

"UP FROM THE MEADOWS RICH WITH CORN..."

THIS WEEK'S COLUMN, with your kind indulgence, will consist of a collection of stories that have nothing whatever to do with the world of books. They struck me as funny, and although some of them probably are very old, I, at least, never heard them before. Maybe they will provide you with a smile or two over a hot week end. . . .

JIM, A NEGRO PORTER at a hotel in Columbus, Mississippi, got involved in a crap game one Saturday night. He lost his week's wages and everything else except his undershirt and pants. But Jim was determined. He remembered that his wife had some savings from her washing for white folks that she treasured in a stocking in the top drawer of a dresser in their cabin. So Jim went home about twelve o'clock, took off his shoes at the door of the cabin, and "crope" in. He rummaged around in the top drawer of the dresser, and made such a disturbance that his wife stirred in her sleep and called out, "Who dat?" Jim paused in his search for a few minutes, and then began again. He rattled the drawer, and once more his wife roused from her sleep, and called out, "Who dat?" Jim waited for a few moments and then resumed his search. He knocked over a chair, and this time the voice that called out "Who dat?" from the darkness was a deep, husky bass.

Gone was Jim's air of furtive secrecy. With a bellow of rage, he rushed over to the bed, and cried menacingly, "Who dat say dat las' 'Who dat'?" . . .

A LADY TURNED UP at a Grand Central Station ticket window with a boy in tow and demanded a ticket and a half for Boston. The agent leaned out of his booth and studied the boy for a moment. "You can't get by with a half-ticket for that boy," he proclaimed. "He's wearing long pants!" "Well, if *that's* your criterion," said the lady coldly, "I ought to ride for nothing!" . . .

HOMEWARD BOUND aboard the Brighton Beach express, Mr. Goldfarb was reading the *Jewish Day* and Mr. Shlepkind his copy of *PM*. Suddenly Goldfarb saw his friend Pincus across the aisle engrossed, of all things, in an issue of Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*. Enraged, he tore the paper out of Pincus's hands and cried, "You low life! You renegade! How dare

you read a filthy sheet like that in public?"

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Pincus. "It's very simple. For years I read the *Jewish Day* as you are doing now. What did I see in it? '200,000 Jews Massacred in Poland.' 'Millions of Jews Starving in Nazi Germany.' It made me feel terrible. So I switched to *PM*, like Shlepkind there. Was it any improvement? No sir! 'Gangs Attack Jews in Dorchester.' 'Synagogue Looted in Far Rockaway.' I felt even worse because it was nearer home. Then somebody told me about this *Social Justice*. What do I see here? 'The Jews own all the banks, and the automobiles, and the movies, and the government.' I tell you, Goldfarb, I never felt so wonderful reading anything in my life!" . . .

WHEN ARTHUR MAYER was patrolling the Ledo Road instead of his usual Broadway haunts, there was, he reported, little danger from Jap raiders or landslides. The real peril was the malaria mosquito with which the jungle was infested. To persuade the workers to take suitable precautions, slides were prepared illustrating how the disease was transmitted. Naturally these slides had to be greatly magnified and the insect appeared with a large and terrifying proboscis. One simple native sat wide-eyed through a showing of the pictures, and rushed out to report to his family, "Our

Burma mosquitoes are nothing at all. They only can give you an itch. You ought to see the size of the ones they have in America!" . . .

WALTER TARLETON JACOBS writes that a sneak prevue of the film story of Al Jolson's life was run off recently at a California theatre. Jolson tiptoed into the lobby to catch the comments of the audience. The first one he overheard was, "Isn't it a shame Jolson couldn't have lived to see this production? How he would have loved it!" . . .

A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY strolled by a country pond one hot afternoon, and, observing nobody in sight, obeyed a sudden impulse to take a dip in the nude. She was splashing about happily when, to her dismay, a hobo appeared on the scene, took in the situation at a glance, and constituted himself a highly-satisfied audience of one. Furthermore, he sat down on her clothes.

The girl implored him to be on his way, but he wouldn't budge. After a half hour of entreaty, she stumbled upon a big dishpan embedded in the pond and, in desperation, covered herself with it as best she could and strode haughtily up to the bank. When she reached the hobo, she slapped him sharply across the face and exclaimed angrily, "You know what I think?" "I do," answered the hobo. "You think there's a bottom to that dishpan. There isn't!" . . .

IRKED BECAUSE YOUR apartment or home is overcrowded? Ponder over a story Averell Harriman says is popular in Moscow these days. A schoolteacher distributed new pho-



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"So you've invented a zero . . . and what have you got . . . nothing!"



