

The Folder

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Jar Ptitsa

NO rumored bird of earthly paradise
Scatters such rubies from her
splendid wing,
Nor are there any nightingales whose
cries
Entice to such a Heaven when they sing
As Phoenix does, that Virgin of the Fire
Who mounts triumphant from her
smoky nest,
Epitomizing every man's desire,
Defeat defeated, Faith made manifest.

Half fabulous omen, if the dream be true
I dream,—and waking still do dream of
you,—
Forbid your feathers ever spread again
Unless they lift this most devout of men,
Your Mystic, on that voyage up the sky
Which vaults the stars to mock mortality.
HUGH WESTERN

The Taste

My friend from Mars was just leaving
when he asked me a surprising question.
Why, I said, it's a drink. Especially in
hot weather.

Surely, he said. I know that. I read the
advertisements. It's a beverage, mildly al-
coholic, produced from a farinaceous
grain by germination, ebullition, and fer-
mentation. I learned that from your dic-
tionary. But what's it like? How does it
taste? I've been so earthly busy, I haven't
had a chance. . . .

True, and odd, I thought. In all the
romantic literature from Shakespeare to
Saintsbury, no one has ever described the
actual feeling. . . . Well, how *would* you
describe it? And the time was short. The
big interplanetary rocket was making
ready. Already they were calling *All on
Earth that's Staying on Earth*.

Remembering all I'd had in my time,
I tried to explain:—

First (I said) an undersavor of cool
easterly air, like the earliest sunbreak of
spring. A suggestion of its vegetable ori-
gin from strong dark soil: a rooty,
sprouty, cereal taste. Even in citified and
ceremonial places, poured by a dress-
coated butler into tapered goblets, it still
holds that smack of simplicity, of clean
country earth.—I wanted to say, it al-
ways makes me think of good garden-
dirt under the fingernails, but I feared he
wouldn't understand. The countryside on
Mars is all minerals and canals, isn't it?

You can pour it (I continued) so you
get the collar at the top or at the bottom.
But to make full experiment, try not to
gulp. No matter how thirsty you are, hold
it a moment on the tongue; then before
swallowing let it wash over the palate.
That's the upper rear of the mouth, where

you enjoy the most delicate stimulus.

Yes, he said unexpectedly: the balcony
always sees the best of the show. I prom-
ise not to gulp. So what?

A kind of tingle, an airy skirmishing
sensation—Oh, something like a tooth
getting ready to telephone the dentist or
the feet of spiders dancing. Then going
down the gullet you get the tart, the
bitterness of the hop. That's the real
thrill—

Wait a minute, he said, making quick
notes. Now which is it, a dance or a hop?

No, no; *hop* is a vine. Its flowers are
cooked with the malt to give their par-
ticular pungent twinge. They use only the
female hop-blossoms, that amuses me.

That's why it's bitter? he asked.

It isn't just bitter; satirical maybe; keen
but a bit ruddy too. It's not like Hard
Liquor, which is dynamite, and it's not
Soft Drink, which is delicatessen. Just
a drink for thirst. It's hard to describe
because as soon as I get that chilly sparkle
on my tongue all my reflexes go into ac-
tion and unless I hold hard the whole
mouthful is swallowed. I wish you'd asked
me all this at a more convenient time.
All I remember is a frosty sting, a de-
scending sluice, then it's beaming softly
in the belly—as though you had swal-
lowed some private property of sunlight.

That's what you call vitamins?

It's one the scientists haven't isolated
yet; Vitamin M, the musical corpuscle.
Maybe the stuff irrigates the vocal cords
on the way down, because it seems to
suggest singing. Even people with poor
voices can almost hold a harmony after
three or four.

You have some good songs to go with
it? he asked.

O rare, I exclaimed. Songs and litera-
ture too. Prost and Proust. Ben Jonson
and Sam Johnson; and Charles Dickens,
the Vitamin D of modern fiction; and
Calverley's famous Ode, and Schnitzel-
bank, you'd enjoy that—

How do you serve it? he interrupted
impatiently.

Best of all on the back steps about
midday, when the cook has her day off
and you've been mowing the lawn. Some
of the bottles have a little tonsil or goitre
in the neck. After you think you've fin-
ished and the bottle has stood a few min-
utes there's still a dreg more, a few stir-
rup-drops for aftertaste—

But they were pulling away the gang-
plank.

For Cosmos' sake, he cried, don't tell
me any more. If I ever get back I'll try
it for myself.

There's a pleasant little hofbrau near
the Interworld Skyport, and as soon as
the rocket had left. . . .

