

ONCE EVERY SIX MONTHS or so, Henry Commager consents to leave the Columbia campus long enough to come downtown and lunch with me. We dispose of various world problems with the soup course, and settle down to a really serious discussion of just how terrible the next year's Columbia football team is likely to be. Last week we talked about Columbia's funny paper too—the *Jester*. . . . Morrie Ryskind was the editor of *Jester* back in 1917, but got the heave-ho for printing an editorial that displeased President Nicholas Murray Butler. I was only a Sophomore at the time, but inherited Morrie's job because there was nobody else around to take it. I ran into trouble with my very first issue. The dance craze of the moment was the "shimmy," and our full-page frontispiece showed a young couple shimmying violently, with an English lord watching in amazement from a ringside table. "What do you think of that dance?" asked the lord's companion, to which he replied, "All H'I can sye is, H'I 'opes 'e marries the gal." . . . The day after *Jester* appeared on the stands, I was summoned to meet President Butler—the only time I ever saw him in my college career. "Mr—er, Cerf," he pointed out coldly, "it might interest you to know in the first place that English lords usually do not speak in a Cockney accent." This put me on the ropes immediately. And a gentle reminder of what had happened to my predecessor sufficed to conclude the interview, and send me out vowing to turn *Jester* into a little brother of the *St. Nicholas Magazine*. . . . Shortly thereafter the whole staff was inducted into the army. Judging by what we got away with after we came back to college, President Butler had stopped reading *Jester* entirely. . . . George Macy inherited the editorship when I graduated, and was followed in turn by Corey Ford. . . . *Jester's* greatest advertising manager of those years was Horace Manges, who is counsel for several publishing houses and important authors today. Manges not only shattered precedent by ending the year with a credit balance, but personally bagged two typewriters, a case of Bevo, two dozen Arrow Shirts, and a carload of Horlick's Malted Milk Tablets in exchange for advertising space. . . . Henry Commager is responsible for all these reminiscences. He is also responsible (with Allan Nevins) for the best short "History of the United States" on the market.

Little, Brown publish the cloth-bound edition; Pocket Books have sold a half million copies of the reprint. . . . Henry says he won't come downtown again until I've read Rebecca West's "The Judge" and Henry De Morgan's "Joseph Vance." I have my order in for copies. . . .

**FRANK LUTHER MOTT**, Dean of the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, is at work on the most comprehensive history of the best-selling books in America that has ever been attempted. It is scheduled for publication in the Fall of 1944, by Macmillan, under the title of "Golden Multitudes." Dean Mott's list, based on a sale of half a million copies and more since 1880, and on a sale equivalent to one percent of the total population of the country before that date, includes over 200 titles, although it omits Bibles, textbooks, almanacs, cookbooks, and manuals. The list is headed by Michael Wigglesworth's "The Day of Doom," published in 1662, and concludes at the moment with Wendell Willkie's "One World." There will be other titles added before the book is ready for publication; the powerful assistance of the Book-of-the-Month Club and low-priced reprint editions put many more titles into the golden half-million class than was possible in earlier years. Typical examples are: "Grapes of Wrath," "For Whom the Bell Tolls," "Mrs. Miniver," "Berlin Diary," "The Moon Is Down,"

"Song of Bernadette," "See Here, Private Hargrove," "Guadalcanal Diary," and "The Human Comedy." . . .

**READERS** who are still goggle-eyed over Margaret Mitchell's assertion that "being the author of 'Gone with the Wind' is a full-time job," are referred to a story about Harriet Beecher Stowe, told by Annie Fields in "Authors and Friends": "A visitor to Mrs. Stowe remarked that he wanted to shake the hand that had written 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' 'No,' she said, 'this hand did not write 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'" 'What?' shouted the visitor in surprise. 'You didn't write it?' 'No,' replied Mrs. Stowe gently, 'God wrote it. I merely wrote his dictation!' " . . . Ever since a bemused admirer assured Dale Warren that he is the spitting image of Vincent Sheean, America's handsomest correspondent, fellow Houghton Mifflinites are absolutely desperate. . . . A group of designers, publishers, and printers stationed for the duration in or about Washington's Pentagon Building have organized an informal book club, which meets once a month. Observed at a recent session were Colonel John T. Winterich, Lester Douglas, Lt. Daniel Bianchi (son of Updike's partner), Joseph Blumenthal of the Spiral Press, James D. Hart and Carl Wheat of California, James Oliver Brown, and Edmund B. Thompson, of Hawthorne House. . . .

**SOME TIME AGO** Russel Crouse promised to write a foreword for a reprint edition of "Life with Father." Pressed for delivery of same, he wired "My understanding was that this foreword was to be a joint contribution of Lindsay and Crouse. Now you'll have to wait until I get Lindsay in a joint!"



"I just thought of a swell answer to give the sergeant on that argument we had, and I'm glad I didn't think of it sooner."

