

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

He Hasn't Abandoned Sex

SIR: Three people have sent me Edmund Fuller's recent article "Books, Beds and Bromides" [SRL Jan. 8]. As regards his reference to myself, permit me please to make a few comments. Why does Mr. Fuller presume to say that I "have abandoned sex for travelogues on a larger scale," as he puts it? Or that "a man cannot get himself privately published any more"?

Neither is true. Besides, those of my books which caused a scandal were not privately published. They were published by the Obelisk Press, Paris, and republished in several editions, both in English and in French, by Les Editions du Chêne, also (in French only) by Gallinard and by Denoël.

Perhaps Mr. Fuller would be interested to know that since my return to America I have been at work, off and on, on the sequel to "Tropic of Capricorn" ("The Rosy Crucifixion"), which is hardly a "travelogue." The first volume of this work, which when completed will run to about 2,500 or 3,000 pages, will probably be published in Paris this year, first in English, then in French.

After that perhaps a little "restraint" will be in order.

HENRY MILLER.

Big Sur, Calif.

"Year of the Miracle"

SIR: If Mr. Harrison Smith, who wrote the editorial "Year of the Miracle" [SRL Jan. 22], will do a little delving into the lives of the writers who shudder not at "small," but "big" business, he will find that the horror of the writers comes from experience—and experience as underdogs. An underdog is a guy who sees a "tycoon" from a worm's-eye view. When a guy has experience in going in to interview, or to work for, some of the great stuffed shirts of business, there is always a reaction, as in a number of novels about radio, publishers, advertising, and so on. Mr. Smith would take them "firmly by the hand," but most of these guys have twisted under the feet of their betters, and it would take hand-cuffs to take 'em again on a tour.

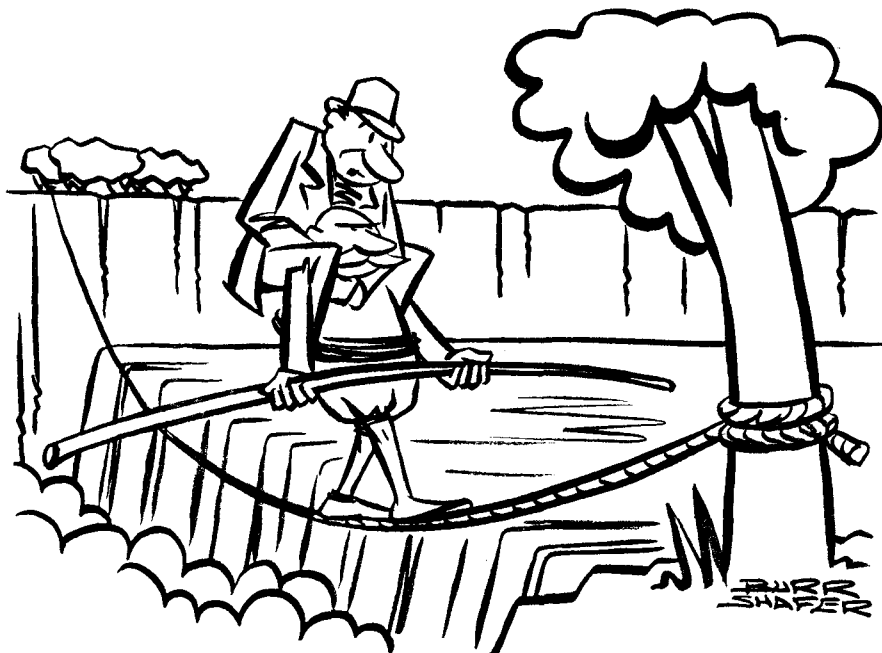
Failure, Mr. Smith, is bitter experience—and novels are not written by successful businessmen—or, to be sure, they'd remain in business, not turn to writing.

Asking writers to like "big" business is like asking privates to like "high brass." In neither case can the trick be done.

JOHN WELSTACH.

Rhinebeck, N. Y.

