

MEN OF EARTH

By Russell Lord



TEACHERS ON WHEELS

THE first county agricultural extension agent I ever knew—I can see him yet, as he comes gingerly picking his way across corn stubble on his father's farm to ask Ernie, of all people, if he needs any advice. I see him as plainly as if it were yesterday—about thirty, blue suit, white shirt, the general air of that if he only had a blackboard and some real scholars he could explain everything. Thus gingerly he went his way among us for years—always homelick for his blackboard, always seeming gently to brush the chalk dust from his hands as he spoke.

Another, quite another sort, in California, the breadth of a contented away; red-headed, healthily ignorant, immense and trig in the puttees and sombrero of a forest ranger. Putting a geared-up silver at forty over rutted roads. Rolling it back on its wheels when it upsets.

These two are my extremes; all the others fall somewhere between. One, now gray, who worked before there was a Smith-Lever law, when there were only about twenty agents in all America instead of some twenty hundred. He tells how, in 1912, he was called upon at one house to assist at a birth and at the next to sharpen a scythe. Another of that early day; he took orders for fertilizer, pocketed the commission, and when confronted with the propriety of it said that it was the most practical program he could think of to improve the soil fertility of the county. The only downright shiftless and faithless one I ever knew, lolling around with the courthouse politicians and cursing farmers as "knockers."

One who in a bad-roads county walks twenty miles many a winter day to keep his project committees going. A timid, credulous one. (These are rare.) He gratefully believes everything he hears and reads—that women who smoke can't have babies, that Germany will be dry in two months, that the crap-shooting son of a local pastor really gave his coat to a shivering man he met on the street. Of these three things he solemnly assures me to five minutes' riding. But a good agent; his people respect his sincerity and trust him.

"Characters": The big ex-haliback who in the first two months you met him had to know how old you were, whether you were married and why not. The one who was always showing you his deputy sheriff's badge and hunting moonshiners by moonlight. The one who it matches in his coupe and waved them around his head while driving to show you how all-right he had everything. The one who told me, "God must love extension supervisors; he made so many of them." The one who at a culling demonstration was confronted with evidence that one of a bunch of his cull hens at a neighboring farm had actually laid an egg. He said: "Well, folks, they stabbed Julius Caesar, and they made old Socrates drink the hemlock, and they buried Joan of Arc at the stake. I guess we all make mistakes!"

An agent who never makes a direct suggestion; another who makes nothing else, always in the tone of orders; both somehow, successful. The best agent in a big state—who, since he's not working at it now, I can name, John Hervey.

He hadn't the slightest sense of humor; a crusader seldom has. Once, I remember as he was driving me up to talk on books in a remote township of his county—Washington county, Ohio—we trailed, per-

force, on the narrow dirt roads of that semi-mountainous region, a laboring truck. Some ribald soul had erased a letter on the truck's back side to give a "Service" caption thereupon displayed, a gorgeously vulgar and on the whole more truthful meaning. I never worked harder at anything than I did to explain to John Hervey why I thought it was funny. Finally, "I see," he said; then added reproachfully, "The very idea of a man with your gifts!"

To John, everybody had "gifts." They tell this story: A badly discouraged club youngster trudged down from the hills of Washington county and bitterly demanded: "What's the use? What can ever grow, anyway, that's any good, on that blame old hill of ours?"

"You can," said John.

I think that is fine, and I imagine he said it. Anyone who knows John Hervey can easily picture him saying it—rugged, intense, self-forgetful, the entire six feet of him thrust forward from an inadequate old desk chair; his eyes a clear gray, worriedly squinted under those sharply bulging brows; his voice low and urgent.

But, "No, I never could have put it that pat," said John, anxiously, the last time I drove out over his county with him. "I've always had trouble expressing myself. That's always been one of my handicaps. All I could get of college was two years, the special course at State. I know what I want to say all right but most of the time I just have to flounder around until people begin to see what I'm after and can work the thing out for themselves. But that's what I'd have wanted to have said. That's always been my foundation idea of the county agent's job: to build up the upcoming crowd; to help people, especially young people, grow."

