

Prime Ministers), it put up its market cross to commemorate a visitation from another world. Ruth Pierce, a market woman, had welshed on a payment; she "wished she might drop dead" if she had lied about it; she had, and she did. Even now the cross with its pious inscription does not look quite silly. I am not surprised to hear indirectly that witchcraft still goes on here and there. There may well be a few women left who stick pins in wax images while the TV aerial shudders on the roof, and who next morning hand out packets of cornflakes in the village store, or carry the Mothers' Union banner to the annual service in Salisbury Cathedral.

THIS is no country of ladies and gentlemen. Though retired majors do live in the downland villages, within earshot of the gunfire on the ranges, the tide of stockbrokers, maiden aunts, and successful lawyers that floods the Home Counties has not reached this far. The landowners here farm on a moderately large scale, with all the latest machines; but there are few manors, and few lords to dwell in them. Though most English rural areas vote solidly Tory, the Devizes constituency, which includes most of the down country, does so only by a few thousand votes.

The great houses of Wiltshire lie farther west, in the lowlands. There Lord Lansdowne, compelled to be less lavish than the ancestor who put up the poet Thomas Moore in a cottage outside the gates, has had to pull down part of Bowood. There, too, the Marquess of Bath keeps Longleat going by applying modern promotion techniques (down to the sale of ice cream) to the business of showing visitors over the house; and at Wilton Lord Pembroke can still enjoy his pretty Palladian bridge over the river, and the Double Cube Room where Vandyck portraits gaze on cataracts of gilt carving—in the hours when the public is not let in. That is the country from which come the young women lampooned in a London revue of a few years ago—"Up for the day from Wiltshire,/In twin-set,/String of pearls,/And sensible shoes."

There is a peppering of twin-sets and pearls in the towns—Salisbury,

Devizes, Marlborough—but in the villages people stick mostly to sensible shoes.

AND THAT is all that happens, or nearly all. Carthorses still lumber out of Salisbury doorways, and live pigs can sometimes be seen on Tuesdays at Salisbury market. Visitors' hair gets blown in their eyes as they pause to photograph the standing pillars of Stonehenge, or the greater circle of prehistoric stones that hugs the village of Avebury; but they are soon off again. As they go the tip of Salisbury Cathedral spire surprises them by appearing over the shoulder of the down. Within those gray walls lie the tombs of nobles in chain mail, faces worn away, and the sculptured

corpse—bones showing through the skin—of a seventeenth-century dean.

In the villages dwell a few people who stay longer than the transient army captains and their wives: Small agile Cockneys train racehorses on the slopes near Marlborough; the poet Siegfried Sassoon lives amid a park on the edge of Salisbury Plain at Heytesbury, the historian G. M. Young in an old cottage at Oare. Crowded industrial England is elsewhere. Not even the red brick of Swindon, which makes and services railroad rolling-stock, leaves much of a dent on the county. Though England now lives on her railroads, highways, and airways, the green road, which leads into the middle of nowhere and out again, will outlast them.

Dean Acheson On Congress

DOUGLASS CATER

A CITIZEN LOOKS AT CONGRESS, by Dean Acheson. Harper. \$2.50.

Dean Acheson, having looked at the Democratic Party in his first book after leaving office, now looks at Congress. He has done better by both of them than they ever did by him. Indeed, one misses in these chapters—originally delivered as Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Memorial Lectures at the University of Virginia—the biting wit which on more than one occasion kept the hounding Senators at bay. It would have been interesting to know how the former Secretary of State really felt to be harassed so unmercifully by the Republicans and ignored so shamefully by the Democrats.

There are scant hints of any deep feeling here; rather, this is a lucid, if not particularly original analysis of the baffling problems inherent in the Executive-Legislative relationship, particularly in the field of foreign policy, demanding trigger-fast diplomacy and dollar-heavy programs. Mr. Acheson, using Woodrow Wilson's *Congressional Government* as his point of departure, agrees with

Wilson's later conclusion that the path of progress for our government does not lie in the direction of the parliamentary system.

Mr. Acheson has no procedural reforms to propose. His path of progress lies instead in a heightened sense of responsibility among the members of both branches of government. He has some good suggestions to make about the useful role Congressional committees could be made to play in developing debate of major policies rather than meddling in administrative matters.

All this needed to be said and is said with considerable eloquence. About the only complaint that can be lodged against the book is that it displays much too much tolerance toward the knaves and fools. More recently, in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee and in *The Reporter* ("Foreign Policy and Presidential Moralism," May 2, 1957) Mr. Acheson has revived the whistling sentence and the rapier phrase for which he is so justly famous. Let's hope he will keep on writing.

