

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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MEDITERRANEAN KEY

Key to the fateful battle of the Mediterranean which is about to burst in full fury is not the Suez canal, but Britain's great naval base at Alexandria, 125 miles west of the canal entrance.

The loss of Alexandria would deprive the British of their key "bridgehead" in northern Africa and ensure Axis domination of the eastern Mediterranean.

Actually, the Suez canal itself has been of little value to the British for months. It went out of use as the so-called "life-line of the empire" when the Axis air attack that severely damaged the air carrier Ilustrious proved it was suicidal to attempt to convoy shipping through the long and narrow waterway.

Since then the Mediterranean has been a "no man's land" for all the belligerents. While 2,000 miles in length, its narrow width at certain places has made it extremely hazardous for both sides, and the British have been routing their shipping around the Cape of Good Hope for some time.

Loss of the Mediterranean would, of course, be a serious blow to the British; but it would by no means end the war or mean victory for the Axis. With her fleet intact, Britain would still be able to carry the fight to Hitler and Mussolini.

MACHINE TOOLS

Chief reason behind the big curtailment in auto production was the release of urgently needed machine tools for defense. The machine tool bottleneck could be broken overnight if all the machine tools owned by the motor industry were turned to the making of planes, tanks and other armament.

Defense experts estimate that there are around 1,500,000 machine tools in the U. S., of which more than half are in plants making motor vehicles or parts for them, and in the allied metal fabricating industry. The list includes grinders, milling machines, lathes, boring machines, presses, gear cutters, drillers, and shapers, all vital in the production of defense equipment.

New output of machine tools is now speeding at the rate of 14,000 a month. This is a spectacular achievement and a great tribute to the industry. But it is only a drop in the bucket compared to the 750,000 machine tools already possessed by the auto and metal fabricating industries, which army men say would increase defense production to full flow immediately if pooled and devoted entirely to this purpose.

HIDDEN COLLEAGUE

A stocky, gray-haired man, flanked by a group of sightseers, approached a Capitol policeman and asked directions to the office of Sen. Hiram Johnson of California.

Tucked away in an obscure corner of the north side of the Capitol where tourists never tread, Johnson's office is one of the hardest to find in the great structure.

"I'll do my best to explain how to get there," said the policeman. "Are you a tourist?"

"No," grinned the inquirer, "I'm the other senator from California, Senator Downey."

FERRY SCHOOL

Everybody is wondering how the swarms of fighting planes which U. S. factories will produce for the British in the next 12 months will be delivered overseas. The answer, for the big ships, is that they will be flown across—and in such great numbers that the British are setting up a special pilot training school for that purpose, in the United States.

The school will give an intensive refresher and training course to volunteer pilots to qualify them for "ferrying" the big bombers across the Atlantic.

The volunteers may be British, Canadian, or American. However, it is expected that the largest numbers will be Americans. The British can use 250 of them.

GOOD NEIGHBOR PILOTS

Another "Good Neighbor" gesture will soon be made to our immediate neighbor to the south, Mexico. The state department will offer pilot-training courses to a number of Mexican youths in the United States.

Initiator of the idea was Vice President Henry Wallace. When he visited Mexico last year, one of the problems discussed was the shortage of aviators in the Mexican army. Wallace was told that Mexico wanted to undertake a pilot-training program similar to that in the United States, but lacked planes and instructors.

MERRY-GO-ROUND

Leading economists rate the industrial and financial surveys completed by the O'Mahoney monopoly committee as the most valuable source material on the economy of the country ever compiled.

Department of agriculture is recommending a new plant to hold soil in the gullies—but they wish the Japanese would tell how to produce the seed. Known as kudzu, it is one of the plant secrets of Japan. It serves not only as a soil binder but also as a feed, surpassing alfalfa.

Spotlight

by GRANTLAND RICE

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA.—They were discussing Joe Gordon's future as a first baseman. I was sitting in the stands with Joe Tinker at the time—Tinker of the old Cubs' "Tinker to Evers to Chance" fame. "Gordon can't miss," Joe said. "He's a natural ball player. He is fast on his feet, and quick with his hands, almost an acrobat. He'll make plays at first which will be hair-raising. A natural ball player can play almost anywhere, except maybe pitch or catch."



Grantland Rice

So we drifted into a discussion, seeking to name the greatest all-around ball player baseball had ever known—the man who could handle more jobs well.