... Mr. Lindsay, meanwhile, got himself involved in a "word game" at the home of Lewis Browne. Everybody was playing except Russell Gleason, who declared firmly, "No word games for baby! I'm anti-semantic!" ... Did you know that there is a thriving metropolis in the heart of Louisiana named Book? Population: 800. Bookstores and libraries: none. ... Colin Miller, of United Features, has solved the problem of wangling breakfast in bed at eleven in a hotel where room service is suspended promptly at nine. At 8:58 he orders a full meal, and adds "I also want two 120-minute eggs. Serve the whole order at one time." Then he rolls over blissfully and goes back to sleep. ... Advertisement unearthed from an issue of *The London Post* in 1775 by that indefatigable researcher, Dent Smith, for *Encore Magazine*:

A Gentleman of Honour and Property, having in his disposal at present a young Lady of good Family, with a Fortune of Sixty Thousand Pounds, on her Marriage with his approbations, would be very happy to treat with a Man of Fashion and Family, who may think it worth his while to give the Advertiser a Gratuity of Five thousand pounds on the day of Marriage. As this is no common advertisement, it is expected no gentleman will apply whose Family and Connections will not bear the strictest inquiry. The Advertiser having always lived retired from the World, immersed in business, is unacquainted with those of that Rank of Life that the Lady's fortune entitles her to be connected with, for which reason he has made this public application. Letters, addressed to E. M., at Tom's Coffee House, Devereux Court, near the Temple, mentioning real Name, and places of Abode, will punctually be attended to. ...

**A LETTER** from the associate editor of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*:

Dear Bennett:  
Is there a philologist in the house?  
Some years ago I was reading a book and in it was mentioned the origin of the phrase "The Goose Hangs High." It said that the word "hangs" was originally "whangs" (with the "w" silent as in "whole, whose, whore, etc.") and referred to the honking sound geese made when returning from the winter migration. This was supposed to foretell good weather, hence plentiful crops and prosperity.

As I came across this passage in the book I read it aloud to my wife who is today my only evidence that I did not dream it all up.

Shortly after this happened a controversy took place in *The New York Times* about the phrase and I sent in my contribution. I was then asked to state the source of my information but for the life of me I couldn't recall the name of the book I had been reading. I thought it was Boswell's "Life of Johnson" but on examination of my three-volume edition I couldn't find it.

I asked every scholar I knew. No dice. I wrote the learned philologist, the Rev. Ernest Weekley of Nottingham University, but he replied that he'd never heard of it and couldn't find it in any of his reference books. And there you are.

Can any of your readers help? I hope so but let me say in advance not to let them tell you that the phrase has anything to do with the "hanging" of game as with venison, pheasants, ducks, etc. I *do* know that much.

Cordially,  
Percy Waxman. ...

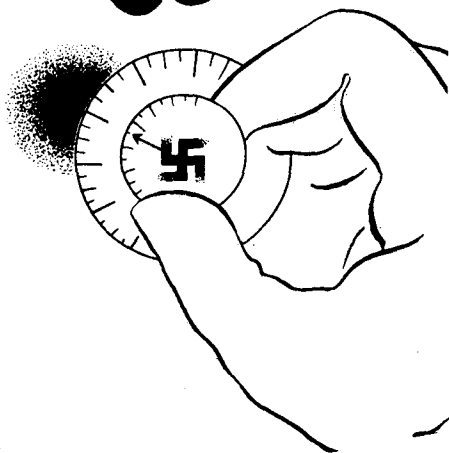
**AN AMERICAN MAJOR** relays from abroad the story of the sentry who stopped a prowler in the dead of night and cried "Halt! What's the last stanza of 'The Star Spangled Banner'?" "How in heck should I know?" said the prowler. "Pass, American!" said the sentry. ...

**DON'T BE ANNOYED** by the endless stream of screen credits that precede the showing of the average Hollywood film these days. Various unions and guilds insist upon these listings, and salaries often depend upon the number of such credits a writer or technician has had in the previous year. The powerful directors' association has managed to enforce a demand that the last and most prominent credit invariably go exclusively to the director of a film. ... Credits for "Trade Winds": Commas and spelling checked by Saxe Commins. Typing by Jezebel, queen of the Randamselles. Chief critics: my wife and Leonard Lyons. Censors: Amy Loveman and Veronica Jennings. Groaners over superb puns: the entire cast. **DIRECTOR:**

BENNETT CERF.

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**FRASER YOUNG'S  
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*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. The solution to Crypt No. 8 will be found in the next issue.*

RO SHH DSLO JAYOEDVZC EA

BSHH PSUW AZ, SZN V ZOLOI

WZOR S GDAZK RDA NVNZ'E

HSZN AZ VE OLOZEQSHHK.

RVHJAZ YVTZOI

*Answer to Literary Crypt No. 7*  
WIVES IN THEIR HUSBANDS'  
ABSENCES GROW SUBTLER  
AND DAUGHTERS SOMETIMES  
RUN OFF WITH THE BUTLER.  
BYRON—DON JUAN