

Jean Battles A Sea of Rumors

Clever Miss Harlow keeps her head up as she denies war with studio and hubby



"My best friend is my boss," says Jean, denying that she and Louis B. Mayer fought about her salary



Their smiles deny the rumors about Jean and her husband, Hal Rosson. But gossip keeps on flowing



Jean went back to M-G-M, and said she was sorry she asked for more money

a "Red-Headed Woman" who walked back and said, "I'm sorry. I truly didn't realize the spot I put the studio in by asking for more salary at this time." Yet, the real Jean Harlow did exactly that.

And the real Jean Harlow explained: "You can't fight with your friends—and Louis B. Mayer is the best friend any girl in the world could have. I could never tell you how wonderful he was to me at the time of Paul's death." ("Paul" was Paul Bern, Jean's second husband, whose tragic death occurred in September, 1932.)

"But my best friend is also my boss. And he is the only one I can go to in matters of business. I would trust him implicitly to do the best thing for me, always.

When conditions are better in the amusement world, I know he will accede to my request on the salary situation.

"There has been no fight so far. But if I remained away long enough to seriously inconvenience the production schedule at the studio, it would amount to that.

"As it is, I have not been away longer now than I usually am between pictures. Not as long as I have been in the past; between 'Red-Headed Woman' and 'Red Dust,' for instance.

"The situation, until now, has been too delicate to discuss. But at this time I want my friends to realize exactly what has been my position. I want to repudiate all the absurd statements that have been made as to my unreasonable demands, and let them know the truth.

"Being a picture star is an expensive privilege. [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 112]

I AM not going to separate from my husband. There has been no fight between the studio and myself."

With those two plain statements from Jean Harlow, intended to set a thousand feverish rumors at rest, she reported to M-G-M to go back to work.

In her first exclusive interview since her reconciliation with her studio, Jean gave me her version of the whole situation.

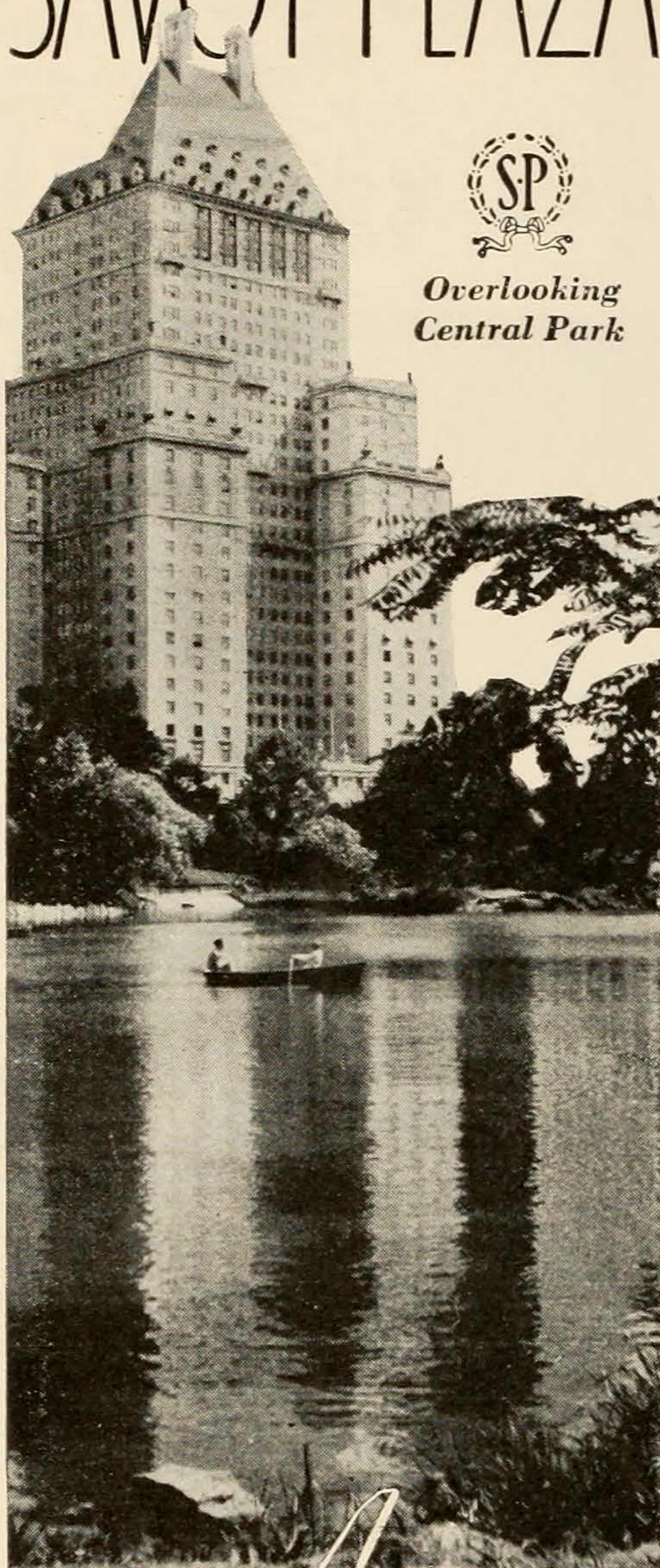
In the first place, she said, she did not strike for any of the ridiculous sums printed—not ten thousand dollars, or even five. As a matter of fact, Jean's salary is less than that of several stars who do not line up the customers at the box-office half so successfully—as she has pointed out.

