

# New fads for old

BY COREY FORD

Suggesting some brand-new national crazes, which everybody who is anybody can take up this coming season

■ It is about time that America adopted a few new fads. The old ones are getting a little worn and shiny in the seat. Jigsaw puzzles, roller-skates, Russia, scavenger-hunts, stratosphere-seekers, "The Three Little Pigs," painted finger-nails, Mae West, Scotch sea-serpents, the Hop Light Ladies, nudism, men's cocktail-jackets (in char- treuse-yellow), *Anthony Adverse*, Eleanor Blue, Communism, The Next War and all our other national enthusiasms of the past year have been done to death. What this country needs is some more ways of wasting its spare time. (We could use a little more spare-time, too, while you're standing up there on that step-ladder.)

To be sure, there is no way of determining just how one of these fads gets started. The first thing you know, there it is, like middle-age or the final date for filing your 1933 income-tax return. Take, for example, backgammon. Greta Garbo is rummaging in her attic one rainy afternoon and she finds an old backgammon-board. This influences all the girls who look like Garbo to go out and buy backgammon-boards. Meantime Joan Crawford hears about this, and she goes out and buys a backgammon-board like Greta Garbo's, only bigger. Not to be undone, all the girls who look like Joan Crawford go out and buy backgammon-boards, and challenge the Garbo contingent. Then Mrs. Roosevelt takes up backgammon, and all the girls who look like Mrs. Roosevelt go out and buy backgammon-boards and take on the Garbo-Crawford winners, and the next thing you know the whole country is backgammon-crazy. Backgammon-factories are working day and night to meet the demand, people are giving backgammon-parties, barkeepers are seeing what the boys in the backgammon-room will have, newspapers are running backgammon-sections, and Simon and Schuster is getting out a new series of Backgammon Books for Beginners. Then, in the nick of time, Greta Garbo starts a new fad for *not* playing backgammon, and the whole cycle starts all over again.

Or else take guppies. A year ago, nobody

went in for raising guppies. They didn't even know what a guppy was. The only guppy they had ever heard of was named Will, and reviewed detective-stories. Then some guppy-fancier came along with a package of guppy-seeds, and the rest is history. Guppy-colonies swept the country like new brooms. Bowls of guppies appeared in every home. When you went out to dine, whole schools of guppies would be swimming around in your soup-plate or your drinking-glass or your finger-bowl. You couldn't take a bath for guppies. By the end of the year, the entire nation was guppy-poor. The only thing that saved the situation was when all the guppy-lovers suddenly developed a new fad for reading Gertrude Stein, and as a result the fad for guppies gradually died out.

On the other hand, we still have Gertrude Stein.

■ For this reason, we have tried to suggest below a few new fads for the coming season. If any of these national pastimes catch on, they will perhaps serve to replace some of our old and jaded enthusiasms of the past year. Then all we shall have to do will be to invent some new fads to take the place of *these* fads, along about 1935, and as a result we shall all be right back again where we started from.

For example, one of the first fads to be replaced is this current craze for new designs in automobiles. The tendency for stream-line construction in motor-vehicles, with sloping fronts and backs, is not only making it increasingly difficult to tell whether a car is going forward or backward (thus making things more and more perilous for pedestrians every day) but in addition it is forcing the drivers of these cars to sit so far back on the base of their necks, in order to fit into the new models, that Americans of today are rapidly developing into a strange-looking race of people with long folding arms and legs and practically no neck at all, somewhat on the general lines of collapsible deck-chairs. Last but not least, the designers of this year's models have created even further confusion by equipping their new automobiles with knees. This idea not only is highly morbid, but also is bound to present a traffic-problem of no mean proportions, just as soon as these evolutionized half-man-half-cars learn to use their knees and begin kicking other cars in front of them, tapping their right front tires impatiently at a cross-street, or else simply sitting down on a curb and crossing their wheels whenever they want a rest.

