

THERE IS LITERALLY no end to the stories of Elliot Paul's early days in Massachusetts, and every time he deserts Hollywood to visit us at Random House he spins a new one. Usually they are so fantastic that anyone unaware of Elliot's unique qualities would dismiss them immediately as nonsense; when Paul is the hero, however, there is always a fifty-fifty chance that they really happened, and weren't merely concocted for our amusement on the way to the office.

On his last appearance Elliot suddenly bethought himself of the time a wealthy Boston engineer offered him free board and lodging in exchange for his keeping an eye on valuable equipment and instruments while the engineer was making a survey in Brazil. Elliot wasn't used to such lush surroundings, but the adjustment proved painless.

A week or so after his installation he was toying with an elaborate slide-rule when the old Negro caretaker hobbled by. Elliot had one of his sudden brain-storms. "This is a wonderful contrivance," he said pleasantly, "and after endless experimentation, I have learned how to use it. Leroy, if you will give me your physical measurements, I will tell you exactly how many more times you will fall in love in your lifetime."

Leroy regarded him with acute suspicion, but was reassured by Elliot's blandest and most innocent look. In a fever of anticipation, he produced a ruler, stripped, and measured himself from head to foot. Paul gravely made note of the statistics, and, while Leroy regarded him anxiously, made a series of mysterious calculations on the slide-rule. Then he closed his eyes, rubbed his forehead with the tips of his fingers, and pronounced solemnly, "Leroy, you are going to be in love 313 more times before you die." Leroy, sixty if he was a day, was understandably delighted. Elliot envisaged a bonanza.

"It was a pleasure to compile these statistics for you as a friend, Leroy," he said, "but obviously the strain is too great on me to continue doing them for others for nothing. If you have any very close friends, however, who would appreciate learning similar facts about themselves, I will conduct the necessary research for five dollars a head."

Leroy thought the proposition was reasonable and so did his friends. Elliot was always generous in his estimates, and thoroughly satisfied cus-

tomers began spreading his fame throughout Boston. There is no telling what a fortune he might have piled up had not the engineer come home suddenly to find him in the middle of computing one naked patron's potentialities on the slide-rule, with four others waiting impatiently in the drawing-room. "That man had absolutely no imagination," says Elliot. "He threw me out!" . . .

HERE IS ANOTHER story contributed by Elliot Paul. Two cockneys were riding up to London on the morning train when they spied a dignified old party on the bench opposite immersed in his morning *Times*. "Bli me," said one in awe. "It's the Archbishop of York." "Ye're cuckoo," scoffed the other. After heated discussion, they bet a quid on it. "Only one way to find out," said the first. "I'll ask 'im!"

He poked the old party vigorously in the back, and said, "Beg pardon, mate, but, to settle a bet, are you not the Archbishop of York?" The old man put down his paper angrily and said very distinctly, "What the blank blank do you mean by bothering me this way? Buzz off, you blank blank blank, before I pull the bell-cord."

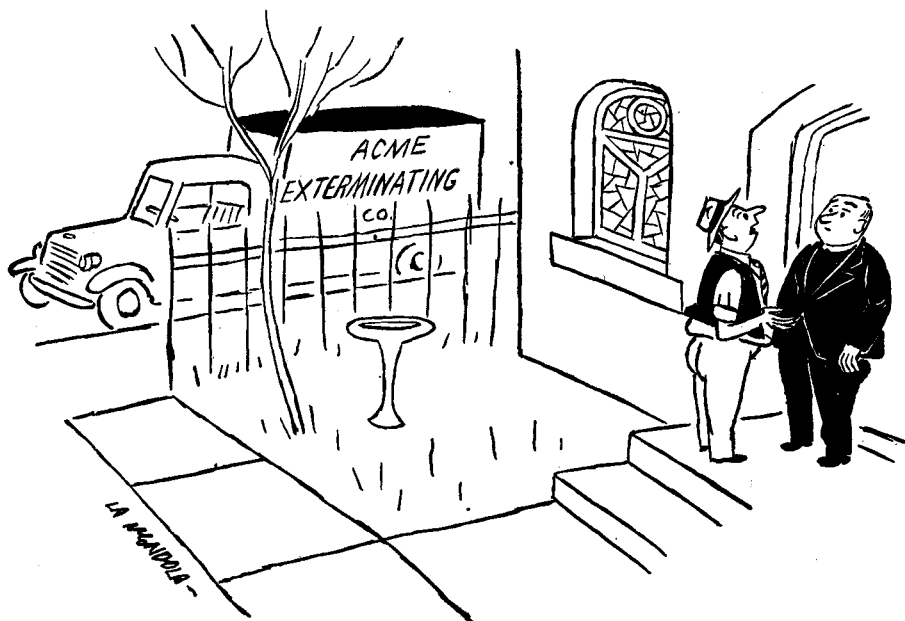
The cockney resumed his seat with a puzzled air, and admitted, "I still dunno whether it's the archbishop or not. 'E wouldn't tell me!" . . .