"Lovely spot for a picnic, dear, if it weren't for these confounded people."

tographs of Stalin and suggested that her charges pin them up on their walls that evening. The next day every one but Ivan reported that instructions had been carried out faithfully. "Don't you love our leader?" the teacher asked Ivan. "Oh, yes," he answered, "but I couldn't hang any picture on the wall because our family lives in the center of the room." . . .

BROADWAYITES ARE laughing over the story of a universally disliked agent who was rumored to be the victim of an elaborate kidnapping plot. "The story is a phony," declared one producer bitterly. "Nobody would kidnap that so-and-so." "Why not?" somebody asked. "Because," said the producer, "who could the kidnapers find to pay ransom?"

"**ONE OF THE MOST** memorable experiences of my career," a famous war correspondent told his friend, "took place on my way to fill a lecture date in Buffalo. I met a beautiful girl in the diner. One thing led to another and the first thing you know I was being entertained in her compartment. Suddenly she burst into tears. 'My husband is the most wonderful man in the world,' she sobbed, 'and look at me here kissing an absolute stranger.' She painted this husband in such glowing colors that first thing you know, I was crying too!"

"A dolorous picture," remarked the friend. "What happened next?"

"Nothing new," said the correspondent. "We just kissed and cried all the way to Buffalo." . . .

HERMAN MANKIEWICZ is one of the fabulously paid scenario writers in Hollywood, but in common with the rest of the plushy set out there has been experiencing difficulty in finding satisfactory domestic help. His

wife Sarah finally reported, "I hired the dream butler of all time today. His name is Rollo." "He looks the part," said Mankiewicz dubiously, "but let's see how well he knows the ropes." "Rollo," he called, "rush me up a double scotch and soda." "Yes, sir," said Rollo with alacrity, but a few minutes later he returned without the drink. "Pardon me," he said, "but would you be wanting sugar in it?" . . .

A MAN WAS FISHING peacefully, one summer morning, when he suddenly heard a woman's voice shrilling, "Help! Help! I'm drowning!" He dropped his pole, dove into the lake, and swam in the direction of the commotion. He came upon an elderly lady spluttering feebly in the water and grabbed her firmly by the leg. Unfortunately, it was made of wood. He reached for her again and clamped an arm around her jaw. This time he came up with a set of false teeth. On the third attempt he fastened his hands in her hair, but alas, she was wearing a wig.

"You fool," she gasped. "Don't stand there doing nothing! Get me ashore. I'm drowning, I tell you." "My dear lady," he answered, "I'm doing the best I can, but you simply will have to give me a little cooperation." . . .

A DISREPUTABLE-LOOKING character waylaid a member of the Racquet Club as he stepped into his roadster and whined, "Just gimme a nickel, mister. I'm starving." The member obliged but couldn't help remarking, "I'm afraid you won't be able to buy much food for a nickel in a time like this." "It's not for food," said the vagrant. "I ain't had a bite now for eight days and I wanna weigh myself."

BENNETT CERF.

"From where I sit"



ONE of the few private things left in this public world is the human mind. You can't see it, you can't feel it, you can't hear it, and unless someone is in love with you, you can't dial it.

This has posed considerable difficulties in the past, and psychiatry, raising its own head and its own questions, has sought to take the mental telephone apart, study its wiring, and assign to it certain exchanges which may be dialed when information is wanted or in case of sickness, fire, theft, or general inability to button the top button.

Now the way all this ties in with you is that psychiatry and air conditioning have gotten together, and you and your family have probably gone to see *The Seventh Veil*, or *Spellbound*, or *The Lost Weekend*. And you've been hearing a lot of talk about how the psychological novel is coming to the front.

These days it makes people feel very sane when they see other people who cannot face the world of reality. But let me say right here, that when it comes to exploring the human mind, the movies barely scratch the surface. True, in a book only one of your senses is bombarded, whereas in the movies you get sound too. But *Asylum Piece* by ANNA KAVAN is an exception.

This collection of stories is carefully calculated to give a vivid emotional projection of a disordered mind and the world into which it has been driven. There was a time a while back, when mention of Freud's name was no longer quite so naughty and the thrill of it wore off. In any case, what the reader may expect to get from this book is both a new understanding of breakdown, and some unusually arresting fiction.

To be clinical is difficult enough, but ANNA KAVAN manages to be both clinical and thrilling. Aside from the contributive value of this book to the field of mental literature, this is a work to be read. And once begun, it will not be put down. It's in no sense autobiographical, but the author has worked in mental hospitals and she knows whereof she speaks.

paul

DOUBLEDAY

AUGUST 17, 1946

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Seeing Things

NUREMBERG—CENTURY OF PROGRESS—PART I

ARE the father and mother of the defendant in this court room?" A youngster of seventeen with brown eyes and black hair, a budding cockney with the look of a grocery boy, stood in the dock at the Old Bailey. His eyes patrolled the floor. Guiltily, miserably. Or stared at the backs of his large, outstretched hands, as they rested on the railing before him. His face was reddened with a blush which rarely left it. He kept biting his lower lip to fight off tears.

