

# The Phoenix Nest

THE Negro question is one that is, in time of war, more and more deeply concerning our country. I can hardly help being interested in it, particularly since that parfit gentil knight of the Olde South, Senator Bilbo, once branded me a "communistic negrophile," thereby implying that he himself was a "negrophobe," which is also the truth. In my own case his indictment is the truth, save for the "communistic." I believe in a certain amount of collectivism, but that is hardly being a Communist, particularly as I don't belong to the Party. I am, however, proudly a "negrophile"; in other words, I believe in treating Negroes like the rest of the human race, and exercising our intelligence, rather than brutality and prejudice, in trying to solve a problem originally

BY HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

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## "Ernie Pyle



HERE IS YOUR WAR

names hundreds of our soldiers in his book and he speaks for thousands more. I have a hunch that those boys will want to read this book when they get back, and so will their children. Maybe their grandchildren." *Saturday Review* \$3.00 Henry Holt and Company

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wished upon us by the old irresponsible slave-traders who first brought the Negro to this land. In spite of all our brutality and prejudice, the strides the Negro has made toward civilization, in our half-civilized country, have been enormous. Therefore I'm particularly glad that the Supreme Court showed the Democratic Party in Texas that it was clearly violating the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution in denying Negroes the vote in its primary elections. Arthur Krock in *The Times* commented upon the whole thing very fairly, in his desiccated fashion ["desiccate": to remove the spiritual freshness or plasticity from: *Webster*], though his last sentence seemed peculiar to me. It was:

Now, States which wish to give legal\* effect to their party primaries and surround them with all protections must find some other way to keep out, if they can, avowed party members they don't want.

"Protections," against what? Against the votes of citizens declared by the Constitution of the United States fully entitled to the immunities guaranteed to other citizens, with their rights stipulated as follows by the Fifteenth Amendment:

\*Italics mine: W. R. B.

The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

The quibble has been attempted that the primaries are not a state matter. They are obviously a state matter, and a national matter. As the Supreme Court decision put it:

The United States is a Constitutional democracy. Its organic law grants to all citizens a right to participate in the choice of elected officials without restriction by any State because of race. This grant to the people of the opportunity for choice is not to be nullified by a State through casting its electoral process in a form which permits a private organization to practise racial discrimination in the election. Constitutional rights would be of little value if they could thus be indirectly denied.

But—don't doubt it—they are denied, and not even "indirectly." The political cuttlefish, who spread their inky fluid all over the Deep South, have declared it openly and brazenly. One Herbert Holmes, Chairman of the Democratic Committee in Mississippi, put it very simply, as quoted in *The Times*, "The Supreme Court or no one else," he said in that exquisite English one has come to expect from such persons, "can control a Democratic primary in Mississippi." Georgia's cultivated chairman added, "I

## The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
THE MOON WAS RED Dana Sage (Simon & Schuster: \$2.50)	Murderous goings-on in and around La Paz, Bolivia, satisfactorily solved by Donald O'Keefe Adams—Don O.K. to South Americans.	Lively and exceptionally well-scened blend of murder, blackmail, bigamy, Inca rites, and adventure—with a hair-raising finish.	First class
THE PARCHMENT KEY Stanley Hopkins, Jr. (Harcourt, Brace: \$2.)	Unexplainable "accidents" in Long Island home bring Peter Murrell to scene. He unravels strange case of mal-adjusted personality.	Pleasantly written and engagingly characterized; with single murder done by "remote control"; some good stuff about dogs, and much diverting conversation.	Good hunting
DOOM IN THE MIDNIGHT SUN Eunice Mays Boyd (Farrar & Rinehart: \$2.)	Nebraska ex-grocer vacationing on Alaskan lake solves two murders in four days and finds happiness.	Attractive background, able semi-pro sleuthing, interesting people—especially the small-fry—and mystery that holds up well to end.	Enjoyable
TOWARDS ZERO Agatha Christie (Dodd, Mead: \$2.)	Inspector Battle unfolds the train of events which made the death of an invalid old lady inevitable.	Some ingenious incidents but rather slow-paced.	Not up to the author's best

would say the Negroes are not qualified to vote in the Democratic white primary of this State." Florida's broodingly intelligent chairman declared, "We'll certainly resist, if possible, any attempt to have Negroes vote in our primaries." One can hardly blame Republican candidate Wendell Willkie from commenting, in his Nebraska speech, upon "the unholy combination of Southern Democrats who deny men in those States the right to vote, and corrupt Northern political machines." Boy, in that respect he certainly knows what he's talking about!

To turn to expressions of more dignity, I quote here two letters recently received from Negro librarians; the second one, Arno Bontemps, is a distinguished Negro writer. The first letter comes from the Johnston Memorial Library of the Virginia State College for Negroes, Petersburg, Virginia—from J. A. Hulbert, the Librarian there:

Both as a Negro American and as an admirer of you and your late brother, Stephen Vincent, let me congratulate you on your note in *The Phoenix Nest*, issue of March 18, with reference to Negroes and the new film, "The Negro Soldier." Here, we are looking forward to seeing this movie and I am sure that ours will be deep emotions of joy and pride. You have no idea what it means, as a Negro, to have recognition of the best that is found in us, as a group. We feel truly that a new day is near at hand when the curse of segregation and injustice will be lifted from us. As a librarian I can see trends in print and public opinion which make me very hopeful for this new day. Sometimes we are impatient but you, who are our friends, can never know how very patient we are. Have you and your fellow editors ever considered a special issue of *The Saturday Review* devoted to Negro literature, something in line with your recent sectional issues? It seems to me that such a number might be well received and I am certain that it would be of great literary interest.

The second is from Arno Bontemps, Librarian of the Fisk University Library at Nashville, Tennessee:

I wonder if I may share the enclosed with you. Perhaps it is evidence of the poetry we are generally too blind to see around us. Miss Frances L. Yocom of this library discovered this item in our catalogue. Each line represents the title of a book, and this is the exact succession in which she found them:

We Americans, we are not alone.  
We are the builders of a new world.  
We build together.

We cannot escape history,  
We did not ask Utopia.  
We have come to a country.

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