

# "From where I sit"



ON D Day, Colonel VAN WYCK MASON was in the war plans room of SHAEF preparing the official communiques for the Normandy landings. During those ominous hours he managed to relax a bit by writing a few notes in a journal he was keeping, trivial little notes about what was going to happen the next day and what troops and what ships were involved and where and why, and what General So-and-So said to Field Marshal So-and-So.

In the deluge that followed he put the wrong thing in the wrong envelope, and hours later, when the realization suddenly struck him, he found he had mailed to his mother not a harmless letter, but notes concerning—guess what? Frantically, he tried to trace the letter, but it had passed the censor. It was just about this time that we read about a girl in London who, practicing on the teletype, sent out the premature message of invasion which got her in hot water but brought her many offers of marriage.



Those were fantastic days, and when we look back on them from the confused quibbling and the reaction of peace, they seem to have been very constructive and exciting, almost like a spy story. Almost like the new VAN WYCK MASON spy story, *Saigon Singer*, which is the first *Major North* story since 1942. This time, *Major North* outstrips past performances in this novel of action and intrigue, which by the way, is longer than any other in the series.

Recalled from Europe where he was engaged in delicate and critical duties, *North* is sent to Manila to track down a woman known only as the *Black Chrysanthemum*; a woman ostensibly in possession of a certain dossier containing the names of British and Americans who, for fabulous rewards, had betrayed their countrymen. And a faint trace led to Saigon where *North* met several strange and intriguing characters, among them *Achille Pluvel*, the hard-bitten rubber planter; *Natalie Converse* of the U. S. Consular staff; and the current idol of Saigon, *Xenia Morel*, an anatomic bombshell and talented opera star. How do you feel, a little on edge—hmmmmmm? Well, I'm on page 176, catch me if you can.



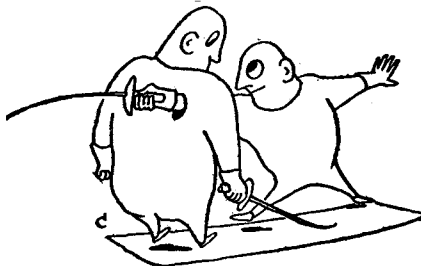
paul

DOUBLEDAY

## TRADE Winds

ERNIE BYFIELD, whose Pump Room is the place where stage and literary celebrities *must* be seen when they are in Chicago, played host recently to Jinx Falkenberg and Larry Adler. Both Jinx and Larry can do wonderful things, the only difference being that Larry needs a harmonica. At any rate, they asked Byfield how he happened to go into the hotel business. "It was one of those quirks of fate," answered Byfield. "My father owned the Hotel Sherman. He bumped into me in the lobby there one morning—and took a liking to me!" . . . That reminds me of a remark Samuel Goldwyn made at his studio once, apropos of nothing. "I ran into Moss Hart last night. He was at my house for dinner!" . . .

The latest chapter in the Kaye-Goldwyn saga concerns the finding of Jim Thurber's great story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Hollywood, of course, promptly changed the name to "I Wake Up Dreaming." Then the Gallup Poll ascertained that the public actually wanted the original title, so, for the moment at least, it has been restored. The story itself has been revised radically but Danny Kaye, they say, is riotously funny all the way through. The ending was rewritten about ten times, and even the one finally shot left Mr. Goldwyn nursing considerable doubts. "I'm going to call Thurber himself and see what he thinks of it," decided Mr. G. Thurber was located in *The New Yorker* office and listened patiently while Goldwyn, in Hollywood, described the new ending in vivid detail. "Look, Mr. Goldwyn," said Thurber finally. "I don't know anything about moving pictures. I don't know what you've done with the rest of my story and I don't particularly care. I sold you the story and that's that. How can I say whether or not your new ending is right?" Mr. Goldwyn thought this over for a moment, and then cried approvingly, "Thank you, my boy. Why can't I get criticism like that in my own studio?"



"Touché!"