SIR: As a postscript to "Year of the Miracle," I wonder how many American authors have any widespread acquaintance among businessmen? There's all the difference in the world between Tom Girdler, for example, and Commander MacDonald of the Zenith Radio Co., or between banker Winthrop Aldrich and banker-hater Cyrus Eaton, or between the C. & O.'s R. R. Young and the Railroad Associa-



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"We'll have to go back, M. Blondin—I forgot my passport."

tion's Mr. Faricy. You can't jam John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther into the same "labor leader" mold—and businessmen are just as variable as laborites. This is a fact of human nature, and novelists are supposed to be experts in human nature. My kick against many U.S. novelists is not that they have left-wing ideology, but that they have ceased to use their eyes and ears.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN.

New York, N. Y.

SIR: Not only is "Year of the Miracle" a magnificent piece of writing, but its viewpoint is one which has needed expression for a long time. I hope you'll forgive me if I take it as a basis, with direct quotations, for an editorial in *The Inquirer*. I'm anxious that some of our readers who may not see *The Saturday Review* regularly should not miss it.

RUTH NASH CHALMERS.

Scarsdale, N. Y.

SIR: Mr. Cousins, I think, is almost too polite concerning "The Return of the Eagle" in the "Year of the Miracle." Somehow, I just knew Harrison Smith had read that "Businessman" article in *Fortune*, even before I finished the first column. Don't you think it would be good fun if Philip Wylie, for instance, would "comment" on the "Year of the Miracle"? Or how about Hayakawa, or Wendell Johnson?

EDITH BAKER.

Chicago, Ill.

SIR: I disagree with both Mr. Cousins and Mr. Smith. I hold a brief for neurotica, for the shadowed life of the mind. But I would see the shadows alongside the light. Personal experience confirms to me that neurosis is an excellent route toward religious

perfection, as William James wrote about the time I was born.

More than this, queer people are apt to be clever people, even before the queer emerges into the clear. I prognosticate a grand revival of the Thersites motif, as well as numerous novels and narrative poems detailing the rise of protagonists from near-insanity to enlightened sanctification.

Pardon my haste in departure: I just gotta write one of those last-mentioned above, and now.

KELLY JANES.

Monterey, Mass.

SIR: In his editorial Mr. Smith speaks despondently of our younger writers: "You might think that they were so blinded by misanthropy, their own private woes, or the miseries they have invented for others, that they cannot see the country in which they live or what their fellow citizens are making of it." He deplores the fact that so many young writers find that "the most contemptible and disgusting figure in our country is the capitalist, the businessman who has succeeded, and the man who has managed to hang on to some part of his wealth."

Mr. Smith's arguments, and even his despondency, are valid. One has only to read the recent output of the younger writers to concede that. However, in his despair Mr. Smith becomes as despairing as the most disconsolate of the young writers he reproaches. He has forgotten that young men are notorious for their pessimism, and that somberness, far from being the mark of the elderly, is the stigmata of youth. The older man may be a gentle or ungentle cynic, but he is not convinced even of his own cynicism. Only the very young man is completely desperate, and persuaded that nothing is good under the sun, and is

intemperate in his reactions towards his fellowman and all worldly institutions. Few mature men lead causes disastrous or noble.

The very young writer is not interested in normal things or in normal people. Such are "stodgy," or "dull," or "reactionary." He sees oppression everywhere, cruelty lurking around every corner, death and dismay in every shadow. He sees no dignified Negro professional man working hopefully and steadily for his people. He sees no eminent Jew, honored by his neighbors of other faiths. He sees no sturdy and contented workingman, proud of his job, proud of his pleasant home, proud of his car and savings. If he sees them, he scorns them, or calls them exceptional. The truth is that they lack "color" for him, and lend themselves to no "cause" in which the young writer is at the moment passionately engaged. He must "rescue" something, and if no group is immediately in need of rescue, he invents such a group, invents its wrongs, and demands justice. This urge of youth is both touching and pathetic, even though it can become dangerous, as witness the support of youth for Fascism or Communism. He refuses to recognize the existence of the great and healthy middle-class in America, concerned with building up a business, with the bringing up of a strong and sane family, and with the happiness which comes from accomplishment and contentment.

