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Chatting

M. H. B.

THERE'S ONE THING I'm very sure of — since the Russians have launched their Sputniks we've all done a lot more star-gazing than we have in many a long year. And for some of us, while we may not have seen Sputnik, the observation of the heavens has led us to notice a few natural phenomena that we have never taken time out to observe closely. For instance, last Wednesday night the weather was lovely, and clear with the result that Venus, the early evening star, looked so large, low and luminous, that it fooled a good many people into thinking it was the Sputnik. Especially as it was at its height of visibility approximately around the time the Russian satellite was due to pass over our area on its orbit. We drove up to Churchill Crescent where our view of it wasn't impeded by trees, and watched in-

tently for about five minutes. That is a big mistake — when you watch a star too intently, your eyes play tricks. The tiny globule of light looks as though it's coming closer, recedes, then starts to waver around up and down again. Closing your eyes for a second and then opening them again always reveals the stars in exactly the same position as when you first looked at it. That was the one thing that made us think that Venus probably was not the Sputnik. It should have been visibly moving across the sky. So we decided to go home and have supper, then drive back to Churchill Crescent to see if the bright object was still visible. This we did. But the glowing star had completely disappeared.

Well, thought we in our ignorance — that certainly was odd. After all stars just don't disappear, do they. Or do they? Inquiring of our more learned friends, we discovered a fact most of you probably know — Venus, the evening star, which we had been gazing at so avidly and with such wonder, rises and sets early each evening, within a couple of hours. It has been doing this for eons.

A LITTLE LATER ON the same night, there was another heavenly phenomenon, to be wondered at. Looking out our front door, which faces northwest, we could see a reddish illumination lighting a large patch of sky quite a distance up from the horizon. The colour fluctuated, becoming more intense and then fading away to a light pink. It almost looked like the northern light, but wasn't like any I had ever seen. The house got quite cooled off for the hour or so we spent donning and doffing heavy wraps to brave the chill autumn gale on the front porch to see what the patch of red sky was doing. Finally, it faded right away for good much to my secret relief. Again an unbridled imagination could conjure up all sorts of explanations. But, as earlier that evening, I telephoned some learned friends and found quite a simple explanation. The reddish glow was the reflection of the lights of Acton or Guelph. Some little peculiarity in the atmosphere had made them thus visible to us.

So it must have been nearly ten o'clock before I got settled down in the living room with the papers and T.V. What excitement. But no wonder. If we couldn't get a bit excited over the prospect of seeing a man-made satellite flying around in the heavens, with a dog in it yet, we would be blasé creatures indeed. It is thrilling to the point of being frightening.

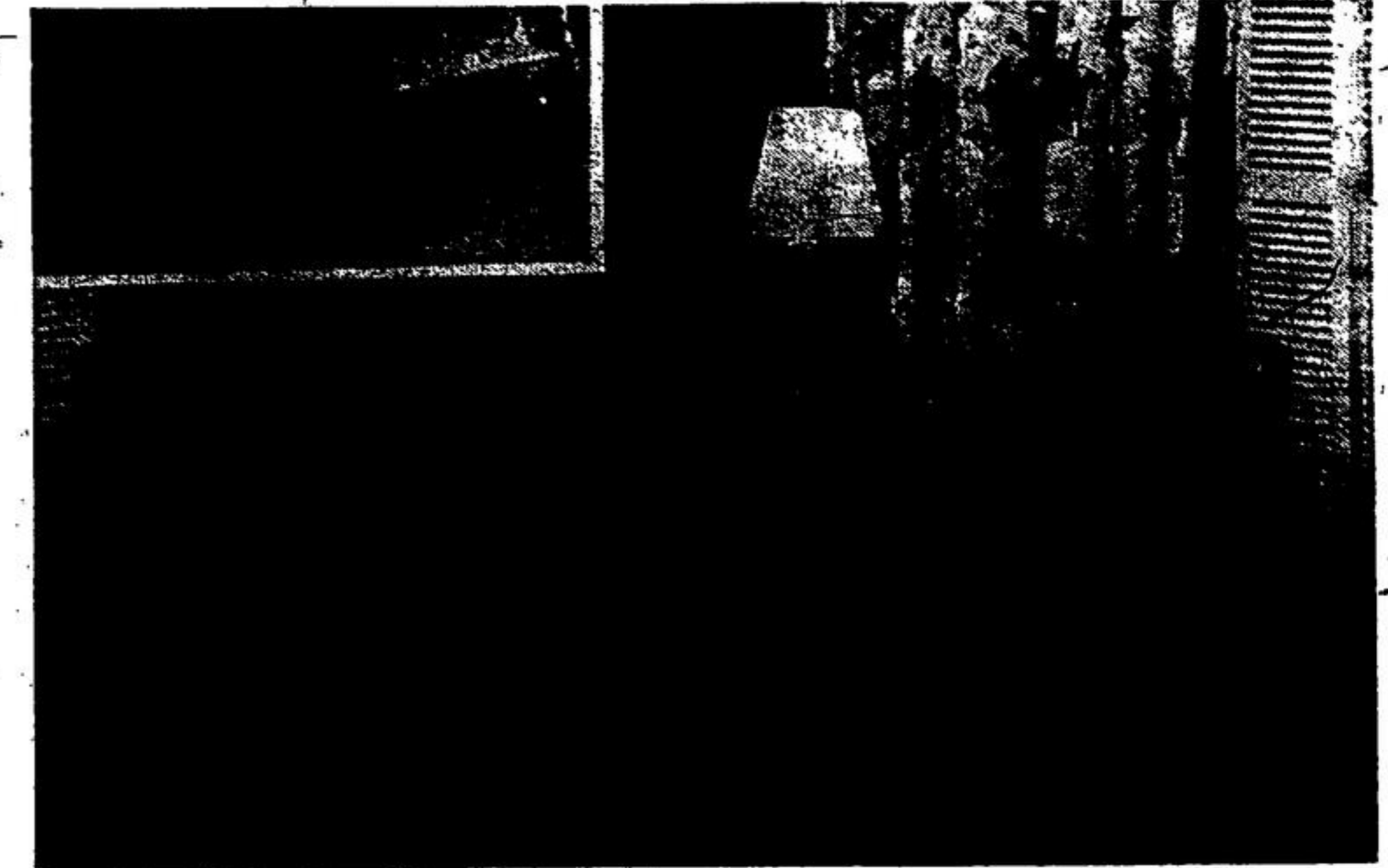
There is even a bit of humour to be found in the situation if you look hard enough. Which reminds me of a little story I heard about the latest cocktail craze in the United States these days. It is called "The Sputnik" made with one part vodka and three parts of sour grapes.