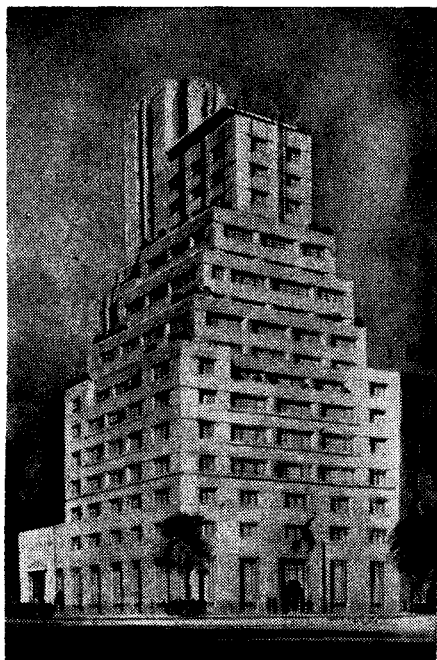
Despite the strife and turmoil that attend the shooting of Mr. Goldwyn's pictures, the finished products somehow turn out to be uniformly superior. "The Best Years of My Life," for example, is a knockout, with a fluent, adult script by Bob Sherwood, superb direction by William Wyler, perfect photography by Gregg Toland, and uniformly excellent acting by an all-star cast. The performance by Harold Russell in particular will linger in your memory for many a day.

To snobs who still turn up their noses at motion pictures, I should like to hold up three of this season's products—"Henry the Fifth," "The Yearling," and "The Best Years of Our Lives"—and ask how many plays or novels of the year can match them either for quality or entertainment. . . .

JOHN O'HARA COSGRAVE, guiding spirit of the Dutch Treat Club for a generation, Sunday editor of the *New York World* when Herb Swope was a tongue-tied copy boy in short pants, husband of the founder of the Finch School, has achieved a new distinction at the age of eighty-two. He has written a book of homespun philosophy. "Man a Citizen of the Universe" is its title, and Farrar, Straus will be its publisher. . . . Dodd, Mead's one-volume edition of the best of Stephen Leacock's writings, called "The Leacock Roundabout," is a "must" for that humor shelf in your library. So is the new Viking Portable Ring Lardner. . . . An S. J. Perelman anthology will be added to the Modern Library in the spring. Mr. P. recently puzzled a young lady who was interviewing him in Philadelphia by confiding, "I have Bright's disease—and he has mine." . . . My recent notes on Lillian Eichler's "Book of Etiquette" reminded Lew Miller of some sage advice he once received from a professional gambler: "When you've got a fixed place in the dining room for a vacation, it's wise to tip your waiter and captain three times: when you arrive, when you reach the halfway mark, and when you leave. The first tip is called 'straightening 'em out,' the second 'tightening 'em up,' and the third, 'the pay-off.'" Now you know! . . .

I MEAN TO read Lucius Beebe's latest book on railroading, "Highball," if I ever can pry my copy loose from the clutch of my five-year-old son, Christopher. No so-called juvenile ever captivated him so completely. . . . J. R. de le Torre (Bill) Bueno, Jr., of Ap-

pleton-Century, sends me some interesting statistics on "Highball." It's over the 10,000 mark now, and a new printing of 5,000 is expected to sell out before Christmas. Its production is limited by the high quality coated paper required—a commodity about as scarce these days as hotel accommodations. Beebe spent more money collecting data and photographs for the book than he ever can hope to get back in royalties. He's just a nut on the subject of railroads—and he has plenty of company. . . . Bueno adds, "Lucius is one of the most interested and helpful collaborators in promotion that any publisher could have. He never demands the impossible, and



Crowell-Collier's prospective mansion on the site of an old Vanderbilt show-place.

seldom even asks for the impracticable. Working with him is a genuine pleasure." . . . If this picture fails to jibe with the impression conveyed by Beebe's own often-incredible columns in the *Tribune*, and his frothy book "Snoot If You Must," he obviously has no one but himself to blame. Like many other young "sophisticates," Beebe seems to pride himself on his weaknesses, and make little of his genuine talents. . . .

**THE OLD VANDERBILT** show-place on Fifth Avenue and 51st Street will soon be torn down. In its place will arise the new home of the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company—a nineteen-story skyscraper, air-conditioned throughout, with a sub-base-ment garage for use of the tenants. The architect's design for the building is reproduced herewith. . . .

**MARION BACON** has sent me a copy of a new Vassar co-op publication

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# Wolcott Gibbs'

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→ In all the time he has been with *The New Yorker*, Wolcott Gibbs has probably covered a wider range than any other writer. In a sense, this book might be called a one-man issue of the magazine, since, beginning with some forty paragraphs he wrote for Notes and Comment, it runs through a section devoted to parodies, another to fiction, including the series from which the title is taken, and still another to criticism, not only of the theatre, but also the cinema, books, and the Wayward Press. There is even a Profile, though since it was printed in another magazine, it does not appear under that heading. In fact, except for a sports department, a section devoted to ladies' fashions, a poem, and, of course, a funny picture, it contains samples of practically every kind of writing that has distinguished the magazine week by week.