In place of the stream-line automobile, therefore, I have invented a new automo-

bile which is built like a face. (No particular face; just anybody's face.) Instead of having knees, my new model will be equipped with eyebrows. The advantage of the eyebrows, of course, is that the automobile can lift them slightly and glance rather coldly at a smaller car which has just tried to pass it on a curve, meantime making a slight but distinct noise with its muffler. This automobile-face will also have big fenders like ears, which it can wiggle in traffic, and in addition will be able to do other things with its face such as snapping at pedestrians, assuming various characteristic expressions while waiting for the lights to change, glancing back over its shoulder to see whether it is being followed by a cop, or occasionally, on a long level stretch of road, turning around and chatting pleasantly with the driver, scaring him to death.

Then there was last year's fad for roller-skates. When this fad was at its height, it was a common sight to see our better dowagers buckling on a pair of ball-bearing skates, leaning over to tighten the straps (sometimes they never got any further than this), giving themselves a push, and coasting rapidly down-hill until someone caught them, carried them back, and put them to bed. Out of fairness to these long-suffering dowagers, therefore, I am trying to replace this fad with a new craze for scooters or Irish-Mails. The spectacle of a dowager seated on a Little Daisy Model, bracing her feet against the dashboard and pumping back and forth like mad as she scoots up Park Avenue, should do much toward making 1934 a memorable year. If our fad for Irish-Mails gets too strong, moreover, we can always replace it with a new craze for the velocipede, the tricycle, or the wheel-chair.

Another fad which has the country in its grip is the current tendency of our fair sex to abandon the slim silhouette of former years and model themselves instead on the more generous proportions of Miss Mae West. Ever since the buxom Mae established the new importance of woman's sphere, our entire feminine population has joined this new vogue to move only with the very best circles. The ladies have all gone West in a big way. One by one our erstwhile gazelles have sought to gorge themselves on starches and fatty foods, take exercises, and otherwise built up their figures fore and aft in an effort to achieve the proper hips or bust.

The best method to combat this growing fad for putting the American curve back where it belongs, it seems to me, is to introduce a new world-figure who would replace Mae West as the feminine style arbiter. In our (*Continued on page 78*)

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## Nonsense, renewed

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Quatre, played with a Yorkshire burr to represent his Navarrese twang, a cute idea, too!—and Marie Antoinette. I personally scored six Marie Antoinettes, three Napoleons and four Charles Seconds. But I am too young to have seen Sarah Bernhardt making her grand exit in the last scene of *Theodora*, with rope on neck to be strangled as per order of Justinian, Caesar et Imperator, by V. Sardou, Adjutant. They say it was swell. A lady asked Sardou why he mashed up history to give Sarah an exit and he said, "It goes better, that way." Nicer like that! Well, we saw DuBarry batting her lover on his wound in order to make him faint and hiding him in one of Mr. Belasco's very best beds. "The story of a great lover," Mr. Belasco said, "is the finest thing the theater can produce. . . ." If a king gives a milliner rooms in Versailles and she loves somebody else it is a great love. We also saw *Caesar and Cleopatra* by Mr. Shaw. That was fun, especially when Caesar told them to let the great library of Alexandria burn—just what a historian and rhetorician would do! We saw all this tripe, dedicated to the proposition that a man who writes a lovely poem about dead ladies must have been a red-hot tomcat, and that the flirtations of some bundle of flesh which or who has inherited a throne are awfully important. They gave us love. If Napoleon's brother who married a girl in Baltimore, left her on the Emperor's orders, they made it all right. He returned in the last act. It was nicer like that. And here it comes back. I saw Machiavelli order Caterina Sforza slaughtered, a while ago. True, she died "most piously and in great peace" in a convent in Florence in 1509. Never mind. Here it all comes back on us. Oh, please, 'no! No, please!

