

**THE ANNOUNCEMENT** by a statistical bureau that there are no less than sixty-two book clubs of varying sizes and descriptions operating today in the United States gave a group of conviviais at the home of Carl Brandt a brilliant idea the other evening. Their revolutionary project is a Book Club Book Club, whose eminent jury will select the "best" book each month from the sixty-two chosen by their competitors, thus assuring subscribers the ultimate and untoppable *crème de la crème*. The sponsors of the BCBC plan no dividends but with every two selections accepted by a customer somebody will come along to read them out loud. This will not only save subscribers wear and tear on the eyes but under certain circumstances will conceivably produce more explosive results than a personal ad. In the event that the month's choice turns out to be the work of one of the glamorous ladies now crowding the literary calendar the authoress herself may be persuaded to come along as reader. Would you like a Winsor tie, a Hobson's choice, or succulent package of Lehmann drops in your home? Subscribe to the BCBC! . . .

**SPEAKING OF** personal ads, Bob de Roos uncovered a pip in the *Los Angeles Mirror*. It read, "Man who leans backward wishes to meet lady who leans forward. Object: One Enslanted Evening. Box Y-85 Mir. . . ." One type of "personal" you are not likely to see in the newspapers again for quite a spell—if ever—is the oft-repeated insertion beginning, "My wife having left my bed and board . . ." For years the wives who were the

victims of this form of public castigation didn't strike back but finally one with gumption—and a smart lawyer—slapped substantial libel suits on every paper that printed her husband's piece of copy. The suit is regarded as an important test case, and several publishers have pooled resources to fight it in court. Until the day when a final decision is announced—and what with appeals and customary delays that may be many, many months from now—most papers will probably play it safe. . . . A Swedish gentleman is said to have evaded the boycott by an adroit bit of rephrasing. His ad began, "My wife having left my bed and smörgasbord. . . ." . . .

**THE AMERICAN** Booksellers' Association has just concluded its fiftieth annual convention at the Hotel Astor in New York, electing Allan McMahon of Fort Wayne to succeed the ebullient Bob Campbell of Los Angeles as its president. For the event Mildred Smith of PW dug up photographs of preceding conclaves, most interesting of which was taken in 1902, when Harper's invited visiting book men to meet five of its current best-selling authors. Their names were Mark Twain, Hamlin Garland, John Kendrick Bangs, William Dean Howells, and Robert W. Chambers. This is what is known as an all-star word-pitching staff. It even boasted a southpaw to confound right-handed critics: Mr. Chambers served up a dazzling variety of autographs from the port side. . . . Guest artists for the golden anniversary get-together of the ABA included Emily Kimbrough, whose "Innocents in Indiana" will be a high-

light of the Harper fall list; Henry Morgan, who remembers occasionally that he owes a book to Doubleday, and Sig Spaeth and the St. Mary's Horseshoers—a slick barber-shop quartette who had the booksellers singing "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage" approximately in unison with them. . . . The booksellers now have a slogan which they hope to make popular all over the country: "Meet me at the bookstore." It was suggested by Tom Denny of *The New York Times*, who noticed that florists increased *their* business with a slogan and also vaguely remembered Siegel Cooper's famous old "Meet me at the fountain." Tom says at least two million men are kept waiting every day by women who are late for appointments. Why shouldn't they do that waiting in bookstores—where they can improve each pining moment by browsing—and, perchance, buying? Makes sense, doesn't it? . . .

**MELVILLE CANE**, the well-known attorney and expert on copyright law, has lost his one-man campaign to persuade Putnam's to publish the Duke of Windsor's memoirs under the title of "The Kingsey Report." . . . Mr. Cane's disappointment may be assuaged by the knowledge that a famous gynecologist is planning to name his forthcoming volume for new fathers, "Mister, Haven't You Begotten Something?" . . . The author is said to be the same doctor who told a new patient, "Mrs. Brown, I have good news for you." The patient answered, "It's not Mrs. Brown; it's Miss Brown." "Indeed?" murmured the doctor. "Miss Brown, I have bad news for you." . . . Allan Ullman, co-author with Lucille Fletcher of the forthcoming suspense story "Night Man" (the same pair collaborated on the memorable "Sorry, Wrong Number"), informs his publishers that he has graduated *cum effort* from P. S. 166 and that he does



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*Robert Penn Warren*



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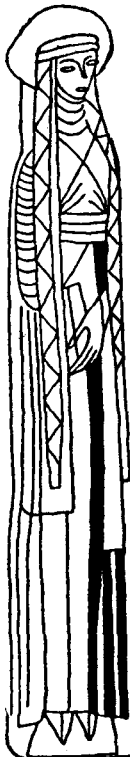
JUNE 24, 1950

5

"I thought I had married a king  
but I find I have married a monk."

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not intend to allow his new literary eminence to interfere with his determination to become a chauffeur. New York traffic authorities who have seen him at the wheel regard this as the worst setback they have suffered in a decade. . . .