Charles Jackson has said that Gibbs seems to him "the most intelligent writer of his kind today, the most readable, and the most entertaining." We can add only that he is certainly one of the most versatile, and that we are proud to be his publishers.

# Season IN THE Sun

AND OTHER PLEASURES

by Wolcott Gibbs



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called "Everything Correlates," by Anne Cleveland and Jean Anderson. A look through its amusing pages leads to the conclusion that life at Vassar hasn't changed so much in the twenty-five years that have elapsed since I endured skimpy meals at the Popover Shop, frightening dances at Main Hall (where the girls did the cutting in!), and long, lonely rides home on Sunday nights all in pursuit of one of the most perverse, wilful, and beautiful girls who ever hit Poughkeepsie. I can't sigh, "Wonder where she is today?" I know. She's an editor of a great magazine, and dignified as a *New York Times* editorial. . . .

**ABEL GREEN**, infallible editor of *Variety*, writes, "Your recent mention of Harry Lauder reminds me of an experience Martin Wagner had with the great Scotch comedian. Wagner, now road manager for José Iturbi, handled the twelfth of Sir Harry's 'farewell' American tours, and did such an outstanding job that some reward obviously was in order. The reward took the form of a road-company edition of a Tiffany cigarette case, but, since it came from a knighted comedian, Wagner allowed as how he'd like it inscribed. Lauder said he'd oblige, and, with a pocket nail-file, scratched his monogram on the cigarette case. The

case being genuine 14-Kresge gold, the inscription promptly turned green. Sir Harry observed complacently, "It's prettier that way". . . .

**WHEN IT COMES** to worrying about the gravity of temporary aches and bruises, Playwright George Kaufman takes a back seat for nobody. Wielding a croquet mallet at the home of columnist Billy Rose a few Sundays ago, he suddenly suffered a spell of dizziness, and could scarcely wait for his doctor's office to open at nine o'clock the next morning, that he might be tapped and examined from head to toe.

The doctor took him over to the cardiograph machine, and George did a bit of major-league pacing while the results were being studied. Finally the doctor reappeared from his sanctum, and spread the charts on the desk before him. He cleared his throat nervously, and said, "George, there is something I might as well tell you. You'll find it out sooner or later anyhow."

Kaufman clutched the corner of the desk until his knuckles were white and told himself, "This is it. Be brave! Take it like a man."

"The fact is," continued the doctor, "I am going to be married."

BENNETT CERF.



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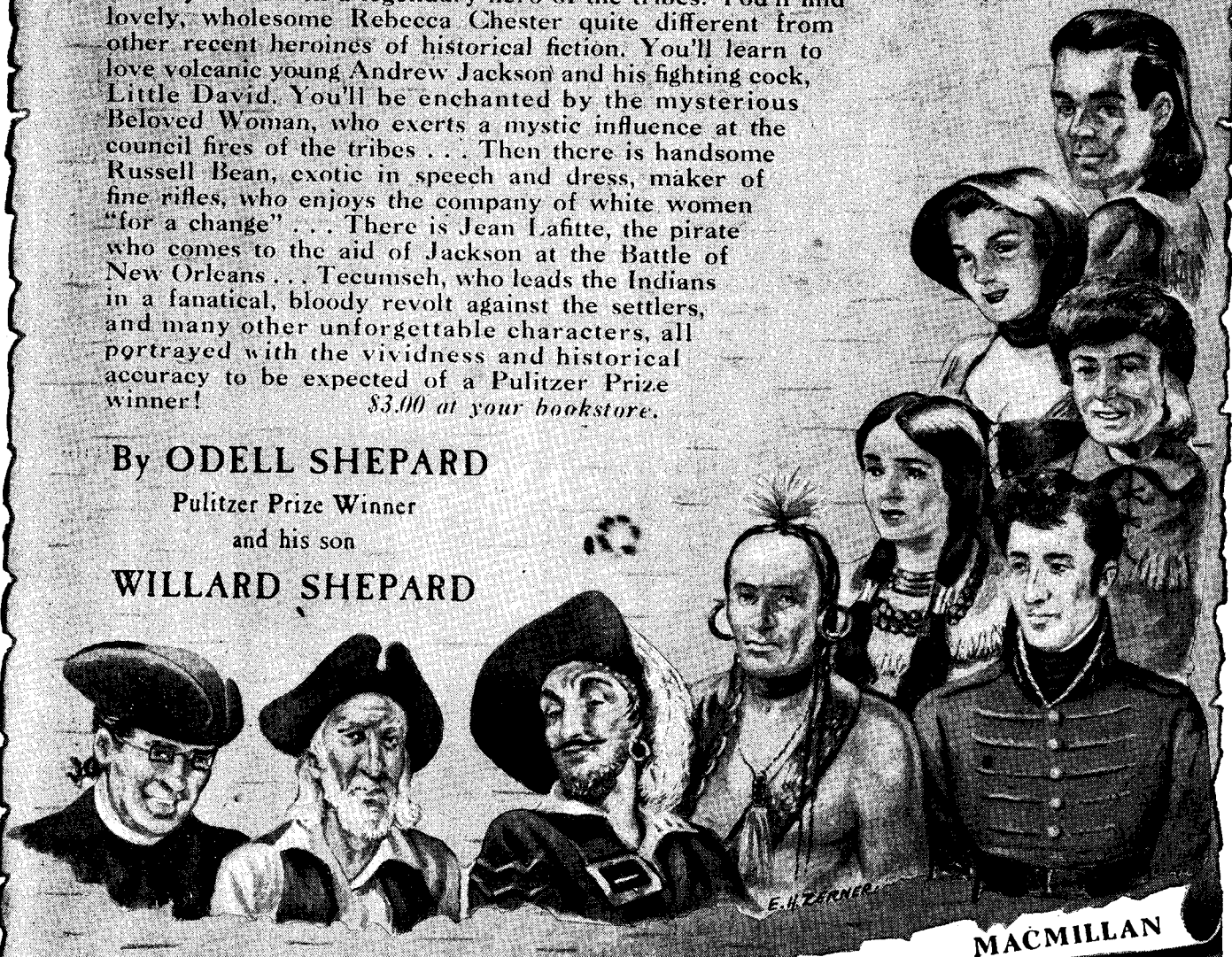
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NOVEMBER 23, 1946