THRILLS IN THE NEWS are not confined to our day and age, however. A couple of decades ago the people of this district helped make some thrilling headlines in the Toronto dailies when two or three brave men from Stewarttown captured a convicted murderer who had escaped from Woodstock prison.

It was on the night of May 28th, 1921, that the desperate criminal slept in the bush near Stewarttown station. Near daylight, he discovered the bench outside the little flag station, and completely exhausted, went to sleep again.

Here he was discovered by two women from Stewarttown. The

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whole province having been alerted to the dangerous criminal-at-large, they saw a resemblance of the man to pictures of the murderer Garfield. Returning to their homes, they reported their find to their husbands when they came in for their noon meal. John Tracey, 70-year-old clerk of the township, telephoned the chief of police, and picking up his farmer neighbour, Lawson, they dashed for the station in their car. Lawson and another neighbour, Applebe, plunged for John Robertson, as murderer Garfield called himself, and brought him into the Georgetown jail just about one a.m.

I HADN'T BEEN aware of this little episode in Georgetown's history until I read the article written by Toronto Star reporter Roy Greenaway in an issue of the Star Weekly Magazine. Mr. Greenaway has been a member of the Star's reportorial staff since 1918, and covered the trial of Denton, 20 and Norman Garfield 25, the brothers who had shot and killed candy-store proprietor, Ben Johnston, of Woodstock.

Thus Mr. Greenaway was the logical person to send to Georgetown to help identify the killer, after the police chief had phoned the late Harry Hindmarsh at the Star saying he was convinced he had Garfield in jail there.

IN GREENAWAY'S own words... "At Georgetown, Foster (the photographer) and I jumped into a taxi and struck for the town hall where the prisoner was being kept. A big crowd of men, women, children, automobiles, buggies and bicycles were jammed tight against the windows and doors.

"It was a strange group sitting around the table in the council chamber. The police chief, Francis Melville, looked the most typical farmer of them all. There were William Applebe and Walter Lawson who had captured the prisoner at the little flag station a couple of miles down the Grand Trunk Railway Line, and others who had helped. They told me they were all writing their stories for the Star. This had been arranged by Mr. Hindmarsh by telephone while the train was on its way to Georgetown.

Chief Melville was out of his chair like a flash when Foster said "Here's a man who will identify him. He covered the trial... The chief grabbed me by the arm and hurried me to the cells. He opened the door and literally shoved me in. The prisoner was sleeping with his face to the wall. He rose up on his right elbow when he heard the commotion and looked at us. I saw his gold teeth first, and then his face took shape in the dark. Garfield recognized me, smiled and flopped back on his pallet. The chief was satisfied.

Garfield went to his death on the scaffold at 5.40 a.m. on Thursday, June 2nd.

NOT WISHING to leave you on such a macabre note, I must tell you about a friend's little boy, who arrived home from school Friday to inform his Mum, my he didn't have to go to school Monday because it was "Popeye Day"

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