

present balance of forces. Big Minh, Senator Tran Van Don ( a former general and a prominent Catholic), the Buddhists, and many other Vietnamese seem willing after all to take their chances. If the NLF should prove perfidious and intractable, President Nixon will probably be able to make a far stronger case for continuing the war than he can now and the government in Saigon will certainly be stronger politically than it is at present. The United States might find it useful to discuss with Hanoi, while the South Vietnamese talks are in progress, such matters as reunification of Vietnam on a federal basis and neutralization of all of Indochina. In my own opinion this is about the best we can hope for in Vietnam.

If the above analysis is correct, or nearly correct, and if the United States continues to support General Thieu without insisting on a major expansion in his political base (which would mean his sharing power with some of his present enemies, not just giving them showcase ministries), then there is a good chance that the NLF will win notable converts in the near future. In that case, the Thieu regime might eventually collapse with disastrous consequences for Mr. Nixon's prospects for employment between 1972 and 1976. Obviously, the administration reads all of this differently; but one cannot help wondering whether a review of a book by some Republican Townsend Hoopes on the decline and fall of the Nixon Vietnam policy will appear in these pages a couple of years from now.

**FRASER YOUNG  
LITERARY CRYPT No. 1375**

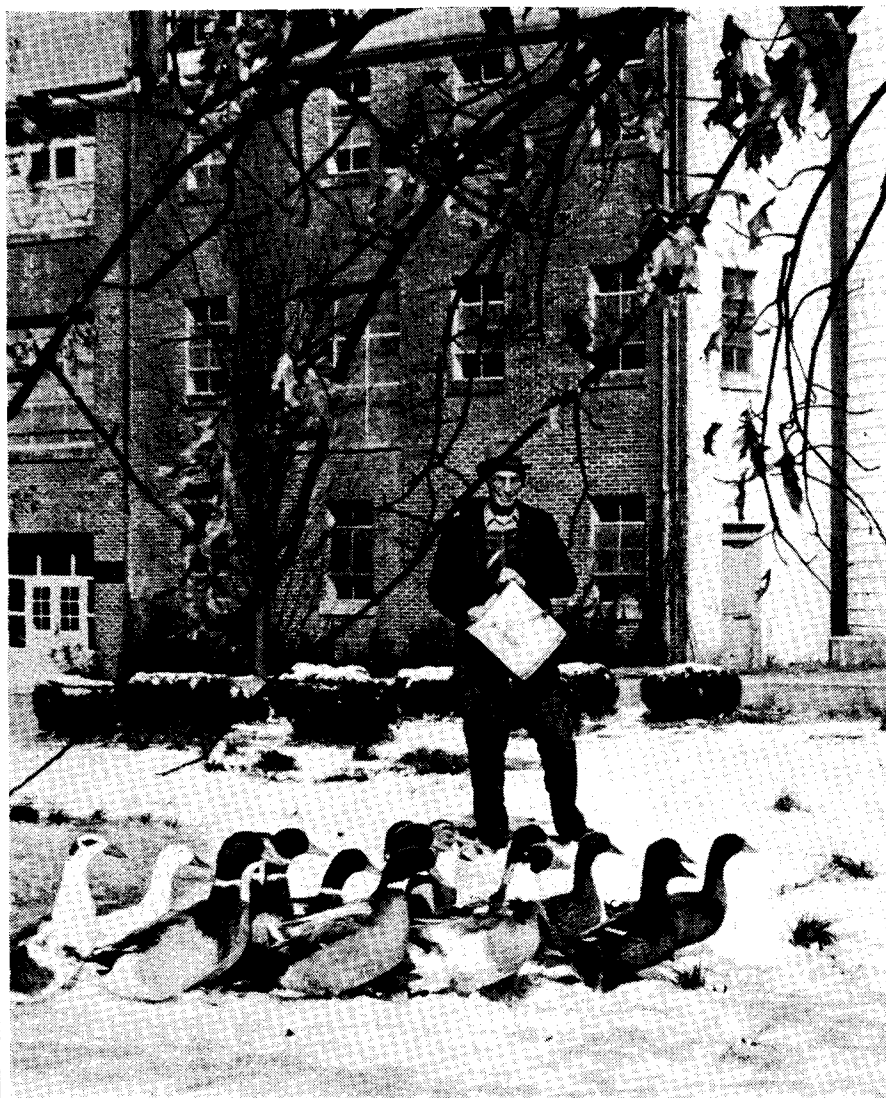
*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1375 will be found in the next issue.*

LK PCB UNHBOEWBEP QSG SG  
SKOSLT NK TLGPYOALEU PCB  
JNEGYWBO SG LP LG NK TLG-  
PYOALEU AYGLEBGG, PCLG  
QNYMT AB GNWB TBWNJOSJI.  
—CYAASOT

**Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1374**

*The world was made before the English language and seemingly upon a different design.*

—ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.



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## Booked for Travel

David Butwin

### Palmy Days in Ireland

SOMETIMES A STRANGER arrives in a new town and senses even before he has stepped out of his car that the place is alive and he will not be bored. My built-in action meter had already jumped 10 points before I crossed a bridge over the River Slaney on the road into Wexford, a seacoast town in the southeast corner of Ireland.

This feeling, I confess, was not altogether intuitive. My arrival coincided not only with a Halloween Friday night but with the closing weekend of the Wexford Festival, Ireland's answer to Spoleto. Opera is the festival's main event, and has been for eighteen years, but the people who yearly threaten to burst the town's crumbling Norman seams doubtless show more interest in the extracurricular activities. At no small enticement, hotel bars waive their customary closing regulations during the ten-day assault.

Wexford on that last weekend in October was blessed with a streak of unseasonably balmy weather, and although the wind blew stiffly off the coast, it carried an almost tropical scent. This was not imagined, for when my eyes had adjusted to the light of the following day I perceived a species of palm tree posted ever so often along the shoreline, causing me to wonder how far I had really traveled the night before. Ireland's southernmost extremities support several subtropical flora, including the strawberry tree and the cordyline palm. These were introduced by nineteenth-century landowners who must have been inspired by County Wexford's mild win-

ters, a relative absence of frost, the magical powers of the Gulf Stream, and perhaps a vision of Waikiki on the Irish Sea.

Another mystery one might have pondered that weekend was where all the celebrants put themselves after the pubs had closed and the singing had died away. Wexford's two worthy hotels, the Talbot and White's, hold a combined 128 rooms, and three others within stumbling distance of town—the Castle Motor Inn, Strand Hotel, and Great Southern Inn—pack an additional 200 or so. That left a few score of private houses dusted off for the occasion by the good ladies of Wexford, but it's doubtful that Mrs. Fortune, Mrs. Kehoe, Mrs. Malone, Mrs. Murphy, Mrs. Walsh, and their neighbors found room for all the strays.

Even in a town of Wexford's cramped proportions and limited amenities, it was difficult to settle into one drinking station, knowing another might be hitting a higher key. A consolation, for those in a sampling mood, was the close proximity of the three or four traditional spots. My weekend began at Des Corish's pub on Main Street, a byway barely wide enough to accommodate two passing tipplers, let alone a pair of vehicles. Des Corish's father was once mayor of Wexford for twenty-five years, and his brother Brendan is the leader of Ireland's Labor Party; so the atmosphere, on any weekend, is abrim with political talk.

Brendan was home for the holiday, holding forth at the bar. He is a big man with bushy eyebrows and white hair. His features and his politics, too,