Tales of a Traveler

SIR:—The bootblack stand outside the
Grand Hotel, Charlotte Amalie, is in full
view of the veranda dining-room. The
owner is a one-legged colored man of
unusual dignity. His stand, bright green,
is emblazoned in large white letters with
the legend: LOVE IS BUT A FAILURE.
Nothing at all about the price of the shine
which is, after that, merely anti-climax.

Goudy should make an immediate pil-
grimage to St. Thomas to see the letter-
ing on the headstones in the graveyard
—in German, Dutch, French, Spanish,
Danish, English. Immensely interesting if
a bit ghoulish—when new graves are dug
old bones are invariably discovered.
These are placed in a common vault that
is wide open for inspection. The skulls
bring poor Yorick to mind.

In Lewis's bookshop in Panama, I saw
my first book-worm face to face; in fact
I saw two of them, one smooth and shiny,
the other hairy and not shiny but both
of them white in color. There was no
trouble in locating the little book-bur-
rowers for Lewis simply opened up a
few English publications and there they
were. It will amuse you to know that
American books are practically immune
from book-worm ravages in the Canal
Zone district; it must be some strange
quality of the English cloth, or paper or
glue. There is no reason to think the in-
sects can reason or think beyond that.
Maybe it's the ink.

The Virgin Islands; did you ever hear
the anecdote about the speaker in Par-
liament who happened to mention them
in his address and on being asked where
they were replied that he didn't exactly
know but he imagined they must be a
long distance from the Isle of Man?

W. S. HALL.

On board S. S. Chiriqui.

The Curious Incident of the *Tour De Force*

SIR:—An anecdote of surpassing bril-
liance bears telling again. To reiterate is
to familiarize and often to endear: the
worthy incident brings up a warmer glow
with its recounting; the noble deed be-
comes more noble still. But we are en-
titled to expect, in a twice-told tale, that
the episode presented will have co-
herence with the broader theme of which
it is a part; that the jewel of consistency,
both as to time and place, will shine
with steady splendor; that the words in
which the story is given will be newly
turned and newly vigorous, and not
merely blurred carbon impressions of
the words we heard before.

On just these counts, and on a dozen
others that might be named, the recital
of Sherlock Holmes's magnificent feat of
clairvoyance in *The Resident Patient*, and
again, to our total confusion, in *The Ad-
venture of the Cardboard Box*, is a bleed-
ing wound in the side of those who think
the king can do no wrong. Somewhere,

somehow, someone missed his step and stumbled—but whether it was Holmes himself, or the baser mortal Watson, it is difficult indeed to fathom.

We all remember the thrill that ran down our spines on that close, rainy day in October when Holmes first forged the flawless chain of logic by which the secret thoughts of his confrère were dragged out into the light of day. No more was needed than the flick of an eye and the knitting of a brow for the wanderings of the humble mind to stand revealed: around the walls of the room in Baker Street it went, from the portrait of Gordon to the portrait of Beecher and thence to the bloody battlefields of America, and so inevitably to the conclusion that war is ever a preposterous means of settling human differences. Watson himself was struck with amazement not only when his train of thought was so patly broken in upon, but also when the simple processes of the reasoning employed to follow it had been painstakingly explained to him. It was, indeed, a brilliant *tour de force* that Holmes performed, and we could, quite reasonably, have borne mention of it again in one of the later chronicles, when Watson, or even Holmes himself, felt frankly in a reminiscent mood.

But we are asked to believe, instead, that on another day—a blazing hot one in August this time—the bemused Watson fell once more into a contemplation of the walls of the sanctum; that his simple mind dwelt, step by step, on the same chain of events leading perforce to the same appraisal of the futility of this same method of settling international disputes. And we are asked, too, to believe that he was amazed when Holmes (it must have been easier this time) broke in upon him as before; and that his amazement was again undiminished when Holmes revealed the now-familiar methods of observation and deduction he had pursued.

We can explain this unparalleled episode—barring of course the possibility of any tongue-in-cheek reliance upon the reader's forgetfulness—only as the springing of a shameful trap upon the master by his stooge, or as the gentle ribbing by Holmes himself of his ingenuous attendant, who did, in all likelihood, indulge on more than one occasion in the same simple profundities of thought and reasoning.