But "the world does move," as Galileo once said. More and more people are sanely and soberly concerned with the welfare of their fellowmen, and these people are not very young people. They do not engage in the mad-nesses of Communism and Fascism and Socialism, chest-thumpings or lamentations. But, quietly, they do work in an orderly fashion for peace, and they do build hospitals and orphan asylums and they do attempt to constrain theoretic government, and they do believe in liberty and the dignity of man. They don't shout, these people, but they are potent and upon them all our hope for the future must rest.

Mr. Smith speaks of John Chamberlain's article in the November issue of *Fortune*. In that article Mr. Chamberlain rebukes many writers of today for their attacks upon the American businessman, the "tycoon." Among such writers, Mr. Chamberlain condemns me. I might say that Mr. Chamberlain has quite misunderstood me, as I wrote him recently. I have tried to show in my novels what happens to a man whose sole aim is money, and the power which money brings. Materialism, godlessness, faithlessness, and stultification of person-

ality follow the absolute pursuit of money as a thing in itself. At the risk of being tiresome—and most everyone thinks it tiresome, these days—I will remind Mr. Chamberlain that Christ Himself said it was not possible to have two Masters—"God and Mammon." My novels were not attacks upon "business" or "businessmen." They were attacks upon men who are without faith, who hate their fellowmen, and whose religion is materialism. Such men are as adolescent as are many of our very young writers of today, for they, too, have a distorted vision of life.

TAYLOR CALDWELL.

Eggertsville, N. Y.

SIR: I am so enchanted by N.C.'s gentle decapitation of Harrison Smith—with soft snappings of his "... Eagle" beak as it were—that I have harshly drawn and quartered my budget to enclose six dollars for my subscription.

Long life to the Eagle.

JOHN SLATTERY.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Truth Before Patriotism

SIR: Drop that pen! "We, the peoples . . ." signed a Charter to bring about the Brotherhood of Man, and now this North Atlantic pact is proposed.

Article 51 states very clearly, "... until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace." The pact is to run from sixteen to twenty years—rather pessimistic outlook for the United Nations! The word "until" in the Charter can be changed by "We, the peoples . . ." to today, if "we" so desire.

The trend of intelligent world thinking, accelerated greatly since the atomic bombs were detonated, is to international law, and eventually to a federal world government.

Let "us" "take the measures necessary to maintain international peace" by calling for volunteers to form an international police force. The oath of office taken by the 4,000 employees of the United Nations: "I take orders from no government. . . . I will regulate my conduct with the interest of the United Nations only in view . . ." will rally loyalists to maintain world order who put truth before patriotism.

WILLIAM MITCHELL.

Vancouver, B. C.

Ceremony of Innocence

SIR: Your reviewer John Woodburn through his "delicious, audacious" modernistic pseudo-literate language reveals himself in his review of "Ceremony of Innocence" [SRL Feb. 12]. He reveals the modern man who enjoys destruction more than construction, who likes to make snide remarks about things he cannot comprehend.

For one failure in the monastic life, there are thousands of glorious successes. One of the most compassionate women I know is the Superior of a home for unmarried mothers. Would Mr. Woodburn like to meet her and learn something about those who have taken the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and who are laying down their lives for others?

The thing in "Ceremony of Inno-

cence" (and how does the word "innocence" find itself in such a place?) that offends those who hold the entirety of Christian belief, is the caricature of the Virgin Birth. And here the fools have rushed in where angels fear to tread.

CAROLINE J. PUTNAM.

Springfield, Mass.

Critics' Circle

SIR: I hope you'll be able to persuade Mr. Michener [SRL Feb. 12] to do the review of Mr. Burns's second novel when it appears in March. That should round the circle out nicely—and make for a pair of most interesting articles.

PAUL MURRAY.

New York, N. Y.

Despair

SIR: The letter of Lambert Fairchild in SRL Jan. 22 mentions that plowshares and swords are first referred to in Joel. He is wrong. They are first mentioned in Isaiah 2: 4: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."

I imagine, though, that a warless world will arrive only when peoples decide not to lift up swords against peoples. I despair of the Captains and the Kings, the statesmen and the politicians.

When wilt thou save the People,
O, God of mercy, when?

HARRY TAYLOR.

Jennings Lodge, Ore.

