

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## On Our Anniversary

SIR: Too bad your beautiful Anniversary Issue [SRL Aug 6] was disfigured by Clifton Fadiman's tour de force on "The Decline of Attention." He, of course, is always brilliant and a past master at the game of insulting the reader; but this time, I think, he went too far. It is hard to stomach when the star salesman of miscellaneous "Information, Please" ridicules the public's desire to be "well informed"; when editors who try to break up solid pages are taken to task on a page that contains a cartoon; when a member of the Book-of-the-Month-Club jury assumes a stance of moral indignation over the fact that the public must be sold on books; when a responsible critic proclaims the doctrine that a writer should consider his readers as his inferiors.

"Decline of attention," my eye. In our age of steadily increasing literacy, the relative size of the serious reading public may be smaller; but the audience for good literature is certainly wider than ever before in history. And where did Mr. Fadiman get the odd notion that a writer must not try to please and entertain his readers? He says he likes "Hamlet." Did he miss the graveyard scene? Even Shakespeare, Mr. Fadiman, was known to cater to the tastes of his audience.

Well, if Mr. Fadiman chooses to call himself a reactionary and to turn the clock back 300 years, that's his privilege. "The American Malady," as Howard Mumford Jones points out in the article following Mr. Fadiman's piece, often causes a writer to declare "not that he is ill-adjusted to his audience, but that his audience is ill-adjusted to him." Amen.

RUDOLF FLESCH.

Dobbs Ferry, N. Y.

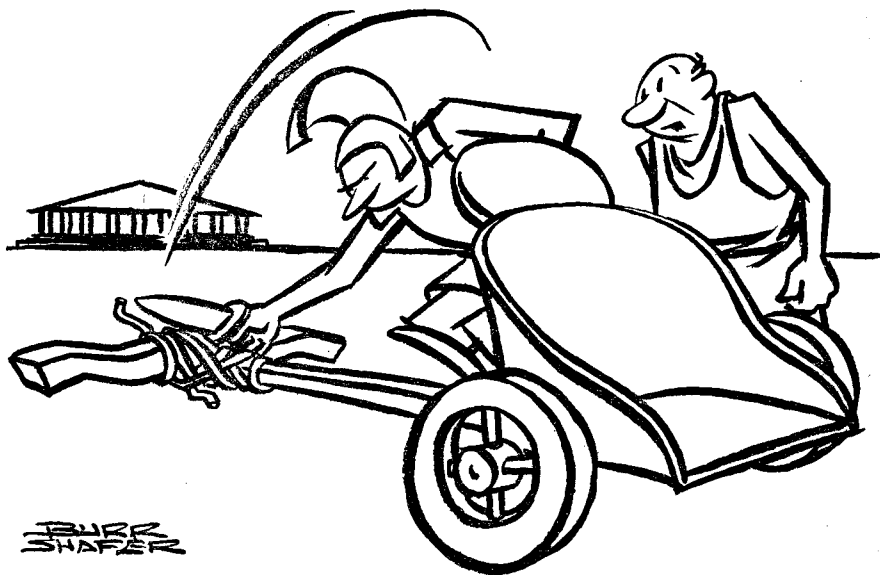
SIR: Mr. Fadiman's article recalled to mind Everett Dean Martin's estimable and helpful study "Liberty." A frequent mention of "mobism" in it now seems more prophetic than it did even a short twenty years ago. It is a state which the United States particularly appears to be surely arriving at at rather a sharp pace, and mainly, I believe, because of the more general neglect there to cultivate the faculties which would most tend to prevent and perhaps definitely postpone the decline of attention which has been progressing without much obstruction for a century, and with even less obstruction the past forty years or so.

K. E. WINTER.

Montreal, Can.

