drillmaster.

"Robert," he explained, "you *must* make the madam afraid of you the first day. If you don't, out here your life will be hell!"

He shifted our roles, and for the next hour I was the butler and he was the madam. Imperiously he criticized everything I did, and if I cowered under his criticism, he would explode.

"No, no, Robert!" he would

shout. "You mustn't let her get away with anything. Stand up and stare her down. It's your only chance to have any peace."

It was 4 A.M. when I collapsed into bed at my apartment, and when the alarm went off at 6:30, I didn't think I could get up. Just roll over, I said, and mark yesterday off as a dream. But I got up, and I arrived at Bugsy's place on time, lugging a bag.

The cook showed me my room, which was upstairs in the garage end of the house. I was unpacking when she telephoned me: "Robert, are you ready? Mrs. Siegel wants her breakfast."

I pulled on a starched white coat and stepped gingerly toward the kitchen. I stopped before a hall mirror to examine myself. In my hand was an Emily Post diagram for a correct breakfast service. And dangling from my watch chain was my Phi Beta Kappa key. I hastily crammed it into my pocket and chuckled.

I WAS to need this sense of humor during the next three weeks. My predecessor had been so diligent in his attentions to the upstairs maid that he had had no time to wax floors, wash windows, clean fireplaces or polish silver. What rare adventure! Standing on ladders scrubbing windows with cold black water running down my sleeves. What drum-beating excitement! Sprawling across floors with a waxing brush while my back ached, my hands blistered, and my knees scraped raw. Sitting outside the House of Murphy in the midnight air waiting for Mrs. Siegel to finish her nightcap. I was so exhausted at the end of each day that I could scarcely drag myself to my shower and bed.

And Bugsy had doublecrossed me. I had come there on the newspaper report — and the reasonable assumption — that the *Metha Nelson* would dock by December 20th; that Bugsy would spend Christmas with his family. But instead he elected to spend it on the high seas. So each morning I had the choice of either giving up or else staying at least another day.

That I stayed on day after day almost cost me my home. My wife had come a long way to spend Christmas with me. Her sense of humor doesn't match mine. So the explanations which I furtively gave her from telephone booths were less than successful.

With Bugsy's family, however, Robert LaSalle was successful from the start. Every day the cook brought me word of

the madam's delight at the beautiful manner in which I served, or at my artistic arrangement of the flowers, or at the way I had adapted myself to the household. On Christmas Eve I carved the turkey and served dinner in the rumpus room for twelve; I changed into a Santa Claus suit, parked my reindeer on the roof, bounded back into the rumpus room, and was a solid hit as Saint Nick. I still have the gifts which Mrs. Siegel and the kids gave me. Then I changed into my chauffeur's suit and drove Mrs. Siegel and some guests to the House of Murphy. I waited for them in a nearby bar where I drank, sang carols with three other chauffeurs, and called my wife, who still refused to be amused.

I virtually took over the rearing of the little girls. They were attractive kids but badly spoiled. No governess would stay with them, and the other servants detested them. They adored Bugsy, and he was fond of them, but he had no time for them so they took to me naturally.

That was the Christmas of *Ferdinand the Bull* and I must have read that story to them a dozen times. I took them to Grauman's Chinese Theater, stopping always at the Good Humor truck. Twice a week I drove them to their riding lessons at a fashionable academy.

The older child had many gifts and autographed pictures from Jean Harlow, who was her godmother. Harlow was Bugsy's first sponsor in the movie set.

Bugsy's sister was a little fat girl in her early twenties. She abused a portable typewriter a while each day, because if she could ever learn to type, Bugsy was going to put her in the movies as a script clerk. Mrs. Siegel's father, Mr. Krakauer, was staying with them.

Bugsy's father was a portly, mustached old gentleman who had worked hard peddling suits all his life, and he had great difficulty passing the time. He liked to talk with me, and on afternoons when Mrs. Siegel went shopping, he'd come into the pantry and help me polish the silver. But he'd be careful to run and pick up a newspaper at her approach.

Once the old gentleman ventured to take his granddaughters to the movies. I dropped them at Grauman's Chinese and came back two hours later. The old man looked pitiful standing there, utterly exhausted, waving to me like a drowning man. The two kids had worried him to a frazzle.

They were really a forlorn family, living there in that big house that Christmas. I was surprised to note that, as I lived there with them, I gradually came to feel a sort of resentment toward Bugsy for neglecting them. Mrs. Siegel was the loneliest of all. Each night, after the others had gone to bed, she'd either go with me or send me after the papers. Then she'd trudge wearily up to her room to read about Bugsy and his voyage on the *Metha Nelson*.

I couldn't get an important word about Bugsy out of any of them. They undoubtedly talked about him, for when they were together they'd get excited and their voices would rise — but in a foreign language.

There were ways, however, in which I could learn about Bugsy, and while I was waiting for him, I didn't spend all my time serving and entertaining his family. His "library" was at the far end of the house, its single entrance opening off the main drawing room. Since I was supposed to clean it, I could go there without exciting suspicion. But I had to be careful because the deep carpet in the drawing room made it impossible to hear anyone approaching.

The library had two concealed compartments, one containing a steel filing cabinet and the other a safe. The compartments were behind the bookshelves and were reached by swinging out two panels of the shelves. Nothing melodramatic like hidden pushbuttons: the shelves swung out when they were pulled. Both the cabinet and the safe, of course, were locked. I decided to unlock at least the cabinet.

But here was a curious situation. Since 1930, Bugsy Siegel had been rated among the top five of America's Public Enemies. By 1940 he was to be Number One. Yet he had never been convicted of anything more serious than carrying a gun. Witnesses were afraid to testify against him. On the West Coast he had never been arrested. He was a "wealthy Hollywood sportsman"; the friend of a countess who boasted that she had introduced him to Mussolini, and to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor; the friend of "stars" like George Raft. He had been entertained by Clark Gable; he was a member of the Hillcrest Country Club. As between Bugsy and me, the law was on his side. I had no right to steal his papers; and I didn't dare approach anyone on the outside for aid. Gangsters with a million dollars a year to spend have tipsters in the strangest places.

On my first day off, I returned with a file and about a hundred keys. I fashioned a key which would open the file cabinet, and I began a systematic cataloguing of the papers, photographing the more important ones. It was nervous work because I had to do most of it very late at night when I was exhausted from waxing floors, and if anyone approached the room I couldn't hear them until they were upon me. These, obviously, were not Bugsy's most important papers — they'd be scattered in bank boxes — but they clearly indicated his connections and activities; and they contained more than enough evidence for legal action.

On December 30th, with no advance notice, Bugsy returned. I went to answer the front doorbell and there he was — the sportsman himself in a two-hundred-dollar tweed suit, snap-brim hat, and plaid tie. He looked very much like Robert Taylor. Two beefy bodyguards were unloading his luggage, which included bagsful of belated Christmas gifts for his family.

"Mr. Siegel?" I inquired. I had been around Hollywood for several months. There was a chance he had seen me, so I watched his face for a sign of recognition. He showed none.

"Yes, I'm Mr. Siegel," he said, as he brushed past me to greet the children.

I carried his bags upstairs, but he told me not to open them. I was already familiar with his quarters. His principal sartorial affectation was shirts. He wore a custom silk variety which cost about $25 apiece. I counted fifty of these in a glass-fitted case in his dressing room. Each shirt was nested separately between glass shelves, and the automatic lighting illuminated each shirt when the case was opened. He had about thirty suits made by his friend Raft's tailor. His bath was in red marble. His wife's dressing room was mirrored on walls and ceiling, and their bed was one of those specially built, out-size affairs which are *de rigueur* in Hollywood. It stood on a two-foot-high dais in the master bedroom.

Bugsy's arrival set the whole household hopping. He moved into his office and began telephoning. Within thirty minutes Bello had arrived — and he gave me a start. He was a little white-haired dandy who wore spats and a mustache, and when I opened the door he burst out with a smile and said: "Well, look who's here!" While I was thinking of something to do or

say, he checked his smile and added: "Oh, I'm sorry. I mistook you for someone who worked for Benny about two years ago." That left me uneasy, because I couldn't be sure what the truth was.

Then came a Hollywood lawyer named Mickey Black. Others darted in and out during the afternoon, and the telephones were going constantly. Bugsy had a switch on his desk with which he could prevent eavesdropping; he also had another private line, but I caught some of his conversations. He and Bello had dinner with the family, then went back to their conferring and calling.

After dinner Mrs. Siegel said to me: "Robert, as you see, Mr. Siegel does a lot of business. A lot of people come to see him. But some of these people are his employes, so you just leave that end of the house alone. His people will open the door and answer the telephone. You go in his office in the morning and clean it; then just look after my part of the house."

At first I feared this meant that Bugsy had suspected me. I had felt his eyes on me while I was serving dinner; and I kept telling myself that he wouldn't be as easily deceived as his family. A successful racketeer suspects everybody. Then I decided that Mrs. Siegel was only explaining to me that the family and Bugsy's business were separate. Obviously I couldn't act as his receptionist and bartender and still have time to serve meals all day, chauffeur his wife, amuse his father, and ride with his kids.

I went to my room at 10 P.M. and stayed until the family retired. Then I came back through the kitchen and pantry and along a darkened hall to where the reception hall opened into the drawing room. Here I was about fifty feet from the open doorway into Bugsy's office. I could discern that a big meeting was in progress. Cigar smoke rolled out of the office. I couldn't hear everything that was being said, but I couldn't approach any nearer to the office entrance because, if I entered the drawing room, anyone suddenly emerging from the office could see me. There was nothing in the drawing room to hide behind: the piano was a grand; the sofas sat out in the middle of the floor. But I could hear much of what Bugsy was saying, for he was mad. He got his name Bugsy from his habit of going "bughouse" when angry. I could tell that he was among his kind. He had reverted to his old gang argot.

After listening to him, I determined to see into that room.

My only chance to see them without risking their seeing me was to go outside and try to find a crack in the venetian blinds. On one window the blinds came all the way down to the floor, and I had sprung two of the slats in the blind on the chance that I might want to look in. I didn't know, however, whether I had sprung them enough.

I went back and let myself out the kitchen entrance. The two big dogs — a German shepherd bitch and a Great Dane — came up to me and I spoke to them so they wouldn't bark. Then, with the dogs trotting alongside, I went to the blind with the sprung slats. They were almost at the floor level, so they wouldn't be readily noticeable, but by sprawling on the flagstones I found that I could see Bugsy and three of the others. The closed windows muted the voices, but I could distinguish most of what was being said. I was relatively safe unless Bugsy should become alarmed and flick the switch on his desk, which would floodlight his entire grounds.

Bugsy's visitors were his hoods, the muscle, the force by which a front man like Bugsy "moves in" on the gambling at Redondo Beach, or "cuts himself a piece" of the foreign book at Caliente, or "muscles in" on Las Vegas, or "takes over a territory" for bookmaking or distributing heroin. They were the collection agents, the intimidators. At least four of those there that night are now dead. Big Greeny Greenberg was machine-gunned in 1939, probably by Bugsy himself; Bugsy got his slugs in 1947; and two others have been electrocuted by the State of New York.

While I was lying there watching them, I began, for the first time, to get a little sore at Bugsy. Until then I had regarded him with a sort of chuckling, what-the-hell attitude. But when I saw him there with the other hoods and listened to him shoot off his mouth, I felt the way I did in London one night when I saw two mangy old rats sneaking toward me in a filthy air-raid shelter. When a man sees a rat he ought, at least, to bestir himself enough to stamp it or throw a stone at it. I always resented the Al Capone story — how we let a syphilitic rat posture as a celebrity, then finally jailed him for income tax evasion.

After the muscle-men left, Bugsy, for some reason, began to prowl. As I darted around

the house I saw him turn on lights in the pantry and kitchen. He came out on the back walk and stood there talking to the dogs. By this time I was in my room and could see him out the window. He walked toward the garage, and this was also toward the stairway leading up to my room. As soon as he had passed out of my vision, I heard him on my stairs. I was baffled. If he suspected the truth he wouldn't be coming after me this way; he'd call me and ask me to drive him somewhere. But neither would he be paying me a friendly visit at 3 A.M.

My door was unlocked, a small light was on in the hall just outside the door, and I was standing in my darkened room fully dressed. If he opened the door I'd have no choice; I'd have to shoot him. I heard him just outside the door; I heard him switch on the light in my bathroom; then he went back downstairs and re-entered the house.

Apparently he was just a man who had been away from home and was looking over his property. But he picked a strange time to do it.

Next day I was tired and jittery. When I took the kids to the riding academy, I told them I had a headache and tried to sleep in the car while they rode. I was afraid I was getting careless; possible mistakes haunted me. Once when I was alone on the cook's off day I had used Sister's typewriter. I had been knocking off about seventy words a minute when the family returned. I was sure I had heard them before they heard the typewriter — but maybe I hadn't. What about Bello's mistaken recognition? Why had Bugsy come to my room at 3 A.M.?

"Listen, bud," I said to myself, "these aren't Boy Scouts you're playing with. They play rough. They kill people. A man can get hurt playing with Mendy Weiss, Champ Segal, Bugsy Siegel, Lepke Buchalter and Big Greeny Greenberg. They can take you for a ride tonight and you'll be just another chunk of concrete down in the harbor, and it's cold in the bottom of that harbor in January."

I wanted to leave, but now that I had seen the rats together and knew something of their operation, I also wanted to help exterminate them. I wanted the law to have the contents of Bugsy's office, and for this to be done, I had to get away without exciting suspicion. For me to leave too soon after Bugsy's arrival would be suspicious, so I decided to stick for two or three more days.

Why did I have to leave in order to inform the law? Why couldn't I inform on an off day, then stay on until the raid? I'll be frank. I didn't know the law in Los Angeles. But I did know that Bugsy had cops on his payroll. I didn't care to risk informing a strange office while I was still sleeping under Bugsy's roof.

The next three days were rugged. I checked visitors and telephone calls and tried to list Bugsy's contacts. On two mornings around 4 A.M. I checked his files again. One afternoon he and I chatted about the kids and their riding.

I came into the rumpus room and he was playing some little pitching game with them. "They tell you been taking them to their riding lessons, Robert," he said. "How they doing?"

"Splendid, suh," I said. "They're going to be the best horsewomen in Hollywood."

"That's fine. You make 'em keep at it, Robert. I want to see 'em in a show before long."

"Why don't you come out and ride with them some afternoon?"

"Me? Hell, I can't ride. When I was a kid I didn't ride nothing but the subway."

On January 4, 1939, I decided I had to go. Bugsy and Mrs. Siegel went off during the afternoon, and around 6 P.M., when I saw them returning, I called a taxicab. Then, while he went to his office, I called her into the pantry and told her I had to leave at once for Arizona. My mother had had a stroke; I'd return as soon as possible.

She was upset but considerate. I had been there less than three weeks, but she insisted on giving me $115 for an entire month. She hoped I'd find my mother better and that I could get back soon.

I had expected to go directly to the taxi, but the kids caught me in the kitchen and delayed me a minute or so telling me goodbye.

I dashed outside, up the stairs, and grabbed my luggage. I felt certain that while I was with the kids, Mrs. Siegel had told Bugsy. A light might flash on for him. I had started down the stairs when I heard the kitchen door slam, then rapid steps along the brick walk. Bugsy! He was coming to stop me! I flattened against the wall and prepared to shoot him again.

But just before he rounded the corner a voice called "Robert," and it wasn't Bugsy but his father. The old man was rushing to tell me goodbye, to express his sympathy, and to offer to lend me money. Had he

not called to me I might have killed him.

As I crawled into that taxicab, I felt weak and almost ashamed of myself. Why the hell do rats have to have families?

DURING the next sixty hours, I was Hamlet fretting at the law's delay. I went to the proper authorities, produced the evidence, and swore out a warrant; but the delay grew out of the usual reluctance of officers to raid a home. The Constitution throws so many safeguards around a home that his home is the safest place for a gangster to have his headquarters. A Federal officer will kick down an office or a warehouse door on any reasonable suspicion, but before he raids a home — particularly the home of a "wealthy Hollywood sportsman" — he wants an opinion from everybody up to the attorney-general. And the more people who are consulted, the more likely there is to be a leak.

The raid was made at 9 A.M. on the third day — and Bugsy was standing in the door to welcome the officers. His first words were: "Why didn't you bring Huie along?" His safe was open, and his files contained nothing more damaging than his last month's utility bills.

It was a galling disappointment, particularly since I was told by persons who seemed reliable that Bugsy hadn't become suspicious and hadn't removed his papers until around 3 A.M. on the morning before the raid. He had received his tip two days after I left his house, and he could have had my name from only four or five sources.

I didn't go on the raid. I wasn't afraid to face Bugsy or his hoods, but I didn't want to face his wife, his kids, and his old man.

A few months later, "Big Greeny" Greenberg apparently made a deal to testify against Lepke in New York, so some of his old friends caught Big Greeny at the corner of Yucca and Vista Del Mar Streets, Los Angeles, and shot him dead. Bugsy, Lepke, Frank Carbo, Champ Segal and Mendy Weiss were charged with the murder, and when Bugsy was arrested, some of the files I had described to law enforcement agents were seized, and it appeared that at last a formidable case would be made against him. Reference to me was found in his files by the Los Angeles county authorities, and I was asked to testify against him. This I was quite willing to do. But Bugsy's connections were able to delay the trial, and while Bugsy lived lux-

uriously in jail, the other witnesses died suddenly or changed their minds.

Bugsy was freed and I got fouled up in the war and forgot about him. But one night in France in 1944 I ran into a friend from Hollywood. He had a copy of a novel of mine. "Funny thing, Bill," he said, "but you know who first called my attention to this book? A gangster named Bugsy Siegel. I was in his place one night last year and he showed me your book and said I ought to read it. I'll bet that's the only book he ever read."

One night in 1945 I was back from Iwo and Okinawa sitting in a Hollywood bar when Bugsy and a friend came in. Bugsy had long ago left his wife. During the war he had prospered; he had even acquired new companions from the upper financial brackets. When he sat down I caught his eye and he stared at me twice, then clearly recognized me. Neither of us moved, and a little girl came up and asked him for his autograph.

I thought of those two mangy rats again, but this time I didn't bother to throw a stone — I just took another drink and wondered if Bugsy's kids and his wife and his old man were still lonely.

PLEASANT MEMORIES OF BERNARD SHAW

by Princess Alexandra Kropotkin

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW came to our home so often that from the time I was a very small child he was someone I thought of as having "always known." He had a deep affection for my father, Prince Peter Kropotkin, which was, if anything, reinforced by their endless political disagreements. And he relished the strange company of assorted Russian exiles, from peasants to aristocrats, British radicals and Continental anarchists that normally overflowed my parents' modest home.

Shaw had a very special smile reserved for moments when he was particularly pleased by some word of admiration or banter from a close friend. Shy and youthful, it rippled his whiskers and softened the jewel-sharp glint of his observant eye. I called it his *inside* smile. A great man must have genuine modesty at the core of him to smile in just that way.

Vividly I remember two occasions when Shaw's true estimate of himself was most apparent, and it had little in common with the cultivated arrogance that was his public pose. In 1935 when he and Charlotte, his wife, were making a round-the-world trip, he cabled me an invitation to early breakfast aboard the S.S. *Empress of Britain* on the day they reached New York. While we were still at table, dozens of reporters arrived — all of them antagonistic, for Shaw had made numerous provocatively unflattering statements about the U.S.A. I warned him

that he was in for a bad time, and added that he deserved it. Mrs. Shaw wisely remained in her cabin.

For half an hour Shaw answered barbed questions with good-humored wit, pleased as always when engaged in intellectual dueling. Then a reporter from one of the largest morning papers said, "Well now, Mr. Shaw, we know you think you're the greatest playwright the world has ever known. Far greater, of course, than Shakespeare."

To this sneering remark Shaw replied very seriously. He stopped clowning. "No," he said, "I am not greater than Shakespeare. I have written some plays which are better *theatre* than some that Shakespeare wrote. But the real test of greatness is how long a man's work will live. And I'll tell you this, young man: Five hundred years from now, people will still be reading Shakespeare. Probably they will still be going to see his plays. But by then, Shaw will be quite forgotten."

Only when he wanted attention did Shaw brag insolently. He was far too wise to be immodest when such bragging was unneeded. "For many years," he once told me, "I had no other way of getting attention, no way except by bragging."

The second and earlier incident that I remember happened some time during the 1920's in Shaw's London apartment at 10 Adelphi Terrace. We had spent a cozy tea-hour together, and as the maid was taking the tea things away, I said, "G.B.S., I have come to the conclusion that you really are a genius." He looked at me quizzically. "And what made you arrive at that conclusion?" he asked.

I explained that insofar as I could see, the difference between great talent and genius lies in the fact that a genius never returns to an idea or problem, once he has dealt with it to his satisfaction. Each new creation is a truly *new* thought. I said I had been re-reading his plays, and that they proved my theory.

Shaw probed the thought. He made me analyze it further. We discussed the work of great composers, painters, writers, scientists, and he pounced on fallacies in my loose statement. The thought interested him, the personal angle not at all. But as I started down the stairs to his front door, I called back to him, "Goodbye, genius."

Then he smiled his nice *inside* smile.

After knowing me informally throughout my childhood, Shaw became a personal friend of mine during my student days at Uni-

versity College, in London. At my proposal he agreed to give the opening talk to our undergraduate Society for the Study of Socialism, which a few students, myself included, had succeeded in organizing. The very word, socialism, was at that time anathema to our stuffy institution of learning.

The famous Mr. Shaw drew a large audience, but not a friendly one. In fact, the event turned into a college riot, with whistling and catcalls interrupting our guest whenever he attempted to speak. He kept his temper, though he was plainly angered, and when some quiet finally was restored, the talk he gave us was extremely brief.

I went to see him next day, stammering apologies for the horrid occurrence. I nearly wept. Shaw was kindness itself. He laughed at me, and soothed me by saying, "Why are you so unhappy? Don't you know that all good crusades begin with a fight? I think you will find that your group made a considerable number of friends yesterday. Fair play is a strong instinct in this country."

As I was leaving, when he opened the door for me, he said, "I've known you a long time. You don't need to call me 'Mr. Shaw.' "

In all the years I knew him, all through the years when he was doing his most prodigious work, Shaw always managed to find time to encourage young people in their enterprises. His kindness and interest were unfailing. "Young people need encouraging," he told me. He added, "I am able to do this, because Charlotte has organized my life so that I can work as much as I do and still have some leisure. Without Charlotte, I would have worked less, and would have less time for friends."

Several of Shaw's plays are among the many by English dramatists that I translated into Russian, in collaboration with Boris Lebedeff. We got together frequently with Shaw to talk over the alterations and adaptations that are inevitable in any translated piece, particularly in plays. Shaw had a great deal to say about the technique of playwriting, and the artistry of holding audience-attention. I remember he said to us, "When people come out of the theatre, if they have seen a good play, they should be arguing. Some of them should be angry with the author."

Immediately after the first production of *Pygmalion* in London, I asked Shaw to let us translate it into Russian. He thought that the gradual

changes of Liza's speech, from pure Cockney to pure Oxford English, would be untranslatable. "You are quite insane" said Shaw. Not at all we insisted. In Russia, we told him, educated people and uneducated people do not talk any more alike than they do in England. Russia has just as many variations of accent and vocabulary. Shaw signed a contract with us.

Putting *Pygmalion* into Russian was a fantastically tough job, but our results were successful. The play was accepted by the *Maliy Teater* — the *Small Theater* — one of the two State theaters in Moscow. From Alexander Sanine, brilliant director of the Maliy, came an enthusiastic cable announcing that he would rush to London to discuss the Moscow project with Shaw.

Sanine arrived, saw the London production, and insisted that when he met Shaw, they must have space enough to approximate a stage. We arranged a late lunch at an Italian restaurant in Soho, where the proprietor, an ardent Shaw admirer, was willing to let us turn his place topsy-turvy as soon as the luncheon crowd had left. The minute lunch was over, Sanine began shoving chairs and tables around. A row of tables represented the stage, a row of chairs represented the front row of the audience.

Pygmalion, as everyone knows, opens with a rainstorm scene. People who have just attended a Covent Garden performance are waiting for carriages and cabs. Sanine had definite ideas about the rain. Speaking Russian, he said, "It is a sudden storm. At your theatre here in London, the rain is wrong. It comes down straight. A sudden storm has *slanting* rain."

I translated for Shaw. He took a seat in what was supposed to be the front row of the audience. "If you slant the rain," he said, "you'll get these front-row people soaking wet."

Sanine and Shaw argued the point at top speed in their respective languages, with me translating as fast as I could. Presently the two men changed places, Shaw climbing up on the stage of tables, Sanine taking a front-row chair. On the stage, Shaw had one of the water carafes from the restaurant. Gleefully he sprinkled Sanine with *slanting rain*. "All right!" capitulated the Russian impresario. "In Moscow there will be no front row. Second row will be first row."

Shaw greeted this solution with one of his rare outbursts of laughter. Turning to my father, who had come along for

the fun, Shaw said, "Well, Peter, you must admit there is something to be said for a theatre controlled by the State. Where, in this country, could a director do away with the front row of seats?"

Father abominated the words state-controlled, state-owned. To tease Shaw, advocate of State socialism, Father said, "Why shouldn't the public get wet? It's all for art. And the Stage is better art than the State."

By this time Sanine was through with the rain. He had his pockets full of notations, and he settled down to business. What, he wanted to know, did Eliza Doolittle think her fate was going to be after Professor Higgins tried his linguistic experiments on her? What did Higgins intend to do with her eventually? Intensely solemn, intensely Slavic, for an hour Sanine plied Shaw with questions. My father coped with the translating of complicated psychological analyses covering each and every character in the play. At last Sanine reached his final question. "What happens to the characters in *Pygmalion* — after the play is over?"

Shaw was sitting there with his arms crossed, his chin pulled down on his chest, a favorite pose of his. Rather sadly he said, "Liza marries Freddy."

"No, no, no!" I wailed. "Please, G.B.S., please don't say that! Freddy is such a silly ass."

Shaw, most undemonstrative of men, laid a hand on my shoulder. "You're not much of a realist, are you?" he said very gently. "Liza has to eat, and Freddy will give her a comfortable life. Higgins doesn't really care a great deal what becomes of her."

To younger people, Shaw's emphasis on the realities of life was always administered with tender sympathy. He had a vast fund of kindly pity for the painful processes of acquiring worldly wisdom.

His own judgment of people was usually very shrewd, except where women were concerned. It always seemed to me that the intricacies of the female mind — or perhaps I should say of female character — were beyond his understanding. He was sincerely grieved to see that the famous Beatrice Webb (Mrs. Sidney Webb) and I did not get on together. Shaw liked and admired the Webbs, they were close and old friends of his, as well as comrades in the Fabian movement. Once he complained to me, "I should have thought that you and Beatrice would hit it off very well."

"She thinks I'm frivolous," I replied. "And I find her so patronizing, I have an almost irresistible impulse to talk to her in Cockney slang."

Mrs. Shaw said to me, most unexpectedly, "Why don't you?" and Shaw looked at his wife in immense astonishment.

Shaw once told me he didn't understand why I got on well with the magnificent Mrs. Patrick Campbell, since Mrs. Pat was not exactly noted for her sweet attitudes toward other women. "You don't admire her acting," Shaw grumbled to me. "You imitate her quite wickedly. But when I see you together, you both seem to be having a good time."