"My father had a lot of gifts I could use. Wonderful personality. Wonderful way of greeting people, telling jokes and so on. A quiet man but he'd have made the best county agent you ever saw. I still get some of my best ideas from the things he did for me. He gave me responsibility as soon as I could walk. Always consulted me, never tried to overrule me. He was more like an older brother to me than a father."

"I was the only boy. When I was eighteen a fast Pennsylvania flier hit his wagon. Before I could reach him he was gone. The hardest thing I ever had to do in my life was to go up to the house and tell my mother."

John had a ten-year fight of it single-handed on that farm, but he built up a herd of purebred Jerseys, and a retail milk trade, and: "By 1915 I had things coming pretty good. My neighbors were all shipping milk to Pittsburgh. They got into a big row with the Pittsburgh dealers."

"I had my own trade. The Pittsburgh price was nothing to me. At first I couldn't see where it was any of my business. But all along my milk route I kept thinking about it and I finally decided to go to the meeting."

"I got there ten or maybe fifteen minutes late. They were still wrangling about who was to be president. Somebody sang out, 'Here's Hervey! He's neutral!' They made me chairman."

"In eighteen months we had Pittsburgh's milk supply cut way down. The papers there were calling us baby killers and the city people were all up in arms. We had to get somebody down there right away to make them see our side of it—that farmers have children, too."

It was a young fruit farmer, about twenty-five, very between pride and fear. A luncheon club in the city of Marietta, the county seat, wanted him to make a talk on the possibilities of direct marketing; and, gosh! he'd like to but to think of getting up there in front of all those lawyers and bankers.

John set his foot on a hub of the car, and talked to him a solid hour.

"Now, look here, here's your chance to develop. . . . And so on, over and over the same old ground. It was getting late. The air was cold and so was I when the young farmer, after a last doleful squint, finally said he'd do it. John jumped into the car, triumphant. As we drove off I said: "John, you couldn't have kept that bird from speaking with a battery of artillery!"

"Maybe you're right," said John, worriedly, then brightened. "But he did need somebody to help him worry. It all takes time. I'm surprised sometimes at the speed we do make. I had that fellow, for instance, in my first calf club, back in 1920, ten years ago. Now he's coming to the front. It's on him and maybe twenty others like him that I'm counting mainly when I look ahead to what we're going to have in this county ten, fifteen, fifty years from now."

But those people who were whispering to commissioners, and so on, and writing letters to the papers, were on his mind. "They pay taxes too," he said. "I wonder if a program has got to be geared to the people who don't want to come along."

Maybe that's it. Anyway, they got him. His backers in the county were willing to raise his entire salary personally, but John said that a county agent who had failed to get the half-salary appropriation which customarily is voted by the county commissioners would just stir up bad feeling by staying. He went into commercial work.

Out of the moving pictures of its memories the mind makes images. My mind has been building the picture of a county agent who is not any one of them but all of them—all, that is, of the same hundreds I have known, worked with, and gone forth with as a reporter among the farms of most of the states. Call him Average, this composite American county agent: nearing thirty, lately married; strong, bronzed and something of a roughneck. He looks and thinks more like a forest ranger than the executive secretary that the organization spirit of American agriculture all but made of him. He is laconic, ironic, earnest, puzzled.

Half prepared, if that, for his job; Smith-Hughes teachers of high school agriculture get two years' special training, but few agricultural colleges have even a man designated to advise students on courses in preparation for the far tougher teaching a county agent has to do. He decides to take a whirl at this county agent business, dances his head off senior week, says so-long to the boys at the fraternity house, takes his diploma, marries the girl, works two weeks or a month under an older agent, and then is thrust into one of the lesser agricultural counties to learn to swim by swimming.

