

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Instigator

SIR: Despite our modesty, we are a little bit disappointed that your announcement of the Anisfield-Wolf Award to John Collier [SRL May 29] made no reference to The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., as the originator of "The Indians of the Americas." We urged Mr. Collier to undertake the book, and worked patiently with him on the project, and, when we had the final manuscript in hand we decided to place it with a trade publisher, and almost immediately made an agreement with Norton. We shall publish our edition in the autumn of this year. You will note that Norton gives us a generous acknowledgment on the title page.

VICTOR WEYBRIGHT.

New York, N. Y.

## Refuting the Irrefutable

SIR: Reviewing Charles Neider's Kafka study "The Frozen Sea" [SRL May 29], Miss Marjorie Brace is greatly impressed by the "irrefutable scientific evidence" as proffered by the author in support of his theories. Opening his book at random—sortes Neideriana—I found on ONE page (149) the following erroneous statements:

(1) "Pinzgauer (from the Austrian river, Pinzgau) symbolizes the river Styx."

Actually, the Austrian Pinzgau is not a river, but—as clearly indicated by the affix-*gau* (*Gauleiter!*)—a region; and "Pinzgauer" always means a heavy brewery horse of the type originally bred in that region. Throughout the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which was Kafka's country, the word "Pinzgauer," metaphorically used, also alluded to great physical strength, endurance, and a slightly comical clumsiness—surely characteristics not commonly identified with the river Styx.

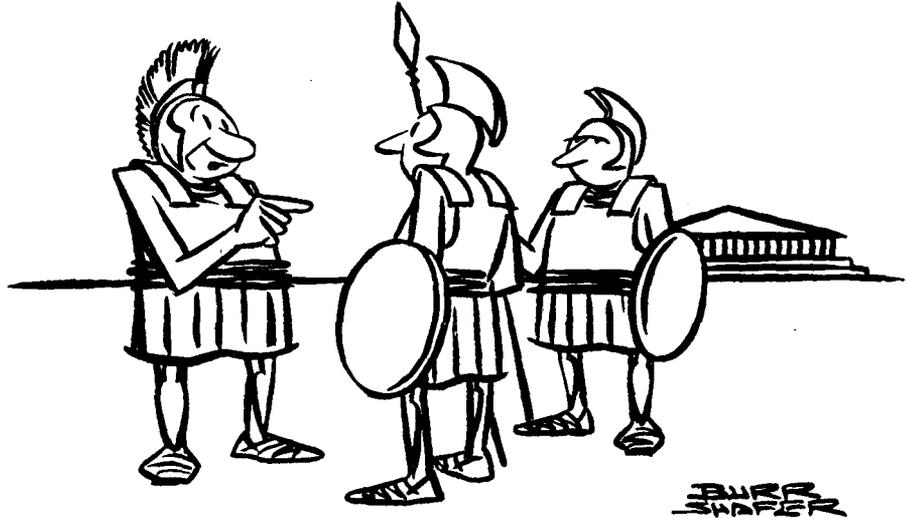
(2) "Brunswick (Braunschweig), the old German family and place name, is connected with the nobility and virility. . . . The first name [of the Kafka character in question] is Otto, which calls to mind Otto Brunswick, one of the more famous of the Brunswick line."

Actually, Brunswick (Braunschweig) is—as, for sound historical reasons, it happens frequently—not only the name of a German ducal family (and that of its duchy, whose capital, Mr. Neider's "place," bears that name, too), but also a rather common Southwest German, Swiss, and French-Jewish family name. Furthermore, the only "more famous" Braunschweig duke known to students of history is Karl Friedrich Wilhelm, the author, or signer, of the ill-famed Manifesto of 1792, which touched off the wars of the French Revolution.

(3) ". . . Otto . . . is the Teutonic equivalent of mountain."

Actually, Brockhaus, a usually reliable authority, traces "Otto" back to the old-Germanic "ot" which signifies "property" or "heirloom."

May I add that I have no axe what-



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

" . . . and another thing. If all us Spartans are warriors, who'll pay the taxes?"

soever to grind with either of the "two schools" of Kafka exegetes. I merely feel—and I dare to submit this on the strength of this one page of his book—that Mr. Neider should have been far more accurate indeed in presenting his "evidence," and Miss Bruce a little bit more careful in accepting it as being "irrefutably scientific."