"Of course we do," I answered. "She is delightfully witty, and I adore being malicious with her."

Shaw shook his head. He, the great master of malice, simply couldn't understand this feminine twist.

Shaw has been hailed, by Guthrie McClintic, among others, as one of the finest craftsmen of the stage. He was also a born showman. He allowed me to attend a private rehearsal of one of his plays, and I never saw him enjoy himself more thoroughly. He acted all the parts, he interfered with everything. Like all good showmen, he loved a big fuss. With the keenest relish he spoke of his visit to San Francisco, where his car was escorted by a cavalcade of motor cops with sirens shrieking.

"That was glorious," he told me. "We dashed up the steepest hills, and then we dashed down them, and the sirens were going all the time. When you go to San Francisco, be sure to see to it that you get a ride like that."

So many memories come back to me of hours spent with Shaw. There was the time he showed me a beautiful drawing of Lawrence of Arabia. The picture was on the living-room wall in the Shaw apartment at Whitehall Court. Shaw stood brooding over it. "I'm sorry you never met him," he said. "The strangest man I've ever known, and I think, the most interesting. Charlotte knew him better than I. He shared her Irish love of horses."

I recall talking with Shaw about *Heartbreak House*, my favorite of all his plays. It has been said that Shaw, himself, liked *Saint Joan* best. He explained his preferences to me a little differently. He said he considered *Saint Joan* his major work, but he admitted that *Heartbreak House* was the play he *liked* the best.

Shaw always relished hearing

about the comments made by audiences at his plays. Whenever I could, I used to eavesdrop for him. He especially enjoyed a remark I overheard after a performance of *Saint Joan*. Two plump, Hokinsonian ladies were exiting directly behind me. I heard one of them say to the other, "You know, I always have disliked the French."

With the exception of my father, Shaw was the readingest man I've ever known. I can't remember ever seeing him in his own home, seated in his big armchair, without the floor beside him being piled with books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and treatises on science, art, economics and goodness knows what not. He would fish out some obscure publication, wave it at me and say, "You really should read more out-of-the-way literature."

Long before I came to America, Shaw urged me to do so. He used to say I *belonged* over here, though I am not too sure it was an unmixed compliment. When I finally landed on these shores, I brought with me a power-of-attorney authorizing me to market the movie rights to a number of Shaw's plays. My efforts to place them made no impression whatever. I was laughed out of the offices of various executives then important in the screen industry.

On my first trip back to London, I fulminated, to Shaw, against the short-sighted opinions of the movie masters. Shaw said, "I think they're wrong. Some of my plays will surely be made into movies. I hope I live to see the day."

"You most certainly will," I declared.

Of the many debts of gratitude that I owe Shaw, the greatest is my American citizenship. For over twenty years now, I have made my life here, and for nearly as long as that, I have been a citizen of the United States. Were it not for Shaw's advice, I might have decided differently.

After I had talked the subject over with him time and again, he finally said to me, "I've been thinking out this idea of yours very carefully. I believe that it is a good idea on the whole. It won't be easy for you to adapt yourself to life in America, but you won't be bored. That would not matter to some women. It is very important to you."

Years later, I teased G.B.S. by calling him the godfather of an American citizen.

"You *are* happy, aren't you?" he asked.

"You bet!" I replied.

Shaw smiled his little *inside* smile.

Heartburn

A STORY

by Hortense Calisher

THE LIGHT, gritty wind of a spring morning blew in on the doctor's shining, cleared desk, and on the tall buttonhook of a man who leaned agitatedly toward him.

"I have some kind of small animal lodged in my chest," said the man. He coughed, a slight hollow apologia to his ailment, and sank back in his chair.

"Animal?" said the doctor, after a pause which had the unfortunate quality of comment. His voice, however, was practiced, deft, colored only with the careful suspension of judgment.

"Probably a form of newt or toad," answered the man, speaking with clipped distaste, as if he would disassociate himself from the idea as far as possible. His face quirked with sad foreknowledge. "Of course, you don't believe me."

The doctor looked at him noncommittally. Paraphrased, an old refrain of the poker table leapt erratically in his mind. Nits — no — newts and gnats and one-eyed jacks, he thought. But already the anecdote was shaping itself, trim and perfect, for display at the clinic luncheon table. "Go on," he said.

"Why won't any of you come right out and say what you think!" the man said angrily. Then he flushed, not hectically, the doctor noted, but with the well-bred embarrassment of the normally reserved. "Sorry. I didn't mean to be rude."

"You've already had an examination?" The doctor was a neurologist, and most of his patients were referrals.

"My family doctor. I live up in Boston."

"Did you tell him — er . . .?" The doctor sought gingerly for a phrase.

One corner of the man's mouth lifted, as if he had watched others in the same dilemma. "I went through the routine first. Fluoroscope, metabolism, cardiograph. Even gastroscopy." He spoke, the doctor noted, with the regrettable glibness of the patient who has shopped around.

"And — the findings?" said the doctor, already sure of the answer.

The man leaned forward, holding the doctor's glance with his own. A faint smile riffled his mouth. "Positive."

"Positive!"

"Well," said the man, "machines have to be interpreted after all, don't they?" He attempted a shrug, but the quick eye of the doctor saw that the movement masked a slight contortion within his tweed suit, as if the man writhed away from himself but concealed it quickly, as one masks a hiccup with a cough. "A curious flutter in the cardiograph, a strange variation in the metabolism, an alien shadow under the fluoroscope." He coughed again and put a genteel hand over his mouth, but this time the doctor saw it clearly — the slight, cringing motion.

"You see," added the man, his eyes helpless and apologetic above the polite covering hand. "It's alive. It *travels*."

"Yes. Yes, of course," said the doctor, soothingly now. In his mind hung the word, ovoid and perfect as a drop of water about to fall. Obsession. A beautiful case. He thought again of the luncheon table.

"What did your doctor recommend?" he said.

"A place with more resources, like the Mayo Clinic. It was then that I told him I knew what it was, as I've told you. And how I acquired it." The visitor paused. "Then, of course, he was forced to pretend he believed me."

"Forced?" said the doctor.

"Well," said the visitor, "actually, I think he did believe me. People tend to believe anything these days. All this mass media information gives them the habit. It takes a strong individual to disbelieve evidence."

The doctor was confused and annoyed. Well, "what then?" he said peremptorily, ready to rise from his desk in dismissal.

Again came the fleeting bod-

ily grimace and the quick cough. "He — er . . . he gave me a prescription."

The doctor raised his eyebrows, in a gesture he was swift to retract as unprofessional.

"For heartburn, I think it was," added his visitor demurely.

Tipping back in his chair, the doctor tapped a pencil on the edge of the desk. "Did he suggest you seek help — on another level?"

"Many have suggested it," said the man.

"But I'm not a psychiatrist!" said the doctor irritably.

"Oh, I know that. You see, I came to you because I had the luck to hear one of your lectures at the Academy. The one on 'Over-emphasis on the non-somatic causes of nervous disorder.' It takes a strong man to go against the tide like that. A disbeliever. And that's what I sorely need." The visitor shuddered, this time letting the *frisson* pass uncontrolled. "You see," he added, thrusting his clasped hands forward on the desk, and looking ruefully at the doctor, as if he would cushion him against his next remark, "you see — I am a psychiatrist."

The doctor sat still in his chair.

"Ah, I can't help knowing what you are thinking," said the man. "I would think the same. A stream-lined version of the Napoleonic delusion." He reached into his breast pocket, drew out a wallet, and fanned papers from it on the desk.

"Never mind. I believe you!" said the doctor hastily.

"Already?" said the man sadly.

Reddening, the doctor hastily looked over the collection of letters, cards of membership in professional societies, licenses, etc. — very much the same sort of thing he himself would have had to amass, had he been under the same necessity of proving his identity. Sanity, of course, was another matter. The documents were all issued to a Dr. Washburn Retz at a Boston address. Stolen, possibly, but something in the man's manner, in fact everything in it except his unfortunate hallucination, made the doctor think otherwise. Poor guy, he thought. Occupational fatigue, perhaps. But what a form! The Boston variant, possibly. "Suppose you start from the beginning," he said benevolently.

"If you can spare the time. . . ."

"I have no more appointments until lunch." And what a lunch that'll be, the doctor thought, already cherishing the pop-eyed scene — Travis (that plethoric

Nestor), the clinic's director, and young Gruenberg (all of whose cases were unique), his hairy nostrils dilated for once in a *mise-en-scene* which he did not dominate.

Holding his hands pressed formally against his chest, almost in the attitude of one of the minor placatory figures in a pieta, the visitor went on. "I have the usual private practice," he said, "and clinic affiliations. As a favor to an old friend of mine, headmaster of a boys' school nearby, I've acted as guidance consultant there for some years. The school caters to boys of above average intelligence and is run along progressive lines. Nothing's ever cropped up except run-of-the-mill adolescent problems, colored a little, perhaps, by the type of parents who tend to send their children to a school like that — people who are — well — one might say, almost tediously aware of their commitments as parents."

The doctor grunted. He was that kind of parent himself.

"Shortly after the second term began, the head asked me to come down. He was worried over a sharp drop of morale which seemed to extend over the whole school — general inattention in classes, excited note-passing, nightly disturbances in the dorms — all pointing, he had thought at first, to the existence of something fancier than usual form of hazing, or to one of those secret societies, sometimes laughable, sometimes with overtones of the corrupt, with which all schools are familiar. Except for one thing. One after the other, a long list of boys had been sent to the infirmary by the various teachers who presided in the dining-room. Each of the boys had shown a marked debility, and what the resident doctor called 'All the stigmata of pure fright. Complete unwillingness to confide.' Each of the boys pleaded stubbornly for his own release, and a few broke out of their own accord. The interesting thing was that each child did recover shortly after his own release, and it was only after this that another boy was seen to fall ill. No two were afflicted at the same time."

"Check the food?" said the doctor.

"All done before I got there. According to my friend, all the trouble seemed to have started with the advent of one boy, John Hallowell, a kid of about fifteen, who had come to the school later in the term with a history of having run away from four other schools. Records at these classed him as very bright, but made oblique references to 'personality difficulties' which

were not defined. My friend's school, ordinarily pretty independent, had taken the boy at the insistence of old Simon Hallowell, the boy's uncle, who is a trustee. His brother, the boy's father, is a well-known rakehell whose exploits have nourished the tabloids for years. The mother lives mostly in France and South America. One of these perennial dryads, apparently, with a youthfulness maintained by money and a yearly immersion in the fountains of American plastic surgery. Only time she sees the boy. . . . Well, you can imagine. What the feature articles call a Broken Home."

THE DOCTOR shifted in his chair and lit a cigarette.

"I won't keep you much longer," said the visitor. "I saw the boy." A violent fit of coughing interrupted him. This time his curious writhing motion went frankly unconcealed. He got up from his chair and stood at the window, gripping the sill and breathing heavily until he had regained control, and went on, one hand pulling unconsciously at his collar. "Or, at least, I think I saw him. On my way to visit him in his room I bumped into a tall red-headed boy in a football sweater, hurrying down the hall with a windbreaker and a poncho slung over his shoulder. I asked for Hallowell's room; he jerked a thumb over his shoulder at the door just behind him, and continued past me. It never occurred to me . . . I was expecting some adenoidal gangler with acne . . . or one of these sinister little angel faces, full of neurotic sensibility.

"The room was empty. Except for its finicky neatness, and a rather large amount of livestock, there was nothing unusual about it. The school, according to the current trend, is run like a farm, with the boys doing the chores, and pets are encouraged. There was a tank with a couple of turtles near the window, beside it another, full of newts, and in one corner a large cage of well-tended, brisk white mice. Glass cases, with carefully mounted series of lepidoptera and hymen-optera, showing the metamorphic stages hung on the walls, and on a drawing board there was a daintily executed study of Branchippus, the 'fairy shrimp.'

"While I paced the room, trying to look as if I wasn't prying, a greenish little wretch, holding himself together as if he had an imaginary shawl draped around him, slunk into the half-dark room and squeaked 'Hallowell?' When he saw me he started to

duck, but I detained him and found that he had had an appointment with Hallowell too. When it was clear, from his description, that Hallowell must have been the redhead I'd seen leaving, the poor urchin burst into tears.

" 'I'll never get rid of it now!' he wailed. From then on it wasn't hard to get the whole maudlin story. It seems that shortly after Hallowell's arrival at school he acquired a reputation for unusual proficiency with animals and for out-of-the way lore which would impress the ingenuous. He circulated the rumor that he could swallow small animals and regurgitate them at will. No one actually saw him swallow anything, but it seems that in some mumbo-jumbo with another boy who had shown cynicism about the whole thing, it was claimed that Hallowell had, well, divested himself of something, and passed it on to the other boy, with the statement that the latter would only be able to get rid of his cargo when he in turn found a boy who would disbelieve *him*."

The visitor paused, calmer now, and leaving the window, sat down again in the chair opposite the doctor, regarding him with such fixity that the doctor shifted uneasily, with the apprehension of one who is about to be asked for a loan.

"My mind turned to the elementary sort of thing we've all done at times. You know, circle of kids in the dark, piece of cooked cauliflower passed from hand to hand with the statement that the stuff is the fresh brains of some neophyte who hadn't taken his initiation seriously. My young informer, Moulton his name was, swore however that this hysteria (for of course, that's what I thought it) was passed on singly, from boy to boy, without any such seances. He'd been home to visit his family, who are missionaries on leave, and had been infected by his roommate on his return to school, unaware that by this time the whole school had protectively turned believers, en masse. His own terror came, not only from his conviction that he was possessed, but from his inability to find anybody who would take his dare. And so he'd finally come to Hallowell. . . .

"By this time the room was getting really dark and I snapped on the light to get a better look at Moulton. Except for an occasional shudder, like a bodily tic, which I took to be the after-effects of hard crying, he looked like a healthy enough boy who'd been scared out of his

wits. I remember that a neat little monograph was already forming itself in my mind, a group study on mass psychosis, perhaps, with effective anthropological references to certain savage tribes whose dances include a rite known as 'eating evil.'

"The kid was looking at me. 'Do you believe me?' he said suddenly. 'Sir?' he added, with a naive cunning which tickled me.

" 'Of course,' I said, patting his shoulder absently. 'In a way.'

"His shoulder slumped under my hand. I felt its tremor, direct misery palpitating between my fingers.

" 'I thought . . . maybe for a man . . . it wouldn't be . . .' His voice trailed off.

" 'Be the same? . . . I don't know.' I said slowly, for of course, I was answering, not his actual question, but the overtone of some cockcrow of meaning that evaded me.

"He raised his head and petitioned me silently with his eyes. Was it guile, or simplicity, in his look, and was it for conviction, or the lack of it, that he arraigned me. I don't know. I've gone back over what I did then, again and again, using all my own knowledge of the mechanics of decision, and I know that it wasn't just sympathy, or a pragmatic reversal of therapy, but something intimately important for me, that made me shout with all my strength — Of course I don't believe you!

"Moulton, his face contorted, fell forward on me so suddenly that I stumbled backwards, sending the tank of newts crashing to the floor. Supporting him with my arms, I hung on to him while he heaved, face downwards. At the same time I felt a tickling, sliding sensation in my own ear, and an inordinate desire to follow it with my finger, but both my hands were busy. It wasn't a minute 'till I'd gotten him onto the couch, where he drooped, a little white about the mouth, but with that chastened, purified look of the physically relieved, although he hadn't actually upchucked.

"Still watching him, I stooped to clear up the debris, but he bounded from the couch with amazing resilience.

" 'I'll do it,' he said.

" 'Feel better?'

"He nodded, clearly abashed, and we gathered up the remains of the tank in a sort of mutual embarrassment. I can't remember that either of us said a word, and neither of us made more than a half-hearted attempt to search for the scattered pests which had apparently sought

crannies in the room. At the door we parted, muttering as formal a good-night as was possible between a grown man and a small boy. It wasn't until I reached my own room and sat down that I realized, not only my own extraordinary behavior, but that Moulton, standing, as I suddenly recalled, for the first time quite straight, had sent after me a look of pity and speculation.

"Out of habit, I reached into my breast pocket for my pencil, in order to take notes as fresh as possible. And then I felt it . . . a skittering, sidling motion, almost beneath my hand. I opened my jacket and shook myself, thinking that I'd picked up something in the other room . . . but nothing. I sat quite still, gripping the pencil, and after an interval it came again — an inchoate creeping, a twitter of movement almost *lackadaisical*, as of something inching itself lazily along — but this time on my other side. In a frenzy, I peeled off my clothes, inspected myself wildly, and enumerating to myself a reassuring abracadabra of explanation — skipped heartbeat, intercostal pressure of gas — I sat there naked, waiting. And after a moment, it came again, that wandering, aquatic motion, as if something had flipped itself over just enough to make me aware, and then settled itself, this time under the sternum, with a nudge like that of some inconceivable foetus. I jumped up and shook myself again, and as I did so I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror in the closet door. My face, my own face, was ajar with fright, and I was standing there, hooked over, as if I were wearing an imaginary shawl."

In the silence after his visitor's voice stopped, the doctor sat there in the painful embarrassment of the listener who has played confessor, and whose expected comment is a responsibility he wishes he had evaded. The breeze from the open window fluttered the papers on the desk. Glancing out at the clean, regular facade of the hospital wing opposite, at whose evenly shaded windows the white shapes of orderlies and nurses flickered in consoling routine, the doctor wished petulantly that he had fended off the man and all his papers in the beginning. What right had the man to arraign *him*? Surprised at his own inner vehemence, he pulled himself together. "How long ago?" he said at last.

"Four months."

"And since?"

"It's never stopped." The visitor now seemed brimming with a tentative excitement,

like a colleague discussing a mutually puzzling case. "Everything's been tried. Sedatives do obtain some sleep, but that's all. Purgatives. Even emetics." He laughed slightly, almost with pride. "Nothing like that works," he continued, shaking his head with the doting fondness of a patient for some symptom which has confounded the best of them. "It's too cagey for that."

With his use of the word "it" the doctor was propelled back into that shapely sense of reality which had gone admittedly askew during the man's recital. To admit the category of "it," to dip even a slightly cooperative finger in another's fantasy was to risk one's own equilibrium. Better not to become involved in argument with the possessed, lest one's own apertures of belief be found to have been left ajar.

"I am afraid," the doctor said blandly, "that your case is outside my field."

"As a doctor?" said his visitor. "Or as a man?"

"Let's not discuss me, if you please."

The visitor leaned intently across the desk. "Then you admit that to a certain extent, we *have* been —?"

"I admit nothing!" said the doctor, stiffening.

"Well," said the man disparagingly, "of course, that too is a kind of stand. The commonest, I've found." He sighed, pressing one hand against his collarbone. "I suppose you have a prescription too, or a recommendation. Most of them do."

The doctor did not enjoy being judged. "Why don't you hunt up young Hallowell?" he said, with malice.

"Disappeared. Don't you think I tried?" said his vis-a-vis ruefully. Something furtive, hope, perhaps, spread its guileful corruption over his face. "That means you do give a certain credence —"

"Nothing of the sort!"

"Well then," said his interrogator, turning his palms upward.

The doctor leaned forward, measuring his words with exasperation. "Do you mean you *want* me to tell you you're crazy!"

"In my spot," answered his visitor meekly, "which would you prefer?"

Badgered to the point of commitment, the doctor stared back at his inconvenient Diogenes. Swollen with irritation, he was only half conscious of an uneasy, vestigial twitching of his ear muscles, which contracted now as they sometimes did when he listened to atonal music.

"O.K., O.K. . . !" he shouted suddenly, slapping his hand down on the desk and thrusting his chin forward. "Have it your way then! I don't believe you!"

Rigid, the man looked back at him cataleptically, seeming, for a moment, all eye. Then, his mouth stretching in that medieval grimace, risorial and equivocal, whose mask appears sometimes on one side of the stage, sometimes on the other, he fell forward on the desk, with a long, mewing sigh.

Before the doctor could reach him, he had raised himself on his arms and their foreheads touched. They recoiled, staring downward. Between them on the desk, as if one of its mahogany shadows had become animate, something seemed to move — small, seal-colored, and ambiguous. For a moment it filmed back and forth, arching in a crude, primordial enquiry; then, homing straight for the doctor, whose jaw hung down in a rictus of shock, it disappeared from view.

Sputtering, the doctor beat the air and his own person wildly with his hands, and staggered upward from his chair. The breeze blew hypnotically, and the stranger gazed back at him with such perverse calm that already he felt an assailing doubt of the lightning, untoward event. He fumbled back over his sensations of the minute before, but already piecemeal and chimerical, they eluded him now, as they might forever.

"It's unbelievable," he said weakly.

His visitor put up a warding hand, shaking it fastidiously. "*Au contraire!*" he replied daintily. Reaching forward, he gathered up his papers into a sheaf, and stood up, stretching himself straight with an all-over bodily yawn of physical ease that was like an affront. He looked down at the doctor, one hand fingering his wallet. "No," he said reflectively, "Guess not." He tucked the papers away. "Shall we leave it on the basis of — er — professional courtesy?" he inquired delicately.

Choking on the sludge of his rage, the doctor looked back at him, inarticulate.

Moving toward the door, the visitor paused. "After all," he said, "with your connections . . . try to think of it as a temporary inconvenience." Regretfully, happily, he closed the door behind him.

The doctor sat at his desk, humped forward. His hands crept to his chest and crossed. He swallowed, experimentally. He hoped it was rage. He sat there, waiting. He was thinking of the luncheon table.

MAIL ORDER SALVATION

by Cedric Belfrage

FOR THE PAST four years hundreds of people all over the United States and Canada have been worrying about my soul. They started out with high hopes for me, and I am afraid I have been a total loss to all of them except, perhaps, Reverend H. of the Bronx.

It was in the summer of 1946 that I wrote to Reverend H., asking him to send along some of his tracts. I needed a sample of up-to-date tract styles for a novel I was doing at the time.

Reverend H. was prompt; his tracts were pink and textually similar to the ones I used to be handed outside saloons. But within a week or two the postman was bringing me each day from six to a dozen offers of salvation by mail-order. They came mostly from prophets unattached to any official church, and carried that version of my address which Reverend H. had made his own, thereby leaving his footprint all along the trail.

My new correspondents asked my prayers for their labors in what, they inferred, was an unprofitable vineyard in terms of cash. The need for money to keep them in business was appended sometimes with delicacy, sometimes with a frankness that might be called crude. One Bible institute in Alberta required "real partners to pray us through . . . $100,000 to keep pace with God next year." From Toronto an editor of a tract wrote disgustedly that he "had been dragging along with antiquated equipment these many years." He needed $1,000 right away and was "asking friends to commit this to the Lord with us." Meanwhile, "Mrs. R. and I are leaving for a little break and ministry in the South. If you know of any way that we can serve the Lord you can contact us at 700 N.E. 63 St., Miami, Florida."

Tied to New York as winter drew on, I was tempted to write Brother R. inquiring if he could use an assistant in his Miami ministry. But at home my spare moments were filled with the

study of "religious merchandise" catalogues, which by then were straining the muscles of my postman.

The streamlining of the religious talisman business, started hundreds of years ago by mendicant friars who went about hawking home-made sacred relics, was a revelation to me. A religious press in Elizabethtown, Pa., offered me "distinctive supplies for Sunday school, church and home" under no less than 731 general and particular headings, all the way from six-volume *Notes on the Pentateuch* at $6.95 to cardboard text-bearing fish at twenty cents a dozen. For example, taking a random excerpt from their catalogue index:

Unvarnished Facts About Christian Science, The
Vacation Bible School Supplies
Virtuous Woman, A
Voice in the Wilderness
Walnut Desk Mottoes
Way of a Man with a Maid, The
Wedding Books and Certificates
We Give Thanks
We Killed a Bear!
We Won't Murder
Wesley, John.

It was all Reverend H.'s doing that the catalogue came my way; but the thought that he might not approve restrained me from sending fifty cents to Elizabethtown for a book entitled *Snappy Stories that Preachers Tell.* Nor did I send in for a luminous cross priced at one dime, although I noticed what a bargain it was compared with a similar item for which a Minneapolis publishing company was asking sixty cents. I could not make a choice between Minneapolis' wealth of items, including Scripture Text License Plates at twenty-five cents, dime pocket-mirrors with Psalm 100 on the back, sixty cents "Peep" Coin Purses with text from Ephesians 2, and Highest Ideals for Christian Youth at four for a quarter, nine for half a dollar. Among their tracts, titles that stood out were *Dance Sends Girl to Hell; Beer, Liquor and All That Filthy Stuff; Motion Pictures Purvey Filth* and *Snakes in an Atheist's Grave.* Other angles on popular sins were offered by a publishing company in Waterloo, Iowa, but at rather stiffer prices. The Iowan vendors could at the same time supply Mighty Midget Wallets opening like a cross, "Nothing Finer" Flag Sets, *The Sugar Creek Gang Series* and other fiction for seven-year-olds, Plastic Piano Banks, "Jesus Saves" bicycle reflectors and scripture-text Kitchen Reminders for Mom.

The variety of aids to the soul was so bewildering that one

who desired to ward off Beelzebub at home, at business, at market or on bicycle hardly knew where to start. Yet the gathering avalanche of mail made clear the necessity of quick action on my part if disaster were to be avoided. I began to be seriously worried the morning I opened a letter headed in red ink:

YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER
Box 4038, ———, Texas

It began:

> Just wait until the blow falls that will destroy you and your loved ones . . . Only fools and ignoramuses will sleep on, unmindful of the impending doom that is upon us.

On page two it developed that there was still a way out. For five dollars, this particular "Junior Kingdom, Inc.," would speed to me from Texas "THE FORMULA for attaining life's greatest achievement"; and if I did not delay a moment, *The Stranger From Galilee*, another huckstering "Dr." — would be thrown in gratis. But alas! At the end of the letter I learned that THE FORMULA was "exclusively for regenerated Christians."

PRACTICALLY everyone who wrote to me seemed to live in a box — a move not without sagacity in view of the fact, on which all agreed, that the world is about to be destroyed (or at least to be suffered with some ghastly visitation survived by few). Under the heading, THE NEARING CRASH OF JUDGMENT, my correspondent from Box 45, Fair Grove, Mo., had worked it all out in the form of a Rube Goldberg-ish chart: a human figure wearing a hat marked "Babylon," standing with powerfully-muscled arms folded over a chest marked "Medo-Persia." It had the face of a football-player at bay and long woman's hair, and wore a skirt designated, GREECE — BELLY AND THIGHS OF BRASS. Above the knees, the legs suddenly stopped; there was a gap for the legend, INTERVAL OF IRON IN FRAGNENTS, and then came the feet marked DEMOCRACY, COMMUNISM, FACISM (right) and REVOLUTIONS, STRIKES, RACKETEERING (left).