**SARAH BALL**, rereading "The Education of Henry Adams," came across a passage concerning the Secretary of State that is certainly as pertinent in 1950 as it was when Mr. Adams set it down forty-five years ago:

The Secretary of State has always stood as much alone as the historian. Required to look far ahead and round him, he measures forces unknown to party managers, and has found Congress more or less hostile ever since Congress first sat. The Secretary of State exists only to recognize the existence of a world which Congress repudiates whenever it can; of bargains which Congress distrusts and tries to turn to its advantage or to reject. Since the first day the Senate existed, it has always intrigued against the Secretary of State whenever the Secretary has been obliged to extend his functions beyond the appointment of Consuls in Senators' service.

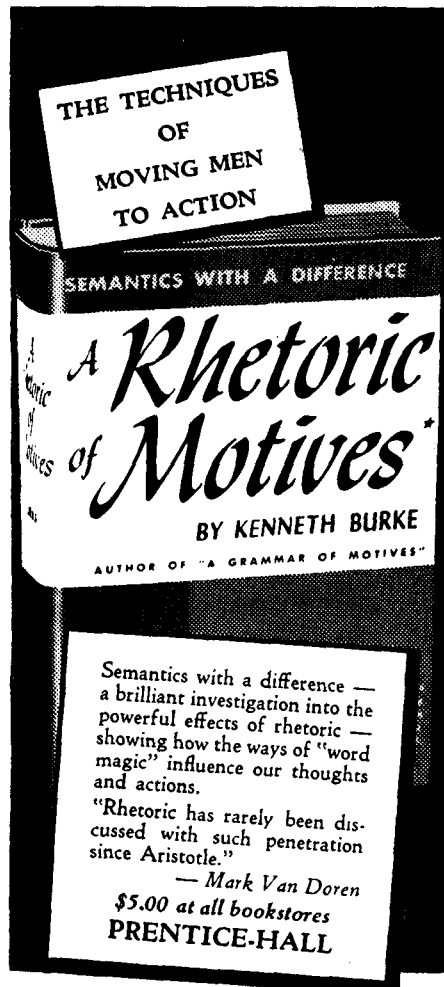
An editor of *Harper's* magazine remembered a paragraph in Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" (written in 1726) that is even more relevant to present-day headlines:

There are some laws and customs in this empire [Lilliput] very peculiar; and, if they were not so di-

rectly contrary to those of my own dear country, I should be tempted to say a little in their justification. It is only to be wished they were as well executed. The first I shall mention relates to informers. All crimes against the state are punished here with the utmost severity; but, if the person accused maketh his innocence plainly to appear upon his trial, the accuser is immediately put to an ignominious death; and, out of his goods or lands, the innocent person is quadruply recompensed for the loss of his time, for the danger he underwent, for the hardship of his imprisonment, and for all the charges he hath been at in making his defense. Or, if that fund be deficient, it is largely supplied by the crown. The emperor does also confer on him some public mark of his favor, and proclamation is made of his innocence through the whole city. . . .

**AND WERE YOU** fortunate enough to see Alan Dunn's cartoon in a recent issue of *The New Yorker* magazine that showed a publisher and editor with their heads together and the editor exulting, "It can't miss, J. G.! The author got disillusioned with Communism, escaped from behind the Iron Curtain, came to the United States, lived on a sharecropper's farm in Georgia, spent a year in a state insane asylum, turned to religion, and now is a monk." If I had anything to do with nominations for the Pulitzer Prizes (ho, ho!) the contest for the best cartoon of the year would be declared hereby closed and the award given to Mr. Dunn by acclaim.

—BENNETT CERF.



## Lost Explorer

By Edmund Pennant

**T**HE infusorial earthmounds of the Upper Amazon  
Waylaid his most earnest dreams and captured them,  
Whispering auras of momentous meaning  
In a relic of genesis hidden in the jungle.

The eye of God scans a generation and falters,  
Finding here and there recruits for the cast of His intentions;  
Scorning the tipsy fears of the callow and the diffident  
Who dare to ignore a visitation, or deny it.

Then in small men an endowment of courage  
Seizes the one great Demand of a lifetime  
To fling off the familiar hobbles of humility  
And solo on wings made of maps and desire.

The plane gnarls the air, leaving a backwash of silence  
That settles on the earthbound, a pall of self-pity;  
For they feel the eyes of the wing-borne on their nakedness,  
On the dribbling termite-steps of their retreating.

He is gone—many years. Those who watched him depart  
Ask warmly of each other, with unashamed triumph:  
Still no word from the Amazon? Have the ants left no clue-fall?  
No talisman, tongue-sinew, signet-ring? Nothing?

