

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please check with an FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **If the book is under copyright in your country, do not download or redistribute this file.**

Title: Short Takes

Date of first publication: 1948

Author: Damon Runyon (1884-1946)

Date first posted: December 19 2012

Date last updated: December 19 2012

Faded Page eBook #20121228

This eBook was produced by: Delphine Lettau & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

DAMON RUNYON

SHORT TAKES

the

publishers are

CONSTABLE

Orange Street London W.C.2

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY

Constable and Company Ltd

INDIA

Longmans, Green and Company Ltd

BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS

First English Edition 1948

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE, LTD.,
AT THE CHISWICK PRESS, NEW SOUTHGATE, N.11



CONTENTS

NOTES FOR MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Insidious I
Is Write Right?
The Wisdom of not Being Wise
Sweet Silence
Wind Storm
The Discriminating Thief
O, Careless Love!
Leave Them and Love Them
The Good Samaritan
Tripping Over Trivia
Origin of an Urge
Magnificent Mammon
You Must Not Trust

MIXED GRILL

A Great Man Passes By
Postscript on Sports Writing
No Justice
Horse Sense
The Thinking Equines
Shall I Return?
Friendliness Goes Out of the Window

OUR OLD MAN

The Thin Line
Marriage Counsel
Live and Let Live
Humouring the Little Women
The Pure of Heart
You Know Them When They're Hungry
The Tolerant Few
Time to Think

MR. JOE TURP WRITES

Nice Fellow
The Rap
Weathering It

Belittling Ben
She's a Dreamer
The Only Answer
The Crawleys
Larcenous Ladies
Sharing Secrets
The Danger of Being Polite
Etiquette
Barber's Business
A Double Life
Fatherly Advice
A Rose By Any Other Name, Etc.
The Scab
If It Works the Way They Hope It Will

DOGS AND CATS

A Tough Town on Dogs
Animal Psychosis
A Dog's Best Friend
Sheba and High Society

HEARTY APPETITES

Dieting Dames
The Way of All Food
Attitudes While Eating
Dinner Despoilers
Holiday Hospitality
Talking Turkey
Free-Loading Ethics
Napkin Technique
Forceful Remarks

BETTER HALVES

Single Track Mind
Out With Her
The Age of Women
Smoking Ladies
The Protective Male
Mrs. Devil
Diaper Dexterity

FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Two Tales of Louie the Stork
Phooey and Louie

Alger non
The Tale of Sneaky the Germ

ON BEING SICK

Why Me?

The Doctor Knows Best

No Life

Good Night

Bed-Warmers

Sweet Dreams

Passing the Word Along

Death Pays a Social Call



NOTES FOR MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Insidious I

My autobiography, or life story, is one thing you can bet I will never write.

If I told the truth, a lot of persons, including myself, might go to jail. If I held out the truth or just told it half way, a lot of my pals who now have confidence in me would be saying:

"That Runyon is a scaredy-cat and a phony bum. As long as he was going to write his life at all, why didn't he write it on the emmus."*

Of course an even more potent reason why I am never going to write my own tale is that there is no sure money in that tripe. It is purely speculative. It might sell but the odds are against it.

It is pretty difficult to find a bookie in New York nowadays to get a market on this proposition but I imagine the price of publication against any book selling to a profit is easily 50 to 1, depending on the author.

I think you could write your own ticket on an autobiography.

I am frankly a hired Hessian on the typewriter and have never pretended to be anything else and when I write something I want to know in advance how much I am going to be paid for it and when.

I am aware that there are many other writing fellows, especially in the newspaper columning dodge, who write out of sheer altruism and who pick up their weekly wage envelopes merely as a matter of form. But not Professor Runyon. The professor wants his. I think I am less spurious than those muggs who let on that their journalistic pursuits are guided by motives far above mere gold.

However, a note from a publishing house which says it is interested in my autobiography helps solve a mystery for me. For years I have been wondering who tells people to write autobiographies. Many a time as I have skimmed through the pages of such a tome, I have said to myself, How can anybody as inconsequential in the world and with as little to say as this guy have the gall to spoil all this white paper?

Well, obviously the publishers tell them, which partly absolves a number of persons against whom I have been nursing the most sinister designs. I do not know who tells the publishers. That is something I am going to investigate at the earliest opportunity.

Maybe many a fellow is going along through life minding his own business and keeping his affairs to himself as he should when some publisher or his representative sneaks up behind the poor bloke and whispers in his ear:

"Look—why not write your autobiography?"

That does it.

The fellow immediately becomes a frightful bore.

I say there ought to be a national committee to which book publishers should be required to submit the names of persons they contemplate asking for autobiographies, the committee to survey each candidate on his experiences before a single line is permitted to be set down on paper. The approval of the committee should be something not easily secured.

I do not think my material would ever pass on the basis of importance. My life has been made up of trivialities. I have accomplished no great deeds. I have met no considerable number of the high muck-a-mucks of the world, and when

I did I was always too self-conscious to hear what they said.

Of course, I could tell about the time Butch Tower was playing vaudeville in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when a furniture dealers' convention was being held there and he shot craps on a blanket on the floor with them with such success that after examining both sides of the blanket and all sides of the dice, they suggested that Butch ought to give them a handicap by hanging the blanket on a line across the room like a sheet up to dry.

So the blanket was rigged like the walls of Jericho in the movie *It Happened One Night* when, as you probably remember, Clark Gable, the lucky dog, was in bed on one side of the blanket and Claudette Colbert was in bed on the other side. And the furniture dealers made Butch stand on one side of the blanket and which was hung head high and hurl the dice plumb over it.

And what do you think happened? What do you think happened?

Why, Butch cleaned those furniture dealers from top to bottom. If they had been betting their own merchandise, he would have been able to furnish a ten-room house.

* Meaning on the level. Hollywood talk.

Is Write Right?

There is the disquieting rumour going the rounds that the owners of the newspapers were contemplating an effort to take their publications back from the columnists. I want to be on hand to protect my interests.

I hear the feeling among the newspaper owners is that they have given the columnists the personal and political and even the sociological freedom of their public prints long enough and that the owners would now like to use the space for other purposes, such as news and perhaps a little paid advertising, a most presumptuous attitude on their part, as you can see.

I am also informed many owners have been brooding over the way some columnists pass out advertising gratis to private business enterprises. It seems these owners take the position the enterprises used to contribute to the newspaper coffers before the free-loading became the fashion and might be induced to do so again if the liberality of the columnists could be restrained.

It is said one owner has figured out that a certain concern that formerly spent \$100,000 a year in advertising with the newspapers now saves \$90,000 by hiring a press agent at \$10,000 per annum to plant mention of it among the columnists, but even if this statement is true I think it reflects a mercenary spirit in the owner that is most reprehensible, and I hope and trust it is not shared by his fellows.

I am told that this unrest among the owners over the columnists started when an owner wanted to publish to the world certain of his own opinions with reference to current problems, believing the opinions to be right, or at least worth submitting, only to find his newspaper had so many columnists there was no room for him.

Now while I don't think the owner had any legal right to trespass on the columnists, I do think it would have been smart for one of them to move over a trifle and give him a couple of inches. I mean look, fellow, the racket has been pretty soft so why stir up those muggs?

This particular owner is noted for an inclination to surliness on slight provocation and his exclusion caused him to

reflect, a thing that could have been avoided. He reflected that his columnists are all contrary to his own and are in support of men and conditions that he believes false and harmless and his reflection has brought him to the conclusion he has been a sucker to lend his typographical resources to his opposition.

But even at that, he might have cooled out and forgotten the incident had he not repaired to a famous night club to continue his reflection about a flagon of Scotch. He was denied admission on the ground the joint was filled up though in the background he could see four or five of his columnists at prominent tables.

This served to remind him of the frequency of their mention, without charge, of this deadfall in his paper. Then he really sizzled. However, this phase of the situation comes under the head of a bad break. Yet by the exercise of a little diplomacy on the part of the columnists, the guy would not have reached the night club in bad humour.

The columnists got possession of the newspapers some years ago by promoting the theory that an owner who permitted the promulgation of political and social opinions contrary to his own through his paper was a great liberal. The owners were convinced that being known as liberals was good for their souls and also for business. I am speaking of the hefty-thinking columnists, of course, not the lightweights like myself. I got in a raincheck.

It is my thought that in sacrificing their own editorial vision and expression and their local news and the fruits of their years of hard work and effort generally to the columnists, the owners were dopes, but naturally I will help resist them to the death. I would hate to get thrown out and have a heavyweight like Lippmann land on top of me.

The Wisdom of not Being Wise

I am a lot smarter than I sometimes let on and when you read something of mine that seems to be an effort to put myself away with my customers as a naive homespun fellow you may be pretty sure that afterwards I will be greatly ashamed of the attempted deception. I do not know why I keep doing it. It must be force of habit.

I say attempted deception because I doubt that any of my readers are ever deceived. They know there is nothing naive or homespun about me, that on the contrary I am wiser than a tree full of owls, that I am hip to all dodges, larcenous and otherwise, and that I have been breathing against silk, as the saying is, for many years.

I doubt, too, that the contemporaries I often notice trying the same role are any more successful in hood-winking their public. The average newspaper reader probably realizes that a newspaperman who has achieved the distinction of a byline must have been around newspaper offices for some time and that in newspaper offices are human beings of ordinary intelligence and some sophistication and that from them the writer fellow must have learned something of life, else he is a complete boob.

It could be I occasionally revert to the homespun role as a sub-conscious expression of regret. I was putting that unsophisticated business in my writing as far back as the time I was working on the *Denver Post* when gruff old Joe Ward, the city editor, fingering my copy, used to growl:

"Come, come, Runyon. Kindly eliminate this aroma of new-mown hay, this note of good-evening-neighbour. I have looked up your record and find you were a messenger boy in the redlight district of Pueblo most of your youth and I fear you there acquired a worldliness that unfits you for playing the joskin in the large city."

But I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen. I was on the right track. I wish Joe Ward had not headed me off. I realized this in later years when I got to New York and saw the late O. O. McIntyre as the best dressed, most

fastidious and highly prized diner in the fashionable Colony restaurant surrounded by zillionaires and remembered he got that way on the strength of a reputation throughout the nation as a sort of reuben glue among the city slickers.

And then I met up with Will Rogers, who was enjoying a fat income from the syndication of his writings in the tone of an unsophisticated country fellow, not too well educated, though if there was a sharper, more thoroughly informed man in the United States than Bill, or one who could speak a better grade of working English, I never encountered him.

But maybe I could not have maintained the Lem Frivibiv pose for any length of time. I am by nature a wise guy. I see no reason to deny it. I feel too self-conscious and, in fact, phony when I don the homespun make-up. In this day and age when newspapers have 50,000,000 circulation and the radio is in every home, it seems to me the people must have too much intelligence and information to fall for that unsophisticated line.

And I just heard of a congressman who has been on the job for over 20 years mainly on the strength of continually assuring his constituents that he is just a simple country boy. He has been living in Washington off and on for two decades, understand, but he remains a simple country boy. And the constituents believe it. Why, b'gosh they must be wider-eyed in their unsophistication than old McIntyre sitting there in the Colony waiting for his filet of sole.

Well, someone once made the crack "You can't exaggerate the stupidity of the public." I have forgotten who it was, if I ever heard. Anyway, kindly do not pin it on me as I have troubles enough. But the more I see of the world, my good friends, the more I am inclined to the belief maybe the guy who said it had something there.

Sweet Silence

My column is slightly irregular and loyal customers sometimes do me the honour of saying:

"I didn't see your stuff in the paper today. What happened?"

This indicates that they looked for it, which pleases me no little. However, I am sometimes perturbed by the fact that when it does appear the customers make no comment. They notice when I am out but not when I am in. It is something to worry about.

Well, now, there are two reasons for the irregularity, one being physical. But the major reason is that I have nothing to say.

I hesitated a long time before revealing this. I realize that it may be a great shock to some of my customers and might create a precedent of far reaching consequences among newspaper columnists.

I mean it might change the present old established practice of columnists who have nothing to say, saying it.

Anyway, they might take to following my example in remaining out of the paper when they find themselves in the situation of having nothing to say. While this would save a vast amount of white paper, I fear it would be deplored by many editors.

When an editor contracts for a column to appear daily in public print, he naturally wants that contract fulfilled to the letter and though the columnist often has nothing to say the editor is apt to feel that it is better to say it in the space and to the extent of the wordage allotted it than deprive his readers of the opportunity of guessing what the columnist means when he says nothing. Because quite often columns of this type arouse more discussion than those in which the columnist really says something.

The man never lived who had something to say every day of his life. By something to say, I mean of course, something worth listening to or reading. But if editors took to leaving out columnists when they have nothing to say, every columnist would be reduced to about three appearances per week and some less and that would be bad for the columning racket.

I expect no applause from my fellow columnists in this confession of the reason for my irregularity. They will probably say that I am non-union. Nor do I expect the commendation of editors. They are more likely to put me away as lazy. I can only hope for the approval of some of my customers for sparing them the boredom of reading my column when I had nothing to say.

The shock of many of them will probably be in their discovery of my lack of versatility on finding I had nothing to say. They will perhaps wonder why I did not fill in with a few letters from Vox Populi or other omnivorous readers. I thought of that. On reading a batch of the letters at hand I found they had nothing to say either.

I worry like the dickens when I find I have nothing to say, and never mind telling me I must be worrying all the time. I want to say something as much as any man alive, yet I have a feeling that whatever I say it should be interesting or entertaining. I have a number of stock subjects that I know I ride too hard, such as the case of the discharged soldiers and my national lottery, but they are not elastic enough to stretch over all the periods when I have nothing to say like those that some of my more facile contemporaries keep in store.

I envy those guys who when they have nothing to say, can always turn to labour and to Russia and to belting the administration and also to rearranging the world after the war. This last, ladies and gentlemen, is a matter of which I know so little that I cannot even say nothing about it though certain of my contemporaries can do it to the extent of eight or nine hundred words daily.

Wind Storm

I sized up some of my columns as they appeared in print and I said to myself, well, Runyon, I see you are up to your old habit of windifying.

This, dear reader, is the habit of being too windy.

I might say prolix or garrulous or verbose, which denotes an excess of words in proportion to the thought, but I prefer windy.

It is a good old up-country expression and refers to breath as expended in words, especially as having more sound than sense.

Windifying is common to many of our public figures and private citizens. It prevails among officials and even the clergy but is more pronounced among writers than any other class, though radio announcers are commencing to be strong contenders for top place.

I admit I am often a flagrant offender. I counted the number of words in each column I inspected and found the average was 950 per column which is 200 more words than my column calls for, give or take twenty or thirty little ones.

I said to myself, Runyon, who do you think you are anyway, sounding your bazoo to that extent? I said, read those columns over again line by line and word by word, a harsh penalty to be sure, but justified by your breaking of the vow you took several years ago not to exceed 750 words per column, and see for yourself the amount of verbiage you got in.

Well, that is just what I did and in every column I found enough of what I might call "water" in the way of words to fill a vat. If this "water" had been squeezed out no one of the columns would have exceeded 700 words and would have said everything I intended and probably better than it appeared with the excess.

I found far too many "buts" which seems to be a favourite word of mine, too many "however's", too many "wells" and "in any events", and too many "of courses" and "as I was sayings". There was plenty of tautology, which is unnecessary repetition whether in word or in sense.

How does this happen, you ask?

Well (see, there it is!) in writing a column one word leads to another. You get to galloping along a certain line of thought and at the point where instinct tells you to pull up, something else occurs to your mind and you slide it in, hoping that they will somehow be able to stretch the space allotted you and make room for the excess.

The copy reader probably cuts it out and you are always surprised that the amputation in no wise disturbs the continuity or thought of your essay, in fact if you write a column for enough years you will learn that nothing the editor does to it affects the destiny of mankind or the course of the world.

I think every writer of a column would prefer to write a short one, and that every newspaper editor wishes they were all short. But brevity could reach inadequacy by which I mean too great a limitation would prevent some column writers from expressing their opinions and would reduce the entertainment of the reader.

I think the most envied column ever written, if you could call it a column, was Will Rogers' daily hundred and fifty words. It may have run over that occasionally and it was also sometimes less. It was envied by all other newspaper writers because of the scant labour it represented as compared to their own and because of its popularity and resultant income. Every editor wanted it as it took very little space in the paper.

I have heard it said that at one time Rogers' tiny column was grossing \$2200 per week, and it must have had a circulation of millions considering the number of papers in which it appeared. It was not great writing but it was something that only Rogers could do, as is evidenced by the fact that since his death scores of writers have attempted to produce something like it without success.

It was just a daily dash of homely philosophy on events of the day, yet the great Irvin S. Cobb was unable to turn out a reasonable follow on it when he was induced to try after Rogers died. Cobb's effort had a certain vogue for a short time, then met a natural death. But on the other hand, Rogers could not shine Cobb's shoes as a writer at greater length.



The Discriminating Thief

One of my fair readers, evidently a very nice lady, wrote that she thought my column the best in the world.

Well, it ought to be in view of the many years I have been stealing from the greatest writers that ever lived to entertain and instruct my parishioners.

I tell you, dearly beloved, that at times my efforts in intellectual larceny in your behalf have been positively superhuman. I do not say my column would be more than just real good if I relied entirely upon my own noodle, but with centuries of writing to prowl through, and pick and choose from, I would be a poor stick, indeed, did I not make it the best.

Sometimes I wonder if youse appreciate me.

I steal from Plato, Socrates, Woodrow Wilson, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Mr. Dooley, Euripides, Nat Fleischer's All-Time Ring Record, Lincoln's speeches, Ingersoll's lectures, LaGuardia's readings of the comic strips, Caesar (Irving and Arthur and Julius), Butler (Nick, Sam, Ben and Bill), Dickens, Cato, Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman.

I steal from Dante, Goethe, Aesop, Confucius, Karl Marx, Yussel Stalin, Conrad, James G. Blaine, Demosthenes, Sheridan (Dick and Phil), Disraeli, Nick the Greek, Joe Louis, Bob Fitzsimmons, Hans Christian Andersen, Grimm, L. B. Mayer, Henry Mencken, Good Time Charley, George Jean Nathan, George Washington, Grover Cleveland, Clay, Calhoun, Talleyrand, Thomas Paine and Jim Farley.

I would like to see another column that presents as great a variety of brains burglary as this. Other columnists steal from a limited number of sources and with great timidity. I steal from everybody and as bold as brass. And yet I feel that in depredations I am a sort of an intellectual Robin Hood. I steal from the rich in wisdom and give it to the poor, if the members of my congregation will pardon the simile.

However, I have developed considerable cunning in my book banditry. I exercise caution in stealing from anyone who has not been dead many years, as I have learned the danger of long memories among the living putting the finger on one quite unexpectedly.

It is not that there is any legal penalty involved. It is simply that personally I do not fancy being caught at my larceny lest my own erudition thereafter be suspect. I mean I do not like to encounter glances that tell me that the glancer is saying to himself, this Runyon is an intellectual gonniff.

I have learned that it is safest to stick to stealing from the classics which, though they are always spoken of quite favourably in our best intellectual circles, are seldom read; hence with just a slight touching up you can get away with their wisdom as your own, and acquire the reputation of being an educated fellow.

In fact, if you are slick enough about it, posterity may quote you as the original author. For instance Lincoln is always credited with the immortal lines, "that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth", though over thirty years before he said it at Gettysburg, Daniel Webster put it this way:

"The people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people."

And long before Webster, Charles James Fox of England, expressed the thought in a toast to "our sovereign, the people" which got him in a fine jam.

I found in a magazine another example of what I mean. General Douglas MacArthur was credited with saying to an aide: "Do you want to live forever?"

Now MacArthur may have said it all right—I am not doubting the authors—but if he did he was remembering Floyd Gibbons' quotation of Sergeant Dan Daly who is supposed to have yelled back in 1918 at his Marines in the Boise Belleau:

"Come on you —— ——, do you want to live forever?"

Nor do I doubt that Franklin P. Adams said, as reported in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but the betting is best that way", only I think Hughy Keough said it first.

I agree that it is no great thought, no sparkling gem of wisdom any way you take it, but when Bartlett's prints something, I want it accurate because Bartlett's is one of my favourite sources of thievery and I like to know who I am stealing from.

O, Careless Love!

Among those I have checked and okayed for the purge is the fellow of whom it is said "He loves people." I think we have gone along with him as far as we should.

I have never been able to get a bill of particulars from this fellow or his admirers. I mean detailed information for the basis of the statement "He loves people".

I have not been able to obtain from or anyone connected with him an explanation for the significance of the propaganda "He loves people". That is to say, what of it?

I have asked what people does he love?

How many?

Their names and addresses, please?

All right, then, two or three?

I have asked why does he love them?

No answer. Not a peep. Well, I never trusted this mugg much anyway, because if he was a square John and did not inspire the statement "He loves people", he would have come out with a flat denial the minute it was first said of him, or with the info I suggest above as proof of its authenticity.

Let me tell you something. I have never considered it a boost to have it said of one that "He loves people". Many, many, many, many, many people are mean and dirty and all around ornery and to have it said of you that you love them would indicate that you are weak minded, or, if you personally prompted the report, an infernal liar.

I am willing to let it be said of you without challenge, or you may say it yourself, that you love some people. Some, remember. Just kindly do not try to take in too much territory or I will have to call you. "He loves peoples!" Aw, filberts!

The statement about which I am making all this squawk often appears in obituary notices, used in the past tense, of course. It is with a blush of shame that I confess that I have used it no less than three times that I remember in the past couple of years—"He loved people".

It is one of those things you drop in without thinking when you are trying to say something nice about one who has departed this vale of tears, who has shuffled off this mortal coil, who has kicked the bucket, or handed in his checks, as we say. "He loved people", I said of each of these fellows, but I have since learned that two of them actually hated people, including their wives—or are wives people?

They made quite a point of mingling with people and of expressing their love for people, which should have made me suspicious of them at once because, curiously enough, the men who had done the most for people in this world were not disposed to association with people in the mass. On the contrary, they gave people the old whiskbroom treatment.

It is my opinion that the American who did more for people than any other man of the past fifty years was John D. Rockefeller, and he bothered not at all with people. He avoided them. I would be inclined to doubt that he loved them. I see no reason why he should. Yet he was one of the all-time great benefactors of people. Now I suppose you are waiting for me to round up that third guy of the trio I mention above.

Well, as I afterwards learned, this guy was arrested once for slugging a neighbour who complained about his dog,

Toots, barking all night. The neighbour could not sleep. Then my man was arrested on three different occasions for kicking people on the shins in box office and ration board lines, two of his victims being women and the third a blind man.

Finally, there were no less than ten different beefs against him in his lifetime for swindling both men and women in stock rackets. I feel not that it was an exaggeration to say of him "He loved people".

Leave Them and Love Them

Someone suggested that old love letters be turned in on the waste paper drive.

It struck me as a great idea and I regretted that I had none to contribute myself. I was always a burn-em-up-right-away fellow on that kind of correspondence.

I do not mean to convey the impression that I received many love letters. I never was the type that inspires tender missives. But the few I did receive I promptly destroyed. It was a matter of gallantry with me.

I shall always remember the one I chewed up and swallowed in Otto Flotto's saloon in Denver long years ago. It was from a lovely little lady who worked in the Horn Dairy restaurant and I digested the document when I saw approaching me a switchman gentleman who had been going with the lady for some time before I cut in and who I suspected of intent to search me for possible incriminating evidence of my encroachment.

I was not wrong in this suspicion, either, as he held me with one hand and frisked me with the other. I was still gulping on the letter and unable to speak coherently which the switchman gentleman took as indications of great fear on my part. He kept remarking, soothingly:

"Don't be scairt, podner. If you ain't got no notes from Sal on you, you won't be hurt and if you have I'll kill you as painlessly as possible so you've got nothin' to worry about."

I have always felt there was poetic justice in the fact that he finally brought me a beer by way of apology for his search and this beer washed down the little wad of paper that was stuck in my throat just at a moment when I felt I would have to eject it.

I do not now remember the full contents of the letter—it was a very long time ago—but I do recollect that it carried a touching postscript that said, "I shall love you forever and always and I wish you would lend me ten dollars as my room rent is due."

I never wrote any love letters because of a parental admonition early in life. I was ten years old and was in the throes of composing a confession of sweet emotion to a beautiful girl of nine who went to the same school I did when my old man came in and on learning the nature of my effort, said:

"Son, I am now going to give you some advice about women which I hope and trust you will bear in mind all your life. It is as follows: 'Don't write—send word.'"

Well, having nothing to contribute to the waste paper drive on my own account, I thought of a friend of mine, now in his middle years, who has always been a bit of a Lothario, with a blazing love affair on tap at all times. It occurred to me that he must have a raft of old love letters and that I would be doing a patriotic service by getting him to contribute them to the paper drive.

"Why, sure", he said, when I spoke to him about the matter. "I must have a million of them. I kept the love letters I received figuring I might go broke some day and need the blank sides for my own correspondence, though you would be surprised how many dolls use both sides of the paper writing love letters. They must have spoiled tons of paper that way."

"I suppose you have them in the attic in an old trunk?" I said. "Perhaps put away in lavender? And surely arranged in neat ribbon-tied bundles?"

"No", he said, "I haven't got an attic. They are in an empty egg-crate in the garage. You wait and I'll get some of them."

He returned presently with both fists full of old letters which he said he had grabbed at random from his store and sat he down to read one written on pink paper. He read to himself and by the time he reached the last page tears were running down his cheeks. Then he read one on pale blue paper and sobbed openly.

"They're from Grace and Mable", he said in a choking voice. "They were written twenty years ago, I only wish I could remember who those dames were."

I left him fairly rocking with lachrymoseness over a letter dated 1912 that he said was from Henrietta but he could not think Henrietta what.

The Good Samaritan

The slight sag to my left shoulder was caused by friends crying on it through the years as they narrated their troubles in connection with the divine passion, which is to say love.

I once developed a sort of rash like an eczema on my chest and examination by a skin specialist left him puzzled, an unusual state of mind for a skin specialist, I will have you know. As a rule those guys can recommend oils, unguents, salves and ointments with incredible readiness and at prices the same. Incredible.

"Runyon", my fellow said, "I fear you will have to give up ocean bathing."

"Doc", I said, "I have not bathed in the ocean since the year following the big wind in Miami. I mean the big one. It was in '26."

"Humph", the doctor said, "I don't think this rash could have lasted that long but I am sure it is due to salt water. Where could you have come in contact with salt water?"

"Oh, shucks, Doc", I said. "I can explain that. It is from the tears of the love-lorn who weep on my shoulder; they—the tears—seep through my apparel to my hide. You know—fellows who want to cry their hearts out on somebody's shoulder and seek mine knowing how accommodating I am. But I didn't think they would give me the itch. What'll I use, Doc?"

"Boo-hoo-hoo!" he suddenly bawled dropping his head on that same willing old shoulder. "I want to tell you about finding a letter from another guy in my dame's handbag the other night when she forgot it in my office. It was in answer to one from her and—"

Perhaps if I tell you how I handled that situation you will understand my increasing popularity as a sort of human

wailing wall among the emotionally distraught. I said, "Oh, pooh, letters mean nothing and the fact that the guy had answered her merely indicated that he was a gentleman and meticulous in keeping up his correspondence." I said, "One of my own greatest faults was in not answering letters promptly and——"

"But this letter was a sizzler", the doctor said. "It closed with row after row of X's. Do you know what that means?"

"Sure", I said. "Force of habit. You go to your young lady and apologize for being a cad and reading the letter."

Well, I saw them together the other night and they were very friendly toward me, though if I had not known my business and had advised the guy to give her a good rousing around about that correspondence, I would have had to endure an evening of dagger glances from both.

In short, I take the dame's part and try to find excuses for her conduct when a gentleman weeper tells me what a dirty deal she is giving him and I take the guy's end when a lady weeper is combing him out to me, because I know that as soon as they make up and start comparing notes, I am bound to wind up winner on both sides. They all say, "Gee, Runyon is a nice fellow!"

But it was not always thus. I can remember when I was a social pariah because of my naïveté in actually putting out advice when a guy came to me asking for advice, in one of these situations. I would say, "Look, Fred, everybody in town knows that doll is triple-timing you and if you have a lick of sense you will pack her in and forget her." I would say, "Why, Percy, I cannot see how you have stood her nagging and extravagance and bad temper as long as you have."

Or I would say, "Mary, it is about time you opened your eyes and saw what a creeping, crawling, pusillanimous scoundrel you are married to, and while I never wanted to open my mouth to you, now that you have asked me, I have to tell you the truth."

Then one day I opened my eyes in a hospital and a nurse was saying, "Yes, it is a wonder he was not killed because six men and six women ganged up on him and gave him a slugging over some advice he had been spreading around"—and that was the moment I switched my tactics.

I still get caught in the switches occasionally but not often enough to do any great harm. Once I had two shoulder weepers at once, one on each shoulder, and when they turned around and looked at one another they saw they were husband and wife who had been crying to me about each other.

They clinched and walked away together and heartily despised me ever afterwards because the wife asked me through her tears if she was not entitled to a quarter of a million separation money and I said I thought that was only fair, and the husband asked if I did not think two hundred and fifty G's too much to give a brisket and in an absent minded moment I said it was a helluva package all right and I would see her in Paducah first.

Tripping Over Trivia

I am trying to cultivate the habit of not being particular about little things. I suppose that after years of being very particular, indeed, I will find it difficult to shake off some of my old exactions, but I must keep struggling. I have come to the conclusion that I have been wasting an enormous amount of time in being particular.

Take the small matter of boiled eggs. I used to be mighty particular about how long my boiled eggs should be boiled. I made a strong point of specifying that they should be boiled three minutes and a half. I had the idea that I could not even

look at eggs boiled less than that time or two seconds beyond. The cooks could not fool me, either, though sometimes I suspected they exerted the most diabolical ingenuity in the effort. I could tell to a clock-tick how long they had boiled eggs the instant they were set before me.

One day I sat down and seriously contemplated the economic phases of the boiled egg situation as applied to me. I considered, through careful calculation, the hours I must have wasted in arguing with waiters that those eggs had not been boiled three and a half minutes, but only two and a half, or maybe four, and in sending them back to the kitchen and then waiting for another boiling.

When my figures showed that on being particular about my boiled eggs alone I had wasted fifteen years, I was appalled. It was then I made up my mind to cease being particular. I immediately made some progress on the boiled eggs. I began calling for them scrambled.

As a cash customer of the New York drama, I estimate that I have thrown away at least six years in being particular about the location of my seat in the theatre, and there will be no more of that waste. I can see now that it made no difference to me, physically or intellectually, where I sat, and that many a time I would have been much better off had I been unable to get inside the theatre at all.

I have also always been particular about the location of my seat in a movie house and have stood up through half a picture to grab a chair in the region of my fancy. From now on I am going to take the first seat I find, and if it happens to be off at one of those angles characteristic of our movie houses from which I can catch only a cockeyed slant at the screen, I will console myself with the thought that I am saving time I would have wasted waiting for a better spot, and that maybe it is a bad picture, anyway.

Nor am I going to waste any more of my precious moments trying to coax head waiters into planting me at a more advantageous table in a restaurant or night club. From now on I will take the one they offer me, behind the pillar, from which I am unable to view anything but the broad backs of the servitors hovering over the favoured guests at the choicer tables, because my figures show that I have thrown away nine years and two months just standing on one leg like a crane at restaurant and night club doors waiting for someone in authority to notice me.

If my will power holds out, no longer will I be particular about the berth that the fellow at the railroad ticket window wants to sell me. I will ask for a lower, of course, but if he says there are only uppers left, I will take it and thus conserve the time I formerly threw to the winds in trying to find someone with a drag with the railroad, or waiting on another train. Upper or lower, I never sleep much on a train anyway, so what difference does it make.

It is the same way about a room in a hotel. I am going to save the time I used to waste waiting at the hotel desk while the clerk examined his records with pursed lips and an air of doubt, to see if he could find a room to my most particular fancy, and take whatever he can offer. There will be a snoring guy in the next room or a noisy party down the hall just the same and I will be ahead about an hour.

I am going to try to make up on some of the time I have wasted in hat stores trying on hats. Hereafter, I will just step in, call for my size, clap the first hat presented on my scone and hurry out, thus saving half a day that I used to toss off peering into mirrors and pulling the hat brim this way and that and chatting with the clerk about the matter. I now fully realize that all hats look the same on my bean, and that there is no sense in my being particular about them.

From here on in, I will endeavour to eliminate the utter waste of time in being particular about where and how I hang my clothes on removal and place my shoes and neckties and stuff like that. I am just going to quickly shed them anywhere, though at this point I am confronted by an economic problem on which some of my readers may enlighten me.

Will the time I save in not being particular in this shedding stand off the time I will probably waste in household argument about me not being particular?

Origin of an Urge

To show you how a little thing can influence a man, I will tell you about the shoe trunk I bought when I first came to New York City.

It was a beautifully made thing of some durable wood covered with shining yellow sole leather with lock and hasps of brass the rich colour of newly minted gold, a work of art if ever there was one.

It was lined with a soft material like canton flannel and it had compartments for about eight pairs of shoes, each of which could be wrapped in pieces of that same flannel-like material before being stowed away in a compartment. There was a tray that lifted out and under the tray was space for a pair of riding boots.

The whole trunk was amazingly neat and compact and could easily be carried by the leather handle on top or one of the leather handles on either end. It was on display in the window of one of the oldest luggage manufacturing firms in New York City, still in business on Madison Avenue, but then having a store on Fifth Avenue, my memory placing the location along in the 20's.

The price of the shoe trunk was \$65 which is not much more than the price of a shoe shine nowadays but was then a neat sum of money. I venture the opinion that if the same trunk were manufactured now you could not buy it under two hundred dollars. And \$65 was the exact amount I received one day from Bob Davis, then editor of *Munsey's*, for a short story and it was the most money I had had in my pocket in a long time.

Now I had never seen a shoe trunk before in my life. I had never even heard of one. I had one \$3 pair of shoes, which was all I ever owned at one time and I was fresh in from Colorado where one pair of shoes at a clip was deemed ample by most of our citizens, though there were rumours of some with several pairs.

Why my attention was attracted to that shoe trunk was never any great mystery to me because I was always of an inquiring nature and the richness of the leather box probably caught my eye and prompted me to step into the store and ask what it was; but my purchase of the thing puzzles me to this day.

I have a vague feeling that the salesman may have been a trifle superior and perhaps patronizing in his manner as he informed me of the uses of the trunk and that my purchase was in a spirit of defiance of the big town generally—a gesture to show it that I was no neckyoke even if I was a new arrival and that I was not to be intimidated by a shoe trunk. Or maybe I wanted to impress that salesman with the idea that I had been accustomed to buying shoe trunks all my life.