SIR: In the most insulting manner imaginable, Mr. Fadiman invites the reader to join him in his snob sanctum and there to scoff at readable writers. If we follow Mr. Fadiman's reasoning we must give up Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Carroll, and Twain, and take to reading income-tax forms and insurance policies. Insurance policies demand attention, while Twain merely entertains.

He broods about the current venera-



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"I still think I could have figured out a way to untie that knot!"

tion for the "fact" and for being "well informed." This from the huckster of "Information, Please."

He despairs that there are so few discriminating readers today, implying that this was not the case three hundred years ago. This is a blatant absurdity. The liberalization of education has made so many people literate that among these millions there are bound to be many who are not so skilled as Mr. Fadiman would have them.

And, finally, Mr. Fadiman tells us there is hope for the humanist (whom he confuses with his attention-holders), because there is an unease that doesn't understand itself. Perhaps it doesn't understand itself because it has made too great a demand on its own attention.

IRVING R. WARNER.

New York, N. Y.

SIR: I was particularly impressed with Clifton Fadiman's brilliant essay "The Decline of Attention" and Norman Cousins's "Credo for SRL." I have been an avid reader all my life and in the final analysis SRL is about the finest literary journal in the U. S. Many, many more years of fine book reviewing, ideas to make one think, and candid expressions on the mores of our times.

LAWRENCE I. CHASE.

Philadelphia, Pa.

SIR: Elmer Davis finds intellectual life generally depressing. Only morally diseased minds could find it otherwise. . . . Can we depend upon the intelligentsia to create for us a happier and a more decent world? Would they be willing to live with their families in a world of their own creation? Some of them brazenly deny that they are missionaries or dogooders and say that they desire to live in a world made secure and

decent by others' blood and sweat.

Notwithstanding the impressive array of intellectual talent set forth in the Anniversary Issue, it is my considered judgment that the most vigorous and the most scholarly minds of the present day are chiefly concerned with building moral and spiritual foundations under our civilization. Jesus, Socrates, Gandhi, and those who interpret their ideas point to a golden age of life on this planet rather than the intellectual leaders who do not seem to have a sense of that which is vital and who overlook the things most important.

O. B. CROCKETT.

New Castle, Ky.

SIR: The article by Elmer Davis alone is more than worth the price. In my humble opinion, he is and has been for years the sanest, the soundest, and most intelligent writer and commentator on the public and political affairs of our country.

WILLIAM M. STANTON.

Kerrville, Tenn.

SIR: I settled down to your giant edition of Aug. 6 with great expectations only to find it deadly dull and almost wholly deficient in ideas. How did you manage to prepare such a dull issue? You even got Elmer Davis to write in a trite, uninteresting manner. This took editorial genius, nothing less. Canby had some ideas—and for the rest, a barren stretch of desert. What an opportunity you missed.

T. SWANN HARDING.

Falls Church, Va.

SIR: You have produced a combined album - catalogue - encyclopedia - travelogue - art - and - photograph - gallery - record - and - film edition that is comprehensive, colossal. Norman Cousins's "Credo for SRL" sets an

impressive standard for all contemporaries.

(REV.) THOMAS F. OPIE, D.D.  
Great Barrington, Mass.

SIR: Fine job. Will be useful for reference.

PAUL FLOWERS.  
Memphis, Tenn.

### Blanshard, Pro & Con

SIR: Horace Kallen's review of "American Freedom and Catholic Power" (SRL July 30) was as neutral an outline or summary, illustrated by quotations, as one could expect. There was not a hint of praise or recommendation for the book. Some may consider this the ideal type of review, but at least it is not typical of SRL reviews. You certainly made a lame attempt at presenting a "responsible consideration of the book."

It is significant that Lynch does not refute a single argument, or question a single fact given by Blanshard, though he insinuates that the book is "as though the Ku Klux Klan had gone intellectual." He does not even refute the ambiguously described charge which he says deserves "extremely serious consideration"! If, as Lynch admits, "probably no phase of our life is in greater need of candid discussion than the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to American institutions, and certainly no important factor in our life has been more consistently neglected by responsible writers," why does his church attempt to stifle this attempt to stimulate discussion of this problem?

