



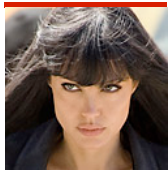
# Books: International Handyman

Monday, Feb. 19, 1945

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**LOOKING FOR A BLUEBIRD** — Joseph Wechsberg —Houghton Mifflin (\$2.50).

Joseph Wechsberg is a bland, dark, persistent man of 38 who started out in life to be a concert violinist. In pursuit of the bluebird of happiness, he has wandered far afield. In addition to fiddling on transatlantic ships and in European cabarets, he has been a professional claqueur in Vienna, a croupier in Nice, a politician's secretary in Prague, a war reporter-photographer in Persia, Ethiopia, China and the South Seas, a malt salesman in Venezuela, a soldier in his native Czechoslovakia, a lecturer on democracy in the U.S. He is currently with the U.S. Army in or near Paris.

In 1943 some reminiscences of this peripatetic career, later published in the New Yorker, won Wechsberg a Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship. The result is *Looking for a Bluebird*. Taken one at a time, at easy intervals, these nostalgic, Bemelmans-like sketches are delightful.

Ticker Tape and Caviar. Wechsberg's sketches and anecdotes show that he most often found the bluebird in his own musical backyard. The characters he portrays most fondly and skilfully are such acquaintances of his musical wanderings as Maurice, an orchestra leader "who was brought up on Pernod instead of mother's milk"; Boris, a violinist who "occasionally [ate] caviar with his right hand, playing a stunning pizzicato sequence with his left" Monsieur Arnould, a music director who had something "of the jovial, placid, dignity of the bull fiddle" he once played; Franzl, an amateur pianist whose reason for living was the hope that some day he might work on Wall Street (he owned six inches of genuine New York ticker tape).

Best of all is Wechsberg's portrait of George Washington Hayes, an American Negro trumpet player at the Moulin Rouge in Paris who got along famously with the gentle old mother of one of the Polish violinists because he, too, loved to wander through graveyards.



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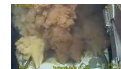


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