A subscription to the Fair Grove paper, *The King's Herald*, would, the author assured me, earn "great reward in the eons to come." But in the same mail I was offered an even more detailed and depressing picture of the future by a heavenly representative whose publication emanated from a P. O. Box in Washington, D. C. For $1.50 a year this prolific doctor was willing to remind me monthly that "the Second Woe is Past;

and Behold, the Third Woe Cometh Quickly." His insight into the Third Woe derives from his decision that "Israel" in the prophetic scriptures may be equated with "Anglo-Saxondom." Although Anglo-Saxondom is full of atheists and infidels, he can promise that "God is staging a gigantic comeback for Israel," in which "the great Leader on the White Horse" will come into power and establish "God's beneficent Theocracy." But before that happy day comes there must be a "conflagration" of which "the Noahic flood is the type." Lecturing from coast to coast, the Washingtonian says he is approached everywhere by people who realize this and "press for advice regarding what to do with their money."

The lean and bespectacled publisher of Alberta's *Prairie Overcomer* sends me pictures of himself flashing splendid dentures and clutching his "four-year-old daughter and seventh child." Although the tot looks as innocent as Shirley Temple at the height of her glory, Brother Publisher holds to "Heaven's diagnosis, that man is incurably wicked." To him, things look black all over. He has asked me to "continue to pray for poor, dark England," a country now in the grip of debauchery and redeemable only by a return to the old-fashioned English Sunday. In America he observes "a resurging tide of paganism" due to the increase in converts to Buddhism and sun-worship. "In the face of the tide," he writes bravely, "let us maintain a holy walk and a faithful witness — our loins girded and the lights burning." Especially disturbing to him are "modern" techniques with criminals; here the only hope is a return to "Solomon's wisdom — the rod of correction."

The editor of *The Uplook*, writing from his church opposite a Kentucky-firehouse, worries continually at Revelation and Ezekiel for clues to heavenly intentions with regard to Russia and the atom bomb. About the Russians he writes in folksy style, as in the passage: "J. I. Zhidkov (I NEVER CAN PRONOUNCE THOSE BOLSHEVIK NAMES, Z-H-I-D-K-O-V). . . ." He is alarmed that "Walter Winchell in his pro-Russian, communistic views, can be permitted to run riot like a Western ranch steer." As to "the 3rd World War with Russia," he "will not be dogmatic as to the exact time. . . . After studying the Scriptures, it could take place during the Tribulation Period, or it could take place

during the first part of the Millenium." But anyway, "I know for sure that God will be the victor." Ezekiel 9 reassures him that five-sixths of the Russians will fall in battle and that it will take seven months to bury the dead. ". . . These are glorious days. These are thrilling days." Should Ezekiel 9 still leave you unhappy, wondering perhaps whether it really does refer to Russians or to someone else, this Kentucky Bible Depot will send you for two bits a copy of *Beyond the Sunset, or, the Bright Side of Death.*

For really original interpretations of the scriptures, commend me to the following gems from Box 438 at Faribault, Minn. "Weep and howl for your miseries," the Minnesotan quotes; "ye have heaped treasure together for the last days . . . which is of you KEPT BACK BY FRAUD."

A comparatively lush publication emanating from a Bible institute in Los Angeles, is sure we'd all get along better if we realized, with "many eminent scholars," that "God dictated to Adam the Genesis account of creation." What happened there was that Adam, "probably previously taught by his Maker, was able to inscribe the words on tablets. If that be so . . . then here in Genesis we have God's literary style. . . . What a Book! What an Author!"

Many of the mail-order salvation-mongers like to quote the Roger Babson prediction that "the chances are nine out of ten that Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and other coastal cities will be totally destroyed within the next twenty years." One adds: "If you want God's bosom to be your pillow 'when the world's on fire,' respond to His gracious invitation now."

"A Still Small Voice," which haunts Box 201 at Atascadero, Calif., merely sends out sobering verses and seems to have nothing for sale. In a recent release, *Bought With a Price*, "A Still Small Voice" reflects:

> Oh, Queens may sell their jew'ls
> and
> Give the proceeds to obtain
> Another route to Ceylon's isle
> Or some such worldly gain;
> But when old Adam bet his all
> On one wild throw, the dice
> Just had to show the paper that
> He'd paid an awful price.

COMMUNICATIONS received from missionary groups as a result of Reverend H.'s good offices convince me that missions are not what they were in my day, when we all dropped pennies in plates to convert what were broadly known as "the

Hottentots." Nobody has sent me anything at all about Hottentots, but mail has come in steadily about missions to Russians and about a lady who is "having hard work bringing souls out of Romanism" in the south of France. The European Christian Mission flatly demanded that I should "pray for Europe's four million unevangelized peoples every day." The numerous missions to Russians are vague about what they can achieve in Russia itself, but they are not particular geographically: they will cheerfully set to work on a Russian wherever one may turn up.

From the accumulated stack of proposals for my salvation at moderate cost as the catastrophe approaches, I turned to the cures for temporal ills described in such publications as *Herald of Hope* (Los Angeles) and *Kenyon's Herald of Life* (Seattle). By sending in to *Herald of Hope* for one of their "Blest Handkerchiefs," any of the following could be quickly cleared up: rheumatic fever, arthritis, diabetes, boils, low blood pressure, "hard cake under the right breast," burns, sinus trouble, kidney trouble, heart disease, alcoholism, dropsy, corns, undulant fever, wens, paralysis, insanity, tuberculosis, hemorrhoids, eczema, asthma, deafness, dumbness and cigarette addiction. According to a testimonial from one South Carolina lady, not even the Blest Handkerchief is necessary in the case of cancer of the face. She merely spread a copy of *Herald of Hope* on the pillowcase for a month and the cancer disappeared.

All in all, since I crashed Reverend H.'s pious circle, I must have received at least two thousand pieces of mail from five hundred different sources. Arthur Martin Karl, an expert in the sucker-list business, tells me that classified lists range in price from $9 to $20 per one thousand names, with $12 as the average. College professors, he says, run quite cheap; doctors are "terrible — they get so many free samples"; industrialists are high, and one of the most productive groups of all are buyers of denicotinized cigarettes. Offhand, Mr. Karl could not quote me a figure on religious suckers, but he showed respect for them with the observation that "they'll buy practically anything."

So there seems to be a good chance that my name has been worth at least $7.50 to Reverend H. I hope so, since I disappointed all his friends.

The Hanging of Will Purvis

HE KNEW WHY the radio people were bringing him to New York and paying all his expenses. He was a kind of glorified freak — an incredible, living legend from the Mississippi backwoods. At first he didn't want any part of it. For more than twenty years he had been avoiding outsiders. But the family — his four boys and his seven daughters and his good wife, Sarah — had begged and pleaded with him to make the trip.

"Papa, you're the only one in the family who'll ever get this chance to go there. You go and come back and tell us what it's like in New York," they urged.

On his first Pullman ride, this short, stocky, taciturn Mississippi farmer was unhappy and frightened. When the porter closed the lower berth curtains he felt the old, almost forgotten twinge of fear.

In the fast elevators of the Hotel Commodore, he felt the same closed-in fear. He was pretty disappointed when nowhere in the great city could they find his favorite chewing tobacco, "Brown Mule." Still, everything might have been all right if the radio people hadn't arranged that interview with the reporters before the broadcast. They stared at this gnarled, rough-looking farmer whose name had once made the world gasp with disbelief and asked him all kinds of silly questions. Then it happened. A photographer said, "Okay, now what

by Murray Teigh Bloom

we need here for a good shot is this character with a noose around his neck just like . . ."

He never finished the sentence. The man from Mississippi lunged at his throat and started dragging him to an open window. A few reporters grabbed him and held him. And then, suddenly, for the second time in his life, he blacked out.

The one thing you could have predicted on that warm Thursday in June, 1893, was that Will Buckley, a prosperous Mississippi farmer, was as good as dead. That morning Buckley had talked freely to a grand jury in Columbia, the county seat. He told all he knew about the activities of a secret Ku Klux Klan-like outfit called "The White Caps." Everybody, including the Caps, knew Buckley was going to talk. And nearly everybody knew the Caps would kill Buckley.

People were just a little surprised that it happened so quickly. On their way home from Columbia, Buckley and his brother Jim and their Negro farmhand, Sam Waller, were shot at from ambush on a bank of Holliday's Creek. Will Buckley was killed while the other two escaped. That murder set the stage for the most incredible case in the long, bloody roster of American homicides.

Sheriff I. Otha Magee took charge of the case. He found a lot of footprints at the ambush scene and one print of a particularly large foot attracted his attention for a bit, but he didn't believe in this nonsense they called "scientific detection." Two days after the shooting, he got bloodhounds put on the cold trail. Eventually, after many bad leads, the hounds led to the Purvis farm and Will Purvis' trial for murder.

The neighbors were the first to say that Will was no murderer. He was, they told the sheriff, a decent, hardworking 20-year-old lad who helped his father tenant farm 120 acres of good, rich Pearl River lowlands. The crop was cotton, of course. Will was good at the wrestling matches they used to hold for community recreation and he was a sharp hand at the possum hunts. And there wasn't an abler jaw about for the cane chewing parties.

Like many other young men he joined the White Caps, but when he learned that the Cap chiefs were planning to murder Buckley if he should talk to the Grand Jury, he quit. He wasn't going to have any part of a gang that went in for murder.

The sheriff and his men came for Will Purvis at midnight.

Magee didn't even bother to look at Will's shotgun standing in a corner of the simple farmhouse. If he had he would have seen that the barrel was clogged with dirt dobber nests and hadn't been fired since the previous Spring. Nor did anyone bother to compare Will's shoe prints with the huge print they found at the ambush site. The sheriff wasn't interested in that kind of foolishness. He had an airtight case and he didn't need any additional proof. They made Will walk the twelve miles from the farm to Columbia's jail. The sheriff didn't like riding with murderers.

For the trial they got up a special grand jury — twelve men who understood the real menace of the White Caps and their night-riding activities and were ready to take stern measures against them. Most of the jurors were from well-known county families. Two of them, E. E. Foxworth and W. T. Varnado, came from families which had nearby towns named after them, just as Purvis, Mississippi, was named for an uncle of Will Purvis. The other men on the jury, R. R. Cullenane, J. W. Smith, C. W. Corley, J. I. Cook, G. W. Rankin, W. T. Hand, R. G. Cowan, C. R. Donovan, J. W. Scarborough and J. R. Regan, were local merchants, surveyors, well-diggers and farmers, a fair cross-section of the county.

On the bench was Judge Sam Terrell who just a few years before had won a small measure of fame as the judge who had sentenced the participants in the last bare-knuckle championship fight in America. The 1889 fight between John L. Sullivan and Jake Kilrain had been held in a natural amphitheater a few miles below Hattiesburg. It ran to seventy-five incredibly punishing rounds before Kilrain's seconds threw in the towel. The State Militia finally caught up with the boxers and the promoters of the illegal bout and brought them before Judge Terrell, who gave them token jail terms and small fines.

At the Purvis trial, which got under way August 4, 1893, it soon became obvious why Sheriff Magee and Prosecutor Jim Neville were so confident that Purvis was the man. They had an eyewitness. Jim Buckley said that he distinctly saw Will Purvis fire the fatal shot. Purvis' attorney, S. E. Travis, couldn't shake his testimony. The rest hardly mattered — the defense witnesses who swore they saw Will Purvis working on his father's farm at the time the killing took place, the admittedly dubious evidence of the blood-

hound tracking, the fact that the prosecution made no effort to locate the murder weapon.

The next day the case went to the jury, and after a few hours they came out with a verdict of "guilty." Sam Terrell, wasting no time, proceeded to sentence the guilty lad.

"I sentence you, Will Purvis, to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead on the sixth day of September, 1893, between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at the jail of Marion County, Mississippi."

The slowly spoken words seemed to paralyze Will Purvis. He stared dumbly at the faces of the jurors for a long minute. Then he blurted out:

"I'll outlive all of you."

Everyone promptly forgot it. Condemned men are always making silly statements.

The case was appealed in vain. Governor J. M. Stone refused to intervene and finally a new date was set for the hanging, February 7, 1894.

Even in his cell, Will Purvis could get the sharp, numbing flavor of death to come. The cell was barely eight feet square, and to make escape impossible, his feet were chained to the floor, leaving enough play for him to walk halfway the width of the cell. He slept on a thin mattress resting on the floor. In that cell, Will Purvis became convinced for the first time he was really going to hang: all appeals had been exhausted and the governor had again refused to intervene.

One day a Meridian merchant, Link Brown, visited Purvis and questioned him closely about the case. He told Purvis that if he were really innocent his life would be spared somehow. What Link Brown didn't tell Will Purvis was that the night before he and his wife had both had the same curious dream: the day after Will Purvis' hanging they had spoken to him and marveled that he was still alive.

A few nights before the day of execution, Will Purvis also had a dream to which he could attribute no significance. In the dream a young mail carrier he knew, wearing a big cowboy hat, came to the door of his cell and placing his hands against the bars cried:

"Hello, Will. I'm glad you got away." Will Purvis hadn't seen this friend since the trial.

Everyone seemed to be having strange dreams at the time. Purvis' mother told him that two nights in a row she dreamed that she saw their neighbor, Joe Beard, holding a shotgun at the ambush site. Will told her to forget it. Joe Beard wouldn't kill a mouse.

As the appointed day ap-

proached, prayer meetings for Will Purvis were being held all over the state by men and women who believed the boy was innocent.

From Meridian a state militia company took Will Purvis to Lumberton on the way to Columbia, where he was to be hanged the following day. The militia was on the alert for any attempt the White Caps might make to free Purvis.

In Columbia, as he passed through the prison courtyard, Will Purvis saw the scaffold where two others had been hanged the day before. He was taken immediately into the courthouse and upstairs to avoid any possible interference by the crowd. They kept him shackled, and questioned him all night in the hope of getting a confession. That night every road leading into Columbia was heavily guarded and the courthouse yard was dotted with armed sentinels.

THEY DECLARED a holiday in most of southern Mississippi on February 7, 1894. From every part of the state they assembled on the courthouse lawn with their picnic lunches and morbid curiosities. They started coming soon after dawn to get good locations. Most of them felt that a guilty man was about to get his due and wanted to watch.

There were a few exceptions, of course. None of Will Purvis' immediate family was there, but some cousins and in-laws had assembled near the gallows to claim the body of their doomed kinsman.

Dr. T. B. Ford, a young physician of Columbia, was there against his will. A bitter White Cap foe, he felt that Purvis was being railroaded to hide the crime of someone more important. He had been appointed by the county to make sure that Purvis was really dead after the hanging. Disgusted at the idea of making the execution a public spectacle, he had decided to come to the gibbet only after the hanging was over, but the sheriff's deputies forced him to come along before the execution.

Similarly, the Reverend W. S. Sibley, who firmly believed Purvis innocent, had to be at the execution in spite of himself. He had to be present to console and fortify the prisoner on his way to death.

The gallows and the rope had been thoroughly tested for twenty-four hours. Heavy weights had been suspended to the rope to take out any excessive give. Sheriff Magee had a staff of four deputies to assist in the execution, to make sure nothing went wrong. This was

no time for anything to go wrong — the county had already spent a lot of money on this case and Purvis' hanging was long overdue.

Heavily guarded, a pale Will Purvis stepped out of the little jail and walked slowly up the gallow steps. Dr. Sibley read a short passage of Scripture. Another deputy carefully tied Will Purvis' ankles together and ran a line securely up to his bound hands. The sheriff and a deputy busied themselves adjusting the noose about Purvis' neck. It was a good hangman's knot, skillfully made except for the ungainly eight inches of extra rope sticking out. It didn't look professional. The deputies got paid extra for hangings and they wanted to be invited again. One of them cut off the gangling end with a sharp hunting knife.

"Anything to say, Purvis?" Sheriff Magee asked. The sheriff never had the least doubt about the boy's guilt.

Purvis looked slowly over the huge crowd and shouted:

"I didn't do it. There are men out there among you who could save me if they would."

Some men in the crowd stirred uneasily but no one came forward. Deputy Scott Hathorn placed the traditional black mask over Purvis' face. The sheriff moved deliberately toward the trap door as he said goodbye to Will Purvis.

Dr. Sibley had been praying continuously since he stepped on the gallows platform with Will Purvis. Where was the miracle he had been praying for?

"Oh, God," he shouted to the heavens, "spare this boy . . ."

Sheriff Magee carefully swung the sharp axe at the stay rope holding the trap. Swiftly Purvis plunged through the trap door. Those on the platform heard the trapdoor creak as he passed it. The crowd's sighs and groans commingled.

This was the moment when Will Purvis' body should have been jerking and dangling while his neck was being broken by fracture of the first and third cervical vertebrae. Instead, after the slightest of hesitations the noose gave way and unravelled completely as his body dropped to the ground under the gallows platform. His body hit a stray two-by-four and rested there quiet as death.

The stillest moment in Marion County history was followed by the most stupendous gasp a crowd of five thousand men, women and children ever uttered. Will Purvis' body had visibly stirred on the ground beneath the gallows platform.

"I came around very slowly,"

he later told his family, "and just as I was about to open my eyes I heard someone say, 'Well, Bill, we've got to do it all over again.' The crowd was still tense with emotion. Then two men escorted me back to the scaffold the second time."

Not until Purvis was on the first step leading up to the gallows did the crowd recover its collective consciousness and realize they were going to hang the lad again.

Deputy Ed Wintborne on the gallows platform reached for the dangling rope but couldn't quite make it. He called down to Dr. Ford standing beneath the platform:

"Toss that rope up here, will you, Doctor?"

Still dazed, Dr. Ford started reaching for the rope. He picked it up, looked at it with unseeing eyes and was about to hand it up when, suddenly, he dashed it to the ground.

"I won't do any such damn thing," he shouted. "This boy's been hung once too many times already."

For the first time the gaping crowd broke its silence and spoke with many opposed voices like a body possessed. "Don't let him hang again," and "Hang the murderer" rose from the courtyard square and beyond in hoarse counterpoint.

And now Dr. Sibley made a decision. Having done his share the Lord was certainly entitled to some human cooperation. Climbing onto the scaffold platform he stayed the rising voices in the crowd with an upraised hand:

"People of Marion County, the hand of Providence has slipped the noose. We have seen a miracle from God in the rescue of Will Purvis. Heaven has heard our prayer. Let us rally to our sheriff if he will refuse to carry out the order of the court to hang Will Purvis at this time."

His big, eloquent voice swept up and down the jammed thousands below him.

"All who want to see this boy hanged a second time, hold up their hands." Only a few hands were raised.

"All who are opposed to hanging Will Purvis a second time, hold up *your* hands." Nearly ever hand in the crowd went up.

Only the sheriff and his fumbling deputies weren't ready to go along with the miracle. There was nothing in the executioner's handbook to guide a man in a spot like this. His orders had been to hang this man until he was *dead.*

He nodded to Deputy Ed Wintborne who had gone below

to fetch the rope. Wintborne handed the rope to Henry Banks, another deputy, who while making a knot splice in its ends so that it wouldn't slip a second time, explained to the first few rows of spectators that the rope slipped because it was made of new grass and was too springy. Then he made a noose again. The sight of it jarred Dr. Ford into action.

He looked at the sheriff calmly preparing for a second hanging and asked:

"If I go and ask three hundred men to stand by me and prevent the hanging what are you going to do about it? And I'm ready to do it, too."

The sheriff looked at him steadily, weighing the man and his intentions. After a few still moments he walked deliberately to Will Purvis and slowly started to untie his bonds. The crowd cheered, and as Purvis was led back to the jail, it took all the effort of the sheriff and his deputies to prevent Purvis from being freed completely by the mob.

They took Purvis back to the jail he never expected to see again and in a few minutes his strange dream came true. His mail-carrier friend in the cowboy hat came to his cell, placed his hands on the bars and cried, "Hello, Will, I'm glad you got away."

In a few weeks they brought him before Judge Terrell again for re-sentencing. Again the judge uttered the grim words required by law but his voice no longer rang with conviction. Will Purvis, he said, had to hang again on September 6, 1895. Purvis' attorneys got a stay of execution while they appealed to the Supreme Court again. In November the high court confirmed Judge Terrell and set the new date for December 12, 1895. If God had a personal interest in this case he'd have to make a return visit before the courts of Mississippi would take notice.

ONCE ALL the appeals had been exhausted and the December hanging date looked definite, Will Purvis' friends and family decided that it would be foolish to expect the good Lord to take time out again from His many chores just to save Will Purvis again. It was time for ordinary mortals to take a hand.

Having been kept in the jail at Purvis — purely accidental ironic touch — for nearly five months, Will Purvis found that jail discipline was considerably relaxed and his friends and family were able to visit him easily. Late on the Sunday afternoon before the hanging was sched-

uled, Bill King, a friend, came to see him and brought him a stalk of cane sugar.

"While I was eating the cane," Purvis later recalled, "Bill King said he would like to look at the combination lock on the cell and for me to have my overcoat on and be ready as they were going to take me out that night. I got ready and by nine o'clock that night the guards came by to make their last inspection. I waited about ten minutes and then looked out of the jail window. In the distance I could hear someone rapping with a paint brush on the end of a log. This was the signal."

The homemade key didn't work so the lock had to be sawed out. A mule took Will Purvis west of the town. The news went to the state capital, Jackson, within a few minutes and not long after the whole world learned that Will Purvis, the man they couldn't hang, had been sprung out of jail by his friends.

He went from friend to friend surreptitiously, spending only a night at each house except for a longer stay he made at his cousin's, O. S. Purvis, who had a special room built for Will under his store.

The hidden, hunted life was made more dangerous when the Governor authorized a reward of $750 for Purvis and $250 for the arrest of members of the party who had assisted him breaking jail.

"I carried a Winchester rifle and a .45 Colt pistol," he later told friends, "but the time spent as a fugitive was the most miserable time of my life. I didn't want to kill anyone so I continued to hide with my friends and relatives. As I blazed a trail hurriedly through the virgin forests and heavy undergrowth, going from one location to another, I realized that my life was in more danger than it had been back in jail and I sometimes wished that my friends hadn't been so hasty in rescuing me from prison."

Will Purvis might have remained a miserable, hunted fugitive the rest of his life if Anselm J. McLaurin hadn't decided to run for the Democratic nomination for governor, which then as now was equivalent to election. McLaurin's only important plank was his promise not to hang Will Purvis. He won easily. In the excitement of the election, almost no one noticed that the first of the jurymen who had found Purvis guilty unexpectedly died that same week.

"Let Purvis surrender himself," McLaurin told Purvis' friends, "and I'll commute his

sentence to life imprisonment." When the news brought no smiles to the faces of the delegation he whispered: "Don't worry. I'll see he's a free man before I go out of office, but he will have to go to jail for a little while."

In February 1897, Will Purvis surrendered. He was sent to a convict camp, the Okley Farm, between Natchez and Jackson, where he was given a job piling logs in a field. Typical meals consisted of black coffee, corn bread and boiled salt meat, turnips and water. He spent twenty-two months as a convict under these conditions and contracted typhoid.

Meanwhile, petitions were being signed all over the state to have Will Purvis pardoned. Hundreds of them poured in on the Governor but the pardon might have been delayed even longer if Jim Buckley, the murdered man's brother, hadn't suddenly come forward in 1898 and said that he was no longer sure it was Will Purvis he saw at the ambush site. This, of course, knocked the bottom out of the state's case and the path was cleared for the governor's pardon.

Late in December 1898, Will Purvis left the prison camp for the state prison at Jackson, where they gave him a suit of clothes, $10 in cash and their best wishes. For five and one half years he had been in hiding or in jail. In the general rejoicing that followed the pardon, no one paid much attention to the fact that another of the famous jury died unexpectedly.

Soon after Will returned to his parents' new farm, just above the town of Purvis, the family threw a huge homecoming dinner for all who had been active in the case. Among them were the Reverend J. I. Boone and his pretty daughter, Sarah. Purvis married her a year later, and settled down to serious farming.

As a pardoned convict, Will Purvis still felt the whispers as he and his wife passed through the town, marketing. There were still many people who sincerely believed Purvis had killed Will Buckley and that only a freak accident had saved him from hanging. But in time most people began to forget the case and Purvis became just an ordinary, struggling Mississippi farmer. The years passed and his family grew steadily larger. Eventually he had four boys and seven girls and he made out fairly well. Hardly anyone noticed the jurors Cullenane, Rankin, Scarborough and Cowan had also died.

Then in 1917, at a Holy Roller

revival meeting, the repeated cries, "Come forward and confess your sins" finally brought a tall, aging, heavy-set man to the platform. Everyone knew Joe Beard, an easy-going farmer whose place was near the old Purvis farm. Beard cried aloud that he had long been suffering under a terrible sin. But the words choked up in him and he left.

For months Beard wrestled with his conscience and finally he walked into the office of Toxey Hall, then district attorney of Marion County. He confessed that he and Louis Thornhill, his brother-in-law, had drawn lots at a special White Cap meeting and both had been selected to kill Will and Jim Buckley and their farmhand, Sam Waller. They built a brush blind near the path the Buckley party would have to use on their way home. Thornhill fired the shot that killed Bill Buckley, but as Joe Beard told the district attorney, "his heart failed him and he could not shoot." Beard was supposed to have killed Jim Buckley and Sam Waller. When he failed to pull the trigger, Thornhill looked at his in-law savagely and snarled, "I've a good notion to kill you, too."

District Attorney Hall planned to bring Beard before the next grand jury, but Beard died of pneumonia before it met. Unfortunately, Beard hadn't signed his informal confession, and with his death it was impossible to prosecute the real killer, Louis Thornhill. As soon as word of the confession got out, Thornhill stopped coming to Columbia and confined himself to his cabin. Even his relatives stopped coming to see him and his cabin was shunned by all. He died a few years later, unconfessed and unrepentant.

Beard's confession made sense to a lot of people who remembered the huge footprints near the ambush and recalled that Joe Beard had unusually large feet. With Beard's confession came final vindication for Will Purvis. But at best vindication would be an empty gesture unless the state could somehow make it up to him, in some small measure, for the attempted hanging, the prison camps and the typhoid. Finally, on March 15, 1920, after several unsuccessful attempts, the Legislature appropriated $5,000 as "compensation." The most eloquent advocate of the measure in the State Senate was Scott Hathorn, who as a deputy sheriff had placed the black mask over Will Purvis' face just before the trap was sprung. News of the award completely overshadowed the

fact that another of the famous Purvis jury had died suddenly.

With vindication came offers for Will Purvis to appear in vaudeville, to go to Hollywood and help write a movie of his life. Purvis wasn't interested. Instead, he added to his modest farm holdings so that he had 120 acres on which he raised corn, cotton and potatoes. With part of the money he invested in a sawmill which turned out poorly.

Shortly after the award, a bright newspaperman discovered the courtroom promise Will Purvis made after the close of his first trial: "I'll outlive all of you." He discovered that the promise was well on its way to fulfillment. Thereafter local people began keeping score themselves. Actually, Purvis wasn't a very good bet to outlive anyone in particular. All his later life he had recurrences of typhoid, and he suffered from a kidney condition.

In 1932, his family persuaded him to go to New York and appear on Ripley's "Believe It or Not" program. He had an unhappy time, particularly when a photographer wanted him to pose with a noose around his neck.

As the years passed, Purvis remained alive even as juror after juror went to his death, a few as a result of accidents. Smith, Corley, Hand and Donovan were added to the names of the dead jurors. Finally, in 1938, when Purvis was sixty-six, there was just one juryman still alive — Johnny Cook, a well-known local well-digger. Even the sheriff, the prosecuting attorney, the judge and all the mistaken witnesses were dead. Cook who came from a line of long-lived Southerners was boasting he would defy the "curse" and outlive Will Purvis. His chances seemed good when Purvis was laid low with Bright's disease, a chronic kidney condition.

