

# —The Phoenix Nest—

THE enclosed short-short essay (reading time thirty seconds) has been sent me by that sage educator and animator of letters, Burgess Johnson, of Union College, Schenectady, New York. It seems to me that this expression (as F.P.A. used to abbreviate such phrases) f. a. l. f. w.:

*To All Friends to Whom I Owe Letters:*

Affixing a stamp to a letter always thrills me. I am sending to someone else a small fragment of myself, and commanding my Government's cooperation. Dropping the letter into a post-box is even more stirring, for I know that it is about to ignore space and bridge distance. It may be an ambassador empowered to reach agreements, or an arbiter to dispel misunderstandings, or a confidential messenger to whisper secrets. There is such power in that folded bit of paper, which seems already winging its way the instant I release it, that my fingers relax their hold lingeringly, so I may gain the full flavor of the act.

Mailing a letter, in fact, so thrills me that I wish I could ever find the time to write one.

—BURGESS JOHNSON.

I wish to thank, for a very kind letter, Grace Harvard Phillips of Los Angeles, California. Part of her letter, concerning the word "palimpsest," I should like to quote here:

In the "Spring Issue"—and now Spring is past, and "Summer is icumen in," (that's O. E. perfect tense, Fadiman says)—you had reference to the word "palimpsest" in poetry. Yes, it takes this long for the *S.R.L.* to come and be read, and a letter to be written. For one thing, had to get and re-read "H. D.'s" poetic novel "Palimpsest." Read the first time years ago, I had been under the mistaken impression that it was written by Richard Aldington.

But here is the beautiful poem of D. H. Lawrence in which that word occurs with meaning and force:

## TWILIGHT

Darkness comes out of the earth  
And swallows dip into the pallor  
of the west;  
From the hay comes the clamor of  
children's mirth;  
Wanes the old palimpsest.

The night-stock oozes scent,  
And a moon-blue moth goes flitting by:  
All that the worldly day has meant  
Wastes like a lie.

The children have forsaken their  
play;  
A single star in a veil of light  
Glimmers: litter of day  
Is gone from sight.

You will recall that I spoke some time ago of Eleanor Presson of Manchester and also of the Sawyer Free Library of Gloucester, Massachusetts. We are up that way now again, I and

the Juvenile Expert, and so I am glad to print here a story Mrs. Presson has sent me of one of her adventures as a librarian. I have changed the names in it, but it is entirely authentic:

She comes to the library every day, usually around closing time—sometimes her brother Tony comes too and her sisters Tessa and Trina. Carlotta is about twelve years old, poorly dressed, but clean. Unfortunately, the same can not be said for her brothers and sisters. But Carlotta has an instinctive sense of order and neatness anyway. She has black straight hair and the look of someone always searching for something. She told me at the very beginning that she always kept her books in the ice-chest for safe keeping. It was Carlotta's sense of order that led us to become so well acquainted. She seemed a little possessed about straightening the books. Five o'clock in the Junior Department finds the whole room in great chaos, the shelves all mixed up, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" where "Alice in Wonderland" should be and vice versa, the magazine table piled high with encyclopedias, mittens, and gum wrappers, and the Easy Book Section—well, words can not describe what that looks like. All this is displeasing to Carlotta. She glances about the untidy room, and suddenly, she attacks! First she bangs the books on the shelves together, and the noise echoes in the quiet room. (I found out later that she was deaf and couldn't hear all this.) Then she pushes the books back on the shelves as far as they will go. I view this with alarm, because it is a strict rule at the Sawyer Free Library that the books should be kept in a straight row one-half inch from the edge of the shelves. I got it from Miss Flatley, the present librarian, she got it from Miss Shute, librarian before her, Miss Shute got it from Miss Phillips, and I think Miss Phillips got it from God. Anyway, it is all very important. So I explained to Carlotta about it and she seemed to agree. Once she understood my method, she swung over to it with no trouble at all. She talks very little; we work together silently; but there is a feeling of companionship between us. Anyway, at five o'clock in the evening on a rainy day in March, I'd just as soon be quiet—very quiet. When the room is in perfect order, we stand back and survey it, probably a little smugly—Carlotta puts on her coat and brings her books to the desk to be stamped out. She likes books with lots of pictures, her favorites are old Encyclopedias and illustrated Bible stories. I stamp the books and she takes them up, usually goes to the waste basket to put one last piece of scrap paper in, walks to the door, turns, smiles at me in a way that lights up her whole face and says, "Bye!" I say "Thank you very much, Carlotta!" Sometimes she says nothing; sometimes, "I come again tomorrow night."

