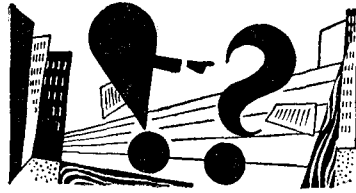

THE SOAP BOX



EDITORIAL NOTES

Shop Talk. It's a strange life, indeed, even for editors. Only two issues back we reminisced in this place about the fantastic things editors are sometimes called up to do, and in particular recalled that long ago a lady asked a member of the staff to help her in the endeavor to win the affections of a contributor to this magazine, who unfortunately did not see his way clear, as graduates of certain schools of business administration say, to return her affections. No sooner was the issue of the magazine containing this bit of history on the newsstands than an old contributor, who has been absent from our pages for years, called in person at the office and asked an editor to help him locate his wife, who a couple of weeks before had run off with the family car and with her person, as the lawyers would have it, depriving the man of her company and services, so clearly indicated in every marriage contract. The poor man added, "She never did such a thing before." . . . The number of poems on the atom bomb that flood

magazine offices these days must be stupendous. In the MERCURY office we must get at least one hundred a month. Most of them, needless to say, are pretty dreadful, full of pious vapidities. So far we have got only one, and a very good one, too, which we rushed into print. We refer to "Cradle Song," by Frances Frost in the July issue. We are not surprised that many newspapers are reprinting it. . . . A magazine office gets all sorts of newspapers and magazines from virtually every section of the country. In every office there is someone who runs through this mass of print, and in the MERCURY office one of the editors actually looks forward to it; he is an incurable reader — so much so, in fact, that in addition to listening, on the radio, to the extraordinary prose of keynote speeches delivered at political conventions, he also reads them, in order to "get the full flavor of them." Occasionally this editor comes across material that has unusual interest. The inmates of the Nebraska State Prison publish a magazine called *Forum*. It carries prose and verse. It also carries ad-

vertisements. A recent issue carried advertisements of a prominent bank of the state, an apparently high grade shoppe selling "saddles, bridles, martingales, saddlery goods, leather of all kinds, luggage and leather goods," a cigar store, a lumber company, a "Home of Good Furniture," and a "Physical Fitness Headquarters." The New Penology, it seems, is in operation in Nebraska. . . . Some prospective contributors, especially women, think it would help them enormously to see an editor when submitting material so that they could get "a personal idea" of the man they were dealing with and thus perhaps have better luck in getting acceptances. MERCURY editors are very cordial and hospitable to all visitors, but the simple truth is that such "personal ideas" seldom do the contributor any good. Editors as a class are very polite, much more so than beginning writers imagine, but they are also cold and objective when considering a manuscript. Of course, editors are pleased when watching a beautiful woman smile softly or gently turn her neatly shaped head, but the pleasure does not influence their critical judgment. It is no secret in the journalistic profession, as it is probably no secret to the general public, that many successful women writers would have some difficulty in achieving fame in Hollywood — as many of the women stars in filmdom would have some difficulty in getting their brain children, to use a phrase common in Hollywood intellectual circles, into the pages of

magazines. . . . The past month a charming young lady, a graduate of one of the reputable Eastern women's colleges, has been trying to sell us an article "proving" the scientific validity of palmistry. The editorial staff is still skeptical. A sense of chivalry keeps us from making public the name of the women's college the palmistry advocate attended.



In the near future we shall print an article in the journalism series that, we feel, will have special interest to all who are bemoaning the low level of so many contemporary radical and so-called liberal periodicals. Mr. Floyd Dell, who with Max Eastman, did so much to make journalistic history with the old *Masses* will relate the history of that periodical of blessed memory, presenting a generous number of anecdotes, thus giving the flavor of an organ that, unfortunately, was later besmirched by the metaphysicians and "artists" who sing the blessings of the Red tyranny. . . . Speaking of the journalism series, we would also like to call the attention of our readers to two other articles, to wit, "Two-Gun Editors" by Wayne Gard, and "The Love Pulp" by Ann Griffith. The first is gory and glorious history that may upset timid students in schools of journalism, and even more so their professors, but we are sure will delight all others; and the second is a wonderful and hilarious study of a group of magazines that specialize in what used to be

called the tender passion — and Mrs. Griffith quotes from these magazines *verbatim et literatim*.