ROBERT PICK.

New York, N. Y.

## Ripping Reaper

SIR: T. G. Reaper's proposals for survival after atomic onslaught are stupefyingly naive and exhibit the same blunder which has brought about the atomic menace itself. They are founded, that is to say, upon a considerable technical foresight which, however, makes no use of the science of psychology. Mr. Reaper, like most Western men, identifies Man with man's equipment. He expects that, after the holocaust, his "League" may survive by clever parasitism exercised upon the wreckage of the Machine Age. The expectation is blind to the nature and the putative behavior of human beings under the circumstances outlined, and SRL is under some obligation to expose this wistful and wishful self-deceit.

Mr. T(he) G(rim) Reaper looks forward, with the mind of a businessman, scientist, or engineer, to the swift exploitation of scrap metal and derelict vehicles, a tabu of exogamy to prevent genetic deterioration, and the recovery, in a few generations, of sufficient science and industry to return to the manufacture of atomic bombs. This is the whole of the Objective Scientific Faith and it will get us no further than we have already got—which is, to the brink of nowhere.

Only the scientific student of *subjectivity* can see what lies ahead. And what is that? Examples will suffice:

The atomic bombing of the first half dozen large cities will depopulate the remainder. Untouched survivors

in cities of all sizes will not wait their fate passively. Unconsciously, we reason that they will—owing, no doubt, to the placid behavior of the Hiroshimans and Nagasakians. This is an error. The Japanese are fatalistic. They had no knowledge of the weapon that had struck them or its horrendous long-range effects. Americans, however, are self-determined optimists. They are extroverted doers. Optimism is the poorest possible orientation, in the presence of massive catastrophe. The typical reaction of the extravert to frustration is hysteria. Furthermore, Americans understand to some degree the nature and effect of atomic explosions.

All American urban populations will flee in panic into the farthest reaches of the rural areas after any local atomic bombing. Tens of millions of wild and starving persons will wrest, in a matter of days, the food stores, homes, animal stocks, etc., from country-living people. The Army, vaguely foreseeing some such possibility, has suggested Universal Military Training as an answer to a need for mass disciplines. Let it be noted that the French, after generations of conscription and in the face of a mere invading army and heckling Stukas, fled their cities and utterly obfuscated military activity on the highways.

American exploitation of forest areas, destruction of wildlife, and pollution of rivers and streams means, very simply, that the foraging multitudes will soon devour such food-stuffs as may be found in the agricultural areas, but streams and woodlands will offer no hope of further sustenance. Cannibalism will thus ensue within a few weeks.

Hence the person who realistically plans to survive needs to know recipes for cooking his fellows, and, also, how to use counters so as not to consume radio-active human flesh. Biological warfare will, naturally, follow upon the heels of the rout—with dis-

(Continued on page 24)



# The Gathering Storm

by Winston S. Churchill

This book is becoming a legend before publication. The combination of statesman, philosopher and writer, unique certainly in degree of excellence, makes this contemporary history a book to be read universally. This first volume of *The Second World War* is an extraordinarily dramatic picture of years leading to the chaos of World War II, drawn with vigor and wit and incisive clarity.

Before publication—\$5.00

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# The Masquerade in Spain

by Charles Foltz, Jr.

One of the first reviews\* calls this: "... the best work on the subject to have appeared in the United States." Its excellence is the product of an intellectually honest study of the conflicting forces that shape modern Spain. For the masquerade is purposely confusing to the outside world. The true faces of the Church, the landowners, the Franco puppets, the opposition are hidden to the onlooker by a devious subtlety of design. Foltz collects the evidence for the first time in some instances, sifts it, interprets it, and presents this enigmatic nation to the world beyond.

\**Boston Herald*

\$4.00



# New Song in a Strange Land

by Esther Warner

Decorations by Jo Dendel

"When man or woman gets under the skin of a land and people and writes of them truly and with a beauty that comes, not merely from a facility with words, but from sensitiveness, knowledge and real passion, that is an experience. 'New Song in a Strange Land' belongs with the few."

\$3.50

*New York Herald Tribune*

STON MIFFLIN COMPANY · PUBLISHERS



# We Need Not Fail

by Sumner Welles

This is a time of grace, a chance, again, to build a strong foundation for peace among nations. Our chance is threatened by every hostility whether localized or universal in intention. Sumner Welles analyzes the Palestine situation as the test—perhaps the ultimate test—of the United Nations. This book presents a great statesman's program of action for permanent peace.