One day when Mrs. McRae was taking my department, it must have been my day off I guess, Carlotta appeared with a man. At first the two

just stood in front of the desk looking frightened, then Carlotta said something to the man in Italian and he pulled some papers from his pocket and handed them to Mrs. McRae. Carlotta said, "You fill 'em up?" The papers turned out to be some very official ones, that all aliens had to present at the Post Office. The man was Carlotta's father, and poor Mr. Cacciatori could neither read or write. Apparently Margaret felt that we would help her father to make out the papers. Mrs. MacRae typed them up for Mr. Cacciatori, told him to be sure and take the information to the Post Office, and they were off.

The next day I was at the library and Carlotta came in with her mother. Mrs. Cacciatori was a little woman with black hair pulled straight back from her forehead and knotted on top. In her ears she wore tiny gold ear rings. She, too, had alien papers to make out. She kept saying "You help? You help? My God, my God they put me in jail!" I assured her that they wouldn't, asked her the questions on the form, filled them out for her, and sent her on her way. Just before she went out Mrs. Cacciatori asked, "You like fish? My man go fishing, he bring you big fish!" She stretched her arms to show just how big. I said quickly that I didn't like fish. I could see myself walking to the train carrying some huge fish, fresh caught, and wrapped in an old *Gloucester Times*. My refusal of the gift didn't seem to bother her. She said good-bye; then, "Lady, you help me. God will help you." I was pleased to know that.

About a week later I was called to the telephone and someone said in a high, excited voice "You kind lady at library?" I almost said "I work in the library; but I don't know how kind I am." But then I thought I wouldn't. I just said "This is Mrs. Presson, children's librarian." The voice said, "You know Carlotta Cacciatori?" I said, "Yes." The voice said, "I'm her aunt." I thought, "Oh well!" It seemed that Carlotta's aunt wanted me to write her a letter to the City Hall in Lowell, Mass., so that she could get her birth certificate to take out citizenship papers. I told her to come up and I would write the letter for her, but not to tell *anyone* that the children's librarian did any such secretarial work on the side, at practically the drop of a hat!

Mrs. Cacciatori came again, though. This time it was a form from the rationing board to get some rubber boots for Mr. Cacciatori. He has a job now with a contractor, because as an Italian alien he is not allowed to fish on his own. Carlotta came with her mother, all smiles, once more requesting that I "fill 'em up!" I did it gladly. I was glad to know that Mr. Cacciatori had found work.

—Eleanor Presson

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

Send GOOD books to  
the Victory Book Campaign,  
Saturday Review Family,  
25 W. 45th Street, New York, N. Y.

## The Crostics Club

**A**NTI-SLANGERS, how do you like this that I came across inadvertently in wandering among Whitman's prose? From "November Boughs" (1888), captioned "Slang in America":

The science of language has large and close analogues in geological science, with its ceaseless evolution, its fossils, and its numberless submerged layers and hidden strata, the infinite go-before of the present. Or, perhaps language is more like some vast living body, or perennial body of bodies. And slang not only brings the first feeders of it, but is afterward the start of fancy, imagination and humor, breathing into its nostrils the breath of life.

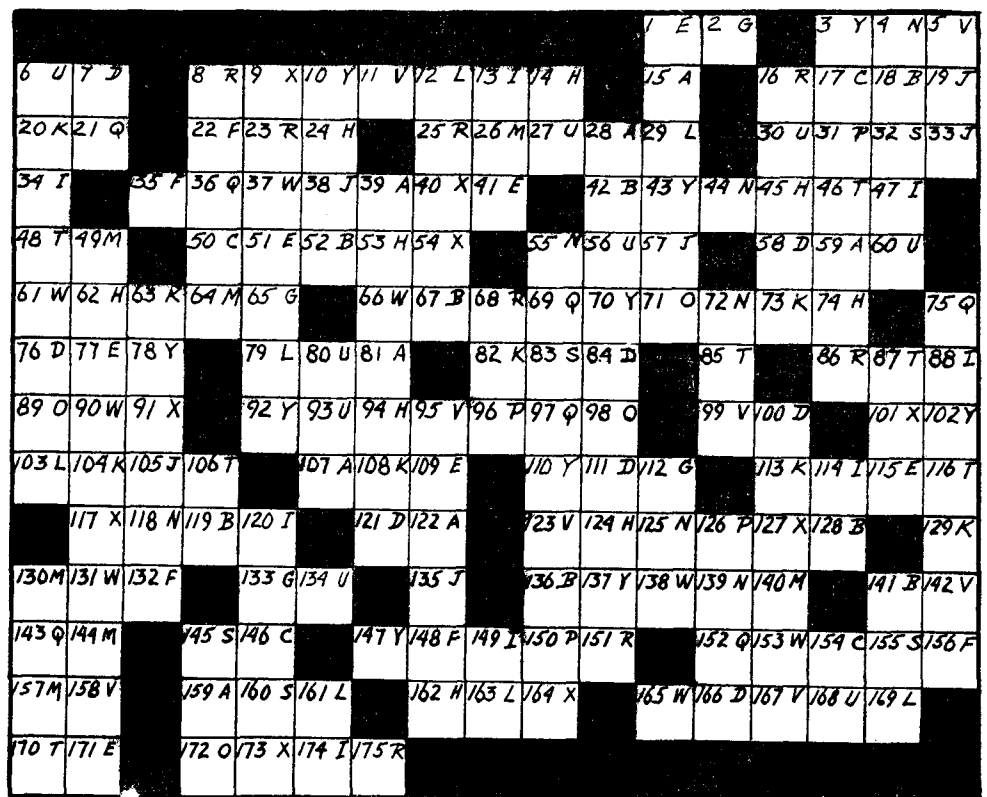
George W. Lyon's article on slang still awaits *SRL* publication, but meanwhile, in writing to express his enjoyment of Will Irwin's letter, he is reminded of a definition of "highbrow," which won for him a *Forum* prize in '26, and which should tickle even that sinner's fancy: The highbrow is a highly developed specimen of the genus *homo*, species *sapiens*. He is more *sapiens* than *homo*. He remembers Mark Twain's definition of cauliflower as "cabbage with a college education" and considers himself a cauliflower in the human cabbage patch. All that Hamlet did was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." All that the highbrow does is sicklied over with his own supercilious sense of superiority. Hamlet said, "Twas caviar to the general" and so says the highbrow as he orders a caviar sandwich and looks with contempt on his fellow mortals eating ham sandwiches. Of course, this does not apply to our DC genus!

