

# DIE, WE THOUGHT WE'D LAUGH!

**OR**

## How To Write A Perfect Scream In Six Easy Spasms

THE United States, besides hot dogs, super-salesmen, Theodore Dreiser, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Monroe Doctrine, has produced something which shows what happens to people when they live between the Statue of Liberty and Golden Gate.

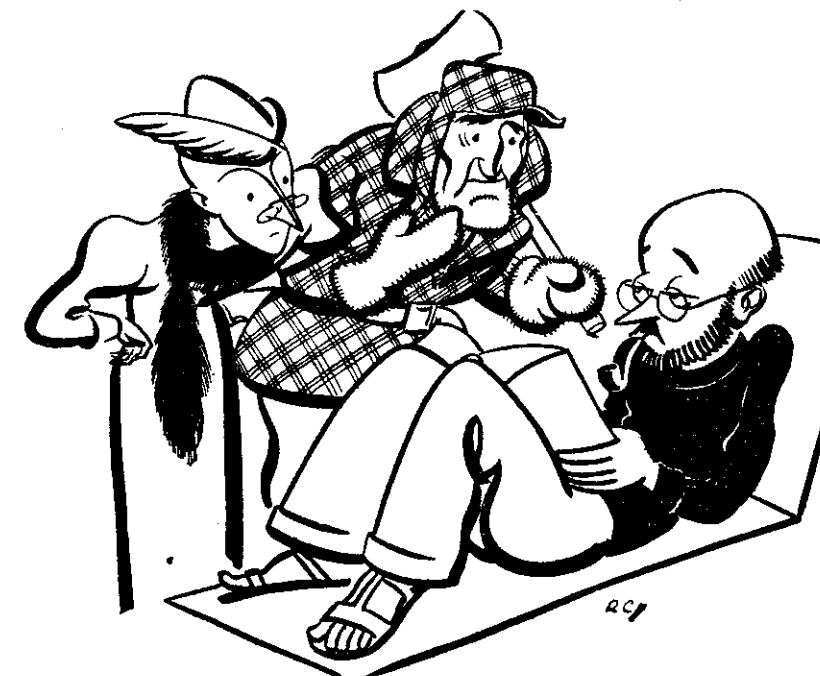
It arrived in the office recently, wrapped in a neat parcel. It is a book, and it came to the order of a member of the staff of the NBS Play Department, who anticipated something unusual and was not disappointed. It could only come, in fact, from a country where a milk bar is called a drug store and where they like shortening their speech so much they take the u out of colour and call cars automobiles.

The book is called "The Plot Genie," and with it comes a sort of ready reckoner chart. The chart is related to numbered notes in the book, and when you get a number on the chart you look it up in the book, and when you've looked up a few you have the whole plot for a comedy, play, poem or short story.

It is a beautifully bound book, excellently printed, and it has 320 folio sized pages. It is the sixth of a series. The others were short-cuts to fame for authors of "General" fiction, "Romance Without Melodrama," "Action-Adventure Stories," "Detective-Mystery Stories," "Short-Short Stories."

### Why We Laugh

All basic comedy situations, the author claims, are founded on Distress, Inferiority, and Incongruity. In the category of inferiority he classes stomach ache, pimples, halitosis, pink toothbrush, cosmetic skin, and athletes' feet. Distress arises most hilariously out of bedbugs and cupidors, or hogs. There is the desire to conceal the fact that one has bedbugs, or a cupidor, an effort to expectorate into a cupidor, or an ambition to be a hog-caller. Much harmless fun may be introduced in these situa-



"A snooping boarding-school mistress and a lumberjack encounter a bewhiskered hermit in a dope den"

tions by making one character mislead another into a belief that he is sweating excessively or making a loud, disgusting noise while eating soup.

