

SCRIBNER'S

1938

Collier's

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

November 27, 1937

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A magazine that came back . . . how an editorial formula was developed with \$15,000,000 backing . . . big names, gay heroines and circulation efficiency . . . first of a new series

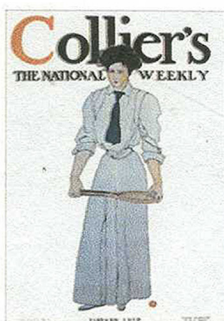
THE famous lady novelist was indignant. She flounced in through the always open door of Thomas Hambly Beck, the new boss at *Collier's*. Down on his desk she slapped a rejected manuscript. The rejection, so a sympathetic and indiscreet editor had told her, had been perpetrated by Mr. Beck himself.

This was back in the 1920's, not long after the Crowell Publishing Company had bought the moribund *Collier's* and discovered the weekly could lose money almost as fast as it could be made by the company's *American Magazine* or *Woman's Home Companion*. Tom Beck was one of the few men in America who could out-talk an angry lady novelist. As a soap salesman he had rung countless doorbells, humored thousands of unfriendly dogs, banished the frowns of a myriad of busy housewives. Having built up the Procter and Gamble power-laundry soap department and launched Crisco on the national market, he did not stand in awe of famous authors. When she asked what he knew about literature, Beck said: "Madame, I know nothing about literature. Professors know about literature. While I was reading your story, I was thinking about a family in Muncie, Indiana. [This was before the Lynds discovered Middletown.] They're buying their own home, have a car partly paid for, a son on the high-school basketball team, and a daughter starting to go out with the boys. I know those people, thousands of 'em. They don't give a hoot about literature, but they love stories."

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Collier's

"I was wondering whether I could go to that family, tell them a few things about your story, and have them want to buy it for a nickel. If I think they'll want your story for a nickel, we'll pay you \$1000 for it. And if we can get a dozen things like that in a magazine, I know we can sell it."



When Beck uttered this dictum, there was little about *Collier's* to justify his assurance. It was a discouraged, moth-eaten, hungry-looking sheet, about which persisted a depressing scent of premature old age and uplift. It was trying to attract the people of Muncie with articles on "More Business in Government, Less Government in Business" and "7 Cents an Hour for Taxes."

Collier's today is a medium of advertising which sells 2,750,000 copies a week and challenges the *Saturday Evening Post's* long leadership in the mass-circulation field. Weekly it dispenses a dependable quota of murderous fictional villains and of young women in shorts and halters, with long, slim athletic legs, vibrantly in love with young men who have long slim legs, hair on their chests, and a wallop in each fist.

Collier's staff writers dash over land and sea by airplane to get hot news stories which will appear on the newsstands not sooner than four or five weeks later, with facts boiled down into glittering stories of personalities in action—Hollywood fluffies, heavyweights, ski jumpers, war lords, and statesmen. The writers are proud their articles are set forth with an open-minded point of view, virile respect for basic fact, and absence of propaganda; Tom Beck is proud they are "bits of information in small capsules, sugar-coated." The magazine is an article of commerce more brightly packaged and more efficiently sold than any breakfast food; a vehicle of light entertainment as dependable and competently engineered as a V-8 straight from the assembly line; a slick journal with a zip of showmanship on every page, as lively and contemporary as a swing band.

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