

Vest-Pocket Thinking

by
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JUST prior to the outbreak of the Big Brawl the publishing world was much exercised in its mind over the spate of so-called literature that was flooding the market.

The vulgar public, as gullible as ever, simply lapped up this rushing torrent of books—most of which could safely be labelled as tripe. And strangely enough, the greater the tripe, the more energetic was the lapping and the more urgent were the demands for something similar.

The result, of course, was inevitable: a widespread outbreak of literary dyspepsia coupled with acute mental constipation.

As a palliative there appeared the innumerable *digests* so familiar to the lazy reader and so beloved by the mentally bankrupt. These, too, rolled off the presses in such numbers and guises that there arose the curious anomaly of the cure being worse than the disease.

Here was a pretty problem for publishers. So that they could satisfy their clamouring customers in their cries for more and better tripe they found that their literary bismuth was ousting the tripe. Worse, so that the *digests* could be kept going in sufficient quantities to make them profitable the tripe machines had to work at full blast to provide the *digestible* material.

Granted, one or two *digests* (we'll leave out the italics) are excellent publications of their sort and some real attempt is made to select from the more worthwhile literature for condensation. These shall be unnamed for this column, with its usual niggardly attitude, does not propose to give any free advertising.

On the other hand, the bulk of these magazines cull from the most sensational sources and appear to deal chiefly with freaks and freakish situ-

ations interspersed with pseudo-political or economic arguments. As a contribution to, or a review of literature in the best sense of the word, they are a dead loss.

So formidable has this Frankenstein monster grown that there is now the pathetic sight of *digests of digests*! Where will it all end? Might not a magazine called *The Digest to the Ump-teenth Power* or something of the sort, be looked for one day.

Looking at the other side of the picture it must be remembered that to the lazy thinker—and a distressingly large section of the populace are lazy thinkers—the digest form of reading is the answer to a maiden's prayer. It creates a false but comfortable feeling in the breast of the addict that he is extraordinarily well-read, whereas in fact, his addled head is filled with all manner of irrelevant facts and odd bits of nonsense.



From an author's point of view, the *digests* can, of course, provide a substantial income. But this is largely dependent on whether he has been