"... an admirable, a sobering, a frightening book ... a magnificent job ..."

*The Saturday Review of Literature*

\$2.50

(Continued from page 21)

ease spreading readily amidst roving mobs that live without sanitation of any sort. H. G. Wells foresaw this in his "wandering sickness"—just as he long ago foresaw the atomic war, the fighter plane, radio, and pretty much all of our contemporary and ingenious man-made horrors.

Mr. Reaper's notion that sex relations can be ordered so as to prevent the breeding of monsters by persons with radiation-damaged genes is now seen as the mere dream of a mind technically conscious but psychologically uninstructed. The scores of millions of country-looting, sick cannibalistic survivors, themselves facing a hundred sorts of death at any hour, will scarcely restrain their erotic impulses to await tests by no-longer-functioning laboratories. Where Mr. Reaper anticipates the prevention of exogamy, rape will be the general fact.

For the sake of brevity, further, similar, and obvious details are here omitted. But Mr. Reaper's solemn belief that only a few generations of post-atomic parasitism will be needed to restore technology, reveals how deeply unaware he is of the basic mistake in the modern, scientific premise. No such speedy gathering up of the pieces and no such gladsome, swift return to the old cycle is foreseeable.

Modern man, in the vast majority, has no understanding of science or the scientific method, even in the objective fields. He regards science, when it is exploited to his advantage, with a sort of infantile lust. When it threatens him, this mood vanishes and in its place comes superstitious hatred. The scientists, in an absurdly egoistic pursuit of what they term "pure knowledge" have failed to elicit much knowledge of man—including themselves—and they have failed to disseminate, even amongst themselves, such scientific understanding of man as does exist. Thus the physical sciences are, actually, a childish game rather than a complete and mature procedure.

What will be the result of this psychological folly? The revenge, naturally, of such persons as do survive, upon the residue of the Machine Age and all its supporting techniques and ideas. In a year or two after the worldwide dispersal of civilized man, those still living will set upon every rusting engine, every power tool, every building that houses instruments, and destroy them. Mr. Reaper hopes to avoid falling back on the wooden plow. Alas! Metal plows will probably be tabu to the residual populations for centuries or millenniums. The knowledge and the works of science will become—for every man—the "devil" of a myriad future religions. Quite understandably, too.

Our folly has been to learn all about objects and nothing about the learner, the subject, man. We are so steeped in this lopsided circumstance that we can think of man himself, these days, only in terms of "disciplines" and "engineering." The rebellion of instinct is the inevitable consequence. Any person, truly interested in his own survival and truly informed as to human nature, knows that the means for the accomplishment of his intent consists in hanging around the most primitive tribe that can be dis-

covered in the most useless (by modern standards) and remote corner of the earth, making little gifts of shells and feather ornaments until the natives take pity on him and adopt him into their clan, for all his unhealthy white skin.

After the atomic bombs begin to drop, I give Mr. Reaper and his well-drilled neo-Boy Scouts a half-life of ten days.

PHILIP WYLIE.

Miami Beach, Fla.

### Comics

SIR: In your edition of *The Saturday Review of Literature*, May 29, 1948, you have an article called "The Comics . . . Very Funny!" It tells about how bad comics are, but hardly mentions at all that there are good comics too, like "Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, The Fox and The Crow" and many others.

I can see your point in saying that some comics are bad, but you say



—New York Herald Tribune.

### "School's Out."

that most comics are bad, I think that is overshooting the limit.

I don't read crime comics much, at least the kind with the man about to cut a woman's eyes such as you pictured in this particular edition.

I agree with you that kind is bad. But "Superman, Captain Marvel, Green Lantern and Batman" and other comics have crime too, but nothing such as you pictured, and if there is you always hear about it, you never see it.

If you are going to prohibit horror comics you will also have to take a lot of original pictures out of Grimms fairy tales and also rephrase it. For instance take the story of Rapunzel, when the wicked witch claws the young prince's eyes out, I call that pretty gruesome.

I also say that you're wrong about saying that comics are the cause of a lot of juvenile delinquency.

BRUCE R. CARRICK.