Anyway I plunked down the \$65 and told him to stencil my initials in either end and deliver it to a home in Flatbush where I was staying at the time, and incidentally was in the red for board and room deeper than even friendship justified. I shall never forget the expressions of amazement on the faces of my hosts when the shoe trunk arrived the next day, packaged like some great treasure six layers of wrapping paper thick, and were told what it was.

They never said anything in criticism to me about it then or afterwards, though it seems to me that the sheer idiocy of the purchase of an expensive shoe trunk by an impecunious young man with practically his last dollar must have called for some discussion in private. I know I asked myself many a time, Runyon, why the heck did you buy that trunk? I never found a satisfactory answer.

But it served two purposes. It inspired me to greater industry than was my habit to get money to buy enough shoes to fill the trunk and, in the process of acquisition, I paid my board bill. And since that time, whenever I have felt disposed to beef about some foolish action on the part of anyone, I have said to myself, Runyon, remember the shoe trunk.

That is why I did not laugh when big George Godfrey, the Negro heavyweight, bought a huge wardrobe trunk with his first ring earnings some years ago though he had nothing to put in it but a few little articles that made a terrific rattling whenever the trunk was moved around. I imagine George could not have explained the wardrobe trunk any more than I

could the shoe trunk, but our motives were probably identical.

I saw the last of the shoe trunk in a pile of refuse in the basement of the house I occupied in Holmby Hills, Los Angeles, over a year ago, the leather cracked and peeling, the sides caved in, the lining moth eaten and the hasps all tarnished, a veteran of many thousands of miles of travel and many years of close association with me, and I said to myself well, Runyon, there goes a memory of daffiness but jiminelly, wasn't it fun!

Magnificent Mammon

This punk, maybe he was fourteen, fifteen years old, said he wanted to get my best advice to the youth of the land. I said, are you kidding, son? I said you would not take my best or even my worst advice if I gave it to you—you or any other kid.

I said I would not take it myself if I was your age.

He said, well give it to me, anyway. The teacher said you have been around since Noah built the ark and you ought to have something interesting to say, only make it short because I want to go to the football game.

I said all right, my boy, I will give you my best advice in three words:

Get the money.

I said that is my advice. Get the money.

Get it honestly, son, I said. The hazards and inconveniences of dishonest dough are too numerous to make it worth while. You not only run the risk of going to the can but there is the matter of conscience that produces sleepless nights and waking hours of fear and brooding like an income tax return full of lies.

I said, then, there is the economic phase of dishonest jack, what with the fences and the mouthpieces and the other protection and assistance getting the most of the swag. Son, I said, if you had been a reader of my column in the old days you would often have read that I think honesty the best policy. Not so much from a moral standpoint but as an economic proposition.

Get the money by hard work and application, if necessary, though I am not opposed to getting it in a soft berth that requires little effort if you can find such a spot. I mean I am no booster for the old rags-to-riches routine if you can locate an easier path.

But get the money.

Son, I said, I am not even opposed to marrying for it. I said I do not approve of youth marrying rich old valises just for their money, though much of the money of this nation is in the hands of the V.P.'s left them by their late ever-loving husbands, and we ought to devise some means of jarring them loose from it.

But, I said, since arranged marriages with a dowry going with the dame have been in vogue in many countries and among many peoples for hundreds of years, I propose nothing sinful nor extraordinary in advising you, my boy, to fall in love with an heiress, if you must fall in love, and vice versa to the girls.

In any event, get the money.

You will hear that money is not everything, and that is true enough. It is only 99 per cent of everything, and if you do

not believe that there are millions of elderly persons in this nation that you can ask.

Get the money. Get rich if possible, my boy. It is my observation that the rich have all the best of it in this nation and my studies of American History fail to disclose any time when this same situation did not prevail.

Calamities seldom befall the rich, or at least not in the same proportion that they do the poor or the worse-than-the-poor, the in-betweens, Mr. and Mrs. Mugg. The rich do not stand in line. They do not serve in the ranks. Son, I said, if you cannot get rich get as close to being rich as you can.

Get the money, I said.

Yes, I know the good book states that "Love of money is the root of all evil", but it also says "Money is a defence", and that is what I am talking about, money as a defence—a defence in youth against that irksome love in an attic or a housing project in middle age against the petty laws and regulations that annoy Mr. and Mrs. Mugg, and in old age against fear and disrespect.

Son, I said, get the money.

I must hurry to the football game, the punk announced.

You Must Not Trust

Ah, young man, here you are again, looking for more advice I presume!

What is it this time?

You want advice on whom to trust?

Listen, son. I think you and I better take a walk out of earshot of certain parties before I answer, as I understand there is already a slight beef out on some of the advice I have given you, and I am afraid we may get another one on this.

No one says the advice is not correct. They just say it is too world. Well, it is only advice based on my experience, and experience is the hard way of learning things, so I feel if I tip you off in advance, you may avoid some of my own bruises and contusions.

Whom to trust?

Trust no one!

Yes, me laddie-buck, that is my advice. Trust no one.

Micah, one of the prophets of the Old Testament, who was pretty much a man of the people, put it in this fashion:

"Trust yet not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom."

I think you ought to consult your old man about the last part of this, my boy, to get a clearer interpretation than I feel called upon to give, though I second the motion. Of course, even the Devil can quote Scripture and I suppose if I wanted to be honest, I would ring in quotations that support trust but why should I weaken my own advice?

Jeremiah, another prophet, who was always squawking about something said:

"Take ye heed everyone of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant and every neighbour will walk with slanders."

If you trust no one, you can not come to harm; that is a sure thing. No doubt, some will say that if no one trusted anyone else this would be a world of suspicion and unhappiness, but I do not see why you have to be suspicious of someone just because you do not trust him, or why unhappiness should come of lack of trust if it was accepted as a matter of course.

I once knew a man who would not trust his wife around the corner and in fact often, when she left the house and walked down the street he waited until she had turned the corner then ran down there and peeked around it at her.

She knew he did it and was not at all unhappy about it. On the contrary, she seemed to feel a little flattered by the attention, though I must say the guy himself always seemed a trifle disappointed because he never caught her at anything.

If every person in the world was taught from birth to trust no one, it would eventually be a universal state of mind and people would know no other. No man would make a deal of any kind with another man without guarantees that would preclude the double-cross with which most of us are familiar. Widows would not be swindled by their late husbands' best friends.

We would have no broken hearts because of some dame two-timing a good man, or vice versa. We would have no sudden aggressions among nations. Why, son, it would be a more effective preventive of wars than all the plans they are rigging up today; though, of course, I have to admit that, in this particular, I am not the first to think of it.

Demosthenes, the Athenian patriot and orator (who is said to have learned to spout brilliantly by keeping his mouth full of pebbles) said a long time ago that there is one safeguard known generally to the wise as an advantage and security to all (but especially to democracies as against despots) and that was distrust.

I have not up to now mentioned the sordid topic of money in my advice to you to trust no one, my son. In lieu of any considerable windifying along that line, I will quote for you a little quatrain that in my youth appeared in many stores and saloons and other places of business and which really says a mouthful:

*"My friend did come and I did trust him.
I lost my friend and I lost his custom.
To lose my friend did grieve me sore,
So I resolved to trust no more."*

And usually the sign added in jarring prose that I always thought was a crude anticlimax to this lovely poesy:

"This means YOU."

MIXED GRILL

A Great Man Passes By

Washington, April 14.—The funeral cortege of the late President Roosevelt, a comparatively small, war-begrimed cavalcade, passed through the streets of Washington this morning from the railroad station to the White House, where simple religious services were held this afternoon before the body was taken to his old home in Hyde Park for burial tomorrow.

The procession was the only touch of military pomp to the funeral of the dead chieftain of the mightiest armed force on the face of the earth.

Hundreds of thousands of the people of Washington packed the sidewalks along Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues, and watched the passing of the mournful troop.

At the corner of 12th Street and Constitution Avenue stood a well-dressed, confident-appearing man, a prosperous businessman, perhaps, with a boy in his mid-teens but tall for his years. He could look over the heads of most of those wedged in 10-deep ahead of him.

"I remember his smile, father", the boy was saying. "I mean I remember it from the pictures of him in the newsreels. It was such a wonderful smile. It crinkled his face up all around his eyes."

"Yes, he smiled a lot", the man said. "I used to say he smiled to think of the way he had fellows like me over a barrel. I hated him.

"I hated him most of the 12 years he lived in this town. I mean I hated him politically. Now I wonder why. He only did the best he could. No man could do more."

Against a sky of crystal, flocks of silvery planes roared overhead at intervals, gleaming in the sunlight. But when the noise of their motors had died away the whole city seemed strangely quiet.

The shrill whistles of the traffic policemen, the clip-clop of feet hurrying over the pavements and the low hum of human voices were the only sounds and they carried far in the eerie silence.

It was as if by signal everyone had said, "Let us all be very quiet", and the whole community fell into restrained mood as it awaited the passing of the funeral party this morning.

Yet one knew that at this very moment, across two oceans, the American guns this man who lies dead had mobilized were bombing what was at once the thunder of his triumph and the vast volleys for those who died in the service of their country, as he had undoubtedly died.

"He wore funny hats, father", the boy said. "I remember the one he had on when he was in North Africa to see the soldiers, and he was riding in a jeep. He turned his hat up in the front and back. He wore funny hats when he went fishing, too."

"Yes, and I used to think his head was too big for them—for any hat", the man said. "I know now that was a foolish idea. Why should he have been swell headed—a great man like him? What crazy things I said about him!"

It was hot. Sweat ran down the faces of the steel-helmeted soldiers standing along the street in heavy flannel shirts. These were no parade troops. They wore crumpled-looking uniforms, they looked field stained.

A man, coatless and bareheaded, carrying a sleepy-looking child in his arms, held the youngster up so it could see over the heads of the crowd and softly said, "Look, look."

Some day that child may be telling its grandchildren that she saw the funeral of President Roosevelt as grandparents used to tell of seeing the funeral of President Lincoln.

Mothers leading children by the hands instructed them to wiggle in between the close-packed spectators to the front lines. No one complained about the children.

Everyone talked in a low voice. There was an impatient turning of heads as some people setting up empty boxes on which to stand chattered loudly for a moment, their voices disturbing the funeral hush.

Small boys perched in the trees along the avenue now green in the early spring.

Footloose soldiers and sailors including officers wandered through the crowd. Canadian service girls in their spic and span uniforms and long black stockings stepped smartly along the street.

Heads showed in clusters at every window in the low temporary war buildings and on the steps and in every jutting place on the solemn looking government buildings that would afford a foothold.

Tradesmen wearing aprons and artisans wearing overalls pressed against the police lines.

Now the tump of drums, at first faint and far-off, but quickly getting stronger, broke the silence and then came the wail of a funeral march played by a band, and an auto loaded with officers passed, then a squad of motorcycle policemen on their machines. The street signals on the avenue kept changing to "stop" and "go" all through the procession.

The people stood with their arms folded, those in back of the first row teetering on their tiptoes trying to get at least a fleeting glimpse of the procession.

The Marine band, the musicians in white caps and blue uniforms, their great silver horns flashing, footed it along to the slow strains of the funeral music.

"They say he always had to wear a terrible steel brace like poor little Jackie Clark and like Cousin Nellie, too", the boy said. "They say he suffered greatly just as they do. Is that true, father? He must have been very brave."

"Yes", the man said, "he suffered greatly. I read once he fought all the better because he fought in chains. He was a game man. That I always said. A very game man. No man could be gamer."

Now came a battalion from Annapolis, the cadet officers with drawn swords, the cadets in blue uniforms with white caps and white leggings and guns slanted across their shoulders.

Then a battalion of field artillery, the soldiers sitting stiffly upright on their gun carriers which moved four abreast, the engines throttled down so that they made scarcely any noise.

Used-looking field pieces painted a dingy red were towed behind trucks loaded with their crews, and the faces of all these soldiers seemed absolutely expressionless under their helmets.

"I remember so many little things about him, father", said the boy. "I remember his nose-glasses. I often wondered how he kept them on his nose, even when he was out in a storm. He never seemed to mind what kind of weather it was."

"Yes", the man said, "I guess all the people will remember little things about him in the years to come. I once said that when it came to weather he didn't mind hell or high water if he had to put one of his ideas across. But it was a snide remark. I made too many snide remarks about him in his lifetime."

Another band, some coloured artillerymen marching on foot, then a band of sailor musicians, their dolorous march music throbbing on the still air.

A battalion of bluejackets and then a battalion of women's armed force units, the Wacs and Waves and women Marines marching rather loosely in the absence of quickstep music.

Movie cameramen on trucks weaved along the line of march. The crowd watched in silence.

And now at last came the flag-swathed casket on an artillery caisson drawn by six strapping big gray horses in brightly polished harness, four of them mounted by soldiers.

The President's flags were borne just behind the caisson and then came the automobiles loaded with the great men of the nation. But with the passing of the casket, the crowd began breaking up, still strangely silent. They had seen the funeral cortege of a fellow citizen, who in other nations and other times would have had the death panoply of a Caesar but who, as it was, probably had more than he would have wished.

"I remember when he got his little dog Fala", the boy said. "I think they must have loved each other a great deal, father, as much as my Mugs and I love each other. You could tell it in the newsreels when they were together. I think he must have been a very kind man to be so nice to a little dog. I hope they take good care of Fala."

"Yes", the man said, "he was a kind man. He was kind to many people. I used to say I hated him when he was alive but now it is difficult for me to pick out any one reason why. How could I hate a kind man?"

Postscript on Sports Writing

I have no fancy for returning to sports writing. I would be no good at it any more; at least not in the tradition of sports writing that flourished in my day as a member of that branch of the newspaper game.

I had softened up too much long before I quit it. I had become too relenting and too friendly and had too many personal contacts. Instead of the district-attorney which I hold should be the role of the sports writer and especially the columnist or editorial commentator, I found myself too often playing the part of the counsel for the defence.

To be a great sports writer a man must hold himself pretty much aloof from the characters of the games with which he deals before his sympathy for them commences to distort his own viewpoint. There is nothing more engaging than an engaging rogue and there are many engaging rogues in professional sports. I fear I knew most of them, and that is not good for a sports writer.

The very nature of nearly all professional sports and some amateur sports, too, makes them subject to influences and practices that are harmful to public morals and, inasmuch as the newspapers recognize the reader interest in sports to the extent of giving great space to them and hiring many sports writers, it is the duty of these writers to severely police their field.

They will be called knockers by sport itself and by many of their own fellows but they will be feared and respected and the sports public will buy the newspapers they represent to see what they have to say. The "he-never-knocked-nobody" sports writer sells very few newspapers, though he gets large and cordial hellos as he moves among the operators and participants in professional sports.

I have heard it argued that a man writes according to his nature—according to the way he is gaited, but I am not sure that this is true. I think it is a matter of character and courage and sense of right and justice. If you have that you can be sweet-natured and kindly off stage or an 18-karat stinker and still be a great sports writer in my opinion.

The soft-soap style of sports writing makes things pleasanter for a sports writer in his daily life as he encounters many more smiles than frowns and it fills his space as well as the sand-paper stuff in case the publisher chances to glance at the sports page to see if the guy is working. But after awhile, few read him. They know what to expect.

Oh, no, I do not say that a sports writer should always be on the blast. That can pall, too. I say he should blast when conditions and abuses warrant and not pass them over unnoticed or apologetically. But inasmuch as even my unpracticed orb can observe conditions right now that seem to me should be blasted, yet my attentive ear hears no general blasting, so I take it that sports writing in that tradition has gone out of fashion with sports writers for the time being.

Except for a few instances. We still have a few stout-hearted chaps of the old school who lay about them boldly and well. And there are a number of youngsters coming up since World War II who give promise of development. I would like to be where they are now, just starting out, of course, but I would not want to go back. And so I will file this in the Look Who's Talking department and let it go at that.

No Justice

MONOLOGUE OF A HORSE PLAYER
(Transcribed from life)

What did I ever do to anybody?

Why can't I win?

Seconds, seconds, seconds.

All meeting long, seconds, seconds, seconds.

What did I ever do to anybody?

I try to live right. I never stole nothing. Why can't I win?

Look at that last one. Three days ago he ran for only a thousand dollars. Couldn't beat a three-legged pig, and me betting on him like he was home. I thought he was a stand-out. Today he moves up five hundred and gallops to those bums and me looking out the window.

Look at that thing in the third. Just breezes to better horses the other day with a bad rider on him. Today he takes off five pounds with MacAndrews up, and I make him the best thing of the meeting. What comes off? He gets beat a dirty snoot by a million-to-one shot.

Yeh, they say something happened to the boy's tack. Why couldn't it happen to the winner? Why did it have to happen to me? Everything that happens around here happens to me.

What did I ever do to anybody?

There's Jolson over there with Jack the Bookie. I hear he bet two hundred three ways on the last winner. That just shows you. Money goes to money. He don't need the dough and he wins, and I'm betting case sugar and I lose.

I bet on favourites and long shots win, and I bet on long shots and favourites win. All the time I get caught in the switches. I got four photo finishes last week. I went down and looked at the pictures and I don't see how the judges could

split them out, they were so close. They could have called them either way. I don't know about that camera. It could be wrong. Those judges could be wrong too. I never got a photo finish in my life.

What did I ever do to anybody?

I never killed no one. I send money home when I can. I try to treat everybody right.

Why can't I win?

How long can a thing like this go on? Can a man come out to the track every day and bet on nearly every race and never get nothing? I wonder if somebody put a curse on me?

Only winner I had in three weeks was a ten to one shot and I had a fin on him and I thought I was out of all my trouble that day. What do you think come off? They called it a dead heat with the favourite so I only got about half the money that was coming to me.

I saw that picture too. My horse's nose looked in front to me. I wonder if those judges are blind? A lot of funny things have been going on around here. I ain't accusing nobody but I see some races that looked to me like somebody was getting shooed in. I wouldn't trust all of those riders but I wish I was in when something is coming off.

That's Warren Wright down there. He's setting there with millions. He could bet thousands if he wanted to where I have to bet deuces. I bet on his horse Whirlaway a couple of times when he was the choice and he didn't get saltz. The other day I didn't bet on him and he won at a price. What does Warren Wright care about me?

Horse Sense

(The following communication came to us from an inmate of a racing barn at the Jamaica racetrack. It was written in horse language which we had translated by Hot Horse Herbie, who savvies horse talk. We withhold the name of the author. He says he does not wish to get in bad with the racing commission.)

I am an old race horse.

I run in the cheapest of the cheap claiming races.

The racing writers and the public have many unkind terms for me.

They call me a skate. A beetle. A lizard. They say I am glue factory fodder and buzzard bait. They say I am a bum.

I don't know why they are so mean to me. I am as honest as the day is long. I always run my heart out. But I have bad legs and sometimes they pain me frightfully. Then I can't run as fast as I would like.

I suppose I am foolish to resent the titles the writers and the public give me. I have heard members of the human race call one another names much more insulting.

But I wish those fellows had to run when their legs were hurting them and with a boy whipping and spurring them to make them go faster. Then they would know how I feel.

I ran in a race only a couple of days ago. I read one writer's comment on me the morning of the race. He said: "Old cripple. Might wake up." After the race he said I quit.

That was a reflection on my courage. I didn't quit. I ran on top for half a mile and then my legs got to paining me so much I had to slow up. Every step I took was awful.

Yes, I am a cripple, and old. What do they expect of an old cripple, anyway?

It is not my fault I am crippled. Don't you suppose I would like to be well and strong? Don't you suppose I would like to run on top all the way so the boys wouldn't whip me and kick me trying to make me catch up?

I don't blame the boy. He doesn't mean to be cruel. He doesn't realize how my legs are paining me. If he did, probably he would sympathize with me and let me walk home.

But then the stewards would have him up in the stand for a poor ride and the racing writers and the public would abuse him more than they do me. I only wish the stewards could question me before a race and find out how I feel. Maybe they would be sympathetic, too.

All the horses I run with are cripples. They all have bad legs or something else the matter with them. There are many of us, but not one is completely sound of limb.

I once read that horse racing is for the purpose of improving the breed of horses. That strikes me as very funny because I know that of all the thousands of race horses in the United States there are not as many as a hundred, including the proudest of the stake horses, that are completely sound. And most of them will sooner or later be in my class.

They will all get crippled from having to run over the hard dirt tracks. They run my kind as often as we can raise a gallop, so the public can gamble on us. We have to run when our legs may be almost killing us. Even when we are so sick we ought to be in bed.

I was once a proud stake horse myself. I cost a rich man \$10,000 as a yearling at the Saratoga sales. I won four times that much for him in stakes before I was four years old. Then my legs went bad.

He could have afforded to turn me out to pasture for the rest of my days. I had earned retirement. But he ran me in a claiming race and since then I have gone from barn to barn, always dropping lower in racing class as my legs got worse. I hope that owner feels ashamed when he sees me now. I wish him all the humiliation I have felt myself as I have gone lower and lower. But none of my physical pain. I would not wish that on a dog.

Don't call me a bum the next time you watch me run.

Just think of me as an old cripple. Think of how my legs must be hurting me. But remember it isn't my fault. Feel sorry for me as I feel sorry for the little boys who have to ride me.

I know my poor old legs may give out from under me any minute and the boy will get badly hurt or even killed. Of course, I may get hurt, too. Perhaps one of my aching legs may get broken. I have seen it happen to other horses many times.

Then they will put a bullet through my head and maybe I will be better off. At least I will be all through with the torture of running on my crippled legs. At least I will not have to worry about ending my days pulling a vegetable wagon.

The Thinking Equines

Do horses think? Any time we get among horse trainers we ask them that. It generally starts quite a discussion.

Nearly all the trainers are sure some horses do a heap of thinking. One trainer said he thought the proportion of thinkers among race horses is about the same as in the human race, which he calculated is one thinker to every thousand.

Race horses, like human beings, are creatures of habit. They are easily taught to do certain things in a certain way and most of them (horses and humans) go on doing those certain things in that certain way all their lives, without questioning.

Of course the horse does not have the same opportunity as the human to undertake innovation. There is a jockey on the horse's back ready to give him a belt if it takes to experimenting. Still, there is usually a boss somewhere in behind the human, too, for much the same purpose.

However, the wise horse trainer usually studies a horse's ideas as manifested in the way it runs a race, and he often comes to the conclusion that the horse knows best and orders the jockey to let it run in its own fashion. Some horses run best in front of the field. Others like to come from behind. We are not sure whether this is thought on the part of the horse or just idiosyncrasy.

Up at Saratoga Springs we had a long session with "Hummin' Bob", who is now ill in a Saratoga hospital, talks about horses, and, in fact—to them, as if they were human beings. He will give a bad actor of a horse a severe lecture on its conduct as if he were addressing a wayward youth.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" he will ask the horse, and you would be surprised how penitent the horse will look.

He told us the greatest thinker of all horses he has handled was (appropriately enough) Diogenes. This horse was no great shucks of a runner, though Bob did win the rich hopeful stakes with him for Walter M. Jeffords. But Diogenes was always lost in profound thought. He would stand for hours gazing into the distance.

When the stable hands would go around dumping rations in the feed boxes and the other horses would be hustling to their oats, Diogenes would continue standing and gazing and thinking. It was not that he was disinterested in eating as he would consume bushels of oats from Bob's hands, but apparently he did not want to waste time from his thinking by devoting himself to the feed box.

Bob often approached Diogenes from the rear and tried to follow his gaze to see if the horse was looking at some definite object, but he says Diogenes never had any visual set target. He was just thinking. We asked Bob what he supposed Diogenes was thinking about and Bob said he never found out, but that he figured from the way Diogenes ran that the horse's chief thought was the futility of running.

Bob said another horse he trained that did a lot of thinking was a filly called Silent Water. When brought out on the track for a race and paraded in front to the stands, Silent Water would make a terrific lunge. The crowd would invariably go oo-oo. Then Silent Water would lunge again and the oo-oo-ooing would naturally increase. It would appear that the horse was making a desperate effort to unseat the rider. Finally, Silent Water would make a third lunge, always the greatest of all, and the oo-oo-ooes would reach a crescendo. That would satisfy Silent Water, and she would settle down. Meantime, the jockey, familiar with Silent Water's whims, would sit perfectly still in the saddle and let her lunge. She never lunged more, nor less, than three times, and only when she was in front of the crowd.

"She was just a show-off", said Bob.

Shall I Return?

I have bet practically all my life.

I will continue to bet until I die.

In fact, you might say I will be betting after death, as a wise guy recently laid me \$1,000 to \$10 that I will not return from that bourne that is popularly supposed to permanently detain all travellers.

Most persons will no doubt say that I have a bad bet. I think I have a good one. In any event, could I resist the price?

It all started at a sidewalk session at Broadway and Fiftieth when the name of a departed brother came up and someone recalled that he had promised to return after death and visit his old friends.

"So will I", I remarked, sociably.

"You will?" said the wise guy, emphasizing the "you" as much as to say that no matter who might return I am least likely to enjoy that privilege.

"Yes, I will", I said, stiffly.

"I would like to lay you ten thousand to a nickel that you don't", said the wise guy.

At these words, everyone present turned around and scrutinized all persons nearby lest some of them be coppers.

"You have a wager", I said to the wise guy after noting that the coast was clear.

He quickly reconsidered.

"No", he said, "that would be too far out of line. I might not be able to pay off if you won. Let me do a little figuring on this proposition."

So he outs with a pencil and an old envelope and did some calculating. Then he went into the corner drug store and made a telephone call, possibly to his lawyer to see what he thought of the bet. When he came back he said:

"The best I can offer you is a thousand dollars to ten."

"Bet!" I ejaculated, the laconic Broadway binder of a speculative deal.

The story that I have since tried to scalp the bet, which is to say that I have endeavoured to bet enough the other way so that I am bound to win no matter what happens, is strictly a canard. In fact, it ain't so. I think I will win my bet as it stands without any manipulating being necessary and who are you and you and you and you to doubt it?

I feel that I would be a sucker not to return to a world that has treated me well, all things considered; that has given me much pleasure and many thrills including the most pleasant of all, which is the winning of a good bet. I have heard a big gambler say that next to winning a bet his greatest thrill is losing one, but I cannot go along with that philosophy. I hate losing. It makes me angry with the whole world.

It is in memory of my pleasures and my thrills only that I will return and it will not be in grisly mood or manner or to the accompaniment of weird rappings in darkened rooms for morbidity is not the atmosphere I have pursued in this world. It will be all a-grin but you are not to tell this to the wise guy because I am saving up a big laugh against him.

It is my wish that when I divest myself of this mortal coil that my ashes be scattered to the gentle breezes over Biscayne Bay down in Dade County, Florida, that my spirit may mingle with the throng here through the years to come and also that I may keep hep to the scandal in my set.

The wise guy spends his winters there and I am giggling right now in anticipation of his expression when I tap him on the shoulder one day and say:

"How about my G-er, mister?"

I think the wise guy is already perturbed because he called me up the other day and asked:

"Do you consider me an old friend of yours?"

"No", I said, "nor a new friend, either."

"That's fine", he said and hung up.

His question puzzled me until I reflected back to the original discussion and the promise of the departed brother to return and visit "old friends."

Friendliness Goes Out of the Window

I have been asked to decide a question phrased as follows: "In a friendly game of poker for moderate stakes—"

Now look.

There is no such thing as a "friendly" game of cards in which money is involved—poker or anything else.

A man who tries to win your money is not your friend, and you are certainly not his friend when you try to win his money.

When two persons sit down to play cards for money they are enemies per se. It is conceivable that one is superior in card sense to the other, meaning that he is the better player, and that this fact is known to both, hence the absence of friendship is all the clearer.

It amounts to the superior player taking advantage of the others. Is that "friendly"? I do not think so.

Does the winner, as a rule, show his friendliness by returning the money he wins? He does not. He puts it in his pocket with a gratified smirk. He may say he is sorry, but he is seldom sorry enough to make restitution.

Yes, you are dead right. There is no reason why he should. I am not arguing ethics. I am merely belting that phony old expression about "friendly" card games.

If the loser is unable to pay off at the moment, the winner is apt to make quite a thing of it and whisper it all over town to the discredit of the loser. Is that "friendly"?

Among friends, the financial capacity of a man is generally fairly well known. It may be no secret that he has no superfluous income, that he cannot afford losing any sizable sum. Yet in so-called "friendly" card games he may be permitted to lose his money to the point of great distress, and I say that is not "friendly."

Oh, sure, he may win. That can happen. The chances are against it. You say he should know better, and so he should. But he may be the weakling type obsessed by a gambling passion, which must surely be known to his acquaintances, and when they play cards with him, knowing he is over his head, I tell you there is nothing "friendly" about it.

They are no more his friends than those who invite a drunkard to have a drink knowing that one drink is poison to him. If a skilful cardplaying man wants to play cards for money and he is a man of honour he will not prey on his friends. He will go outside his own circle to find his opponents among strangers. You may say it is just as wrong to despoil strangers who may not be any more able to afford losses any more than friends, but, I repeat, I am only knocking the legs from under that "friendly" thing.

If you are a gambling addict with bet-a-million gates proclivities on a low-bracket income and a man invites you to his home and wines you and dines you royally and then clips you for a week's wages or more in an after-dinner card game, knowing your situation, I say it is anything but "friendly", unless he declares your play does not go, and I have not heard of that happening since seven years ago last pancake Tuesday.

When two or more persons who can well afford it cluster about a table and play cards for high stakes and thrills I think it is all right, although a little bit silly in view of the fact that none of them need the money and that it is only going to make the winners dishonest because usually they do not want the losers to make income tax returns on their losses.

This is cutthroat gambling, but if none of the players can get hurt financially and it is an emotional outlet for them that beats giving the money to the needy, I say let them go to it. Only let us not have any more of that gab about "friendly" games for money.

Oh, yes, and I almost forgot to mention the health angle.

Some men, as we know, are stronger physically than others. Some men are starkers, or powerful fellows, while others are puny punks. They should be going to bed early and getting plenty of rest to conserve their strength. They should be going light on the smoking and not eat between meals. Perhaps their eyes are none too good.

Now then I have often seen it happen, and so have you, that healthy men keep their less robust acquaintances up playing cards to all hours, or vice versa, which amounts to the same thing. The result is the weakies' health is sadly undermined. Their lungs are affected by their own excess smoking or by the nicotine vapours emitted by others. Their eyesight is impaired by long peering at the cards.

It is a common practice for card players to partake of snacks during long sessions and here is where those of less durable stomachs start their ulcers. Perhaps their absences from home makes for domestic discord and consequent unhappy mental reaction, though that is a detail compared to a man's health.

But have you ever heard the strong say to the weak:

"Look, podner, you are about at death's door and I think we better call it a night."

You have not. That is, not if the strong is loser. And I say there is nothing "friendly" about a card game like that, even regardless of the money consideration.

There is an element of excitement in playing cards for money, especially to one who is playing with what is called "distress money", which is money he needs and this excitement often produces divers and sundry anatomical disturbances besides those I have outlined above.

I have a friend in Los Angeles who was supposed to be one of the healthiest men alive but who came down recently with a mysterious attack that was not solved until they took him to a croaker and had a cardiograph made. Instead of the usually tipsy lines that the cardiograph gadget usually makes, this one got on the wrong tangent and registered my friend's mental processes, not his heart action, and what came out was a message in plain words as follows:

"I wish I had knocked with six."

I repeat some of my stories over and over not because I do not remember I have told them before but because I figure I may catch a new reader now and then who has not heard them, and this applies to my tale about the guy who made a big

bet at Nick the Greek in a stud poker game and then began shivering and shaking as Nick contemplated the situation at length.

"Nick", he said, "if you call me I'll have a fit."

"Go ahead", Nick said, pushing in his dough.

The guy fell on the floor in his promised fit, sure enough.



OUR OLD MAN

The Thin Line

Our Old Man was once asked if he believed it possible for the living to communicate with the spirits of the departed and he said he had an open mind on the subject. He said he did not dismiss the idea in its entirety but that he did not believe it would work in all cases. He said he thought it depended to some extent upon the character, disposition and the environment in life of the departed.

He said he once spent three nights hand-running in a house back in our old home town of Pueblo in which a mysterious murder had been committed on the theory that the spirit of the murdered man might be hanging around the premises and that he could get the shade to give him a clue to the murderer, but that he never would have embarked on this adventure had he paused to reflect on the character of the departed.

He said he should have remembered that the departed had been noted as one of the most unobliging citizens of the community besides being suspected of dishonesty and that there was no reason to think he would change after reaching the beyond. Our Old Man said if he had thought of this it would have saved him a couple of sleepless nights during which he roamed the house calling on the spirit of the departed to appear and give him a tip, which Our Old Man planned using as the basis of an exclusive story in the *Chieftain*, for which he was a reporter at the time.

On the third night, worn out from his vigil, he went to sleep and when he awoke he found that his pocket had been picked of six dollars and eighty cents which he had been saving to pay his room rent and laundry. So he gave up the quest, telling everybody that it served him right for thinking the spirit of the murdered man would come around to do a favour or for any other than a despicable purpose. Our Old Man said the worst part of it was that his rooming house landlady, and Wing Foo, the Chinese laundryman, both refused to believe his story and made a little trouble for him.

He said one time he attended a regular séance conducted by an alleged spiritualist because he wanted to get in touch with the spirit of a departed pal by the name of Bill to find out where Bill had put some fishing tackle belonging to him. The alleged spiritualist was a big fellow with a fat stomach and Our Old Man said he was surprised to find at the séance the widow of the departed Bill and also the widows of several other departed, so he judged the spiritualist was doing a swell business.

Bill's widow was the first to get in her order for communication with the spirit of the departed and sure enough the spiritualist raised a voice in a darkened room that he said was Bill's. Our Old Man was just about to break in and ask Bill's spirit about the fishing tackle when he heard the voice addressing the widow and asking her how she felt and if she still loved him and Our Old Man got right up and said:

"See here, Abbie (that was the widow's name), you know blame well that old Bill wouldn't want to come within fifty miles of any place where he thought you'd be and if he did he wouldn't care a whoop how you felt. You know that I know he hadn't spoken a word to you in three years prior to joining the departed and that he wouldn't ask you if you still loved him because he was on to you carrying on with that fellow that runs the livery stable."

These remarks caused quite a stir because all the ladies present knew they were true and they began running out of the place denouncing the spiritualist fellow as a fake although Our Old Man tried to stop them by telling them that he made no such charges but that he just thought maybe the spiritualist had got hold of the wrong spirit.

