

# TRADE

# Winds

ONE OF THE PLEASANTEST things about being associated with the publishing business is learning about books when they are sometimes no more than a contractual gleam in their publisher's and author's eyes. The other day for instance I listened with fascination to Dr. William S. Beck, who has just signed with Harcourt, Brace for a book which probably will be published in about a year. It sounds as if it will perform for today's reader something of the scientific service which the works of Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington performed for theirs a few decades ago. Dr. Beck is an M.D. who has been doing some profound research in the field of biochemistry. He is one of the scientists who have been probing into living tissue searching for the elemental stuff of life. Much as the nuclear physicists discovered the electron within the atom, these men are studying a substance—an acid—of which the genes and chromosomes are made and which seems to come very close to being final irreducible living matter. His book, as yet untitled (he refuses my suggestion: " $A_2$  Loves  $B_3$ "), will probably appeal to mechanists who will see in it a chance at long last to make human-seeming robots. But it may appeal even more to those who have been searching for the answer to the question "What is the basic stuff of God's Creation?"

ANOTHER BOOK which I have been privileged to see at various stages of its creation will be published by Harper's at just about the time this column appears. Its title "The Fears Men Live By," its author Selma Hirsh. Some years ago Harper's published five ponderous volumes called "Studies in Prejudice," very distinguished, very scholarly. What Mrs. Hirsh has done is to take the meat of these studies, and particularly of volume three, "The Authoritarian Personality," and to write her interpretation of this remarkable examination into the things men hate and the fears

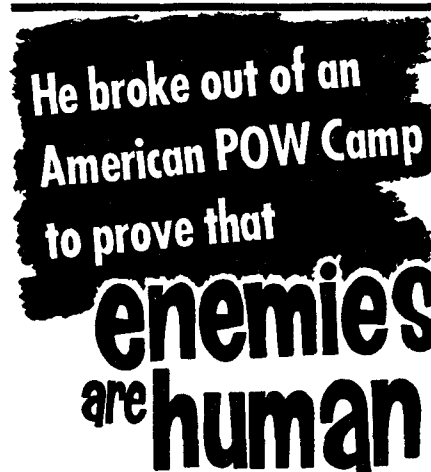
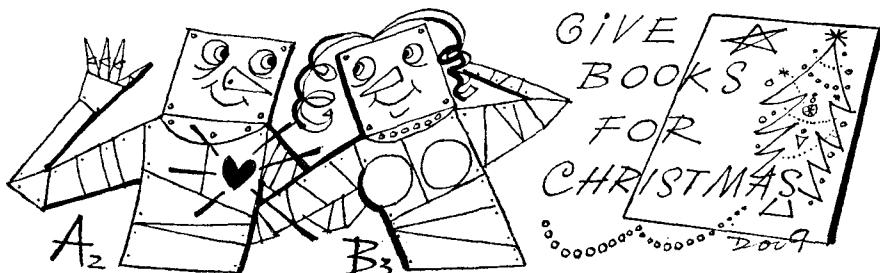
which cause them to hate. It's a ground-breaking book, stimulating, very readable, and a most important one, to which Dr. Harry Overstreet has written a glowing foreword.

I AM CONTINUING to get mail as the result of my comments about reading, or rather the lack of reading, in the United States. All of this mail is being turned over to the National Book Committee as promised. Many of the letters suggested that the publishers should get together on a co-operative advertising venture to sell the idea of reading. Whether this can or will be done I don't know, but this year American Book-Stratford Press will run a two-page newspaper advertisement in major cities urging people to give books as Christmas presents, listing some especially attractive recent books, and listing as well local bookstores in which they can be bought. The copy for this advertisement was written by Simon and Schuster's Jack Goodman, and I don't remember when I have seen better.

SOME PEOPLE I KNOW USED TO PLAY a game called "Conversation Stopper." The idea was to say something after which nothing else whatever could possibly be said. The game was won permanently some years ago by a lady who broke into a conversational lull with "My grandfather used to have a wonderful fund of stories—pity he never told any of them."

Next to the conversation stopper comes the conversation luller. A "luller" is a statement which makes no possible sense but which sounds as if it does and which, when injected into a non-animated conversation, causes everybody to get a little sleeper. Like this one: "He was president of the company for all seven of its fifteen years." Try it sometime. It's more effective than seconal.

