

# The Saturday Review



Editor, NORMAN COUSINS

Chairman, Editorial Board, HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

Chairman, Board of Directors, E. DEGOLYER

Associate Editors, AMY LOVEMAN, HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN

Assistant Editor, ELOISE PERRY HAZARD

Feature Editor, ROLAND GELATT

Book Review Editor, RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

Contributing Editors, JOHN MASON BROWN, BENNETT CERF, MARY GOULD DAVIS,  
JAMES THRALL SOBY, HORACE SUTTON, JOHN T. WINTERICH

Publisher, J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Publisher, W. D. PATTERSON

Contents Copyrighted, 1952, by The Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

## Tales of Two Citizens

FOUR days before the election we discussed the campaign with the man who runs the tailor shop down the street. He was closing his shop early, he said, so he could do some heavy volunteer work that evening for Stevenson.

"Most important thing I've ever done in my life," he said. "Can't remember voting for a better man. Only one smart enough to keep us out of war and save our freedoms. Don't elect him, we're lost. Once liked Ike but I see no hope now if he gets in."

At lunch the next day I listened to my waiter as he sized up the campaign.

"I don't want to sound like a crazy man," he remarked, "but I'm going to quit this job and go to Mexico if Ike doesn't get in. Way the country's been going these last few years all our money will be in the hands of crooked politicians and all our men fighting a war somewhere in Asia. Stevenson's the prisoner of the Pendergast gang. I never gave any of my hard-earned money for campaign contributions before but I'm doing it now and my wife agrees with me completely."

Two days after the election we picked up our suit at the tailor's. Our friend was whistling as he worked. We asked him the inevitable question.

"Well, maybe the way it turned out it's not so bad after all," he said with a smile. "You've got to admit that General Eisenhower is a great man. He'll do a good job. By God, he has to do a good job. Sent him a telegram congratulating him. Maybe now I can catch up on my work."

We saw our waiter at noon. He didn't seem to be exulting over the fact that he wouldn't have to exile himself to Mexico.

"Sure, I feel good about the elec-

tion," he said. "But, you know, I feel sorry we couldn't have elected Stevenson Vice President or something. Now there's a real man for you. He appeals to the best in people. I sure hope Eisenhower gives him a big job. I'd hate to think the country isn't using a fellow with his brains and sense."

\* \* \*

Now, the remarkable thing about these two incidents is that there was nothing remarkable about them. All over the country millions of people were turning the same wonderful somersaults and landing on their feet. The magic stabilizer was the ballot box. It contained something more than marked slips of paper. Built into it was the absolute confidence of the people. Whatever the devices that may have been used to capture the votes, the device that counted the votes was what really mattered. It was the magic conciliator. Not that there was anything insincere or tentative about the strong partisan positions people took before the election. When people spoke about their candidates in terms of life or death for the country, they were expressing their genuine feelings rather than parroting political slogans. But they were reacting within a framework of competition and uncertainty; the moment the framework changed they could with equal sincerity shift their thinking to the higher level of common ground and a larger unity.

DeTocqueville refers to the "electioneering intrigues, the meanness of candidates, and the calumnies of their opponents." These evils, he remarked, were doubtless great, "but they are transient, whereas the benefits that attend them remain. The desire of being elected may lead some men for a time

to violent hostility; but this same desire leads all men in the long run to support each other; and if it happens that an election accidentally severs two friends, the electoral system brings a multitude of citizens permanently together who would otherwise always have remained unknown to one another. Freedom produces private animosities but despotism gives birth to indifference."

AND James Bryce, another distinguished outsider, was moved to express wonder at the fact that the ease with which the Americans slid into blazing political warfare was exceeded only by the ease with which they slid out again.