The next day a couple of the widow's grown children came around and thanked Our Old Man for rescuing their maw from the clutches of the spiritualist as it seems she had been paying him money to communicate with the spirit of the departed Bill but they did not offer to pay the doctor's bill for patching up the wounds the spiritualist inflicted on Our Old Man, who said he would not have minded if he had been able to find out about the fishing tackle.

Marriage Counsel

Our Old Man said one time a charming young lady by the name of Miss Abigail Zuz came to him for advice on the subject of marriage. She was being courted by a young man named Clukey and also by Obadiah Envelope, a sod widower of several years' standing and twice her age. Our Old Man said she asked him which one he thought she should marry and that he advised her to take Obey.

He said he told her that he did not entirely agree with Benjamin Franklin's advice to young men to marry widows, but that he did think it was an excellent idea for young women to marry widowers. He said he explained to her that it had been his observation that second wives had all the best of it because their husbands tried to do for them all the things they had neglected to do for their first wives.

Our Old Man said he told her that a girl who caught a fellow who had been bereft of his helpmeet after 10 to 20 years of married life became the beneficiary of conscience payments by the husband to the memory of the first wife, although Our Old Man said the husband was not always really to blame for inattention to the first wife. He said as a rule a first marriage comes in youth and a fellow is out hustling around to make a living and is too busy to remember the little amenities of matrimony, such as taking the wife places and buying her things.

He said that after a lapse of years marriage became a routine with the husband, and he did not notice how hard the wife worked at home or how tired she looked and in fact gave her presence scant consideration until one day she up and died, and then he got to remembering her only too well. Our Old Man said then the husband began thinking of the things he could have done and perhaps meant to do for her and was downright conscience stricken, so when he got married a second time he was generally always on his toes trying to make up to the second wife for his derelictions in the case of the first. He said he told Miss Zuz that he had known Obadiah Envelope long enough to feel that he was that type and that she would be missing a right good thing if she failed to nail him.

So Miss Zuz became Mrs. Obadiah, but Our Old Man said she was around in two weeks complaining that the advice given her was all wrong, especially with reference to Obadiah taking her places and buying her things. She said Obadiah was about as loose as the post office foundations with his money and that he was not conscience stricken enough to keep her from doing all the housework. Our Old Man said the former Miss Zuz was right put out and wanted to know what he advised now.

He said he suddenly remembered that Obadiah inclined a bit toward spiritualism, so he told Mrs. Obadiah to leave everything to him. Our Old Man said then one night he dropped in at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Obadiah and that he took with him a friend of his by the name of Mrs. Toober who gave séances with a table and after a little social chat he got her to call up a few spirits and one of them was the spirit of the first Mrs. Obadiah.

Our Old Man said Mrs. Toober said this spirit wanted to talk with Obadiah and what the spirit talked about was how it suffered thinking of the way Obadiah had neglected it in life and how it hoped he was showing the second Mrs. Obadiah every possible kindness and spending plenty of money on her. Our Old Man said he never heard a more convincing spirit than this one, although Mrs. Toober did all the talking for it, and Obadiah cried as if his heart would break and he promised the spirit he would do just as requested if it cost him the fifty thousand dollars he had saved up and for several months the second Mrs. Obadiah had a wonderful time.

Our Old Man said it would have gone on indefinitely but one day Mrs. Toober told one of the neighbours that he had directed her what to say at the séance and the neighbour told Obadiah and Obadiah shut down on his generosity to his second wife until she was no better off than the first one was. Our Old Man said Obadiah wanted to fight him for interfering with his married life and the second Mrs. Obadiah hated him for advising her to marry Obadiah and on top of that Mrs. Toober persecuted him for years claiming he had promised her five dollars for the séance.

Our Old Man said it was remarkable the way his well-meant advice was always getting him into trouble.

Live and Let Live

Our Old Man said it was truly remarkable how much good advice he could think of to give his fellow men and how little of it he took himself. He said no man or woman who followed his advice to the letter could possibly fail of success in life, yet he remained pretty much of a failure because he was unable to take his own medicine.

He said for instance one of his stock pieces of advice to others was to do no favours and trust no one. He said the soundness of this advice could scarcely be questioned, though it might be open to criticism on the ground of selfishness and possibly even of inhumanity.

But he said he was speaking of advice from the standpoint of utility, and on that basis he considered this advice unassailable. Particularly, he said, as he could point to half a dozen men right there in our old home town of Pueblo, and to several women, who had taken the advice and as a result were flourishing.

Our Old Man said that so far from following his advice himself he took just the other tack. He said he did favours whenever and wherever possible. He said he had often got up in the middle of the night to do a favour and that his well-known willingness to do favours made him the recipient of innumerable requests for same. He said this entailed a great loss of time that he might better have devoted to his own interests.

He said those who had followed his advice escaped these requests and this loss of time because they had established themselves as no-favour doers. Moreover, he said, they suffered none of the criticism that fell on him when, after doing a million favours, he found himself for some reason unable to do one more. Our Old Man said that most of his enemies in our old home town were persons for whom he had done many favours only to finally fail to do one more, and that in every case the enmity traced to the single failure in that particular case.

Our Old Man said it was much on this basis that he sometimes advised others not to strive too much for absolute perfection in life. He said he thought it was a good idea to occasionally make a mistake, even if one had to make it deliberately. He said it had been his observation that a person could live in a community for years without deviating from a path of perfection and get no credit, yet at the first faltering everybody knocked his brains out.

He said on the other hand a wavering by one never perfect attracted no attention. He said he was not suggesting that periods of disorder were to be recommended, but that he felt something a little short of 100 per cent was all right, at least until communities took to pinning medals on perfection, and allowing for a slip into the bargain.

Our Old Man said that instead of following his own advice and trusting no one, he trusted everybody and that thus he had experienced a succession of swindles and betrayals, and a slight disintegration of his faith in his brethren and sistern, especially his sistern. He said contrariwise those who took his advice could not be swindled or betrayed because they never offered swindlers or betrayers the opportunity. No one went to them to endorse a phony check because it was known that they were not in the endorsing business.

Our Old Man said he sometimes felt a bit aggrieved at his brethren who had violated his trust, but that he never really got sore at the sistern. He said he had placed implicit trust in the sistern all his days and that he hoped to continue to do so until the sod closed over him because he considered the crossings-up he had received at their hands just so many beautiful experiences.

He said that while those who followed his advice to the letter might be spared much anguish of heart and soul and the pangs of jealousy, they nonetheless missed something without which life was incomplete. Our Old Man said that was

illusion. He said he loved to recall, in his old age, the illusions he had created for himself in another day around the personalities of various of the sistern—illusions of loveliness and charm and of faithfulness unto death.

He said he admitted it was sometimes a shock to him to learn that the object of one of his illusions was meeting another fellow in back of Stone's livery stable immediately after leaving him, but Our Old Man said incidents of that nature never completely destroyed his trust in the next one, thank God.

Humouring the Little Women

Our Old Man once got himself greatly disliked by many married men back in our old home town of Pueblo because of an address he made before a women's club.

The whole thing came up entirely by accident. The women had scheduled a much more distinguished citizen for a speech but he failed to appear on time. Our Old Man happened to be passing the meeting place and some of the women were out in front looking up and down the street for their expected guest.

The audience inside was getting impatient and the women asked Our Old Man if he would mind stepping in and making a few remarks to fill in until the more distinguished citizen arrived. Our Old Man said, not at all, and he went in and took the rostrum, explaining to the audience that he was just a pinch hitter and would stop as soon as the star got there.

Our Old Man said he guessed he would discuss matrimony, as he noticed that most of the women present were married. He said matrimony was nothing more nor less than a sporting proposition. He said the usual matrimonial vow itself contained the essence of a strictly sporting proposition when it said "for better or for worse". He said nothing could be plainer than that.

Our Old Man said most men liked to think they were good sports, but that in the matrimonial game they were the worst in the world. He said that, in matrimony, men were inveterate squawkers, welchers and cry-babies. He explained that by welcher he meant a fellow who ran out on the obligations of a sporting proposition.

He said any sporting proposition is founded on the proposition that persons must stand to win if they stand to lose, but that in matrimony men rarely conceded that principle to women. He said that in matrimony men seldom manifested any disposition to stick to the sporting phases of the proposition "for better or for worse", because as soon as it got worse they started beefing.

He said, take a fellow he knew right there in our old home town of Pueblo who was considered one of the greatest sports alive, because of his equanimity as a loser in gambling games. He said he had often seen this fellow step into the Greenlight gambling house, drop a big wad and go out laughing.

Our Old Man said he had admired the fellow's spirit himself, until he learned that the fellow would go home and bawl out his wife if dinner was late or one of the kids was squalling. Our Old Man said that was a little thing, to be sure, but that it was a violation of the ethics of a sporting proposition and indicated to him that the fellow was a good sport only in public.

Our Old Man said, the average woman had more sporting blood in her little finger when it came to matrimony as a sporting proposition than the average man had in his whole body. He said this was curious, too, when you considered that women are commonly bigger losers at it than men.

He said he knew many a woman, possibly including some of those present, who must have been bitterly disappointed

when she found she had wound up with a four-flush in the matrimonial game, yet he did not recall more than a few making a public outcry about the matter. He said a woman might find she had drawn a drunkard, a ne'er-do-well, or a chaser, but she had too much pride to go around disclosing her misfortune. He said, on the other hand, when the average man found he had drawn a deuce when he was looking for a queen in matrimony, he made no bones about yelling that he had been trimmed. He said that one of the wonders to him of women was their ability to lose gracefully and stick to the ethics of matrimony as a sporting proposition as laid down in the matrimonial vow.

Our Old Man said the only criticism of women he had to offer was their disposition to let the men take advantage of their sporting spirit. He said when divorce becomes unavoidable, the men generally let the women become plaintiffs on the ground that it is the sporting thing to do. He said that was where the men bamboozled the women, because as defendants the men could go around appealing for sympathy.

Our Old Man told the meeting that he could prove that there were more bad husbands in the world than bad wives, and he might have done it, too, but for the fact that at this moment the speaker originally scheduled appeared in the doorway. One of the women who had enlisted Our Old Man as a fill-in motioned to him from the doorway and he started to leave the platform, whereupon there was a great outcry from the audience of "No, No!" "Go on! Go on!" and "More! More!"

Our Old Man was willing to oblige, but the original speaker was pretty much peeved, especially as a slightly deaf old lady near the door informed him that as near as she could judge he had been the topic of Our Old Man's discourse. Our Old Man thought it discretion to leave as unobtrusively as possible, but for a couple of weeks afterwards he had to exchange hot words with many of the married men of our old home town.

They said he had made it tough on them at home, and Our Old Man could see why when he commenced receiving the somewhat garbled reports of his discourse. However, he was proud of the fact that the club by unanimous resolution invited him to return at his convenience and complete same.

The Pure of Heart

One rainy evening Our Old Man dropped into a crowded church back in our old home town of Pueblo and stood by the door quietly listening. After the regular service there was a sort of open meeting and various citizens got up at the invitation of the pastor and delivered informal talks.

The pastor recognized Our Old Man and finally said he was glad to see him among those present, and to heartily welcome a somewhat noted local non-churchgoer. He mentioned Our Old Man by name and said he wished he could induce him to make a few remarks. The pastor said he thought it would be most interesting to hear Our Old Man's impressions of the occasion.

Our Old Man stepped forward and said he had noticed a number of citizens shaking their heads, apparently in some alarm, at the reverend gentleman while he was talking. Our Old Man said he judged that these citizens might be objecting in pantomime to the pastor calling on him and he wondered why. He said he wondered if they felt he was not good enough to speak in their church or if they were afraid of what he might say.

Our Old Man said if the latter, they need have no fear. He said he would not utter a word calculated to offend the most sensitive. He said if the former, they might be right. He said it was quite possible that he was not good enough to speak in their church and maybe not good enough to even be inside it. He said as a matter of fact it was his doubt on this point that kept him what the pastor termed him, a non-churchgoer, if the pastor meant by that one who was not a regular church member.

Our Old Man said he often attended various churches though he did not belong to any one. He said he had often wished he could join some church but that he felt it would be improper, if not false pretence, for him to do so until he had completely adjusted his conduct and his thought to the teachings of the church. He said he was going to wait until he was dead certain he could sit in church on Sunday accepting the teachings in his mind and heart without feeling that on Monday he might be tempted to skin a neighbour in a business dicker.

He said he was certainly delighted, however, to see so many of his fellow citizens who had obviously arrived at the adjustment of which he spoke. He said they must have arrived at this adjustment, else they would not be there. He said he was sure they would not be assembled in that holy place accepting the sacred teachings if they were men who collected rents from the poor for rat-ridden, disease-breeding shacks, or who double-crossed their pals or swindled their customers.

Or if they were men who mistreated their wives, or indulged in riotous living, or profited at the expense of the unfortunate in any way, cheated at cards. Our Old Man said he was also pleased to see that a large number of ladies of the community had also reached that adjustment. He said their presence was an assurance to him that they were not guilty of backbiting, slander, selfishness, or wanton display and that they respected their marriage vows.

Our Old Man said he seemed to be hearing slight murmurs in different parts of the room and that he supposed he was outstaying his welcome, so he would close with an apology. He said he was there entirely by accident as it seemed to be the handiest shelter from the rain, but that he hoped they would not feel that he had unduly trespassed when he confessed to them that he had taken advantage of their sanctuary to indulge in a little spiritual thought on his own account.

Afterwards there was quite a bit of talk about Our Old Man's remarks. It developed that there were persons present who were guilty of everything that Our Old Man mentioned but Our Old Man said, well, that proved they had no right to be there. He said the only thing he regretted about the matter was the accusation against the pastor that he had deliberately planted Our Old Man at the service.

Our Old Man said he would insist to his dying day that he only went in out of the rain.

You Know Them When They're Hungry

Our Old Man knocked around for a matter of ten years or more with a fellow back in our old home town whose name we will record as Smith. They were considered pals. They were together four or five nights in every week. This Smith was a successful business man.

One day a chap named Brown asked Our Old Man what kind of a fellow Smith was. Our Old Man said he seemed to be a nice fellow. Brown said that struck him as rather an evasive answer. He said to Our Old Man, you know Smith quite well and appear to like him, but your recommendation is not enthusiastic. Our Old Man said yes, he liked Smith all right, but that he did not know him.

Brown said what do you mean you do not know him? You go to the ball games with him. You eat with him. How can you say you do not know him? Our Old Man said he could say it because it was the truth. He said he was acquainted with Smith the same way he was acquainted with scores of other men, that he was on friendly terms with Smith but that he still did not know him.

Brown said he wished Our Old Man would explain to him how he could make an almost daily companion of a fellow for years and then maintain that he did not know him and Our Old Man said well, in all the years he had been acquainted with him, Smith had been prosperous and untroubled. He said he had found Smith under those conditions affable and considerate and congenial.

But Our Old Man said you had to know a man when he was unsuccessful and struggling to say you knew him. He said you had to know a man when he was broke and down and out and friendless and ill and when he was poorly clad and miserable and then you had to know him when he was well dressed and had his health and a job and was going good generally before you could say you knew him.

Our Old Man said you had to know a man when he was unhappy and when his cup of joy was overflowing. He said you had to know him when he was drunk and when he was sober. He said you have to know him in darkness and in daylight, in love and out, single and married. He said knowing him thusly you might say you knew a man, but if you knew him in only one of the conditions described, you did not know him. Our Old Man said that personally he doubted if he had ever known any one man 100 per cent—and only one woman.

He said several times in his life he thought he did. He said he had had friends that he felt he knew backwards and forwards, in and out, up and down. Friends that he thought could not make a move or entertain an idea that he could not anticipate. Friends whose action in any given situation he could call without consulting them in advance. But Our Old Man said they had invariably fooled him, usually under some untoward circumstances in which he had never known them.

He said he did not blame them but blamed himself for thinking he knew them without having known them under those circumstances. He said you had to know a man in all weathers, hot and cold, before you could say you knew him. He said he had had a friend in his earlier years by the name of Gadgetty that he thought he knew to the last drop of blood because he had known him under conditions good and bad. He said he had once taken the witness stand and sworn that he knew Gadgetty better than anyone else in the world, but he forgot that he had never known him in cold weather.

Our Old Man said one winter night they were sleeping out in the open with one blanket between them and Gadgetty stole the whole cover for himself while Our Old Man was asleep. Our Old Man said he almost froze to death. He said he once had another friend named Pipestem that he thought he knew almost as well as he did Gadgetty, but that one time when they were soldiering in the tropics in dreadfully hot weather and had to sleep in a mosquito infested swamp, Pipestem copped all the mosquito netting and Our Old Man was severely stabbed by the pests. He said that was when he decided that you had to know a man in all weathers before you could say you knew him.

He said Smith was as companionable a chap as he had ever associated with but that he had often wondered what Smith would do if his business was going to pot. He said he loved Smith as a brother and that he hoped Smith reciprocated his feelings but that on the basis of knowing a comfortable Smith he could not conscientiously say that he knew him until he had known him with a single blanket for two and only mosquito netting for one.

The Tolerant Few

Our Old Man said the human trait he most admired was tolerance in the sense of forbearance in judging of the acts and opinions of others. He said ninety-nine out of every hundred men honestly believed they possessed tolerance but that only about ten in every hundred actually did.

Our Old Man said he himself had long laboured under the impression that he was about as tolerant as they come on the opinions of others. He said in fact he made quite a point of his tolerance, especially in public argument. He said his favourite quotation was Voltaire's statement that he disagreed with what another man said but would defend to the death his right to say it.

Our Old Man said he felt this sounded grand but that one night he found himself thinking that he would not defend to

the death or even to the extent of a slight wound, Joe Peters' right to say that a pointer was a better all-around hunting dog than an Irish setter because it was positively wrong and Joe Peters was a fool and a man would be out of his mind to defend the right of a fool to say something that was wrong.

Our Old Man said then it suddenly occurred to him that he invariably found himself thinking that every man who disagreed with him was a fool. He said he realized that it was his secret conviction that no man who took the opposite side of an argument should be permitted at large, and that he could not recall any occasion of debate when he conceded to himself that the other side was right. Our Old Man said it was at this moment that he saw that he was tolerant of the opinions of others only when he found those opinions coinciding with his own.

He said it was a great shock to him to see that he was not only lacking in tolerance of others' opinions, but that he was in truth most intolerant. He said then he commenced to closely observe those with whom he disagreed and thought were fools and he could see that they in turn thought he was an absolute dolt and probably felt that he should be confined in the booby hatch.

Our Old Man said they were usually fellows who thought they were mighty tolerant, too. He said that after he got onto himself he stopped shooting off his bazoo about his tolerance of others' opinions, even at the cost of such pleasure in argument, though he regained some of the pleasure, vicariously, by following Joe Peters around.

He said Joe Peters always prefaced his remarks in argument with the statement that he had no patience with any opinions not in agreement with his own and that therefore anything he had to say would be biased and probably unfair. Our Old Man said Joe Peters was intolerant, but honest, except maybe in that opinion about a pointer being better than an Irish setter. He said no man could be honest in that opinion unless he was crazy.

Our Old Man said he liked to feel that he had regained some of his tolerance in judging of others' acts even after he got wise to himself on his lack of tolerance of opinions, but that he was not sure he had been able to do so. He said often after he had made public excuses of some fellow citizen's conduct, he had found himself secretly wondering if the citizen had not been in the wrong. Our Old Man said if he had been completely tolerant, his conscience would not have questioned afterward.

He said the ratio of tolerance among women was about one completely tolerant woman to every half million. He said maybe he had been living in the wrong part of the world but that he could not remember having met more than a dozen completely tolerant women in his life and those were very old. He said women were more tolerant of the opinions of others than men but far less tolerant of acts. He thought that was because women often do not understand opinions but seldom mistake acts.

Our Old Man said young women sometimes had a little tolerance in their make-up but that he doubted it would assay more than twenty per cent while middle-aged women, especially the married ones, rarely showed a trace. He said on the other hand it had been his observation that middle-aged married men were more inclined to tolerance than bachelors of any age and he thought that was because middle-aged married men understood through their own temptations and perhaps experiences, the acts that the intolerant criticise.

Time to Think

Our Old Man said it sometimes did a man good to be laid up awhile by illness, allowing that it was not fatal or permanently disabling. He said it gave the invalid the opportunity of doing a lot of thinking and of getting a different view of many situations. He said a long stretch of lying in bed showed a man that things he thought were of vital importance did not matter so much after all.

He said an illness had the same general effect as the system some old monarch he had read about was supposed to have employed whenever he was beset by too many worrisome problems of state. The old boy would just order all correspondence and petitions and other documents locked up and would not look at them for several months. By that time the dire emergencies indicated in the correspondence would have passed.

Our Old Man said he knew of nothing that gave a man a better line on his own weight in the world than a spell of illness. He said that many a man who thought he was indispensable in his own field discovered when he was knocked out by sickness that things went along in his sphere about the same as usual and maybe a little better than usual.

He said a few weeks of helpless confinement generally showed a man that he was not absolutely essential to the world, no matter what his job. He said that after the first anxious inquiries and cheering messages and perhaps flowers, the man found that life was proceeding in the world outside his sick room without missing a beat and that even in his own household things had settled down after a brief uproar and were going along as evenly as if nothing had happened.

Our Old Man said this was a painful disillusionment to a man who had an idea that his little world revolved exclusively about him and that if he was incapable of activity everything would come to a halt. He said it was a surprise and a shock to many men to learn in illness that laughter continued around them and that gay music was not stilled.

Our Old Man said that personally he would not have it any different, but that he supposed he had become more philosophical through experience about these matters than the average man. He said he had weathered several protracted spells of illness in his lifetime and that he had learned through them that he was important only in proportion to his ability to be on his job.

He said he thought he was all the better for his illnesses, morally, if not physically, because he usually came out of them with his cranium deflated and his spirit greatly chastened. He said that he generally returned to his work with greater energy than ever before and with a determination to prove his value and that thus his productiveness was increased for a time.

He said he generally had a kindlier feeling toward his fellow citizens, too, including those that he knew had been viewing his illness from the standpoint of possible self-advancement. Our Old Man said he never felt bitter toward a pal who had probably been figuring that his illness might open the way to the pal's promotion, even though the consummation of that thought could be arrived at only through his departure from this world.

Our Old Man said that was just human nature and that you could not change human nature. He said he remembered with shame that he once felt a vague glow on hearing of the illness of a chap whose passing would leave a vacancy that he would almost surely be called on to fill and that after that he never blamed a man in whose path he stood who came to his bedside when he was ill and spoke words of sympathy with a slight gleam of anticipation in his eyes.

Our Old Man said he realized that it was quite possible for a fellow citizen to feel truly sorry for him in his illness and yet at the same time be considering the eventualities of the illness from a personal standpoint. He said he was quite sure that no man ever hoped for the worst for him but just felt that if the worst was bound to happen, there was no harm in looking at the personal possibilities of the situation. Our Old Man said this was not ghoulishness at all, just more human nature.

He said he had found illness a great time in which to reflect on his mistakes. He said he could always see quite clearly, when stretched out on his back, his errors of omission and commission. He said it was then that he most keenly regretted the hours he had wasted, and the things he had said, and the friends he had neglected.

He said he had never failed, in illness, to firmly resolve that if permitted to escape from his bed of pain he would straighten out his whole life, and that this resolution lasted until he could take a firm step. Our Old Man said then he found he was just the same as before his illness. He said he guessed he had the same trouble as the Devil, as recounted in an ancient rhyme:

"When the Devil was sick,

*The Devil a monk would be.
When the Devil was well,
The devil a monk was he."*



MR. JOE TURP WRITES

Nice Fellow

Dear Sir, last night when I got home from work I ses to my wife Ethel well lovely I know where there is a new movie we haven't seen and I will help you with the dishes and take you to it and Ethel ses no Joe let's stay home. I want to tell you something. I ses all right but why can't you tell me now, and then we can go and see the movie just the same?

Ethel ses no it will take me a little while to tell you and I ses well all right sweets I guess the movie will keep. So we had supper and I helped her with the dishes and after she had put everything away she came into the living room where I was reading the paper and ses now Joe I will tell you the something I mentioned. Do you know you are a terribly nice fellow?

I ses I am? She ses yes you are. I think you are the nicest fellow in this world. I ses well I am glad to hear it Ethel but what was it you wanted to tell me? She ses that was it. I ses what was it? She ses why what I just ses. I ses do you mean that all you wanted to tell me was that I am a nice fellow? Ethel ses sure. I ses now wait a minute Ethel. I ses isn't there something else that goes with it? She ses not a thing Joe. I just wanted to tell you that you are a terribly terribly terribly nice fellow.

I ses let me think that over awhile. I ses you turned me down on going to the movies to tell me I am a terribly nice fellow? Ethel ses yes. I wanted to have you where you would listen to me when I told you. I ses what brought this on Ethel? She ses well Joe I got to thinking this afternoon what a terribly nice fellow you are. You come home every night all tired out but you always ask me to go to the movies though I know you are so tired you are liable to go to sleep in them and you often help me to do the dishes and never forget to ask me how I feel and are nice to me in a million ways. Then I got to thinking that I haven't told you often enough what a nice fellow you are so I made up my mind to have a nice fellow evening for you and this is the one. Joe I am going to have a nice fellow evening for you once a month after this and on that evening we will just stay home and I will tell you what a nice fellow you are.

I ses well sweets you don't know how much I appreciate this. I ses you are pretty nice yourself and she ses you tell me that almost every day Joe and I guess other husbands tell their wives the same thing but how often do the wives tell their husbands they are nice fellows? I ses I don't know Ethel. She ses well I'll bet it is not often but now that I have got my nice fellow evening started maybe it will spread all over the neighbourhood and become a regular thing.

I ses have you mentioned the idea to others already Ethel? She ses no only to my moms. She was over here this afternoon when I was thinking what a nice fellow you are and I told her I was going to have my nice fellow evening for you tonight. I ses what did she say beautiful? Ethel ses she ses it was crazy. My moms ses my pops is a nice fellow too but that she hasn't told him so to his face in 20 years because if she did he would become suspicious that she wanted something. She ses you would get suspicious too. Are you Joe?

I ses of course not Ethel and it is the greatest idea I have ever heard of in my life. I ses from now on I will be looking forward to your nice fellow evening and I will keep on trying to show you I am entitled to it and just then the phone rang and Ethel was away quite awhile answering it and when she came back she ses guess who that was Joe? I ses I guess it was your Uncle Ben asking if you could let him have a couple of dollars. She ses no that was my moms. Do you know what she ses Joe? She ses she went home and got to thinking about my nice fellow evening and she made my pops stay in and told him he is a nice fellow too.

I ses what did your pops think about that? Ethel ses why moms ses he was tickled to death and gave her a big kiss and that surprised her so she could hardly talk to me. I ses well baby here is a kiss for you and I hope it is no surprise and Ethel ses of course not Joe. What a really nice fellow you are.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

The Rap

Dear Sir, last night my wife Ethel and I went into a drug store because I wanted to buy some razor blades and there was a couple of clerks talking to each other back of the counter but they did not pay any attention to me so I rapped on the show case with my knuckles and Ethel ses why Joe I didn't know you was one of those?

I ses one of those what Ethel? She ses a counter rapper. That is a terrible thing to be. I ses why I was just trying to attract the attention of one of those fellows so he would come and wait on me. I ses those two guys are standing back there chewing the fat and not giving me a tumble and I wanted to let them know I was here.

Ethel ses O they know you are here all right Joe and one of them will come and wait on you as soon as he can. I ses well both of them are taking a long time about it and Ethel ses how long? I ses about ten minutes thats how long and she ses why Joe Turp we have not been in here three minutes and what is all the hurry about anyway? Don't you know that millions of people are killed in this country every year in automobile accidents just because they are in a hurry?

I ses Ethel in the first place its not millions. I ses its only a few hundred thousand and besides that has got nothing to do with this situation. I ses I come in here to buy something and I am entitled to attention instead of having those guys stand back there gabbing together. Ethel ses well Joe maybe they are talking over something important that has just come up and besides thats no excuse for you to be a counter rapper. Have you always been a counter rapper Joe?

I ses see here Ethel whats the use of making all this fuss about me tapping a little to attract one of those guys attention? She ses that wasn't a little tapping Joe. That was a regular counter rapping. Its worse than being a whistler at clerks or a cougher. When I was working in that department store I hated counter rappers more than I did any other kind. I hated them more than I did the ones that tugged at my sleeve or tapped me on the shoulder.

I ses well how did you expect them to attract your attention if you didn't notice them Ethel? She ses why they could say I beg your pardon Miss or good afternoon or something polite and I would notice them right away and hurry to them as soon as I could. Joe clerks don't keep customers waiting on purpose because they know they have to wait on them sooner or later. I ses well it looks like I am being kept waiting on purpose here and Ethel ses Joe did I ever tell you what I did to a counter rapper?

I ses no and I guess it will wait until we get home beautiful. She ses well I was getting down a big bolt of cloth one day when he came up to the counter behind me and rapped and I turned all of a sudden but hard as if he had startled me and with the bolt of cloth held so it would sweep across the counter and it hit him alongside the head and made him see stars. But I didn't know it was the boss Joe and I lost my job. I am glad I didn't know you was a counter rapper before I married you or maybe I would have refused you.

I ses lets get out of here and go to some other store and Ethel ses no Joe you must learn to be patient and remember what I told you about the millions of people who are killed in automobile accidents because they are in a hurry and just then one of the clerks came up and ses I am terribly sorry to keep you waiting but my associates wife just telephoned him that their baby has the colic and I was telling him what to tell her to do.

Ethel ses why if I had known that I would have told him something my moms used to do and the clerk said well lady I have three kids of my own so I have had some experience and they stood there talking until finally I rapped on the counter again and Ethel ses Joe you know what I told you about a counter rapper. I ses Ethel I wasn't rapping for the clerk this time. I was rapping for you.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Weathering It

Dear Sir, the other day when I got home I ses to my wife Ethel hay Ethel this has been a hot day. She ses thats what you ses when you came home yesterday. I ses well it was a hot day yesterday too but it was no hotter than it was today. I ses it was sizzling down town. I ses I don't think I have ever seen a hotter day in Brooklyn. I ses my gracious its hot.

Ethel ses yes I guess it is Joe and I ses you guess it is? I ses don't you know it is? I ses see here Ethel don't you feel the heat? She ses certainly I feel it Joe. I feel the cold when it is cold too but I don't think the weather is a very interesting subject and I was taught when I was a little girl not to talk too much about it. I ses who taught you that Ethel? She ses my moms did. My moms did not allow anybody to talk about the weather around our house.

I ses why thats the craziest thing I ever heard of Ethel. I ses whats wrong with talking about the weather? Ethel ses O there is nothing wrong with it Joe but my Moms ses for twenty years from the day they were first married when my Pops would come home from work the first thing he ses was its hot or its cold. It finally got on her nerves Joe. One day she told him that when she married him she did not think she was marrying a weather bureau and they had one of their few big fights so after that she did not allow anybody to talk about the weather in our house.

I ses well thats a fine thing Ethel. I ses I guess thats the most unreasonable thing I ever heard of. I ses what can be more harmless than talking about the weather. Ethel ses O its harmless all right Joe but my Moms ses it got to be very boring to her after twenty years when she would be sitting in the house sweating like a Turk after working all day over the wash boilers and the stove and sweeping and dusting and scrubbing and my Pops came home and ses its hot. My Moms ses he always ses it as if it was news to her when she knew it was hot better than he did. How does a Turk sweat Joe?

I ses I don't know Ethel and she ses well I guess a Turk sweats big Joe because my Moms always talks like sweating like a Turk when she means sweating big. I ses look Ethel. I ses a nicer word is perspire. Ethel ses I know Joe but my Moms ses sweat. She ses sometimes she would be going around the house with an old coat over her and half freezing because she was trying to save all the coal she could and then my Pops would come home and say its cold as if that was news to her too. So one day she threw his lunch bucket at him only it was empty and did not hit him and then she sat down and had a terrible crying spell. Her nerves went to pieces Joe.

I ses well Ethel I guess it was just a case of nerves in the first place and what your Pops ses about the weather did not have anything to do with it. I ses her nerves would have gone to pieces if he had never mentioned the weather because she was overworked.

Ethel ses no Joe she kept on working just as hard afterwards and it did not bother her nerves but that was because they had an agreement that my Pops was never to mention the weather again even if it was good weather. Did you ever say its hot or its cold to my Pops Joe?

I ses well I suppose I have and Ethel ses do you remember what he ses in reply? I ses well come to think of it he just ses so what? Ethel ses thats right Joe. Thats all either my Moms or my Pops ever ses when somebody ses its hot or its cold to them and they brought me up the same way only of course I never ses so what to you Joe because I wouldn't want you to think I was giving you a short answer. I ses O I think I am commencing to see what you are driving at Ethel. I ses you have gone a long way around trying to tell me you don't like to hear me talk about the weather.

Ethel ses well Joe when somebodys husband comes home every night day in and day out and ses its hot or its cold when somebody already knows its hot or its cold I guess somebody commences to realize about my Moms nerves and I

ses Ethel lets you and me drive down to Coney Island and forget the weather and she ses why Joe thats wonderful. Now I know why I love you so much. You are a very understanding husband. And it is hot Joe.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Belittling Ben

Dear Sir, last night when I got home I ses to my wife Ethel hay Ethel do you know who I saw in Grogans this afternoon? I ses I saw your Uncle Ben and he was sitting at a table eating sandwiches with the biggest blonde dame I ever saw in my life and he had his head all tied up like he had been in an accident. Ethel ses well he was in a kind of a one Joe. He had a narrow escape.

I ses I never heard of it beautiful and Ethel ses no I didn't tell you Joe because whenever I tell you about something that has happened to my Uncle Ben you always ses it served him right. I ses well generally it does Ethel but what happened this time and who is the big blonde? I ses do you know about her? Ethel ses O yes. Her name is Maude and she lives in the Bronx. My Uncle Ben was over here and told me about her when he got out of the hospital the other day. I think he is falling in love with her Joe.

I ses well why doesn't he pick somebody near his own size to fall in love with Ethel? I ses that dame would make two of your Uncle Ben. I ses she looks big enough to lick Joe Louis and Ethel ses why Joe my Uncle Ben ses she would make mince-meat of Joe Louis. He ses she could knock out Joe Louis with one hand and shake Billy Conn to death with the other and do both at the same time. He ses she is very strong Joe and I think that is why he likes her. She is the one he had the accident with.

I ses well tell me about it Ethel though I suppose all I will get is your Uncle Ben's side and Ethel ses he met her because he thought she was a spy Joe. You know my Uncle Ben is very patriotic and is always on the lookout for spies to turn them in to Mister Hoover and one day he saw Maude in Sands Street near the Navy Yard with a box under her arm only of course he did not know her name was Maude at the time. He suspected that she had a camera in the box and was taking pictures around the Navy Yard for the enemy. That is the way spies always do Joe. So he started to follow her.