To you time-keepers: Send in your statistics for the week's DC on a postal and I'll see what this column can do for you. Send it direct to my address\*. A note from our distinguished playwright, Elmer Rice, hard-working but sufficiently interested to keep in touch with us, serves as a fitting introduction:

"In general I should say that it takes about as long to do one of the puzzles as it does to smoke a good-sized after-luncheon cigar; that is, from twenty-five to forty-five minutes. Forty, I think, would be the average. An hour is about the outside a busy person can spare. If you haven't solved it in that time, put it away, and wait for next week's issue of the *SRL*, or look up the answer in the back of the book, as the case may be. My time figures are based upon the solution of about a thousand of the puzzles. I've been stuck a dozen, or maybe twenty times—mostly in the early days, before I got the hang of the thing. NEEDLESS TO SAY, NO REFERENCE BOOKS!"

E. S. K.

\*353 West 57th St., N. Y. City (Room 1425).



## Double-Crostics: No. 485

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

### DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the corresponding numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (1940 edition).

The solution of last week's Double Crostic will be found on page 6 of this issue.

### DEFINITIONS

- A. The crowning or finishing part of a thing.
- B. Swallowed up; engrossed.
- C. The predecessor of whist.
- D. To stop or close, as an opening.
- E. High shell explosive, chiefly picric acid.
- F. Type of small pleasure vessel.
- G. Night (Norse Myth.)
- H. English humorous novelist (1881-).
- I. A beautiful shepherd youth who sleeps forever.
- J. A fold, lobe, as of the ear or lungs.
- K. Private infliction of punishment for crime without due process by law (2 wds.)
- L. A weak-minded, stupid fellow.
- M. It is rumored (2 wds.)
- N. A kind of English bobbin lace.
- O. An elder poetic or a younger prose Icelandic (Norse) work.
- P. Wholly engrossed in feeling, meditation, etc.
- Q. Greatness of undertaking (obs.)
- R. Gives authority to.
- S. Sly and cute; foxy.
- T. American inventor (1888-).
- U. For use on short journeys.
- V. Cramped (comp.)
- W. Heroic King of Sparta.
- X. The farthest extent or reach.
- Y. Braced firmly; propped.

### WORDS

28	15	30	107	59	81	159	122
42	141	128	52	18	67	119	136
154	17	50	146				
121	166	84	111	100	76	58	7
51	171	77	41	1	115	109	
132	148	22	156	35			
2	133	112	65				
24	94	14	74	124	53	45	162 62
13	149	47	34	88	114	174	120
33	135	19	38	105	57		
129	104	82	73	108	20	63	113
79	163	12	29	169	103	161	
144	26	157	140	64	130	49	
4	125	55	118	139	44	72	
89	172	98	71				
126	31	96	150				
21	75	152	36	69	143	97	
151	86	16	23	25	68	175	8
155	145	83	160	32			
116	85	170	48	87	46	106	
56	168	60	6	134	27	30	80 93
123	167	99	11	5	158	142	95
61	153	66	90	37	131	165	138
127	164	91	40	54	117	173	101 9
110	137	3	102	43	78	92	70 10 147