Clear Light of Wisdom

SIR: A spare minute just now gave me time to read the article "Are Families Passé?" [SRL Dec. 25, 1948]. It is a treat to read another excellent prescription of good sense by the late Ruth Benedict. There is so much vapid generalization about the family and other social causes célèbres by people who have gained the public ear without anything significant to say into it, that it is a welcome contrast to come across the words of an intelligent person who not only is made uniquely competent by a lifetime of study and research, but who throws the clear light of cool scientific wisdom across a well-worried problem in a beam of prose that is lucid, spacious, and precise—warm with the love of humanity in all its patterns, and bright with the perspective of great knowledge.

DEAN M. KELLEY.

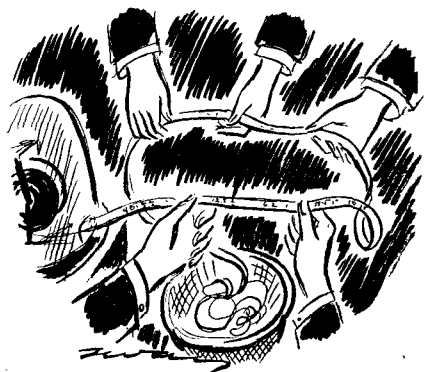
Denver, Colo.

Inspiration

SIR: A year has passed since your article "The Comics . . . Very Funny!" was published [SRL May 28]. Inspired by the piece by Dr. Wertham I made an effort to bring a new ten-cent book into the market. While I have not succeeded I still owe you a note of thanks. Had it not been for your article, we might not have tried.

H. H. STANSBURY.

Mamaroneck, N. Y.



SENSITIVITY AS CENSOR

(Continued from page 10)

body. And, in the natural course of events, this impact of interpretation and criticism will fall now and then upon more or less helpless minority groups, who, goaded to desperation, will feverishly demand protection. If granted out of respect or pity, and some form of official or unofficial censorship established, then the flood of tyranny is loose. Suppression never intended or imagined in the beginning becomes in the end inevitable. An endless chain of dictatorship is suddenly unwound, and entwines in its fetters all the operations of the human mind. Thus, if we ban from this country the "Oliver Twist" film, out of deference to Jews who don't like Fagin, then we lay the foundation for banning from the public schools *The Nation* magazine out of deference to Catholics who don't like certain articles by Paul Blanshard. If we shut a lecturer off the air because he is an atheist and thus distasteful to Christians, then we prepare the way for silencing Unitarians because they are distasteful to Fundamentalists. A law enacted some years ago in New Jersey against the Nazi Bundists of that time caught for its first victims the innocent Jehovah's Witnesses.

THUS does suppression spread, like a disease. Smaller and smaller becomes the area in which the mind can operate. Man's noblest gift, the creative imagination, finds itself confined at last as in a prison cell, for there is now nothing for the novelist and dramatist to write about but robots, or such fantastic specimens of life as Gulliver encountered in his travels. "The proper study of mankind is man," wrote Alexander Pope, and succeeding generations of students and writers have said Amen. But this study cannot be carried on with any success, or indeed at all, if branch after branch of the human family is to be lopped off from consideration. And never, under any circumstances, if it is agreed that no weak or wicked character is ever to be identifiable as belonging to any particular class or clan of humans! Right at that point would freedom end, and man's higher life be left to atrophy and decay.

For all this, in the last analysis, is only the old familiar question of liberty. Shall a man be free to speak and publish his ideas, however disagreeable or even dangerous they may appear to be? Shall other men be free to hear these ideas, in their own inquiry after truth, or perhaps in curious interest in the fallacies and

fantasies of the human mind? Or shall we turn to the iron hand of censorship, and dictate what men shall or shall not think and speak? To the true libertarian, who trusts in the essential integrity of human nature and the well-trying processes of democracy, the challenge is easy. He will not resort to censorship under any circumstances. He knows too well that censorship means:

First, the assumption of infallible personal judgment—the amazing ability to know what is false for oneself is false for everybody. Where such ability comes from, and how it is guaranteed—this is never told.

Second, the imposition of this personal judgment upon the entire community by group pressure, by duly enacted law, or, in the last analysis, by force and violence. By what right such suppression is exercised, is not stated.

Third, the arrogance of a minority in using its power to control and even persecute the majority. It is apparently not remembered that the majority, exactly like a minority, has rights which are entitled to recognition and respect.