I SEEM TO HAVE caught hold of a lot of thorns when I stated in a recent column that roses are seldom named



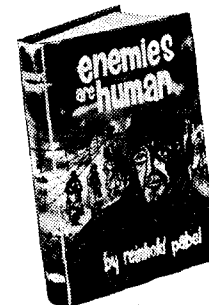
by REINHOLD PABEL

This is one of the truly exceptional books to come out of World War II. It is a German G. I.'s view of mankind's most devastating war: the story of an odyssey from battlefield to battlefield, the history of how one man discovered that ENEMIES ARE HUMAN.

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It's a taut and vivid narrative that this "enemy of yesterday" writes: sometimes shocking, often deeply moving. But it's much more than that. Through the eyewitness accounts of Hitler's frightening rise to power, of bloody battles on the Russian front and of stealthy escape, runs a theme of paramount importance to today's world—that regardless of uniform, men do not hate on an individual level.

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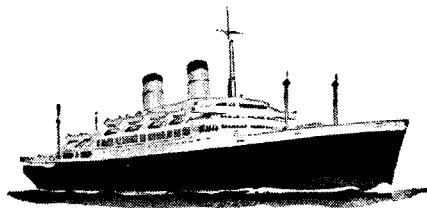


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after individuals and that the naming of one after Amy Vanderbilt was unusual. Rose growers have written in to tell me I am wrong and to point out the number of times roses have been named after people. Well, damn it all, I didn't say roses were never named after people—I just said that most times they weren't, and when you consider the thousands of rose varieties that have been named and the relatively small number of people so honored it still seems perfectly proper to say that Amy Vanderbilt has thus been especially, if not uniquely, honored. The other day,



incidentally, I heard from Amy that a book had been sent for review to a publication issued at San Quentin and that the San Quentin reviewer had called it "good escape reading."

IT IS TWENTY YEARS since Jonathan Latimer wrote "Lady in the Morgue," one of the most enjoyable mysteries ever published. Thereafter he went to Hollywood and probably earned more in a week than a mystery novel earns in a year. Now—or rather in October—Mr. Latimer will give us, via Inner Sanctum, another hard-boiled gem, "Sinners and Shrouds." This is one of the facts that I learned when I had dinner recently with Inner Sanctum's Lee Wright, and Frank Taylor, who masterminds for Dell. Also present—and, indeed, the guest of honor—was William A. P. White, a gentleman from Berkeley, California. The name may not ring a bell with you until I tell you that he used to write mysteries, and now reviews them, for *The N. Y. Times*, under the name of Anthony Boucher, and that he also reviews science fiction for the *N. Y. Herald Tribune* under the name of H. H. Holmes. A. P. had already won my affectionate regard long before I met him. Now he cemented it by laughing uproariously at a couple of stories I told him. I would be glad to re-tell them here but *The Saturday Review* goes through the United States mails and these stories are definitely for neither your grandmother nor the Postmaster General.

WE FOUND THAT we were in agreement on a number of points, particularly that few modern mystery writers have written more skillful and more puzzling mysteries than has John Dixon Carr, who is published under that name by Harper's and under the name



of Carter Dixon by Morrow. A. P. and I tried to decide which was the very finest mystery Carr every wrote. He voted for "The Crooked Hinge"—I voted for "The White Priory." We finally reached compromise agreement on "The Blind Barber," making it unnecessary for us to leave our chicken tetrazzini and to step outside. Which was fortunate for me because he knows so much more than I do about murder.

**A. P. IS SO BUSY** with his reviewing and his editing of science-fiction magazines that he hasn't written a mystery novel in a long, long time. I am sure thousands wish he would, thousands who remember that wondrous first mystery of his, "The Case of the Seven of Calvary."

**SEVERAL COLUMNS AGO** I referred to Mark DeWolfe Howe as a father who has three children in "Who's Who." Donald Barnhouse of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, points out that both Elias Compton and David Eisenhower have three children in "Who's Who." O.K., Mr. Barnhouse, but I am afraid I have to top you—Mark Howe not only has three children in "Who's Who" but he's got a nephew there, George Howe, who wrote the novel "Call It Treason," which won the Christophers' Award and became a very successful motion picture.

**ANOTHER PENNSYLVANIA** correspondent, C. W. Nieman of Bethlehem, asks a pretty good question. Why, he wants to know, if it is so important to read stage directions when reading a play are those directions always set in italics, making them quite difficult to read? I am not the man to answer that question but a chap by the name of Bennett Cerf, whose firm has probably published more plays than any other current trade-book publishing house, is the man to answer it, and maybe some weeks hence he will.