Her contract called for a raise in salary at this time. And a contract is a contract.

If your idea of Jean is formed by the characters she plays—then behold her out of character. Because off-screen she very definitely is out of character. It certainly was not

By Ruth Rankin

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Jean Battles a Sea of Rumors

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32]

I send out from eight to ten thousand photographs and letters a month. This requires the services of two secretaries. I have to have a personal maid and hairdresser. Because my hair has been so much publicized, it takes constant care. When I am traveling, and while I am in the East, it is shampooed every other day. And I do not travel without my father and mother. Wherever I go, they go with me. All this is expensive.

"Also, essentials, such as insurance, have much higher rates for picture people.

"So far as downright luxuries are concerned, I am not extravagant. I am driving a three-year-old car. If my home can be considered a luxury, then it is my only one.

"But I had a lovely home before I came into pictures," Jean smiled. And you knew if she were not in pictures, she would still have a lovely home.

It is a delightful place, this big Colonial home on the top of a hill. A home that fits Jean—a suitable background for an exquisite and fastidious girl.

It must be very difficult to be a man and interview Jean Harlow. And keep your mind on your work. Because any man worthy of his sex must be urgently aware in all senses of that luscious beauty.

VERY definitely Jean ranks with the great beauties of all time. This was my first interview with her, and the physical perfection of the girl struck me almost with a staggering impact.

She is so infinitely more beautiful than she photographs. The quality of her skin is something to amaze complexion experts.

The first sight of Jean gives a woman a firm new set of resolutions to start that diet right away and run around the block every morning. You become acutely conscious of all three chins and the four spare tires around the middle. How must the mere men feel?

Then she begins talking—and you forget her physical allure, if you are a woman. Because the girl has a distinct flair for conversation.

There are a lot of famous beauties around Hollywood that get over big with the men. Most of the girls are discreetly silent when these charmers' names are mentioned. Some less discreet speak right out in meeting and say what they think.

But it's a funny thing about Jean. I've never heard another girl say a mean thing about her. You see, they like her, in spite of her overwhelming loveliness. I don't know of any higher compliment one girl can pay another. Especially in Hollywood.

WHEN Jean says, "I am doing what I think is right in going back to work at the studio," I believe her.

"It is regrettable," she continues, "that these stories of a 'fight' were circulated. There was a straightforward business discussion about money. Any business man or woman will appreciate the situation.

"Then, after considerable thought on the subject, I was convinced that it would be establishing a wrong precedent. If all the actors in Hollywood thought they could simply walk out of the studio and demand more money before they would return, it would upset a lot of apple-carts. After all, there is such a thing as a contract!"

Aside from Jean's "walk-out" and all the stories about it, many other rumors have been circulated.

So many concerning her supposed separation from Harold Rosson, even an impending "blessed event," that Jean thinks it is high time to give some first-hand information on these subjects.

She tells me she has appeared in a certain nationally known chatterer's column some twelve or fifteen times recently—and she insists that not on one occasion were the statements correct!

But she doesn't hold it against the columnist. Not for a minute. She says, very generously, "How could he call me up long-distance and verify it every time?"

She says she simply puts it down as another



May Robson is proud to show visitors her wall of fame in her California home. They're all pictures of friends. Recognize Chaplin? On the right, Harold Bell Wright, author. You guess the rest

of the penalties, along with the advantages, of being "news." If there is none available about her, someone will always manufacture it.

She indignantly denies the divorce rumors. The more they persist, the more emphatic are her denials.

And imagine her surprise not long ago, when the city editor of a Boston newspaper telephoned her to verify the rumor that she was on her way East to have her baby! He had heard that she was going to be attended by the same obstetrician who took care of Libby Holman Reynolds!

Jean laughingly comments that, aside from the fact that she isn't going to have a baby, and wasn't on her way to Boston, the story was okay.

SHE told me quite sincerely that she wants to have one or two children. But not now. She believes a baby is a full-time job, and so is a screen career.

"I could not accomplish both without neglecting one. And it wouldn't be the baby."

After all, Jean is only twenty-three years old. There is necessarily a time limit to a screen career. She has plenty of time ahead to have a family.

There is no show of resentment in Jean, in spite of the sometimes vicious rumors that have been circulated about her. She says reporters are her best friends and that she is tremendously fond of them.

When she was off the screen for a year (due to litigation with Howard Hughes, producer) after her first picture, "Hell's Angels," the reporters did not permit the public to forget her.

She was constantly in print—and it was important to her at that time—as it is at any time, to an actress. It meant that she did not have to begin her career all over again at the end of that year.

They kept her "alive" and made her vital and interesting news.

But that isn't the only reason Jean has a soft spot for scribblers. She is one herself.

Nothing small-time about it, either. No little febrile poems, no timorous short stories, testing her stride. No, she bursts out with a bombshell, just as Jean Harlow should. She has written a novel!

