

## Victory over Blindness

*IT WAS NOT MY OWN IDEA.* By Robinson Pierce. New York: American Foundation for the Blind. 1944. 128 pp. \$1.50.

Reviewed by M. E. TRACY

**T**HIS is the story of a blind man, and of the adjustment he was obliged to make on losing his sight just as he was approaching the prime of life. It is told by himself in very simple language and in a very modest way. It deals with exactly such problems as you and I would face under similar circumstances—every day problems, such as combing one's hair, shaving, learning how not to stumble over furniture, avoiding objects by listening to their echo, learning the braille system, getting accustomed to the use of simple tools, and so forth.

The tragic part of this story consists of the fact that Robinson Pierce had already chosen a profession which seems to be more dependent on sight than most others and had made something of a reputation for himself as an athlete. He had already graduated from Brown and picked astronomy as his chosen field when the darkness began to descend. The strength of his story consists in the philosophical way he faced his fate and the various methods he chose to make the most of it. In summing up at the end, he says,

... my life as a blind man was spent mostly in the country. This may have been unwise. Being a teacher at the time my sight went, perhaps I should have gone on with teaching. Other blind men have done so successfully, and I believe the theory of continuing to do what you have done before is more in line with up-to-date social thinking. Perhaps, with me, fate decided the issue by having me born thirty years too soon for that competent advice. Anyway, it was the country life for me.

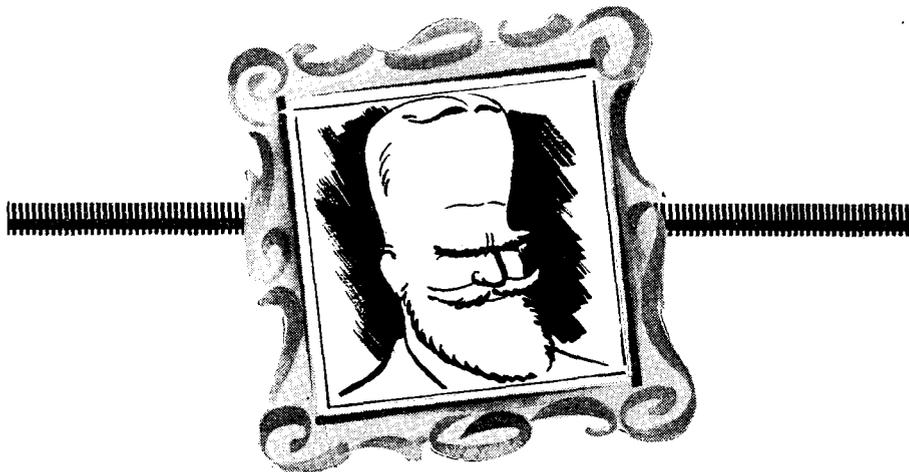
No sooner was it determined that Mr. Pierce was going blind, than kind friends advised him to "get back to the land." Incidentally, that seems the general tenor of advice which people get when they find themselves up against a real emergency. Taking it seriously, he found himself on a rather poor and badly run-down New England farm and, as so many others have done before, went into the chicken business. His description of how he mastered the business, adapted himself to its various requirements making a success of it and doing much of the work with his own hands or fingers, is really a revelation of good humor and Yankee ingenuity.

OCTOBER 28, 1944

## How many

# SHAW'S

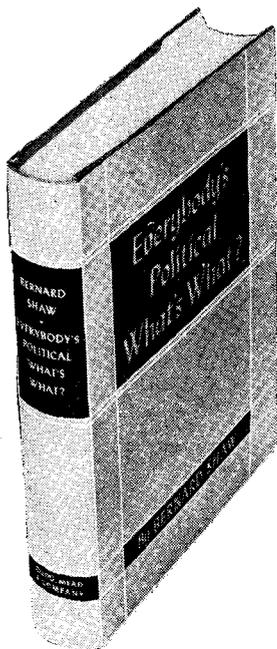
## do you see in this picture?



*There are at least six  
—and all of them have collaborated in*

## Everybody's Political WHAT'S WHAT?

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Everybody's Political What's What? is *all* Shaw.  
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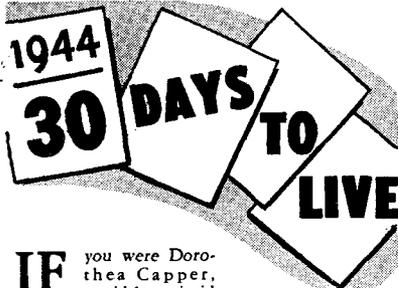
# New York Murders

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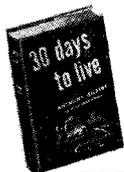
Duell, Sloan and Pearce



**IF** you were Dorothea Capper, you'd be a timid spinster. You don't think anybody cares whether you live or die. But you're dead wrong! Because you are to inherit five hundred thousand dollars—PROVIDED YOU ARE STILL ALIVE IN THIRTY DAYS!

