

The Lyons Den

By Leonard Lyons



Ex-Ambassador Tony Biddle tells this story of Rotterman, the Austrian village where he once had a shooting lodge: "When the local radio announced the Nazi putsch against the Dolfuss regime, seven of Rotterman's quislings marched to the city hall, jailed the seven officials there, and took over their offices. Two days later came the radio announcement that the putsch had failed. The seven Nazis immediately rushed to their homes, packed supplies for their comfort, and went to the jail. There they released the seven imprisoned officials and took their places in jail. The man who had assumed the Mayoralty of Rotterman also telephoned his wife. "Don't pay the butcher bills," he advised her, "because tomorrow morning I'm to be hanged."

Ninety-three of the 94 N. Y. delegates to the Democratic convention are pledged to Roosevelt . . . Sec. Morgenthau is expected to be named head of the new International Monetary Board . . . Ernest T. West, the steel man, is pulling for a Dewey-Bricker ticket . . . Dashiell Hammett, author of "The Thin Man," celebrated his 50th birthday yesterday, in the Aleutians. Hammett, gassed in the last war, is a Corporal now and refuses to be commissioned. He volunteered for overseas duty and had to have all his teeth yanked before he could pass the physical . . . Chas. Coburn drew a royal flush at the Hoyle Club Monday, but was so calm that his monocle wasn't budged.

Capt. Don Gentile, who covered the N. Y. night spots last weekend, is a practical young man. He had his pick of N. Y. notables, but the man he was most anxious to meet was a young flier at La Vie Parisienne, who really had some useful information to impart—useful especially to one who soon will be flying over France again. The flier had been shot down over Havre, fell into friendly hands and was taken to Paris, Spain, Portugal and back to London.

The latest literary bout will involve Philip Wylie's blast in the Sat. Rev. of Lit., against text-book writers. He refers to the text-book publishers as "cap and gown Capones" . . . Morrie Ryskind, the playwright, is in New York to work on the script of Fred Allen's new movie . . . Shirley Temple, who refused \$10,000 for a broadcast, will appear on the Army's program, "Visiting Hour," broadcasting from San Francisco. The Army at first invited Shirley to broadcast from Denver, but her mother said it would be impossible because Shirley must remain close to home to catch up on her one weak school subject, botany.

Woody Guthrie is the writer-minstrel-artist who wrote "Bound for Glory," a best-seller of last year. Guthrie, accompanying himself in the banjo, has played at Madison Square Garden and Town Hall, and made recordings for OWI, Victor and the Library of Congress . . . He recently was awarded a Rosenwald Fellowship, which allowed him, for one year, to do whatever he wished to do. Guthrie made his choice. He's working as a cook for the Merchant Marine.

On her way back from Washington Mrs. Vincent Sheean sat next to a sailor who bought a copy of Look, opened the pages and then became excited. "This story is about my ship," he told her. Mrs. Sheean glanced at the article. "This story," she told him, "was written by my husband" . . . Donald M. Nelson's passport, which he used for his trip to Russia, still is being held by the State Dept., which picks up all passports when travelers return. Nelson will wait until the end of the war, before he asks for it . . . Julie Haydon, the actress, this week will finish the book she's writing about the life of her dog. She's doing the illustrations for it herself. "I can't write," she confesses. "I just put down whatever the dog does."

Benjamin Stolberg, author of "Tailor's Progress," the story of the ILGWU, tells of the early 30's, when a New York clothing manufacturer, anxious to evade the union, selected the Hightstown project of the National Housing Authority as the place where he would establish a colony of 300 families, and have them work there. He convinced Eleanor Roosevelt of the merit of his project, and then asked Albert Einstein to obtain the consent of David Dubinsky, head of the ILGWU. Einstein went to the union's offices and discussed the new country life being planned for these tailors. "Dr. Einstein, when it comes to physics, you're the professor," said Dubinsky. "But when it comes to tailoring, I'm the professor."

The man who sang "Day In, Day Out" on Fred Waring's NBC broadcast Friday was Seaman 2/c Leo Bernache. He used to work for Waring. He was in New York last week, and went to the studio to witness the broadcast. Waring saw him in the audience, and invited him onstage, to do the broadcast, without a rehearsal . . . The phone company officials discovered that Harry James was phoning Betty Grable in Hollywood twice a day, for 30 minutes. After one week of this, the bandleader was notified that his calls will be limited to five minutes, once a day . . . Harry Green, the actor, is an expert card-trickster. He was invited to a party given by Lord Louis Sterling, who asked him to do a card trick. "I passed your building today, and saw a Television set, for \$2,500," Green replied. "If I'm here as an entertainer, I'll have to charge you, the same as you'd charge me—\$2,500." Lord Louis replied: "\$2,500? Do the trick."

Major Andre Baruch, back from Africa, tells of the Casablanca conference, which he covered for the Army. After the third day of the conferences, all attended by Baruch, his room-mate, Camera-man Sammy Shulman, rushed into their room, and closed the door stealthily. Shulman then looked under the beds, in the closets, etc., etc., searching for possible recording devices. "Sh," he whispered, "but I got big news: 'The Big Guy's here.'" . . . "What Big Guy?" asked Baruch, who had been spending three days with the President and Churchill . . . "Sh," whispered Sammy. "Don't tell anybody. But I think Roosevelt must be around, because I saw his ear."