On Thursday, October 13, 1938, Will Purvis smiled weakly through the racking pain of his disease and said to a relative at his bedside: "I guess I can die now." He did.

And the last of the jurors, Cook? He was stricken and died on Saturday, October 8th, five days before Will Purvis died. His blurted courtroom promise of 1893 was made good. He had outlived the men who had condemned him to hang.

Stalin's Bible

by Waclaw Solski

THE WORLD'S all-time best-seller among books, with the single exception of the Bible, is a solid and solemn tome carrying the unwieldy title, *A Short History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union*, commonly referred to in its native habitat as the *Short History*. Its reader appeal to anyone but long-suffering political specialists is practically nil, for it is written in the special gobbledegook of official Bolshevism. But it has been translated into some 200 languages and dialects and its aggregate circulation may be estimated safely at 50,000,000.

Several hundred million people daily are being indoctrinated with the contents of this book, not only as individual readers but as students in all schools of the Soviet-dominated segment of the earth, from the river Elbe in Germany to the brink of the Pacific, and in communist cells and schools in the rest of the world. Its study is mandatory for millions in the U.S.S.R. and its satellite empire, where no one can receive a diploma in any branch of education, or obtain an important post in the ruling hierarchy, or get a commission in the armed forces, without thorough knowledge of this fundamental volume.

To the Bolshevik faithful the *Short History* is roughly what *Mein Kampf* was to the followers of Hitler. But whereas the Nazi "bible" was known at least by name and evil repute to the whole world, even the well-

informed average man outside the Soviet orbit has rarely heard of its communist equivalent. Yet the ideology and political goals propounded in its pages are already having a profound impact on the ordinary mortal wherever he may live, since they underlie the current struggle between militant communism and freedom throughout the world.

It is not excessive to say that as a typical American you are paying higher taxes, sending your sons to Korean battlefields, gearing for possible atomic war, as a result of the precepts and blueprints for action set forth in a book about which you are probably hearing for the first time.

When it was first published, in 1938, the Soviet press hinted that certain erudite chapters — like those dealing with dialectic materialism — were written by Joseph Stalin himself, though the book as a whole was credited to a Special Commission of the Communist Party. In time, however, credit for the whole work was increasingly ascribed to the dictator. By October, 1950, this palpable falsehood was made total and official: the Moscow *Pravda* let it be known that "this work of a genius, this book that has sold more copies than any in modern times" was written in its entirety by the *Vozhd* or Leader.

No exact circulation figures have been published. But in 1946 alone, ten million copies were printed in Soviet Russia in the many tongues of that polyglot empire, in addition to the millions already extant. In the satellite areas, hundreds of thousands of copies roll from the presses every year. *Pravda* recently announced, for instance, that the fifth large printing of the *Short History* was issued in 1950 in tiny Lithuania. Boastful statistics of a large increase in book output in all iron-curtain countries, intended to suggest a literary renaissance under the Soviet sun, fail to specify that the impressive figures have been swelled by huge editions of the *Short History* and other such propaganda fare.

In the United States, although Communist Party membership had not reached seventy-five thousand, a second printing of one hundred thousand copies of the book was announced in 1939, only one year after its release in Moscow. A closely printed volume of 363 pages, the English-language edition sells for less than a dollar in all communist bookshops. Everywhere, Russia included, the price is kept low to encourage buying. Whether any part of the fabulous profits and royalties goes

to the alleged author or to the respective national parties is not disclosed. A Soviet report on December 11, 1949, showed that the circulation of all of Stalin's works has reached a total of 539,000,000 in the Soviet Union, making him the most widely published author in history.

More and more, since its first publication, the *Short History* has become a substitute for all other communist treatises. The direct study of Marx, Engels and even Lenin is no longer encouraged by the Kremlin. In their pristine form these works might give a perceptive reader too much food for thought about the course of the Soviet "experiment," while the Stalinist history contains a safe distillation and interpretation in line with the prescribed myths. It is today the sole book that is required reading in the Soviet officers' corps and the basic text of Soviet education on all levels, from high school through the universities and specialized Red academies.

Any facts or ideas in history, philosophy, economics, even science, that do not happen to square with the *Short History* become treasonable errors by definition, and woe to the Soviet citizen who raises embarrassing questions. The book thus stands as a monument to the Big Lie.

THE date of its hatching, 1938, is significant. That was when the notorious "blood purges" were rounded off. Virtually all the Old Bolsheviks, founding fathers of the Soviet state, had been "exposed" as foreign agents, spies, madmen and traitors; those still alive had been duly executed, with or without benefit of a public trial and confession. The most effective living witnesses to the outlawed truths had in this way been eliminated. The revised history of the party, the Revolution and the post-revolutionary years could now be enshrined in a formal document, in which Stalin is identified retroactively as the leading figure, and of stature almost as great as Lenin's.

Victor Kravchenko has written of the new book, in *I Chose Freedom:*

> Shamelessly, without so much as an explanation, it revised half a century of Russian history. I don't mean simply that it falsified some facts or gave a new interpretation of events. I mean that it deliberately stood history on its head, expunging events and inventing facts. It twisted the recent past — a past still fresh in millions of memories — into new and bizarre shapes, to conform with the version of affairs presented by the blood-purge trials and the accompanying propaganda.

It was, in Kravchenko's words, "bold, specious, conscienceless fiction," with "a certain magnificence in its unabridged cynicism, its defiance of the common sense of the Russian people."

The true roles of the giants of the 1917 upheaval — Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and the rest — were erased, and these once-glorified leaders were repainted as demonic hirelings of the capitalist world and the old regime. The Red Army, created and led by Trotsky in its initial years, was represented as the handiwork of Stalin, who was pictured as the military genius of the civil war, the architect of the whole Soviet structure, and the sole repository of Marxist-Leninist wisdom.

All neutral historians of the Russian Revolution are agreed that Stalin's part was minor. The celebrated on-the-spot account by the gifted American journalist, John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, does not even mention him; Reed seems to have been unaware of Stalin's existence. The reason is that Stalin, though in the leadership group, hovered in the shadows while others crowded in the limelight. There are ample indications that the cautious Georgian held himself aloof from Lenin's *coup d'etat*.

But in subsequent years Stalin's mouthpieces invented a "party center" which was supposedly the high command of the *coup* and in which he played first fiddle to Lenin's baton. The *Short History* made that invention official "fact" which could be doubted only at the peril of one's life.

Aside from Lenin and Stalin, very few were acknowledged in the book as genuine revolutionary leaders in 1917. Among the few, it is amusing to note, were Andrei Zhdanov and Nikolai Yezhov, who were then nineteen and thirteen years old respectively. Evidently the zealous repairers of history forgot to check the birth-dates of these Stalin henchmen.

The honor assigned to a thirteen-year-old Yezhov boomeranged in another respect. At the time the *Short History* was compounded, this man headed the omnipotent NKVD that had just carried out the colossal blood-letting. But scarcely had the volume come off the press when Yezhov in his turn was liquidated. Happily for all concerned, every new edition of the Bolshevik "bible" is carefully revised to conform with new policies — a process of rewriting the past exactly like the one described in George Orwell's

novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* — and Yezhov's name has been duly expunged. However, since American editions cannot always keep pace with the Soviets revisions, Yezhov still figures as a thirteen-year-old leader of the 1917 *coup d'etat* in the *Short History* on sale in Red bookshops in the United States. Undoubtedly in the next edition, these mistakes will have been corrected by the more careful of the American editors.

Foreign correspondents in Moscow have noted that whenever Stalin is feted in his own presence, he joins in the stormy applause for himself. The dictator in the flesh thus does honor to a kind of abstract Stalin, the historical figure. This curious habit is followed in the *Short History*. The author talks of himself in the third person and the book abounds in almost routine references to the courage, genius, omniscience of its author. We read that "Comrade Stalin was carrying on tremendous revolutionary work in Trans-Caucasia" or that "of great importance was Comrade Stalin's report on the national question."

In contrast with Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which bristles with I's, there is thus not a single first person singular pronoun in the *Short History*. But Stalin's unique literary mannerisms do show through in some chapters, indicating that he actually had a hand in their composition.

In his 'teens, Joseph Djugashvilli, as he was still known, attended an Orthodox theological seminary in Tiflis, preparing for the priesthood. Those years have left indelible marks on his speech and writing. For instance, he is greatly addicted to numbering the reasons and causes of everything, as in a catechism. He likes to pose ideological questions, which he then proceeds to answer in numbered array. He is also inclined to employ Biblical-sounding words, such as *slodyey* (an evil-doer), especially in castigating sinners.

These elements in the *Short History* accord well with the fact that the book was designed as a species of Soviet catechism, a manual of prescribed beliefs. In effect it provides the one and only correct answer to every conceivable question of communist faith and Soviet objectives. Whether in Moscow or Peiping, in New York or Valparaiso, a citation from the *History* is final law for a disciplined Stalinist, taking precedence over the original views even of the sainted Marx and Lenin. What these prophets may have "meant" can still be disputed, but to question the literal veracity of Stalin in his "bible" is for the fundamen-

talists of his church the blackest of heresies.

Again in contrast to the rantings of *Mein Kampf*, its Soviet counterpart is stylistically sober unto drabness, couched in the awkward pseudo-scientific jargon of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist gospel. The book is, like the Bible itself, at once a history of events and a statement of faith. But it goes beyond the Bible in that it also embodies a plan of action and a textbook of revolutionary methods.

Its central idea, running like an unbroken thread from cover to cover, is the inevitable world revolution. Soviet leaders often find it expedient to announce the possibility of the coexistence and even cooperation of the communist and capitalist worlds. But Stalin's book, final authority on Soviet dogma, *never says a single word about this possibility*. On the contrary, it repeatedly exhorts its readers to remember this peaceful co-existence is both undesirable and impossible.

"As long as capitalist encirclement exists," it affirms repetitively, "there will be a danger of capitalist intervention. To destroy the danger . . . it is essential to destroy the capitalist encirclement." The preamble itself instructs believers as follows: "Studies of the history of the party strengthen the belief in the ultimate victory of the great task of Lenin and Stalin, *the victory of Communism in the whole world*." The Kremlin, it is clear, will settle for nothing less than an ultimate Soviet Union of the World.

The book reminds the reader that, in the days of mourning for Lenin, Stalin made "a solemn vow in the name of the party," namely "to remain faithful to the principles of the Communist International." This organization was founded in Moscow in 1919. Describing the event, the *Short History* emphasizes the fact that it adopted a manifesto "to the proletariat of all countries, calling upon them to wage a determined struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for the triumph of Soviets all over the world." The over-all purpose of the communist movement is thus presented without margins for doubt, whatever double-talk Kremlin politicians may be forced to employ in their dealings with the infidels.

By the logic of the Stalinist dogma, indeed, there are no alternatives, since victory of the Soviet Union over the Western world is a foregone conclusion and the doom of capitalist civilization inevitable. The duty of

communists, seen in this light, is inherent in history itself. They must hasten the inevitable process, using the leverage of the Soviet Union and its armed forces when necessary to accelerate the final climax.

Another Stalin book, *Problems of Leninism*, comprising his speeches and articles, also carries enormous weight as a guide to perplexed communists. Abroad it is still quoted frequently as *the* bible of the Muscovite faith. But actually its place in the sacred writings has become secondary; it is approximately exegesis to the scriptures of the *Short History*.

A careful study of the history should be made obligatory for American and other non-Soviet statesmen assigned to deal with world problems under the shadow of the Kremlin's new power. Unfortunately they are as ignorant of its content as their opposite numbers were of *Mein Kampf*. Under the communist code, lying to "the enemy," which is to say the non-Soviet world, is not only permissible but a matter of honor and glory. What a Stalinist spokesman, in the United Nations or in some liberal magazine, says on any issue is therefore no more than a tactical diversion if it conflicts with the strategy set forth in the Soviet catechism, the *Short History of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union*.

Waclaw Solski, author and political analyst, has published numerous books in Europe. An authority on Russian political and cultural subjects, he has written articles for COMMENTARY, THE NEW LEADER, THE SPECTATOR (*London*), THE MODERN REVIEW *and other publications. Under the sponsorship of the National Committee for a Free Europe, he has just completed a book on Soviet propaganda, entitled* THE ENGINEERS OF SOULS.

The State of Sin in Chicago

by The Reverend
Alson J. Smith

A WORRIED GROUP of Chicago tavern owners and liquor dealers met at the Hotel Stevens two years ago to map strategy. They had just been dealt a body blow by a local election which made several precincts of the wettest city in the country as dry as a Kansas Prairie. They ate hot chicken and listened while Stanley Baar, manager of the Licensed Beverage Industries, Inc., talked cold turkey. The able head of L. B. I. laid the facts on the line with rare frankness.

"You," he said, "are accused of aiding, abetting and being a party to the operation of what is alleged to be the most disreputable, obnoxious, and least law-abiding on-premise liquor establishments the world over. Conditions on the Bowery of New York, the slums of Paris, the "skid-row" section of Los Angeles, the Basin Street district of New Orleans, and the Beale Street area of Memphis cannot compare with the conditions in the metropolitan Chicago area.

"There exists here an element that, either for greed or because of their very character, operates with pure disregard for any and all laws of enforcement. They stay open beyond legal hours, they sell minors, they permit gambling, they employ hostesses, they allow prostitutes and other undesirable characters to congregate.

"There is not a violation in the whole lexicon of liquor control which cannot easily be used to describe this element. Outlets and rendezvous where the law is flouted are places that have given birth to notorious syndicates, to murders by many scores, to the hatching of many crimes, to the illegitimate control of gambling, horseracing and vice on an historical scale second to nowhere in the United States."

This indictment came from no minister, no crackpot reformer. It came from an insider, one of

the lords of the trade. Was he exaggerating? Could Chicago taverns possibly be that bad?

As a citizen of Chicago, I once might have said no. All of us take for granted the municipal ordinances which prohibited every violation he described. We know that it is the sworn duty of the police and magistrates to enforce these laws. Spurring the law enforcement agencies on is the Committee of Fifteen — a citizen's vigilante group dedicated to civic improvement — and the Chicago Crime Commission. And as a final line of defense, there is the press and public opinion; they would not tolerate such flagrant violations of law and morality.

I decided to see for myself whether the indictment was true. Getting started was no problem. Stand almost anywhere in Chicago and you can't pitch a quarter across the street without hitting a tavern, night club, saloon, bar or cafe. Whether they are called by these names or known as a package store, drug store, lunch room or hotel, they all serve liquor. There are more than 9,200 retail liquor "outlets," or one for every 260 adults.

I made my tavern-to-tavern check on just three streets — South State, West Madison and North Clark. My first call was at a long narrow saloon with a tiny stage built back of the bar. Elsewhere in the country floor shows are confined to the floor. In Chicago they are served up on the counter with the drinks.

This bar features a "sensational" dance called "Beauty and the Beast." For a fifteen-cent beer, you can watch a tired chorus girl artistically portray both the beauty and the ape that is seducing her. There was a variation in the entertainment I saw. In addition to her regular act, she did a "strip." The handful of customers at the bar gazed sadly into their beers while she pranced through her bumps and grinds. There was no applause when she gave her navel a last listless shake.

Said the man next to me: "Better the beast should have stripped."

At another cafe across the street, there were six "red hot" strippers and an M. C. — a master of coarseness rather than ceremony. As I was leaving, the men's room attendant spotted me as a new customer.

"Don't get the wrong idea, mister," he said. "We ain't usually this tame. Floor show's slowed down some because they're putting the heat on us."

"Who's they?" I asked.

"Why, the mayor and a new police captain. But things'll be

back to normal in a couple days. We'll just close early — 'round four — for a few nights. Come in next week and we'll be open 'round the clock as usual."

As I went from one tavern to the next, I heard the same story. The heat was on but it was only temporary. But heat or no heat, I counted four "Beauty and the Beasts," one Virgin's Dream, and three Dance of the Lovers. All of them had the same motif. The dancers dressed as half-man, half-woman, the male disrobing and seducing the female. Nothing was left to the imagination.

"How much rougher can it get?" I asked a bartender.

"Brother," he said laconically, "Any one of those dames can bump the head off your beer."

Every bar featured the same display of middle-aged women, shaking their sagging fannies. Their acts certainly didn't improve the liquor, and no alcoholic haze could conceal the fact that these "beauties" and "virgins" were fat, fortyish and frowzy. I found that the old trouper's saying is still valid: "No night club can open in Chi without at least four strippers."

No night club advertisement in Chicago newspapers is complete without a lurid illustration of its "atomic blondes," "Cuban bombshells," "siren revues," and "exotic jungle dances." Whether the performer's name is Val de Val, Shalimar, Denise Darnell, June Darling or Rene D'Orsay, the end of the act is always the same — naked belly and bare rump. Needless to say, even Chicago has laws against nudity, but nobody ever thinks of enforcing them. The Municipal Code specifically declares: "All indecent acts or entertainments are illegal." But Chicago's night life depends upon nudity.

With sex glutting the liquor market, tavern owners have been forced to cut prices to attract trade. Competition is so stiff that the five-cent shot has almost been revived. In two sawdust-littered grog shops on North Clark Street you can buy two drinks of bar whiskey for eleven cents. The whiskey is no more identifiable than the nondescript characters from nearby rooming houses and cheap hotels who gulp down the stuff.

A standard brand of whiskey retailing in the Loop for fifty cents a drink costs only eight cents on North Clark Street. Throughout most of the city, you can stand at the bar, order a bottle of beer and see a floor show, all for forty cents.

In virtually every night club, and in most of the taverns, I had

the opportunity to play "26 games," a dice game where the customer rolls against the house for drinks. The want-ad sections of the newspapers are full of calls for "26 game" girls. Bartenders laughed at the suggestion that gambling is illegal. Chapter 191, Section I, of the Municipal Code may proclaim that "all gambling is illegal and all places used for gambling are common nuisances." So far as Chicago is concerned, this is a dead letter law.

Another rule on the books that is never enforced is the Illinois Liquor Control Law, which states unequivocally that "no alcoholic liquor may be sold, given or delivered to any minor (boy under twenty-one, girl under eighteen). But according to the Juvenile Protective Association, more than one out of every four taverns consistently violates this law. Despite laws against serving minors, I never saw teen-agers refused liquor. "Sure I serve 'em," said one bartender. "If she swears she's over eighteen, Margaret O'Brien can get a double bourbon any night in the week. I'm running a bar, not a schoolroom."

Typical of this Pandora's Box of juvenile delinquency is a report about a tavern on the South Side:

> Unescorted teen-age girls and older women drink with men they meet there and leave with them for immoral purposes; underage boys engage in drunken fights over young girls; liquor is sold after the closing hour with most of the patrons becoming intoxicated; underage girls are employed as waitresses and gambling game operators; young sailors and soldiers "pick up" young girls and hardened disreputable women; there is obscene language, drunkenness, and indecent conduct. Once a man was found brutally murdered in a vacant lot near the tavern, and an 18-year-old boy who was last seen with the murdered man said that they both had been drinking in the tavern on the night of the murder; the boy said he had been drinking there for two years. Only then, after a murder preceded by more than five years of continuous violation of our laws, was the license revoked. But even this long and disgraceful record was not enough to keep the place closed; its license was restored and today it is conducting business as usual.

How did this den get its liquor license back? Brewery officials interceded with the local Liquor Control Division. Despite the protests of the people in the neighborhood, the license was restored.

Not only do Chicago taverns serve minors, they also employ them. The law may prohibit the employment of minors, but that did not prevent a South Side tavern from featuring nightly a four-year-old-child in its one A.M. revue. Girls thirteen to sixteen are frequently employed as "hostesses," waitresses and "26 girls". Eleven-year-old boys work in bowling alleys and taverns, setting up liquor as well as pins.

Miss Jessie Binford, executive secretary of the Juvenile Protective Association, declares that the law is violated so frequently as to make it a farce. Here is a case record from the Association's files:

> Two girls, thirteen and fourteen years of age, came to Chicago in search of employment (and a good time). Young girls can secure employment more easily in the tavern than in nearly any other place in the city. These girls were hired to work as waitresses in a tavern on West Madison Street. Their duties, however, were more those of hostesses than waitresses. They were to serve the patrons, drink with them, and use any methods necessary to induce the patrons to spend money. (No recommendations are necessary in securing such jobs.)
>
> The tavern owner asked the age of the girls and they informed him that they were of legal age. This satisfied the tavern owner, in spite of the youthful, almost childish appearance of the girls.
>
> The girls worked from early evening until three or four A.M. and were paid $1 per night for their services. After being employed for short intervals in several taverns on the near West Side, a restaurant owner offered them a place where they could sleep when he discovered that their funds were exhausted. He showed them to a room over his restaurant — dark, dirty, windows boarded up, soiled table linens for bedding. As he left he padlocked the door, making prisoners of the girls. The key to the door was given to a man who patronized the restaurant; other keys were made and given to other men, all of whom entered the room and took liberties with the girls. A telephone call caused police to arrest the men and take the girls into custody. The case is now pending before the grand jury.

ANOTHER LAW openly violated concerns liquor licenses. Despite the fact that these annually expire on April thirtieth, half of Chicago's liquor outlets seldom bother to apply for renewals until days or weeks later. The local Liquor Control Com-

mission each year has to plead publicly with the operators to file for renewal. Nowhere else in the country would a tavern risk doing business for fifteen minutes without a license. But in Chicago, gin mill operators write their own tickets.

How little respect taverns have for the law is shown in these figures compiled by the Juvenile Protective Association in 1946: 5,250 places violated building code regulations, five thousand permitted gambling, 2,200 sold liquor to minors, 4,500 sold to intoxicated persons, two thousand violated health and sanitation laws, 1,200 employed minors, and 5,300 served women at the bar — all in violation of the Chicago Municipal Code and the Illinois Liquor Control Law.

The chief restriction placed by the Liquor Commission on licensing is: "No license shall be issued for the sale of alcohol in any store where the majority of customers are minors." These generous terms are carte blanche to Chicago merchants. Package stores sell alcohol by the drink, taverns sell it by the bottle. "Restaurants" sell it both ways. So do bowling alleys, dance halls, amusement parks and drug stores. Chicago is the only place in the country where daddy can walk up to the counter and order a chocolate soda for Junior and a scotch and soda for himself.

Liquor has become such a staple item in the Chicagoan's diet that it competes with breakfast foods. An established institution in the Windy City is the "Goon Hour," a six to seven A.M. jag-time when taverns feature "morning pick-me-ups," "eye-openers," and "breakfast slugs". What the cocktail hour is to New York, the Goon Hour is to Chicago.

Small wonder that Chicago is the true home of the hangover. There are some twenty-seven thousand chronic alcoholics in Chicago, according to E. M. Jellinek, of the Yale University School of Alcohol Studies. Dr. Walter Cromwell, vice-president of the newly created Chicago Committee on Alcoholism claims this figure is too conservative. He places it nearer the fifty thousand mark. Chicago's chronic alcoholic rate per hundred thousand is 1,097 as compared to the national rate of 719. It tops the record of New York, Washington and every other city that claims the drinking crown.

Liquor is even more than food and drink in Chicago. It also flows through city government. The "ABC's" of municipal politics are Alcohol, Bossism and

Corruption. Political power is centered in the fifty party committeemen in the city's fifty wards. Many of these politicos are tavern owners. Others reap their profits from liquor sales through the kickback system. When over-zealous police captains interfere with the taverns, the ward heads are quick to act. Many a precinct chief has found himself exiled to the suburbs for refusal to follow orders to "lay off." The heat which slowed business in the taverns I saw on West Madison Street proved a temporary matter, just as the barkeepers predicted. It ended when the ward committeeman straightened the police chief out, seldom a difficult job. A high-ranking police official, speaking frankly, said: "I got fifty captains under me. Maybe ten of them are honest. The rest of them would steal a red-hot stove."

Things are but little different now from the old prohibition days when four hundred cops from the Maxwell Street Station lined up once a month at the Genna Brothers' liquor warehouse for their bribes.

WHAT HOPE is there for Chicago? Charles Fleck, Republican chairman of the Illinois Liquor Control Commission, sees little chance for improvement until Chicago taverns are reorganized. He divides the blame between the city administration for lax enforcement, and some liquor wholesalers for their complete lack of business ethics. He points out that the state authority is powerless to revoke or suspend municipal liquor licenses. This can be done only by the mayor of Chicago, who is also chairman of the City Liquor Control Commission.

No truer words apply to Chicago today or to her immediate political future than those written by Walter Liggett, a crusading Minneapolis newspaperman. In the AMERICAN MERCURY, fifteen years ago, just five years before his death at the hands of Chicago gangsters, he said: "Chicago probably presents the most perfect example of the apparently incurable inability of Americans to conduct their public affairs with even a modicum of honesty and efficiency."

Arrival and Departure of Hoot

A STORY

by Richard Bissell

HOOT CAME ABOARD one summer afternoon that was so hot you could fry an ostrich egg on the steel deck plates. We were on the Illinois River, tied up at Joliet waiting for orders.

I was a deckhand once myself and since I've been Mate I believe in going easy on the boys, so I took Hoot back and showed him where his bunk was in the pigpen.

"What's your name, boy?" I said.

"Ronald Gibson," he said. He was a dumb-looking bird right from the start — strong, heavy, but you know, a big shock of black hair and he had that look about him that would make any mate think, "Well, here's another one."

"You better drop that Ronald," I said. "The boys won't go for that at all. Tell 'em your name's Tom."

"My name's Ronald," he said, setting down the paper sack with his clothes in it.

"Listen, boy," I said. "Tell 'em your name is Tom."

Just then Purcell came in from the messroom. He was another deckhand and a wise one that I never cared for.

"This here is Tom Gibson," I said. "He'll sleep over you in the upper deck."

"Welcome to the party," Purcell said. "What boat you come off of?"

"Never worked on no boat before," says our boy Gibson.

I went up to the pilot house to get our orders from Captain Norton.

By the end of the first watch the boys had scrapped both Ronald and Tom and the new deckhand's name was Hoot, after Hoot Gibson the cowboy. It's funny how quick you can pick up a new name on the river; they been calling me Dude ever since I came aboard with a new necktie on in St. Louis one time — my God, it must be ten years ago.

So we picked up six empties and headed down the canal, bound for Havana, Illinois, and the coal docks, to pick up some

barges of coal for Chicago. Oh, the life of a towboat man.

We made Brandon Road lock, and like all new deckhands Hoot wanted to be helpful but just got in the way. I told him finally to hang back and watch until he found out what it was all about. We shoved out of the lock and the sun was setting and we headed down the Illinois River with our barges riding light and easy in front of us, and with a fine contempt in all our hearts for the poor ignorant dumbbells on the shore.

I sat in the pilot house, full of swiss steak and happily thinking of the bums in my home town hanging around the pool hall waiting for bedtime. I forgot about Hoot. The *Glenn Traer* came creeping upstream and we passed her.

"I wonder if they're still having trouble with their rudders," Captain Norton said, and without waiting for answer gave a careful description of the girl he had met at the tavern while we were laid up that afternoon.

The sun went down. The offwatch threw their cigarettes in the river and turned in.