Such is the character of censorship, which makes its use indefensible under any conditions, by reason of any provocation, in a free society.

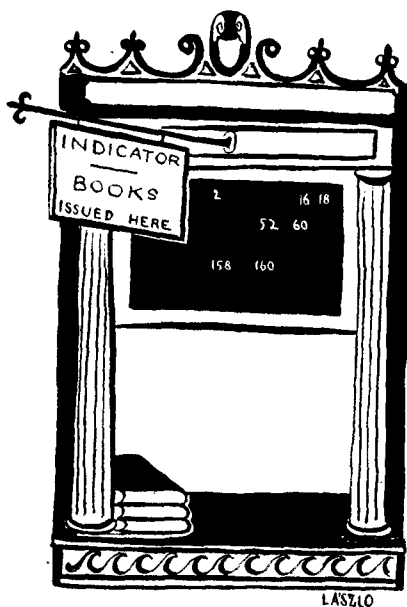
But does this mean that men are to do nothing when they are viciously misrepresented or cruelly attacked? Are they to stand helpless against slander, false witness, and all untruth? The Jews, for example—are they to endure, as they endured the fires of the Inquisition, the danger and damage of a Shylock on the stage, and a Fagin on the printed page? Is

a wicked picture, like "The Birth of a Nation," to be left to run its course, and the Negroes of the country seek no defense or redress? And are Catholics, because they are so accustomed to abuse, to enjoy no protection from what they regard as wanton attack upon the sanctities of their faith and works in the New York Nation? Does freedom, in other words, mean the exposure of the weak to the strong, and the license of error to wreak its utmost havoc without interference?

Such assertion, or suggestion, is natural, but quite absurd. Not in a free society are any to be left defenseless against enemies or traducers. Instead of outlawing serious literary and dramatic works in which offensive or careless material appears, let the sensitively maimed rise up and protest. In a country such as ours, the very atmosphere is hospitable to truth. Platform, pulpit, and printing press are everywhere available to reach and educate the public mind. Picket lines may be formed, and public meetings held, to challenge and correct error. Nothing is more unfair than to assume that all the varied instrumentalities of freedom in a democracy are at the disposal only of the misguided and misinformed, even the wicked. As a matter of fact, every means for the expression of free opinion is as available for good as for evil uses. It is only when such means are fanatically denied us, that we need be afraid. Truth, and the liberty to speak it, is our whole case. And how events, when trusted, prove it! Thus, "The Birth of a Nation" may not inaccurately be described as a turning point in the history of the Negro in America, for with this picture and the reaction against it began the sudden emergence of Negro artistry in music, literature, and the drama. Shylock has helped more Jews than he ever hurt, since Shakespeare, with his inimitable genius of humanity, presented in this character not only the avaricious money-lender, but a psychological and spiritual martyr who bore on his person all the scars inflicted upon his suffering tribe. It is all a matter of confronting error with truth. So long as men are free thus to bear witness against defamation, they need not be afraid. John Milton said it all:

Truth is strong next to the Almighty. . . . She needs no policies, no stratagems to make her victorious. These are the shifts and the defenses that error uses against her power. . . .

So Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by suppressing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let Truth and Falsehood grapple. Whoever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter!



U. S. A. *Students of American society are agreed that during and since World War II the position of our minorities—particularly of our Negroes—has improved more than during any preceding decade. These gains have been reflected in the remarkably large number of books dealing with minority problems published during the same years, and particularly during the present season. Such notable recent volumes as Robert C. Weaver's "Negro Ghetto," Walter White's "A Man Called White," Pearl Buck's "American Argument," Louis C. Kesselman's "Social Politics of the FEPC," and Beatrice Griffith's "American Me" have just been joined by three important books reviewed below: Edwin R. Embree's and Julia Waxman's "Investment in People," Arnold and Caroline Ross's "America Divided," and Cary McWilliams's "North from Mexico." . . . Julius Isaacs's "Oath of Devotion" deals with a tribunal much too well-known to members of minorities: the Magistrates' Court.*

Rosenwald Adventure in Philanthropy

INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE: *The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund.* By Edwin R. Embree and Julia Waxman. New York: Harper & Bros. 1949. 291 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