New York, N. Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Carrick is eleven years old. He and other readers should note the article refers always to comic books, not comic strips.

SIR: If you want to see a picture of mass behavior in regard to the

consumption of comics, you should visit a large school cafeteria—hundreds of youngsters—sandwich in one hand, ice-cream in another, and the eyes popping out and eating up the comics. Is all this comics-consumption an innocent merriment? By no means. It has a most corrupting effect upon the youngsters. Needless to reiterate, it makes them blasé toward the serious issues of life; it makes them cynical and mindless of real esthetic values; it gives them a certain kind of insidious shrewdness.

What the derived effects of comics-consumption have on the intellectual aspects of school work are obvious. It is pitiful to see a high-IQ student getting the best marks in school work but being essentially a stultified individual because of the intoxication resulting from comics.

MARTIN WOLFSON.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

SIR: One of the most cogent reasons for the success of the comics, is namely, that they are the marijuana of parents as well as of their offspring. Many guardians who lack the time or imagination to play with their children or to devise other outlets toss them comic books by the armful because "there won't be a sound out of them for hours!" They then rationalize about their influence in order to enjoy their benefits. Another irony of this expedient is that even the children who come from homes where they do not ordinarily crave comics hear about them in school and feel constrained to be up on the latest instalments in order to rate with their crowd.

LOUISE S. PEARSON.

New York, N. Y.

SIR: John Mason Brown's objections to the comic books [*SRL* Mar. 20] left me quite cold. Having read Dr. Wertham's article I disagree on every point, as a matter of fact on his one point, since his only objection is that the comic book is the cause of all juvenile delinquency. Even if the comic books are banned there will still be sadistic small boys who can be handled only by means of a father's razor strap.

Charles Dickens is cited in a couple of places. I shouldn't say that he wrote for children. He attacked the social evils of his time, and in attacking them saw many abolished. But juvenile delinquency can't be abolished. Two cases of rape have just been publicized today in the newspaper. I think more publicity should be given the punishments meted out in such cases. I presume that Dr. Wertham would blame them on the comics. A boy of fourteen and another of nineteen. (If you call such a nineteen-year-old a man I don't.) In my opinion the attentions of the psychologist in such cases is a waste of time. In these two instances I should mete out death to both boys. In my opinion a boy of fourteen (this boy of fourteen) knew what he was doing in killing the girl of eight.

A severe code of laws is the only answer to such juvenile delinquents, not the abolition of the comic books. Someone has said, "There is no such thing as a bad boy." I disagree.

GORDAN STOECKLER.

Washington, D. C.

**Poetry.** During the war patriotic poetry, "the poetry of freedom," was heard again in the land. There is no more valid way of telling an epic, national story than to put it into ringing and metered verse. Charles Wharton Stork has continued this revival of an old theme and a discredited form in his galloping, rhymed narrative, "On Board Old Ironsides." To tell a story in verse that might have otherwise been written in a novelist's pedestrian prose may be a way of bringing poetry to greater numbers of readers. Another illustration of this is found in a volume reviewed this week, "Always the Need," by Joel Keith, who writes of a wrecked marriage by means of a series of sonnets. Perhaps in the postwar years a new poet will arise who will find a theme and the words for it as eloquent as Stephen Vincent Benét's "John Brown's Body."

## Duels of Ships and Sex

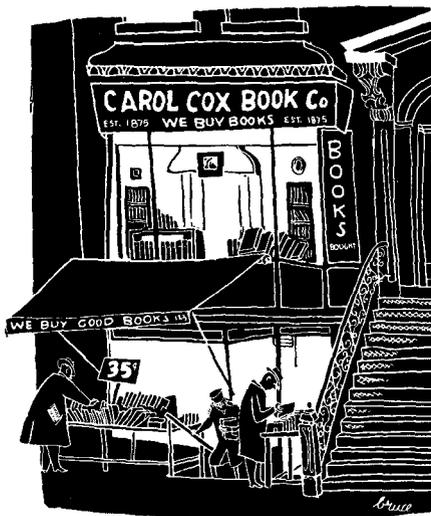
ON BOARD OLD IRONSIDES, 1812-1815. By Charles Wharton Stork. Mill Valley, California: Wings Press. 1948. 92 pp. \$2.50.