### Our Own Humble Effort

Here is one result of dialling numbers and following the chart, and the plot may be used without restriction by any who wish:

Deep in the jungle, a sissy and a hash-slinger meet a hobo and a red-hot mamma. One is a back-number but keeps his shirt on and pounds the pavement. He has one foot in the grave, and is a sorehead, but doesn't mention it as he knows even the walls have ears. However, one of the others rubs him the wrong way and he is left kicking his heels. Someone gets lit up and his three companions are in a stew,

until it turns out they've all sown their wild oats. So the first-mentioned spills the beans and then gives up the ghost as he can't help feeling he has been the goat. The three others go to Rogue's Gallery where they encounter a lounge lizard and a tout. The hash-slinger by this time has a crush on the red hot mamma but she is busy locking for a needle in a haystack. The hash-slinger is solid ivory from the neck up so he's naturally more occupied than a one-armed paper-hanger with the hives. As he is also living from hand to mouth he is a bit of a chiseler and the red hot mamma gives him a cold shoulder and henpecks the lounge lizard. The hobo has meanwhile begun to show the cloven hoof and departs with his tail between his legs. The moral is, don't catch your chickens before they're counted; but they all escape by the skin of their teeth from a four-flusher.

That plot, of course, has yet to have the sharp corners polished off, but anyone can see its possibilities.

Another plot leads the budding author to a situation in which a snooping boarding-school mistress meets a lumberjack in a dope den. There they encounter a bewhiskered hermit who is submitting to social ostracisation to hide his genius. And that only takes you as far as climax 4b, sub-section 3.

### Strange, But True

All this may sound utterly fantastic. It is. And it is true. It is also true, if the Preface is to be believed, that the volume was five years in the writing, and involved a tremendous amount of research work by a special staff under the direction of the author. More than ten thousand comedy situations, stories, jokes, and gags were analysed to discover the basic comedy situations, "of which there are 31 in number."

It seems strange that Shakespeare came before this book, and not after.

## War Work For Animals

### Strange Tasks Fall To The Lot Of Birds And Beasts In Wartime

(Written for "The Listener" by RONALD McINTOSH)

THE outbreak of the war witnessed the opening of the strangest recruiting centres on record — for the enlistment of dogs for active service. All over France Alsatisans and sheep dogs between one and five years old were accepted as gifts to the nation or on loan "for the duration." Their service in war consists of helping ambulance bearers to seek the wounded and in the carrying of despatches. Needless to say, their training is as rigorous as that of any soldier.

In Germany also, dogs became conscripts—but for a different reason. Their carcasses can be rendered down to make soap, while their bones are turned into fertiliser. When the war broke out, German dogs were classified into three cate-

gories—those fit for military service, dogs trained for leading the blind, and pets. The third class went into the refineries, at the same time helping to ease the nation's food problem.

Dogs are not the only animals capable of playing a part in total war, as the Germans were quick to discover. Toward the end of the Great War the edible animals in German zoos went into the butchers' shops to feed a starving population, but this time the elephants, zebras and camels have joined the land army, pulling tractors and ploughs and thereby saving valuable oil for the air force and mechanised army. In this role, too, the horse has come into its own again in every warring country.

### Pigeons Called to the Colours

England has not found the need for conscripting exotic animals from her zoos, but thousands of pigeons have been called to the colours, the first to volunteer being the King's famous racing pigeon loft. To-day 600,000 homing pigeons are performing valuable work for the Royal Air Force. They carry vital messages when the need for secrecy demands that the aeroplane's radio must not be used. They are also of great value when a seaplane is forced down at sea with its radio out of action.

The pigeons have adapted themselves remarkably to their new duties. When first released from an aeroplane travelling at high speed the birds are tossed about in the rush of air and momentarily lose their sense of direction. The experienced campaigners, however, have learned to drop like a stone, with wings folded, until they are clear of the air currents.

Miniature cameras have been designed enabling pigeons to act as valuable reconnaissance units, but the Royal Air Force has demonstrated its ability to carry out such duties satisfactorily

without the aid of its feathered allies.

The canary is another bird which has its war duties to perform. Its heartbeat is so rapid that the inhalation of the minutest quantities of gas results in instant death. These birds have therefore been much in demand both in Germany and England, to give warning of gas attacks.

### Silkworms, Too

Even the humble silkworm is doing its bit as a war worker. The need for parachutes has created an unprecedented demand for silk, and at ancient Lullingstone Castle, in Kent, each of 3,500,000 silkworms is busy spinning its quota of 1½ miles of silken thread annually.

Perhaps the strangest war work it has ever been the lot of animals to perform was assigned to seals during the Great War, when the British Admiralty was willing to try any scheme which might help to counter the submarine blockade then starving Britain. The seals were coaxed by rewards of fish to detect the motors of submarines under water and proved apt pupils, but the war ended before any of the trainees had been put into active service.