I ses hah I see the finish to this Ethel. I ses he followed her until her husband came along and gave your Uncle Ben his lumps. I ses well I have got to say again it served him right. Ethel ses that's not the way it was at all Joe. She is not married so she hasn't got a husband. My Uncle Ben followed her from Sands Street clear to the Bronx on the subway and then to the place where she lives and he was taking down the address to send it to Mister Hoover when she turned around and walked up to him and ses what do you mean by following me you dirty masher? Then she hit him Joe.

I ses humph I guess your Uncle Ben is right about her licking Joe Louis if she could do all that damage with a punch and Ethel ses she did not hit him with a punch Joe. She hit him with the box she was carrying under her arm and it was not a camera in the box. It was a patent electric flat iron she was selling Joe and the doctor told my Uncle Ben he could have got a concussion of the brain from it. That was when my Uncle Ben was in the hospital and Maude was there beside his bed crying like her heart would break over him. She was very sorry Joe and she was not a spy and now my Uncle Ben thinks they may get married.

I ses why that's fine Ethel if she can sell enough of those irons to make a living for your Uncle Ben and Ethel ses there you go belittling my Uncle Ben again. He is not going to let her sell those irons any more if they get married. He ses they are dangerous things to have in the house. They are going to live in this neighbourhood and my Uncle Ben ses he will bet all those fellows around here who are always picking on him will be sorry when he sets Maude to work on them.

I ses Ethel your Uncle Ben has a romantic streak in him hasn't he? Ethel ses why yes I guess he has Joe unless you are trying to be sarcastic. But I think this time it is really love because he borrowed five dollars from me to pay Maude for the iron. It got broke when she hit him with it. I ses yes Ethel when your Uncle Ben starts paying for things it must be love.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

She's a Dreamer

Dear Sir, the other night my wife Ethel woke me up out of a sound sleep by shaking me and hollering Joe O Joe wake up please and when I opened my eyes she was standing by the bed in her dressing gown and she ses Joe I just had a terrible dream. I ses well thats a fine thing to wake somebody up to tell them. I ses why didn't you go to sleep again and forget it?

Ethel ses O I couldn't go to sleep again until I called up my moms to ask her what it meant. I ses do you mean to tell me you called her up at this time of night to ask her such a silly question? Ethel ses its only about midnight and she never goes to bed that early and besides its not a silly question. I wanted to know what it meant. My moms knows what every dream means. I am going to have trouble with a good friend.

I ses what did you dream about that means trouble with a good friend? Ethel ses I dreamed about a zebra. I ses do you mean one of those striped mules like they have in the circus? She ses certainly Joe. What other kind of zebras are there? I ses I never heard of such foolishness in my life. I ses there I was knocking off a bundle of sleep that I need plenty of these days and you wake me up to tell me you are going to have trouble with a friend because you dreamed about a zebra. I ses Ethel you go on back to bed now and let me finish out my snooze.

Ethel ses well I don't think thats a nice way for somebody to talk to their wife. Don't you ever have dreams Joe? I ses no I don't. I ses I am too tired when I hit the feathers to do anything but sleep and even if I did dream I wouldn't believe in it enough to call up somebody to find out what it meant. I ses will you please go to bed? I ses what are you standing there for? Ethel ses I am trying to think what good friend I am going to have the trouble with Joe. It can't be Mamie Schultz because I am having trouble with her already and besides she is not a good friend. She is a two-face. Maybe it will be with Alberta Marx but I can't think what the trouble will be about. Can you Joe?

I ses look Ethel. I ses you go ahead and have trouble with anybody you like and let me sleep will you? Ethel ses O it couldn't be with just anybody according to the dream Joe. It has to be with a good friend. I ses all right pick out a good friend and have your trouble. I ses I never heard of such a silly superstition in my life as believing in dreams. Ethel ses then why are you afraid to walk under a ladder when it is leaning across a sidewalk? Thats superstition Joe. I ses thats not superstition thats common sense. I ses the ladder might fall on me. I ses any dope would know that.

Ethel ses Joe Turp are you calling me a dope? I ses of course not. I ses I am not calling you anything but foolish for believing in dreams and then Ethel began to cry and she ses yes you did call me a dope and even if you didn't call me one thats what you think I am. My moms had believed in dreams all her life and my pops believes in them too and they don't call each other dopes. I think you are very mean Joe.

So I had to get out of bed and put my arms around her and I ses listen beautiful. I ses if you think I called you a dope or if you think I am thinking you are one I apologize. I ses whats more one night next week I will take you over to Madison Square Garden to the circus and you can see those zebras you dreamed about. I ses I will even believe in your dream too if you like.

Ethel stopped crying and ses thats wonderful Joe. I mean about the circus and now you can go back to sleep and I will not say another word to you although I wish I could think who the good friend is I am going to have trouble with. So I kissed her and went back to bed and got to sleep right away but pretty soon she woke me up again and ses Joe I have thought of the good friend I was going to have trouble with. Its you Joe. But now we have had it and its all over so I don't have to worry any more. Now do you believe in dreams?

I ses good night Ethel.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

The Only Answer

Dear Sir, last night after supper I sat down in my big chair in the living room and was all relaxed and dozing a little when my wife Ethel ses Joe you look very comfortable. Do you feel that way? I ses yes beautiful I do. I ses it is a wonderful thing for a fellow to be able to sit down in his own home like this and not have to think about anything. I ses I was afraid you would want to go out tonight.

Ethel ses well I was going to suggest that we walk down to the Conovers. They are having some kind of a party but I would rather be home with you Joe. I ses I am glad to hear that Ethel because those Conovers give me a pain. I ses I never feel just right at their parties because they try to do too high toned. Ethel ses yes Dottie Conover thinks she is better than anyone else in this neighbourhood though sometimes they do have fun there. But I don't really want to go Joe especially if you feel like talking to me a little because I want to ask you some questions.

I ses go ahead and ask all the questions you like sweets and I will do my best to answer them and she ses well Joe I have been wondering why they call them dry goods stores. I mean what is dry goods. I ses why Ethel I guess dry goods is stuff that women buy like linens and woollens and silks and things like that. I ses that is all dry goods so stores that sell them are called dry goods stores.

Ethel ses yes but you can buy perfume and shampoos and other things like that in dry goods stores and they are not dry are they? I ses well lovely maybe the name started before those stores sold wet stuff and they never changed it and she ses yes that may be it Joe but there is another thing that puzzles me. Why are fellows clothes made different from ladies clothes? Why didn't they make them all the same in the beginning and who first thought of making them different?

I ses Ethel I don't know who first thought of it but I guess they made them different so you can tell dames and guys apart. I ses if guys and dames clothes were all made just alike you would run into a lot of mistakes these days. I ses which way would you have wanted them made Ethel? She ses well Joe sometimes I think it would be handier if they were all fellows clothes but of course they are not so pretty as ladies clothes. But I often wonder why somebody in the beginning ses we will put this kind of clothes on the ladies and that kind of clothes on the fellows. Don't you ever wonder about things like that Joe?

I ses no Ethel I don't think I do. She ses don't you ever wonder why we whistle at a dog but not at a cat? I ses no gorgeous. She ses don't you wonder why some very wicked people have a lot of money and some very good people are terribly poor? I ses well Ethel I guess I have wondered about that now and then but not for long because I figure that is the way it is and there is nothing I can do about it. She ses but don't you think there ought to be a way of taking that money away from those wicked people and giving it to the good people Joe as a reward for being good?

I ses look Ethel. I ses did you say the Conovers are having some kind of a party? She ses well they are having a few friends in and Dottie asked us. I ses maybe we might as well drop in on them sweets. I ses maybe we can get a few

laughs there although I think that Chet Conover is a first-class dope. I ses get your hat you pretty girl and we will go and Ethel ses all right Joe but do you know what I think? I think you are willing to run the risk of being bored to death at the Conovers rather than answer a few little questions for me.

I ses well Ethel do you know what I think? I ses I think you knew if you asked me enough questions like that I would give in and go to the Conovers because that is what you wanted to do in the first place and she ses yes I want to go all right Joe but I really would like to know what you think about taking that money away from those wicked people and giving it to the good people.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

The Crawleys

Dear Sir, the other evening when I was on my way home from work I ran into an old neighbour by the name of Crawley who I have known ever since I was a kid and I ses hello Mister Crawley but he looked right at me and did not hello me back so I got in front of him and stopped him and ses hay Mister Crawley whats wrong with you? I ses don't you know Joe Turp? He ses I know you all right but I don't want to have anything to do with you or anybody related to you especially by marriage so please don't ever speak to me again.

So when I got home I told my wife Ethel what had happened and asked her what she thought had got into the old codger and Ethel ses O I guess its about his wife Joe. A very strange thing happened to her and Mister Crawley is blaming my moms because my moms gave Missus Crawley a piece of good advice and he found out about it. I guess Missus Crawley told him Joe. My moms ses she never could keep anything to herself. I ses well Ethel it must have been something serious for him to pass me up the way he did, I ses what was the advice anyway?

Ethel ses well Joe Missus Crawley has worked herself to a bone for her husband ever since they were married and that is 35 years. There never was a day in her life that she did not do the cooking for him and the cleaning up after him and she never had a vacation of as much as 24 hours in all that time although old Mister Crawley is as rich as mud. She was really worn down to nothing Joe.

I ses how do you know so much about her Ethel? She ses my moms told me. My moms and Missus Crawley went to school together when they were girls and my moms ses Missus Crawley was really pretty once. So about a month ago Missus Crawley was telling my moms about how tired she was and how she would give anything in this world for a little rest and that was when my moms gave her the piece of advice. My moms told her she should get something the matter with her back and go to bed and stay there until she got all rested up. My moms told her that if you say there is something the matter with your back nobody can tell whether there is or not even a doctor.

I ses wait a minute Ethel. I ses do you mean to tell me your moms told Missus Crawley to pretend there was something the matter with her back when there wasn't? Ethel ses thats right Joe. So Missus Crawley took my moms advice and got something the matter with her back and old Mister Crawley was terribly upset about it because there was nobody to get his breakfast for the first time in 35 years and he had to bring Doctor Satch in to look at Missus Crawley every day and it cost him money. You know Mister Crawley is very stingy Joe.

I ses well what happened then Ethel? She ses why Missus Crawley got such a fine rest that she really enjoyed staying in bed and she was there until a couple of days ago and got up feeling fine but I guess she could not keep the secret Joe because old Mister Crawley was around to my moms house ranting and raving like a crazy fellow at her for putting him to all that expense with her advice and making him uncomfortable for nearly a month. Then when he went back home

what do you suppose had happened Joe?

I ses I give it up Ethel. I ses I am thinking maybe he was right for being hot at your moms. Ethel ses yes but don't you want to know what happened? I ses yes I suppose so and she ses well when he got back home he found Missus Crawley had been so happy and excited about her nice rest and felt so good that she started to dance a little jig and slipped on the floor and sprained her right ankle very bad so she is now in bed again and there is really something the matter with her and that is why Mister Crawley is mad at all of us especially my moms though I don't see how he could blame her for his wifes sprained ankle Joe.

I ses Ethel I think he has got some right to be mad and she ses well he is certainly mad all right but he isn't any madder than my pops Joe. My pops heard about the advice my moms give Missus Crawley and now he isn't speaking to my moms because he ses he can figure out a couple of hundred times since they were married that she went to bed with something the matter with her back and he had to get his own breakfast.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Larcenous Ladies

Dear Sir, the other night my wife Ethel and I were walking along Fifth Avenue over in New York looking in the windows and finally we came to a big store that had a lot of dames dresses on dummies and Ethel ses wait a minute Joe. Thats the cutest dress I ever saw in my life.

I ses do you mean the one on the dummy that looks like that dame Katharine Hepburn thats in the pictures? Ethel ses O they all look like Katharine Hepburn. Its the expression Joe. I mean the one over there in the corner. Its really a dream. Have you a paper and pencil Joe? I ses here you are beautiful. I ses are you going to take down the address of this joint and come back and get that dress tomorrow? Ethel ses don't be foolish. I could never afford to spend what they charge in this place for a dress. Thats an exclusive model and it must cost a fortune. I am going to make a little sketch of it and buy the material and make one like it myself for almost nothing. I will get Kitty Corbett to help me.

So she started drawing on the back of an envelope I gave her and I ses now wait a minute Ethel. I ses when you tell me thats an exclusive model you mean no other store has one like it don't you?

She ses certainly Joe. Their own designer made it just for this place. I ses thats what I thought. I ses well they pay that designer good money don't they? Ethel ses O sure Joe a designer for a store like this makes a fine salary.

I ses look Ethel. I ses maybe that designer was quite a while figuring out that dress and all the time he was doing it this store was paying his salary. Ethel ses the designer here is a lady Joe and not a fellow. She is very famous. I ses all right she is a lady. I ses on top of her salary they probably had to spend some dough for the goods thats in that dress and they put it in the window here thinking its something all their own and that nobody else has.

Ethel ses what on earth are you getting at Joe? I ses Ethel what I am getting at is that you have no right to make a sketch of that dress and then go and fix one like it for yourself. I ses thats just the same as stealing because you are glomming somebodys idea without their permission. I ses if one of the owners of this store saw you making that sketch he would have a right to call a cop and have you arrested or maybe sue you because you are stealing an idea that cost him money.

Ethel ses O thats the craziest talk I ever heard in my life Joe. I am going to copy that dress because I could not afford to pay what they would want for it here and thats not stealing Joe. Thats just being economical. I ses yes Ethel but when

you copy that dress maybe Kitty Corbett will copy it from you and some other dame may copy it from her and pretty soon it is not an exclusive model anymore and you knock the poor guys who own this store out of their price for an idea that may have cost them plenty.

There was a guy standing next to us at the window with a pretty good looking dame and he ses brother you are a hundred per cent right. Thats what I tell my wife here when she copies a hat she sees in one of these high class stores. Shes a nut on hats. You see the one she has got on? She copied that yesterday for about four fish from one she saw in a window up the Avenue that was priced at fifty bucks. I tell her she ought to get herself a burglars outfit and go into business right. I guess all broads are full of larceny brother.

I ses well they don't seem to mind stealing somebodys ideas and that is really not honest and the guy ses ideas hay? brother they would steal hot stoves. Then the dame with him ses to Ethel don't mind them honey. All fellows just talk to hear themselves talk. Ethel ses O I don't mind them. They would talk a lot more if they had to pay the money we save them by copying things and the dame ses thats right. I hope you don't mind me making a little sketch of your hat while you were sketching that dress. I think its lovely and I am going to have one made just like it tomorrow.

Ethel ses come on Joe and when we were on our way home she ses I never heard of such nerve in my life. I designed this hat myself and there was not another like it in town and now everybody will probably have one. I just hate that woman. I ses what about the dress Ethel? She ses thats different Joe.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Sharing Secrets

Dear Sir, last night my wife Ethel ses Joe if I tell you something will you promise not to tell another living soul? I ses whats it about sweets? Ethel ses why I can't tell you what its about until you promise me you will not tell another living soul. I ses well I guess I can promise that all right unless its something illegal and you would not know about anything illegal.

Ethel ses of course not Joe. How could I? I ses well go ahead and tell me what its about. Ethel ses its about Mildred Samuels. She told me today but she made me promise I would not tell another living soul not even you. I ses did you promise? Ethel ses certainly I promised. Mildred would not have told me if I had not promised. I ses well then what do you want to tell me for? I ses won't that be breaking your promise?

Ethel ses why Joe what good would it do me to know something if I could not tell you? I ses yes but you ses you promised Mildred you would not tell even me. I ses now you want to tell me so what kind of a promise is that? I ses suppose she finds out that you did tell me? Ethel ses well suppose she does? I ses then she will never tell you anything else again. Ethel ses O yes she will. I am her best friend and what good would it do her to know something if she did not tell her best friend? Besides how can she find out I told you when you are not going to tell another living soul?

I ses well Ethel I guess you better not tell me. I ses I would not have you betray somebodys confidence for the world and Ethel ses but don't you want to hear what it is Joe? I ses Ethel even if I wanted to hear it the worst way in the world I would not like to have you betray somebodys confidence. I ses you promised Mildred you would not tell anybody not even me so you just keep your word. I ses Mildred would probably be terribly disappointed in you if she found out you told me. Ethel ses why thats crazy Joe. Mildred expects me to tell you. She would not have told me unless she expected me to tell you.

I ses now wait a minute Ethel. I ses let me get this figured out. I ses you ses Mildred Samuels told you something

after getting you to promise you would not tell another living soul even me? Ethel ses thats right Joe. I ses now you want to tell me and when I remind you of your promise to Mildred not to tell me you ses she expected you to tell me? Ethel ses thats right Joe. Whats wrong with that?

I ses well it does not make sense to me. I ses it sounds daffy. I ses suppose somebody told me something and made me promise not to tell another living soul not even you and then I came home and told it to you what would you think of me? I ses wouldn't you think I was dishonourable to betray somebodys confidence? Ethel ses of course not Joe. I would think you were very mean if you did not tell me. Has somebody told you something lately that you have not told me?

I ses no but if they had told me and I had promised not to tell anybody not even you I would not have told you. I ses I would have kept my promise to them. Ethel ses Joe I believe you are keeping something back from me. What is it? I ses look Ethel. I ses I am not keeping anything back but I am just telling you how I feel about promises like that. I ses suppose you told me about Mildred Samuels and I promised never to tell another living soul and then went and told somebody else wouldn't you think I was a stinker?

Ethel ses thats not a very nice word Joe and besides you do not understand. Everybody tells somebody something and makes them promise not to tell another living soul but they do not expect them not to tell. Joe if somebody has told you something you have not told me you can go ahead and tell it because they expect you to. I ses Ethel I tell you nobody has told me a thing and she ses well do you want to hear about Mildred Samuels? I ses no sweets you keep it to yourself like you promised and now I am going to bed.

Ethel ses well its very important and I ses thats all the more reason you should not tell me. She ses I hate to know something and not tell it but good night Joe. I want to listen to the radio awhile. So I went to bed and went to sleep but about half past one this morning I woke up and shook Ethel and when I got her awake I ses hay Dolly what was that about Mildred Samuels? Ethel ses why Joe what do you mean? I ses what was it about her that she made you promise not to tell another living soul not even me?

Ethel ses well now let me think a minute Joe. O yes. She is going to run away to Toronto with Chub Walters and get married. I ses when? Ethel ses why they are going at ten o'clock tonight. What time is it Joe? I ses one thirty and Ethel ses well I guess they have gone. I am glad for Mildred's sake. I ses Chub Walters owes me twenty bucks and he was to have paid me tomorrow morning so I guess I can kiss that goodbye.

Ethel ses yes Joe I guess you can but if you had let me tell you about Mildred when I wanted to you could have caught him at her house before they left. You see Joe you ought to listen to me. I ses good night Ethel. She ses good night Joe dear.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

The Danger of Being Polite

Dear Sir, the other night my wife Ethel and I went to the movies and the only seats we could find were in the middle of a row so we had to push past a lot of other people to get to them and when we got back home Ethel ses Joe I want to tell you something.

I ses tell away baby. She ses well when we have to push past other people in the movies to get to our seats I wish you would not keep saying to them excuse me excuse me. I ses why Ethel. I only say that to apologize to them for disturbing them. I ses you take tonight for instance. I ses we got in right in the middle of that picture and those people were busy watching it so I ses excuse me to show them I was sorry we had to bother them.

Ethel ses yes but you ses excuse me excuse me a million times. What was the use of wasting so many excuse mes on them? I ses Ethel you know very well it was not a million times. I ses it was only four or five at the most and I was only being polite and Ethel ses Joe nobody appreciates politeness when you push past them in the movies like that. They just think you must be a country jake for saying excuse me.

I ses here Ethel that is the wrong attitude to take. I ses everybody appreciates politeness and she ses not in the movies Joe when you have to push past them to get to your seats. They just get mad at you no matter how many excuse mes you tell them. Why don't you watch the way I do it and act the same way and then they will know you are not a country jake.

I ses how do you do it? She ses I do it the way everybody else does it. I just climb right over them and I do not say excuse me excuse me excuse me a million times. I ses look Ethel. I ses there is such a thing as being nice in this world and it is not nice to climb over people without saying something to show them you are sorry. Ethel ses why Joe they climb over me in the movies when we are sitting where they have to do it to get to their seats and nobody ever ses they are sorry for me.

I ses now wait a minute Ethel. I ses I have just thought of something. I ses I have often noticed that any time we have to push past people to get to our seats a lot of them keep looking at us even after we sit down. I ses tonight two or three of those people we had to push past kept looking at us every once in awhile long after we sat down. Ethel ses do you mean those two fat ladies in the seats on the aisle or the skinny one with the funny hat?

I ses I do not remember what they looked like but I noticed several of those people turning their heads every once in awhile to look at us long after we sat down. I ses Ethel now you tell me the truth. I ses did you do something to those people or not? Ethel ses why no Joe I did not do anything to them. I just climbed over them. I ses yes but did anything happen to them when you were climbing? She ses well only by accident.

I ses what do you mean by accident? Ethel ses O those fat ladies got their toes stepped on and the skinny one got her funny hat knocked off but she looked much better without it Joe. The way you knock a hat off Joe is to turn all of a sudden when you are climbing over somebody and let your arm fly out by accident. Did those people look mad when they were looking at us after we sat down Joe?

I ses yes they did and I was wondering why. I ses there were some fellows in the row ahead of us looking back at us after we sat down and they looked mad too. I ses don't tell me they had some kind of accidents Ethel? She ses O it was just their hair. I ses what do you mean their hair? Ethel ses why you know how some fellows drop their heads back on their seats while they are looking at the picture. If somebody who is climbing over people in the row behind them has a pocket book in her hands she can scrape it across their heads and muss up their hair by accident. It makes them awfully mad Joe but they have no right to have their heads dropped back on the seats because some of their hair is full of greasy old oil.

I ses Ethel I am ashamed of you. I ses I thought you were always a lady and she ses well I am Joe except in the movies when nobody else is a lady. Those fat ladies were not ladies Joe. They would not pull in their fat old legs an inch to let me past and that skinny one with the funny hat gave me the meanest look you ever saw in your life and she would not pull in her skinny old legs either. She acted like we had no right coming in there and I was not sorry when she got her hat knocked off by accident.

I ses Ethel now that I know what has been coming off I am never going to take you to the movies again. I ses its a wonder we have not got in a lot of trouble over you acting that way and Ethel ses Joe the only time we almost got in trouble was the time you stood up and turned up your seat to let some people get past us and you shut off the view of the people behind you so they missed some of the picture while you were standing and a fellow hollered sit down bum. Do you remember that Joe?

I ses yes and if I could have found out who that fellow was I would have fixed him and she ses yes but is that any reason for you to keep standing there trying to pick him out until other fellows were hollering sit down bum too? I was

terribly mortified that night Joe. I ses Ethel I think I will go to bed and she ses all right Joe.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Etiquette

Dear Sir, last night my wife Ethel was reading a book and I ses whats that you are reading Ethel? She ses its a book Joe. I ses I can see its a book sweets but what is the book about? She ses it is about etiquette and it was loaned to me by Mazie Groody. Etiquette means the way to act Joe.

I ses see here Ethel I know what etiquette means as well as you do. Ethel ses you do? I ses certainly I do. She ses well Joe I am very sorry to tell you but even if you do know what etiquette means you do not know how to do etiquette. I ses how do you mean do it? Ethel ses Joe you would be surprised to know how many etiquettes you do wrong.

I ses O I would hay? I ses what etiquette do I do wrong? Ethel ses why when you introduce somebody to somebody you always ses let me make you acquainted with so-and-so. I ses well whats wrong with that? I ses besides I do not always put all that in. I ses sometimes I just ses meet so-and-so. Ethel ses thats wrong too. That's very wrong Joe. You ought to just speak the names of the two somebodies you are introducing to each other.

I ses how do you mean Ethel? She ses well suppose you were introducing Hazel Quigg and Freddy Kugler. You ought to just say Miss Quigg Mister Kugler. I ses wait a minute Ethel. I ses you know very well I did introduce Hazel Quigg and Freddy Kugler quite a while ago. Ethel ses yes I know that Joe but I was just using them to suppose. I remember you did not introduce them with etiquette.

I ses how did I introduce them? Ethel ses you ses hi there Hazel I want to make you acquainted with Freddy Kugler. You should have said Miss Quigg Mister Kugler. Joe can you imagine how embarrassed I would be for you if you were introducing Emily Post to somebody and ses hi Emily I want to make you acquainted with so-and-so? I would be really mortified.

I ses who is Emily Post? Ethel ses she is the one who wrote this book of etiquette. I ses well Ethel in the first place I do not know Emily Post and in the second place if I did know her I would not introduce her to anybody. Ethel ses why not? I ses well I would want to talk to her myself and if I introduced her to somebody they would want to talk to her and interrupt us.

Ethel ses what would you want to talk to Emily Post about? I ses I would want to talk to her about etiquette of course. I ses I would like to find out from her what difference it makes how you introduce somebody as long as you get them together the way I did Hazel Quigg and Freddy Kugler. I ses then I would ask her how to unintroduce somebody so Hazel and Freddy would be like they had never met. I ses Ethel baby I am almost off my gazoop listening to that Freddy Kugler tell me his troubles about Hazel.

Ethel ses yes thats what I was going to talk to you about Joe. I ses has Freddy been around here telling you his troubles? Ethel ses no but Hazel has. She is crazy about him Joe but they fight like cats and dogs. She ses its all his fault. I ses well he ses its all hers. I ses if they ever get married I pity them both because it will be something terrible. I ses I am sure sorry I ever introduced them. Ethel ses yes especially when you did not introduce them right.

I ses look Ethel I suppose I ought to hunt them up and introduce them all over again the way your book ses and Ethel ses O Joe would you do that? I ses what do you mean would I do it? I ses I was just making a joke. Ethel ses well I am serious. It would be a nice thing if you did it Joe. They have not been speaking to each other for three weeks and Hazels

heart is breaking. If you took Freddy around to her house and ses Miss Quigg Mister Kugler I bet they would have to laugh and that would make them up.

I ses why sweets they will only have a falling out again in a few days and Ethel ses what difference does that make Joe? They will have the fun of making up this time. Will you do it for me Joe? I feel terribly sorry for Hazel. I ses certainly I will baby. I ses I will do anything for you but don't blame me if it does not work out and Ethel ses Joe you are a lamb.

So I went down to the Schultzes and found Freddy Kugler in there drinking beers and I ses come along with me Fred and he came and I took him right around to Hazel's house. He started to squawk when he saw where I was taking him but I had a good hold on his collar so he could not get away and I knocked on Hazels door and when she came out I ses Miss Quigg Mister Kugler.

She started to laugh and Freddy laughed too just like Ethel ses and then they kissed and made up. So I went home and told Ethel and she ses Joe you certainly are a lamb. It was a very serious quarrel this time. I ses what did they quarrel about baby? Ethel ses it was about the way Freddy always goes out of doors ahead of her and walks on the inside when they are in the street. Why Joe do you see what they quarreled about? Why it was etiquette. I just realized it Joe.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Barber's Business

Dear Sir, the other night my wife Ethel ses Joe, I wish you would take me to the movies tonight, and I ses why sweets it will be a pleasure if you will let me drop in at Sam the Barber's on the way there and get a quick haircut.

I ses I have not had a haircut so long I am commencing to look like an old English sheepdog and Ethel ses I have never seen an old English sheepdog, Joe. What do they look like? I ses they look like I am commencing to look and she ses Oh, well, I will be glad to have you stop at Sam's then although you know how I hate to wait for you in the barber's because there is never anybody there but men.

So that is where we went and Sam found an evening paper with the funnies in it for Ethel while he was cutting my hair but before Sam got through with me she had finished with the paper and was watching us and she ses Sam you hurry up with Joe because we don't want to be late for the movies.

Sam ses I am practically all done now Missus Turp, and then he held a big hand mirror up behind me so it showed the back of my head in the mirror in front of me and ses how is that Joe? I ses that's fine Sam and Ethel ses Joe why does the barber always hold a mirror up that way when he gets through cutting your hair?

I ses why, Ethel, I guess the idea is for me to see how the haircut looks in the back of my head and Sam ses sure thing, Missus Turp, that is the idea. I do that for every customer that gets a haircut so he can see if he likes the way I have done it in the back. He could not see it back there unless I held the mirror up behind him.

Ethel ses yes, but suppose he did not like it. Suppose my Joe there ses Sam you haven't cut my hair on the back of my head right, what could you do about it? Sam ses Joe never ses he don't like it, Missus Turp. He always likes it, Ethel ses yes, but suppose some day he don't. Could you put his hair back and start cutting it all over again?

Sam ses why, Missus Turp, don't your hairdresser always let you see in a mirror how she is doing your hair? Ethel ses yes, but that is not the same thing. She doesn't cut my hair off the way you do Joe's and if I don't like the way she has

done it she can change it and I don't think you can change hair you have cut off and left on the floor.

I ses look, sweets, I thought you was in a hurry to get to the movies and you are wasting time with this thing. Ethel ses well, Joe, there are two things I have always wanted to ask somebody about and one is why the barber always holds a mirror up behind a fellow's head after he has cut off his hair and another is why the waiter in some restaurants always shows people the food in the dishes before he serves it.

Sam ses Missus Turp I don't know anything about waiters but us barbers have always let a customer see the way we have cut his hair in back and nobody ever asked questions about it before, even suppose questions. Ethel ses well, suppose some fellow was disgusted with the way you cut his hair in the back and of course you couldn't put it on him again and he got mad and slapped you or maybe sued you for damages for spoiling his hair?

Sam ses please, Missus Turp. That old gentleman waiting there is Mister McQuillan who owns the department store down town and he is too big a customer for me to stand here trying to answer supposes for you. I ses yes, Ethel, we are late now and she ses well all right, Joe, but why does everybody always get excited when somebody asks a few little old questions?

So we walked out of Sam's and we had not gone very far when we heard somebody behind us going psst, psst, psst to attract our attention and it was old Mister McQuillan and when he caught up with us he ses to my wife Ethel, young lady, I have always wanted to ask that question myself about the barber and the mirror but have been afraid to. If ever you find the answer will you please let me know?

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

A Double Life

Dear Sir, I suppose you have been wondering what happened to me as I have not written to you but it all started with my wife Ethel not wanting me to tell you about her having the boy and girl twins. She made me cross my heart and hope to die that I would not breathe a word to you until she ses it was okay.

I asked her why she objected to me letting you know when the twins came and she ses it was because she somehow felt bashful about it. I ses well, that guy knew you was going to have a baby so what is there to be bashful about? Ethel ses yes, Joe, he knew I was going to have a baby but he didn't know I was going to have babies.

I ses I don't see what difference it makes and Ethel ses well, Joe, it seems almost immodest for someone like me to have two babies all at once the first time they have a baby, instead of one at a time a couple of years apart like most people. That is why I am bashful about letting that fellow know because he will put it in the paper. You wait until the novelty of having them wears off and then you can tell him.

I ses all right, Little Mother, if that's the way you feel about it and she ses yes, and another way I feel about it is don't call me Little Mother, if you please. You make me feel like an old lady. Joe, are you really glad about there being two of them? I ses Ethel, I wouldn't have them any less for anything in this world and she ses I am glad to hear you say so, Joe, but it really seems to me that two is quite a lot.

Well, for a few days she seemed almost embarrassed about the twins but then everybody commenced sending her congratulations and flowers and presents to the hospital and when she was able to go to her mom's house the street was practically blocked all day with neighbours calling on her and pretty soon Ethel became real proud and a little hard to get along with especially when she finally got to taking the twins out in the baby buggy and people stopped to admire

them.

In fact, Ethel grew so proud that one day her pops ses, daughter, you have done a fine thing bringing two nice healthy children into the world but there is no sense in getting so doggone chesty about it because other women have done the same thing lots of times and some even better. My grandmother had triplets twice. But Ethel only ses humph, and you could see that she felt that no one else's triplets could be as important as her twins.

I was working hard on my job every day and helping around the house in the evening and I forgot all about writing to you or anyone else until the other night when Ethel ses Joe, what did that fellow put in the paper when you told him about the twins? I haven't had a chance to read anything in weeks and weeks.

I ses why, Ethel, I never told him about them. I ses you distinctly told me not to mention them to him until the novelty of having them wore off on you and I am not sure that it has yet. She ses Joe, is that supposed to be a mean crack like the one pops made about me being chesty? I ses no, no, no. I ses why, Ethel, I guess I am chestier than you are about the twins as some of the guys I know are squawking because I am always talking about them.

Ethel ses well, do you mean to tell me that my children are over two months old and there has been nothing in the paper about them? I ses not as far as I know, but please remember it is only because you told me not to tell that fellow anything, Ethel ses I do not recall telling you any such thing, Joe, and you better write to him immediately and tell him the good news.

So I am writing.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

Fatherly Advice

Dear Sir, the day after the twins came I was in Schultze's bar shaking hands with everyone and buying them beers and cigars and they were all slapping me on the back and congratulating me and calling me pops and daddy when a big sour-looking guy with a moustache who had been watching and listening moved up to me and ses who are you, anyway?

I ses why, my name is Joe Turp. He ses what happened to you that everybody in this joint is making such a fuss over you? I ses I just had twins. He ses what do you mean, you just had twins? I ses I mean my wife Ethel had them but of course they belong to both of us. He ses well, why don't you give the little woman credit right off the bat instead of saying you had them?

I ses Oh, I am a little excited and it was just a slip of the tongue, I guess. I ses we never had twins or even any other kind of children before. He ses what are those twins, girls or boys? I ses one is a girl and one is a boy. He ses well, what makes you think you and your wife have done such a great big thing in having those twins?

I ses I didn't say we had done a great big thing, mister. I ses I just told you why these people in here was making a fuss over me when you asked me. I ses they are all my friends because this is my old neighbourhood and they are all glad my wife Ethel and me have got the twins.

He ses well, do you realize that about fourteen or fifteen years from now you and your wife will be the cause of considerable expense to the taxpayers of this community when your boy is picked up for juvenile delinquency and sent to the reform school? Do you think you have any right to do that to the taxpayers?

I ses mister, what gives you the idea that my son will be a juvenile delinquent? He ses why, just sizing you up. You are the type that produces boys like that. He will probably be caught robbing some poor old man's candy store. A couple of years later the girl will run off with a bum and you will have to support them the rest of your life.

I ses mister, do you know what I think? I ses I think you have drank too much and are looking for trouble. He ses who am I looking for trouble with? I ses well, maybe with me. He ses Turp, look at me. I am bigger and stronger than you are and I could break you in two but why should I want to do anything like that? You haven't done anything to me.