### Humble Suggestions to Playwrights

A curious thing is that Shakespeare's historical story, *Julius Caesar*, is re-

vived more frequently than any other of his plays except *Hamlet*. Fine theaters in Europe often revive *Coriolanus*. It helped to upset Paris, day before yesterday. There are no great loves in these plays. Brutus had a wife who adored him, yes. But the play isn't about Portia. People seem to like these plays because they are about something. They are about a man vs. a mob, or a man managing mobs, or about gangs fighting for political controls. Well, if we are to have historical plays in bulk, won't somebody bring mankind on the stage? Let Mrs. Bernstein and Mr. Jones and Mr. Simonson sketch up the extraordinary clothes of 1357 and 1358 for a play about Stephen Marcel, the *bourgeois* reformer who made himself dictator of Paris and was corrupted by his job. The play almost writes itself—without a "great love", alas!—from Marcel's petition to the chuckleheaded Jean of France, through the killing of the young Regent's counsellors to Marcel's death at the gate of Paris. And there are good costumes in 1381 when the English peasants went vaguely Red and seized London. The scared landholders and aristocrats didn't know what to do, but the grand *bourgeois* did, the great fishmonger, Walworth, mayor of London, the professional plunderer Knolles, and the draper, Nicholas Bramber. Suddenly, the mob saw the toy king appear in Smithfield. Their leader rode to talk to the boy in his knot of armed lords and officials. The peasants saw Walworth's sword flash. Wat Tyler slipped to the ground. A royal squire jumped down to plant a knife in the Red's belly. And there came Robert Knolles and Bramber marching at the heads of veteran gangs of mercenaries. They—No, no great love! No DuBarry, no Bothwell. You aren't tempted? Sorry! Go and write one about Messalina and be sure to take her great loves seriously.

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search for a bigger bust than Mae, therefore, we should turn naturally to Herr Hitler. If our lovely ladies would learn to brush their hair down over their eyes, raise their right arms, and grow a slight moustache, then perhaps all would be quiet on the Mae West front, and we could get a little work done once more.

Still another fad which had us all going during the past season was the growing tendency of authors to write 1000-page books like *Anthony Adverse*. Ever since Hervey Allen introduced the ten-ton novel, complete with trailer and small portable crane, our literary gentry have been writing similar volumes of long enduring prose, stretching farther than the eye would care to reach, and publishing them in bulky tomes which would make the old-fashioned 300-page novel look like a night-club sandwich. As a result of this trend toward the 100,000-word novel, in fact, it is reported on good authority that publishers next year

are planning to preface each of these novels with a brief statement in italics: "Reading time, 2 years, 7 months, 13 3/4 days."

A fad like this, of course, could be replaced by substituting a vogue for *thin* novels, preferably novels consisting of a couple of covers (front and back) and a single page inside bearing the word "Finis." (In extreme cases, it might become *de rigueur* to omit the front and back covers entirely, and supply merely a neat pair of onyx book-ends.) Publishers could vary the page with the word "Finis," moreover, by substituting other little surprises between the covers, such as Fourth-of-July snappers, trays for cigarette ashes, or chocolate-covered almonds for the ladies. Not only would this new fad prevent the American right arm from breaking off at the elbow, as a result of lugging around these ponderous tomes, but in addition I might have a chance at last to

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## The double house

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you poor old boy," he said in his big, safe voice. "There. There." He cleared his throat, curiously. "I missed the silly old train, that's all, Robbie, old scout. Buck up. You poor old man. Now, then, go upstairs and wash those black hands of yours and come down and we'll have supper." But Robert clung to him for a moment longer, his arms around that large, solid bulk, his heart pounding in him. Then he ran upstairs.

He washed his hands for a long time while he let his heart stop beating, and his great relief rolled over him in a lovely warm wave. His father was here, and so everything was all right. His father, whom he loved, and who was happy and strong, and his only promise of safety. His father, who said they were just alike, and so held out a reason for living to Robert. Everything was all right. Just keep plugging along. Everything will get better as soon as I get older, Robert thought, in sheer relieved joy. My father says so. He wandered downstairs, and started back toward the kitchen.