Below him was a sizable inkspot of barristers, their gray wigs showing white above their black gowns. Confronting the boy across a well of lawyers and clerks sat the judge. He dominated the scene as a mountain dominates the valley that lies in its shadow. He was higher than the boy, and like him alone, but not so lonely. He was a man, costumed as a symbol and trying to think and act like one, though still a man. He was an individual and an abstraction; a modern, yet a figure out of Hogarth. His scarlet robe and powdered wig glowed in the yellow grayness of the court room. So did the fine dispassion of his face. He was awesome in his dignity, fearsome in his power, and as imperturbable as men learn to be who dare to ventriloquize for justice.

"No, Your Lordship," came an answer from the far side of the dock. "The defendant's parents are not here. They are waiting in the corridor."

"Do you mean to say . . ." His Lordship's voice, so sonorous and impersonal before, had thunder in it now. "Do you mean to say that, while room has been made for idle spectators in this Court, no place has been found for the father and mother who have labored to raise this unfortunate boy? Are these luckless parents supposed to overhear from a chance passerby outside what most vitally concerns them? Bring them in at once."

They appeared, and in turn took their places in the witness stand. He was a little storekeeper, the cockney character who seems overdrawn when he wanders into an English comedy. He was oily of hair, pink of face, and flashy of dress. He sported handlebar mustaches, and wore the inevitable thick watch-chain across his ample vest. She was a meek, faded

woman in black; a dressed-up version of the char to whom condescending British dramatists turn when in need of a reliable laugh. Her upper plate kept slipping, while tears trickled down her cheeks. Her blue eyes found their way but once to her son's face. She appeared to see only the judge.

There was nothing comic about this couple now. It was impossible not to sense how complete their happiness had been with each other—and with their son—and how utter was their present wretchedness. They had ceased to be cockney, or English. They were a father and mother—any father, any mother—bludgeoned by life, and compelled to say publicly what it cost them anguish to admit in private.

"Before your son was guilty of this immoral attack on a boy of fifteen, what was he like—as a son?"

"N it please Your Lordship, 'e was always a good boy. Hindustrious, book-lovin', 'elpful around the 'ome 'n shop. I can't rightly imagine what it was that got into 'im that night."

The father and the mother, they both said this in their different ways. He brusquely, embarrassed by having



—International News Photos.

Von Papen and Field Marshal Keitel rise to their feet to plead "not guilty."

to praise no less than to defend; she proudly, not bothering to hide that her heart was broken. No one could fail to feel their shame. Or the misery which was theirs. Yes, and the boy's, too. Nor could anyone miss the gratitude which lighted the mother's eyes, and lifted her mouth into a brief half-smile when the judge leaned over to her, before passing sentence, to confide, "Madam, you shall have your son back—not now, but very soon."

I could not help thinking back to this boy, this family, and this English court when, a few weeks later, I found myself in the old Bavarian Palace of Justice in Nuremberg. Such samples of naked grief as these Britishers represented, of families with their lives blighted, of individuals with crimes to their discredit, are common sights in the court rooms of any country. In these cases the faces of the accused can register the misdeeds they have done. If they are guilty, their countenances are part—not the legal but a human part—of the evidence. Moreover, the grief for which they have been responsible is no less visible on the faces of the affected parties. The whole ugly business is within the scale of what features can record.

But as I looked at these twenty men in the dock at Nuremberg, I realized that their faces, however evil, could not bear the full imprint of their crimes. What their expressions should have said, what I had half hoped, half expected they would say, they did not, could not reveal. A Hauptmann, a Judd Gray, a Loeb, a Leopold, a Lonergan or a Heirens can look his part when brought to justice; look it to the full. Or if not, look it enough so that we can read into his appearance what we feel must be there. But not these men.

No mouths regardless of how cruel; no eyes no matter how brutal or how shifty; no chins in spite of their ferocity; no lines however depraved could record their guilt. Their crimes were too far-flung, too grandiose, for their countenances to hold. They were of a mass scale, hideously beyond any individual register. What their faces could not say, the face of Europe—indeed of the world—says for them. Their guilt was written in Coventry and London; in the charred corpses of Stalingrad and Rotterdam; in the stench of Buchenwald. It was written in the agony of slave labor, in the helplessness of displaced persons, in the rubble of millions of homes, of lives, of hopes. It was written in the hunger of the old and the young, in the heartbreak of families, the despair of nations, the moral degradation of our times, and the