I ses I don't think you can break me in two, mister. He ses now, you see? You are the one who is looking for trouble, and I don't see why. All I have done is to tell you what an expense you and your wife have brought on the taxpayers of Brooklyn by bringing a juvenile delinquent into the world and that your daughter is going to run away with a bum and you get sore and tell me I am a drunkard.

I ses I didn't tell you any such a thing. I ses all I ses is you have drank too much and he ses it's the same as telling me I am a drunkard. But that has got nothing to do with what we are discussing. Turp, don't you think you and your wife should be ashamed of bringing juvenile delinquents into the world two at a clip to be burdens upon the taxpayers?

Well, about this time a friend of mine by the name of Jackson motioned me from the doorway to come outside and I ses pardon me to the guy with the moustache and joined Jackson who ses I have been trying to bail you out for ten minutes but you never looked my way to give me a chance. That guy will drive you crazy.

I ses who is he, anyway? Jackson ses he is a printer who lives in Williamsburg. He is feeling very moody because his wife has just had their tenth baby. Keep away from him, Joe.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

A Rose By Any Other Name, Etc.

Dear Sir, I forgot to tell you that we named the twins Cornelius and Constance for my wife Ethel's pops and moms but we had quite a discussion about the matter first.

I wanted to name the boy Eisenhower MacArthur Turp but Ethel ses no, he should be named Joseph after me and the girl should be named Josephine because quite awhile ago when we were talking about names for just one child I ses to Ethel, suppose you have twins what will you name them, and she ses I will name them Joseph and Josephine.

I ses Ethel, why do you want to name the girl Josephine when we do not even know anybody by that name and she ses well, it will sound nice with Joseph. I ses there is not going to be any Joseph because I told you once before I will not have my son going through life like I did with everyone wise cracking to him hello, Joe, what do you know.

I ses you can name the girl what you please and you can name the boy what you please, too, except Joseph. I ses personally I like the name of Ethel for the girl, and Ethel ses no, Joe, that is out, too. I think one Ethel in the family is enough but I wish you would think over how Joseph and Josephine swings.

I ses I wish I could name the boy for my pops but his name was Joseph, too, so what about your pops? Ethel ses why that will be wonderful, Joe. We will call the boy Cornelius. I ses all right then we might as well go all the way and name the girl for your moms although those names will cause a lot of confusion in this family. I ses we will be calling both of them Connie.

Ethel ses we will not. We will only call the little girl Connie. We will call the little boy Con. I think that's even cuter than Joseph and Josephine, Joe. Con and Connie. What do you think? I ses Ethel, I was thinking of calling the boy something for a nickname like Puggy and she ses Oh, please Joe, never call him a nickname. Nicknames are so common.

I ses I have heard you calling him Bubber already and that is surely a nickname and I have heard you calling the little girl Sissy which is also a nickname and I have heard your pops call them both pollywogs and Ethel ses it was only because we had not decided on the regular names and I had to call them something.

I ses Ethel a good nickname is very handy sometimes and she ses for instance the one they used to call you when you was a boy, I suppose? I ses who told you about any nickname of mine when I was a boy? Ethel ses why, Joe Turp, do I need somebody to tell me something about you when you was a boy when we were practically children together only you were quite a bit older? Haven't I known you all my life? Do you want me to remind you what the nickname was?

I ses Oh, you probably heard somebody call me some nickname just once but it wasn't a regular nickname that I had all the time. Ethel ses I seem to have heard it quite a lot of times. The nickname I heard was Rabbit Ears, Joe. Would you like to have your son Cornelius called Rabbit Ears? I ses no, Ethel, not any more than you would like to have your daughter called Chubby.

Ethel ses humph. I ses humph yourself. She ses Oh, no one ever called me that except a few of the girls in school and probably that old Abby Schultz reminded you of it. Besides it wouldn't mean anything now, would it Joe? I mean I am not somebody to be nicknamed Chubby any more, am I?

I ses I should say not, Ethel, but I am not so sure about your daughter Constance unless you start putting her on one of those diets you used to follow right away.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

The Scab

Dear Sir, I have been very busy lately helping my wife Ethel with the twins. I have been coming home early from work so I can push them around awhile in their buggy and in the evening I stay with them and let Ethel and her moms go to a movie.

Ethel's pops will not keep me company but goes down to Schultze's bar instead and drinks beers because he ses even the drunks around Schultze's are better company than babies although of course he is probably only joking. Personally, I do not mind staying in with the twins at all as they sleep most of the time.

Well, the other evening right after dinner the door-bell rang and I went to see who it was and there stood five guys from the neighbourhood who are all friends of mine and in fact three of them grew up with me in the same block. They are all about the same age and all not long out of the Army or the Navy except one guy by the name of Crowley who was in the Coast Guard.

I ses why hello guys. I ses it is sure a pleasure to see you all together and I would ask you in for a drink only I don't want to wake up the twins. I ses if you have come to see them you will have to make it another time because they are sound asleep.

Crowley ses Joe can we talk to you a few minutes? I ses why sure, but let's walk down the street a little ways so the twins won't hear our voices and make it snappy as Ethel and her moms are going to the movies and I am going to stay

with the kids. A guy by the name of Meyers who was in the same outfit with me in the Army ses Joe can't you go down to Schultze's with us so we can discuss our business over some beers?

I ses no, I won't have time for that. I ses let's discuss it right here and Crowley ses Joe you know we are all nice fellows and good pals of yours, don't you? I ses why certainly I know it. He ses you know we are all married and have babies the same as you and all our wives are good friends, too.

I ses well, none of you have got twins and he ses no, you are in front on us there, all right, but Joe you have always been a regular guy and we know you wouldn't scab on us for a million dollars if you knew you were doing it. I ses look, Crowley, don't be hinting I would scab on anybody if you know what's good for you.

Then a guy by the name of Fishy Martin ses well Joe, that is what you are doing when you are spending so much time taking care of those twins. You are being a non-union husband because all our wives are saying to us, why don't you stay home and mind the babies like that nice Joe Turp and let us go to the movies? Joe, those dames are making it tough on us and you are responsible even if you don't know it.

A guy by the name of Tiff Griffin ses yes Joe you are setting a very bad example around here and we have come as a committee representing the union husbands to ask you to lay off that stuff except maybe once a month and I ses well gentlemen I like to stay with those twins but I can see your point. I ses I will quit making it a bad habit right away and thank you for calling my attention to the matter.

So I went home and I ses to my wife Ethel and her moms, girls, I am afraid I can't stay with the twins tonight as I have got some business to attend to. I ses you will have to stay in yourself and Ethel ses why that's fine, Joe. Moms and I have been wondering when you was going too quit being so helpful and moms ses you have already lasted two weeks longer than she expected.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

If It Works the Way They Hope It Will

Dear Sir, out of a clear sky last night my wife Ethel ses Joe, do you think they have fixed it so there will never be another war? I ses why, Ethel, I hope so. I ses what made you think of that?

Ethel ses well, a number of things made me think of it, I guess. I was over to Mrs. Tyler's this afternoon again and she was sitting there with her hands in her lap looking at a picture of Willie. She sits that way nearly all the time since she finally heard from the war department that he was killed.

I ses I am glad you go to see her, Ethel. I ses Willie was a good son. Ethel ses yes, and I got to thinking what a terrible thing it was that Willie had to go all the way from this little corner of Brooklyn to the Philippines to get killed and Jakey Levine to Sicily and Freddy Williams to Germany. Joe, it made me sick at heart.

I ses well, it was too bad, Ethel, but that is war and she ses yes, that is war and it is war that you still go around limping a little when you used to walk so quick and proud and it is war that Tommy Katz has only one leg left and Richie Smith is out of his mind from his nerves and so many boys from this neighbourhood are hurt or sick.

I ses whoa, just a minute, Ethel, I ses you are not talking like the girl who was so cheerful when I went away to the war and laughed and sang to me and made me feel like I was only going on a picnic somewheres close by. Ethel ses well

I was not laughing or singing inside, I can tell you that, but if I had let on how bad I felt you would have felt bad too, because my feelings seem to be catching to you.

I ses yes, I think they are, Ethel. I ses, sweets, I feel just as bad about the fellows from this neighbourhood as you do, but there is nothing we can do about it except to always remember them and try to be nice to the ones they left behind like Mrs. Tyler. Ethel ses I will always remember them, Joe, but it makes me very sad that there are many people who have already forgotten them, and my pops ses it is always that way.

I ses I suppose it is, sweetheart, but as long as even just a few like you remember you will make up for all those who forget, but I think there must have been something else that gave you a spell today. I ses you go ahead and tell old Joe what happened and Ethel ses yes, I will Joe.

She ses it was when I got home and looked at my own son sleeping in his cradle and I got to thinking that probably Willie Tyler once looked as little and cute as my boy and now he is dead and buried thousands of miles from home because there was a war. I got to thinking, Joe, that the same thing could happen to Cornelius if there should be another war when he is as old as Willie was and I would have nothing left of him but his memory and a picture.

I ses Ethel, you should not let your mind dwell on morbid thoughts like that and make yourself unhappy. She ses I can't help it when there are so many things around me in this neighbourhood to make those thoughts but Joe, I am sorry you have caught me in this mood. I usually let it out talking to pops.

I ses well, Ethel, they have got a new set-up now that ought to prevent another war if it works the way they hope it will and Ethel ses Joe, I will pray that it works, not only for our little boy but for all the other little boys in the whole world.

Yours truly,
JOE TURP.

DOGS AND CATS

A Tough Town on Dogs

In the course of a long life I have owned many, many dogs and every time I have lost one on which my affection centred I have taken an oath to myself that I would never own another because the experience of loving and losing a favourite is too depressing. Then as time dulled the edge of my sorrow I have invariably found myself looking around for another dog.

It is not unfaithfulness to the memory of the dog that died. On the contrary, I think it is the tribute of a desire for continued canine companionship fostered by the last one. I would not like to be without a dog. I am aware that there are many persons who do not fancy dogs and while I do not understand this feeling, I concede their right to it. Only I wish they might have known little Nubbin when she was well and seen her glad responsiveness to a friendly word or look.

I find myself wandering about peering into the pet shop windows and watching the puppies at play, not at all disheartened by their environment, and wishing I could buy every last one of them and take them home with me.

Generally there are mature dogs, too, and they are a sad spectacle to me because in most cases I imagine they have had owners who for some reason have had to dispose of them and the poor dogs stand gazing around them in a bewildered manner.

I would like to take them home, too. Even more than the puppies they need a friend. They peer anxiously into every passing face, apparently hoping against hope that their old pals will reappear to lead them away. It would worry me if I had to put a dog on the market in that manner, though I am not criticising those compelled by circumstances to do so.

I notice a lot of unfamiliar canine breeds along the upper-bracket stretches of Fifth and Park and Madison Avenues, being aired by streamlined dames, or by maids or bellhops or janitors. Fashions in dogs are constantly changing in New York. My first dog in the big city over thirty years ago was a Boston Bull, then the last word even among the bong-tong though today it strikes me that the higherly barbered Pagliaccis of dogs, the miniature French Poodles are the thing.

Still, I saw a lady being dragged along by the Colony restaurant by a droopy looking Afghan hound and another was being towed by a huge wire-haired pointing griffon. I saw a pair of miniature Doberman pinschers on Park, the teeniest things you ever clapped eyes on, though the oddest sight I beheld was a fashionably dressed gal with a beagle. The combination looked great, too.

New York has always been a tough town for dogs and it is tougher now than ever before what with a rabies scare in the Bronx that has the cops rounding up dogs not on leashes and arresting and fining the owners. The dogs are destroyed if unclaimed in two days.

The keeping of a dog on a leash does not prevent it from using its teeth, of course, so I would pronounce that regulation asinine did I not always believe that a dog owner should not permit his dog to run loose in a congested area. He should use a leash for control. But the only safeguard against a dog biting is the muzzle as is demonstrated by the fact that in Great Britain where the muzzles are required on dogs at large, there has been no case of rabies in years.

However, our difficulty is we have no muzzle that does not seem inhumane and dog owners squawk about employing them. As far as New York's safety and the comfort of the dogs is concerned I suppose the solution would be to bar the canines from the big town entirely except in sections where they can be confined in yards. You can readily see what is meant by a dog's life, though you may not get the impact of the term as I will when the New York dog owners start taking pens in hand to me on that last recommendation.



Animal Psychosis

When I am in Southern California I throw all my sick-dog business to Dr. Eugene C. Jones, a smallish gentleman of highly professional mien, because he has a pet hospital of such appointment and sterilized atmosphere that I am hoping to later sneak in a few of my ailing friends, hospital accommodations in S. C. being mighty scarce these days.

I used to be real handy at doctoring up hunting dogs and pit bulls and just plain dogs, but when these house critters like Nubbin, the little red cocker spaniel, fall ill I send them to an expert because what could I get if I tried to help one and missed?

I could get plenty of hell, that is what I could get. Period.

So I told the lady to take Nubbin to Dr. Jones and she came back real excited because it seems that besides giving the doc a run down on Nubbin's dopey demeanour and refusal to eat filet mignon and paté de foie gras she threw in a narration of the little dog's habit of taking one of the lady's bedroom slippers, called "mules", or any article belonging to the lady that it can get hold of and lie in a secluded spot with its head on the article all day long.

"And what do you think?" the lady said. "Dr. Jones says Nubbin has a psychosis. He says the veterinarians are making quite a study of that now. We have got to give her B-1 vitamins. That will equalize her emotions and bring about a more normal state. Aren't you surprised?"

"At what?" I inquired. "The vitamins?"

"At Nubbin's psychosis", replied the lady.

I said uh-huh because I did not want to let her down on her news, but as a matter of fact I was not greatly surprised. According to the dictionary, psychosis is any psychic process or condition, whether in man or the lower animals, and I have long been a close observer of such condition in both. I mean man and the lower animals, with special reference to race horses.

I never bothered much about studying dogs, though the fat one called Sissy has struck me as being a bit on the simple side because she does nothing but eat and sleep. She will eat as long as there is a morsel to eat in sight. She will eat when it is obviously an effort to her and no pleasure. She reminds me of a roly-poly dame who knows she should refrain from eating but just can not help it.

Now psychosis in many race horses manifests itself in their friendship for goats or chickens or other critters, without which the horse is very restless. They correspond, I suppose, to Nubbin's "mules". The great Whirlaway had to be escorted to the post by his own lead pony, which was obviously a form of equine psychosis, because it was difficult to get him there without the pony.

Some of these horses will refuse to eat and lose weight when their favourite companions are kept from them. The late "Hummin' Bob" Smith once told me about a horse he trained by the name of Articulate that loved a mouse that hung around its stall and when this little mouse was carefully effaced by a stable hand one day the horse was greatly put out and wouldn't run a lick until they got another mouse, this time a white one. Bob said Articulate was colour blind. I guess maybe he was spoofing me.

I think Articulate was one of the best named horses that ever raced on American turf. He was out of an imported mare called Utter. Old Bob liked neat names. I am sure he had something to do with the superlative title that Mrs. Dodge Sloan, for whom Bob was training, applied to a foal by American Flag out of Golden Melody.

The title was National Anthem.

I had a horse once named So Sorry that I bought for \$400 out of a yearling sale at Saratoga. It was by Big Blaze out of that good mare Taps and I gave her to a farmer in New Hampshire because this horse developed a psychosis at a very early age.

This horse's psychosis took the form of an aversion to getting in front of other horses. I suppose if we had had time to analyze the emotional history of the horse we might have found why and corrected the matter, though remembering So Sorry's lack of speed I do not see how.

A Dog's Best Friend

The red cocker spaniel Nubbin, the one with the psychosis that I told you about, had to have her tonsils out and Doc Jones did the job quite neatly, with a lady assistant listening to Nubby's heart through a stethoscope and warning the doctor now and then to quit pushing the anaesthetic cone tighter.

"Her heart won't stand it", the lady would say.

Well, the tonsillectomy was quite successful, but on top of everything else Nubbin developed uremic poisoning.

She is a very sick little dog. She is getting thinner and weaker right before my eyes because her stomach will not retain nourishment. But she is a game little thing and still tries to move around as usual and to pretend great savageness toward the other dogs when they approach as she is guarding the lady's slipper or raincoat.

I keep Nubby with me as much as possible. You see, I too have been very ill and I know how lonesome one can get in illness, especially if in good health they enjoyed companionships, and though this is just a little old dog I remember how she has always loved the company of human beings, the sound of human conversation, and how responsive she has always been to a word or even a look.

I also remember she did not sidle away when I was ill, in the manner of many human beings from whom I thought I had the right to expect at least an inquiry. Their desertion made me a little sour for a time, which is strange enough in view of the fact no one knows better than I that all humanity is composed of 80 per cent jerks.

I should have known what would happen because I have seen it happen to others a thousand times before, not only in illness but in other bad luck. I suppose it is the old story of rats deserting the sinking ship, only the real rodents are generally better guessers than the human rats, as the latter often go tearing away from a ship that manages to stay afloat and then they have to sneak back and ingratiate themselves into a berth again.

But I can not blame them. They are only obeying instinct. They are only following what is said to be the first law of human nature—self-preservation. Little Nubbin would not understand this, being a dog, because her instinct when I was ill was not that I could no longer do her any good, that someone else might, but that I was still her friend and she was still mine. I reckon dogs are just dopes while human beings are real smart.

I will always remember a question from Bill Lengel, the magazine editor, who called on me one day during my convalescence, and when I kept replying "no" to his inquiries whether I had seen this and that fellow, asked:

"Damon, what becomes of a man's friends when he gets sick?"

I could not answer that one. It reminded me of a somewhat similar question asked by the once great theatrical producer, Charles Dillingham, at a time when he was broke and commencing to be forgotten along the big street, of which he was once one of the most glamorous and successful figures. He was sitting on a stool at a drugstore lunch

counter when a gabby guy who knew who he was took the stool beside him and began babbling.

"I wonder what's become of so-and-so?" he finally wondered, naming a Broadwayfarer who had sunk into obscurity.

"I don't know", said Dillingham, adding thoughtfully, "I wonder what's become of Dillingham?"

A few years ago a killing in New Jersey gave "Roaring Sam" Rosoff, the great subway builder, considerable newspaper notoriety, though it was never established that he had the slightest connection with the affair. I found Sam one summer day all alone on the veranda of his house in Saratoga Springs, and in no spirit of bitterness he told me of the way some of his supposedly closest friends took flight from him, including one man he had made a millionaire.

"I needed money to close some contracts, but all I saw of them was the back of their necks", said Sam musingly. "Oh, I was a little discouraged for a few minutes. Then a fellow I did not consider a particularly intimate friend put up \$3,000,000 cash for me and restored my confidence in humanity. His name was Charley Schwab."

Sheba and High Society

As I've explained, this cat Sheba is not really my cat. Her name is not even Sheba. That is only what I call her. I do not know her square monicker. I intended to ask her true owner, Miss Gertrude Neisen, when I saw the lady a few weeks ago, but in Miss Neisen's presence trivial questions seem utterly trivial.

I hope the "Nei" is correct, though it could be "Nie". Anyway, you pronounce it "Nee-sen". The spelling could be ambidextrous like that of Jerry Geisler, the famous Los Angeles lawyer, who lists himself in the telephone directory as "Gie" and "Gei" and responds with equal amiability to "Gee" or "Guy".

Miss Neisen is the charming singing star who is my landlady. Now just a minute, gentlemen. She owns the house in Holmby Hills, West Los Angeles, California, where I temporarily set up a branch of my hermit business, but with the main office still on Hibiscus Island down in Dade County, Florida, of course. That is all, gentlemen. Miss Neisen is a landed proprietor of no mean proportions. Or should I say landed-lady? No, I guess I shouldn't.

She once made the front pages by bidding in for \$26,000 one of those marble palaces at Newport built by some jillionaire and in spite of the fact that the water pipes burst and flooded the joint causing considerable damage she subsequently sold the place at a big profit. She owns at least one other house in Los Angeles besides that which I share with Sheba the cat and I think she recently bought one in New York City, so when everybody is running out of houses Miss Neisen will be all hunky-dory.

I have examined my agreement with the lady and I fail to find any clause relating to my upkeep of Sheba the cat, but I have willingly accepted this unexpected responsibility because I noticed that she seemed to have many high-toned callers, including a golden bobtailed Manx, a fawn-coloured Angora, the spittin' image of Sheba herself, a big blue Angora, and divers and sundry others I could not identify because I am not really a cat-man.

But I thought they were all Sheba's suitors and having heard that among my neighbours are Miss Claudette Colbert, Miss Irene Dunne, Miss Fanny Brice and others of the cinema elite I was highly flattered. Thinks I to myself, if Sheba can contract a really classy union with one of these feline dudes I might horn myself into the best social circles of Holmby Hills as her sponsor.

To show these swells, meaning the cats, that Sheba was no blowser, I had set out for them such delicacies of the season as boiled fish heads, and sometimes raw liver and chicken giblets and presently Sheba had a veritable salmon. A Siamese joined the festive board one day and then I figured we were as good as in, socially. I figured this must be Miss

Colbert's cat, at least.

But now I am commencing to have my doubts about the visitors. It is obvious that their intentions are not serious and probably not honourable. The blue Angora snitches the choicest portions of fish right from under Sheba's velvet nose. The bob-tailed Manx cops all the gizards on her and the fawn Angora drinks her milk. They are eating us out of house and home.

I have given up on Sheba as a social wedge. I think she must be a dope to tolerate these free-loaders, and so am I for not taking Al Ellum Club and passing among the pussys and knocking their ears down. But they are invariably so ravenous that I am disturbed by the thought that but for my bounty they might perforce go hungry to bed. Maybe I ought to take my tidbits around among the owners.

Up to the time of meeting Sheba I had no great passion for cats. I never owned but one and that was a big white cat that was given me when I was occupying the penthouse on the roof of the Forrest Hotel high over West Forty-ninth and boasted the only live cricket ever on Broadway.

I had a big box of growing flowers in a window box of the penthouse that I bought from a florist and presumably the cricket came in the box. Anyway, all one summer it chirped away like mad and Broadwayfarers flocked to my door in droves asking permission to sit and listen to the song of the cricket.

Well, suddenly the song ceased and was never heard again and since it seemed unreasonable that the cricket had taken it on the duffy out of there after all the kind treatment bestowed upon it, I was finally forced to the conclusion that that big old white cat had corralled my cricket.

I was pretty hot under the collar about the matter and dismissed the white cat from my life immediately but I was not as hot as a delegation of Broadway gents when they came to my place that evening and learned of the disappearance of the cricket. They had planned to use it as a gambling medium by wagering on how often it would chirp within a given space of time.

I was very cool toward all cats thereafter until as I say Sheba came along, although I always exchanged courteous greetings with the cat belonging to Jack Duffy the actor, which would ride on his shoulder into Lindy's and other shots.



HEARTY APPETITES

Dieting Dames

We read a piece in a magazine which said that the ladies of the United States are spending \$25,000,000 a year on reducing.

We consider this a most alarming revelation. It discloses a situation that is a dire economic threat to the nation. In our opinion it calls for Congressional action. By making reducing a penal offence, Congress could not only save the \$25,000,000 that is spent annually in the absorption of lard, but could add double that amount to various fields of industrial endeavour.

Let us take carpentry for example. If the ladies were compelled to permit nature to take its course in expansion, the employment of skilled artisans and the sale of lumber, nails, etc., would be vastly increased on the one item of theatre and grandstand seats, not to mention dining room chairs and loveseats for the home. The bodies of automobiles would have to be enlarged, thus adding to the use of materials in the automobile industry. All this new business would naturally percolate down to the mills and the foundries and to the forests where the lumber grows.

Or we might consider the garment trade. But for this reducing stuff, the ladies would require more goods in their dresses and other apparel, and consequently more workmanship. Girdles would have to be larger.

The fur industry and consequently the lowly trappers of the Far North woods would benefit by the abatement of reducing. Where now a mouse's skin suffices to cover some of the attenuated ladies you see around these days, it would take a couple of moose hides to shield every fair form from the inclemencies of the weather under a non-reducing regime. Grocers and bakers and dairymen and traders in all foodstuffs would enjoy unprecedented prosperity because the ladies would be eating up to the full measure of their normal craving, which is terrific.

Restaurant owners would thrive. The doctors would flourish. The ladies would be devoting the time they now waste on reducing to increasing the population. We think this is quite important to the Democratic Party. It is a well-known fact that Democratic ladies go in for reducing to a greater extent than the Republican ladies and here we find a threat to the Democratic majority. We consider it partly treason for the Democratic ladies to be shedding suet at the cost of neglecting the vote of the future.

Of course, this whole business of reducing traces to error on the part of the ladies with reference to the fancy of the gentlemen. The ladies think the gentlemen prefer them thin. It is a curious fallacy that has existed in the minds of the ladies for years. They almost kill themselves sloughing blubber thinking to enhance their appearance in the eyes of the gentlemen, whereas the gentlemen like them looking better nourished.

When a gentleman goes home at night worn out from his day's work, it is no pleasure for him to see in the doorway a veritable apparition, reminding him of the sharp edges of human existence. What he wants to see is something that fills the doorway from jamb to jamb with a softness suggesting comfort and repose. And let us tell you something else: A gentleman finds no tranquillity in the uneasy flittings about the house of a shadowy remnant of reducing. He much prefers the solidity of an unreduced presence that in the still watches of the night makes itself known by those stertorous inhalations and exhalations of peaceful slumber that prove it is not a ghost.

We might here paraphrase Shakespeare:

*"I like them not the lean and hungry ladies,
Give me the fat dames who sleep o' nights."*

But if you ask us why the gentlemen do not state their preferences and thus end the reducing, we must say that there are enough things already to argue about with the ladies. Let us not dig up any new subjects.

Now we do not say that a lady should not go on a diet, if she feels so disposed. No, we do not say that. If a lady thinks that by refraining from food in its more solid and nutritious forms, she can shake off those bulges that some deem inimical to pleasing proportions and to the wearing of the new narrow line dress, it is all right.

But we do say that when she goes on a diet, the lady should not make the process disturbing to mankind. She should not permit it to interfere with the happiness of husbands and waiters. She should omit gestures, such as the one reflecting horror when the man starts to place a little dab of butter on her plate. We hold that there is no sense in dramatizing this situation. Her slight wave of the index finger, and a gently whispered "No butter, please", will accomplish the same purpose as a full arm sweep and an elocutionary "NO! NO! TAKE IT AWAY!" The exclamation points suggest that she has caught the poor waiter red-handed in some sneaky enterprise, whereas in buttering the client he is merely performing his appointed duty.

The attitude of a lady on a diet toward a well-meaning waiter is generally most deplorable. The waiter approaches her all aglow with cheerfulness and the menu in hand, and she responds to his pleasant greetings with a distinct chill. She almost knocks the proffered card out of his duke. When in accordance with the functions of his office he politely offers suggestions of healthful fodder, her replies are impatient, sharp and frequently unkind.

But never mind about the waiters. It is the husbands we are really thinking of. The husbands get a raw deal from the ladies on a diet. The husbands are gradually forced into a disinterest in food that is bad for a nation that is trying to build up its manpower. It is no good for restaurant owners, meat packers, vegetable growers or fish peddlers either.

We took two ladies to dinner the other evening. Both were on a diet. One had a cup of soup, the other a spot of salad. That was all. Offhand you might say this was a pretty good break for us, considering it from an economic standpoint. Their restraint in the matter of food naturally cut down the overhead. But the smallest possible check could not have compensated us for the mental discomfort involved in dining with two ladies on a diet.

You see, we are a good man up there at the manger. A sound, two-listed eater. Our favourite orchestration is the munch-munch of jaws. But sitting there between those two ladies on a diet, and us happy as a clam in anticipation of the impending sport, we soon became aware of a heavy pall over the situation. It began when the waiter brought on our soup, a thick creamy bisque of cauliflower that gave off a most delicious aroma.

Up to that moment the ladies had been chatting with reasonable cheerfulness about their respective diets, and the short-comings of mutual friends. We had offered no comment on their restricted fodder.

Our motto is live and let live. But as we tested the acoustics of the soup, we could not help remarking that it was beautiful. Well, it was.

Then our gaze travelling across a laden spoon to the opposite side of the table caught an ominous glint in the orbs of one of the ladies on a diet. We do not say there was murder in her eyes. It was more like simple assault and battery. The other lady on a diet sat there in a silence that was positively accusing.

Unaware of any guilt, we spoke highly of a nice little broiled trout that followed the soup. But by the time the fried chicken, Florida style, came on, with corn fritters and cream gravy, and a few other little odds and ends, we were having a dreadful time maintaining a conversation. Those two ladies on a diet just sat and glared at us, and we felt they were thinking, "Pig", and "How disgusting", and it made us mighty self-conscious. It was then we realized the deleterious effect on mankind of the practice of the ladies going on diets.

The gloom hurt our appetite. We were just barely able to wade on through a wedge of peach pie with a gob of ice cream on top of it, and a few cups of coffee (with cream and sugar). We were downright unhappy when we left the place with those two silent ladies, and our state of mind was not enhanced when one of them said (with a knife in her voice):

"You did that on purpose!"

The Way of All Food

Seven orders of chicken, 10 orders of potatoes, 9 glasses of orange juice, 2 quarts of milk, 1 giant salad, 5 egg salads, 5 orders of rolls, 5 orders of pie with ice cream.

This is the food and drink consumed at one sitting by a soldier of Fort McPherson, an incident that for some reason (not entirely clear to me) was deemed worthy of publication in the newspapers with pictures of the consumer.

I think it possible that the newspapers consider Salvatori a big eater. I would not say so. I would say he is a fairly hearty eater, *not* big. But you do not hear much about real big eaters since rationing came in and, among the present crop, I suppose Salvatori may stand out. But he is *not* big.

Certainly he is not to be mentioned in the same breath with some of the old time eaters I have written about in this column, such as "Diamond Jim" Brady, a millionaire gourmet of years ago. Do you see where the Salvatori menu includes nine glasses of orange juice? Well, "Diamond Jim" used to drink the juice of a case of oranges on opening one eye in the morning and another case on opening the other eye, according to report; and after that would have a dozen porterhouse steaks smothered in chops for breakfast.

I love the exploit credited to "Diamond Jim" in a raw oyster eating contest against the champion of the State of Maryland who stipulated that a barrel of raw oysters be placed in front of each contestant, the one first devouring the contents of his barrel within a specified time to be awarded the belt.

Well, Jim is supposed to have demurred at the conditions because he was not familiar with oysters, but the Maryland champ was insistent and finally Jim asked permission to go in a side room of the hall where the contest was held and consider the situation before deciding whether to go through with the catch, or default.

He came out of the room in about half an hour wiping his mouth with a big silk handkerchief, nodded okay and went on and won the struggle hands down, eating all his oysters while his opponent quit at two-thirds of the barrel.

"But do you know", Jim is supposed to have said afterwards, "I wasn't dead sure I could eat a whole barrel of oysters until I went in that side room and tried one."

The mighty Indian athlete, Jim Thorpe, was once accounted an eater good enough to win an Olympic eating contest if there had been one on the programme, but I doubt that he can eat up to his old form. He is getting on in years and, as a man ages, his stomach shrinks.

At least that is what the medicos tell me and it seems borne out by the case of Feab Smith Williams, otherwise George Godfrey, a large prize fighter who was also sometimes known as "The Black Shadow of Leiper ville". In his youth George is said to have tossed off two dozen stewed muskrats under the impression that they were squirrels, but the best he could do against the same fodder later in life was twenty-three at a sitting.

It has long been my ambition to develop the greatest eater in history and for a time I thought I had the man in Walter Stewart, a brilliant young sports writer from down Memphis way. He was on Broadway but a short time, but he had restaurant keepers hiding their chairs when he hove in sight to avoid serving him at the prices that then prevailed.

Stewart went back to Memphis after awhile to keep from starving to death on short portions here. Anyway, he is out of consideration for the time being, and it is no secret that I have centred my hopes on Bill Girard, a handsome picture producer at Twentieth Century-Fox in Hollywood.

It is my opinion that the eating of a cooked elephant would be an eating exploit that would go ringing down the corridors of time and an elephant is the goal of my ambition for my champ. Bill is now up to eating a horse, so he thinks

an elephant will be a shoveover for him in a few months.

But what is the use of me telling you these things? You will probably think I am just fibbing.

Attitudes While Eating

In contemplating restaurant eaters, I find that the most common is the apologetic type.

He says: "I'm not very hungry. I had a big lunch. I just want something light."

If you are the host and are taking the grunt, or check, that is good news for you in these days when the genial bonifaces are charging for their vittles by the karat.

"Waiter, what could I have that's light?" the guy asks. "No, not roast lamb. That's heavy. In fact, I had roast lamb for lunch. Let me see. Well, all right, I'll take the corned beef and cabbage. That's light."

The waiter starts away and the man calls him back, saying:

"You'd better bring me a cup of bean soup first and a glass of beer and I'll have some boiled potatoes and a nice combination salad with my dinner. I'll have my coffee with my dessert."

Then he casually nibbles up a loaf of bread while waiting for his order, remarking:

"I ought to know better than eat a big lunch. It always spoils my dinner, but I had nothing for breakfast this morning except some fruit and coffee and a couple of eggs and felt empty by noon."

When his dinner arrives he comments:

"The guy who runs this joint must be making a fortune. His portions are getting smaller and smaller. It's just as well I'm not hungry."

Then, as he ploughs through the viands with great vigour, he says apologetically:

"Do you know this tastes so good it gives me an appetite."

The ladies are the greatest apologetic eaters. They generally alibi with the matter of poundage. A dame hefting a ton will say coyly:

"I have to watch my calories. But I'm on a binge tonight so I will have some of that delicious-looking chicken fricassee."

The apologetic female eater manages to make it appear that she is doing the host a favour by eating a few pecks of provender though, as I say, with prices what they are now in the taverns, she would undoubtedly be doing the poor soul a favour by laying off the grub.

The indifferent eater is also male and female and a most insidious type. This is the eater who, when the waiter proffers a menu, pushes it aside and says languidly:

"Oh, just bring me anything. I'm not particular. Anything at all. What's the rest of them having? Stew? Oh, all right. Just bring me some raw oysters, a porterhouse steak with a few sliced tomatoes, some French fried potatoes and a little

stewed corn. Eating doesn't really interest me."

The dissatisfied eater is practically synonymous with the knocking eater. I mean, he is one and the same. He does not like the food, the service, the atmosphere or anything else about the establishment in which he is eating and expresses himself to that effect between bites that finally devastate an enormous amount of fodder. In other words, he knocks and eats and eats and knocks simultaneously.