But whatever the explanation, the incident itself is sufficiently remarkable to demand a closer examination of the comparative record afforded. Textually, the two accounts are so nearly alike as to make one the counterpart of the other. Citing first, throughout, the text as revealed in *The Resident Patient*, and second the text according to *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*, the small discrepancies may be briefly and quickly detailed. The thermometer of ninety becomes a thermometer at ninety; the

paper becomes the morning paper; Watson's ejaculation "Most preposterous!" becomes "Very preposterous." Then, as Holmes's revelation begins, he changes "Your eyes turned across" to "Your eyes flashed across"; instead of saying "You then glanced," he says "Then you glanced." And that is all—the rest, down to the words "... had you not shown some incredulity the other day," is identical and verbatim. In the first instance, the anecdote is followed by a stroll about London, through Fleet Street and the Strand, which is succeeded in turn by the visit of Dr. Percy Trevelyan; in the second instance it is followed by a reference to the item in the paper about Miss Susan Cushing's receipt of the pickled ears, and the subsequent sortie to Croydon.

Incredible as all this is, the record stands. There can be no denial of the Word as the Word is spoken; no appeals to the original Greek or Latin for re-translation and emendation; no cries of "Apocrypha, Apocrypha!" to put the onus on the unelect. We can only bow our heads in sorrow and acknowledge that the foundations of our faith have been rudely shaken; that the Absolute has suddenly become relative; that somebody, though truth still shines dimly from afar, has pulled a thunderous and awful boner.

EDGAR W. SMITH.

Note:

These observations on the use of the famous "double passage" are presented, of course, in the light of the deeper realities inherent in the Watson record itself. According to mundane history—the unwelcome and unrealistic history which attributes authorship of the tales not to the ineffable John H. Watson, M.D., but to a certain Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—the facts are these:

The passage in question first appeared in the slightly risqué tale of the *Cardboard Box*, which was the earlier from Doyle's pen, but which he suppressed in England, and, later, in America. When he published *The Resident Patient* in the *Memoirs*, he liked the episode so well that he transplanted it, body and soul, to this story. Later—much later—he allowed *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* to appear in *His Last Bow*, leaving the passage in it exactly, or almost exactly, as it had first been written.

In the Doubleday Doran "definitive" edition of the tales, published in 1933, the passage occurs in both *The Resident Patient* and *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*, as cited above. In the John Murray (London) "definitive" edition, published in 1928, it has been deleted from *The Resident Patient*, and replaced in its totality, by the text "Unhealthy weather, Watson," said my friend." The John Murray version of *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* is identical with the Doubleday Doran version.

E. W. S.

Caducity of Editors

SIR:—As a former Editor, the past few years have brought a constant string of earnest young people to my office door, convinced that they have just what it takes to become a great editor. Furthermore, they are certain that an editor's life is the life for them. Consequently they are prepared to storm the strongholds and wrest success from a somewhat reluctant destiny.

Now while I admire the courage of my young visitors and their enthusiasm there isn't much that I can do for them in the way of a job—so I give them fatherly advice; try to get them to see

the error of their way and select some other less hazardous occupation than journalism, knowing all along that it won't make the slightest difference. They'll persist in their course anyway.

But recently I found my answer to this problem. A few months ago, I picked up a volume in a second-hand bookstore. It was a very handsome volume entitled *A Portrait Gallery of American Editors* and cost, when originally published, all of thirty-five dollars. Just why anyone would want to pay that not inconsiderable sum to gaze upon the countenances of some forty odd, largely oldish men—and a few women—I can't see for the life of me. But anyway William Edwin Rudge, the publisher, and Doris Ullman, who took the photographs and edited the book, were more sanguine. (The fact that I obtained it for \$2.50 leads me to believe that their sanguinity was largely misplaced.)

Browsing through the pages, a remark of John Farrar's at the luncheon table one day came to mind. He stated that the average Editor's span of greatest usefulness averaged ten years—at the most fifteen. Applying John's yardstick to the Editors in Miss Ullman's book, we found it amazingly correct. Of the forty-three Editors at the height of their power thirteen years ago but two out of the entire group, in this year of grace 1938, are still editing the same or, for the most part, any magazine. Both survivors, oddly enough, in the Condé Nast organization. One—Richardson Wright, Editor of *House and Garden*, the other, Edna Woolman Chase of *Vogue*. And of the thirty-nine magazines then published, thirteen had suspended publication entirely and several others had been merged or in the case of *Life* had changed their character entirely. Nine of the Editors were dead—two by their own hand—two had retired, one was editing the Sunday Section of a daily newspaper, and of nine we could find no trace. The remaining thirty had quit journalism entirely for other and we trust more substantial occupation. One had become Governor of a New England State; another Vice-President of a large Public Utility Company; several had gone into the more lucrative fields of advertising or public relations; two or three more fortunate than the rest, perhaps, were receiving pensions for their years of work, but there were several others still among the ranks of the unemployed.

So, nowadays, when a young man or woman suggests taking up editing as a profession, I merely hand them the book with the summary. Not that it will do any good, for youth is ever (fortunately for the world) optimistic. But ten or fifteen years from now they can't look at me accusingly and demand to know why I didn't tell 'em the facts of an Editor's Life. Well, there's one consolation, I probably won't be here to see them.