The list was longer than you might think. The Squire of Orlando pondered this problem.

"First of all," Joe said, "there was Babe Ruth. He started as a pitcher, and still holds the best five-year winning average in baseball—a great left-hander. Then he became a star outfielder—and I mean one of the best—and he was a good first baseman. He was the greatest home run hitter of all time, and that's a tough record to beat."

Greatest Shortstop?

"What about Honus Wagner?" I asked.

"I was thinking about old Hans," Tinker said. "He was known as a great shortstop—probably the greatest. But did you know he had starred in every position on the club except in the box? He played every outfield position, including catcher. He led his league in batting for seven or eight years. And he used to steal from 50 to 60 bases a season. There was a ball player. Better than Babe Ruth? I'd hate to say. But old Hans was close."

"Now, you pick one," Tinker said, "who belongs with these."

"What about George Sisler?" I suggested. "Sisler started out at Michigan as a star left-handed pitcher. He might have been one of the best in baseball. But they needed his hitting. After that he was a crack outfielder, just as Ruth was. Then they moved him to first base, where he is one of the few to challenge Hal Chase. Sisler hit as high as .420, which Ruth nor Wagner never did. As I recall it, the Michigan star averaged over .400 at bat for four consecutive years. And he was one of the best base runners the game ever knew. I mean 40 to 50 steals a year."

"We can't throw him out," Tinker said. "Pitcher—outfielder—infielder—great hitter—crack base runner—that moves him up with the other two."

The Discussion Goes On

Ty Cobb, one of baseball's immortals, played his string through as an outfielder. Walter Johnson was solely a pitcher. So was Matty Grover Alexander, Cy Young and Lefty Grove. Nap Lajoie was a great infielder. Tris Speaker and Joe Jackson were among the best outfielders—as is Joe DiMaggio today.

Cobb, of course, was something apart on attack—the greatest run getter that ever lived. But the argument was about the all-around entries—those who had the chance to prove they could star at many positions.

I also nominated John Montgomery Ward of Providence and the old New York Giants.

"That was before my day," Tinker said.

"Ward," I said, "was a star outfielder, a brilliant infielder, and a better pitcher than Hoss Radbourne, whom he discovered. Ward pitched at least two no-hit games, one of them perfect. And he was one of the best base runners that ever lived. He was also a manager and scout at the time."

"Maybe so," Tinker said, "but let's keep more modern. Let's not go back any further than 1900."

We accepted the mild rebuke in the spirit one should show to younger years.

We finally settled on the Big Three for all-around ability—Ruth, Wagner and Sisler.

All were great hitters—among the greatest. Two of them—Ruth and Sisler—were star pitchers, although Sisler never had the chance Babe had to prove his ability along this line. Wagner and Sisler were two of the best base runners in baseball. Ruth, with his 230 to 250-pound body operating on slender ankles, was out of the running here.

Wagner was never a pitcher, but he proved that he could handle the eight remaining jobs, as well as lead his league at bat year after year and run bases like a scared coyote.

There are many others—Rhody Wallace, an old-timer; Jimmy Foxx of the Red Sox; Bucky Walters of the Reds; Freddy Lindstrom of the Giants; and many more.

But the Triple Top remain as stated—Ruth, Wagner and Sisler—as long as Tinker won't let me ring in my golfing partner from the late eighties and the early nineties—John Montgomery Ward.



WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON
(Consolidated Features—WNU Service.)

NEW YORK.—Birthdays of views with venerated patri-arches of this land are usually given to bland optimism, though the heavens be falling. It's an old American custom. Henry Morgenthau Sr., just turned 85, has been an exception. We haven't seen his customary chat with the reporters this year, but when and if it is recorded we may be sure he sees what he sees and isn't trying to slick things up. Not that he's a pessimist or defeatist. I remember meeting him on Mt. Desert Island, Maine, a few years ago and was tremendously impressed with his faith, ardor and fighting spirit.

He knows a lot about wars and trouble. It was our Civil war that brought him here from his native Mannheim, Germany. His father was a prosperous cigar manufacturer. Civil war tariffs put him out of business and the family came to this country when Henry Morgenthau was nine years old. He was a lawyer at 23, turned to real estate and finance, and had his money-making over at 55, with time, means and mental equipment to turn to the humanities, to philanthropy and good works in general. Now he has a son in the cabinet, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and the unflagging energies which are the reward of an abstemious life.