Often he starts headlong, trying to do everything people ask of him. He may solicit members for the farm bureau, or keep books for the co-operative creamery, or wear out good tires following the no-longer favored "farm advisor" idea of county agenting—the idea that the agent is there as a sort of farm doctor, to give free service to individuals.

But midway in his second year he begins to feel firm ground under him. He realizes that the only way to help people is to get them to help themselves. He sees that his job is to teach a few, and to have these few organized to demonstrate to the others. And he finds that, somehow, he has got a hold on many of these key people, these "leaders." Then he begins to make headway—and often gets a better offer and goes to another job.

There are 2,100 of him in America, satiated by half as many women, home demonstration agents and by 300 club agents. That multiplies him in my mind. I see him going out on horseback in Texas counties so vast that he takes tentage and stays out four days or a week. I see him in New England town meetings, big and trig in his Sunday blue, laboriously getting over the idea that democracy is more a matter of works than of politics. Bumping potato demonstrations on Massachusetts fields with corner drug stores. Jumping into Illinois ditches to see if tile is properly joined. Showing Arkansas farmers how to get at the get of market reports. Stumbling and blushing a little as he introduces a dress-form specialist to Florida farm wives. Playing handball with the boys at a county club camp in Oregon.

I am not a bit ashamed that for a number of years I took the government's money, as one of the 1,300 "subject matter specialists" who help get him the facts and back him up.

TRUE GHOST STORIES

By Famous People
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By IRVING BERLIN
Famous Composer

ONLY the person who suffers from insomnia knows the ravages and terrors of the still night hours before the dawn of day.

Through the night's lulling tunes and haunting melodies come to Irving Berlin, the famous composer; but sleep eludes him.

"Once during a hot summer night," Mr. Berlin related, "I was staying at a small Broadway hotel during the production of one of my first musical comedies.

"Tired out from the work of rehearsal, I could have fallen into a light sleep, but I was disturbed by the snoring of the man in the next room. I paced the floor. The snoring grew louder and wilder. It was uncanny. At four o'clock it stopped, and I fell asleep for a few minutes, only to be awakened again by the regularity of the harsh notes. I slept by fits and starts."

"At six o'clock I remember I was awake.

"Frankly, I walked into the hall. The snoring man's door was open. I pushed aside the ventilating screen. An empty white-rock bottle caught my eye. I picked it up and, with one blow, brought it down with revenge upon the man's head. It shattered into hundreds of pieces. Blood trickled down the man's face. This was horrible.

"The next thing I knew a hand was grasping my arm. I could feel it, but could not see it. Was it the dead man's ghost? I tried hard to visualize it—it was the hand of a spirit detective?

"I reached up to push the hand away.

"Wake up," roared a bellboy, who was tugging at my arm. "You left a call for seven o'clock. Hope you had a nice night's sleep," he added, jauntily. "The man in the next room has complained that he dreamed he heard the noise of some one walking back and forth, back and forth, all night. Hope you didn't hear anything queer."

End of the Earth Seen According to Prophecy

According to Dr. Fritz Zwicky, a physicist associate of Dr. Robert A. Millikan, discoverer of cosmic rays, the Bible prophecy that "the earth shall melt with fervent heat" is strictly scientific and is the destined end of our whole solar system. None of us now present need feel alarmed about it, as it may not occur for many millions of years, possibly billions. But once in a thousand years some sun—in us only a point of light in the sky—has suddenly blazed up and then gradually disappeared. This is believed to be the result of an explosion, releasing the interior heat, estimated in our own sun to be an intensity of 30,000,000 degrees. In the case of our sun that would mean the instant conversion of all the planets and all upon them, if any, into gas and the disappearance of our entire solar system. That is what happened to such suns and solar systems, if they had any, which thus ended their careers during the past eons of time.