I went down on deck. The deckhands and the second engineer were sitting on the foredeck in the dark, smoking.

"Old man Marshall Field never told nobody a thing," the engineer was saying. "When it come to issuing information he was a clam. And look what he built up."

"Sure," says Purcell out of the darkness, "and look at the Field Museum. Ten minutes in there and you need some patent bunion powder. It's a foot killer, that place. I was there once when I was in eighth grade, so don't leave me hear no more about Field."

I sat down on a coil of line and made a cigarette and we all sat in silence listening to the river boiling under the stern of the barges. On the barge line there's time to go over your whole life and plan it again — my God, the hours we spend between locks sitting, and the hours in the bunk staring at the ceiling.

"Shore is gettin' dark," Hoot said suddenly. "When is the man gonna tie up? When we goin' to bed?"

Oh, Hoot, you should never of said that, I thought. They'll never forget that. You poor dumb country boy, don't you know the pride and joy of the river profession is that we're *never* tied up? Don't you know a pilot has eyes like a cat and a nose that can smell shoal water even when he's drunk? Don't you know, you hick, that running the lonesome black river at night is what sets us apart from

other mortals?

"Why, sure, now," says Purcell, "the pilot must be crazy. It's away too dark to run."

"When we goin' to bed?" says the second engineer, imitating Hoot's country voice.

"When is the man gonna tie up?" said one of the deckhands.

"Yeah," says another. "If the captain don't quit riskin' all our lives like this here, I'm agonna go up to the pilot house and tell him off."

"Hoot," I said, "come here," and I got up and walked down the deck past the engine room doors. He got up and followed me and I went down the deck to the stern.

"Listen, you goddam fool," I said. "I told you to just keep quiet and watch the rest of them."

"I never done nothin'," said Hoot. He was pigeon-toed and hunched up, a sorry looking deckhand any time.

"I never done nothin'," I said, imitating him. "You rube you, you just give them enough stuff to keep them laffin' at you for a month, maybe a year."

"What you so mad about, mister?" he said.

"*We run all night, every night,* you goddam cornhusker. Now go on in and go to bed before you fall overboard," I said.

"Looks like I'm in trouble again," he said, and he went to the bunkroom.

BREAKFAST was a fine affair. Everybody had heard about it by then from messboy to captain.

"Say, Cap," says the rat-faced old messboy, handing Captain Norton his bacon and eggs, "how come we run all night last night? I was scared to death all night long. I come in here and set in the mess room in a life preserver from sunset on."

Norton ate his breakfast. He was on his dignity when he was half-awake.

"When is the man gonna tie up?" says Purcell down at the deckhands' end of the table.

The cook, fat old Harry Baldwin, leaned on the door frame.

"Captain Norton," he said in that silly Memphis drawl of his, "Ah'm sorry, sir, but if we're agonna run nights Ah'll have to give notice. Mah pore nerves just won't stand it. Why man, Ah'm just a wrack this mawnin after what we went through all night."

"More coffee," Norton said, and taking the fresh cup started for the pilot house with it in his hand.

"When we goin' to bed?" says the second engineer. "I ain't use to these late hours."

Hoot ate his breakfast like he

never saw two eggs before. Just once he looked up, and from his face you could see he'd been kicked around like this all his life; he seemed afraid somebody was going to take his plate away from him, so he ate fast, like a stray dog ready to run.

So the boys had a good time with him — we've all been through it ourselves — but this was just the beginning. Oh, it's great what a bunch of big brave men will do when they get a stray cur to tie the tin can onto.

"Listen, Hoot," I told him one morning when we were locking up through Starved Rock. "Don't do nothing Purcell tells you to do. Don't pay no attention to him at all. Don't let him get your goat."

"He don't bother me none," Hoot said.

"He's out to run you off," I said. "He's a mean boy, so just watch him."

Hoot was naturally terrible dumb, and the deck work came very slow to him. I don't know how many times I tried to teach him how to put an eye splice in a two-inch line — he never did learn. He couldn't get the idea of making tow at all; about the only thing I could use him for was strong-arm stuff, and scrubbing paint work.

Purcell made the most of Hoot's bewilderment on deck, and whenever we were making tow there was a constant rattle of insult. In his hard South Chicago voice, Purcell blasted Hoot incessantly, all the time with a sneer on his ugly wide face.

"Come on, stupid, bring the axe over here. That's right, trip over the cavel. Too bad. Hurts, does it? Get up off the deck, goddam it, and get that ratchet on. Geez, your folks must be proud of you. *Not* that way, grab the other end. Ignorant! Pig! Farmer!"

"Listen, Purcell," I told him one time. "You're going it a little strong on Hoot. Yammerin' at the poor dummy ain't gonna make him into a deckhand."

"Why shouldn't I?" he said. "There's suppose to be three deckhands on this watch. Frankie is about half a deckhand and this Hoot ain't no deckhand at all. So who's doin' all the work? Me. For one deckhand's lousy wages I'm doin' all the work."

"Yeah, well lay off," I said.

The summer dragged on and it was hot, my God it was hot, and we ding-donged up and down the Illinois River shoving the coal to Chicago. One of the deckhands on the other watch keeled over out on the barges one noon with sunstroke. Over on our sister boat a deckhand

from Peoria fell in and drowned. In the pilot house we listened to the baseball games, and to Ralph Ginsberg playing luncheon music in the Empire Room at the Palmer House. The second mate went out with a high flyer from Lacon and ten days later to the marine hospital. The deck plates were so hot in August they stayed hot all night.

We were laying down at Havana waiting on loads one afternoon and Purcell and the second went uptown for a few beers. When they came back down the levee about three o'clock, they were feeling fine, and just then they saw that a fisherman had set up a little shanty there with a sign painted on a board, "FRESH FISH." This gave the second a brilliant idea and he went over and bought a big ugly carp, one of those hellish looking things with big yellow scales, all over slime.

So they went aboard with the fish and they went into the deckhands' bunkroom very quiet, and old Hoot was laying there under the blue sheet with his mouth open and snoring. Very carefully they pulled the sheet back and laid the carp, hell it must have been two feet long, in bed alongside of Hoot.

Hoot came to after awhile, and half-asleep he felt that big slimy fish in bed with him and he came out of the bunk on springs. He was scared to death.

It was a scream all right. It's also very funny to put a mouse in a pail of water and see how long it takes him to drown. The mouse keeps going around and around trying to find someplace to crawl out. Sometimes it takes two hours for him to drown. Very comical. I found Purcell playing this game one time and he was mad as hell when I fished the mouse out and turned it loose.

"Listen, Greasy," I said to the second that evening. "If you wanna play them fish jokes, just play them on one of the wipers. Lay off the deckhands, see?"

"Why, what's the matter with you?" he said. "Ain't you got no sense of humor?"

"Yeah," I said. "I got a sense of humor. I pull the wings off flies for a good laugh."

The next week came the big blowoff on Hoot.

We got paid twice a month, and when we got our checks I took Hoot up to the saloon near the docks at Joliet and helped him get his check cashed — $42.50 for two weeks.

We picked up five empty jumbos and two standards and went off down the river.

A couple of nights later I was

in my bunk reading *Argosy* and Hoot came in.

"Somebody stole my money," he said.

"You must of mislaid it, Hoot," I said. "Nobody ever steals from each other on the river. They steal a ham from the company, or take a stilson wrench home in the suitcase once in a while, but they don't steal from each other."

"I had my money tied up in a rag in the toe of them rubber boots I bought off of Shorty. All the deckhands knowed it was there. I never made no secret of it."

"You're a hard luck old boy, Hoot," I said. "Well, I'll try, but we'll never get it back, kid."

What could I do, I'm no detective. Somebody stole the money all right.

They all denied it. Nobody knew nothing about it, of course. In a case like that all you can do is ask, and raise hell, and grieve over the goddam human race.

When we got back to the docks at Joliet, Hoot came out on the foredeck with his paper bag, with his two shirts and three pairs of socks in it, and those precious rubber boots.

"Good-bye, mister," he said. "I'm quittin'."

"Now wait a minute Hoot," I said. "You're not much of a deckhand, but you got a job here as long as you want."

"I'll never make it here. I can't learn steamboatin' no better'n anything else I ever tried."

"Stick around, kid," I said. "You'll make it after a while. It's a tough racket, boy, but you're doing all right."

"They stoled my money," he said. And the last I saw him he was turning the corner over by the saloon, with his paper bag under one arm, and the rubber boots under the other.

I went back to the bunkroom.

Purcell was in his bunk smoking a cigarette and reading a comic book.

"Get up and get out," I said.

"What?" he said. "What's the joke, Dude?"

"Get up. Pack up and get off."

"How come? How come you're firin' me?"

"I don't like the way you comb your hair," I said. "It makes you look like a dump rat. Get off the boat. And get off quick."

Richard Bissell is the author of A Stretch on the River, *a recently published collection of stories about life on the Mississippi. He used to be a river pilot himself. Lately he has been running a shirt factory in Dubuque, Iowa. He says he likes it.*

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE

The Trouble with the Irish

Dublin

I met with Napper Tandy, and he took me by the hand,
And he said, "How's poor ould Ireland, and how does she stand?"

WELL, SHE'S still standing, though perhaps staggering a bit. The stagger began around about 1922, when she got her partial independence, and since then the country has gradually become almost intolerable as a place where a man of sensitivity can abide at his ease.

During the period when Ireland was being misruled by England, it was quite a pleasant and lively spot. The native Irish were kept away as far as possible from outside influences and were forced backwards towards the Middle Ages. I do not suggest that there was anything wrong with living in the Middle Ages, nor do I consider as too offensive the picture of Ireland as drawn by sentimental nineteenth century writers — a beautiful green island with thatched cottages, unspoiled colleens and romantic rebels.

It was, of course, essentially a lie but it was kept in circulation by hotel-keepers, jarvies, topers and English colonels. In a sense it was a flattering, if undignified, conception of the country, but the Irish gave it a twist to suit themselves and played up to the idea when they discovered that it paid good dividends in tourist trade. Besides, the Irish were natural actors and they reveled in playing a comic role. If it made themselves and others laugh and also brought some

money, they were satisfied. But when talking quietly among themselves in a pub they would relax and discuss the relative ease with which one could fool an Englishman and an American. "Of all the furriners it's aisier to cod the Englishman but the Yank is freer with the spondulicks," I often heard it said.

During the past twenty or more years, Ireland has been drifting into a smug system of government which is entirely foreign to the Irish mind. The Irishman needs opposition to feed his emotional temperament, and if he does not get sufficient opposition he becomes flabby and crooked, like Irish-American politicians. There is nothing over here in Ireland worth fighting for or against. The British are down, if not out, and the group which rules in the six northern counties (still held by England) are more comic than offensive.

But there is more vitality in the northern than there is in the southern Irish. Up north they keep a religious war in full swing. On the twelfth of July each year the Protestants all turn out with big drums and march in procession, shouting hatred and defiance at their Catholic neighbors. But even in this part of Ireland there is less spirit than there used to be. I was in Belfast for the "Twalfth," as they call it, and I noticed that many of the anti-Popery songs have given way to such compositions as, "If I'd known you were coming I'd have baked a cake." As I say, even the fight is going out of the northerners.

What offends most in Ireland is the government. It would seem that, in recent years, every dishonest opportunist around has found his way into the Dáil (our Parliament). Perhaps the reason may be that, owing to the strict emigration laws during the past few years, those Irishmen we would normally export to Chicago were forced to remain in Ireland and, as their natural bent was towards politics and allied fields, they found their way into the government. They have established a new order: Ireland must become respectable. People are expected to keep a crease in their trousers and to learn to drink cocktails in chromium-decorated bars. The Dublin pubs, famous for their witty atmosphere amid the sawdust and spittle, are a thing of the past. When the present owner bought Davy Byrne's pub, made famous by James Joyce in *Ulysses*, he announced that he was going to turn it into a respectable tavern. He carried out this dire threat, with the

result that people of taste cannot now go in there for a quiet drink.

Last week I went down to county Monaghan where I was born. I was sad at the change that had taken place. When I was growing up, the townland was full of children. There were at least five or six in every house. Now, however, there is only one child in an area of about a half-mile radius, and that child's father was over fifty when he married a couple of years ago. There are lots of old forlorn bachelors in the area and they give the place a desolate appearance. They have electricity in the houses but there are no children to benefit by it.

All the youths have fled to the English factories and it is not always easy to save the harvest because of the shortage of help. This year a great part of it was lost but the lack of help was only one cause. It must have been the wettest summer in living memory and as I sat in my Dublin flat I was at least consoled that I had not to worry if my rick of corn was not properly thatched.

In Dublin everything has become precise and correct as far as it is possible to make an Irishman conform to a pattern. The government and the clergy, both Protestant and Catholic, control every medium of expression and of living in one way or another. To get a job in Dublin is, therefore, most difficult if one has a sense of dignity; one has either to join the Freemasons or its Catholic counterpart, the Knights of Columbanus. It is not easy to become a Knight but, if once in, your future is assured.

There is no television yet in Ireland, which is no loss for, like the Irish radio, it will be controlled directly by a politician, the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, when it does arrive. Almost everyone in Ireland has a radio set but few listen to the Irish radio; instead they listen to the B.B.C. (British Broadcasting Corporation). The Irish radio programs, run entirely by civil servants, are so stupid that many have had their radio sets so arranged that they cannot possibly run into the Irish programs. Half the programs are in the Gaelic language, and since no one would talk or write in Gaelic if he could get a hearing in English, these programs are even more moronic than the ones in the English language. So far we have only got one or two jukeboxes in Dublin, but very soon more will arrive.

Since Mr. De Valera's party was beaten at the elections a

couple of years back, Ireland is ruled by a coalition government of six parties whose only sense of unity is that they all hate Mr. De Valera. De Valera, whether one agrees with him or not, was at least a great figure and a man of courage. His autocratic attitude had something of the artist in it, as when he once pointed out to an opposition speaker in the Dáil that he had only to look into his own heart to see what Ireland needed. The present government is more inclined in similar circumstances to look into someone else's pocket — especially the American pocket. During the last few months the Irish government has been sending all the hotel keepers of Ireland over to America on a costly junket on the pretext of studying American hotel methods. No one can see the sense of it unless it be to flatter the Americans, to court tourist traffic or hope for a further "loan."

The present Minister for External Affairs is Mr. Sean McBride, son of Maud Gonne, who was admired so much by that great poet, W. B. Yeats. He was born and reared in France but, worse still, he has the dangerous delusion that he is Ireland's man of destiny. Though once a revolutionary, now that he is in control there is no hope of a revolution. He visualizes himself as a leader of Ireland at world councils. The only real Irish trait he possesses is that of taking himself and Ireland very seriously.

When McBride got his present job, he announced that Ireland was in future to cast aside her comic cloak and that the ideals of her great men, Yeats, Synge and the rest, must be propagated. He would institute a Department of Fine Arts. Eventually he established a Cultural Committee. Irish writers were delighted at this brave gesture and looked forward with enthusiasm towards a bright future. They were not without their suspicions, however. They could see, too, that he was careful to praise only the dead. Still, there were hopes that Ireland's men of genius would be recalled home and given sinecures. When the Cultural Committee took shape, however, the only people appointed to it were Civil Servants and second-rate writers who were well in with the politicians and the clergy. They made a film on the life of Yeats but so far it has not been shown in Ireland, though it has been tried out on the defenseless Icelanders.

A further sidelight on modern Irish "culture" was the sending to the International Exhibition

in Venice, as representatives of Irish art, the two painters — both women — who are conceded generally to be Ireland's worst painters. Of Ireland's serious painters there are three: one spends most of his time at the racetrack punting; another is submerged and discouraged by a teaching job; and the third is constantly drunk, trying to forget his studio and his wife.

It may seem less peculiar, then, that most of Ireland's best artists and writers have to flee the country. The reason is not the much talked of censorship of books, but rather the problem of making a living. A man with an independent mind cannot get a job in Ireland. If an employer braver than the rest suggests that he might give him a job, he is sure to be warned by a politician or clergyman that the man is dangerous. He never gets the job. Once a man is blackballed he will be unemployed forever in Ireland.

This is one reason why there is so much frustration in Dublin. A man of ideas must go out of the country or risk the alternative of going out of his mind. Bernard Shaw, James Stephens, Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Casey, James Joyce — exiles all. Most of the writers go to London. Few go to America because experience has taught them that those who do go there often turn into what they call "stage-Irish Yankee windbags."

There is little social life in Ireland. The wealthy political businessmen go to the races on a Saturday and swagger around praising jockeys and looking affluent. The rest go to the films and, though there are over a hundred cinemas in Dublin, they are all packed to the doors every night and many have to be turned away. All the films are American and British; there is no Irish film industry. Someone in Ireland did make a film but it was so bad that one film critic described it as "a form of torture to which Stalin's attention should be drawn." The Abbey Theatre is, of course, in the deepest degradation, partly controlled by the government. The dance halls are also crowded every night of the week by men and women seeking recreation. Marriages in Ireland are few and far between and the dance hall is the next best thing.

The Dublin pubs also are crowded every night and one has to push hard to get near the bar. Women as well as men now drink in the pubs to the ruin of the pubs and themselves. Night clubs are not permitted, and that is no loss.

The literary center of Ireland is London, but if one happens to find himself as a visitor to Dublin, he might drop in on the Pearl Bar some Friday evening. There he will find most of the spiritually broken-down writers, the phonies, the journalists and the sycophants — all clustered in one spot. Austin Clark will be there, dressed like the picture of a New England Puritan; Francis McManus, the novel-a-year man; Robaird O'Farrachain (Robert Farren), who writes bad verse by the ream; and of course many others of the same calibre. In the centre of this group sits Bertie Smyllie, editor of the *Irish Times*, his large body overflowing the chair and his ear cocked for a word of flattery. Sean O'Faolain (John Whelan) tries to run a special session of his own out in the suburbs.

Yesterday I walked up the Dublin mountains, away from the petty squabbles of the city, and looked around. All the memories of ancient Ireland seemed to rush upon me — her kings, her battles and her mythology. Away to the north was Howth Head, famous in all the Irish sagas, and I could not but reflect that though Ireland's men may stumble and fall her hills and legends sustain her.

— PETER KAVANAGH

Peter Kavanagh is a County Monaghan man. He was at one time a professional boxer and also a shoemaker. He strayed from these trades, however, and became a college professor and a writer. Devin Adair just brought out his latest book, The Story of the Abbey Theatre.

Crime Goes Bourgeois

Paris

OVER HALF THE inventions at the recent French inventors' show were devices to protect the public against crooks. With British jails bursting, there has been a demand in the House of Lords for the restoration of flogging. In Rome the Pope has exhorted Holy Year pilgrims to pray for a world "almost universally flooded with moral decadence," and the Vatican has ordered the excommunication of priests who indulge in private commercial speculation.

In England armed robbery is up fourfold; smuggling is up seventyfold; murder is up fivefold; crimes by women and children have doubled since 1938; and a third of all larceny cases involve children under

seventeen years of age.

In Italy extortion and kidnaping have increased fivefold; whole battalions of children are now mobilized to beg and steal; and other thousands of children collect cigaret butts, after which the tobacco is reworked, rolled into stolen Pall Mall wrappers, and sold as new cigarets.

There are so many criminal gangs in France that the French crime reporters are running out of names for them. Two prominent gang leaders had to be satisfied with numbers in the headlines: Crazy Pierre No. 1, and Crazy Pierre No. 2. In all the large French cities there are well-organized gangs, and their low-slung *traction avants*, as their getaway cars are called, are the French equivalent of the black Cadillacs in Chicago in the Twenties.

France's metropolitan newspapers devote about half their scarce newsprint to crime. Yet it is not the amount of crime that is startling; rather it is the nature of the criminals. Crime is becoming a middle-class occupation: the 1951 model criminal is more likely to come from the *petit bourgeois* than from the criminal class.

Certainly the criminal element doesn't include a man like Antoine de Recy, decorated leader of the French Resistance. He risked not only his own life but the lives of his six children for France's freedom. But de Recy went from his seat in the Chamber of Deputies to a prison cell for stealing $300,000 worth of his country's bonds.

Many Resistance leaders are now in prison. Pierre Durand, said to be the second richest man in France, has been convicted of fraud against the government. Six important distillery executives were recently arrested in Paris for smuggling alcohol into Belgium.

The businessman crook is numerous in England as well as on the Continent. Scotland Yard's dossier on an English smuggling gang showed its leader to be an educated and cultured man, "formerly a legitimate business man."

The businessman crook is a postwar variation of the prewar society thief, the Raffles robber, long beloved of fiction. Max Intrator — Black Max, he is called — canters in the Bois de Boulogne before breakfast. After lunch he listens to Mozart sonatas in his penthouse apartment. At night, when he is not serving brief prison sentences, he operates in the black market.

Last Fall the police announced the arrest of the leader of Europe's No. 1 band of smug-

glers — a patron of painters named Fredoric Ebel. The gang operated its own squadron of eight planes known as the Escadrille of Gold. The RAF used a radar net to trap the smuggler planes.

In England there is Sydney Stanley. Rebecca West has called Stanley "the charmer from the Arabian nights." At fourteen Stanley employed thirty workers making work clothes. Six years later he controlled several factories and had a huge income. Immediately after the war, Stanley, then in his early forties, began operating as an English influence man. Compared to him, the American John Maragon was a lackey. In his lavish apartment he entertained industrialists and government ministers. A director of the Bank of England wrote letters of introduction for Mrs. Stanley, describing her as "the wife of a very good friend of mine, an eminent business man." The Secretary of the British Board of Trade accepted gifts from Stanley.

The Labor Government has now declared Stanley an "undesirable," but it has not dared to bring him to trial. Sir Hartley Shawcross, Britain's attorney-general, declared that a trial "would not be in the public interest."

France's *petit bourgeois* has recently furnished these examples of the new criminal type:

The son of a prominent architect, who worked days in his father's office, and took his wife housebreaking nights. A basketball star who dabbled profitably in extortion. A garage owner named Perfect John who bossed three separate gangs of car thieves. And a colonel in the French Resistance, holder of the Legion of Honor, has been arrested for complicity in the Aga Khan jewel robbery.

A Scotland Yard official recently observed that "smuggling is by no means confined to the criminal population, but includes thousands of ordinary men and women. Many are of public school education, with considerable capital at their disposal." In Germany a military government report stated that "officials of some of the most respectable welfare agencies are involved in smuggling and black marketing."

The criminal ingenuity of youth is everywhere evident. In England and France the average age of the beginning criminal used to be twenty-two; now it's eighteen. In Germany a gang of seventy-three adult robbers was found to be led by a nineteen-year-old boy. The child beggars of southern Italy are

often kept awake by their parents for many hours to develop black circles under their eyes. An eight-year-old German lad organized a gang of child-smugglers which specialized in stealing laundry off Belgian clothes lines.

Women, too, are going after starring parts in the melodrama. La Saigneuse, the Bloody One, who specializes in drugging her victims, and La Theodora, who excels in robbing house guests, are recent heroines of the French crime press. A paralyzed woman, known as the Silent One, managed to direct a gang of female shoplifters. Police found $25,000 worth of stolen merchandise in her Paris apartment.

Pierette Chaude — "warm Pierette" — was the mistress of three successive leaders of the same gang. When police killed gangleader Raymond Naudy at Menton, she was wounded by his side. Taken to a hospital at Nice she gave birth to a stillborn child; and when her father came to weep at her bedside, she summoned all her strength and spat in his eye.

The end of rationing and the black market dollar has driven many petty crooks into the big time. The shady characters who sidled up to you on Avenue de l'Opera, or haunted the approaches to American Express, have gone underground now. Knowing no honest way to make a living, they have taken to more serious occupations — smuggling, counterfeiting, or drug peddling.

The English like to blame much of their crime on the thousands of deserters from His Majesty's armed forces. France has her deserters from many countries, including America. The French blame the North Africans who have flooded Paris, particularly the Algerians, for much of her crime. In Germany the DPs are the popular scapegoats.

Time and again the various European police departments have "smashed" the biggest ring of smugglers or "seized" the most important gang of counterfeiters. But the next ring smashed or the next gang seized always turns out to be bigger.

French law and politics seem to encourage crime. Under French law a criminal who has been sentenced to a maximum penalty for his crime may commit equally serious crimes for a period of two months after he comes out of prison and suffer no further punishment. The principle of concurrent jail sentences enables criminals to atone in two years for crimes which merit an aggregate lifetime sentence.

The European parole system is vicious. Political and religious anniversaries have become wholesale "freedom days" for even the most confirmed criminals. Frequently the police pick up a thief who has served numerous sentences for robbery but who was nevertheless paroled under some beneficient and all-inclusive amnesty.

The public is generally apathetic. At the moment the French are angered by the crimes of "*bourreaux*," butchers, fathers who have murdered their own children. Three particularly hideous cases occurred within ten days. Less repulsive crimes, however, fascinate the public.

Much of the crime has a political base. Traffic in arms engages thousands of underworld characters. The Arab countries, Israel, Viet-Nam, Indonesia, Spanish Republicans, Greek guerillas, Malay rebels, and Burmese Communists are all customers. Before he was chased out by the Red Chinese, even the High Llama of Tibet was negotiating deliveries.

The extreme left and right political parties throughout Europe probably have concealed arsenals. Both opponents and supporters of General Charles de Gaulle claim that his "armies" could arm themselves before you could say Jacques Robinson.

In cheap cafes as well as in smart hotels off the Champs Elysses, machine guns are quoted for delivery at from $75 to $150. Tanks can be had, by parachute if necessary, at prices up to $10,000.

A pirate fleet currently sails the Mediterranean, made up of surplus subchasers and a submarine which formerly belonged to Yugoslavia. Arms fill most of the holds, but the boats also carry drugs, diamonds, gold, prostitutes, political escapees, and army deserters. Uranium shipments, smuggled from the Belgian Congo, are not unknown.

Other crimes are laid to the cold war. There have been three cases of criminal arson in French defense plants. The Spanish Falange has accused the British Secret Service of pouring counterfeit pesetas into Spain. Berlin Socialists are convinced that the Communists are printing phony Westmarks.

There is much talk in America about saving Western civilization with arms. Some of us in Europe are wondering if arms can be enough to save a civilization which seems to be losing sight of the realities of crime and punishment.

— STANLEY H. KAPNER

Books

Nize Baby, Et Op All de Prose

WHAT IS THE state of American letters, now that Old Man Hemingway has creatively passed on? William Faulkner is the only real heavyweight left on the scene. While his last novel, *Intruder in the Dust*, was a cut under his previous ones, it was still nothing to be ashamed of, and compared to it most other novels in very recent years are awkward and immature. Faulkner still produces first-rate short stories — a very rare thing nowadays — and it is indeed devoutly to be wished that he keeps going.

As for the other writers, they are, to pick up Hemingway's boxing metaphor, most of them lightweights, welterweights, and middleweights. None of them have the supercraftsmanship that Hemingway had, nor the virtuosity of Faulkner, but a handful of them are working hard to develop a point of view and technique that are both contemporary and personal.

At the moment, a flowery, exotic school of writers, operating out of New York City and gardens like Capri, is riding high, exploiting deformity and sexual sickness. But it is very doubtful if this school will remain popular much longer. Its special appeal is to an urban society with a deep need for releasing a post-war hysteria and confusion. Once this hysteria and confusion have been let out and satisfied, a return to a literature less esoteric and decorative is inevitable.