Of all the many types of eaters I have studied and classified, I think I like the unashamed eater best. He is the one that tears into his chuck without embarrassment and eats until the cows come home without offering any apologies or kicking about anything whatever. He is concerned only with the business of satisfying the inner man. He eats what is set before him and eats all of it.

This type makes the best husband.

Occasionally you find an unashamed eater among the ladies but not often.

I like, too, the enthusiastic eater who boosts as he eats, saying he never tasted such marvellous meat and vegetables in his whole life though this one can become monotonous after awhile. Still, at his most boresome he is better than the eater who keeps boosting every place in town other than the one he is in at the moment.

Dinner Despoilers

If the members of there-oughta-be-a-law association will come to order we will present a situation familiar to all that cries aloud for summary action.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are dining in a quiet restaurant with no sounds audible to the ear other than the normal noises incident on the inhalation of soup and the mastication of the more solid forms of sustenance.

Among you and around conversation is reduced to a low, genteel murmur. The waiters slip around with velvet tread. The atmosphere is orderly and restful. Then suddenly there appears on the scene a party of men and women who have been doing a little elbow-bending prior to their arrival, and who are, in fact, three or four or five sheets in the wind, as the saying is.

They enter in great confusion. The dames are giggling, the guys are laughing uproariously. One of them has perhaps just related a dirty story. They advance into the room still giggling and laughing, but in ever-increasing volume. One guy is sure to direct a few witticisms at the head waiter as he escorts them to a table, though he be a man of dignified demeanour, striving to perform his duty with dignity.

Now there comes the business of seating the party, which is usually directed in a loud tone of voice, and with frequent switchings of the arrangements, by one of the dames, presumably the hostess, and all this to the accompaniment of more of the giggling and laughing and wisecracks by the inevitable comedian or comedians of the group. Often there is more than one comedian.

Now that they are finally seated, after much disorder, the matter of preliminary drinks is taken up, and this leads to an almost endless discussion, all in loud tones, but it is not a patching to what comes when the party starts ordering the viands. There are frequent interruptions by various ladies discoursing on why they cannot eat this or that and what happened to them the last time they did, and maybe one of the comedians works in another dirty story, which produces gales of laughter and distinctly offends the sensibilities of the waiter.

Well, by this time the new arrivals are in complete possession of the premises, their noise wrecking the quiet and decorum like a bomb dropped through the ceiling. They are apparently unaware of the presence of anyone else in the place. They submerge even the low murmur of those at the other tables. They are impervious to the reproving glances directed at them, or of the helpless shoulder shrugs and eyebrow liftings of the boss of the joint as he stands regarding them in hateful aversion.

Presently you find not only your repose upset, but your enjoyment of your food seriously hampered. You feel an attack of indigestion coming on. And all the while the party gets noisier and more unrestrained and more boorish generally and you depart with a feeling that your dinner hour has been utterly ruined, and that brings us to the purpose of these remarks to this assemblage.

It is our suggestion that we pass resolutions directed to our lawmakers instructing them to forthwith produce legislation that will make it quite legal for docile diners to pass about among parties such as we have described with a stocking full of mustard and beat the bejimmy out of each and every one. And that furthermore it shall be mandatory on all restaurant proprietors to keep in stock a supply of Michel Finnborgs, otherwise known as Mickey Finns, to be administered at his discretion, and on request by his quiet customers, to the various members, male and female, of liquor-laden parties that seem to think when they enter a gustatory gaff that it belongs to them, lock, stock and barrel, to disorganize and disrupt to suit their pleasure.

We feel some reluctance about bringing charges against the fair sex, but we are commencing to suspect that many ladies take a sadistic pleasure in swooping down on a table at which gentlemen are seated at those inopportune moments of ingestion. The other evening we saw a lady in a telephone booth in Lindy's watching a party of ladies and gentlemen of her acquaintance at a near-by table and we noticed that she lurked in ambush until the waiter served the goulash and then she rushed out and made for the table.

When a lady approaches a table at which gentlemen are seated, the gentlemen are supposed to rise and stand. So, naturally, the gentlemen had to leap up at her approach, being gentlemen, and as they all had their mouths loaded with goulash, a most painful scene ensued. Some of them managed to get the goulash down, but one of them was not so fortunate and stood there gulping like a boa constrictor suddenly disturbed while inhaling a sheep, and the lady watched him with an expression that indicated she was enjoying herself.

We do not have the faintest doubt that she carefully planned all this distress. She could have emerged from the booth before the arrival of the goulash or after it had been taken care of by the gentlemen, but no. She lingered until she could hit the bull's eye. We have two witnesses besides ourself of the lady's sinister actions.

The purpose of the lady's approach may be to join the party, or it may be just to pause and exchange greetings with other ladies at the table, and this exchange is apt to take from one to ten minutes, during which the gentlemen are supposed to remain standing, although of course the lady always implores: "Please sit down", just as she always says on approaching: "Please don't get up."

Now we are one gentleman who is inclined to take the lady at her word in both cases, but especially in the first instance, because nine times out of ten she seems to time her approach at the instant we have inserted a big hunk of steak in the kisser and commenced to masticate. Thus we are compelled to arise with bulging cheeks and stand there mumbling "blup-blup", what with the stymie to speech imposed by the steak, and we are here to tell you that this is an embarrassing moment to us.

Well, then, you are saying as you read this, why do you get up at all? All right, we will tell you. We have tried remaining seated, but invariably we get a kick on the ankle under the table by way of a reminder of our manners, and we have come to prefer choking to death to sustaining a chipped ankle bone, which can be a very serious injury. Who kicks us? Ask any married gentlemen.

Another thing, when a lady who is a member of a party, quits the table for those purposes for which ladies commonly quit tables, including dancing, the gentlemen present are supposed to rise at her departure, and rise again on her return,

which we claim is one of the most enervating customs known to society, especially when you get a lady who is constantly going and coming from a table. A gentleman can get himself all tuckered out with one of these dames in the course of an evening.

Personally, we have hit upon a compromise in this matter. We just sort o' go through the motion of rising, occasionally going so far as to elevate the hip pockets about half an inch from the chair, but immediately dropping them back again, and we find that this satisfies the social amenities. However, we have come to the decision that if the ladies impose any more physical exercise on the role of a gentleman, we are going to quit trying to be one.

(Echo from the living room: "You are, are you?")

Holiday Hospitality

We used to know a fellow who became a bit of a sadist around holiday time. He did not marry until he was in his late thirties and his bachelor days had been quite gay and carefree, or anyway, gay. He married a nice girl who was a fine housekeeper and an excellent cook and made a nice home for him, but we suspect that he had periods of envy of his former bachelor pals.

When a holiday like Thanksgiving or Christmas was approaching he would catch one of these pals in an unguarded moment and invite the poor guy to dinner in his home. He would first buy the prospect a few drinks to soften him up and would then condole with him on the utter loneliness of the bachelor state at this festive period of year, painting such a dreary picture that the victim would soon lapse into tears of sympathy for himself, though given time for sober reflection he would realize that he was not lonely at all.

Our villain would expatiate on the skill of his wife, Myra, in wrestling a turkey and would throw in a few little sketches of the joys of drawing up to a well-laden table surrounded by beaming kissers and would eventually draw from his tearful quarry a remark that he would love that sort of thing himself. Then our sinister schemer would plunge home the invitation to dinner, and it was an even money bet that his prey would accept unless he had been smartened up by previous experience.

Now that was all apparently innocent enough—an invitation to dinner. But the menace in this tale would then mention in an offhand manner the hour, which he always made around 2 o'clock p.m., a circumstance that for years puzzled his wife, Myra, who did not realize his sadistic tendency and would just as soon have had the dinner at the more civilized hour of 8 p.m. But her cruel husband convinced her that he liked the midday feast because it reminded him of his boyhood days.

Now, of course, he knew very well that his guest would go out with the boys (and maybe the girls) and get himself good and loaded the night before the fateful day, in accordance with the time-honoured holiday custom of bachelors, and probably sleep until noon, and get up with sad stomach and the most awful taste in his mouth. To guard against any late cancellations on the grounds of sudden calls out of the city or sickness or deaths in the family, the foul host would keep calling up his man and tell him how hard Myra was working on the dinner and how her heart would be broken if the guy failed to show up.

So, of course, the unfortunate soul would go to the dinner regardless of his physical suffering, and the first thing the host would do, fiend in human form that he was, would be to plant one of the kids, preferably a baby, on the bloke's lap, and the baby would immediately start to cry, thus increasing the guest's already splitting headache. However, this was just a minor circumstance, to what happened to the gee when the dinner was put on the table in a dining room that the host purposely overheated.

The poor bachelor's plate would be piled high with turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes and turnips, cranberry sauce, etc., and if he managed to struggle through a bit of it the inhuman monster who had invited him there would keep slapping on more provisions, saying the good wife would feel perfectly dreadful if he did not eat every smitch. And all this, you understand, would be happening to a guy with a horrible hangover at around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when just thinking of a glass of orange juice made him gag, while meantime the host would be excusing himself every few minutes and going into an adjoining room and laughing himself silly over the guest's agony.

We have not seen that host in some time, but we are told that he was found one Christmas Eve in an alleyway with both legs broken, and while we do not vouch for the story we have heard that he was set upon by several of his victims of past years, aided and abetted by a bachelor who had promised to be at the fellow's house for dinner the following day and was looking for an out.

Talking Turkey

You can have my share of the turkey.

In my opinion it is the most overrated critter for eating purposes in kingdom come but the most striking example we have of the power of propaganda.

This has reached a point where all our citizens endeavour to eat turkey on Thanksgiving and Christmas including members of tribes that cannot possibly have any natural gustatory affinity for the bird and probably think they are merely obeying some law of the land.

I am seizing upon this particular time to express myself on the subject of the turkey for the reason that there is such a shortage of the fowl that the turkey producers and dealers are selling all they can lay their hands on and therefore will not care what I say whereas in times when they find themselves with an over-plus they would scream that I was knocking their industry.

Nothing is farther from my mind. I just do not happen to care for turkey except as I shall explain later, and I think that our supposed national taste for turkey is the result of some intimidation. I mean our people who would rather be dead than out of fashion have been induced to believe that at certain seasons you either eat turkey or you are plumb out of style.

The newspapers and magazines publish pictures of the turkey as regularly as clockwork disclosing it as a beautiful and regal thing whereas it is rather homely, in my judgment, and they depict small boys apparently avidly devouring drumsticks or legs of the turkey, the most unpalatable segments of the fowl imaginable.

Just now the newspaper and magazine vogue in turkey pictures is of soldiers nibbling at turkey meat with an implied relish that I can scarcely reconcile with what I hear of Army cooking especially when it is common knowledge that few restaurant chefs have ever been able to cope with the turkey and that the only place where it is ever properly prepared is the American home. Or rather some of them.

Little children who do not get turkey on holiday occasions are made to feel less fortunate than millions of others of their kind and are apt to be most unhappy about the matter and I am always regretful that I cannot go among them and cheer them with the assurance that they are really pretty lucky, especially if they have chicken or duckling or young goose as a substitute.

These fowl I hold above turkey gastronomically and as far as I am concerned it is also out-ranked as food by pheasant, grouse, quail or even squab except as I have suggested above under certain circumstances. I am thinking now

of baby turkey which must be broiled to be of any account and which is properly cooked and served in only a few spots in the United States.

One of these is the famous Colony restaurant in New York City, an establishment infested largely by the Bong Tong, where broiled baby turkey may have originated as a regular item of restaurant cuisine.

I have heard that the late O. O. McIntyre who was a steady customer of the Colony was its first pronounced booster and mainly because of his fancy it was kept on the menu.

It is served at the Colony with a sauce composed of mustard and applesauce which may strike some of my readers as slightly bizarre but which I assure them is quite a thing. One other restaurant to my knowledge is making a special point of broiled baby turkey and that is Mike Romanoff's in Beverly Hills though the introduction was attended by an unfortunate happenstance.

It seems that Joe Malatesta, the maître d'hôtel of the Romanoff premises approached a picture producer whose current offering was putting people to sleep and said: "A little baby turkey perhaps, sir?" Well, the producer thought Joe was being insulting and got up and excited in the highest dudgeon seen in Beverly Hills in many a day.

Free-Loading Ethics

In a discussion among some young and rather inexperienced free-loaders recently the question was raised as to the ethics of differing with the host on any topic that may come up at the table or over the canapés. A free-loader is a confirmed guest. He is the man who is always willing to come to dinner.

Personally we do not consider the question an ethical proposition at all. It is a matter of diplomacy, and diplomacy should always be one of the first considerations of the free-loader if he has any regard for his art.

As a rule, a host likes to be agreed with or he would not be a host. If he wanted people to disagree with him, he would not bother assembling them at some expense about a table with him. He would step down to the corner and find plenty of disagreement at no cost, except perhaps a doctor's bill. Young free-loaders should always remember this psychology of the host.

When the host is at the head of the table giving off gas, the free-loader should listen as attentively as possible, confining his own remarks to a few terse observations of agreement. He should never go beyond half a dozen words at a time because lengthier comment would necessitate the host pausing and a host does not like to pause. We offer, not as stock models, but as suggestions for the free-loader, the following:

1. You're a hunner puh cen' right.
2. Absolutely.
3. Positively.
4. I understand.
5. Of course.
6. Yes.

We think No. 4 is the best of them all for a young free-loader just starting out on his career. It suggests that he is intelligent and that the host's remarks have a flattering clarity. Veteran free-loaders usually reduce the formula to an occasional nod of the head. This enables them to maintain their free-loading without interruption, while at the same time keeping in complete agreement with the host.

If there is also a hostess present, the veteran glances at her from time to time as he tastes a dish and nods and smiles to indicate to her that this is free-loading stuff worthy of the gods. You can usually identify a veteran free-loader by a crease across the back of his neck from excessive nodding.

We believe it impolitic ever to disagree with a host even though the free-loading may be of such mediocre quality as to make the free-loader wholly indifferent about a return engagement. It is an old trick of veteran free-loaders to stir up an argument with a host whose cuisine is not of the best, just to escape further attendance at his board. We say there is always a chance of improvement. We have known it to happen.

We remember a host in Wilmington, Delaware, who had a terrible cook. She was so bad that the free-loaders got to taking issue with the host as soon as he started in panning Mr. Roosevelt. Naturally he eliminated them from his invitation list. Then he married the cook and as she refused to do any further wrestling with pots and pans he had to get another whose cooking became the wonder of the countryside, and the banned free-loaders almost went crazy hearing of the marvels they were now denied.

Even when a host presents his free-loading in bad restaurants it is best to bear with him, in our opinion. He may one day switch restaurants. We do not hold with the theory that poor free-loading is better than no free-loading at all, but we do believe in stringing with a host until it is a dead sure thing that there is no hope for him. You have to be fair in this world.

As a matter of fact, many veteran free-loaders are quite choosy about their hosts. Some insist on knowing what is on the menu before accepting an invitation. We recently heard of one out in Hollywood, California, who declines to be seated next to a certain hostess because she spoils his appetite. We must say we consider this rather technical.

The free-loading in Hollywood is supposed to be the best in the United States, especially in the private homes of the inmates of the movie capital. It is said that Hollywood preserves to a higher degree than any other community in the country the true science of cuisine in the home. The veteran free-loaders out there have the different homes rated according to the quality of their free-loading. Some are accounted strictly B productions, but many of them are said to be epics.

We ran into an old-time free-loader from out there not long ago and he said he would rate the Hollywood free-loading the best in the whole world. He has travelled much and free-loaded in many different places. He said Montgomery, Alabama, is second to Hollywood, and Minneapolis is third. He said New York City is absolutely the tail-ender, bar Brooklyn. His mother lives in Brooklyn.

Napkin Technique

Abe Lastfogel, the New York theatrical booking agent, wants to know if it is proper to tuck the napkin in around the shirt collar when dining.

One corner of the serviette should be inserted in the collar just below the Adam's apple and tucked down with the index finger about half an inch, so that it will not be dislodged by the undulations of the throat muscles in the process of swallowing. The rest of the napkin should be permitted to flow triangular-wise across the chest like an old-fashioned dickey.

If it is a napkin expansive enough to permit two other corners to be secured under the suspenders on either side of the diner's chest, so much the better. This will give a flat, smooth effect, which is much neater than when the napkin just dangles downward by one corner from the collar as if it were on a washline. It is also much more protective, especially on soup which sometimes sprays off at unexpected angles from the spoon when you blow on it for cooling purposes.

We realize that in speaking for the flat effect we are disagreeing with those authorities who hold that the bulk of the napkin should be bunched up under the chin. We consider this arrangement inartistic and also old-fashioned. It probably goes back to the days when many gentlemen diners wore beards and it was considered a good scheme to mop up the overflow as near the source as possible.

We realize, too, that we are at variance with that school of thought that contends for the napkin laid across the lap and sneers at the napkin suspended from the collar as a breach of etiquette. However, we are inclined to dismiss the napkin in the lap as sheer affectation. We defy anyone to prove that the napkin so located is either decorative or effective, save as it serves the lady diners as a buffer for their finger nails or as a wiper for their lipstick and even they could just as well use the edge of the tablecloth.

Surely it will not be denied that there is much waste motion involved in the napkin in the lap which is eliminated by the napkin in the collar. The thing is elemental. A gentleman diner in the course of a single meal will lift his napkin from his lap and replace it at least a half dozen times, which represents a certain loss of muscular energy. If he has his napkin in his collar he can employ all his strength on his food, without even lowering his hands below the surface of the table.

If in the course of his dining his countenance requires the occasional attention of that delicate nature for which the napkin is designed, his wife ought to be able to take care of the matter with a few loving dabs with her kerchief. A man at his dining should not be troubled by details. Nor should he have to deal with the element of worry which enters into the situation of the napkin in the lap.

A gentleman diner with his napkin so placed has to keep thinking about the hazards of spots on his necktie and weskit, or, if in evening clothes, on his shirt bosom. This is mental disturbance and doctors will tell you that mental disturbance reduces appetite. It is a scientific fact that no man with his napkin in his lap can eat as heartily as the diner who wears it in his collar.

The difference in food consumption between these diners when they are in street clothes is perhaps 25 per cent, in evening clothes it is 50 per cent. That is to say, the man in evening clothes dining with the napkin in his lap will eat only half as much food as a diner in evening clothes with his napkin in his collar. The former will not only be worrying about spotting his shirt bosom but about the remarks his wife will make if he does.

We do not know who first conceived the idea of the napkin in the lap but it may have been some laundryman of the genius of a George Preston Marshall who wanted to increase the laundry business. Certainly it could not have been with any thought of beautifying the appearance of diners, especially the ladies when they are dining in those evening gowns with the low necks. We think some of them would be much improved if they tied their napkins around their necks and thus provided themselves with awnings.

Maybe the same genius who thought up the idea of the napkin in the lap also invented the paper napkin, which is a total loss to a man who likes to tuck his napkin in his collar. The liquids seep right through the paper and even as soft an object as a loose boiled potato bouncing off the chest is apt to cut right through a paper napkin and scatter. The only thing to do in an establishment that insists on providing paper napkins is to borrow a bib.

Much of the romance and picturesqueness of dining would pass away if the napkin in the collar was abolished. The spectacle of a diner so panoplied is cheerful and argues a well-fed fellow, who enjoys his food. Moreover, it is a democratic gesture of which we have too few left in this country.

The napkin in the lap has its staunch adherents. They are mostly skinny persons. However, we think that even they will concede the superiority of the napkin in the collar when they are advised of the origin of the napkin in the lap as explained by William Moffitt. Mr. Moffitt states that the napkin in the lap was born of skulduggery. He says it goes back to a most corrupt era in England in the 18th century, when Walpole was Prime Minister.

It seems that Walpole used to like to pass a little money around among his deserving political followers, especially those in the social set. He would give big dinners and the guests would find theirs in their folded napkins. It was much

more genteel than just taking them into the powder room or up an alleyway and handing it to them in an envelope.

Before Walpole introduced this classy method of taking care of the boys, the napkin in the collar was the vogue. But naturally a guest at a Walpole dinner soon got leery of shaking out his napkin preparatory to unfurling it 'neath his second chin, lest he inadvertently strike a lady across the table in the eye with a flying pound sterling.

That would have caused gossip. The guests soon learned to drop the napkins unfolded in their laps and to transfer the packet to the pocket from there. As they were the hot men of society in those days the rabble got the idea that this was the proper place to wear the napkin, and thus the napkin in the lap became a custom which endures to this day in many circles.

We mentioned Mr. Moffitt's explanation of the origin of the custom to an old-time New York politician, and he said Walpole's guests must have been a lot of cheap skates to be satisfied with just what you could get in a napkin, unless they had napkins in that period the size of Ringling's maintop. He said he certainly did not see how you could hide a tin box in an ordinary napkin.

The tin box became somewhat noted in New York political circles a few years back as the place where a politician might happen upon surprising sums of money if he looked hard. The tin box was perhaps the lineal descendant of the black bag of a more remote political period in the United States.

We do not recall any notable discoveries in napkins in our time, but we remember when some big league baseball players got to finding money under their pillows. It was wrong money, as it turned out. Twenty-one years ago, come next World Series, it was. The Cincinnati Reds had won the National League championship and were opposed to the Chicago Sox of the American League and the Sox were as good a ball club as was ever mobilized and figured to massacre the Reds. Then gamblers made a deal with important members of the Sox to throw the Series. The ball players put it over, too. They were paid various amounts, the sum total a mere pittance compared to what the gamblers won, and when the expose came and the players had to explain where they got the money, some of them said they found it under their pillows. The explanation was deemed implausible. In those days practically nobody was going around placing anything under anybody's pillow.

The guilty ball players were given the hoovus-goovus from baseball for the rest of their lives. Among them were some of the greatest players that ever laced on cleated shoes—Buck Weaver, a third baseman, for one, and "Shoeless Joe" Jackson for another. "Shoeless Joe", as he was then, would now be worth \$300,000 of any ball club's money. He was the greatest natural hitter we ever saw, not barring Babe Ruth or the mighty Ty Cobb.

Against that lively ball of today, "Shoeless Joe" would be hitting 'em across townships. He could hit .350 when he was just clowning and better .400 when he was serious. You talk about hitters—why that old "Shoeless Joe" could drive the ball farther with the breeze on his missed strikes than most ball players can send it off their bats. Ask anybody that ever saw him in action, or look up the book on him.

We felt sorrier for Joe than any of the others. He was not a smart fellow except up at that plate. There he was the wisest man in the world. We do not remember now where he said he found his bit of the wrong money. Maybe he was one of the pillow men. It is a cinch he did not find it in his napkin because "Shoeless Joe" was strictly a devotee of the napkin in the collar, a fact that causes us to doubt that the napkin there, protective and democratic though it may be, is always the badge of complete integrity.

Forceful Remarks

I am disappointed to learn that Joseph Stalin did not pat Marshal Semën Timoshenko on the pimple or head, with a

vodka bottle.

To tell you the truth, I did not even know Stalin was supposed to have done the patting until I read a denial.

The story had been going the rounds that Tim O'Shenko, as the Irish called him, arising to make a speech after many toasts had been drunk at a banquet at Teheran, gabbed so much that Stalin let him have it over the onion, or head, with a vodka bottle.

My disappointment is not in the fact that Tim was not beamed in the manner described. Not at all. If any generals are to be beamed at all, I know of several I would prefer seeing used for that purpose. But the idea of saluting a windy speaker in this manner appeals to me greatly and I feel that it is a pity Stalin did not set the fashion, as reported.

It would be a wonderful innovation if the toastmaster at every banquet was supplied with a vodka bottle and given *carte blanche* by law to pass among the orators and belt them bow-legged at his discretion. It would make for shorter and perhaps more interesting banquet speeches.

The thing could be given a sporting aspect by having bookmakers present to lay prices on the vodka bottle versus the skulls. In many cases the skull would probably be a top-heavy favourite as clearly a guy who does not know when to close out a speech must be very thick-headed, indeed. I do not suppose the vodka bottle would be absolutely necessary. I merely specify it because it would have been the vogue had Stalin really boffed Timoshenko. I think almost any heavy bottle could be made to answer. I would recommend champagne bottles for use on banquet orators as such bottles have good sound bottoms and could be relied upon to do their duty thoroughly.

For the nominators of favourite sons in our national conventions, I would suggest bourbon bottles of the larger size, and for excessively windy members of the House and Senate, I believe old-fashioned beer kegs should be used instead of just bottles. Of course, all these various containers should be empty before being converted into blackjacks as it would be a criminal waste of contents if any full bottles broke over the sconce-pieces, or heads.

It is plain that the implication of the story denied was that Timoshenko may have been kicking the vodka around a bit himself and that it loosened his tongue, which makes the denial even more regrettable as it deprives us of the opportunity of recalling the remark alleged to have been made by Abraham Lincoln when some tattle-tale informed him that General Grant was drinking.

If you remember the tale, Lincoln is supposed to have said he wanted to know the brand Grant fancied so he could send some of the same to his other generals. Lincoln probably never said it, but it has been a great anecdote for editorialists for many years and the vodka business could have been worked over almost as effectively. However, it seems Timoshenko was not even present at the banquet where he was supposed to be beamed and the whole yarn becomes a washout, though I still say if even the thought of abating wind in the manner mentioned occurred to Stalin, he had a marvellous idea.

Incidentally, the passing of the old-time punch-in-the-nose as a means of settling arguments and differences of opinion, and of avenging personal insults and injuries, and of straightening out ruffled social relations generally, is to be regretted. It used to be a great atmosphere clearer.

I suppose some of my readers will deplore my attitude as inciting to violence and perhaps elaborate it into global terms and claim it is a reflection of what is the matter with the whole world, but you know very well I am talking about communities, about neighbourhoods, and that anyway when the punch-in-the-nose flourished there was less strife in the world than there is today.

So kindly do not try to make me out an exponent of big violence. As a matter of fact the good old punch-in-the-nose was a great sedative for violence. It often quieted down a tendency toward violence and made a regular little lamb out of guys who thought for a minute or two that they were lions.

Nowadays when two guys have a difference, they go around verbally knocking one another. In the old days, one

would have beckoned the other into a convenient nook, there would have been a removal of coats and a brisk exchange of punches in (or at) the nose, the wind-up a handshake and a renewal of friendship that rarely again suffered a fracture. The punch-in-the-nose was a wonderful cement and a great spreader of mutual respect.

In these days if you punch a fellow citizen in the nose he is apt to run screaming to his lawbooks demanding that suit for damages be filed against you forthwith, a new procedure that undoubtedly restrains the delivery of many a punch-in-the-nose by gentlemen who are not judgment proof. In my old home town of Pueblo years ago, a citizen who sued another over a punch-in-the-nose would have been ostracized socially and also in the Schwer Brothers beer hall.

If you said something against a man, if you infringed in any way upon his rights and dignity, if you disparaged his wife or any member of his family, you could be sure that he would be in to see you and to punch you in the nose unless you were the better man and punched him in the nose first and there was no shrieking for the cops. Under certain circumstances the punch-in-the-nose was imperative or a man forfeited public respect.

Yes, I know about a soft answer turning away wrath and about presenting the other cheek, but that is not the way it was done back in my old home town of Pueblo and that is not the way it was done in the old days on Broadway when dapper Harry Pollok, the big fight promoter of the period—the Mike Jacobs of his time—and John McGraw, the manager of the Giants, counted a day lost that they did not deliver or receive a punch-in-the-nose.

I fear that a recapitulation on the two would show heavier receipts than deliveries but that has nothing to do with my argument. Pollok and McGraw did not stand around complaining of wrongs or waste time calling up their lawbooks. They just punched somebody in the nose (as I say) or vice versa, and as reflecting the spirit of the times, the newspapers published far less about the matter than they do about a bit of shadow boxing in a night club in which nothing is exchanged but gestures.

A newspaperman today may not state in the public prints that a citizen is a no-gooder without almost surely incurring a lovely suit, even though the statement may be known to one and all, and far and wide, as the gospel truth; whereas in the old days the worst that could have happened to the newspaperman was a punch-in-the-nose. No one sued for libel. An aggrieved party simply sauntered into the bar where the newspaperman hung out and—biff! One or the other got flattened. It might easily be the aggrieved.

In those days the type of newspaperman who called a citizen a no-gooder in print was unlikely to be a popover. He was apt to be able and eager with his dukes. I have never ceased to marvel at the way newspapermen used to be willing to engage in fisticuffs in the name of the honour of their newspaper, though the publisher might not stake them to the price of a beefsteak for a black eye by way of reward.

The late Jack Miley, veteran of the United States Marines of two wars and one of the most entertaining sports writers that ever lived, was thoroughly representative of the spirit of the old school. Jack was a fat and jovial chap who stood four square behind anything he said in the paper and he figured in a number of historic punches-in-the-nose including one for Dizzy Dean, the baseball pitcher.

Bill Farnsworth, the former sports editor who died not long ago, was of the same type when he was active in the newspaper game, but he calmed down in his later years and one day he remarked to me:

"I have reached the stage where if I start a punch-in-the-nose I simultaneously holler for a cop—the cop for the other guy if I connect, and the cop for me if I miss."



BETTER HALVES

Single Track Mind

So you want a little advice from me on the subject of matrimony just in case you might some day think of getting married, do you, my boy?

Well, I will tell you something. Your approach is very clumsy. You do not want advice. You know very well, fellow me lad, that you have come up against a dame you fancy strongly, you are going to marry her, and you want encouragement from me in your design.

No matter how vehemently I might advise you against committing this act, you are going to get hitched at the earliest opportunity. Then some day when you are having a brawl with your dear wife you are going to crack to her, "Well, old Mr. Runyon was right when he told me I was a sucker to think of getting married and I wish I had listened to him."

That is what you are going to say in the heat of anger to your sweet little wife and when you two are friendly again she will gently cross-examine you in such a way that you will not know what she is up to and will ask you, "Did Mr. Runyon really tell you not to get married?"

Well, perhaps some friendly instinct will let off an alarm in your noodle and you will deny that I said any such thing, but more likely you will try to pass it off without actually lying by saying airily, "Oh, you know how old Mr. Runyon is—always kidding."

But, my boy, from that day on I will be in constant jeopardy of sustaining frost bite when I am in the vicinity of your lovely little wife. She may never say anything to me openly, but as sure as you are a foot high she would secretly put the black curse of Fifty-second Street on me and never mind that crossing your heart and hoping-to-die that you will not crack to her in the manner I suggest. I know youse young married guys.

Now, my boy, I do not want to prolong this discussion. I think you are snared. There is nothing I can do about it. If I undertook to show you that the whole set-up of life, economically and otherwise, is just a deck of cards that has been stacked by Nature in favour of womenkind to hornswoggle the male sex into matrimony, you would say that I am misstating the case.

But look at the lay-out, son. Perhaps a man yearns for a home, a little vine-covered cottage. Perhaps he gets one, all by himself. Well, the deal has been so arranged that there is a lot of tedious work around a little vine-covered cottage that gives a man a crick in the back in no time at all and brings to his mind the fact that that type of labour is performed with ease by women.

He has to give up the vine-covered cottage and return to life in a flea bag, contract a permanent crick, or get married. He usually takes the line of least resistance and gets married. If Nature was not conspiring for the women, why did she not make housework a genuine pleasure to the men? And then there is the matter of children.

Many a man would like to have little children of his own playing about his feet, their innocent prattle as music to his ears. He may be a man who has an aversion to women, but to acquire the children he has to get married. I submit that this is a prima facie evidence of a conspiracy for the women on the part of Nature else she would have made it possible for mankind to grow the children on trees.

If you lose a button off your pants, my boy, and are unhandy with a needle and thread and there is no tailor in immediate reach, you are reminded of the efficiency of a wife in emergencies of this kind. If Nature had intended to give a square rattle, she would have made them as skilful at sewing as the females, especially on trouser buttons.

I think I should point out that the women have long elaborated the inconveniences and discomforts of the male

singletons, as for instance they have made a great bogie of lonesomeness in old age. I think if a bachelor has the foresight to save his money until he amasses quite a sum, his old age will be anything but lonesome. I know a lot of old pelters who are domestically unencumbered yet who have all the company male and female that they can stand.

I think you can throw the lonesomeness scare out, young man—but why am I talking to you? It is a good even money bet that you have the licence in your kick right this minute, like a fellow I was advising not to get married a couple of years ago. He was around not long afterwards smoking hot from the divorce court asking my advice about getting married a second time.

I said: "What can you lose?"

He came back six months later and said: "I just found out what I could lose. My second wife skipped last night with another guy and all my money."

Out With Her

I think a man whose wife is ornery may discuss her in public the same as any other misfortune.

The question of the propriety of such discussion was raised the other evening among a group of my acquaintances after the departure of a chap who had been bending our collective ears with a narration of the orneriness of his ever-loving.

One of the boys said:

"Don't you think it rather indelicate of Homer to be unveiling the shortcomings of his Missus in that manner?"

Another said:

"Yes, aren't those things supposed to be kept quiet like skeletons in your closets?"

"In whose closets?" I demanded, just to let the guy know he could not pin anything on me.

"In people's closets", he qualified. "Do you think it right for a man to go around blabbing to everyone who will listen that his wife is a no-gooder? Do you think it proper? We will leave it to you, Runyon."

My decision is as above.

It is quite all right.

One of those fellows who was discussing Homer's gabbiness is named Gus and before Homer came along this Gus had put in half an hour telling us of his arthritis and all of us others chipped in one by one with advice on what to do.

Another gee named Sam has a heart condition and this also called for half an hour with the rest of us, including Gus, mentioning remedies and naming doctors that he ought to see. Then a bloke named Chris got away with half an hour relating his business difficulties which drew a full discussion and much free advice.

But when Homer arrived and started filing his beef about his wife he was heard in what you might call strained silence. Nobody offered him a word of sympathy though his tale was well nigh heart rending and only one, a bachelor named Willie, had a suggestion of any kind.

"Have you tried a bust in the jaw?" asked Willie helpfully as Homer concluded, but of course he was immediately frowned down and the minute Homer got out of earshot they started putting in the grease as lacking in a sense of the proprieties.

Yet I thought his tough luck was worse than Gus' arthritis or Sam's heart condition or Chris' business difficulties because he disclosed his wife as a foul-tempered vixen whose extravagance is bringing him to ruin, as a liar, and a double crosser and I thought he was entitled to advice the same as the other hardluckers.

I think it would be a good thing if all men with nasty wives would talk them over with their friends or even with strangers if they can get any to listen, because it would let out a lot of bile that husbands are inclined to secrete in their souls and would make them feel better afterwards.