If there's a dark side, he isn't afraid to look at it. He was back from Europe in 1933 with the simple conclusion that the world was heading into another war. "There is, in Europe," he said, "no honest, moral desire for peace." In 1913, his friend Woodrow Wilson made him ambassador to Turkey, which post he held until 1916. Thereafter, he helped pick up the pieces, in the ruin and chaos of the middle east. He has been both observing and studious and unapologetically easy-going optimists, singularly clear-sighted in his prophetic look ahead.

THERE'S a tale of a professor who grew old writing a history of civilization. Late one night he finished it. Then, after a brief survey of the result of his arduous labors, he heaved a great sigh and threw the history in the fire.

"What's the matter?" asked his wife. "There isn't any civilization," he replied.

Dr. Edward L. Thorndike, author of the famous Thorndike intelligence test, probably wouldn't say there isn't any intelligence, but he does say intelligence can't be tested, according to news reports of his address before the American Philosophical society at Philadelphia. Dr. Thorndike's apostasy no doubt will set up some new measuring standards.

If we don't learn much, about keeping out of wars and such, it isn't Dr. Thorndike's fault. A professor at Columbia for 37 years, he is the author of a shelf of books in the general field of the psychology of learning. He has just about surrounded the subject of "How We Learn." The question of what we learn seems to be still wide open.

From Williamsburg, Mass., he went to Wesleyan university, Harvard and Columbia and taught at Western Reserve before joining the Teachers' college faculty in 1897. He is 67 years old.

THE word is getting around that the founding fathers could fight well because they were supercharged with vitamin B. They ate anything handy and got the thiamin of the B, which is to be found mainly in roughage.

Get Courage in Bottles, Baskets In These Days

Prof Russell M. Wilder of the Mayo foundation is alarmed over our shortcomings in this regard. He says, "Continued deficiency of the thiamin content of American diets may have led to a certain degree of irremediable deterioration of the national will."

His conclusion is one of many in which it is insisted that we must look to the drug store and the grocery for the real fighting urge. Courage comes in bottles or baskets in these fantastic days.

Dr. Wilder is one of the country's leading specialists on nutrition and diseases of metabolism. Born and reared in Cincinnati, he was educated at the University of Chicago, and Rush Medical college; practiced in Chicago and has been with the Mayo foundation since 1922. He was a medical gas officer in the World war.

More Power for the R.A.F.



The largest fleet of light planes ever seen in New York was christened on behalf of the R.A.F. benevolent fund, and will make a barnstorming tour of the country to raise funds for the families of England's air defenders. The fleet was inspected by these models. Inset: A Canadian woman working in a De Havilland aircraft factory at Ottawa, Canada. In Canada, women are taking the place of men in industry.

'Before and After' in Ireland



Northern Ireland has had a taste of Nazi wrath, and southern Ireland is getting ready to meet "any invader." At the left an impromptu concert is enjoyed in a destroyed area of Belfast after German bombers visited Northern Ireland. At least 500 lives were lost. Right: Prime Minister Eamon De Valera of Eire inspects troops during the greatest military display ever seen in Dublin.

Standing Ready—Somewhere in England



In the "danger zone," the Dover-Folkestone area of England, which has become the "front" in the battle of Britain, home-guardsmen patrol the barren sea cliffs and shore—ready to give Hitler's Nazis a warm welcome if they come. Sergeant W. Read, a retired civil servant, standing guard, typifies the spirit of Great Britain.

New Chinese Foreign Minister Greeted Here



Appointed foreign minister of China while serving as that nation's ambassador in London, Dr. Quo Tai-Chi is shown on arrival in New York. L. to R. Newbold Morris, president New York city council, welcoming Dr. Quo Tai-Chi, while Dr. Hu Shih, Chinese ambassador, and Li Yu Ying (right) personal representative of Chiang Kai-shek, look on.

'Buddy' Poppy Girl



Daughter of a World war veteran, Joan Leslie, actress, is shown in her new role of national "buddy" poppy girl. She was selected for the 1941 "buddy" poppy campaign of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U. S., for aid of veterans' families.

Bomb Shelter



Jacob Baker of Cleveland, with model of his shock-proof bomb shelter which will house four persons. Mr. Baker says the shelter will be in process of manufacture soon.