GEORGE FINK.  
Burlington, Iowa.

SIR: It seems to this reader that the real cause of so much anti-Catholicism is complete ignorance of just what the Church is. The Roman Catholic Church is universal; it numbers among its members whites, blacks, Orientals of every shade, and former members of Judaism and Protestantism. Among Catholics there are as many varieties of personality as among those who do not profess the ancient Faith.

As an organization, the Church requires a hierarchy just as any American corporation has its president, vice president, etc. The unity of the Church lies in its recognition of the central authority of the Pope in matters of Faith and Morals!

In the past, as every Catholic who has studied his Church history knows, there were many abuses of temporal power. This did not diminish in the least the validity of the Church as the Treasury of Divine Wisdom, the Church founded by Jesus Christ Him-

self, as has been proven time and time again by her own as well as pagan or non-Catholic historians.

The Church has always preserved the rights of the individual over any earthly power. The forces which attack her in the name of "liberalism" are too often those who wish to see man bound in their own peculiar form of "liberty." They are so liberal that anyone who does not agree with their views must at all costs be eliminated!

Mr. Blanshard is only renewing an unsuccessful effort which began two thousand years ago. Let him remember too that, during the last war, the Catholics who are only one-fifth of the population of the country made up one-third of the armed forces! They fought and died while arm-chair patriots who had "limited" their families were congratulating themselves. If only our enemies would study our Faith as it is rather than through the distortion of what they imagine it to be!

DAVID J. LAMB.  
New York, N. Y.

SIR: How can H. M. Kallen even attempt to infer that Paul Blanshard has presented an objective study of the Catholic Church in America?

It is common knowledge that Mr. Blanshard has been consistently anti-Catholic in his articles that appeared in *The Nation*. Not only has he been anti-Catholic, but vehemently so. Even when he attempts to set down the basic "truths" of the Church he edits them so that when they appear in his book they are no longer the tenants of the faith, but rather they are Blanshard-interpreted "truths."

Also is Mr. Blanshard unaware that many other right-thinking people are carrying the battle against such things as birth-control, divorce, mercy-killing, and other evils? Although the Catholics are the only organized group to be united against these evils of society, there are millions of non-Catholics who are also waging war against the diseases of our world.

Lastly, I would doubt that any Catholic leader would consult with Mr. Blanshard on anything Blanshard would desire to publish. Blanshard's record speaks for itself.

EVANS G. OLWELL, JR.  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

SIR: How in the world can Mr. Lynch expect that "American unity" can be "furthered" and the Catholic and Protestant groups brought into "closer concordance" when it is well known that the only possible concord would be admission on the part of Protestants that they are heretics and outside the alleged only true church?

One might just as well be realistic at this point.

Is Mr. Lynch well informed when he speaks of the non-Catholic's protest against "being forced to subscribe to Catholic practice"? What about the non-Catholic doctors being forced to discontinue their service in hospitals by command of the Roman Catholic Church? Is it not astonishing that this gentleman, as a superintendent of public schools, considers "secularism as a fundamental principle of public education"?

E. M. CONOVER.  
New York, N. Y.

### Presentative Art

SIR: In my letter on the Museum of Modern Art Catalogue you printed representative where I had intended and written presentative. This was probably because you knew of no such word, but the word presentative art as a replacement for abstract art was coined by Josef Albers, and is introduced in an essay by him in the book "American Abstract Artists." Webster's New International Dictionary defines presentative as:

Producing an esthetic impression directly and independently of nature; nonrepresentative; nonimitative; as, the *presentative* arts; the *presentative* element in a cubist painting.

Or, that presents or serves to present with vividness or clearness, as an image or abstraction.