Meanwhile, a book that will serve as a good enough springboard for a discussion of the

present, as well as the past, state of American letters is *The Disenchanted*, the novel by Budd Schulberg, the man who provided the world with *What Makes Sammy Run?* In fact, whether Mr. Schulberg knows it or not, the whole novel seems to be little more than a comparison between writing as a way of life then and a form of existence now. I'm sure that Mr. Schulberg meant it to be quite a bit more than that, but, then, that's the way it goes.

I will assume that by now everybody knows what the book is about — more or less of a recreation of the life of F. Scott Fitzgerald, as related by a young, not exceedingly bright Hollywood script writer who worked on a script with Fitzgerald in his last days. Several things about the book struck me quite forcefully, and I'll try to round them all up for some sort of presentation.

It became apparent to me, after a chapter or two, that I was in the hands of a man who had carefully studied "writing" and was familiar with the six basic steps, but that was about all. What was not apparent to *him*, I believe, was that by trying to recreate the life and times of Fitzgerald, among other things, he was immediately competing with that strange, gifted man on his own ground, and this is certainly something nobody in his right mind should attempt at this stage of the game.

Mr. Schulberg has all the material on his subject — he really stunned me with his documentation — but as soon as he tries to do something with it that is supposed to resemble fiction and not documentation, he crumbles before your eyes. Scene after scene of Fitzgerald's mad whirling around the world with his feverish, wild-eyed wife and their glassy-eyed friends is thrown at you but nothing happens. It doesn't excite you, as I suppose it should; it just bores you. And all you can do, as you listen to all that whoopee noise, is remember sadly how much better Fitzgerald himself had done it. In fact, he did it for all time, and this book proves it.

One thing Mr. Schulberg was trying to do — again unconsciously, I'm sure, for he is obviously aware of his master's power — was to match the wisecrack against the epigram, the "sensitive, poetic" prose style against the real poetic sensibility, the gimmicked fleeting observation against the durable insight, the *knowledge* of writing, in other words, against the *talent* of writing. And it is

due to an extremely ponderous accumulation of such defeatist matches that the book simply does not move, does not come off. As Miss Gertrude Stein once said of one urgent young writer, "He has a kind of syrup, but it doesn't pour."

The most interesting thing about *The Disenchanted* is the speculations it inspires in the reader about the differences between the writers of Fitzgerald's generation and the ones living now, the rewards of being a chronicler of one's times, and the shifting in general human values in the last twenty years or so. All this, of course, is brought up in the book, but it is never handled with perception or illumination.

You notice, speaking of literary values, that there has been, over the past twenty years, a disappearance of stylists, of enchantment and magic, of natural flair, of individualism. (Apropos of prose style, one of the few good notions in *The Disenchanted* was that Fitzgerald, in his last befuddled days, fell back on it the way a gentleman on the verge of being dispossessed from his house gets a sudden, loony comfort from the fact that he has a fine old American middle name.) People like Fitzgerald were immensely concerned with the way a sentence moved and sounded and the different effect a short paragraph had on a page when it was wedged between two long paragraphs. Most novelists regard the sentence as something that is standing between them and the better things of life.

Also, Fitzgerald and his contemporaries wrote fiction with the understanding that one of its main requirements is that it enchant you. They wrote as though they still believed in such things as magic and the imagination, and they made you believe in it too. Tried to find very much of this today.

Another thing, in those days there seemed to be a fear of sounding like another writer, of losing your individualism. This produced a diversity of styles and visions the like of which has never before been seen in our culture. Today, however, this fear seems to have been reversed; you get the impression that one mind with a thousand pencils is doing all the writing.

Maybe this is because there are simply more writers and it is harder to sound different among so many. I don't really think this is so. I think this is simply a period of dullness, of ultra-respectability and imitation. One explanation, I venture, is that all over the coun-

try, in every college, young men and women, God help them, are being "taught" how to write the "correct" way. And a great many of the people doing this "teaching" — as if you could "teach" somebody how to be a writer — are writers who have a humdrum, unexciting technique themselves, and who can't help teaching their students to write the way they do, whether or not the student's own talent and material happen to gibe with this technique.

An awful lot of writing reads as though it were turned out, willy-nilly, in some "workshop" or other. (Every time I see the words "writer's workshop," I can't help thinking of grammar school art class, when forty of us brats, seated at a workbench, were all trying to build the same bird house.) This is one of the faults of *The Disenchanted*. The tricks are there, and the "know how," as I believe they still say, but none of the real stuff which, when seen, felt, or tasted, makes you jump up and shout, "Man, this it *it!*" This convinced me, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that writing in this country has unfortunately become equated with something like mass calisthenics.

The mass of today's prose, as typified by the book under discussion, is some strange, colorless, tasteless substance, something you might call "permaprose," made of plastic, turned out by the roll, and quite easily converted into suspenders or belts, or used to wrap bundles with. And as for wit, well, there seems to be a law against it. Maybe writers today think that if they are witty in their writing, people won't take them seriously. They just couldn't be more mistaken. As I pointed out before, Mr. Schulberg feels that the gag and the wisecrack are real wit, and this makes you think, at various points throughout the book, that you are listening to a radio program or watching Milton Berle, but certainly not reading what purports to be a serious book — that is, a book not written exclusively for large-scale entertainment for noodleheads.

The serious writers of Fitzgerald's time were able to combine entertainment with insight to a far greater degree than the serious writers of today. To be quite clinical, there appears to be an ever widening schism between these two things. The serious writers are less concerned with a traditional entertainment value, and the people who write for mere entertainment do that alone. The combination of both these things in

one writer is most unusual. The serious writer — I mean that man who is aware of himself as being involved in the great tradition of literature, who more than likely feels closer to Chaucer than he does to his own brother — this man is becoming more and more alienated and imagines himself to be writing for only a few similarly alienated people like himself.

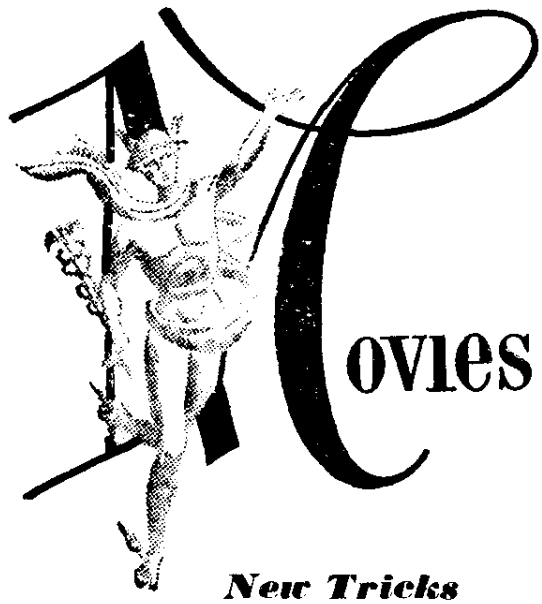
Something else I was reminded of by Mr. Schulberg's book — but, again, hardly challenged by his insights into it — was how people have almost selfconsciously frozen up since Fitzgerald's time. It was the fashion, you might say, of the twenties to be exuberant and outwardly rebellious, romantically aggressive, to communicate enthusiastically, or at least warmly, with other people in whatever you did. The emotional fashion of the intellectuals of today, however, is the complete reverse of this. You are considered corny if you show too much emotion or enthusiasm. Keep it to yourself, don't let anybody know what goes on behind that iced expression. Be sullen, tight-lipped, complicated, confusing. Keep it on ice — that's it, be "cool."

The difference between the typical Twenties man and the typical Fifties man, is the difference between Fitzgerald's sentimental Gatsby and the incredibly vacant, unmotivated anarchist Stavrogin of *The Possessed.* Stavrogin, who could marry a crippled idiot girl just for kicks. It is Stavrogin who is the archetype of the Fifties man. Why, he makes Gatsby look like a mushy juvenile delinquent.

To get back to literature as such, this recreation — or redocumentation — of Fitzgerald makes you wonder about the rewards of being, as Fitzgerald certainly was, a chronicler, a reflector of the subtle styles and gestures peculiar to a particular era. The better you are, it would seem, the more acute and mimetic your eye and ear, the greater the risk you run of becoming dated. You achieve a certain greatness, but as the argot of the following generations changes, you become more and more difficult to reread with spontaneous pleasure.

Before I wind up this month's soliloquy, I'd like to touch lightly on the subject of names cooked up for characters in novels. When I first saw the name Manley Halliday in *The Disenchanted* used quite seriously, I was dead sure that I was in for burlesque and that nothing good could possibly come of it.

— CHANDLER BROSSARD



Movies

New Tricks in Dreamland

DURING THE PAST few months, Hollywood has been behaving about as predictably as a family of uncaged leopards. Picture after picture has leaped out of the cans, pawing the air, lashing its tail and biting large chunks out of the smothering fabric of film conventions. The unhappy ending has come to the fore like a reform candidate in a depression election. Situations have been depicted which have all the sweaty and unglamorous discomfort of a transcontinental bus trip. Heroes have had their perfection marred by traits slightly more unsympathetic than fingernail chewing or nose-picking. Villains are frequently shown as unlucky human beings drifting into bad ways simply through bad luck rather than as personifications of evil formed in depths of sordidness.

Perhaps John Huston's "The Asphalt Jungle" started the breakup of convention when it showed a bunch of gangsters organizing a big steal like corporation executives and carrying it out with a cold, abstract dedication. In any case, the breakup has continued to the point where even the dreariest "B" picture is likely to display some bizarre patch of reality. In two of the most publicized of recent pictures, the male leads, in defiance of tradition, have been engaged in open affairs with much older women. The cycle of pictures about race prejudice which began so mildly culminated in 20th Century's lurid "No Way Out." This movie sprayed the film audience with some of the saltiest language in cinema history, and it let Richard Widmark rip off a remarkably accurate portrait of a slum sadist whirling about in an orgy of hatred and blood lust.

Whatever the explanation, pictures have changed so drastically as to mark off the present epoch from the past almost as sharply as did the invention of sound. The exact techniques and contributions that make the difference are, of course, much less easy to isolate, but they might

be loosely grouped together under the label of a more heightened sense of reality.

In "Panic in the Streets," for example, Elia Kazan filmed such a prize collection of greasy, verminous-looking grifters and petty criminals that it made you feel like skipping the newsreel and heading for the nearest public bath. "Edge of Doom," that semi-sociological study of a poverty-stricken young murderer, can have my vote for the gloomiest picture ever made. Even the technicolor musicals like "Summer Stock" or "Three Little Words" now set their turns in modest interiors with recognizable walls instead of nebulous sky palaces.

For all the immeasurably greater freedom that prevails now in choice of subject matter and treatment, it is still difficult to say that there has been a clear-cut, overall improvement in pictures. A good deal has been painfully gained and quite a bit has been painlessly lost. The old dictum that "moving pictures should move" has been neglected as never before, so that you finally get a film like "The Glass Menagerie," in which the camera appears to have been nailed motionless to the floor. Vivid, interesting motion is not often to be found any more even in the big western or war pictures. While most major productions are infinitely better planned and unified than they were formerly, they also seem to be less spontaneous and vivacious. The attitudes pictures promulgate are much more adult, sober and literate but they are not always closely and convincingly related to the material. Many an evening in the picture house makes you feel as if you were back in school, an impression reenforced by the number of films with a narrator who makes sure you miss no point of a plot that is about as difficult to grasp as a banana.

The problems involved in making better motion pictures are always complicated by the fact that nobody has yet been able to patent a device which figures exactly which way the audience will jump. Among the few men in Hollywood who seem to have been able to combine intelligent innovation with profit-making has been Mr. Darryl Zanuck.

A Zanuck picture is usually a ruthlessly well-made affair, as efficiently engineered and highly polished as a new car. Writer-director Joseph Mankiewicz, who won a couple of Academy Awards last year for "Letter to Three Wives," turns out the kind of picture that blends well with the Zanuck approach. The

combination of these two men looks as if it will go far and may possibly have a powerful influence on future film-making. Its latest brain-child, "All About Eve," has had an enthusiastic critical reception and is very much in the hectic competition for the coveted "Oscars." Sharply sensitive to audience trends and genuinely willing to take a new tack when it is necessary, Zanuck and Mankiewicz have here taken the risk of offering a two-and-a-half-hour talky film that seems to provide the equivalent of legitimate theatre.

Since it succeeds in keeping the spectators diverted throughout and leaves them with the feeling of an impressive experience, "All About Eve" should, if nothing else, do something to stem the tide of under-realized, insubstantial double-feature quickies. Like a play, too, it assumes a high degree of intelligence in the audience. It also takes for granted some knowledge of contemporary theatre people and some interest in their lives and problems. The character of Margo Channing, a dramatic star of the first magnitude, is presumably modeled in part on that of a leading Broadway figure famous for her Southern background, her ability as an actress and the rowdy elegance of her offstage repartee. It also serves for a discussion of the psychological difficulties of actresses. In the case of Margo Channing, these consist of an obsession with age that leads her to worry about playing youthful roles, anxiety about what her career is doing to her femininity, and her relationship with a stage director eight years her junior.

Eve Harrington, "evil Eve" as Margo Channing names her, turns, before the picture is over, into a myth rather than a person, concocted from a voluminous literature on *femmes fatales* that dates back to the days of Delilah. Using sex and moral blackmail, converting her talent as an actress to a genius for deception, Eve climbs from obscurity to the pinnacle of Broadway success with all the ease of a mountain goat. The scene in which she meets her master at playing the same game is really quite excellent.

There are few moments in drama that give an audience such an agreeable fillip as a climax in which two preternaturally wicked people reveal their identity. Eve's innocent appearance, hypocrisy and underhanded exploitation of the nice people who befriend her has needled the spectator to the point where he is fairly panting

with the desire to see her crushed. Her companion, De Witt, draws sympathy at this point because he is a self-confessed, completely consistent scoundrel, and also because he prevents Eve from ruining the lives of the only likeable people the picture presents.

Eve's serpentine maneuvering within this group is shown in ingenious sequences that make for glittering and suspenseful drama rather than for a forceful representation of the major characters or the milieu. The trouble with most of the attitudes and insights generated by the picture is not that they are superficial or without relevance, but quite simply that they are pretty much second-hand. De Witt's address to Eve, for example, is reminiscent of a speech in "The Scoundrel," when Noel Coward informs a female that they are like "two empty paper bags belaboring each other."

The dialogue is bright and witty but it is likewise full of echoes of Wilde, Shaw, Coward and assorted unidentifiable ghosts and half-ghosts. Mankiewicz has borrowed the old molds and used them to turn out a different kind of brick, one more suitable for Hollywood construction work. And it is primarily construction that is Mankiewicz's forte. Using flashbacks, commentaries, multiple images and ingenious plot devices, keeping his actors moving about with the finesse of a choreographer, he builds up "All about Eve" into a solid wall of bright film images and sounds with scarcely a dull spot in the entire affair.

Bette Davis is, I think, at her best in the high-keyed, semi-hysteric parts that let her tap all her incredible resources of nervous energy and do not call for any great subtlety or variety. Toned down and muted, compared to her usual performances, stripped of her customary mannerisms, she doesn't quite seem to have all the color and grandeur necessary to fill out the role of the great, temperamental stage luminary.

The two male leads, Hugh Marlowe and Gary Merrill, are rugged, big-voiced, well-trained actors with pleasing personalities who seem better adapted to the stage than screen. They declaim rather than talk and never quite sound as if they are thinking up their lines by themselves. Nearly everyone in the cast seemed out to break a world's record for perfect acting.

— WILLIAM POSTER

Illuminati in the Theatre

MAX BEERBOHM once wrote that *the* theatre did not interest him but that *a* theatre now and then did; in other words, that it was occasionally a particular theatre rather than the theatre in general that fetched him. Just how honest the incomparable Max was, it is not for me to venture, though there is some evidence that at least partly belies his words. His alleged indifference to the theatre as the theatre did not, it seems, keep him from trying his hand at playwriting, from composing two hefty volumes of play reviews and drama criticism, from sentimentally creating one of the loveliest heroines in modern fiction in the person of a girl of the stage, from becoming an honorary member of the London Critics Circle, from enjoying as his close friends many theatrical figures, from stating that he considered the theatre the best and most desirable of all careers for a woman, and — among various other such contradictions — from marrying and living happily ever after with one of the theatre's most charming actresses.

Goethe, less superior than Max in his attitude, observed that one can't easily find any place that would suit one as well as the theatre. "No one," he continued, "asks you any questions; you needn't open your mouth unless you want to; on the contrary, you sit at your ease like a king, and let everything pass before you, and recreate your mind and senses to your heart's content. There is poetry, there is painting, there are singing and music, there is acting, and what not besides. When all these arts, and the charm of youth and beauty heightened to an important degree, work in concert on the same evening, it is a bouquet to which no other can compare. But even when part is bad and part is good, it is still better than looking out of the window or playing a game of cards in a close party amid the smoke of cigars."

If at this point you fidget in your chair in anticipation of an essay, enriched by copious quotations, on what eminent literati of the past and present have thought of the theatre, you may be relieved to know that you are not threatened with any such adversity, which must immediately become happily apparent to you when I proceed to narrate for you the reaction to the theatre of, as a sporting starter, that baseball great of a former day, the illustrious Ty Cobb.

I met the tall, lanky, dry-voiced Cobb for the first time about nine months ago at a small dinner party given for him in celebration of his marriage to a Buffalo, New York, belle just the night before. The talk got around to the theatre with the serving of the chicken croquettes. Cobb allowed he was much interested in it, and in its musical shows particularly. "But it ain't my idea of real, genuwine entertainment," he confided to the gathering. "My idea in that direction is spittin'." Though the ladies at the table seemed peculiarly to be uninterested in any development of his subject — indeed, seemed a little apprehensive — I took the liberty of encouraging him to elaborate, since my curiosity in the arts, both high and low, is quite unquenchable.

"Yes," he gladly responded, "I like the theaytre, but spittin' is my real hobby. For years when I was younger I practiced up on all kinds of spittin' — spittoon target, long distance, catch-as-catch-can, and lots of other kinds — and down in my home state of Georgia I got so good at it that they began looking up to me as a champion. I really got so fine that an uncle of mine, who lived in Chicago and who was somethin' of a spitter himself, having heard of my talent sent me the railroad fare to come up and visit him and do some more practicing in which he would teach me. I said I sure would and I got on a train in the day coach and I hadn't sat down for more than three minutes than I reconized that the man sittin' in the seat opposite to me was also a spitter. You can tell 'em with experience; it's the way their mouth and lips and the expression on their faces is.

"In another minute, I was sure, because this man looks at me with a sneer on his face and says, 'You're a spitter too, eh? Well, I don't know how you rate yourself, but I'll lay you a dollar I'm a fancier spitter than you are and, if you don't think so, start demonstratin'.'

"So I started demonstratin'

my best spits and each time this bird says to me with a snort, 'Huh, that's nothin',' and matches my spit. Bidin' my time, however, I finally looked him in the eye and said, 'O.K., now you match this if you can,' and I performed my masterpiece, which was workin' my mouth up full of ammunition, fillin' up my lungs, and then suddenly lettin' go and coverin' the ceiling with half a dozen shots next to each other in a row like bullet holes. It was wonderful, and I sat back and gave him a pityin' smile. 'You beat that, you blowhard,' I challenged him.

"This bird said nothin'. He just quietly opened the two car windows, the one next to him and the one next to me, and prepared himself. For three minutes he prepared himself and then he said, 'Watch!' Then he took a long, deep breath, braced himself against the arm of his seat, lifted himself about six inches outa it, and let go a chunk of spit that flew outa the window next to him, curled around to the window next to me and, as God is my judge, flew in and hit me plum in the eye! 'That's what I call my Boomerang Spit,' he announced proudly. So I had to hand over my dollar.

"Sure, I like the theaytre, but I'm a heap more interested in this spittin' art."

MY FRIEND, the late James J. Corbett, on the contrary, was impervious to the charms of technical expectoration and was widely known as "Gentleman Jim" not only for his punctilious manners but for his habit, when the necessity for ridding himself of a surplusage of saliva arose, of depositing it politely in his handkerchief and thereupon tossing the kerchief, as no longer correctly available, into the nearest ashcan or drawing-room jardiniere. Jim's passion, rather, was the theatre. I have never, indeed, known a man more deeply devoted to the theatre, as was attested to, after his retirement from the ring, by his serious efforts to constitute himself an actor, and by his regular attendance, when freed for a spell from greasepaint, upon plays and shows of every form, shape and color. "The theatre," he once said to me, "is the best drug in the world for worries and at the same time the best for stimulation. When I'm in the dumps, I can go to a play or show and, if it's any good at all, I come out feeling my old self again. It's like non-alcoholic booze that makes you feel a little drunk anyway."

The various fighters from the

time of John L. Sullivan through that of Bob Fitzsimmons and on to that of Jack Dempsey who have appeared on the stage have done so simply to cash in on their names and ring reputations. But Corbett was wholly sincere about it and respected the theatre so much that he tried to serve it as honorably as he could. In short, whatever the critical result, he at least did his best to be a good actor. Even when he made his first appearance in a semi-biographical item called *Gentleman Jack*, which was one of those conventional punching-bag things provided prize-fighters for their stage bows, he studied voice projection, stage deportment, and other such dramatic requirements; and for his later appearances in Bernard Shaw's *Cashel Byron's Profession* and in *The Burglar And The Lady*, he worked as hard and prepared himself as carefully as any ambitious professional actor. "When I'm in a theatre audience, actors work to please me, don't they?" he remarked. "So when I'm on the stage, why shouldn't I work just as much to please an audience?"

HENRY MILLER, the celebrated actor, director and producer, complained that the trouble with the theatre was that it was too theatrical, whereas James J. Walker, the one-time fabulous mayor of New York, complained that the trouble with it was that it wasn't theatrical enough. "You know that no one ever loved the theatre more than I do," he told me no less than a dozen times during the years of our friendship, "but it's getting to lose too much of that romantic quality it used to have. The plays, which once were full of stars and moons and rainbows, are now too often full of soapboxes with actors perched on top of them spouting propaganda, or they're chock-a-block with so-called 'problems,' dirt, platform debates, and other such depressing things. And so are even some of the musical shows, God forbid. When I go to the theatre, I don't want to feel I'm still sitting at my desk down in City Hall. I want to be amused and entertained, given a smell of flowers and a bit of the warmth of sunshine; I don't want to be made to feel as if I were in a damp cellar listening to a hunk of woe. If the playwright has anything in his head, it's not so bad. But most of them haven't got anything in theirs but a lot of uneducated indignation."

It was commonly believed that Jimmy's sole concern with the theatre was the *Ziegfeld*

Follies, and that he never attended it unless the stage was occupied by a regiment of pretty girls and low comedians. He was, to his credit, quite as receptive to pretty girls and funnymen as most civilized theatregoers, including such specimens as Thomas Hardy, Arthur Bingham Walkley, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, the Emperor Franz Joseph, and Mike Todd — to say nothing, of course, of George Washington in his day — but the prevalent notion that he begged off when anything more elevated was on tap was not true. He was not, to be sure, an Ibsen or Gorki fan, but he was a catholic theatre customer in other directions and took in more plays of one kind and another than any half-dozen mayors of New York ever did. "I like the lights," he said. "So what does it matter much if the lights go down in the auditorium and go up on the stage, even if and when the show's bad. It's still lights, isn't it?"

John Barrymore's chief regret during his years in the theatre was that he couldn't sit in the audience and watch himself. "They talk of the great catharsis in classic drama," he once remarked to me over the bottle. "There's a hell of a lot more of it in a good, stiff drink." Tod Sloan, the eminent jockey and in his time the toast of two continents, for a while, did not agree, however. Tod, whose idea of heaven was an orchestra seat at a musical show, expressed himself thus: "I don't know about this gab how men say they get a big lift out of whiskey and how it takes the meanness outa 'em and makes 'em understand and appreciate their fellow men better and all that kind of stuff, but what makes me feel fine and uplifted (if that's the big word) is a good musical comedy. Not a dramatic play, which you can stick up your chimney, but a good musical show. That's the ticket for me. I love 'em. They're wonderful. I've seen a hundred of 'em and I want to see a hundred more. They uplift me (if that's how you say it). They're my church."

— GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

TV and Radio

"Don't Send Me In There, Coach"

ONE OF THE outrageous frauds which radio perpetrated on its numb but willing audience was the elevation of sports broadcasting to the level of movie exploitation, so that every athletic event, no matter how dull and witless, was described as though it were the match of the century.

Television has ended the shameless deception. Now the home spectator is able to see that organized sport is only occasionally the breathless spectacle which more than a quarter-century of loudspeaker shouting has led him to believe. Neither the spectators nor the men who have been doing the shouting seem to be prepared for this denouement, with the result that sporting events on television today sometimes have an unreal quality calculated to drive a man right out of his armchair and into a stadium.

There is a certain nostalgic regret involved in this development. One recalls the poetic rapture of Graham McNamee's descriptions of California's natural glories, while her native sons were being trodden underfoot in the Rose Bowl by callous visitors from the South and Middle West. Whenever Mr. McNamee exhausted the meager resources of the language, he could always be depended upon to apostrophize the tremendous drama on the field with those telling, familiar words, "What a game, folks, what a game!" It was enough to leave an earth-bound listener limp.

McNamee set the style, more or less, in sports broadcasting and it has persisted, with few changes. There have been refinements, of course, as in Ted Husing's addition of culture to the general excitement of descriptive announcing. A connoisseur will not soon forget the day Husing's style reached its climax in the course of a particularly thrilling rally at Forest Hills during the national tennis finals, when he exclaimed

"— and the ball, ladies and gentlemen, falls into the interstices of the net."

Happy, exciting, cultural days! They are gone, and the only strange aspect of their vanishing is that the sportscasters who have bridged the eras and now do their stint for television appear not to realize that times have changed.

The distinguished sports historian, Bill Stern, who gave a whole new meaning to the phrase, "sports broadcasting," though perhaps not the one he intended, was indulging only last summer at that same ivy-covered Forest Hills stadium in the kind of romantic analysis which his radio listeners have been eagerly absorbing for years. At the end of his between-sets interpretation of a player's performance, he turned for confirmation to Donald Budge, the ex-champion, who had been describing the match itself.

"Isn't that so, Don?" he demanded, in the immemorial radio manner.

"No," said Mr. Budge, with gloomy honesty, thus confirming the opinion of video viewers.

Tennis, incidentally, is a sport which still defies the television technicians. It is necessary for the cameras to view the court lengthwise, and there is a damaging loss of perspective for which the human eye on the scene is able to compensate while the camera lens cannot.

Boxing, on the other hand, permits the cameras to close in on a relatively small area of operation and so provides the home viewer with the best seat in the house. Because he is able to see so much better than anyone else, the prize-fight fan is justifiably irritated by an announcer drafted from radio who attempts to tell him what he is seeing.

The newer generation of video announcers realizes this fact, but when the oldtimers are turned loose on a big fight they find themselves overwhelmed by habit and rhetoric. Husing's description of the Louis-Charles fight, for example, occasioned as much post-mortem comment as the sad affair in the ring, combining as it did the best features of an old-fashioned McNamee performance and all the color, claret in this case, of Husing's own style.