—ALAN GREEN.

*TRADE WINDS is being conducted by Alan Green while Bennett Cerf is on vacation.*

## Garden

By Witter Bynner

**S**EE me crouching,  
Part of a tree:  
You look on a garden,  
Looking on me.

These roots commingle  
From their birth.  
So do I  
With all the earth.



**THREE TELEPHONE PIONEERS** from different sections of the country are shown here. They are Robert C. Price of Williamsport, Pa.; Mrs. Marguerite T. Burns of Minneapolis, Minn.; and Melvin F. Held of St. Louis, Mo. Shown also are emblems of the two Pioneer associations.



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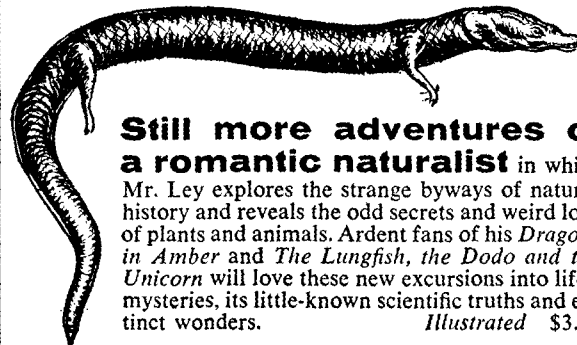
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# PEPPER COAST REPUBLIC

*Unfortunately, all philanthropies do not prosper and all republics are not righteous. This is the sad lesson of John Gunther's vignette of the troubled little state of Liberia on the West African Coast. The article is excerpted from Mr. Gunther's latest continental survey, "Inside Africa," to be published the end of this month by Harper. (Copyright, 1955, by John Gunther.)*



True Whig Partisans demonstrating for Tubman's reelection.

By JOHN GUNTHER

*This is a sick country—maybe it will get well.*—AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL IN MONROVIA.

**L**IBERIA is *sui generis*—unique. I could use any of several adjectives about it—"odd," "wacky," "phenomenal," or even "weird." It is roughly the size of Ohio or Tennessee, but the entire country has only ten miles of paved road, five of which are in the capital. There are no more than 260 miles of "all-weather" roads, and not all of these (except in the Firestone area) are actually passable at all times. The total road mileage—including dirt tracks—is only 800. Liberia never had a road at all until 1916, when an enterprising American diplomat built one in Monrovia itself, so that he could use an automobile that had arrived there by mistake, the first ever to be seen in the country.

Only two native Liberians have ever become doctors. There are also two naturalized Haitian M.D.'s, but in the whole country there are prob-

ably not more than half-a-dozen reputable physicians, outside of Firestone and the missions. Infant mortality among Africans runs as high as 75 per cent in some areas. No public-health service at all existed till 1931—and Liberia has been an independent republic since 1847! More than 90 per cent of the population is illiterate.

The poverty of most Liberians is formidable. Recently a distinguished visitor from abroad, representing an agency of the United Nations, was taken out into the Hinterland to inspect a new agricultural station. The delegation accompanying him included a cabinet minister, no less, whom we may call Mister X. Some cabbages, grown at the station, were on proud display. These were so good that anybody might well have coveted them; nevertheless the U.N. man was somewhat surprised when he saw Mr. X pick one up surreptitiously and toss it into his car. Mr. X's chauffeur then darted forward and seized one too, and others in the official party followed suit.

Thievery—the cities swarm with

thieves—is most conspicuous during the rains. First, rice is short then, and people are hungry. Second, the noise of the rain makes it easy for thieves to get around. Stealing is, however, by no means confined to professional criminals or to the poor, who are so miserable that petty theft may easily be forgiven. It is almost a national sport. Newspapers talk openly of "wholesale stealing" in government departments. Recently the Italian legation lost, of all things, its safe. Even at a fashionable cocktail party in Monrovia an unwary guest may have his pocket nimbly picked or his wallet rifled. Liberians love to wear top hats, and the joke is that these are useful as well as decorative in that they are so convenient for the temporary disposal of minor loot. A hostess may even find rolls of her toilet paper missing, and a top hat is an admirable place for concealing objects of this nature.

As to corruption in Liberia, that, too, like the rains, is really something. It exists on all levels. Money is, let us say, assigned to some government department for a worthy project. But it