My admiration increased by leaps and bounds when she told me how she went about it. A direct and business-like method, and a method she understands. No feeling around in the dark. No delays, procrastinations, excuses.

She simply wrote it first in the form of a motion-picture script.

Jean has read hundreds of scripts. They did not look so formidable as a novel. They were stripped of all the unnecessary detail by which a woman is so easily side-tracked from her main objective. So Jean blocked out her story in the shape of a script.

THEN, with everything before her, clear and concise, she enlarged it into a novel. Not about Hollywood, either. The locale is New York.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? All right. Let's see you try it.

And Jean's novel found a publisher.

I hope her marriage to Rosson will be a success. But it's a tougher job than it looks from the outside—to make a marriage work, with dark rumors circling around, ready to close in at the slightest sign of encouragement.

Jean has learned more in her short twenty-three years than most women have a chance to learn in a lifetime.

She evinces a gentle tolerance that only comes to the majority of persons after many more years of living and experience. I think it would take more than a rumor to upset her good balance.

She was big enough to think it over, return to the studio, and say, "I'm sorry," when many a lesser luminary has held out to the bitter end.

And it's a lucky break for all of us—because there'll be another Harlow picture soon!

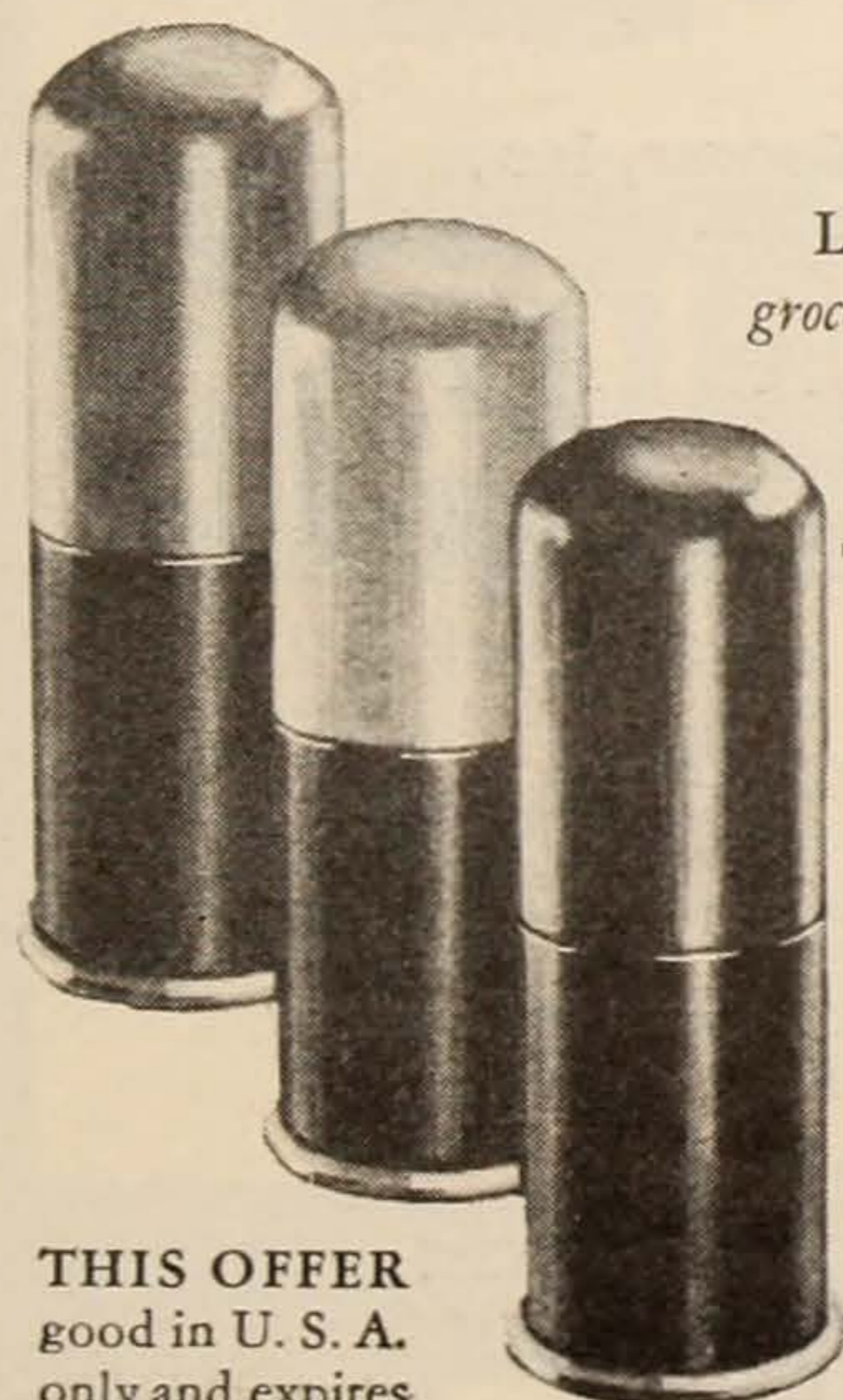


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