The chasm between radio and video sports announcing is nowhere more obvious than in those fights which are being broadcast and telecast simultaneously. The viewer, if he is lucky, hears only occasional comments from the announcer as the pugs push each other drearily around the ring. But in

the distance he often hears that other voice, the radio announcer's, like an emanation from the unhappy past, describing the lack of action as though Dempsey had just knocked down Tunney for the long count. The viewer begins to understand why those fights he used to hear on the radio always looked so different when he saw the official films.

During the football season of 1950 there was a noticeable lack of bridge-building between sound and sight. It was, in fact, more painfully obvious than ever what fanciful worlds the football announcers have been creating for years on the radio.

To hear the familiar voice of one of these experts and at the same time witness what he was describing must have been disillusioning for thousands of new TV owners.

"They line up now in the T," the voice from the loudspeaker informs him breathlessly. The viewer can see that this is undeniably true. "They're set up for the buck lateral sequence," the voice continues breathlessly, "and Slippery Sy takes the ball from the hands of quarterback Bullet Joe Glutz, and shoots off tackle for five yards — no, make it seven. And the referee sets the ball down on the twenty-yard line, a gain of four yards. But wait a minute. There's a signal flag on the play, and I believe State was offside."

On radio, this kind of thing may have been necessary to hold the listener's interest — the attempt to make touchdown drama out of every routine line plunge, the compulsive effort to keep talking and never mind accuracy so that the dreaded odor of dead air would never permeate the kilocycles.

On television, the only word for such a technique is distressing. The viewer not only sees better than the announcer, but he sees more accurately and he has utterly exposed the dream world in which radio sports broadcasting has lived. He properly resents being given a steady flow of superfluous and quite often inaccurate information.

It may be that the promoters and the proprietors of huge stadia are premature in their dark fears that sports will be played sometimes solely for a television audience, because words are not the only factor which diminishes the appeal of video sports.

The limitations of the camera are severe in many cases. In football, the intricacies of the game today baffle the camera operators as well as rival play-

ers, so that much of the time they eagerly follow the faked part of a play and have to switch abruptly when they finally spot the ball. The advantage of a long-range lens in bringing the viewer right down into the backfield is thus partly nullified. Sometimes the camera gets bored, and we are treated to sideline shots of coaches in terrible anguish and heroes who have just booted away a touchdown beating their chests in mortal distress. Meanwhile, life continues unheeded on the playing field.

In hockey, the camera is simply not fast enough to follow the action. Basketball comes off much better, although the viewer too often sees only the offensive play. This is true in a good many televised sports: the spectator at home is able to watch only the immediate area of action. The split-screen technique is used in baseball telecasting to help overcome that difficulty, and sometimes the cameras catch a pickoff at first base. More often, however, when two or three things are happening at once on the diamond, the hapless viewer is given a choice of one, or else the camera hops frantically from one area to the other and salmagundi results.

When the arguments are boiled down, it may be that sports telecasting has only two real advantages. The viewer saves the admission price, which he will later pay in repairs to the set, and he is able to take off his shoes, put his feet up and lean back in comfort whatever the climate may be. If he turns down the sound too, he may have arrived at the nearly perfect state. But if he is willing to forego discomforts and pass through the turnstiles, he will see much that television cannot yet give him.

It looks like a conflict between man's natural laziness and his desire to observe at first hand his fellow humans in competitive battle. This may result in psychosternia, or sports neurosis. Or it may unexpectedly produce a hardier race, driven into the open air by an anxiety to see games whole. A more gloomy view is that it will end in the final disintegration of the human species into an inert blob of material on the living room sofa. — JOHN TEBBEL

Down to Earth by Alan Devoe

'CHUCK LORE . . .

NEARLY ALL of us who live in the country know at least one wild animal, however doubtful we may be about the others. We know Woodchuck. The chances are that we not only know him, but also shoot at him, sick the dog on him, shake our fists at him, and try setting off gas-bombs in his burrow in the pasture. Woodchuck can be just about our Number One Nuisance. He nips off the clover-tops, and hides some of his den-holes so completely that the horses and heifers break their legs in them. When he gets to the beans, he eats stems, leaves, pods, the whole plant down to the ground. There is practically nothing in our vegetable garden that he doesn't like, and not much in our flowerbeds; and he will climb the best-made fence, or dig under it, to get to the delicacies. Oh, we know Woodchuck.

Or do we?

Do we know the facts about that long winter sleep of his, when he drowses from frost-time to bluebird-time? Woodchuck is asleep, now in January, throughout almost all the northern part of his range; and the nature of that sleep is very odd. Have we heard that Woodchuck will eat meat? How does our furry corn-snatcher and apple-tree-girdler manage to keep

his burrow so clean? To know things like this may not help us keep Woodchuck out of the clover field — probably nothing will ever completely do that unless an Act of God — but it will at least enable us to reflect, as we sit on the porch and watch *Marmota Monax* happily chewing off the blossoms, that anyhow our crops are being harvested by an interesting animal.

Where does Woodchuck get his name? There are a great many ingenious theories about that, some of them plausible. Perhaps the most popular of them explains that "chuck" or "chucky" is old rural English for a pig; and of course the early settlers here found the animal living in the woods, so they called him Woodchuck for pig-of-the-woods. This theory is such a persuasive invention that it seems almost a pity to spoil it. The fact seems to be, though, that Woodchuck gets his name — like so many animals and plants of our American outdoors — from the Indians. In Cree, he was called Otchoek (or Wejack, or Weensuck; the spelling of Indian words has to go pretty much by ear). In Choctaw he was Shukha; in Natick, Ockqutchaun. In other Indian tongues there are other similar names, all sounding — if allowance is made for the guttural, grunting quality of Indian speech — more or less like "woodchuck." Woodchuck was one of the most familiar native animals to our Indians. They put him into stories and legends, wondered at his prodigious winter sleeping, and gave him his name.

What about that winter sleep of his? Does Woodchuck only drowse, or is he in a deep unconsciousness, or what? When the days shorten to a certain point and the heavy frosts set in, even though the golden autumn sun still shines warmly across the fields and there is still plenty to eat, Woodchuck is moved to retire into his four- or five-month hibernation. His sleeping-chamber is far inside the burrow, down under the frost line. For his first few days there he merely naps and nods, sometimes rousing and prowling a little. Then gradually he sleeps oftener and oftener, more and more deeply. Field naturalists have dug Woodchuck up at every stage of his winter rest, and tested him; and laboratory scientists have watched him dozing away the winter in special observation boxes, so we know now exactly what happens to him during his long, long night. It is a pretty astonishing thing.

Woodchuck's pulse slows

down, down, down, from his summer rate of eighty or ninety heartbeats a minute to a rate of only about five. Curled up tight in foetus position, Woodchuck breathes slower and slower, until when he is fully asleep he is drawing only about a dozen breaths an hour. His temperature goes down to 38° F., or even a little lower. Once he has entered into this final depth of unconsciousness, he stays wrapped in it until the Spring. Snows, winter winds mean nothing to Woodchuck, curled in his oblivion far down under the frozen ground. He sleeps as the trees sleep, or the grass: withdrawn into a deep life-suspension that is very close to death. It is strange to realize that for Woodchuck there are only three known seasons: spring, summer and fall. Woodchuck goes to sleep with the taste of green growing things in his mouth. When next he opens an eye, there are green things growing as usual.

HAVE we wondered why sometimes there is an earth pile beside Woodchuck's burrow and sometimes there is none? It is not a caprice. Starting a burrow, Woodchuck always throws the dirt behind him. He always makes a mound. But his burrow is no simple tunnel. It is an engineering feat, and a masterpiece of safety. For four or five feet, Woodchuck tunnels slantingly downward, and then usually he takes a gradual turn and there he pats a hump of earth into place on the tunnel floor. That is for a barricade, or at least an obstacle, against intruders. An eye peering into the burrow mouth can see no farther along the tunnel than that point, and Woodchuck uses it as a kind of observation stand. After the curve and the hump, Woodchuck may tunnel another twenty-five feet or more before curving upward to make an exit, and he may make several lateral tunnels in various directions, each leading to yet another exit. When Woodchuck makes an exit, working carefully from below, he pulls every crumb of earth inward and he makes the exit hole as little as he can. It is around these exit holes that there is never found any telltale mound. These are the holes beside which Woodchuck likes triumphantly to sit, straight as a tent-peg, chirping and whistling, while our dogs bark their heads off at the earth-mounded burrow entrance way over yonder on the other side of the field. The stock may easily break a leg in one of these cunningly concealed exit holes; they can ruin a pasture, but they

are testimony at any rate to Woodchuck's animal ingenuity and canniness.

Speaking of the earth mounds: Have we ever noticed an especially big one, that seems to get piled higher and higher every year, although as far as we know, the inhabitant of the tunnel is doing no fresh burrowing? If we investigate one of those mounds with a spade, it may tell us part of the story of how Woodchuck makes his sanitary arrangements. When Woodchuck is making his tunnel — or rather, usually, his labyrinth of tunnels — he commonly hollows out a little sideroom somewhere in it for use as toilet. His droppings are scrupulously voided in that one place, so that the corridors of the burrow are kept fresh and clean. (Anyone who has dug up many woodchuck burrows must have been struck by how neat and odorless they are.) After this special room has been used for a time, Woodchuck cleans it out. He brings the gathered droppings to the burrow-entrance and piles them into the dirt-mound there. Mixed with earth and disinfected by the sun, the waste material becomes indistinguishable from the rest of the mound. Year by year there grows a higher hummock — a hummock that also serves Woodchuck, incidentally, as his lookout place.

We have heard Woodchuck whistle, of course. It is his commonest utterance. Perhaps, too, we have heard him growl, down inside his burrow when we are passing near it. He sounds like a bear fight. But what about that queer grating, chattering noise that sometimes comes from the burrow? It is not quite a growl, not quite a squeal, not quite like anything else. Woodchuck makes that intimidating chatter by gritting and grinding his teeth together.

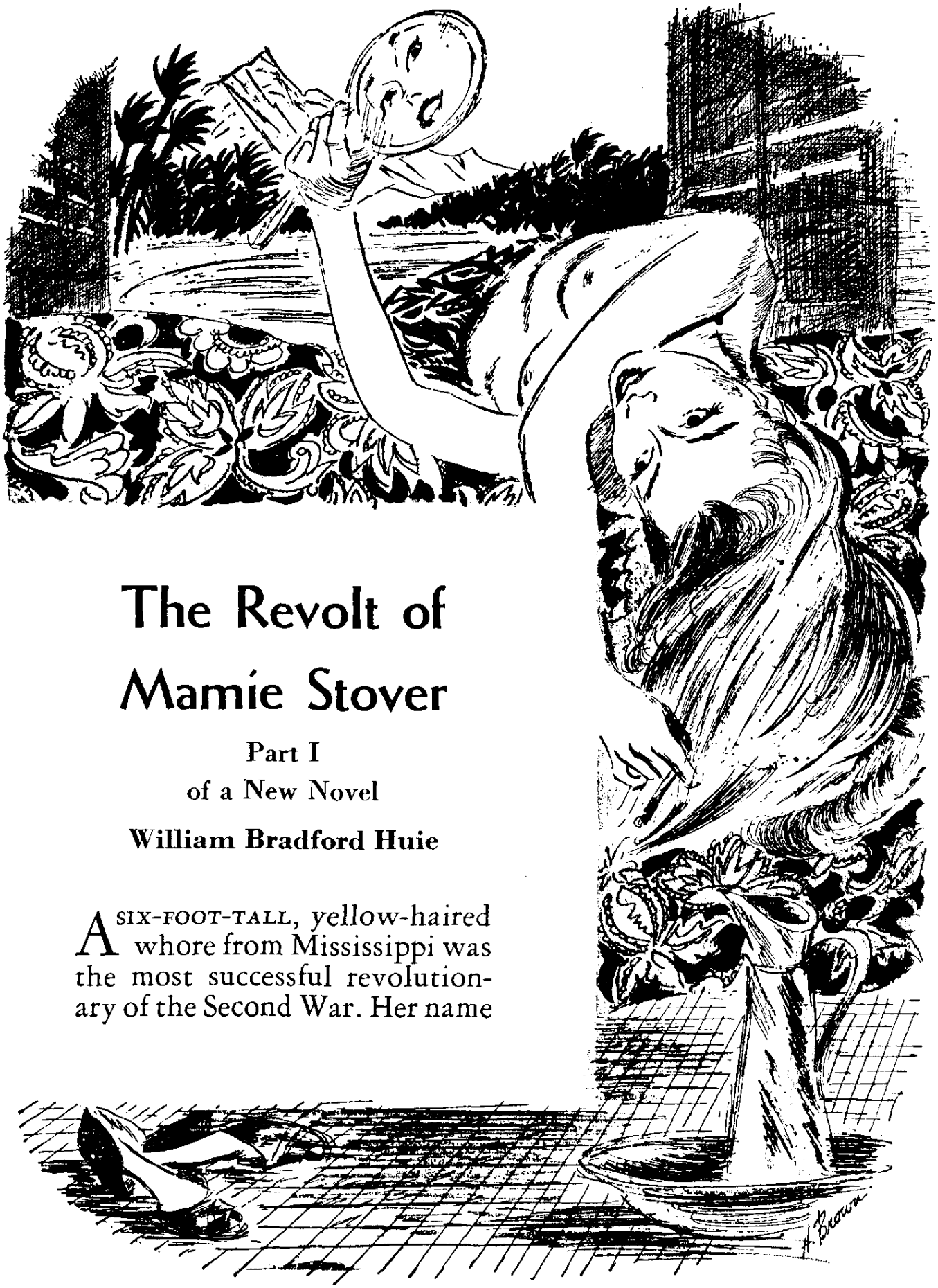
He has one more kind of noise, still more astonishing. He sings. On the hundred-odd acres that for years have served me, as a naturalist, as a sort of living laboratory, I suppose I have not heard Woodchuck singing more than three or four times. Unless *Marmota Monax* is a special interest of ours, so that we are everlastingly peering into burrows and listening at them and following old *Marmota* by day and by night (yes, he comes out in the moonlight) we are not likely to hear the chuck-song even once. Or if it *is* heard, it is likely to be mistaken for a bird. It is no bird. It is our Woodchuck, trilling and fluting away, very softly, like a warbler.

Common as Woodchuck is, he has enough curious ways and unexpected behaviors to keep a

home-acre naturalist busy for a lifetime. Do we know that he swims? There is a popular belief that he cannot swim at all. It is not true. Woodchuck will swim to get away from a dog, if there is no other possible way of escape; and he will even swim just to get across a wide brook to the vegetable patch on the other side.

Or again: How does it happen so often that a good terrier goes lolloping down a burrow in pursuit of Woodchuck and very shortly comes back empty-handed? Surely Woodchuck can't out-distance him, and a determined dog does not back down from a fight, powerful and dangerous though an angry Woodchuck can be as an adversary. No. The answer is that Woodchuck, hard pressed, can throw up an earthwork behind him faster than seems credible, and can pack and ram it to the consistency of concrete. He can build much faster than the best dog can tear down. Many and many the terrier that has gone rushing down a burrow and found, within ten feet, what seems to be unmistakably a blind ending. Woodchuck has just that minute made it. Or still again: Whoever could imagine Woodchuck eating flesh? The answer is that any naturalist can who has known *Marmota* long and intimately enough. Every now and then he will eat May-beetles as enthusiastically as a skunk. A reliable naturalist has sworn to Woodchuck's even eating a small bird.

No discussion of 'chuck lore could be complete without a raising of the question: Can Woodchuck climb trees? It may sound like a silly question, perhaps, for Woodchuck is obviously a ground animal of ground animals, his heavy digging claws no more suited for tree-climbing than a sparrow's beak is suited for pounding fenceposts. But the truth about Woodchuck, nevertheless, is that he can and does go aloft whenever he feels like it. Some woodchucks climb often, some only rarely. Usually a big bush or a sapling is as high as they go, but not always. Sometimes Woodchuck, in the spring, gets a craving for fresh maple sap, just as red squirrels do. On such an occasion Woodchuck may go clambering up a maple to a height of fifty feet or more. As a final whopper — but a true one, though no one but veteran Woodchuck-watchers may perhaps be expected to believe it — when Woodchuck makes his descent from these dizzy heights he almost always (unmindful of the thing's being clearly impossible) comes down head first.



The Revolt of Mamie Stover

Part I
of a New Novel

William Bradford Huie

A SIX-FOOT-TALL, yellow-haired whore from Mississippi was the most successful revolutionary of the Second War. Her name

was Mamie Stover. She made a fortune. The war wasn't a disaster for her; it was an opportunity. It multiplied the demand for her merchandise. It brought her long lines of eager new customers. It made her a partner, then a pensioner of government. It offered her the chance to revolt against onerous old restraints, to rise in the world, to acquire property, to feel important. And more skillfully than any of her competitors, Mamie Stover used the opportunities of war to make herself rich and comfortable.

I first met Mamie Stover on the night of May 12, 1939. We were on a freighter out of Los Angeles bound for Honolulu. About midnight I went to the wardroom for coffee, and there I found this tall girl, quite alone, just sitting there, sipping coffee and taking long, slow drags off a cigaret.

"Oh, hello," I said. I was surprised. I had thought I was the only passenger aboard.

She gave me the merest glance and no answer and I felt irritated. The wardroom of a freighter isn't the grand salon of a liner; it's a small room where one should be civil. I went to the Silex and poured my coffee, creamed and sugared it, and since there was only the one table, I sat down at the end, as far as I could comfortably get from this girl who wished to be left alone.

My irritation subsided, however, as I began to examine her. She had been beaten up. Some man had beaten her in the face, and she hadn't liked it. Her cheeks were swollen both from the blows and from her crying; one eye was bruised; her shoulders sagged; the corners of her mouth drooped; but there were needlepoint flashes of hate in her eyes. Whoever had hit her had not escaped her claws, but god, she had taken a beating.

Her hair was extraordinary: it was a golden blonde. It didn't look faded or streaked or artificially white, like the hair of most blondes; it was a vivid, luxuriant yellow, and it tumbled down onto her shoulders in coils. Her height, too, was unusual. Even as she sat there, before I saw her stand erect, I knew she must be near six feet. There was the long line of her back, long arms, long hands, and big, high-hung breasts. She was neither frail nor fat; she was a big woman with a body proportioned to six feet of height. She had a large, sensual, pouting mouth; her gray eyes were big and set far apart. Her makeup was heavy, almost theatrical, but I decided that this was an effort to cover her one

startling blemish: there was a ragged, fresh scar on her left cheek.

She looked, as a matter of fact, something like Lizabeth Scott. Except taller and meaner and with more, longer and yellower hair. Not like Lauren Bacall; her features were finer, more feminine than Bacall's. She twisted her mouth when she exhaled smoke, like Alice Faye. At first I guessed that she had been in burlesque, or a stripper and bar girl in some joint, but as I watched her I changed my guess. She hadn't had it quite that tough; she had worked as a model or had been a fairly well-kept adventuress.

She wore a black slack suit with a sea-green blouse and a bolero jacket. The suit needed cleaning but it was quality. Like Magnin's or Bullock's Wilshire. I thought that perhaps her man had been a gambler or a promoter — the man who had beaten her in the face and thrown her out. Now, obviously, she was lost. For when a man hits a woman hard in the face he destroys much of her value forever. If she fights back she becomes a snarling dog. If she doesn't fight back she becomes a whimpering dog. In either case she loses value which she can never regain. This girl had snarled and fought back; then she had been crushed.

The chief engineer, a good-natured Pole named Gorecki, came in and spoke to me.

"You writing some more stories?" he asked. The freighter belonged to the Hawaiian Fruit Company, and I had ridden it twice before. The officers knew I was a writer who lived in Hawaii and who was a friend of some of the ship's owners.

"Yeah, trying to, Gorecki. How's it outside?"

"Rough and raining."

He didn't speak to the girl; just got his coffee and came and sat by me.

"How long you been on the Mainland this time?"

"Too long," I answered. "About three months."

"Guess you're anxious to get back to the islands?"

"Yeah. Makapuu Point'll look good to me."

"Where you been?"

"Hollywood. I been working on a story there."

The girl raised her head and for the first time looked directly at me. She was quite young. I judge women's ages by their necks, and I knew she couldn't

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Editor's Note:

This is the first of three books which the new MERCURY *will run serially in its next twelve issues. The authors also will be regular contributors of short stories and articles to these pages.*

be more than twenty-one or -two. Yet already she was a discarded bundle of despair and hate, with an ugly scar on her face.

"I can't understand it," Gorecki was saying. "A young, clean-looking fellow like you who knows all the high-ups and who can live there in Hollywood with all them women — why the hell you want to live out in the islands?"

I chuckled. "A man's got to have some place where he can feel at home. I never could feel at home in Hollywood — even with all the women. I like to go there to work occasionally, but then I want to get out in a hurry."

"Why?"

"Too tough. Dog eat dog. Too many people figuring angles twenty-four hours a day in order to survive. Too many automobiles trying to get too many places. I don't have that sort of ambition. I'd rather live out in the islands and have a few friends and preserve my digestion. Besides, I'm not so young. Thirty. You can be an old man at thirty."

Gorecki still didn't understand.

"You know this Marlene Dietrich?" he asked.

"I've met her."

"Ever been up close to her?"

"Reasonably."

"She as good as she looks?"

"Yeah." For Gorecki's satisfaction I nodded like I knew something.

Gorecki smote the table with the flat of his hand. "Jesus Christ! I saw that picture three times where she sang that song and wore them long black stockings and that black garter belt. You see it? The one where she sat on that piano and pulled her legs up and showed them big white thighs with them black straps around 'em? Good God A'mighty!"

The girl got up and walked out. She was even taller than I had expected. At least six feet and perhaps a hundred fifty pounds. Her big, high-hung breasts became defiant as she walked. Her well-tailored slacks and red, built-up shoes accentuated her height and her long-leggedness.

Gorecki motioned his head in her direction as she went out. "There's a lotta woman, too. Take a good man to stand up to that, wouldn't it? But she's not talking. Coupl'a private dicks brought her aboard last night just before we sailed. They talked with the old man. Today she didn't come out of her quarters all day. Tonight she was walking on the deck in the rain but she wouldn't speak to no-

body. The old man told us to leave her alone."

"Damaged cargo, eh?"

"Yeah. I'd say some big shot there in L. A. wanted to get rid of her. She don't look like she's on no pleasure cruise. She looks like a lost ball in high weeds."

"She's built like a racehorse."

"You said it. She didn't have on them pants when she came aboard last night. She had on a dress and it was blowing. Boy, she's stacked. She's got legs like Marlene Dietrich except more of 'em."

"How do you suppose she got that scar on her cheek?"

"Knuckle duster. I've seen 'em before. A knuckle duster always leaves a ragged scar. And the man who hit her wasn't holding nothing back; he really smashed her one."

Gorecki went to the Silex and poured himself another cup of coffee. "There'll be just one place for her in the islands," he said. "Across the river. She ought to do all right. A scar like that always helps a big, young, yellow-headed whore; it just makes her look meaner and hotter. Maybe I'll go over and see her myself."

I got up. "Yeah. Maybe I will, too. Goodnight, Gorecki."

I went back to my quarters. The rain beat against the window and the lightning flashed. When I had crawled into the lower bunk and switched off the light I thought of that big, beaten-up girl lying alone in the darkness in another bunk and the thought made me feel lonelier than usual. I hoped she was asleep; I hoped she wasn't crying; I hoped she was too simple, too insensitive to cry except at the physical pain of being hit.

NEXT DAY about ten I went to the wardroom for breakfast. Rain was still falling in sheets; it was dark and blowing; the ship was wallowing along at twelve knots. I read the radio operator's news bulletins with my eggs: Hitler and Tommy Manville and Dizzy Dean. I went back to my room and worked for a while, but by four o'clock I was so depressed that I began to nip on a bottle of Old Crow. The weather was wretched.

After dinner the skipper persuaded me into a poker game. I played until midnight and lost fifty dollars. Aboard ship I always lose at poker. I don't know why it is. I've played poker over most of the world, and on land or in the air I can hold my own, even win a little. But not at sea. At sea I invariably lose. I suppose it's due to that relaxation which one feels aboard ship. Most women are said to yield themselves more readily aboard

ship than anywhere else. I suppose it's the same with me and poker. At sea I can be had more easily; I lose some of my ability to detect guile; I'm more inclined to accept things for what they appear to be; I relax my suspicions. I guess that's why I can't win at shipboard poker.

Back in my room I uncorked another bottle of Old Crow and sat down at my typewriter. The ship rolled. I've drunk Old Crow for years because when I was a young reporter hanging around state houses down South the politicians used to give it to me. It's good bourbon, hundred proof, and the old black crow used to fascinate me when I was drunk.

Once when I was sick and drunk after covering an electrocution I suddenly began flinging all the black crows in the room out the window. An exasperated cop came up to arrest me, but he was a good guy and we talked and I had three bottles left and I gave them to him and he went away. He thought I was crazy for wasting so much good whisky on a pavement eight stories below. Besides, I might have killed somebody.

Now, in May 1939, I had for five years written only books and magazine stories with an occasional screen play. In 1937 I had built a small home in Hawaii, and I was returning there after a stint in Hollywood. My magazine editors thought I worked better in the islands than anywhere else. The day before I left Hollywood one of them had telephoned me some advice from New York.

"Listen, Jim," he said, "your stuff has always been honest and real but it's been hopeful. You've got a reputation as a hopeful writer. Your readers expect hope. But lately I think I detect a somber, sardonic note creeping into your best work. Sure I know times are tough, but times have always been tough, and we need hope now more than ever. I think your trouble is that you are staying in Hollywood too much. For Christ's sake get out of there and go on back to the islands. Breathe some ginger-scented air; lie on a beach; eat a pineapple; caress your Polynesian sweetheart; and write good, hopeful, inspiring stuff. You've got a Polynesian sweetheart, haven't you?"

"Not at the moment."

"Well, get one immediately. That's what was wrong with Nietzsche, you know. He never had an Italian sweetheart. He never had a real woman. No wonder he was a sourpuss. I don't want to run any risk with

you. You're a healthy Southerner with a long view and a sense of humor and I want you to stay that way. So go on back to the islands and quit thinking about war and politics and write something hopeful."

I was going back to the islands and try to keep my long view and sense of humor. I took another long tilt at that old black-beaked bastard, then Mamie Stover tapped at my door. I knew it was she; I know the sound of a woman's tap on a door late at night; I suppose I had been expecting her.

I was startled nevertheless when I opened the door. She was standing there on those long legs and high heels, and since I was wearing only straw slides on my bare feet, she towered over me by a good five inches. A man is always startled, perhaps a bit frightened, when he confronts a woman who looks down at him.

"Can you give me a drink?" she asked.

"Sure, come on in."

She was still wearing the black slack suit, but she had put on a fresh white blouse which was open at the neck. She looked much neater than the night before. She had brushed that coiling yellow hair; she had made up carefully; some of the swelling seemed to have gone from her face; but the black bruise was still visible under her right eye. She sat down on the bunk and lighted a cigaret while I poured whisky and water.

"You'll have to take it British style — no ice."

"That's okay."