SHORTLY after the 1928 Presidential election I visited Al Smith in his new business office. He and Calvin Coolidge and Julius Rosenwald had been selected as a committee to dispose of a rather large sum of money. The donor had stipulated that the entire fortune should be given away within a year after his will had been probated. When Al Smith considered his responsibility he did not, as was his usual custom, consult specialists. He went to the committee's first meeting filled with confidence that Julius Rosenwald was as good an expert as could be found for such a task, but to his great dismay when the session opened Mr. Rosenwald announced: "Now, gentlemen, don't rely upon me for advice. I've been giving away money most of my life, but I know less about it now than ever." This remark may have been symbolic of Julius Rosenwald's modesty, but I have a feeling that it contained a kernel of truth. It is not true that individuals who have the capacity for accumulating fortunes are also equipped with the wisdom essential for the proper philanthropic disposal of the surplus. Julius Rosenwald seemed to have learned this lesson and thus a large share of the sixty or seventy million dollars he gave away was appropriated by advisors and specialists who operated his foundation, the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

This Fund has now completed its

work, since Mr. Rosenwald stipulated that both the principal and the income should be dissipated within a single generation. "Investment in People" is an exciting story of the studied effort to improve education, health, and race relations through the wise expenditure of private funds. The authors were both employees of the Fund, and Mr. Embree was its president and director throughout its twenty-year existence and hence we have in this volume an "inside" life history of one foundation. The story is frankly and somewhat loosely told, beginning with an altogether too brief biographical sketch of Julius Rosenwald's life and closing with appendices which furnish the Fund's by-laws, officers, expenditures, names of persons and institutions who were recipients, and publications which resulted from the Fund's grants.

What characterizes the Rosenwald adventure and gives it a unique place in American philanthropy is the fact that Mr. Rosenwald was driven by a focused ideal and this ideal became transmuted into the foundation's policy. He had a passion for the American experience and its democratic aspirations and he was convinced that these aspirations would continue to be thwarted and the "dream" remain dusty so long as Negro citizens were compelled to accept inferior status. It was not the Fund's primary policy to attack race discrimination as such, but rather to improve the health and education for Negro citizens and thus drive discrimination out of the "front door" of American civilization. Through a fortunate confluence of forces, the very term of the Fund's existence coincided with the greatest advance in race re-

lations in our nation's history. Dr. Embree and his associates do not take credit for this remarkable shift in attitudes and practices but it is my conviction that when the history of this epoch is finally written, the Rosenwald Fund will itself be counted as one of the effective forces of change. One-third of our Negro citizens now live in the urban North and West; six states have enacted anti-discrimination laws; over a million Negro workers are now bona fide members of trade unions; only seven Southern states retain the poll tax; Negroes now sit in Congress, in state legislatures, in city councils and serve on juries; over 100,000 Negroes are now studying in universities and colleges. These and other gains are mentioned in the chapter on race relations, the most glowing section.

When Bruce Barton recently proposed that the most effective way of piercing the Iron Curtain would be to drop Sears Roebuck catalogues from the sky upon the Russian people he thereby threw into relief Julius Rosenwald's other claim to fame, namely the saga of a son of a Jewish immigrant who built a two-billion-dollar mail-order business upon the assumption that an expanding sense of need was the sign of a happy and prosperous people. The Sears Roebuck catalogue, that "dream book" which "brought to the countryside a breath of the mysterious outside world," is also a symbol of something deeply significant in the American experience. And, the fact that Julius Rosenwald's mail-order business became one of the chief instruments for bringing faith and hope to American Negroes is one of those historic coincidences which confound our foreign critics and cause the historian with a sense of humor to chuckle.

Eduard C. Lindeman, professor of social philosophy at the New York School of Social Work, Columbia University, is the author of "Wealth and Culture" and other books.

Song to Play Slowly

By Joan Aucourt

GREEN as grass in the sky's shadow,
A sea in slumber, a salt sea-fire,
Green as an old song in a meadow,
Eyes like those who can make wit a liar.

Wise in the ways of stone and smiling,

Colder than honey in a brook:
Lips like those there is no beguiling,
A mouth like that is not soon forsook.

The Saturday Review