

THE TIMES

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'GADZOOKS, QUOTH I'

AN AMERICAN LITERARY INTERLUDE

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 7

The racks of lurid paperbacks in the drugstores and stations across the country have long been providing for the buyer and the browser the stuff that dreams are made of: but now a book is to appear that is made of the stuff of dreams—the waking dreams of the night owls.

The story begins with a "disc jockey," a radio announcer who runs a one-man programme of recorded music and personal monologues in the deepest hours of the night. One day, it appears, he went to buy a book he thought he had heard of—and was told that it did not exist.

That "an index card, a printed list" should have more validity than a person rankled; he insisted that there was such a book, but another list confuted him. So he spoke to his "night people" about it, to the cab-drivers on late shift, the soda jerks in the "all nite fountains," the watchmen and the insomniacs, to all the people who listened to his programme, and he told them that the "day people" were pushing them around—why shouldn't there be such a book? Go and ask for it, he said, and let's call it *I, Libertine* and say it is written by Frederick R. Ewing.

BOOKSHOPS ASKED

So bookshops all over the country began to be asked for *I, Libertine* ("by a fella called Ewing"), and the publishers began to think that maybe they were wrong—if there was not such a book on their lists, there should be. With the title already provided it was not difficult to do the rest . . . a period novel, certainly, a dash of Farnol and a splash of Amber . . . "turbulent! turgid! tempestuous!" The blurbs almost wrote themselves.

And next month *I, Libertine* will appear. The cover has already been shown; a tricorne hat on the hero, in the background a décolleté heroine, and a sample from the dialogue—"Gadzooks, quoth I, but there's a saucy bawd!"