But one murder has already been done—and BANG! a horde of relatives try to "liquidate" you! You're a wide-open target for all sorts of poison concoctions, lethal arrows and diabolical drugs! Five times they fail—but the sixth...

What to do? Sit around and mark "X's" on the calendar—and pray that *rigor mortis* is not just around the corner? Luckily, up steps Arthur Crook, that eccentric sleuth who made *The Woman in Red* and *Death in the Blackout* so memorable. Suspense piled on suspense pyramids into a "wow" of a climax!



## THIRTY DAYS TO LIVE

By ANTHONY GILBERT

At all bookstores—\$2.00

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## Melodrama on a High Plane

*THE ROAD IS BEFORE US.* By Agnes Boulton. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1944. 227 pp. \$2.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

**T**HIS is an unusual first novel. It develops as a keen psychological analysis of the characters involved, but, what is more important, it has always, at every turn, a firm grasp of the technique of story plotting and telling. It is melodrama, but melodrama which stems logically from the author's sure comprehension of the people she is writing about. Ostensibly, Miss Boulton is describing for us the daily episodes, the small chat, the bickerings and misunderstandings which punctuate the lives of four people on a five-day trip to Florida; but actually, and never straining for effect, she is showing us the pattern which had shaped T. E. Edgren, copy-reader on a New York morning newspaper, into the man he was—and was discontented with. Edgren was a man sick in his soul, sick of a sickness he did not quite understand, when he drove into Pittsburgh to pick up his unknown fellow-travelers, old Mr. and Mrs. Rawl, and Miss Addie Brown, who was a black girl who had the same feeling that Rawls did of wanting to escape the harsh breath of the northern winter.

But the story is really concerned with Edgren and his sister Ann, who had just died so tragically, with Ann and with the strange mother who had borne them and with their ineffectual father. They had grown up almost too close together. Ann, Edgren was shocked to discover too late, was the only human being he had any love for. And this love, selfish and blind though it was, had balked and hindered the unfolding of his character. His friend Judy knew this, but she could not very well tell him so. He had to learn for himself. And perhaps he never would have learned if Ann had not surprised him by marrying John Verry—of whom he had never heard—and then dying of an abortion for which he blamed Verry. It was Ann's death, and his resentment against Verry which had impelled him to quit his job and pursue Verry to Florida, to pick up, incidentally, the Rawls and Addie Brown, as a means to cut his traveling expenses.

"It's an awful tiresome trip down," Mr. Rawls remarked to him apologetically.

Well, it wasn't. Mr. Rawls died in his sleep one night, and Addie Brown had a miscarriage, which she kept to herself, and Edgren got himself involved in a drinking bout at a weird

Georgia roadhouse, and met some distinctly unusual people—including a Negro sculptress, who eases out of the story too soon—and was an unwitting witness to a murder. He managed to barge through a remarkable cross-section of the South in those five days. He learned a good deal about how elderly people live and think in Pittsburgh or St. Petersburg. And he might have learned a lot more about the ways of the Negro folk, if he had been able to look into Addie Brown's mind, which he wasn't. Addie Brown was just as upset as he was. Her problem was one of raising three hundred dollars to engineer divorces for herself and Campbell Washington, so they could get married and be legal together. And then there was the baby she lost in the roadside cabin. She hadn't wanted to lose that baby. Addie Brown is a very real person, perhaps because Miss Boulton doesn't try to romanticize her. And that is also true of Mrs. Rawl, whose pettish small talk etches her before your eyes like one of Jane Austen's characters. But the meat of this story is the reflections that pass through the mind of T. E. Edgren as he peers over his steering-wheel at the road ahead. Without realizing it, the incidents of travel, the people he is thrown with, tend to stabilize his feelings. He is able at the last to face Verry with sanity, and to break himself free of the unnatural spell which had bound his initiative. Miss Boulton's story is as thoughtful as it is dramatic.

### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 71

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle.*

**IF YOU ARE STUCK:** *The clue below the cryptogram will give you the definition of one word. Answer to No. 71 will be found in the next issue.*

LBC BDEFAGHLC JFLB  
KHMxGJ BHP KHVVXHSD  
ZHLB LBC TXPN FG KCHV  
FQ KHGLRC.

—OFBS LXDVFG.

**CLUE:** The sixth word means MORAL DEPRAVITY.

*Answer to Literary Crypt No. 70*  
NO CHANGE, NO PAUSE, NO HOPE! YET I ENDURE.

—SHELLEY.