I looked closely at her hands as I gave her the glass. Long fingers. No rings. No hard work. A fresh coat of light nail polish. She raised the glass and deliberately, expertly let half its contents slide down her throat. She wasn't a sipper; she was a drinker.

"I'm sorry I didn't speak to you last night," she said. "I didn't mean to be rude. I just . . . I wasn't feeling well."

"Sure, I know how it is."

"I'd been crying and I was afraid if I talked I'd start crying again."

"I understood."

"But I've quit crying now. I've cried enough."

Her voice was soft and Southern; her big soft mouth was a healthy red and white; her hair looked soft and yellow and luxuriant. I felt sorry for her. She was a big, voluptuous human thing who had been used, soiled, beaten in the face, then tossed out on the rubbish heap. But it isn't easy to feel sorry for a yellow-haired girl who is six feet tall. It's easy to feel sorry

for the little people of the world — for the mousy little girl who is crying because she's been hit by the drunken sailor — but you feel instinctively that the big blonde ones could have looked after themselves.

And while I was at once sorry for this girl, I couldn't immediately regard her as being tragic. Only a comparatively few men and women are complex and sensitive enough to suffer real tragedy; only the few who yearn and aspire and hope and strive have the capacity for tragedy; and I didn't believe this girl was among this group. What had happened to her was a shame, but was it also a tragedy? She was like a lost, hurt kitten — a rather large kitten — that mews at your feet in the rain. You are sorry for the kitten; you wish that the carriage hadn't run over it and broken its leg; you wish someone would take it away and chloroform it; if it drags itself to your door you'll give it a saucer of milk; you feel miserable about it; but you feel no deep sense of tragedy.

This girl had wept in loneliness and misfortune, but a dog will howl when it's lonely and surely no dog can be tragic. A primitive, uncivilized human being can't suffer tragedy, nor can the simple, insensitive ones who are partly civilized. Only the most highly civilized, the most sensitive can be tragic; the others can only be pathetic.

Yet there were evidences of spirit and value in this girl. There were those flashes in her eyes, that tilt to her head, and that erect posture by which she projected her high-hung breasts. She had fought back. She had fire. She was big but she was a scrapper. So perhaps she was more than the kitten wounded by the carriage. Perhaps she was the mastiff wounded in the battle with the bear. The kitten would deserve only pity and the saucer of milk and the chloroform, but the mastiff would deserve to have his wounds bandaged, to be given a chance to recover. Maybe she wasn't the heroic, sensitive man or woman who is wounded in the battle with Evil and whom an honorable man must aid even at the cost of his life. But she might be the mastiff.

As I talked with her, I tried to appear not to notice her scar. It was a new scar, ragged and three inches long, running diagonally from under her left eye across her cheek. It was completely healed, but even under her makeup it was still red and ugly.

"You're wondering about the scar and the bruises, aren't you?" she asked.

I nodded. "I'm wondering about you. Why don't you tell me?"

I filled her glass again.

"Why should I bother you with my troubles? You don't care."

"Everybody cares a little bit about everybody else, I guess," I said. "And in my case let's say it's business. I'm a writer, and a writer is like a doctor. He earns his living out of other people's troubles. He just listens to troubles and makes notes. I used to write for *True Tales*. I got my material by listening to the troubles of bar girls in New Orleans."

"You mean the folks in *True Tales* don't really write the stories?"

"Of course not. *True Tales* are written by drunken writers who are behind with their rent. I wrote them to help pay the rent when I was making twenty dollars a week on a newspaper."

She liked that. She even tried to smile.

She leaned back on a pillow in the bunk, stretched out one long leg, and drained her glass. "About two hours ago," she said, looking at the glass, "I realized I've got to snap out of it. I got to make a fight of it. I got nothing to go back to; I got nothing to look forward to; but I've got to fight. And if I'm to live and fight I got to have somebody to talk to. I got to find a man. I'm that kind. I hate other women and I hate being alone. That means I have to have a man to live. So I decided to look for you. I found you in there playing poker — I could see you through the doorway — and I waited and followed you here. I hoped I'd find you alone."

I thought of the kitten in the rain again. Or was it the mastiff? I wished that she had knocked on some other door — on Gorecki's door; he could have helped her — but here she was, and I had to proffer the saucer of milk. . . . or the bandages.

"All right," I said. "Let's make a game of it. I'll tell you your story. You give me a few facts, then I'll build the flashbacks like we do it sometimes in Hollywood. I'll tell the story and you make the corrections. Okay?"

"Sure, if you think you can do it."

"I can. Name?"

"Mamie Stover."

"Age?"

"Twenty-two."

"Been married?"

"No."

"A child?"

"No."

"Occupation?"

She hesitated. "Maybe I could say 'actress' because I did appear

in two pictures. I been in Hollywood three years. But I'm not really an actress. Maybe I better just say 'none.' "

"Yeah. You mean the camera examined your hair and your chest in two pictures. You were a member of the sultan's 'hahreem.' Or you dangled over a swimming pool in a color shot. You were listed briefly among the 'starlets.' Well, in New York women like that call themselves 'models' or 'entertainers'; in Hollywood they are 'extras' or 'proteges' or 'starlets.' But it usually adds up to just 'man hunter' or 'man's woman,' doesn't it?"

She exhaled a stream of smoke. "Man hunter is close enough for me."

"Born?"

"Leesburg, Mississippi."

"That's in the Delta, isn't it? Up toward Memphis?"

"Yeah."

"Occupation of parent?"

"Barber."

"That's enough for this sequence," I said. "Now you watch it as it rolls." I put my feet up on the table and began talking swiftly, perfunctorily. "Three years ago, in May 1936, Mamie Stover was graduating from Leesburg High School. She was the prettiest girl in the class but not the happiest nor the smartest nor the most popular. In fact, she was quite unhappy — and for several reasons. She was Cinderella without the gown and coach; she had to work in chimney corners. She didn't have pretty clothes because Tom Stover, the barber, never had any money, and if he did he either drank it up or gave it to that hussy who lived up near the cemetery. When Mamie complained, Tom would cuss, then slap her down. So Mamie was a resentful girl. She resented being slapped, and she resented the sight of plain, ugly, flat-chested girls wearing the clothes which she, Mamie Stover, deserved by natural right. And she was unhappy because she was tall and big. She envied the cute little girls who could giggle and look up at halfbacks and make them feel heroic. Mamie never giggled; and she could only look down at halfbacks. At recess she was never in the midst of the laughing, gossiping group; she walked apart with one or two of the older, less attractive girls and sometimes with one of the brawnier boys who played tackle and who was from an older class. . . ."

As I recited this, Mamie Stover stirred restlessly. She got up, poured a drink, and stood on her long legs at the window.

"But Mamie Stover had her

looks," I continued. "Nobody denied that. In her basketball uniform or in a bathing suit or in a blue cotton dress walking past the courthouse, Mamie made the men turn around, gawk, hitch up their pants, and scratch theirselves. She was elected Miss Leesburg without opposition, and a Memphis photographer took her picture for the high school annual. And she had plenty of older men after her — guys who called her 'Flaming Mamie' and who told each other that she looked 'hot as a smokestack.' But these weren't the Smart Young Boys Who Were Going Somewhere; these were the tough, older fellows who worked in garages or hung around the sheriff's office, and they wanted to take Mamie to the woods and get her down in a back seat. And this worried Mamie's best friend, her mother, Bessie Stover, who cooked, washed, sewed, gardened, prayed, sang, bore children, and made a new dress for herself every seven years."

I stopped for a drink. "Corrections?"

"My father's name is John, not Tom. My mother's name is Leona."

"Okay. Corrections made. Next sequence. Who sponsored the beauty contest? The Legion or the Elks?"

"Neither one. It was the Cotton Festival."

"Good. A good situation. Southern belles and mint juleps and Ol' Man Rivah and banjers and party dresses. You were a Maid o' Cotton. A fresh bloom from the Delta. Leona Stover begged and stole to make those dresses that Miss Leesburg would need for the carnival. And Mamie Stover marched down Main Street in your red-white-and-blue pants while the folks hollered and the bands played *Dixie*. You stuck your chest out so far that one old codger on the curb chirped: 'Look' a yonder, boys! Thet gal's got tits big as mushmelons!' You rode on a float in a white cotton dress with the flag in one hand and a stalk of long-staple cotton in the other. And finally you put on the high-heeled shoes and the white cotton bathing suit — the one the big store had given you. You made that suit bulge in all the right places and what caused the bulges wasn't cotton, either. You pranced in front of the judges three times while the extras cheered and whistled. Then the mayor hisself set the crown on your head and bussed you on the cheek while the flash bulbs popped. You were Miss Cotton and a thousand editors yawned and decided whether to

give your picture one column or two."

"The mayor was sick and couldn't be there," she interrupted. "So he had the governor to crown me."

I was getting a little drunk.

"That's too bad about Mistah Mayor," I said. "It spoils the shot. He looks like a Foxy Grandpa. He ought to be in there. But we can change that. Let's go on. The magic wand had been waved. Cinderella Stover, the barber's daughter, had become a queen. The Cotton Queen. She was a-goin' to Hollywood to become a Movie Queen. She had a Big Contract. One year at seventy-five dollars a week. Nobody noticed the one year; just that fabulous seventy-five dollars a week. John Stover had never made twenty a week, so Mamie was rich as well as famous. The big store gave her clothes and she posed in the corner window. She was taken over by a press agent, and with the agent was a fancy frau who was going to escort Cinderella on the magic carpet to Fairyland. Over Cinderella's picture in the local *Clarion* was this caption: EMBARKS ON MOVIE CAREER. In 14-point Gothic that fits perfectly on a two-column cut. Cinderella's coach was an American Airlines airplane. It was a big day at the airport. Leona Stover and John Stover and the photographers were there to bid Cinderella goodbye. And when the door on that airplane closed, Mamie Stover was trapped. She had joined the fairies; she could never go back to the mortals. She could never live in Leesburg again; she could never marry a filling station operator or a deputy sheriff; she could never have babies tugging at her big breasts. It was all or nothing; the Rubicon *et cetera*."

Mamie Stover had removed her jacket and was lying propped up on a pillow against the wall in the lower bunk. She emptied her glass again and said: "You seem to know the formula pretty well."

"Why shouldn't I? I've worked on newspapers that sponsor beauty contests. Except we never called them beauty contests; we called them 'tit lotteries.' I know about the lucky Cinderellas with yearning hearts, long legs, and protruding chests who win Big Contracts. I've escorted them to airports; I've seen them mount the magic carpet; I've watched airplane doors close behind them. And I've been around Hollywood enough to know that one in five thousand hits the jackpot. The rest either go back home fast or they get hurt."

"Then you know what happened to me?"

"Sure. I'll need just one more answer to complete the flashback. Who were the boys who brought you aboard this ship?"

She hesitated again, then answered: "Carroll Craft's bodyguards."

I laughed and shook my head. It wasn't a mirthful laugh but the laugh which comes when you consider a puzzle and suddenly notice that the answer is ridiculously easy.

"That makes it simple," I said. "Mr. Carroll Craft! The Sheik of the Sahara! The Bandit of the Bayous! Yeah, this one's easy. When Miss Cotton left home she was a queen, but when the magic carpet arrived in Hollywood, she was a grain of wheat in the seasonal crop of yellow hair and big tits. Beauty contest winners were a dime a dozen. The guy who had signed her to the Big Contract knew this, but what the hell, she was only an item in his budget. His studio got five times as much free advertising out of her as she cost him. And the fancy frau wised her up. 'This ain't Mississippi, honey chile. It's tough out here and you gotta get Connections.'

"Miss Cotton was sent over to amuse the great Carroll Craft and his gangster pals; Louella Parsons hinted at a romance; *The Hollywood Reporter* said the Cotton Queen would appear in Craft's next picture, the Bastard of Baghdad. And she did — that hah-reem shot. Then her year ran out and nobody picked up the option. Craft and his boys were tired of her because a new crop of contest winners with even bigger breasts was arriving every month. Mamie Stover became just another prop around great houses; a plaything which stood by and looked hot until some Man-of-Power got bored with gin rummy, took her upstairs, then returned to his gin rummy without asking what her name was. When she was being 'considered' for a picture she was summoned to the office at 5:30 in the afternoon. The examination was made on a casting couch, and she left with twenty bucks and a promise to let-her-know. And this wasn't too bad because Miss Cotton was lonely and hungry and needed her men.

"Finally, however, she also needed another abortion, and she went to Craft's house one night to ask for money. He was drunk; he had her without bothering to take off his shoes; then he began beating her. Only this time he wasn't satisfied just to use his fists. The great swashbuckler wanted to see blood.

When she scratched his face he socked her with a pair of knucks and tore her cheek open. The bodyguard got her out, a pharmacist clamped up the cut and performed the abortion, and she starved for a month while the cut healed. Then she began trying to sneak back into Craft's house to beg for money to hire a surgeon to erase the scar, but the guards drove her off. When it looked as if a little bad publicity might develop, the guards beat her up, packed her up, brought her to a ship, paid her passage, gave her fifty bucks, and warned her not to come back."

I GOT UP and took a straight drink. "How's that? Any changes necessary?"

"Not enough to bother with," she said. "You make it sound like it happens every day."

"Yeah."

I had recited this story with little resentment. It isn't extraordinary. Variations of it occasionally make the newspapers. Perhaps something ought to be done about it. Perhaps there should be an Association for the Protection of Beauty Contest Winners in America. But I'm afraid I'm not much of a reformer. I haven't saved any lost women; I only make contributions to the Salvation Army. So Miss Cotton from Mississippi had proved unequal to a tough environment. So what could I do? So I wanted to give the hurt kitten the saucer of milk — or bind up the mastiff's wounds. I live in the house by the side of the road, and I can provide milk, bandages, sympathy, and a night's lodging; but I can't provide salvation because I don't know how.

I left the room for a few minutes, and when I returned Mamie Stover was back at the window, smoking, watching the lightning and the rain and the roll of the sea. I undressed, pulled on my pajamas, and crawled into the lower bunk. She came and sat on the side of the bunk and looked down at me and smoked her cigaret and held my hand.

We didn't speak; no further words were necessary. In her wide gray-blue eyes I could see her loneliness . . . the loneliness of a hound dog under the moon . . . the loneliness of a bruised and discarded woman . . . the loneliness which presses the chest and constricts the throat. I knew she wouldn't voluntarily go back to her own quarters. She hated being alone. She hated other women and she hated being alone. She had to have a man to live. She was that kind. I knew, too, that she had sought me by design. She wanted

to use me as a barrier against loneliness; she wanted to use me to help her in the islands. She had learned in Hollywood that one must use other people; that the way to be secure and successful is to "sleep with Power." I knew she wanted to use me, but while such knowledge depressed me I couldn't hate her for it. I didn't want her — but I couldn't ask her to go back into the darkness alone.

When she bent over and laid her cheek against mine, I stroked her hair and tried to respond to her. She clung to me while the rain beat against the window and the ship rolled on through the night.

"Shall I turn off the light?" she asked.

"Yes."

In my bunk she became so desperately hungry that for a moment I feared I'd be unequal to her. She wasn't passive and yielding; she was fierce and wild and strong. She was long-legged, powerful, and aggressive. Her billowing hair and her big, hot mouth almost suffocated me. She clutched and clawed and bit and scratched. She moaned, then screamed so that I had to hold my hand over her mouth lest she rouse the ship. Someone outside might have thought that murder was being done.

I went to the shower room and stood for a long time with the hot water beating against my body. I had taken her only because I was drinking and depressed by the weather . . . and because she was hurt and lonely. I hadn't wanted her. She wasn't my kind of woman. She was refuse. Goddam Carroll Craft refuse. Goddam Hollywood refuse. Why don't the Hollywood producers get smart, I thought, and start making money out of their refuse? They ought at least to be as smart as the meat packers. The packers use everything about the pig but the squeal; they don't throw away a goddam hair. The producers throw away too much. They ought to exploit their refuse. In their Big Breast Promotions why don't they publicize their Mamie Stovers sometime as well as the Misses Cinderella Big-Breasts and the Seven Husbands? They made a picture showing how *A Star Is Born;* why don't they make one showing how *A Whore Is Born?* Why don't they make a big-budget, super-epic about the garbage cans of Fairyland? About Carroll Craft and the scarred and bloody baggage his servants toss over the back fence?

Then I turned on the cold water. What the hell! Where there's winners there's gotta be

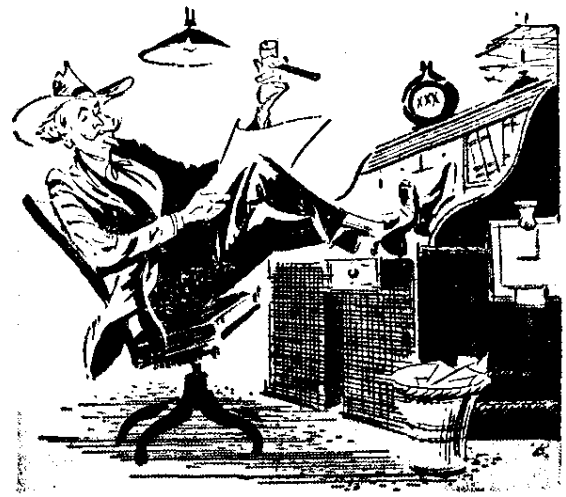
losers. Big purses attract big fields, and this means many losers. You can't blame Hollywood. They run the big lottery and create big winners and bounce the many losers out the back door. And the People applaud because the People love a winner and loathe a loser. What do the People care about all those miserable big-breasted wenches who dream and scheme, pray and prey, and yearn and whore but never get anything more than sex and a sock in the face? The People have never wanted Mamie Stover; they don't give a goddam about her or what became of her; they want more of Miss Cinderella Big-Breasts and her Seven Husbands.

And what do losers like Mamie Stover deserve anyway? They had their chance, didn't they? Hollywood gave Mamie Stover the opportunity to get out of Leesburg, Mississippi, didn't it? It saved her from having to marry a filling station operator, didn't it? If she didn't have what it takes, what could Hollywood — or I — do about it?

I went back into the room, switched off the light, and vaulted into the upper bunk. The sheets felt cool and clean. The window framed the lightning and the rain. I could feel the throb of the ship's engines and the thrust of her propellor. Below me, six feet of woman was sleeping — sleeping because she had had a man and was not alone. Six feet of scarred and defeated protoplasm. She had been run over by the carriage — or rent by the bear — but she was still much too vital to die.

(*Part II of The Revolt of Mamie Stover will appear in the next issue*)

Draughts of Old Bourbon



LAST MONTH in this space we recalled General Eisenhower's exhortation to the troops on D-Day in Normandy. Here, with only the four-letter words deleted, is the address of General George Smith Patton, Jr. to the Third Army.

Men, this stuff some sources sling around about America wanting to stay out of war and not wanting to fight is a crock of ——. Americans love to fight. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. America loves a winner. America will not tolerate a loser. Americans play to win. That's why America has never lost and never will lose a war. The very thought of losing is hateful to an American.

You aren't all going to die. Only 2 per cent of us right here today will be killed in battle. Death must not be feared. Death, in time, comes to all of us, and every man is scared in his first battle. If he says he's not, he's a goddam liar.

Some men are cowards, yes, but they fight just the same or get the hell slammed out of them. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. Under fire some men get over fright in a minute; others take an hour; for some it takes days. But a real man will never let the fear of death overpower his honor and his sense of duty.

All through your army careers you've been bitching about what you call chicken —— drill. That, like everything else in the army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is instant obedience to order and to teach a man constant alertness. A soldier must be alert every minute or

some German sonofabitch will sneak up behind him with a sock full of ——. There are four hundred neatly marked graves somewhere in Sicily, all because ONE man went to sleep — but they are German graves because the bastard who went to sleep was a German.

An army is a team . . . eats, sleeps, and fights as a team. This individual hero stuff is horse ——. The bilious bastard who wrote that stuff in the *Saturday Evening Post* don't know any more about real fighting than he does about ————. Every man must do his job. What if every truck driver decided he didn't like the whine of a shell overhead, turned yellow and jumped into a ditch? What if every man thought: "They won't miss me" and jumped into a hole? Where the hell would our country be now?

No, thank God, Americans don't act that way. Every man does his job, even down to the guy who boils water to keep us from getting the GI ——.

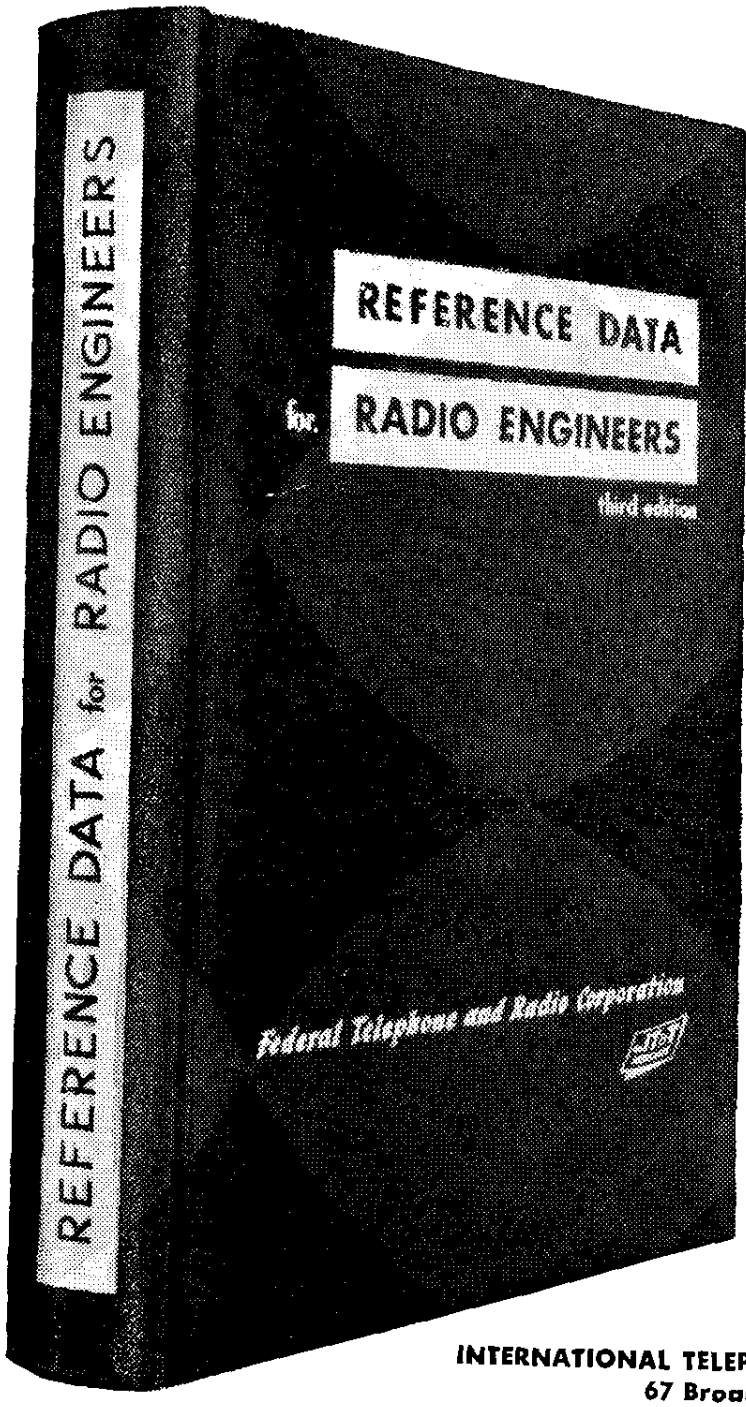
Remember men, you don't know I'm here. No mention of that is to be made in any letters. The U.S.A. is supposed to be wondering what the hell happened to me. I'm not supposed to be commanding this army. I'm not even supposed to be in England. Let the first bastards to find that out be the goddam Germans. I want those bastards to look up and howl: "Ach, it's the goddam Third Army and that sonofabitch Patton again!"

We want to get this thing over and get the hell out of here and get to those purple——— Japs. We'll win this war, but we'll win it only by showing these bastards that we got more guts than they'll ever have.

And here's something you can remember, men. Twenty years from now when you're sitting home around the fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the war, you won't have to shift him to the other knee, cough, and say: "Son, your granddaddy shoveled —— in Louisiana." No, sir, you can look him straight in the eye and say: "Son, your granddaddy rode with a sonofabitch named Georgie Patton and the Third Army!"

As a service to veterans of the Third Army, as well as to any others who may desire it, arrangements are being made to have this address recorded in the Patton manner by a famous actor. The address as recorded will be unexpurgated — just as General Patton delivered it. How this recording may be obtained will be explained in our next month's issue.

Ever hear about our electronic "book of knowledge"?



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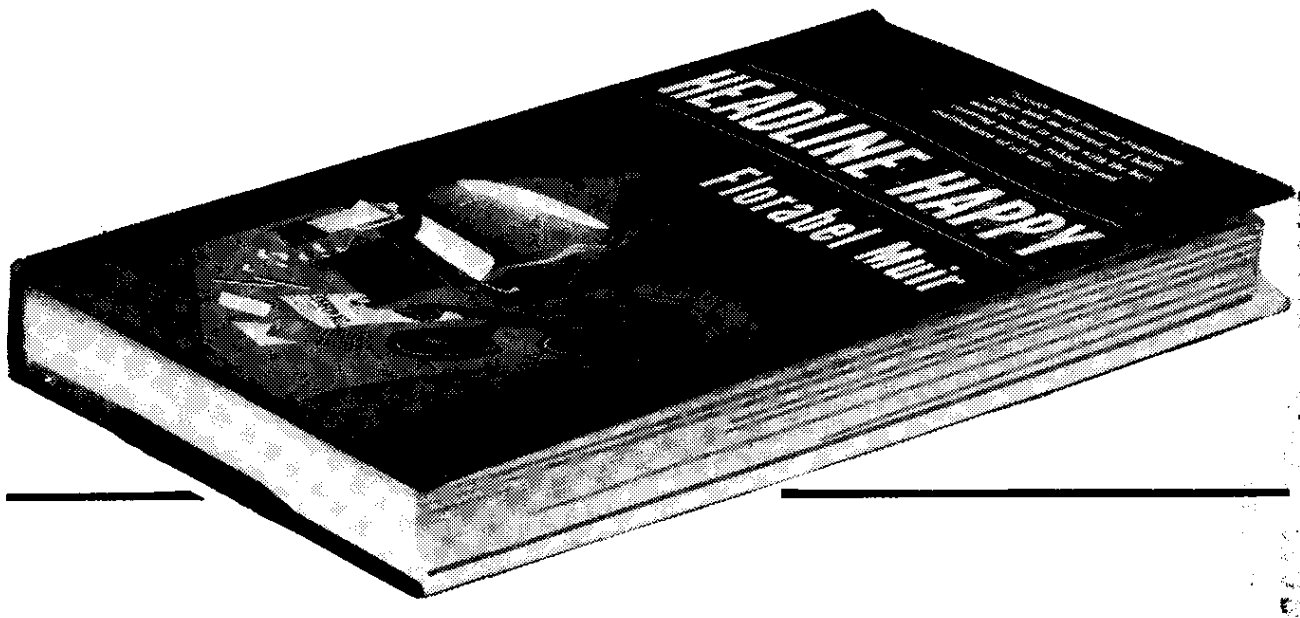

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