WARD JACKSON.  
Richmond, Va.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Maybe it would be better to sic it for a while until folks catch on.*

### Pseudo-Problems

SIR: I wish to comment on the rather misleading presentation of logical empiricism as "the thesis . . . that science can ultimately find definite and complete answers to all problems" in connection with Philipp Frank's book "Modern Science and Its Philosophy" [SRL July 30]. The catch to this argument is that logical empiricists hold that any problem which cannot be solved by scientific method is, by definition, a pseudo-problem; any assertion which cannot be verified by scientific or logical methods is meaningless. Statements such as "that is beautiful" or "that is good" (in the esthetic and normative senses) are not viewed as assertions at all, but as mere expressions of emotion





or desire, which cannot have the attributes of "true" or "false." Logical empiricism is not a "doctrine" of the bold, but a doctrine of the weak: it represents a deterioration of the understanding to the point where science and logic are the only things it can comprehend. The only boldness exhibited by logical empiricists is in the assertion that anything that they (thus limited) cannot understand is meaningless.

It is true that Communists strongly dislike this new philosophy, but this is so because Communism (albeit in a perverted fashion) holds some things to be good and others to be bad, whereas logical positivism leads to a complete and thorough-going subjectivism in ethics. This doctrine is just as great an enemy of Christianity as of Communism, the former being (as Toynbee observes) basic to most of our own Western culture.

I refer to "The Abolition of Man" by C. S. Lewis as a statement of the consequences of such doctrines as logical empiricism. Our ability to do what we want is rapidly increasing, due to technology, but our knowledge of what is desirable is approaching an eclipse.

LEE YOUNG.

Suncook, N. H.

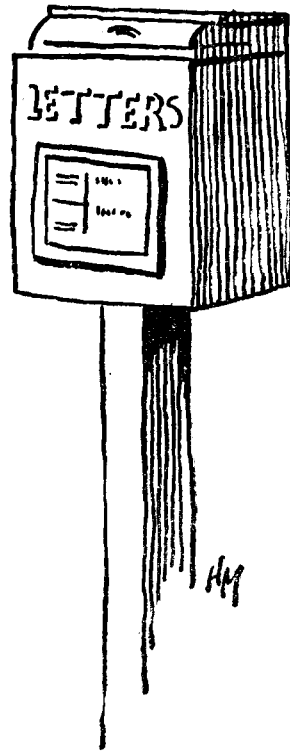
### A Look at the Register

SIR: I have a copy of the London Stationers Register before me and seventeen of Shakespeare's plays are not there "duly inscribed under the author's name, correctly spelled," as asserted by the Countess of Chambrun [SRL June 25]. Only five plays are so recorded, namely, "Henry the Fourth," "Much Ado About Nothing," "King Lear," "The Two Noble Kingsmen," "A Yorkshire Tragedy." And three times out of five the name is spelt "Shakespere."

As for the reliability of that "highly official document . . . the London Stationers Register," "The Two Noble Kingsmen" is not included in the First Folio and is primarily the work of John Fletcher, "A Yorkshire Tragedy" is a totally spurious Shakespeare play, the "King Lear" of this first registration is an atrocious text filled with bewildering errors and misreadings. The reason is evident. It is a text hurriedly and haphazardly put together from rough stenographic notes made of an actual performance. It is a manifest "steal." It is an attempt by prior registration to deprive the purchaser of the play of his copy-right.