RAILROAD STATIONS

The heavy thinkers and meaning-seekers will probably laugh at me for bothering myself to write about it, but I do want to go on record about something: railroad stations. Railroad stations fascinate me. I have wandered through nearly all the major ones in this country and abroad. I particularly like to visit them in the early morning hours, when they are deserted; their grand charm then comes out most effectively. Well, now to my main point. I think that the Grand Central station in New York and the 30th Street Station of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Philadelphia are without question the most truly wonderful on this globe. The other day I happened to find myself, about three in the morning, in the lobby of the 30th Street station, and I was almost overwhelmed by its majesty.

ALLERTON O. MASON

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CRITICISM OF THE PRESS

One of the things the American press, especially the newspapers, suffer from is the lack of real criticism. The few professional magazines that pretend to cover the dailies and weeklies are barely worth the paper they are printed on: they are full of shabby

self-praise and they carry too much advertising by newspapers. I think there should be a real, honest magazine of criticism of the press, and I suggest that the journalistic profession subsidize it, granting it a subsidy sufficient to carry it for a decade or more. I make this last provision to make sure the profession does not change its mind after it sees what the magazine prints. Of course, for an editor the magazine should have someone who is in no way beholden to the editors and publishers of the newspapers, and surely he should not in any way be connected with a school of journalism, for most of the people who teach in them are timid and wouldn't think of saying an unkind word about any papers, least of all their editors and publishers.

I myself have no specific ideas as to who should be editor, but once he is picked he should be given a fat salary and guaranteed absolute freedom. One more word: the magazine must not have any advertising whatsoever. The only concession I would make to the newspapers is that each paper which has contributed to the support of the magazine get its weekly or monthly or bi-weekly or bi-monthly copy without charge — though, on second thought, I'm not so sure of that either. Of course, the magazine should be on sale to the public. The public has a right to know what's wrong with the papers it is supporting — and a right to complain.

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TEN FALLACIES OF FELLOW-TRAVELERS

BY WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN

IN THIS time of overshadowing international crisis the air is thick with wishful fallacies about short-cuts to American-Soviet agreement. Some of these fallacies are rooted in ignorance and misunderstanding. Others are the product of half-truths and truths which are irrelevant.

Outright Communist and extreme fellow-traveler propaganda appeals to a limited and shrinking clientele in America today. The fallacies I have in mind are more dangerous because they often sound reasonable and tolerant and are circulated by individuals who would indignantly and sometimes sincerely repudiate any special sympathy with the Soviet régime. Anyone who reads the newspapers and listens to serious programs of discussion on the radio will recognize the frequency with which these ten fallacies crop up.

(1) "*The Soviet Union only wants security.*" This soothing phrase is used over and over again to "explain" and justify a long series of acts of crude force and subtle intrigue which have led to the outright annexation of more than 270,000 square miles in Europe

and Asia, inhabited by some 24 million people, and to the imposition of vassal status on a much larger area of Eastern and Central Europe, over 600,000 square miles, with a population of over 100 million. If security is, as it should be, the right of the Russian people, why is it not equally the right of the many smaller peoples — Poles, Letts, Estonians, Lithuanians, Finns, Rumanians, Hungarians and others — who have suffered cruelly from the executions, mass deportations and wholesale confiscations that are an unvarying feature of Soviet expansion?

But the obvious truth is that security is a very secondary consideration in the minds of the Soviet rulers. These rulers know from experience that their country was secure against external attack when it was much weaker militarily than it is now, in the twenties, so long as Germany was effectively disarmed. When the war ended in Europe three years ago there was complete agreement among the victors as to the necessity of imposing thorough disarmament on Germany. The United States offered a

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