ALWAYS THE NEED. By Joel Keith. Chicago: Dierkes Press. 1948. 40 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by A. M. SULLIVAN

IN THAT curious struggle known as the War of 1812, America's mediocre record in land battles was offset by the brilliant performance of her small navy. Charles Wharton Stork retells the epic narrative of the *Constitution*, affectionately dubbed Old Ironsides, in a combination of blank pentameter and rhymed tetrameter. With considerable vitality of expression and variety of metrical pace, he recounts the successful engagements of the *Constitution* against the frigates *Guerrière*, the *Java*, and the smaller pair, the corvette *Cyane* and the sloop *Levant*. The poet seems to know his way around in the nautical terminology, and is especially apt in conveying the technical superiority of American seamanship in the slow but dramatic chase of the *Constitution* by the three British men-of-war when the Yankee frigate stole every puff of air to gain speed during a long calm.

The duel of the frigates *Constitution* and *Guerrière* is told as a game of wits between Captain Hull, the Yankee, and his personal friend, Captain Dacres, the Briton. Despite a partisan point of view that belongs to the heroic poem, Mr. Stork maintains a generous attitude toward the individual foeman. With mounting suspense he tells of the approach of Old Ironsides toward the adversary, of the early damage of the American frigate's rigging by British gunfire, and Captain Hull's reticence in opening



fire. In the rigging, a young Baltimore sailor waited:

Up on his fore-yard Tim Carty sat,  
Crouched and alert as a mountain cat.  
Below him, his friend Old Zeb, the  
gunner, watched impatiently for  
the opportunity of firing. The *Guerrière*  
loomed larger as the smoke of her  
guns blew away; a ball ripped  
through the sail, with white ribbons  
blowing around the sheets and stays.  
The signal at last is given and twenty-  
four guns fire broadside at the enemy  
with devastating results. The main-  
mast of the *Guerrière* topples, but a  
random shot has cut the halyards of  
the *Constitution's* flag, and it dangles  
above Tim Carty:

Up shimmies Tim, takes the sev-  
ered rope  
Splices the strands with the speed  
of hope.

Raked and ruined, the *Guerrière*  
strikes her colors, and Captain Hull,  
superior seaman, greets his friend and  
enemy Captain Dacres as if he had  
just beaten him in a game of tennis.  
Later, the *Constitution*, under Captain  
Bainbridge, defeats the out-gunned

but faster *Java*, and later under Cap-  
tain Stewart it captures the corvette  
*Cyane* and the sloop *Levant*.

Mr. Stork is a robust story teller,  
and he weaves the love interest of  
Tim Carty and Sara Trent through  
the battle scenes. The absence of any  
historical notes or source credits is  
disturbing to the reader who would  
like to know where facts end and fic-  
tion begins. The poet's technique has  
greater vigor than finesse, and while  
bardic freedom is expected in the  
narrative poem, some of the lines have  
the adjectival weakness of the "lus-  
cious roar" of the guns.

\* \* \*

Joseph Joel Keith in forty Shake-  
spearean sonnets offers the story of  
marital tragedy, as we observe it  
through the faithless wife, the dis-  
tressed husband, and the anguished  
little son. The tale, as much as we  
hear of its detail, unfolds in a psycho-  
logical case history with the poet al-  
ways present. There is no character-  
ization, no motivating incidents, and  
little suspense because the poet is  
concerned only with an analysis of  
frustration. The poem is the appraisal  
of a Greek tragedy in retrospect, re-  
lated with tenderness, poetic skill,  
and a consistent music, as in the pic-  
ture of the lonely boy:

Let each tomorrow be a picket fence  
where he might dream the happy  
hours away  
and find the other side a greener  
place  
and nothing stunting growth, and  
nothing dim  
the shining candles of his rosy face;

The lad runs away, the father seeks  
and finds him. The wayward mother

### FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT: No. 261

A cryptogram is writing in cipher.  
Every letter is part of a code that  
remains constant throughout the  
puzzle. Answer No. 261 will be  
found in the next issue.

ZYXW VYTSX RQP ROYNW RX

MRKKJ RX WMPJ ZRSP NK

WMPHQ ZHGFY WY OP.

ROQRMZRZ THGEYTG

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 260

If there's a job to be done, I al-  
ways ask the busiest man in my  
parish to take it on and it gets done.  
HENRY WARD BEECHER.