Nothing is more unique in the American democracy than this wide-open arena for periodic upheaval resulting in unity without uniformity. There is a series of tests, each one more important than the last, all leading up to the big test and the big prize. The battle for local political control becomes subordinated to the regional battles, and that in turn to the nominating conventions, and that in turn to the election. Each battle has its own surrounding ring, requiring unity for the larger battle. The main challenge today, of course, is to recognize the need to construct an ultimate outer ring for the differences within the world itself. One of the most eloquent definitions of the mission and obligation of America in this respect is to be found in the closing pages of a book published several years ago—"Crusade in Europe," by Dwight David Eisenhower. The burden of that conclusion was the need for and possibility of world law in our time.

—N. C.

## The Beach

By Eric Barker

BY the sea's edge, under the bronze-handed sun,  
the beach receives the refuse of the tides.

Wrung through with funeral hymns,  
the derelict dead—  
perches of gulls and scuttling-floors of crabs—  
forget their long sea-windings, cast out  
from undulant voyagings far and wide—

travelers horizonless that swam the  
utmost hill  
and trench of ocean to this final shore,  
their songs all sung save what the tides  
keep in their moonward driftings or  
release  
faint and reminiscent through the ears  
of shells.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Santayana & John Hersey

► IN PAUL ARTHUR SCHILPP's article on Santayana ["The Roman Brahmin," *SR* Nov. 1] he reports that the aging philosopher had told of reading John Hersey's "Hiroshima." This was of particular interest to me, for it echoed something that Santayana told me when I visited him in the summer of 1944 while stationed in Rome.

Santayana shied away from any penetrating or lengthy discussions; perhaps this attitude resulted from previous upsetting involvements. But I do remember vividly his answer to one of my questions: "Whom do you consider the most outstanding living American fiction writer?" He replied, in his slow delivery but with little hesitation: "John Hersey." And this is the Hersey of August 1944, the author of "A Bell for Adano," who had not yet conceived "Hiroshima" or "The Wall."

ALFRED FEUER.

New York, N. Y.

## "Limelight"

► IT IS INTERESTING to read Messrs. Knight and Alpert, pro and con, on "Limelight" [*SR* Oct. 25].

I find myself agreeing mainly with Mr. Alpert. Neither critic, however, mentioned the single really honest and telling performance in the film, which is the work of Sydney Chaplin. In one of the most tritely written roles of recent years, young Mr. Chaplin brings the part dignity, charm, and credibility. The Dickensian landlady should also be cited for her cameo contribution.

Your critics have overlooked the generally poor photography in "Limelight," the bad lighting, the trembling walls of interior sets, and the remarkably inferior "process" shots. For a genius who has millions to spend and time to burn, Mr. Chaplin in "Limelight" makes us appreciate all the more those filmmakers who must bring a picture in on schedule, and who still manage to endow their productions with elements that lift them above the banal and lachrymose.

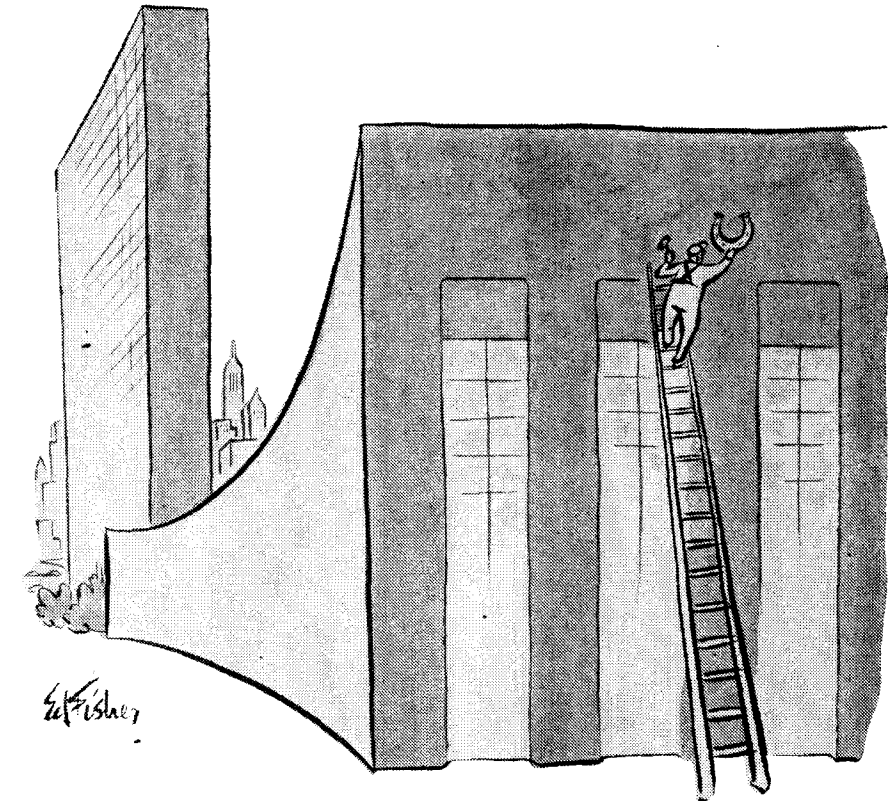
ROBERT DOWNING.

