

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Need for Science

► GEORGE SARTON's plea for science [SR Sept. 27] contains a vital message for our irrational era. The complexities of present-day problems, which demand the utmost in rigorous, scientific reasoning, have evoked the very qualities most inimical to scientific objectivity. Fear and frustration have produced an anti-intellectual atmosphere in which Americanism is merely an anti-Communist cult; and its high priests demand, as a price for salvation, that society be purged of dissenters to its negativist orthodoxy. From a long-range viewpoint the most ominous aspect of these ever-increasing demands for conformity is the persistent attempt of chauvinistic fanatics to kill the Socratic spirit in our schools.

It is under these adverse conditions that our schools must better their performance of the past in cultivating an attitude akin to the scientific humanism outlined by Mr. Sarton. Until scientific habits of thought have become more widespread we shall continue to be plagued by such enduring falsehoods as the belief that peace can be achieved through military strength alone, that a man can be fairly judged by his creeds rather than by his deeds, and (that ultimate refuge of self-righteous bigots) that God is necessarily on our side. These and other primitive rationalizations must go the way of the Ptolemaic theory if our civilization is to arrive at positive solutions to the problems that beset us.

C. W. GIFFIN, JR.

Erlton, N. J.

Down with Science

► "AN HISTORIAN'S PLEA FOR SCIENCE" is a contemptible piece of intellectual charlatany. Sarton says, "Science develops very much as if it had a life of its own." Indeed, it does have a life of its own, and a death of its own. The German writer F. G. Juenger points out in his "Die Perfection der Technik" that scientists today are morbidly absorbed in the study of disintegrative reactions, such as atomic fission, and that these are the ways of mental death.

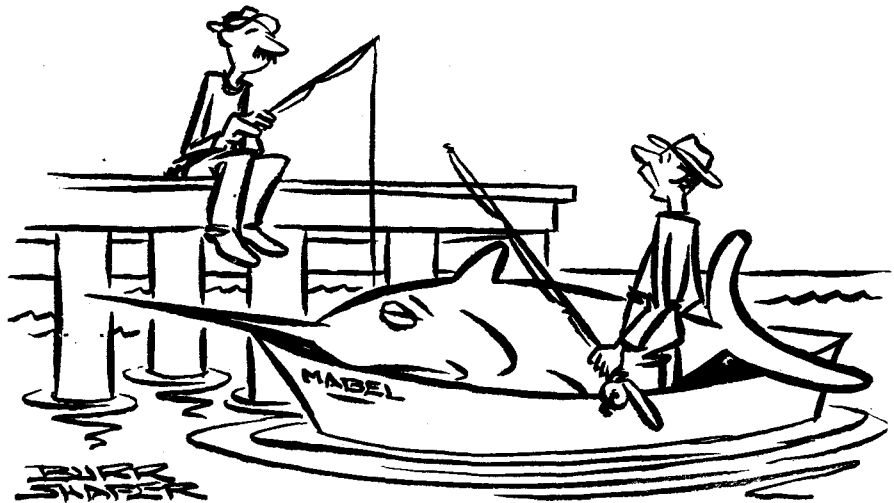
Science is rotten. It begets a class of mechanistic intellectuals who yearn to be taskmasters, like the ancient Egyptian engineers. We common folk yearn to see them done to death. And we, not they, shall win. We do not believe in science. We do not want to be ruled by scientists and intellectuals. . . .

MORRIS HORTON.

Greenville, Texas.

Vox Populi

► EVERY TIME someone established comes out with a new book, readers start composing their "I don't care what the critics say—this is what I think" letters. That would be okay, I suppose, if these readers had anything to think with, but some



"It was pretty dull—didn't see a single shark."

of the letters you run across would hardly set you to believing that. Most of them tell you more about what people don't know than what they do know. The stuff they've written lately about Hemingway's "The Old Man" [LETTERS, SR Sept. 27] is pathetic.

Complaining about his prose style. How stupid can they get? So what if he does break all those stuffy and proper English-class rules for language? It only makes his prose more sound and flexible. Anybody who knows anything about literary art knows that.

And what if he does deal with what people call bru-tal-i-ty and cru-el-ty? You find those things in life, don't you? They're there whether anyone likes it or not.

If some of these people can't wake up to what Hemingway is like, then they ought to give up and stop writing their precociously flippant and dreadfully sincere but stupidly absurd letters.

WILLIAM WHITE.

New York, N. Y.

Berle As He Was

► ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON's review of the new Milton Berle show [SR Oct. 4] was certainly more than a little charitable in its gold star credits. Curiously enough, I didn't like the first show. And at least a good dozen of my friends agreed with me.

Now, Mr. Shayon, you're the critic and I'm one of thirteen people who purchase Texaco products whose sale makes the TV program possible. We prefer Mr. Berle as he was.

