

problem than the habitual drunkard. In line with modern medical and sociological thinking on the subject, Mr. Hirsh discusses alcoholism as a disease, rather than as a sin or crime. There is also an interesting report on the effects of alcohol on the body. An illuminating work.

MUSIC

THE WORLD'S GREAT OPERAS, by John Tasker Howard. \$2.95. *Random House*. Mr. Howard here gives the stories of 205 operas by 95 composers, which is to say, he gives the stories of virtually all the important operas in the history of music. There are four appendices: brief biographies of the composers, a listing of the librettists, a listing of the sources and derivations of the plots, and an index of the characters in the operas. For an introduction Mr. Howard offers "a brief background" of the history of opera. He is a very capable musicologist and commands a clear writing style, and his book is most useful and belongs on the shelf of every professional and amateur musician.

THE VICTOR BOOK OF SYMPHONIES, by Charles O'Connell. \$3.95. *Simon & Schuster*. This is so thorough a revision of the celebrated book which first appeared in 1935 that it is virtually a new book. Here Mr. O'Connell devotes himself exclusively to the symphony, and he analyzes 138 symphonies by 45 composers. Needless to say, the discussions are uniformly sound and comprehensive and well written. There are a glossary of musical terms and a list of recordings. A first-rate job.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE WRITTEN WORD, by Gorham Munson. \$2.95. *Creative Age*. This handbook is addressed to "all who wish to gain skill with the written word in the English-American language." It deals only with prose and is aimed at both amateurs and professionals. It is full of sound advice about technique and marketing, and it is well

written — which is not always true of such handbooks. Mr. Munson does not consider himself above saying several good words in behalf of the successful writing of journalism, but he makes sure that the reader knows that journalism differs from great prose and also from "scripture." Mr. Munson is a veteran teacher of writing at the New School for Social Research, where he is amazingly popular; from this very able and useful book it is easy to see why.

THE ETHICS OF AMBIGUITY, by Simone de Beauvoir. \$3.00. *Philosophical Library*. Having asserted, at considerable length, the absurdity and ambiguity of man's situation in this world, the existentialists are now attempting to provide him with an ethical system. In undertaking this assignment, Simone de Beauvoir appears to have all the necessary qualifications: first, she is Jean-Paul Sartre's wife; second, she is totally unintelligible; and third, she is loaded with paradoxes, of which "in order for the return to the positive to be genuine it must involve negativity" is a fair sample. What Mme. Sartre is saying in this essay is very uncertain. The most explicit statement in the book demands "the rejection of every principle of authority," but even this injunction is qualified to the point of meaninglessness. Tough sledding, and not worth the ride.

THE YANKEES, A Pictorial History of Baseball's Greatest Club, by John Durant. \$2.95. *Hastings House*. A nostalgic photographic record of the New York Yankees, from the time when they played on Hilltop Park and were known as the Highlanders, down to 1948. Pictures of old-time baseball players seem to have a way of evoking the past as few other things can, and this book should make pleasant browsing for all but the most unrepentant non-fans of the game. Some of the best of the hundred-odd pictures are among the oldest; it comes as a surprise to learn that the techniques of action photography were so well developed at the turn of the century, when Hal Chase, Willie Keeler and Clark Griffith were active.

THE OPEN FORUM



SELF-INDICTMENT

SIR: I want to give my heartfelt thanks to THE AMERICAN MERCURY for printing the transcript of the "Meet the Press" appearance of Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the "Red Dean" of Canterbury, in the May issue. After reading it I am more than ever convinced that the best way to expose men like him is to let them talk and just print what they say; editorial comment would be superfluous. A man who didn't know that Marx called religion the opium of the people; a man who had never even heard the charge that there are 12 million people in Soviet concentration camps; a man who can infer religious freedom from the existence of two or three churches; a man who can identify the love-thy-neighbor Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount with the savage repression of the police state — such a man obviously doesn't need to be attacked by others. Every time he opens his own mouth he's indicting himself.

HORACE SELIG

Brooklyn, N. Y.

SHOULD WOMEN KICK?

SIR: Waverley Root's article, "Women Have Nothing to Kick About," in the April MERCURY, is a blast of hot air. The fact is that the female has two strikes on her the moment she is born. And we are all aware of this — make no mistake about it. For if by some occult manipulation a female were to awaken in the morning and find she had been trans-

formed into a male she would go into ecstatic handsprings and pass around the cigars. Similarly, if a man, no matter how old, were to awaken and discover himself a female he would arise and straightaway hang himself.

By her particular structure woman is condemned to be on the receiving end of things, especially of man's attentions. Now take a close gander at the majority of men and tell me if that's good. . . .

CHAS. OVERILL

Newport Beach, Cal.

SIR: Mr. Root's article should have had the title, "Immensely Wealthy Women Have Nothing to Kick About." Homes equipped with \$30 beaters, automatic laundries, ironing mangles, garbage disposals, dishwashers, pressure cookers, and other luxuries mentioned by him are *very, very* rare. A check-up among the top-income families here in San Antonio revealed less than a half-dozen homes with all those labor-saving gadgets. And this is a city nearing the 400,000-mark.

Mrs. Stern's article ["Women Are Household Slaves," in the January MERCURY] was about the *average* housewife. Income-tax returns show 47,325,147 individuals with adjusted gross incomes below \$5000. She was speaking for this group. In answering her, Mr. Root appears to be representing the 2,640,327 persons who have an adjusted gross income of more than \$5000.

Mrs. Stern was interested in the 17,469,690 homes with more than one child. Mr. Root, with his "one small daughter," was speaking