New York, N. Y.

## McCarthy

► IN VIEW OF THE FACT that you say you try to provide impartial reviews, just why, may I ask, did you turn over "McCarthy: The Man, the Senator, the Ism" to William T. Evjue [*SR* Oct. 25]? Surely it cannot be unknown to you that for years Mr. Evjue has devoted the pages of his *Madison Capital Times* to attacks on McCarthy as wild and virulent as any McCarthy himself is charged with making. To expect Mr. Evjue to be impartial on this, his favorite subject, is expecting a hen to lay a duck's egg.

The pity of it is that this is an important issue, and a really impartial



reviewer might have done a little valuable checking on some of the "facts" Anderson and May propounded. As the thing stands, we in Wisconsin realize you have simply handed a well-known and fanatical McCarthy hater a chance to air his thesis to a larger audience.

MARY T. LOCKE.

Mount Horeb, Wis.

## Dismay & Distress

► BELIEVING AS WE DO that intelligibility is an essential ingredient of any literature that will endure, the undersigned members of *SR*'s editorial staff were dismayed and distressed by the arguments put forward in Ben Lucien Burman's "The Cult of Unintelligibility" [*SR* Nov. 1]. The highly subjective tone of Mr. Burman's article certainly did not clarify the case for which he was arguing, nor could it persuade any open-minded person yet to be convinced; the note of pique and petulance that permeated it could only give aid and comfort to those whose views on literature are diametrically opposed to his—and ours. Perhaps a worse "dead-horse" in Mr. Burman's article was the little quiz appended at the end. We scored 100 per cent on this—and so, we dare say, did most *SR* readers. Mr. Burman argued the case woefully in the body of his article; he gave it away entirely by offering as evidence material such as this.

If the case for intelligibility in literature is worth propounding at all at this late date, it is a pity that two better qualified critics, proponents of both posi-

tions, did not state the issue fairly and argue it cogently.

ZOLA DINCIN.  
ROLAND GELATT.  
ELOISE PERRY HAZARD.  
PETER RITNER.  
RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

New York, N. Y.

## Who Understands?

► "THE CULT OF UNINTELLIGIBILITY" was to me one of the most sensible and logical articles that I have ever read concerning the Joyce-Stein cults, which are often composed of pseudo-intellectuals who revel in the fog of their heroes' often meaningless jargon. It is encouraging to a teacher of literature to be able to cite such an article for additional reading to students who cannot understand or appreciate such prattle as one often finds in Joyce or Stein.

ELEANOR DRAKE MITCHELL.

Cookeville, Tenn.

## Obscurantism Is a Dead Issue

► ATTACKS ON "OBSCURITY" in literature are as old as literary history itself. Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Donne, Blake, and Browning all have been accused of the bugaboo of obscurantism. Even Shakespeare is not perfectly clear, and many of his passages are beyond elucidation by scholars. The work of these men has survived in spite of their obscurity, or because succeeding generations have understood them.

In discussions of literary merit ob-