7



# THE Captain AND THE Tiger

WE never met the captain, though we knew him by reputation. His career had been unusually successful even for a New England shipmaster. When he retired he went to live on one of the islands off the Maine coast where he became an influential and public-spirited member of the community. No worthy cause lacked his support. His contributions could be counted on for all the village projects. All but one, that is. When he was asked to contribute toward starting a public library he sharply refused. "Readin' rots the mind," he said.

There is no record that anyone argued with the captain. Perhaps he was not open to argument. Perhaps his fellow townsmen had an uneasy feeling there might be something in what he said. If that was it, we confess we share their feeling. There is a way of reading that rots the mind—reading to escape one's own thoughts.

If we could have a talk with the captain we would like to suggest that there are two ways of reading, active reading and passive reading. And there's something to be said for the first. The active reader is a participant. His thoughts come to meet the author's, in agreement or dissent. If the text is flint, he'll be steel and strike sparks. Or some passage may serve as a springboard for creative ideas of his own. Whatever happens, it's two-sided.

This hypothetical argument came into our mind in connection with William Blake, a writer who challenges the reader every line of the way. No passive readers need apply. We have been thinking a good deal about Blake since reading Mark Schorer's illuminating book, *WILLIAM BLAKE: The Politics of Vision*, which relates him to the thought of his own age and of ours. Mr. Schorer supplies an answer to the persistent question of how the author of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* came to write the Prophetic

Books. In supplying that answer he makes clear the immediate importance to us of what Blake has to say. It's a good argument for active reading.

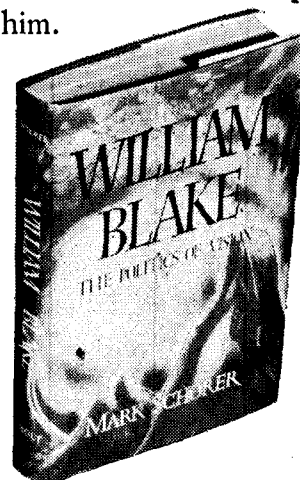
Rebellion against tyranny is the clue. Blake was a revolutionary, but he carried the idea further than most. He fought tyranny in its ultimate stronghold, the human mind. The drama of the Prophetic Books, which moves so vividly and terrifyingly before the inner eye, is the battle against "mind-forg'd manacles".

Blake's passionate and life-long interest in freedom was not theoretical or personal or artistic or political. It was all of these combined in a single impulse. Blake wanted life, not for himself alone, for Man. Life for Man—so that he might love, sing, write, paint and still further enlarge his freedom by fighting against tyranny.

Life depends on the release of energy. Blake saw this energy dammed at its source. He saw the faculties of the mind at war or subjected to the tyrannical rule of Reason. And he spent his life trying to clarify the strife. When he wrote about the Tiger and the Lamb he wrote from his own experience. Blake was both, though perhaps mostly Tiger. His explorations of this interior battlefield bewildered his contemporaries. Many of them thought him mad. Now that modern psychology has caught up with Blake, or at any rate has put the substance of his visions in different terms, we can see more clearly the magnitude of his effort. The "mind-forg'd manacles" are still with us. Their disastrous effects are everywhere evident.

