

night we all went on the bash, and our's was a noisy tent. We were all very happy and it wasn't long before Mac got sentimental, and wanted to sing. The highlight was always his rendering of "The Easter Parade." He'd stand up, perspiring freely, and would practically talk the song, going very slowly, with lots of pauses, and great emphasis. He fancied himself a lot with that song, so we'd always applaud loudly, and he'd bow gravely. We got round to it this evening, and Mac hadn't been going long, at the far end of the tent, with a bottle in one hand, when Jim and I spotted it together. On the floor just inside the door, showing up very distinctly in the light of the Coleman, was Mac's orange shell!

We weren't nearly as merry as Mac, but we both thought that we were seeing things. It moved a little, then began to sidle in, and a claw showed. In a flash we realized who were the humourists who had pinched the shells. Some crabs with shells which were feeling tight had found Mac's glossy ones, and thought they were just what the doctor ordered. They had swapped over smartly.

Mac was still in the full flood of his song. "Oh, in her Easter bonnet" . . .

he gave a dramatic sweep of the arm. At that moment he froze—he'd seen the shell creeping towards him. He forgot about the Easter parade, and sat down on his cot, and wiped some of the sweat off his face. Then he said, "Jim, I don't feel so good. You boys carry on, but I think I'll lie down for a while." He got in his net and turned his back to the light, and I don't think he budged until morning.

Well, we grabbed the shell, and that was one crab which didn't have to worry about the accommodation shortage any longer. We polished the shell up, and put it on top of Mac's ration-case tallboy. All of us were very surprised when he found it in the morning, but we noticed that he didn't seem so very startled himself. He was puzzled, but he didn't even seem to suspect us of anything. Goodness knows how he accounted for it to himself, but he looked like a man who has had a solemn, final warning. He never discussed it much, but he did remark casually, "I think I remember some kind of dream about it coming back."

We noticed, though, that for a long time after he didn't accumulate his beer, but just drank it as it came.

"FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE PRING"

"Cairo had a sort of spring, but not the real thing," said Major R. A. Usborne in a broadcast talk. "I found the point rather well made for me when, in what passed for the spring of 1944, I bought in one of the bookshops there a paper-bound anthology called *Poetry of our Times*. It had been printed in Cairo, and I am convinced that the proofs thereof were corrected at the time of 'the flap' in Cairo, those harassed days when Rommel was at Alamein, and he was thought likely to become an honorary member of the Turf Club in Cairo at any moment. The first sentence of the introduction of this collection says: 'An anthology invariably means by definition a choice, and in consequence omission . . . ' But the omission which startled me above all in this carelessly printed book, and later made me very happy, was the inadvertent omission of the 's' in spring in the first line of a piece by Gerard Manley Hopkins. The Cairo reading of this line was 'Nothing is so beautiful as pring.'

"Pring's good. There were many other startling misprints in the book. But 'pring' pleased me most. Pring; pring song; pring in the air; pringtime, the only pretty ring time; yet, ah that pring should vanish with the rose . . . The truth is, of course, that Cairo really has no spring; only pring. Pring is the season that hits Cairo in February, and dissolves into summer about the end of March. In Cairo, in the pring, the first fly comes back, and you treat him as an infuriating individual, to be chased and killed; whereas, come May, he is one of a crowd, and you languidly wave a fly-whisk at him. In pring the Gezira swimming-pool looks very clean, and you would swim in it if it were only a little warmer out of the sun. In the pring you kick your British warm off your bed at midnight, and wake up shivering, to grope for it, at 5 a.m. In the pring the Cairo kites snicker to each other more loudly. Yes, pring is a very definite Cairo season, and, if one likes it at all, it is only because it is warmer than winter and cooler than summer."—*The Listener, England.*