Gelett Burgess in his itemized argumentation in favor of the Earl of Oxford [SRL June 4] makes no mention of Oxford's dying in 1604 and of this registration of "King Lear" occurring in 1607. It is true that the inscription of a play in the Stationers Register at a certain date is not positive proof that the play was written shortly before that date. But the wording in the Stationers Register reads, "A booke, called Master William Shakespeare his historye of King Lear as yt was played before the Kinges maiestie at Whitehall vpon Saint Stephens night at Christmas Last," and this specification does suggest a first performance of the play December 1606. Moreover, Act I, Scene 2, Gloucester says, "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us:

though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus, and thus; yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects"; and in the autumn of 1605 there occurred two notable eclipses of the moon and sun, that of the moon on the 27th of September, that of the sun on the 2nd of November. Oxfordians, having searched the almanacs through in vain for another instance of two close eclipses of the moon and sun, would dismiss this mathematical evidence as a mere accident of literary phrasing coinciding with fact. However, there is this more. Early in 1606 there appeared a small pamphlet translated from the High Dutch en-



titled "Strange fearful and true news which happened at Carlstadt in the Kingdom of Croatia." It enlarged upon "the Earth's and Moon's late and horrible obscurations." The similarities of phrase, rhythm, and sentiment indicate that the author of "King Lear" was indeed influenced by a reading of the pamphlet.

There is strong evidence that when "King Lear" was written the Earl of Oxford was dead.

ALDEN BROOKS.

Topanga, Calif.

SIR: In connection with the Stratfordian-Oxfordian controversy the following dates (some conjectural, others approaching certainty) are of interest. 1605-06: "Lear," "Macbeth"; 1606-07: "Antony and Cleopatra"; 1607-08: "Coriolanus," "Timon of Athens"; 1608-09: "Pericles"; 1609-10: "Cymbeline"; 1610-11: "The Winter's Tale"; 1611-12: "The Tempest"; 1612-13: "Henry VIII," "The Two Noble Kinsmen." The dates, those of the earliest production of the plays, are given by Sir E. K. Chambers in "William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems."

The seventeenth Earl of Oxford died in 1604. If he wrote these plays in the years suggested above, he must

have been the most distinguished of Elizabethan ghost writers.

F. Y. ST. CLAIR.

Grand Forks, N. D.

### Bollingen Foundation

SIR: We think that before raising grave accusations against a foundation it would have been only fair to investigate the activities of the body [SRL June 4]. If Mr. Hillyer had taken the trouble to do that, he would have discovered that the list of fellows and authors of the Bollingen Foundation includes personalities of the most diverse background and extraction, Jews as well as gentiles, refugees as well as Americans, but all of them good, confirmed democrats. He would have found names like Paul Radin, Huntington Cairns, Herbert Read, R. P. Blackmur, Benedetto Croce, St. John Perse, James H. Breasted, Jr., Herbert Friedmann, Max Raphael, Joseph Campbell, Charles de Tolnay, Walter Friedlander, Victor Zuckerkandl, none of whom could be suspected of Fascist or authoritarian leanings.

We, the undersigned, refugees from Nazism, whose writings and public records give evidence of our violent repugnance to the dogmas and methods of dictatorial regimes, wish to testify to the effect that we have received the most generous unconditional support from the Bollingen Foundation. The vacation season has made it impossible to get in touch with other fellows or authors of the Foundation. But we feel certain that all of them would be happy to join us in protest against the defamation of an institution which has intended and done nothing but good to studies and arts in this country.

HERMANN BROCH,

ERICH KAHLER,

SIEGFRIED KRACAUER.

New York, N. Y.

SIR: Obviously those who accuse Hillyer of jealousy are taking their own measure, not his. What sort of mentality can imagine a distinguished poet as sour-graping the dreary, ugly, sordid, and senseless trash that is called modernist "poetry"? The fakers have of course succeeded: the destruction of poetry is almost complete. But Hillyer has never competed for a share in their triumph. No genuine poet could be capable of that sort of thing. It is a logical impossibility. To believe otherwise is to confess a crudity far below any normal level of mind.

However, the me-too crowd probably has nothing to worry about. Contempt for poetry is as firmly rooted in just about every editorial sanctum and university crypt as it is in every hardware store, bank, and shambles.

GRANVILLE TRACE.

Atascadero, Calif.

SIR: Just one little item. The judges of the Library of Congress-Bollingen Award speak of "impugnant." I think myself impugnable when I say that the word should have been "impugnation."