But the voice he heard was so horribly like and unlike his father's that it stopped him short in his tracks. He could not move, he could only listen to hear that dreadful sound again. "My God, I could almost give up," this voice said.

"But I thought everything was get-

ting along well enough at the office," his aunt's voice said, trembling. "Was this the first you knew, that they were going to let you go?"

"Yeh." Robert heard a long, heavy sigh. "Sometimes I'd wish I were dead, if it wasn't for that poor old boy. Oh well." There was a pause, and then Robert, shaking outside the door, heard one more sentence. "My God, Esther, how I wish we were children; we were happy then."

Robert turned, with his hands before him as if he were blind, and without will went to the front door, opened it, and found himself in the chilly night. He walked around to the back of the house and looked up at the sky as he walked, and saw it filled with brilliant and meaningless stars, and shut his eyes against them. He started to get into the hole that went into the empty cellar, and then sat for a moment half in and half out, with his mind throbbing like a wound. It seemed to him that this was the end of all happiness, of all hope. He began to cry, hysterically, and let himself on through the hole into the black, frightful cellar. Terror, and hopelessness, beat upon him like oceans, overcoming him. He stumbled in the darkness until his clutching fingers felt one of the dangling ropes. As he fumbled at the loop he was sobbing crazily.

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read *Anthony Adverse* after all.

Among the other fads of yesteryear which might well be supplanted by new vogues could be listed the following:

### TIARAS

In place of the vogue for tiaras, we could inaugurate a new fad for nose-rings. These baubles should prove novel and arresting, and also would give the ladies a place to hang the gloves, lipstick and compact which they are always dropping under the table.

### NUDISM

For Nudism I should suggest substituting a new fad called Ulsterism, in which the faddists would go around wearing long ulsters, galoshes, and red-woolen mufflers around their necks. Even if it does nothing else, this new fad (if we may judge by the majority of nudist-camp pictures) ought to be a darned sight easier on the public's eyes.

### STRATOSPHERE-SEEKERS

Instead of the current fad for going up in airplanes, balloons, rockets and other devices that aim to get you as

high in the air as possible, I should like to introduce a new fad for Ground-Grippers, or people who prefer to have their feet on solid ground as much as possible. If they feel the way I do about planes, in fact, they might even prefer to crawl on their hands and knees, or else dig down under the surface and pull it over them.

### PAINTED FINGERNAILS

The fad for painted fingernails on our fair sex, I think, has gone about far enough. Instead of daubing their fingernails a bright scarlet, therefore, I suggest that the ladies inaugurate a new vogue for bright yellow knee-caps, orange, or bright green ear-lobes with gold fringe. And in the meantime I'll be starting a little vogue of my own for painting my navel purple and contemplating it in expressive silence.

Last but not least, there is one more distinct advantage in listing all these new fads for the coming season. If we read all about them here, then perhaps it will not be necessary to go out and actually do them. And, as a result, we can all ignore them entirely and can, instead, do exactly what we want for the rest of the year.

And what a novel fad that would be, *mes enfants!*



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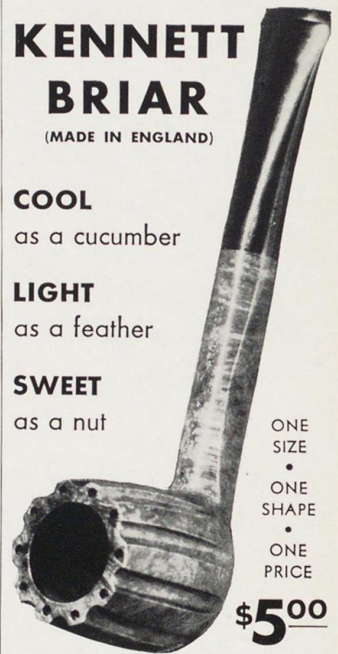
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