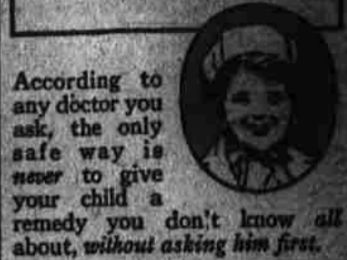
Such exploding suns are known as supernovas, an ordinary nova being a new star, not new in fact, but new to our vision. Doctor Zwicky says that astronomers are in expectation of such a phenomenon occurring near the Virgo universe by 1937, and are keenly on the watch for it. It is a tentative theory that comets are created or released by exploding suns and if this phenomenon actually occurs on time much more about that ray may be learned.

Of course, the year in which we observed it would not be the date of the actual explosion, since for us to see it now would require that it happened many thousands of years ago, so long does it take for light to reach the earth from such mathematical distances.

The mere discussion of such an event and mention of the great lapse

A Law Every Mother Should Know and Observe

Never Glee Your Child An Unknown Remedy without Asking Your Doctor First



According to any doctor you ask, the only safe way is never to give your child a remedy you don't know all about, without asking him first.

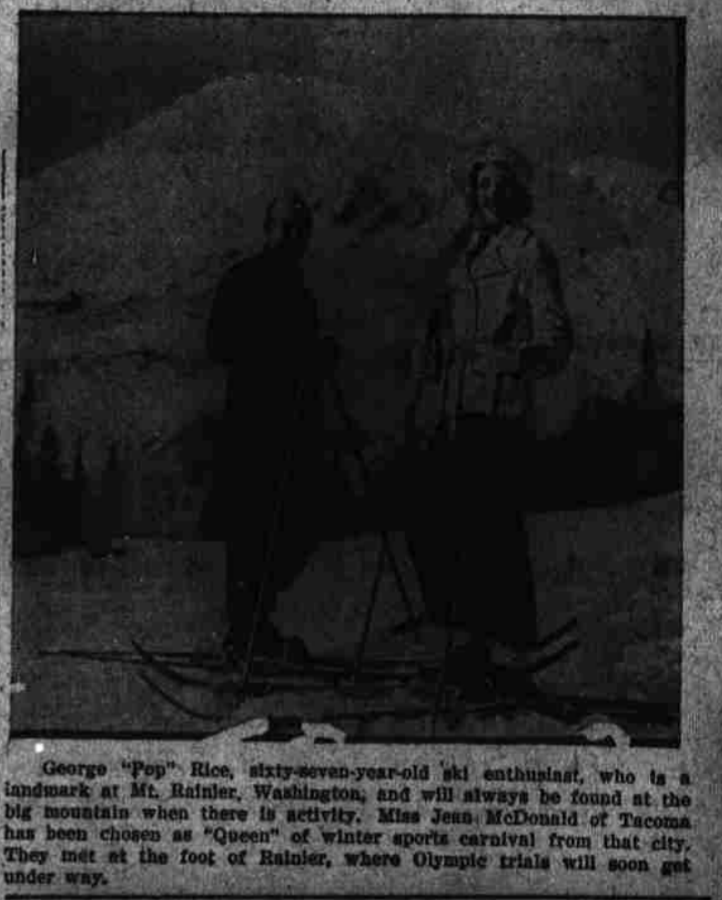
When it comes to "milk of magnesia," that you know everywhere, for over 60 years, doctors have said "PHILLIPS' Milk of Magnesia for your child."

So—always say Phillips' when you buy. And, for your own peace of mind, see that your child gets this; the finest men know.

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PHILLIPS' Milk of Magnesia

Oldest Skier Grets Snow Queen



George "Pop" Rice, sixty-seven-year-old ski enthusiast, who is a landmark at Mt. Rainier, Washington, and will always be found at the big mountain when there is activity. Miss Jean McDonald of Tacoma has been chosen as "Queen" of winter sports carnival from that city. They met at the foot of Rainier, where Olympic trials will soon get under way.

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