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.

Cape Ann, Mass.

*The Saturday Review*

## STAGE

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## FICTION

(Continued from page 16)

cryptic than illuminating. A Berlin astrologer finds himself mixed up, all unwilling, in the affairs of Hitler, and goes through two confusing days in the underground shelter. Hitler is glimpsed emerging from a toilet there. The wildly mad atmosphere is conveyed well, but the meaning of the events seems to evade definition stubbornly.

After examining the Yalta Conference through the eyes of its chief participants and also through an exterminator called upon to rid Roosevelt's and his staff's quarters of bedbugs and lice, Mr. Aldanov moves much farther back into history, to about the mid-point of the sixteenth century. "The Belvedere Torso" examines Michelangelo at ninety, and in the story there is also Giorgio Vasari, the art historian, Pope Pius IV, and a madman engaged in a lengthy project to assassinate the Pope. Perhaps it is because the narrative takes place on too many levels that a clear unity of meaning does not emerge. Much seems unrelated, although a picture of the time is believably and skilfully created.

Maybe it is the contrapuntal method, so often used in these longer than average tales, that tends to limit their emotional force. Mr. Aldanov uses many vantage points from which to view his events, and the dovetailing of them results in interesting formal arrangements, but also in a curious lack of intensity. "A Night at the Airport," the title story, seems somewhat superficial and occasionally mislead-

## Cicada

By David McCord

**T**HAT katydid in yonder tree  
 Has something now to say to me.  
 If I could find him, find his limb,  
 I'd have a word to say to him.

But he is green as green the leaf:  
 The soul of Proust within Moncrieff  
 Is not more perfectly contained  
 Than he is perfectly ingrained.

A word with me is all he wants.  
 I know the word, and my response  
 Each summer's end has been the same:  
 To stop it running like a flame

Across the leaf-to-leaf abyss.  
 When sorrow empties down to this,  
 Must all my traded long-ago  
 Remind me that I know, I know?

## STAGE

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ing, because of the many lines of development used to tell it. Many characters in it are delineated only enough to be seen as types (symbolical though they may be), and they are gone from view no sooner does

one become interested in them. Mr. Aldanov more often succeeds in gaining historical perspective, and in lighting up times and places rather than his people in these quite unusual stories.

## Boy Makes Good on Wall Street

**CITIES OF THE DEEP.** By Edward Lyons. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 496 pp. \$3.50.

By HARRISON SMITH

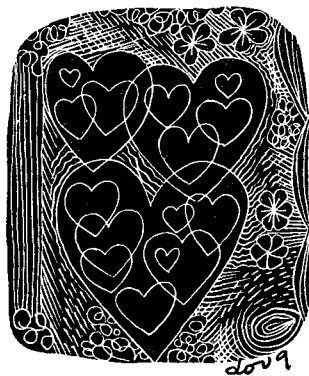
**I**N THIS novel Edward Lyons exhibits certain qualities that may produce a writer who will have enough to say, and who will say it dramatically enough to assure himself a certain future. A born story-teller, endowed with an almost too exuberant flow of language, he has written the story of a wild boy brought up in a forgotten coastal port in the South who is determined to seek revenge for his wounded ego by escaping to New York, accumulating million after million on Wall Street, and returning to Waccamaw to lay his enemies low.

Mr. Lyons's subtitle labels it a dramatic novel of the American dream. Fundamentally, it is a Horatio Alger story, conceivable to the imagination of ambitious youth half a century and more ago.

There is a wildly romantic flavor to the book that sharply divides it into three parts. The characters who belong to Kim Starling's youth and who are later to mean so much to the returned and bruised millionaire are all, to be sure, the stock characters of romantic fiction: the devoted mother whose reason is half destroyed by the disappearance of her sailor husband, the sterling and shiftless old doctor who performs miracles of surgery and diagnosis, the quaint old boat builder, the obese philosopher-tramp, the princess in the guise of a Civil War colonel's daughter who is kept in a decayed plantation house. There is the story of Kim's escape on foot to the city where gold can be picked up in the streets by any boy whose dream is strong enough, a grim saga, but still the figment of romance.