Personally, I find such disclosures interesting and entertaining. Just as you think you know all the cussedness of which a dame can be capable, up bobs some fellow whose wife has a new twist on meanness. Of course each and every one of my lady readers will understand that she is not the kind of woman I am talking about, though I will bet that they know some that fit the blueprint perfectly.

Many men with sour wives are too proud to have that mistaken sense of the proprieties that prevents them from bringing up their marital curses at the round table, yet if they just had a leg shot off they would think nothing of discussing that lesser misfortune. They ought to speak up and unburden themselves on their wives because keeping their woe buried inside is nothing less than fermenting spiritual acid.

Many a man is misunderstood by his friends through failing to explain to them that what ails his disposition and what may be hampering his work is a wife who is a rumpot, who nags, who is an emotional mess, who is foolish in the head, or otherwise a washout and many a wife trades on a husband's gallantry in this respect by making it appear that he is the floppo of the combination.

I think another reason why a man should give his marital mistake a complete airing is the protection of his fellow man. You see, if he eventually steps out of the picture still holding his tongue about her, other men will have no line on her and she may be able to corral another poor mugg and thus further spread human misery.

The Age of Women

UNDELIVERED ADDRESS FOR A WOMEN'S CLUB

(Note: We have received an offer from a New York lecture bureau to go on tour making addresses to clubs and other organizations. We are unable to accept because of a severe case of inarticulation, but we have been idly drafting a series of talks that we might have delivered had we the nerve.)

Madame chairman and ladies: I remember hearing in my youth a bit of verse in which a poet sang disconsolately of the encroachments of women upon what were then considered the special privileges of men, but who wound up his verse with a chant of joy because one privilege was still withheld from the members of your sex. I cannot now remember all the words of the verse. I only remember the lines which ran:

*"But she can't strike a match
On the seat of her pants
Because she ain't built that way."*

Now then, in the days when those lines were written, the match commonly in use was one with a bit of sulphur at the end of a small stick and to ignite such a match it was necessary to produce friction by drawing the sulphured end across some hard surface. It was the practice of many men to h'ist the right or left leg a trifle, pulling the cloth of the trousers, or pants, tightly across the limb and rubbing the match-end smartly across the tightened cloth, thus producing the necessary friction.

I am offering this explanation for the benefit of my younger hearers. I am sorry that I did not bring an old-fashioned match with me that I might give you an ocular demonstration.

In my youth I was an expert lighter of matches in the manner I have described. I was ambidextrous. I could use either leg with equal facility. I realize now that it was a paltry accomplishment at best and might have been equalled by women even then, did not modesty forbid.

Indeed, I am sure that the starched surfaces they could have presented in those days would have furnished much better friction for match-striking purposes than the softer material of men's trouserings. However, the point I am making here is that as far back as the era of sulphur matches, men sensed the approaching equality of women and were apprehensive to the extent of writing poetry.

Today that equality is an accomplished fact. You have pulled up dead even with men in almost every respect. This is the age of women. I congratulate you. I only regret that the old sulphur matches are no longer in vogue that you might refute the words of that verse maker of the bygone years by showing what friction a skirt tightened over a girdle might produce.

Today you have the vote. If it is suggested that you have not done much with the vote, you can reply that neither have we. Neither have the men. You are still on even terms with us there. Today you sit on juries with us and equal us in bewilderment over the issues involved. You have achieved the privilege of our barber shops. It has been years since it was any novelty to see a woman in a barber chair getting a haircut and shave.

You drive automobiles and ride horses a-straddle. You play all sorts of sports once dedicated solely to men. In some sports you not only equal but surpass many men. Only in the manly art of self-defence do you seem deficient in representation, but if any of you oversizes here present would train properly for two months you could lick most of the heavyweight contenders that are around nowadays. All you need is a good left jab and a little footwork.

Yes, this is the age of women. You have the freedom of the bar rooms once exclusive to men. It has not been so many years ago that you had to sneak around to the family entrance with the growler if you were a-thirst. Now you can walk

right in and stand up at the mahogany as long as possible. You can smoke cigarettes and cigars in public, if you desire, or even a pipe. I would suggest that in smoking a pipe a woman should be careful to select one that matches her face.

The contour of a pipe is as important as the shape of a hat. Only recently there was mention in the papers of a woman smoking a pipe in a New York night club and it was agreed that it did not become her. Out of curiosity I made inquiry and learned that her pipe was a short dudeen that was not in proportion to her face. She should have used a pipe with a long, curving stem. That reminds me of a story, but I find my time is up, so I must depart. Ladies, I thank you.

Smoking Ladies

We claim to be able to read a lady's character and to tell something of her life and habits by the way she smokes a cigarette. So many ladies smoke cigarettes nowadays that we have a field almost as wide as that of the palmists and the handwriting sharks and astrologers.

We have one great advantage in our racket, too. We do not have to use tools or props of any kind, not even teacups. All we require is an unobstructed view of our subject and her cigarette smoking. We work almost as well at long range as we do close up. However, we occasionally like to examine a cigarette butt discarded by a lady smoker as it invariably presents evidence of value to us in character analysis.

For instance, there is the general state of the butt. If the end that has been in the mouth is discoloured by lipstick and is wet and frayed as if it had been chewed on, we know that the smoker is an untidy person and quite nervous. The chewing indicates the nerves. If the end is as dry and spotless as when the cigarette came out of the original package, she is bound to be a lady of neatness and nice disposition. An unsullied cigarette butt is the mark of orderliness and calm.

The manner in which a cigarette butt has been extinguished is also important. If it has been tossed aside still burning, it is proof that the smoker is careless and thoughtless and not at all a person to be trusted around a keg of dynamite. If the butt has been squdged down in an ash tray or elsewhere, we have not only messiness again, but petulance.

It is significant, we think, that the most squdged down cigarette butts are usually found in ash trays on tables at which married couples have sat, though we are inclined to discount the yarn that a head waiter in a high-toned New York juke makes a good thing of tipping off society news-gatherers to matrimonial rifts whenever he finds more than twenty squdgers on the lady's side of the table. That could happen when she was only trying to argue the guy out of a new spring outfit.

A cigarette butt that has been extinguished by a lady smoker by deftly knocking off the live ember without frazzling up the rest of the butt, indicates neatness combined with great consideration for others. She does not want the butt to smoulder away to an ash giving off fumes that her neighbours might find unpleasant.

If we were viewing a lady cigarette smoker with reference to her desirability as a matrimonial prospect, we would not hesitate to nab one as thoughtful as this without asking any questions, though of course we would hurdle the Statue of Liberty getting away from one that extinguished her butts by tossing them into the used coffee cups or glasses of water.

An extremely short cigarette butt discarded by a lady smoker argues that she is either of economical, if not parsimonious, nature or is quite absent-minded. She smokes them close as a matter of saving or permits her thoughts to wander while she is smoking until the ember burns her fingers. Absent-mindedness is not a grievous fault, to be sure, yet going back to contemplation of the lady as a matrimonial prospect, it is something to be considered. She is the kind that would be sure to forget to cook dinner now and then.

A cigarette butt that shows that only a couple of whiffs have been taken by the lady smoker before discarding

suggests a spendthrift streak, but it can also mean a propensity to sudden bursts of anger. The lady may have hurled the butt from her as a gesture of ire over something said to her. Under some circumstances it could be a plate.

The profligacy of throwing away a briefly smoked cigarette is not in itself important because cigarettes are cheap, but it indicates a lack of appreciation of a good thing that might conceivably extend to a husband and home life. A cigarette butt discarded by a lady that discloses a two-third smoking of the whole cigarette is proof of that recognition of values that we like to find in a lady.

It might be suggested that our theories based on the examination of discarded cigarette butts would fall flat if the cigarettes were smoked in holders but you must remember that we do not depend entirely on the butts for our character analysis. They are just incidental. It is the manner of smoking that is our open book and the holders are as much of a tip-off as the naked cigarettes.

Only two out of every twenty lady cigarette smokers know how to smoke a naked cigarette with that degree of artistry that leaves you unaware that they are smoking at all, and only one in fifty knows how to smoke a cigarette in a holder without giving the impression that she is practicing fencing. The holderees are a plumb cinch for us.

When we see a lady smoking a cigarette in a holder and keeping the holder gripped between her teeth while carrying on a conversation, we know she is strong on social-conscience stuff. If she lets a little of the smoke roll out of her nostrils while she talks we are fairly certain that she is literarily inclined. If she waves the holder around like Di Maggio missing a third strike, we will bet she is against Roosevelt.

The Protective Male

We have received a letter from a lady reader complaining that her husband walks along the street letting her tag after him, single file, and that he bolts through doors ahead of her. She wants to know if we do not consider him an exceptionally rude and inconsiderate man.

We do not. We think the protective instinct is quite highly developed in this husband, though he perhaps does not realize it himself. He goes ahead of her as a matter of instinct to shield her from possible danger—to take any impending blows first. If, while walking in the street, a shot is fired at them, the husband is the lady's bulwark. If anyone asks what about a shot fired from behind them, we can answer that no gentleman would fire on a lady, especially from the rear.

If behind a closed door there lurks sinister danger, the lady's husband is bravely lunging forward into it first. That is why he enters doors ahead of her. It is protective instinct. Sheer protective instinct. It is something that goes back to the primitive man. It is something you find in the nobler beasts of the forest, and it is always being misunderstood by married ladies.

We do not call ourself a brave man, yet we like to get into the bathroom first in the morning, because we cannot be sure that a rattlesnake is not coiled in there and we want to take its venomous punch rather than jeopardize the lady. Of course it is improbable that a rattlesnake would be coiled in the New York apartment we inhabit, but it could be a lion or a buffalo. We have the protective instinct developed to a high degree.

It looks quite gallant to see a gentleman arm-in-arm with a lady in the street and bowing her through doors ahead of him but it may not be gallantry at all. It may be cowardice. He may keep close to her while walking, so that when danger threatens he can push her in front of him as a shield. By letting her walk through open doors first he is letting her step into any risks that may lie beyond. In short, he is using her as a convenience and as protection. We earnestly advise unmarried ladies to avoid geezers of that type when contemplating matrimony.

We have heard married ladies, who fail to recognize the protective instincts in their husbands, beef because the husbands pull out chairs in restaurants and sit down first. Without the husbands knowing it themselves, the protective instinct prompts this move. They want to test the strength of the chairs before permitting their wives to try them. A gentleman who pulls out a chair for a lady may be exposing her to the hazard of a heavy fall.

Our correspondent does not mention bundles, but if her husband lets her lug the bundles when she is walking behind him in the street, it is further indication of the protective instinct. He wants to have both hands free to meet any assassins who may be lingering along the line of march. When a gentleman insists on carrying bundles for a lady, he is just assigning to her the fist-fighting, in case any develops.

The Indian warriors generally walked ahead of their squaws, letting the latter carry the bundles and perhaps the papoose. The warriors wanted to be freehanded in case of trouble.

Married men in whom the protective instinct is highly developed generally permit their wives to carry the papooses for much the same reason. Also, the papooses may be heavy.

The protective instinct in us used to always put us about ten paces ahead of the lady walking in the street, sometimes more, depending on the lady's yen for window shopping. This practice occasionally developed odd little situations. Several times we have found ourself addressing strange ladies and telling them, rather sharply, to hurry up.

One night we took a lady by the arm and started to pull her along to accelerate her pace, only to discover that she was not the right lady. She stopped at the first cop and wanted to have us taken in charge, but the right lady hastened up from her window shopping and set things right. The strange lady said she was glad she was not married to the likes of us, and that made us even. We were glad, too.

We trust we have cleared up our correspondent's query and placed her husband in a better light before her. We assure the lady that in the good old days he would have been preceding her with a lance or a big battle-axe. We can see that he is of the right breed. Undoubtedly he precedes the lady up and down stairs, which is not only proper but one of the greatest safety measures ever devised for gentlemen.

If the lady slips and starts falling down the stairs, the gentleman escapes the danger of being knocked into the next county. Besides, he saves her embarrassment in the event she has unshapely pins.

Mrs. Devil

I was discussing Mrs. Devil the other night with my friend, Pratt, and exchanging ideas with him on her appearance. I am speaking of the wife of Mr. Devil, sometimes called Satan, Beelzebub, Belial and so forth.

Pratt held out for Mrs. Devil being a sort of Sadie Thompson type. Pratt's imagination is pretty much grooved when it comes to women. With him they are all either Sadie Thompsons or his mother. Pratt, of course, is a bachelor.

Another chap named Goodman was listening in on the dialogue and he challenged our authority for assuming Mr. Devil has a wife. He said he had always been under the impression Mr. Devil is too smart to get married, but I cited him the Prophets.

They speak of the wicked as the children of the Devil.

I pointed out to Goodman that Mr. Devil must have begotten these children by a lawful wife, else the Prophets would have mentioned the illegitimacy. They were not squeamish about things like this. Goodman said yes, I seemed to have

something there.

I showed him where Mr. Devil is mentioned specifically as the father of lies, which I am sure means all the different lies we know, little lies, big lies, white lies, black lies, mean lies and all the rest.

"I am well acquainted with mean lies", said Goodman. "She lives in the same apartment building I do."

We are told Mr. Devil "entered into" certain great personalities of history, meaning he got control over them in thought and in spirit and thus accomplished their ruin. I am not going to attempt to give Mr. Devil a character any less despicable than is generally charged against him, but I have long believed he has considerable assistance and there are reasons why I must suspect Mrs. Devil.

I do not think it possible for Mr. Devil to do all the dirty work alone. Besides, much of what we have come to know as "devilishness" has a definite feminine touch which argues the hand of Mrs. Devil. Not even Mr. Devil could have sufficient ingenuity for evil to prompt human beings to some of their actions recorded today. Cherchez la femme, as the fellow says.

Now I visualize Mrs. Devil as a real nice looking lady, not too young, not too old, but just right. I can see her as having black hair, black eyes of great expression, fine teeth and a lovely figure. Not too much here, not too little there, but just right. In short, I think she must be most attractive to all who behold her.

A sophisticated lady, you understand. No dope. No screwball. No simpleton. Worldly wise and yet no wise cracking. Not over-gabby. Not small-gossipy. And of course her voice is low and musical and her laughter tinkles like money in a cash register, which is the most pleasant sound I can think of offhand.

I picture her as rather an inviting dish. It does not stand to reason she is a scrawny, sharp-featured broad without charm because as such she could scarcely be the instrument of harm to mankind that she has always been. I do not believe that old Ananias and all the other characters back to Adam who were pushovers for temptation would have gone for a dame of that type. And, as a matter of fact, I do not believe Mr. Devil would have hooked up with a crow.

Diaper Dexterity

The diaper derby of the Chicago flat janitors is now history. However, that does not deter me from expressing myself on a few observations on this matter.

I am greatly astounded that so simple a task as changing a diaper should be considered by anyone as possessing the elements of competitive effort and of public interest, unless of course the babies are of more advanced age than the title usually indicates. I mean to say it has never before occurred to me that there is anything to the enterprise of changing a diaper that would make one diaper changer of sufficient difference from another to warrant a contest.

What is there to changing a diaper?

You grab hold of a baby, hurl it on his or her back, whip off the used tire and clap on the spare—but wait a minute. I seem to be getting the babies mixed up with automobiles. Let us retrace our steps.

In cold weather, I advise warming the new diaper before applying, and would also recommend care in adjusting the safety pins, because I know thousands of sour citizens whose lives were first embittered by being inadvertently tacked into their saddle blankets early in life. (Oh, yes—a little talcum. Don't forget the talcum.)

You then dismiss the proceeding with a loving little pat which will often serve to dispel any tears that the subject may have developed during the changing of the diaper as a result of your belting him or her for not holding still.

All right. What is there to that? What is there to it to work up a championship contest? Where is the excitement the thrills? There may be some fellows who can hold a trifle more neatly than others and who can put a little more flourish to their touches, but when it comes to the fundamentals there is nothing to changing a diaper worthy a crowd.

I admit there may have been improvements in the process since my time. I believe I recall seeing a lady slip a pair of paper pants on a young 'un and maybe she was passing that off as diapering, but it is my impression that the Chicago contest involved the old-fashioned racket and I say it has no varying shades of adroitness, at least not enough to make a battle royal.

I once knew a chap who had a system of just hanging the baby on the clothes line to dry and he was greatly admired by all his fellow citizens for having discovered a wonderful innovation on changing a diaper, but the baby was one of those precocious kids that learned to talk quite early and eventually he tipped his mamma off to what was going on and there was the dadgumbdest row in that household you ever heard of.

I judge from the paragraph about the Chicago tussle that time was deemed important and that it also figured in the New York contest, news of which had escaped me up to this moment, and I want to say that the seven seconds flat mentioned is not the world record by three seconds. The record is held by my maternal grandmother and was established in western Kansas years ago.

She had picked up her baby in the yard and gone into the house to change a diaper when she observed the approach of a band of old Dull Knife's Injun braves in war paint and she changed that diaper in four seconds and was a hundred yards up the road in another ten. The Injuns said afterwards that most women generally dispensed with changing any diapers under such circumstances and expressed great admiration for grandmamma's sense of orderliness.

I think I forgot to state that my own best time for changing a diaper is about eight seconds and I simultaneously smoked a cigarette. I would have done better had not some of the hot ashes dropped in the new diaper, leading to a fierce hand to hand struggle with the baby.

I never knew until recently that some laundries had special diaper-renting services. I always thought that the laundering of diapers was strictly a household function, with some ladies showing a marked preference for the family bath tub for their operations, often about the time the old man wants to take a bath.

But now literally tons of diapers are handled by city laundries, which I must say I consider further evidence of deterioration of the womanly arts in the home. However, I am consoled to some extent by the thought that probably in small towns the good old-fashioned system of rinsing the diaper still prevails.

During the war, through the loss of hands to the armed forces and defence work, laundries were crippled in all departments, and in none more than the diaper-dusting division, and I understand that the beef from fond mothers who had been relying on the diaper service of the laundries was terrific. You see, a gentleman can wear the same shirt, the same socks or the same shorts for days without inconvenience or discomfort, but to ask an infant to wear the same diaper for more than twenty-four hours would in the opinion of experts annoy the kid no little.

The way I came to learn about the bogging down of the special diaper-laundering service in one city was through a gentleman friend of mine who has a new baby in his home, which is a modest little apartment. The gentleman and his baby, and also his wife, just moved to the city I am talking about from another city where the lady had become accustomed to a fairly efficient diaper service.

But it seems that they were strangers to the new city and had no political connections and when they applied to the local diaper services for a franchise, they got the old equine guffaw. The folks running the services asked my friends who they thought they were, anyhow. One guy told my friends he had a notion to report them to the FBI for just thinking they could get a diaper dusted without at least a letter of introduction from the White House.

Well, it seems my friends' baby is a great one for diapers and presently the ones that needed laundering came at the wife so fast and furious that she could not cope with the situation, though it is to the gentleman's credit that he pitched in and helped her as much as he could, which was not much, as he is just a fair hand at dousing diapers.

They were in the depths of despair when one night they were invited out to dinner and in the course of the ensuing chit-chat one of the guests said he had a brother-in-law who ran a diaper-laundering service. My friend unbosomed himself on his problem and the guest said:

"Well, you look like a nice fellow. I'll call up my brother-in-law and put in a good word for you. I may be able to get you straightened out with him. You call him tomorrow at 4 o'clock and by that time I will have talked to him."

So the next day my gentleman friend called the diaper launderer and the launderer said:

"Yes, my brother-in-law put in a nice plug for you with me and I have decided to allot you my service if besides paying my usual rates you will call at five different addresses in your immediate neighborhood three times a week and pick up bundles there and bring them in with your own. You will also have to deliver them."

I saw my friend yesterday bustling down the street laden with distressed diapers and he was very, very happy. He said his wife is happy and that the baby is happier than both of them put together because they had about decided to let the child go without diapers, and it seems the little one has a strong sense of propriety.



FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Two Tales of Louie the Stork

I

Now, children, one day Louie the stork who distributed the little babies, was as tired as all git-out from overwork and dropped into a bar in New York City for a slight stimulant.

"Give me brandy", he ordered, like Mark Hellinger.

He drank it.

"Give me another brandy", he ordered, like Mark Hellinger.

Then he ordered a few more brandies like Mark Hellinger and of a sudden his head commenced feeling very funny because he was plumb tuckered like I tell you and a bird in that state is easily bejummuxed by liquor. To tell you the truth, children, Louie the stork was loaded. He was as stiff as a plank. He was cock-eyed.

But Louie still had a lot of undelivered bundles of infantile swag and even though his noodle was whirling and legs were as limber as twigs, he continued his appointed rounds. He went toddling here and there, dropping his packages. In view of his condition, it is not surprising that somewhere along the line confusion entered into Louie's normally orderly scheme of things.

He got the little new babies all mixed up. He left a set of quadruplets at the home of Miss Ethleda Spurze, an old established spinster lady who was a strong supporter of birth control since 1904 and she was so infuriated that she got herself a kettle of boiling water and poured it over the first guy who rapped at her portals.

It happened to be J. K. Bulge, a deacon in her church, and the incident of the quadruplets at her house and her scalding of Deacon Bulge really caused talk in her set. However, Louie the stork's error in this instance was no greater than his leaving with the young and very English Brents a baby that spoke only the Russian language, giving rise to elevated brows on all sides, including the baby's.

Then there was the Eskimo baby that Louie left at the bachelor apartment of Mr. Caesar C. Caesar-Caesar, unfortunately reaching there just as Mr. C. C. C-C.'s beautiful fiancée was also arriving to keep a dinner engagement with him. She signed for the baby and had it hid behind her when Mr. C. C. C-C. in person opened the door, all the butlers having been drafted.

"Caesar", she cooed, "where was it you told me you were when you were away last winter with the Coast Guard?"

"Why", said Mr. C. C. C-C, "I was up in the Arctic. Cold as hell, too."

With that she knocked him unconscious and some say she did it with the baby, but that I do not believe. But there is no doubt that Louie the stork's skuller caused a little disorder.

He had one baby left over and was staggering through East 53rd Street with it when he was overcome by his libations and whatnot. He swooned away completely. At that moment, a gentleman with a very kind face came along and took charge of Louie, dashing cold seltzer water in his face and giving him nourishment in the form of club sandwiches and chicken à la king.

The gentleman said his name was Billingsley. When Louie revived and related what he could remember of his story the gentleman's heart was touched. He said he would see to it that no such calamities ever befell Louie again. He set up permanent quarters for Louie the stork right where he found him and put Winchell in charge of the bookkeeping so that

Louie would have his assignments laid out for him in advance. There has never been a mix-up since.

So, my eager little listeners, that is how the Stork Club came to be established, and if you go there this very night you may find Louie the stork standing at the bar ordering brandy only not like Mark Hellinger, but well diluted, and who do you think is behind the bar dealing out the stuff? Let the tiny chappy over there in the corner with his hand raised answer.

Correct, Phocon. Absolutely correct. The one doing the dealing is the last little baby that Louie the stork had that night I have been telling you about. The child was raised to young manhood, by Mr. Billingsley, and there he is. We all sometimes wonder to what address he was originally billed, but do not bother to make too much of an investigation because good bartenders are hard to get, while Louie the stork can bring you a baby any time.

II

I found Louie the stork bellied up to the bar in his headquarters, the Stork Club, the other night and was pained to note he had a black eye.

A waiter was holding a hunk of raw filet mignon to the damaged orb and I thought this a terrible extravagance considering the scarcity of meat and the price. I asked the waiter if he could not have used a loin cut just as well.

"Mr. Louie likes filet", he replied.

"Yes", Louie the stork said. "It has more class."

"Louie", I said, "that is a pip of a shiner. Where did you acquire it, if it is any of my business?"

"Well", Louie said, "it is your business to the extent that you can inform your young readers as to how I got it before they hear some rumour that it came of dirty work at the crossroads. There are always people ready to knock me and in this instance I want the children to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

He took the filet mignon from the waiter and motioned me to a table in a corner and as we sat down he drew a slip of paper from his inside coat pocket under his left wing and showed it to me. On this slip of paper was written "Mr. and Mrs. V. Dey Stylish, Central Park West, 8-lb. boy."

"Is that plain to you?" asked Louie the stork.

"Sure", I said.

"Well", Louie said, "that is exactly the way the order was handed to me at 5 o'clock this morning. It is the original slip. I have not changed it one iota. I get a zillion a year just like that. Naturally, I assumed that it came through the office of our head checker, Mr. Winchell, and was 100 per cent okay. So I reached up on the 8-pound counter and pulled down as nice a little boy as you would want to see and hastened to the Central Park West address.

"It is a large apartment house and they told me at the telephone desk that Mr. and Mrs. Stylish lived on the eighteenth floor. The elevator took me up with my precious bundle and I punched the bell of apartment 2-B, the summons brings to the door a large red-haired fellow of maybe thirty-odd who was batting his eyes sleepily and whose regular features seemed drawn into a tight scowl.

"'Good-morrow and greetings', I said (continued Louie the stork), 'you are Mr. Stylish?'

"'Who else would I be at this hour?' he demanded.

"'Am I a soothsayer?' I asked. 'I have your boy here.'

"'What boy?' he said.

"'Why, the one you ordered', I said, uncovering my bundle and disclosing the baby to his eyes.

"'Mildred', he yelled back into the apartment, 'did you order a baby?'

"A female voice, faint and far away, said no.

"'Get out of here and take that thing with you', the red-haired fellow said. 'You have got plenty of gall trying to palm off your excess babies on us.'

"With that he doubled up his fist and hauled off and biffed me in the eye, with the result as you see. I kicked him on the shin and he leaped at me with such fury that I turned and ran down the eighteen stories with him in hot pursuit. All this time I had the baby under my wing. It never peeped.

"Well", said Louie the stork, "I finally managed to outrun Mr. Stylish and got here and put the baby back in stock and five minutes later I got a phone call from a lady who said she was Mrs. Stylish and wanted to apologize for her husband's conduct. She said the baby had been ordered for next February and she had forgotten to tell him and to please bring the same one back then.

"I do not believe her", said Louie the stork. "I have implicit faith in Mr. Winchell's office. Anyway, I am not ever going to take that baby back to her. I am going to take her a girl just for spite. Where is my file? My eye pains me."

I then realized that I had absently put the filet between two slabs of bread and had consumed same while listening to Louie the stork's tale.

Phooey and Louie

My adult readers will kindly hand this one over to the kiddies without bothering to read it because it is nothing but a story about how Phooey Pigeon tried to impersonate Louie the stork and what came of it and I am sure the grown-ups will wish to avoid that sort of tripe.

Phooey Pigeon is a big blue bird who has always been what in my set we call a schnorrer, a sort of a bum who never works and is ever on the mooch, panhandling crumbs wherever he can and sleeping in the sheltered crevices of various buildings for which privilege he pays no rent whatever.

He is a member of the group that used to hang out in front of the Stork Club in East 53rd Street which as I have told you is the headquarters of Louie the stork who brings the little bouncing babies and some that never bounce, especially nowadays when the rubber shortage is very keen.

You could see Phooey and his companions there almost any day gossiping among themselves and cadging victuals from the doorman until a street repair crew moved into the strasse and set up such an ungodly racket that Phooey and his mob had to scam down to St. Patrick's cathedral for peace and quiet although their appearance was deemed an unwarranted intrusion by the devout and orderly birds that have made the cathedral steps a meeting place for years.

The racket got so terrific that it also wore on the nerves of Louie the stork and during the repair crew's working hours he likewise took to going down to the cathedral and standing on the steps where he could meditate and doze without having his ear drums busted, although of course Louie held himself aloof from Phooey and his ilk, storks having no truck in common with pigeons especially if the pigeons are bums.

It was during one of these periods of Louie's absence from his headquarters that there arrived at the Stork Club a

somewhat flustered but fine upstanding young gentleman with a slip of paper clutched in his duke and it also happened that at this moment Phooey Pigeon was standing on the sidewalk in front of the club waiting to see the doorman on the offchance of making a quick touch of a few grains of corn.

"I beg your pardon", said the young gentleman addressing himself to Phooey, "my wife told me I would find here the famous bird she has been expecting. You are Louie the stork I presume."

"I am", replied Phooey, marvelling slightly that anyone could be dope enough to mistake a pigeon for a stork but as alert to opportunity as any other city slicker to a sucker. At the same time he tried to hunch himself upwards to look taller.

"Your legs are shorter than I anticipated", said the young gentleman handing Phooey the slip of paper. "I have here an order from my missus for a ten-pound boy. I tried to get her to compromise on six pounds but she insists on a tenner. Can you take care of this?"

"Why, sure", said Phooey Pigeon, quickly figuring in his mind the charges he would impose for cartage and other expenses. "Just give me the address and leave everything else to me. But of course", he added, "I require a small retainer of let us say a peck of wheat."

"I haven't got much with me", said the young man, "but I'll leave my watch with you for security and I will have your fee waiting for you when you arrive."

Seeing this was the best he could do, Phooey Pigeon took the time-piece and the address and the young gentleman departed highly elated. Then Phooey waited around until he got the chance of sneaking into the store room of the stork where the babies are kept and where he grabbed one off the ten-pound shelf although he was half tempted by the six pounders as they struck him as much cuter.

But he was afraid that the young gentleman might not pay off on a skimpier order so he put the ten pounder over his shoulder and started for the address wishing his legs were longer so he could get there more rapidly. And now, children, what do you suppose happened?

Well, the burden was too much for Phooey Pigeon and when a kindly cop picked up what he thought was an abandoned baby in a doorway, who was under the chubby little creature all flattened out but Phooey. They had to pump air into him with an auto tyre pump to get him back in shape again.

And do you know what? It was the lady's ten-pound requirement that was his undoing because packing only a sixer, Phooey would have made the delivery okay and pulled off his swindle. So the moral is, kids, never try to carry too much weight.

Algernon

I

Sergeant Ed Dougherty, Sergeant Leland Kane, Sergeant Clair B. McDermott and Private Richard O'Neill of the infantry wrote me a letter stating they are unable to find a man in their regiment of the physical prowess of Rusty Charley.

This Rusty Charley was once exploited by me in a short story in which I mentioned that he knocked an ice wagon horse to its knees with a righthand punch that did not travel more than four inches though Charley called me up the next

day to dispute the distance stated, claiming it was really only an eighth of an inch.

Anyway, the boys seem greatly impressed by the feat as reported by me. But I marvel that the soldiers apparently have not heard of one of their own who is ten times the man Rusty Charley is on the best day Charley ever saw. I refer, of course, to my friend Algernon, who since he returned home from the Pacific has been stopping with me.

Now I hesitate to talk about Algernon here because he is the object of much envy in certain circles and at times there seems to be a concerted effort to belittle his achievements. But I cannot let Algernon remain unknown to these worthy soldiers, and I must request my other readers to just pass this one up today and then we will not have any sceptical remarks.

Algernon operated in the Pacific under special orders from Washington, hopping from island to island and dealing savage blows to the enemy. He was not required to report to anyone but Harold Ickes, and how Mr. Ickes got mixed up in this situation is not known. Anyway, he appears in our story this once. Goodbye, Mr. Ickes.

Algernon had been provided with a diamond-studded bomber, but it proved too slow for him so he usually carried it under his arm. He did not discard it entirely on account of the diamonds, and, to tell the truth, they are what Algernon is living on at this time, as naturally I have to insist on a little board-and-room money from him.

Well, it seems that when he landed on an island where there were Japs Algernon would first uproot a cocoanut tree of perhaps 100 feet in height, trim it neatly, leaving just a sort of natural crotch in the shape of a hook at one end and then as he nabbed the Japs would string them on this tree as he used to string catfish on a willow twig when he was a boy living in a little town on the Big Muddy.

Inasmuch as Algernon always hit the islands ahead of everyone else he generally used up all the available Japs, and that is what brought the complaints against him. I think they were from the Marines. The Marines said they landed on the islands to annihilate Japs and that it was a terrible knock to their corps to land anywhere and find nothing to annihilate. One of the generals tried to make a deal with Algernon to leave just a few Japs for annihilation, but Algernon said no, he wanted them all. Hence the brass hats got busy with Washington.

It seems Washington was sore at Algernon, anyway. It discovered after he left on his mission that he had been courting a Washington young lady and one night he took her to the Washington Monument to press his suit. He inadvertently leaned against the monument and pushed it seven inches out of plumb. Algernon really does not know his own strength.

But the Washington authorities said he had no right to use the monument as a trysting place, and that is why Algernon is in very foreign with them.

II

Earl Shaub wrote me of Jack Dempsey's great grandfather, Nathan Dempsey, who lived in the village of Leesburg, Tenn., and is said to have been the pioneer strong man of those parts.

"Why", Earl says, his eyes bulging with excitement, "he could raise a 500-pound weight above his head or lift a bull over a fence.

"One story is the strongest man in Georgia came along one day looking for him and found old Dempsey riding a mule. The Georgian said: 'I am the strongest man in Georgia. I have heard about you and came here to lick you.'

"Old Dempsey replied: 'Just wait until I lift this mule over the fence and I will accommodate you.' He lifted the mule over the fence and knocked hell out of the stranger, whose name was George Manclaves.

"One old gent of 85 telling of Nathan Dempsey said: 'Jack was never the man his great-grandpaw was. Why, old Nathan could have turned Jack over his knee and spanked the sparks out of him....'"

I was a little surprised that Shaub deemed the small feats mentioned as worth reporting. It showed that he did not know about my friend Algernon, who as a mere school boy was challenged to fight by a grown man named Searles, who then suddenly became panic-stricken and ran to the union depot and hid in a passenger coach in a train standing on the tracks.

When Algernon got to the depot no one would tell him which car Searles had entered, so Algy picked up the cars one after another and shook all the passengers out of each until he shook out Searles. By that time Algernon's vexation had abated so all he did was just throw Searles away.

The other day, while Algernon was sitting on our lawn, he was approached by two characters who identified themselves as Stuporman and Trash Boardman. They seemed to be quite peevish about something and the one who said he was Stuporman remarked to Algernon:

"I am going to give you a shellacking you will remember all your life—if you recover."

"Yeah", put in the one who said he was Trash Boardman, "and after my friend Stupe has finished with you I am going to mash what is left of you like a potato bug."

"Why", said Algernon, "what is eating youse guys? What have I done to you?"

"That is not the pernt", said Stuporman. "The pernt is what we are going to do to you."

"Ah", said Algernon, "I see you are from Brooklyn."

"Myrtle Avenner", said Stuporman.

"What we are going to do to you should not happen to a pussy cat", declared Trash Boardman.

"Just a minute", said Algernon, getting to his feet. "Do youse boys mind if I feel your muskels?"

They did not mind, though they intimated it was only delaying disaster so Algernon felt them over very carefully and then he lay down on the grass and commenced to laugh. He laughed with such gusto he embarrassed the callers and they went away.