From the Bottom— To the Top of the Best-Seller List

MARYA MANNES

THE CARDS were stacked. When my grandmother, a wealthy North Shore dowager, saw me two days after I was born, she said, "In China, they would drown her."

At that time my father, the operatic idol of seven capitals, was already drinking heavily. At my christening he forced champagne down my tiny throat. When I hiccuped he roared "That's my girl! I'll make a bum of you yet!" My mother, white-lipped, left the house. I did not see her again for ten years.

During that time, I lived with my father, Ricardo Neri, the greatest Siegfried of his time and, some say, of all time. Born Dick Black, his magnificent physique, his Greek features, and his tireless lungs had made him the brightest star in the Metropolitan's firmament.

His appetite for women was inexhaustible. In his enormous house, which was modeled after Valhalla, women came and went. I called them all Mummy and they taught me many things. At five there was nothing I did not know.

"My little one," said father, "you too will be a great singer, and to be a great singer, you must have lived." He saw to it that I did.

He had constructed one great hall of his house to give the illusion, with layers of green and blue scrim and a few giant water plants of papier maché, of the Rhine river, and had installed all the complicated apparatus necessary for his "Rhine Maidens" to "float" through the "water." In his drinking bouts it used to amuse him to attach his various lights of love to pulleys and send them screaming through the Rhine.

I was a lonely child; old before my time. I worshiped my father and he worshiped me: His one ambition was that I should follow in his footsteps, and when I was fifteen he persuaded the Metropolitan that I was ready to sing "Carmen."

I will never forget my debut.

There I was, Rita Neri, daughter of the great Ricardo Neri, facing the Diamond Horseshoe. When I came out of the cigarette factory, swinging my hips, the ovation was thunderous. "Bravo! Bravo!" they cried. I had to sing to stop from choking.

I do not know how I got through my ordeal. I was in another world, sustained only by the thought that I was a Neri. I remember that in the middle of the "Habanera" someone next to me hissed "B-flat—not A!" But I was used to jealousy.

After it was all over, my father crushed me tenderly in his great arms. There were tears in his eyes.



"You were . . .," he said, but could not go on.

Even my mother came to the green room, in sables. "My little Poopsie!" she cried, "With a rose in her teeth!"

The Director of the Metropolitan looked at me gravely and said, "I have never seen such a Carmen." It was a night of triumph.

I Start Downward

But it was too soon. I was not ready for it. I wanted love. I wanted oblivion. That night I found both in the eyes of a glorious young waiter. We went off after the party, away from all the glitter, to his room in Delancey Street. Every night he beat me unconscious and every day we made up. But a week later he left me for a catering job. All he said as he left was, "It won't work."

I stumbled from bar to bar, drink-

ing Gibsons. People looked at me strangely. In one bar I met a man I used to know and he got me a job in a night club. Singing dirty songs.

With my red eyes and matted hair, I reminded people of an existentialist chanteuse. I didn't care.

One night I met a poet with gentle eyes. He took me to his room in a flophouse and read to me. We had no money and no food, but we had something else.

Every night Paul would go to the basement and get the cheese out of the rat trap before the rat did, and with what was left in the bottom of discarded beer cans we made festive little dinners.

I remembered an exclusive restaurant where my father used to take me, and once a week I would go to the back door at ten at night and ask Gaston for leftovers. On my sixteenth birthday he gave me half a duck-bigarade, a quarter strawberry tart, and a third of a bottle of St. Emilion. I hurried back to the flophouse. Paul had left a note. "There is no future in this," it said.

I gave the duck to the rat and stumbled blindly into the street. A one-way street. It had been a one-way street since I was born.

The Bottom

When I was seventeen I looked thirty-five. When I was eighteen I looked forty-six. When I was nineteen . . . In my twentieth year, after five hundred men and a thousand Gibsons, both my parents came to a violent end. My beautiful mother was charged by a rhinoceros on safari, and a week later my father was found dead at the bottom of his Rhine, tangled in harness. It must have been a practical joke.

Half-conscious, stumbling through the gay, heedless crowds in the bright sun of upper-Fifth Avenue, I heard a voice.

"Rita! Poopsie Neri!" Pushing my hair away from my dark glasses, I strained to see. Somehow, through the fog of degradation, I managed to recognize an old lover of my mother's—a publisher.

"What do you want of me?" I muttered thickly.

"A book," he said, as he guided me to his office. "And don't leave out a single thing!"

I didn't.