Blake has no final answer for the woes of the world nor any immediate prescription for happiness. But he knew in what direction to look for them. In seeking to release the creative energy in himself and in others he touched upon our nearest and hardest problem. Reading him is a challenge to the active mind.

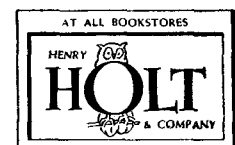
If we ever meet the captain we'll mention Blake to him.



## William Blake:

THE POLITICS OF VISION  
by Mark Schorer

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Advertisement

# America's No.1 Public Utility

By W. W. WAYMACK

A COMMITTEE of New York City educators last year listened to a series of lectures by *New York Times* men, went through some intensive "workshop" discussions, and came up with the conclusion that newspapers ought to be studied in our schools—not as a bit of supplementary fluff but as an important part of the total educational process. They used the word "integral." Their judgment, of course, was that of competent professional educators, and they were thinking solely in terms of the newspaper as an educational tool.

They were quite right. Our processes of "formal education" not only can make sound use of the newspaper from kindergarten to college inclusive, and in literally a thousand ways involving nearly every kind of "course." Our formal educational processes also need the newspaper "integrally" in order to relate education to life, to our generation, to reality, to education's fundamental job of preparing youth for vocation and citizenship.

While quantitatively America has had more of education than any other human society, it is a trite truism that as preparation it is inadequate. The intelligent part of adult America still shakes its head in wistful sympathy as a new crop of school graduates is turned out. Orators at graduation exercises still tell the product of our schools that they are going to find things very different and quite terrible. Commencement is a great breaking-point separating the academic from the real, dividing two lives.

This over-the-precipice-and-into-the-torrent significance of commencement needs drastic reducing. That does not mean turning all our schools into vocational academies. It has little to do with the controversy between the "great books" educators and their confessedly "more practical" opponents. What is needed is that our education be made animate, be made to live and breathe, regardless of the balance that is struck between Aristotle and the lathe—or Einstein and Hollywood.

To be sure, our education has been

"making progress." And certainly our leading educators are not unaware of the weaknesses. The real trouble, the root of the main weakness, has been and is in the peculiar climate of the prevailing American attitude toward education. Taking the analogy of a team of horses, we have said to education simultaneously, "Get up!" and "Whoa!"

We have been devoted to popular education; yes. While we have been ridiculously stingy about salaries, our devotion has been something to marvel at, dollar-wise. But all the while the effective pressure has been to keep the educational process detached from the problems of present and future. The tabu has been as powerful as the one against "telling them about sex."

Current problems are always "controversial." Education (the prevailing idea has been) must be non-controversial. Ergo, even history must be "taught" as if it were a puppet show manipulated by some not very convincing artist ages and ages ago in a world that probably never existed and that, in any case, certainly has no relevance to our world of today. When an educator so far forgot himself as to relate education to what his students would shortly have to deal with, the "authorities" attended to him.

And yet nationally we go into the

dolours whenever somebody remarks that we are weak in "preparation for citizenship."

Well, the "integration" of the daily newspaper (which is day-by-day history, from the stories about Gromyko's veto and Al Capone's supposed reactivation, on page 1, to the "Help Wanted" advertisements in the classified section to the rear) into the schooling process is a sound, feasible, and urgently needed way of relating past and present and future. It is a needed way of relating the academic to the real, of making education a stream instead of a process of pushing youth over a cliff blindfolded, with the admonition that it is up to youth to survive the drop somehow and then to find better answers for the problems of citizens on the plains below than their predecessors have had brains enough to find.

SO much for the need that the schools have for the newspaper. That also suggests society's need for the same thing. But there are two sides to the need.

The press, for its own good as a key instrument of a democratic society, needs to be in the schools. More accurately, our society needs in its own interest to have our press subjected to the corrective critical process that general use of newspapers in the schools would lead to.

The press is the No. 1 public utility of a self-governing people. (To the extent that radio shares the role, it will come under the same influence.) But the press is a peculiar kind of public utility which cannot safely be regulated by government as to its essential service function. (Of course the publishing business can and should be regulated as to wage minima and things like that; but that's another story.)

The impracticability of government regulation puts a tremendous responsibility upon the private enterprisers who run this public utility. It puts upon them more social responsibility than any small group can be expected to live up to unaided. The only real