QUAKERESS Jessamyn West McPherson, of "Friendly Persuasion" fame, is basing an opera libretto on the life of Audubon. . . . Thomas Lamont, writ-

ing from Maine to say he could not come down for the Shaw Ninetieth Birthday Dinner, added: "Sometime you must let me tell you how Mrs. Patrick Campbell tried to get me to buy Shaw's letters to her; also how Shaw himself, the Socialist, scolded my chauffeur in New York about my old-fashioned limousine. 'It runs all right,' said Mr. Shaw, 'but for a capitalist to have such an old car is a disgrace.'" . . . No time like the present, Mr. Lamont. . . . Anthony Boucher, visiting the Simon & Schuster offices, ran into an author who was planning a trip to Central America, and distinctly heard Elinor Green remark, "Well, that's the way it is—here today, Guatemala." . . .

BLAKISTON'S new anthology of "Famous Plays of Crime and Detection" includes such time-hallowed thrillers as "Sherlock Holmes," "Seven Keys to Baldpate," "Within the Law," "On Trial," "Broadway," "The Bat," and "Angel Street." In their foreword, the editors remark:

It is hard to believe that in a period when mystery and murder stories in book form are selling four or five times better than they ever did before, and when the hills of Hollywood are echoing the horrendous shrieks of countless motion picture gang molls, zombies, hatchet men, and monsters (all of whom look suspiciously like Boris Karloff), there should not be a single play of this genre on the Broadway boards. In the past three years, in fact, with the public prosperous and thrill-hungry, literally begging for cops-and-robbers, body-in-the-closet entertainment, all that the legitimate theatre has been able to whip up was one single exhibit, "Ten Little Indians," so feeble in comparison with the stalwarts in this collection that we never even considered it for inclusion.



"Do you have any bats in your belfry?"

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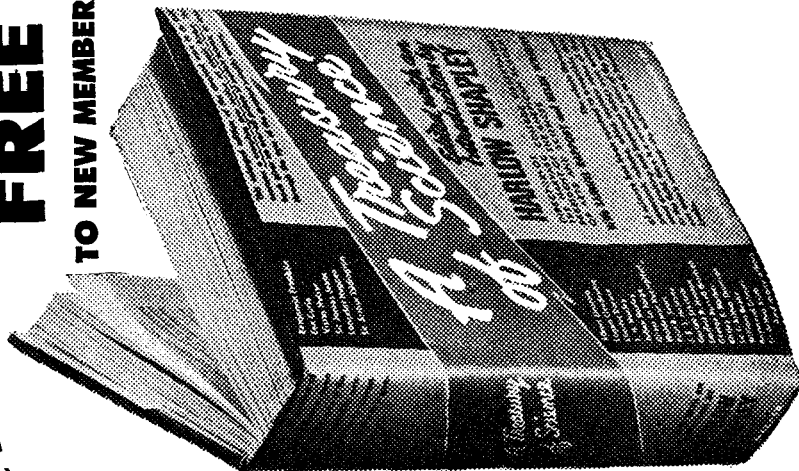
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Seeing Things

IN BIG BEN'S SHADOW

IT all depends upon what you are looking for, and where, and whether your search is conducted in peace or war.