He laughed so hard that the following day the Los Angeles newspapers reported a slight earthquake in the vicinity of Holmby Hills, yet it was nothing but the action of Algernon's reflexes. I tell you Algernon is real strong.

The Tale of Sneaky the Germ

"Sneaky", I said to Sneaky the Flu Germ the other day, "I have just heard that you have a lot of relatives."

"Bums", retorted Sneaky, hotly. "I don't have any truck with them."

"Well", I said, "did you ever hear of a germ by the name of A Typical Pneumonia? He claims he is a distant cousin of yours."

"A Double Bum", shouted Sneaky. "He goes around using my material such as chills and fever. I deny that he is any kin of mine. He is a plagiarist. I'll have him arrested for impersonating an attack of me. He has been getting a raft of my business lately under false pretences. Where did you hear of him? Has he been hanging around your house?"

"No", I said. I explained that I had heard of A Typical Pneumonia from Mr. Eddie Goulding, the cinema director, who had entertained the stranger for quite a spell and became quite interested in him.

"Goulding is one of my old customers", grumbled Sneaky. "I am surprised to learn that he has been taking his trade elsewhere. I understand this bum A Typical What's-This is a foreigner and I am going to have J. Edgar Hoover investigate him."

"Not exactly a foreigner", I said, "I am informed that he is from Honolulu which makes him a citizen. He migrated from there a couple of years ago. Sneaky, he is offering tough competition to you. He is inclined to be extremely democratic and will not permit himself to be isolated."

"Yeah?" said Sneaky. "Bidding for the popular vote, hey! Well, we will see who comes out on top."

I suppose we will, at that. Personally, I think Sneaky will outlast A Typical in popularity among our people because he attempts no new-fangled tricks like this Johnny-Come-Lately.

They tell me he first fancied soldiers and plied his traffic among our armed forces with considerable effect. Then he discovered civilians and has been raising Cain with them. He is described by the medical fraternity as low grade and lacking in the personality of Sneaky. The medicos run his name together thus: Atypical.

It seems that one of the few animals that can be infected with this germ is the mongoose, a fact that worried Mr. Eddie Goulding no little when he was familiarizing himself with his guest, because Mr. Goulding, the perfect host, wanted to call in some subject besides himself for the entertainment of A Typical and discovered that mongooses are not permitted in these United States.

The mongoose is a small critter of the rodent family that is indigenous to India, Burma, North Africa and Spain and is noted for its ability to lick its weight in cobras. The nearest mongoose to these shores are in Bermuda and our doctors have made some studies of A Typical there. Mr. Goulding wrote to a soldier friend in North Africa and asked him to capture and mail a mongoose at his earliest convenience but the soldier replied that all he had been able to capture was a Nazi and wouldn't he do just as well for infection purposes?

At one time it is said there were as many as 1,500 cases of A Typical Pneumonia in one large soldier camp in this country at once, but in each case the germ was knocked out with reasonable speed, and apparently without evil after-effect.

"It proved the bum is a bum", said Sneaky the Flu Germ, when I told him of this matter. "He has none of my endurance and penetration. You know very well I would not leave my customers without something to remember me by. Look at yourself."

Sneaky is definitely of the sterner sex. We have known him for years and could not possibly be mistaken. He wears a black moustache and smokes cigars.

What is more, Sneaky has a wife. Mrs. Sneaky is a small flu germ of rather timid disposition and, we think, of good heart. When she lights on you it is never in the fiendish manner of her husband. Her attacks are so gentle that folks mention them as "a touch of flu". Sometimes she does not knock you off your pins; when Sneaky lands you think you have been hit by a blackjack.

We believe if Mrs. Sneaky had her way about it she would never bother anybody but would stay at home minding the children and attending to the housework. However, old Sneaky probably grouches around saying she never does anything to help him, a charge that will be familiar to wives who are not even germs, so she finally goes out and lays her "touch" here and there in self-defence against his grumbling.

Some pessimists claim our theory is altogether too altruistic. They say we give Mrs. Sneaky a character that she does not deserve, asserting that there is sinister method in the very lightness of her "touch". It permits the patients to walk

around the streets and infest movie houses and street cars and other places where human beings may be found in groups and spreads her gentle contamination among them in the form of sniffles and small coughs.

Several of the pessimists we are quoting are playwrights and theatrical producers and they allege that Mrs. Sneaky's dirtiest work is against them. They say she makes it a point to produce among her clientele the sniffles and small coughs aforesaid on opening nights of plays in the theatres so that the actors will be unable to make themselves heard by the dramatic critics. When a dramatic critic is unable to hear what actors are saying it tends to give him a most melancholy attitude toward a play which may be reflected in his review thereof.

One theatrical producer told us that the business would be better off if Mrs. Sneaky kept out of the picture and let Sneaky himself do his worst. The producer said that Sneaky put the sniffles and coughs in bed where they belonged and sometimes the dramatic critics with them. He said he thought his average of play successes would be 50 per cent higher if the dramatic critics had been in bed on opening nights.

Another gloomy view of Mrs. Sneaky's character is that she softens folks up with her "touches" and makes them duck soup for the subsequent and more severe attacks of Sneaky. We are loath to credit any of this slander. We like to think well of all females, including germs, but we admit we have never had any personal experience with Mrs. Sneaky. Her husband considers us his private job and though the accusation against Mrs. Sneaky that we have just mentioned were true, it would be unnecessary in our case. We are always in a softened up condition for Sneaky the Flu Germ. (Knock wood.)

We wonder how many of our readers are acquainted with Sneaky's nephew, Bronch Itis, who generally remains on the scene after Sneaky has departed. Bronch Itis is a nasty little guy who delights in keeping you awake by tickling your throat with a feather duster and making you go buh-roop, buh-roop, buh-roop. You let Bronch Itis get in a berth with you in a crowded Pullman and we guarantee that he will not only cause you one of the most uncomfortable nights you have ever known but will win you more enemies than would a speech in favour of Hitler.

If that inquiring reader wants to know why we are so positive about Bronch Itis' sex, we can say that it is because we are dead certain no female could be as ornery as Bronch, even a germ.



ON BEING SICK

Why Me?

When physical calamity befalls, the toughest thing for the victim to overcome is the feeling of resentment that it should have happened to him.

"Why me?" he keeps asking himself, dazedly. "Of all the millions of people around, why me?"

It becomes like a pulse beat—"Why me? Why me? Why me?"

Sometimes he reviews his whole life step by step to see if he can put his finger on some circumstance in which he may have been at such grievous fault as to merit disaster.

Did he commit some black sin somewhere back down the years? Did he betray the sacred trust of some fellow human being? Is he being punished for some special wrongdoing? "Why me?"

He wakes suddenly at night from a sound sleep to consciousness of his affliction and to the clock-like ticking in his brain—"Why me? Why me? Why me?"

He reflects, "Why not that stinker Smith? Why not that louse Jones? Why not that bum Brown? Why me? Why me? Why me?"

Was he guilty of carelessness or error in judgment? "Why me? Why? Why? Why?"

It is a question that has been asked by afflicted mortals through the ages. It is being asked more than ever just now as the maimed men come back from war broken in body and spirit and completely bewildered, asking "Why me?"

I do not have the answer, of course. Not for myself nor for anyone else. I, too, am just a poor mugg groping in the dark, though sometimes I think of the words of young Elihu reproving Job and his three pals: "Look into the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou."

The Book of Job may have been an attempt to solve the problem why the righteous suffer and to point out that such suffering is often permitted as a test of faith and a means of grace. They sure put old Job over the hurdles as an illustration.

He was a character who lived in the land of Uz, 'way back in the times recorded in the Old Testament. He had more money than most folks have hay and he was also of great piety. He stood good with the Lord, who took occasion to comment favourably on Job one day to Satan, who had appeared before Him.

"There is no one like Job", remarked the Lord to Satan. "He is a perfect and upright man. He fears God and eschews evil."

"Well, why not?" said Satan. "You have fixed him up so he is sitting pretty in every way. But you just let a spell of bad luck hit him and see what happens. He will curse you to your face."

"You think so?" said the Lord. "All right, I will put all his belongings in your power to do with as you please. Only don't touch Job himself."

Not long afterwards, the Sabeans copped all of Job's oxen and asses and killed his servants and his sheep were burned up and the Chaldeans grabbed his camels and slaughtered more of his servants and a big wind blew down a house and destroyed his sons.

But so far from getting sore at the Lord as Satan had figured would happen after these little incidents, Job rent his mantle and shaved his head and fell down upon the ground and worshipped and said:

"Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Now had I been Satan I would have given Job up then and there but lo, and behold, the next time the Lord held a meeting Satan again appeared and when the Lord started boosting Job for holding fast to his integrity, Satan sniffed disdainfully and said:

"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has he will give for his life, but just you touch his bone and his flesh and see what your Mr. Job does."

"All right", the Lord said, "I will put him in your hands, only save his life."

Then Satan smote poor Job with boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. I reckon that was the worst case of boils anyone ever heard of, and Job's wife remarked:

"Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die."

"Woman", Job said, "you are a fool. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not evil?"

But when those pals of Job's, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, came to see him he let out quite a beef to them and in fact cursed the day he was born. In the end, however, after listening to discourses from his pals of a length that must have made him as tired as the boils, Job humbly confessed that God is omnipotent and omnipresent and repented his former utterances and demeanour "in dust and ashes" and the Lord made him more prosperous than ever before.

"Why me?"

"—*Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.*"

The Doctor Knows Best

A man has a pain in a certain spot.

It isn't a severe pain. It isn't an incapacitating pain. But it is nonetheless a pain.

The man goes to a doctor.

"Doc", he says, "I've got a kind of a pain."

So the doctor examines him. He takes the man's temperature, feels his pulse. He looks down the man's throat. He listens to the man's chest. He tests his reflexes.

The doctor finds nothing. He gives the man some simple remedy and tells him that ought to do the trick.

The man is back in a few days. "Doc", he says, "that pain is still there. I don't feel so good."

The doctor makes another examination. He has the man go to an X-ray fellow for a few takes of his teeth and his

interior. The doctor puts the exposures on a rack and gazes at them intently. He sees nothing. He lets the man look at them. The man does not see anything, either.

Then the doctor gives the man diathermic treatments. He gives him vitamin pills and vitamin hypodermics. The needles hurt the man like hell.

"How are you today?" the doctor asks the man on the man's next visit. The doctor is not taking the needles himself, so he has no call to cut himself in on the man's suffering with that "we."

"Doc", the man says, "that pain is still there. I don't feel so good."

Now the doctor puts the man on a strict diet. He tells him to stop smoking and drinking and to cease doing all the other things the man enjoys.

"Doc", the man says, "that pain is still there."

The doctor commences to resent the man's attitude. He commences to hate the very sight of the man's kisser. So do his office attendants. They look at one another knowingly when he appears for his treatments.

When the man's friends ask the doctor what's the matter with the man, the doctor shrugs his shoulders. He purses his lips. He smiles slightly. He as much as says there is nothing the matter with the man.

The man is observed taking one of the pills the doctor ordered.

"He's always taking pills", the observer remarks. "He's a hypochondriac. His doctor can't find a thing wrong with him."

Now if the man has had a good break from life and remains a bachelor, he is not in such bad shape, but if he has the misfortune to be married he is in an awful fix because his wife and family are more difficult to convince that he has a pain than the doctor. They resent his attitude even more than the doctor.

"I've still got that pain", he says to his wife.

"It's just your imagination", she says.

"You never looked better in your life. You mustn't give way to every little ache that comes along. Think of all the suffering in the world. I'm really the one that ought to be in bed."

"I don't feel so good", the man says.

"Nonsense", his wife says.

So the man finally hauls off and gives up the ghost. He ups and dies. His wife and family are astonished, and indignant.

"Well", the man's friends say. "He wasn't looking any too well the last time he was around and he was complaining about a pain, too. Must have been something radically wrong with the old boy, at that."

The doctor is in a bit of a huff about the man dying that way.

No Life

You have been noticing an uneasy sensation in region of the Darby Kelly and the croaker says it looks to him like it might be—

Well, nothing serious, if you are careful about what you eat and take these here powders.

All right, Doc. Careful is the word from now on. Thanks.

Wait a minute. No orange juice.

What, no orange juice, Doc? Always have orange juice for breakfast.

No, no orange juice.

Okay, Doc. That's gonna be tough, but grapefruit is just as good.

No grapefruit, either. No acids.

No grapefruit? Say, what does a guy do for breakfast, Doc?

Cereals.

Don't like cereals, Doc.

No syrup.

You don't mean a little sorghum on wheat cakes, do you Doc?

No sorghum. No wheat cakes. No sugar.

You don't mean no sugar in the coffee, Doc? Just a couple of spoons a cup?

Yes, and no coffee.

Now look, Doc. You don't mean no coffee at all?

No coffee.

Say, Doc, that's all right about no sugar, but you must be kidding about no coffee at all.

No coffee.

Not even a coupla cups a meal, Doc? Why, that's just a taste.

No coffee.

Doc, that ain't human.

No candy.

Not even a little bitsy box of peppermints at the movies, Doc?

No, no peppermints. No ice.

You ain't talking about a tiny dab of banana ice cream, are you, Doc? The kind that goes down so slick?

Yes, no sweets at all. No highly spiced stuff. No herring.

What kind, Doc?

Any kind. No herring.

But you don't mean a little of that chef's special, Doc? The kind with the white sauce on it?

No herring.

Not even matjes, Doc?

No herring.

Well, all right, Doc. No herring. Gefüllte fish will have to do.

No gefüllte fish. No goulash.

What kind of goulash, Doc? Hungarian?

Any kind. No salami. No highly seasoned Italian food.

I never eat that more than a coupla times a week, anyway; I'll take a lobster Fra Diavolo now and then.

None of that.

Are you sure about the herring, Doc? There must be some kind that're all right.

No herring.

It's a conspiracy. Whoever heard of a little herring hurting anybody? Why, Doc, people have been eating herring for years and it never bothered them.

No herring.

Well, all right, no herring after tonight and tomorrow. What's this list, Doc?

It's your diet. Follow it closely.

But there ain't anything on it a guy can eat, Doc. It's terrible. You were just kidding about the coffee, weren't you, Doc? No coffee! Can you imagine a guy trying to live without coffee—what? You can't!

And no cigarettes.

Doc, a guy might as well be dead, hey?

Good Night

DIALOGUE BETWEEN RUNYON AND BED
(A Little Style Larceny from Benjamin Franklin)

RUNYON: Well, Bed, here I am again. Gosh, I feel tough.

BED: What's the matter now?

RUNYON: I ache all over. I think I've got a fever. Gosh, I feel tough.

BED: I'm not surprised. You can't stand it any more, old boy.

RUNYON: Stand what?

BED: Staying out all night and eating what you please and when you please.

RUNYON: Say, what has that got to do with the way I feel? I've picked up a germ of something somewhere.

BED: Well, that's because your physical resistance to germs is weakened from staying out all night and eating indiscriminately. You ought to know better.

RUNYON: My physical resistance is all right. This is some kind of germ that has nothing to do with staying out and eating. Say, why don't you have more covers? You haven't got enough blankets on to make a boxing glove for a bumble bee.

BED: I've got on as many as usual.

RUNYON: Well, look how I'm shivering.

BED: That's because your resistance is low, I tell you.

RUNYON: I guess I need a doctor.

BED: It doesn't make any difference whether you need one or not—you'll have him. I wish you would get one that doesn't dump himself down on me when he's looking you over. I'm a little tired myself from the way you tossed around last night and hollered.

RUNYON: What was I hollering about?

BED: How do I know? You kept hollering "take that!"

RUNYON: Oh, I remember. I was dreaming I was a prizefighter and was knocking Joe Louis out. I guess it was the knackwurst and sauerkraut I ate before I came home.

BED: Knackwurst and sauerkraut, eh? And you wonder why you don't feel good? Why, that's enough to kill a donkey.

RUNYON: See here, Bed. Knackwurst and sauerkraut don't make your bones ache and give you a fever. My chest is sore, too. I may be getting pneumonia. Gosh, I feel tough. I'm afraid I'm in for a siege.

BED: My goodness, I hope not.

RUNYON: Why, don't you like my company?

BED: Oh, your company is all right, but I enjoy it more a little at a time. Then I'm not in so much danger.

RUNYON: What do you mean—danger?

BED: Well, I have to constantly be on guard against being destroyed by fire from those cigarettes you are always smoking. When I think of the narrow escapes I've had it makes my pillows shiver. You shouldn't smoke cigarettes when you are sick, anyway.

RUNYON: Say, a fellow has to do something. He can't just lie still all day and night, can he?

BED: You certainly don't anyway. You keep me in constant torment by kicking around and getting my sheets all knotted up. Your constant groaning is most disturbing, too.

RUNYON: Say, I seem to have a lot of faults, don't I?

BED: Oh, I won't say anything about the soup stains you get on me when you are having your meals off a tray, but I wish you would be more careful about the bread crumbs. They are really most annoying. Another thing, your language is at times slightly offensive.

RUNYON: Listen here, Bed. Maybe I'd better go to a hospital and be sick if you're going to be so critical.

BED: You wouldn't like it. They would turn the lights out on you early and wouldn't let you do so much reading. You couldn't have the radio turned on all the time, either. By the way, why do you keep switching from station to station every few minutes instead of listening to one programme all the way through?

RUNYON: That's because I'm always trying to find torch music when I'm sick. It makes me feel better. I wish Ukelele Ike was always on the radio singing, "It Had to Be You" when I'm sick. Gosh, I feel tough. Say, Bed, how does typhoid fever start?

BED: Oh, you haven't got typhoid fever. If you've got anything it's probably just a little cold. Is that another cigarette? And didn't I hear you groan? Well, I can see that I'm in for it again. Oh, my goodness!

RUNYON: Send for the doctor. Gosh, I feel tough!

Bed-Warmers

When I was in a hospital for a sort of check-up, I was reminded of a medical friend of mine in Hollywood who has the biggest check-up business in all Southern California.

The hospitals out there, as everywhere else, are always pressed for space for patients, especially private rooms. My friend's clientele is strictly the private room type and he had to devise some method of holding at least one or two private rooms in reserve at all times lest some of his patients die of mortification over having to lie ill in wards.

He keeps a list of movie producers, directors, executives and even a few actors and when one of his private room patients who has been really sick is ready for discharge, he calls up some fellow on the list and says:

"Henry, I have been thinking of you lately and I wish you would pop into Gates Ajar hospital tomorrow morning for a check-up. I have a room there for you."

Naturally Henry hustles for the hospital so fast you can scarcely see him for heel dust because the chances are he is a hypochondriac to begin with and in any event the check-up is always de rigueur in Hollywood. It gives a man something to talk about when he goes out socially.

Henry takes with him an assortment of silk robes and silk pyjamas and slippers and other gear, just in case any of the nurses are attractive enough to warrant a display of this nature, and he crawls into the hospital hay still warm from the body heat of the last patient.

He does not know it but he is there just as a holder. He does not know my friend is using him to keep the room against

the coming of a patient of greater illness or importance—and especially importance—than Henry. My friend drops around about noon and takes his blood pressure and is assuming a serious expression before telling Henry that it looks bad when the phone rings.

"Doctor", the office downstairs advises him, "Mrs. Farfel has just arrived."

"Henry", my friend says, as he hangs up, "you are 100 per cent okay just as I thought. You can get out of that bed right now and go home, and consider yourself checked up to who-laid-the-rail."

"But, Doctor", Henry says, "don't you think—"

"Henry", my friend says, "please get up. I will help you put on your clothes. I need the room for Mrs. Farfel."

"You mean the wife of—" Henry begins.

"Yes", says my friend. "Ah, here she is now! Henry, you will have to dress out in the hall."

Of course, I do not believe the story that my friend had three of these holders dressing out in the hall at the same time, but there is no doubt that his check-up turn-over is very rapid and very large. I fear, however, that he has lost a very good check-up customer in the person of another friend of mine, a top producer, who entered the Gates Ajar for a check-up, thinking he was going to get a good rest from his missus and was dispossessed by my medical friend in forty-eight hours.

What made the producer particularly sore was his discovery that the patient who succeeded him was that same missus who went in for treatment for a nervous breakdown. I am inclined to the opinion that my medical friend should have employed a stranger as holder, at that.

The hospital life is not for Runyon. It operates on the theory that the day begins at about 8 o'clock in the a.m., at which hour the nurse comes barging in with bright hellos that have a slightly synthetic ring to one who knows that she must have got up at 6 o'clock to get to the hospital from her home so early unless she lives around the corner. Even then no one can be that cheerful at 8 a.m., especially on a dark day.

The hospital regime is too upsetting to my routine. I think it was originally devised for farmers. What proof can they offer that it does a man any good to be awakened at 8 a.m., and put to sleep at 9 p.m., when all his life he has slept until noon and gone to bed at 4 a.m.? Let us be fair about this.

After a couple of weeks of hospital order I find myself dozing at gin rummy games like Jules Saranoff, the champion gin player of the Friars club, a famous man with his violin in the old days of vaudeville. When "Sary" plays gin, everyone bets on him up to the moment he heaves the ten of spades when he should have chucked the nine of clubs, which is apt to happen any minute after he has played eight or ten hours because he no longer possesses the stamina of former years.

One night I was nodding on "Sary's" left and did not see exactly what came off but it seems his opponent ginned and won the game on a bad play by "Sary" and I was awakened by his backers clamouring to be declared off the next game on the ground that he was asleep. I remarked that his eyes were open so he must be awake.

"The one on your side is", said a backer, "but the one on the other side is closed. He is sleeping one-eyed."

Sweet Dreams

We think the greatest institution ever devised for human comfort is the bed. Let us talk about beds.

A man is usually born in bed, and spends at least half his life in bed. If he is lucky, he dies in bed. We used to think that the best place to die was on the battlefield, face to the foe, etc., but that was when we were much younger and more casual about dying.

Now we know that a battlefield is likely to be an untidy sort of place and much more lonesome for the purpose of dying than a nice clean bed, with the doctors and the sorrowing relatives clustered about, all wondering how soon they are going to get paid off.

However, let us not pursue those morbid reflections about beds. We prefer thinking of beds in their more cheerful aspects. We like to think of a bed as a place of refuge and rest—as a sanctuary against the outside world with its troubles and woes, where sometimes in beautiful dreams, a fellow can live a few hours in ecstasy.

Of course there may be a few bad dreams, too, but we always figured they are stood off by the pleasure derived from awakening to a realization that they are not true. Only the other night a bloke shoved us off a twenty-storey building, but we woke up just before we hit the ground and our joy on discovering that we were still safe in bed completely cancelled the few sweaty seconds we suffered while falling.

We claim to be one of the greatest authorities in the United States on beds—that is, on the sleeping qualities of beds. We have slept in beds in every State in the Union, and we must say good beds are fairly common in these days when the construction of springs and mattresses has reached a degree approaching perfection, and American housewives, in furnishing their homes, are properly placing more importance on beds than on any other items of household equipment.

We can remember when some hotel beds, and a lot in private homes, too, were pretty hard to take. Even now I occasionally run across a survivor of the times when a bed was commonly just a sort of rack with a lumpy mattress and creaky springs and skimpy coverings for a fellow to toss around on between suns, though in general Americans have become educated to the idea of complete comfort in beds.

The trouble with Americans about beds in the past was their theory that a bed typified indolence. They apparently did not realize that the better a fellow rested in bed, the livelier he was likely to be when he got up, and that the better the bed, the better his rest. It is our opinion that the energy of Americans generally has greatly increased since the improvement in beds.

We hold that many Americans owe their lack of appreciation in beds to faulty education in youth. Some parents send their children to bed as punishment. If they would reverse this procedure and send them to bed only as a reward, and keep them out of bed as a penalty, it would inspire in the kids a respect and appreciation for beds for which they would thank their fathers and mothers in later years.

It might be a good idea, too, to teach the youngsters right from taw that they should never take any worries to bed with them—that they should regard bed as a secure nest in which they should rest without giving a thought to worldly concerns. If you started on them early enough maybe they would grow up with the knack of disregarding the winds of worry rattling at the window panes, or the rain of adversity pattering on the roofs that disturbs so much adult peace of mind in bed.

We never cared much for that Spartan simplicity in beds that some fellows profess to fancy. A cot in the corner, or a crude pallet on the ground 'neath the stars is not for us. We went through all that in our army days, and you can have it.

We will take all the luxury with which a bed can possibly be surrounded—a gentle, yielding mattress, and quiet, cushiony springs, and soft, downy pillows, and snowy linen and the richest of coverings. A fellow gets little enough out of life under any circumstance without making his hours of rest too tough.

We like a bed wide and long that we can kick around in without falling out or stubbing our toes. As we have said, good beds are common enough, but a truly great bed—one that fits perfectly, and that sleeps good, is a rarity that a fellow should cherish above all other possessions. We have a bed in New York City that we think is the sleepingest bed in the whole world and would not part with it for anything, but of course another fellow might not like it. It might not just fit him. That is the thing—to get a bed that fits.

I realize, of course, that my appreciation of a bed is due largely to the fact that I am one of those fortunate chaps who sleeps fairly well, for which I am grateful to a kind providence. I can imagine nothing worse than insomnia. I am lucky enough to be able to sleep after a fashion standing up, or hanging on a hook, but in a good bed—say, that is when I really saw wood!

Passing the Word Along

Since I lost my voice or about 90 per cent of its once bell-like timbre, I have discovered many inconveniences as well as some striking conveniences.

The greatest inconvenience is that it involved explanations to friends on meeting them for the first time since the vocal abatement and they are grieved by the absence of my former thunderous salutations.

You see in my set warmth of greeting is rated by the size of the hellos you give and receive and I was always noted for issuing the hood rive, or top size, the good old "Hello, hello, hello, hello, the old well, well, well, hello, hello, hello."

Now that I am perforce down to the $6\frac{3}{8}$ size hello for one and all which is just a nubbin of a hello and the brush off kind you give a gee you do not like my friends are inclined to huffiness toward me until I explain about the voice.

This is a bit of strain in itself but fortunately they soon start telling me about remedies that cures other blokes they know so all I have to do is to stand there and nod my head at intervals.

I find the nod wonderfully noncommittal, especially when someone is delivering a big knock against someone else because word cannot be carried to the knockee that Runyon was a party to the knock. At least they cannot quote a nod.

I am occasionally distressed by strangers to whom I address myself in my low murmur answering me in imitative whisper, possibly inadvertently, possibly because they think I am kidding and possibly just because they have no sense. Sometimes even my friends do the same thing in that gentle spirit of mockery of human affliction from which many actors and others have long drawn their humour.

You have undoubtedly heard some of our public performers discoursing humourously on cross-eyed persons, on bald heads, on the deaf and the dumb and the lame and the halt. You have perhaps seen them simulate limps and other distortions of the body to point up their jokes. It is a common practice for us to apply nicknames suggestive of affliction such as "Gimp", "Frip", "Humpty", "Deafy", "Blinky", "Baldy" and the like.

False teeth and glass eyes and the toupee have long been standard items of jest among our jokesters. A person who is compelled to resort to a hearing device, one of the greatest boons to afflicted humanity ever invented, is said to be "wired for sound" which is supposed to be good for a hearty laugh.

And not only is infirmity one of our leading topics of humour but it is often brought up by men in moments of anger against the infirm, as when they say things like "That one-legged so-and-so", as if the infirmity itself was a reproach.

Of course the humour that deals with infirmities is in bad taste. Most American humour is in bad taste and growing worse under the present vogue for the suggestive and the downright obscene in the spoken and written word. But even the suggestive and the obscene is not as unkind as the humour dealing with bodily affliction.

The hale and hearty shun the afflicted and I cannot say I blame them much. I can well imagine that I am a great trial to my friends who have to bend their ears close to my kisser to hear what I am saying. Maybe it would be better for all concerned if I did not try to talk at all because everybody else is talking these days and I would not be missed.

I carry a pad of paper in my pocket and when conversation is indicated I jot down my end of the gabbing on paper and pass it on to my vis-à-vis who takes a glaum at the chirography, crumples up the slip of paper and casts it aside, nodding his head or muttering a noncommittal um-huh because he cannot read it any more than I can after it is two hours cold.

The forced practice has produced a headache for me as this morning I was waited on by four guys who were all mighty belligerent. I mean they all wanted to place the sluggola on me. They wanted to bash out my brains, if any. I mean they were sizzling.

The first one to appear we will call Pat, though his name is really Pete. He had a piece of paper in his hand that he handed to me, saying, truculently:

"What does this mean?"

The paper had obviously been wadded up and smoothed out again and I could not decipher the writing, though it looked familiar.

"Who wrote this?" I asked Pat (in writing).

"You did", he said, fiercely.

Then it dawned on me that it was indeed my own writing and I read it better.

"Pat is a louse", the writing said.

I tried to remember when I had written it. It could scarcely have been at the editorial council in Joe Connolly's office because insects were not discussed, only a few heels. As a matter of fact I did less talking in Joe Connolly's office than anywhere else in town because when I walked in he had a great big pad of foolscap lying on his desk and I felt insulted. It was a hint that I talk a heap.

It might have been in Lindy's late at night when I had a meeting with Oscar Levant and Leonard Lyons, but it comes to my mind that we did not get as far down in the alphabet as the P's. We quit at the O's because I ran out of pad paper and Lindy commenced to get sore at the way I was working on the backs of his menu cards.

I was busy writing out a denial for Pat when Joe and Ike and Spike, as we will call them, came barging in and each of them had a crumpled slip, and were so hot that taken jointly you could have barbecued a steer on them. I read one slip that said Mike would rob a church, another that stated that Ike would guzzle his grandmamma if he thought it would help him while there was still another that I would not think of putting in a public print. I did not realize that I knew some of the words.

I think if there had been only one present he would have belted me but the four being there at the same time complicated matters because each one knew the others are copper hollerers or stool pigeons, which is what I had in mind in my writing, and would belch to the bulls if a murder or mayhem came off.

So they finally left muttering they would see me later and I was taught a lesson about leaving written testimony scattered around. However, I think that there is a plot for a great crime story in all this by my favourite mystery writer of

the moment, Raymond Chandler of Los Angeles. I mean he could have the real killer going about dropping notes that finally land him in the gas chamber at Quentin because Chandler puts all his mysteries in California as if we do not have them in Florida, too.

I notice that whipping out the pad sends most of my acquaintances to searching themselves for their specs and they invariably have some fatuous remark to make about getting old as if I did not know by just looking at them or remembering how long I have known them.

I do not pull the pad and pencil on the dames. I just shake hands and grin idiotically. Most women are near-sighted since infancy and too vain to wear cheaters but why should I embarrass them. Besides not all of them can read.



Death Pays a Social Call

Death came in and sat down beside me, a large and most distinguished-looking figure in beautifully-tailored soft, white flannels. His expensive face wore a big smile.

"Oh, hello", I said. "Hello, hello, hello. I was not expecting you. I have not looked at the red board lately and did not know my number was up. If you will just hand me my kady and my coat I will be with you in a jiffy."

"Tut-tut-tut", Death said. "Not so fast. I have not come for you. By no means."

"You haven't?" I said.

"No", Death said.

"Then what the hell are you doing here?" I demanded indignantly. "What do you mean by barging in here without even knocking and depositing your fat Francis in my easiest chair without so much as by-your-leave?"



"Excuse me", Death said, taken aback at my vehemence. "I was in your neighbourhood and all tired out after my day's work and I thought I would just drop in and sit around with you awhile and cut up old scores. It is merely a social call, but I guess I owe you an apology at that for my entrance."

"I should say you do", I said.

"Well, you see I am so accustomed to entering doors without knocking that I never thought", Death said. "If you like, I will go outside and knock and not come in until you answer."

"Look", I said. "You can get out of here and stay out of here. Screw, bum!"

Death burst out crying.

Huge tears rolled down both pudgy cheeks and splashed on his white silk-faced lapels.

"There it is again", he sobbed. "That same inhospitable note wherever I go. No one wants to chat with me. I am so terribly lonesome. I thought surely you would like to punch the bag with me awhile."

I declined to soften up.

"Another thing", I said sternly, "what are you doing in that get-up? You are supposed to be in black. You are

supposed to look sombre, not like a Miami Beach Winter tourist."

"Why", Death said, "I got tired of wearing my old working clothes all the time. Besides, I thought these garments would be more cheerful and informal for a social call."

"Well, beat it", I said. "Just Duffy out of here."

"You need not fear me", Death said.

"I do not fear you Deathie, old boy", I said, "but you are a knock to me among my neighbours. Your visit is sure to get noised about and cause gossip. You know you are not considered a desirable character by many persons, although, mind you, I am not saying anything against you."

"Oh, go ahead", Death said. "Everybody else puts the zing on me so you might as well, too. But I did not think your neighbours would recognize me in white, although, come to think of it, I noticed everybody running to their front doors and grabbing in their 'Welcome' mats as I went past. Why are you shivering if you do not fear me?"

"I am shivering because of that clammy chill you brought in with you", I said. "You lug the atmosphere of a Frigidaire around with you."

"You don't tell me?" Death said. "I must correct that. I must pack an electric pad with me. Do you think that is why I seem so unpopular wherever I go? Do you think I will ever be a social success?"

"I am inclined to doubt it", I said. "Your personality repels many persons. I do not find it as bad as that of some others I know, but you have undoubtedly developed considerable sales resistance to yourself in various quarters."

"Do you think it would do any good if I hired a publicity man?" Death asked. "I mean, to conduct a campaign to make me popular?"

"It might", I said. "The publicity men have worked wonders with even worse cases than yours. But see here, D., I am not going to waste my time giving you advice and permitting you to linger on in my quarters to get me talked about. Kindly do a scammola, will you?"

Death had halted his tears for a moment, but now he turned on all faucets, crying boo-hoo-hoo-hoo.

"I am so lonesome", he said between lachrymose heaves.

"Git!" I said.

"Everybody is against me", Death said.

He slowly exited and, as I heard his tears falling plop-plop-plop to the floor as he passed down the hallway, I thought of the remark of Agag, the King of the Amalekites, to Samuel just before Samuel mowed him down: "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Minor typographical errors have been corrected; these included superfluous letters in such words as terrific, alives, and etiquette; missing letters in worldly, philosphical, anwer, hightly and competiton, and misplaced letters as in circlces. A single instance of life was changed to live in the sentence:

A person could **life** in a community for years.

One instance of too was changed to read to in:

wondering when you was going **to** quit being so helpful

Hyphenation is inconsistent throughout.

also by
DAMON RUNYON

More Than Somewhat
Furthermore
Take It Easy
Runyon à la Carte

the
publishers are
CONSTABLE
Orange Street London W.C.2

[The end of *Short Takes* by Damon Runyon]