REGINALD T. TOWNSEND.



A crowd of refugees from Irun who had sought safety in Hendaye, France. (From *Illustrated London News*)

Tyranny and Liberalism

REFUGEES: ANARCHY OR ORGANIZATION? By Dorothy Thompson. With an Introduction by Hamilton Fish Armstrong. New York: Random House. 1938. \$1.

DOROTHY THOMPSON'S POLITICAL GUIDE. New York: Stackpole Sons. 1938. \$1.25.

Reviewed by ELMER DAVIS

THESE books are both expansions of magazine articles, the nucleus of the study of refugees being the contribution to *Foreign Affairs* which was largely responsible for the calling of the Evian conference. Miss Thompson apologizes for it as a hasty job which she wrote because she felt she simply had to, but it has the merits of the sort of thing people write because they have to; there is intensity of feeling in it, a vivid picture of the dreadful situation of some millions of people who no longer can call any country their own. And there is also a very sensible plan, worked out in collaboration with Moritz Schlesinger who was associated with Nansen in post-war refugee work, which might settle the present refugee problem if there were enough good will, unselfishness, and intelligence in this world available to apply it.

There are two critical points in any refugee settlement—places to put the refugees, and means for financing their movement. Miss Thompson points out that there are plenty of countries that

have more room, even if her estimates on the population possibilities of tropical regions seem wildly optimistic; and while the modern pioneer is no longer content with a log cabin in a clearing, but wants telephones, automobiles, and radios as soon as he can get them, "the settler's demand for the advantages of civilization will actually prove to be his greatest asset to the country where he settles." As for the financing of these mass migrations, "charity is not enough." If capitalism "had a more enterprising spirit," if its "imagination had not been dulled" (treasonable words, Miss Thompson) international finance could organize something on the line of the old East India Companies for developing the waste places of the earth through an unusually high type of immigration. But capitalism being what it is, a more practical method would be one which has been employed on a small scale in Palestine—the utilization of blocked funds belonging to refugees or foreigners, especially in Germany, to finance exports which could be used by the refugees getting settled in their new homes. Or if the British government, unable to receive many refugees itself but eager to contribute to the solution of the problem, put up a few million pounds to help finance the transfer, that could be charged off of the war debt to the United States. . . .

And at about this point the reader wakes up, and comes to a conclusion which is underlined by the present state of the Evian conference. All this is perfectly sound, in theory; it makes sense—

but if this were a sensible world there would be no refugee problem. No country, however vast its open spaces, seems very anxious to receive much immigration at present; nor have the Germans as yet displayed any enthusiasm for turning blocked funds into exports that might bring some advantage to somebody else. As for the British war debt, who would be so ill bred as to mention that in Westminster when England needs the money for other things? Miss Thompson deserves high praise for reminding us that the thing could be done; unless what is left of civilization is simply to give up and quit, we have to keep on trying. But the immediate prospects of getting anywhere are dim—and within a few months, or a few weeks, there may very well be forty million refugees instead of four million.

The "Political Guide" is subtitled "a study of American liberalism and its relationship to modern totalitarian states," and here, too, one notes an occasional confusion between what ought to be and what is. Miss Thompson likens the behavior of a nation which fails to participate in a collective security plan to that of a citizen who is willing to let a kidnapper snatch anybody else's baby so long as his own is let alone. This is a worthy moral concept but the realities of the international situation are hardly so simple.

Her concept of liberalism is a high-minded one, but when she says that liberalism went astray because the idea of self-realization "became perverted into the idea of self-interest," and denounces the "mechanical conception that the unbridled competition of egoistic self-interests will work out automatically in the greatest good for the greatest number," she is denying one aspect of historical liberalism, and implying a definition that would not be shared by many readers of the *Herald Tribune*. She brackets the Wagner Act in denunciation with Russian purges and German anti-Semitism; "for is it not clear that under any economic system there will be workers and directors, and if one destroys utterly the spirit of collaboration, how shall one revive it?" The employees of Mr. Tom Girdler might feel that the spirit of collaboration is something that ought to work two ways, but Miss Thompson (who probably deplores Mr. Girdler) equally deplores measures that may eventually bring him and his like into step.

However, her book is infused with a praiseworthy sentiment, and she most certainly deserves a citation for insisting that every American ought to be made to pass an examination on "The Federalist."

Elmer Davis is one of the most trenchant commentators on the passing scene. He is a frequent contributor to the magazines, an ex-newspaper man, and a close follower of the political affairs of the United States.