At a charming little house in Suffolk which had once belonged to E. V. Lucas and was more recently owned by Hamish Hamilton, I chanced this summer to come across a *Carte Gastronomique* of France. My eyes were drawn by habit to that irregular bite in the Normandy coast which stretches from Pointe de Barfleur to Le Havre. More particularly they were drawn to the environs of Ste. Mère-Eglise, Isigny, and Port-en-Bessin. There was a time when all the world had watched, as well it might, what was happening on the beaches there.

Thinking back to the under-water obstacles, the land-mines, the barbed-wire, and the pill-boxes which our coxwains and GI's had been warned to notice as they approached those strips of France then known (and even now remembered) as "Utah" and "Omaha," I could not help wondering what the *Carte Gastronomique* would advise travelers to be on the lookout for. Somehow I suspected it would be different. It was. The *Carte Gastronomique* recommended: *la crème, le beurre, les oeufs*.

Although all three of these were missing in England this summer, something else was there. The lean times, the hardships of daily living, and the fatigue to which most people confessed, could not obscure it. It was in the air. It was also in almost everyone's living. It afforded a sustenance of its own. It was the unavoidable awareness of new life stirring in the old; of a Britain which continued to be traditionally British at the same time that she was being different in a very British way.

London, for example, was much as she had been even before the war. At least on the surface, and in spite of countless angry proofs of how the war had battered her. Her streets were clotted with traffic; her sidewalks bulged with pedestrians. The international array of uniforms was missing. So was the incessant scraping of heavy army boots. Yet she seemed as crowded as she was in wartime. She was a great sprawling city going unemotionally about a great city's business.

Her past was part of her present—

the noblest part, visually. She did not have the shove and frenzy of New York or Chicago. She did not scream or roar in their fashion. She was old enough to modulate her voice and conserve her energies. Her traffic often moved at the pace of her drays. Her taxi drivers had lost neither their wonderful old cabs nor their manners. They negotiated their way through jam after jam without automatically challenging the legitimacy of their confreres.

Although London looked as tired as her people said they felt, her neatness persisted, as did theirs. Her sidewalks had a hand-washed appearance. They were unsullied by sudden, soft, dark spots as sidewalks can be only among a people not entirely converted to chewing gum. Her citizens did not discard papers wherever they happened to be. They still obeyed the signs on the rubbish containers; those signs which, because they read, "Deposit litter here," had caused many a smiling American soldier and sailor to wonder in wartime if British dogs could possibly be as amenable to regulations as their owners are.

Eros was not back in Piccadilly Circus early this summer, though his imminent return was rumored. His base was still boarded over, which meant that there was no perching place for flower vendors. These old women, who always looked as if they were waiting for Dickens or Shaw to

write about them, were also among the missing.

So was Charles I from his pedestal just off Trafalgar Square. But the pigeons were there. They were dove-like enough never to have conceded the war's actuality. They still added non-regulation plumage to Nelson's hat. They still rested unconcernedly on Landseer's arrogant but patient lions. And flocked to the doors of the National Gallery without mustering the courage to enter even on Free Days. Or cooed and strutted around the fountains, and pecked at crumbs—for a wonder without queuing.

Although their scarlet coats and busbies of the pre-war days had not yet come out of storage, sentries were once again visible in the old familiar places. Before Marlborough House and St. James's, they either stomped their solitary paces—in khaki—or stood mummified by duty. Each morning, too, Christopher's Alice could have gaped at her fiancé—also in khaki—as the guard was changing at Buckingham Palace. In Whitehall the Horse Guards were once more, impressively if futilely, astride. The crowds which gathered each noon to stare at them seemed to find in them almost as reassuring proof of both continuity and survival as Britons did (yes, and aliens, too) when they passed Buckingham Palace and saw the royal standard flying.

The daily newspapers were not what they had been in bulk. Nor were they of that hernia-provoking heaviness to which we were accustomed here even during the war years when pulp was scarcest. They were four- or six-page affairs. Brevity had become the soul of news—a condition not without its merits.

Reports of acrimonious debates in Parliament, of the Labor Govern-