It is to the author's credit that all of this is not only entertaining but somehow plausible, once the reader is caught by the torrent. When Kim marries in New York and finally gets a job in a run-down investment house owned by the only son of an aristocratic family, the author is faced with his real problem. The novel suddenly comes to life in another way, for Mr.

Lyons has accumulated enough knowledge of Wall Street in the days of the tycoons who were known as malefactors of great wealth to describe Kim's merciless and brutal rise with powerful realism. He betrays his partner, who, following his own dream, has gone to France to fight in the First World War; his savage jealousy destroys and indeed kills his wife, who has come up from the slums of Brooklyn. The millions he accumulates cannot alleviate his wretchedness or bring the dead to life. In the ferocity



of his toil he has acquired stomach ulcers and a weak heart. Kim goes back to Waccamaw, ready for death. He finds his boyhood princess teaching school but still beautiful, the old doctor and the antique boat builder still alive. Together they build the seagoing yacht that has been part of the dream, and romance is back in full flood.

It is difficult to know which to admire the most, the gusto with which Mr. Lyons plunges into the heart of romance, or the realism and irony with which he endows his attack on the ruthless Wall Street gang who helped to bring about the Great Depression. In the future he may have to decide on which side of the fence he chooses to write. He has imagination, intelligence, and the gift for singing words. But he may not be able to repeat this kind of novel without asking too much of the reader's credulity. In other words, he may use his truly remarkable talents for serious and dramatic novels, or plunge headlong into the maelstrom of pre-fabricated, lush, and romantic tales.

## Shipwrecked and How

**SILVERLOCK.** By John Myers Myers. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 349 pp. \$3.

By DALE L. MORGAN

**I**F you like picaresque adventure, old tales contrived into new ones, or intellectual guessing games, "Silverlock" may be the book for you. Otherwise, you had better settle for something else in this week's literary output, for plainly John Myers Myers's new novel is not for everybody. Some may find the book superbly amusing, deft, witty, and full of rich allusion, while others, like myself, will begin by wondering why Mr. Myers bothered to write it and end by deciding that the fun he got out of it must have seemed enough, let the end-product be what it might.

The conception, at least, is original—that of a man shipwrecked upon the shore of a land created from the bizarest stuff of legend and literature, and of a pilgrim's progress which, however, brings the pilgrim out nowhere in particular. (Perhaps that is the point.) The adventures are those that might befall a man cast away among Circe and her swine, Beowulf, Anna Karenina, Don Quixote, Manon Lescaut, Horatius at the Bridge, Hester Prynne, assorted characters from Alice's Wonderland, and Isaak Walton. Also Robin Hood, Oedipus, Gawain, Semiramis, Robinson Crusoe's cannibals, the Delphic oracle, Simon Suggs, the Flying Dutchman, and Huckleberry Finn's raft.

Whatever one gets from a book of this kind, one has to work for. The publishers are inclined to find Mr. Myers's novel "a meaningful commentary on man's search for a satisfying vision of life," but although it is certainly a saucy performance, amusing as much for its impudence as for its incident, I find it in no part profound, and about as meaningful as it would be had Mr. Myers contrived its writing by farming out the individual episodes to freshmen in English at Arizona State. There is, of course, a well-known dictum that poets and artists are entitled to whatever a reader can get from their work, whether they were aware of putting it in or not. We can be no less generous to Mr. Myers, making him a gift in fee simple of all that readers are willing to dig out of his book. But having been born lazy, never having improved upon this condition materially, and never having been much taken by morality plays anyway, I for one am disinclined to work Mr. Myers's mine for him.