# Do you realize *you've just lived through a year* TO CONFOUND THE EXPERTS

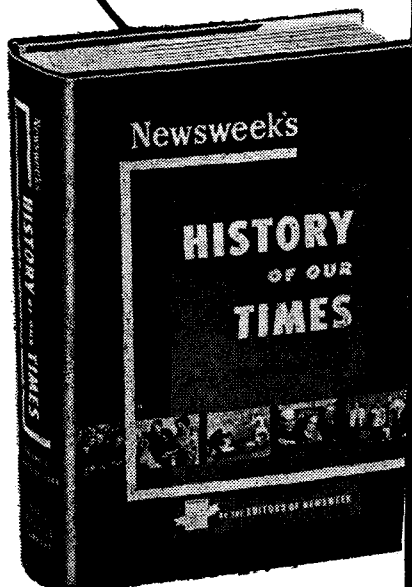
a year of predictions that didn't come true, crises that evaporated . . . but also a year of tremendously important events?

How much of the news of this amazing year did you miss?

How much do you still remember?

*Give yourself this test.  
How many of these  
questions can you answer?*

- ☐ What was the biggest and most important newsbreak of 1949?
- ☐ What two countries staged a successful ballet invasion of the U.S. in 1949?
- ☐ What were the two new wonder drugs that made headlines in 1949?
- ☐ What 1949 novel was considered most representative of present American intellectual temper?
- ☐ What popular hit song of 1949 was written by two British spinsters?



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# Can Newspapers Survive Without Sex?

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EDITOR'S NOTE: When *The New York Sun* died last January 4, to be merged with *The New York World-Telegram*, it marked the passing of New York's fourth major daily in two decades. Ten months ago serious financial difficulty developed on *The New York Post*, and it appeared for a time that the ranks of the metropolitan newspapers would be thinned further still. James A. Wechsler, thirty-four-year-old Washington correspondent of *The Post*, was brought in as editor. Since that time *The Post* has made one of the most remarkable comebacks, with respect to circulation and advertising, in the history of modern American journalism. Sensational sex stories have been credited with a substantial part of *The Post's* recovery. This has led to considerable discussion in American newspaper circles about the relative importance of such sensationalism as against straight news coverage and editorial-page policy. In the following debate Mr. Wechsler defends his policy against the position taken by August Heckscher, editorial writer for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

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## I. The Techniques of Showmanship

JAMES A. WECHSLER

Editor, *The New York Post*



James A. Wechsler

THE OTHER day I got a letter-to-the-editor which read: "Although I agree with almost everything *The Post* stands for and I think it is terribly important that a liberal newspaper succeed in New York, I must tell you that I am distressed by some of the features your paper has carried in recent months. The recent series on Ingrid Bergman, for example, seem designed to get the kind of circulation that *The Daily News* attracts. . . ."

My impulse is to reply by saying that the accusation is entirely just. I do not believe the Lord in His infinite wisdom placed a ceiling on the circulation of *The Post* or that he regards readers of *The Daily News* as less worthy human beings than others. To put it another way, I do not believe that He would have let *The Sun* die if He had felt the readers of

*The Sun* were the chosen people. I do not mean to be irreverent or facetious in discussing a serious problem; I confess some amazement, however, that most of the lamentation over the fate of *The Post* since Dorothy Schiff, Paul Sann, and I took over its direction last year seems to come from very earnest liberals who agree with most of the things we say on the editorial page, who applaud each of our crusades, wish us a long life, but are horrified by what they call the "sensationalism" which has given us a real chance for survival.

One of the axioms of liberal journalism in the last couple of decades seems to be that there is a direct correlation between high circulation and spiritual corruption. There seems to be a general suspicion that the liberal weeklies would probably cease to be liberal if they got too many readers. There is a curious paradox in the discussion for liberal journals are most fond of picturing themselves as spokesmen and champions of *The People*. They depict most mass-circulation newspapers and magazines as organs of "vested interests" and, by and

large, I sympathize with the charge. Yet the unexplained paradox is that *The People* have persistently crowded the newsstands to buy the journals which are against them and left the liberal publications to a select, self-righteous audience. I do not believe that this is really as puzzling as it sounds.

Within the last decade two newspapers have died in New York City. One was *The Sun* and the other was *PM* (later called *The Star*). Editorially, they had almost nothing in common. *The Sun* was as reactionary a newspaper as any published in America. *PM*, if unpredictable and intermittently plagued by Stalinist direction, proclaimed itself the embodiment of all the liberal virtues. If I may say so, I would guess the basic cause of death in both cases was not a product of editorial policy; it was a product of dulness. In the long run both were so preoccupied with their messages that both succeeded in boring thousands of people. They seemed to be published chiefly to articulate the passions and prejudices of their editors rather than to entertain or enlighten their readers.

HAVING served my time on both *The Nation* and *PM*, I must state the categorical opinion that a newspaper which professes to be a spokesman of *The People* must display some real capacity for interesting them; that it cannot depend for survival on the tenacious doctrinaire support of those who agree with its editorial policy (any more than *The Sun* could ultimately endure simply because it had the devotion of the people who hated Roosevelt most). It ought to be neither self-conscious nor apologetic when it applies techniques of showmanship aimed to bring a heterogeneous crowd into the tent. There is little *The Post* has done in the past ten months that has not been done by most liberal and radical newspapers in Europe which have been able to build mass circulations. To cover a lot of ground swiftly, I think New York City has effectively demonstrated that the fact of being liberal is no guarantee of