FRED MINOTTI.

Baltimore, Md.

Interlingua for the World

► THE ARTICLE "English for the World" by W. L. Werner [SR Oct. 4] may be convincing to English readers. But should we not ask how his arguments for pro-

moting English as the world language will appeal to the people of Latin America, India, other Asiatic countries, and to the people of the Soviet Union?

National sensitivities are always symbolized by mother tongues. In this era of rising nationalisms the assumption that English is the inevitable international language should be realistically examined. Shall we transfer colonialism from the political to the linguistic realm?

The International Auxiliary Language Association, to which Professor Werner refers, has sought to adapt many national languages, not just one of them, to the needs of our international community. Our research has turned to all languages which are widely spoken throughout the world to collect from them words which will be internationally understood. There is an astonishing number of such international words. To this vocabulary we have given standardized form under the name Interlingua. The Interlingua Dictionary contains 27,000 such international words, not "English words that are internationally known" as Professor Werner has described it.

Interlingua is a generalized European language because the largest number of words is held in common by the languages of Europe; but in so far as words from Oriental languages are today in international circulation they are also included in Interlingua.

This natural medium for international communication would seem to have the important asset of political neutrality and therefore a chance for gradual acceptance as the international language.

Its present appeal is not limited to scholars, as Professor Werner states. Interlingua is used monthly in the international edition of a popular scientific publication which is pioneering in the introduction of this auxiliary language.

MARY BRAY,

Executive Director, IALA.

New York, N. Y.

Seeing Things

QUEEN BEA



Beatrice Lillie—"the youthfulness of her spirit remains untouched."

CHANGE is the law of life; change, the guarantee of progress. All things change. So, I was about to add while enjoying the safety of this stream of truisms, do all people. But "An Evening with Beatrice Lillie"* has forced me to realize that last statement is a lie. Twenty-nine years have passed since first I saw Miss Lillie in London and she has not changed a bit either in her looks or in her comic style.

Most of us have been battered by

time. But not Miss Lillie. She bounces onto the stage with undiminished energy, as trimly attractive as when she and Gertrude Lawrence conquered New York in "Charlot's Revue." She sports the same boyish bob. Her pertness has not altered. The youthfulness of her spirit remains untouched. The brightness both of her person and personality is untarnished.

Does she sing "There Are Fairies at the Bottom of My Garden," and chant her love for "Paree," and impersonate the self-centered friend who visits a star in her dressing-room at the conclusion of a first night? These and other favorites she is merciful enough to do again. She also does some new numbers and has the kind-

ness to make even them seem familiar.

The adage has it that you can't get enough of a good thing. This is the way all of us who are Bea-stung feel about Miss Lillie. We are not only happy with everything she does but happy before she does it. By this I mean we are made happy by the mere thought that she is waiting in the wings and about to appear.

Our admiration does not blind us to the fact that some of her numbers are better than others and that all of them are much the same in tone and attack. So what? Only the unwise tamper with perfection. To have Miss Lillie change would be a calamity. An evening with her cannot be too long. She leaves us wanting more of the same and regretting that she cannot find time to reorder those two dozen double-damask dinner napkins, to reappear as Gladstone's pet, to sing her version of "Britannia Rules the Waves," and re-do any number of the old favorites treasured by her fans.

THE program tells us that Miss Lillie's first approach to London managers was as a singer of serious ballads. Office after office turned her down until one day André Charlot reluctantly consented to give her an audition. Sensing his apathy, Miss Lillie decided to take a chance. She jettisoned her "art" and burlesqued a song called "We're Drifting Apart, So You're Breaking My Heart" so unsparingly that Charlot was in stitches. The result was a three-year contract.

Although I do not doubt this story, it does seem odd to me that Miss Lillie had not realized her genius for spoofing long before. I have been told that, even when she was a girl singing quite devoutly at church affairs in her native Canada with her mother and sister (they were known as the Lillie Trio), there was something about her so patently droll that the parishioners had to fight against laughing in a most unchurchly manner.

This off-beat in Miss Lillie's spirit, this heaven-sent ability to be funny, or rather inability not to be funny, is manifest in everything she does. Perhaps the best way of explaining what is unique about her brand of comedy is to fall back on a tale told by Alexander Woollcott in "While Rome Burns." Woollcott recalls a night at the Casino in Monte Carlo when he was apprehensively watching Miss Lillie risking her all at *chemin de fer*.

"On this Riviera occasion," says Woollcott, "Miss Lillie was suffering from the hiccups, and one spasm of them was misread by the banker as a hoarse cry of 'Banquo!' A hundred thousand francs of unearned increment was being pushed towards her before she, in her pretty confusion,

* AN EVENING WITH BEATRICE LILLIE— and Reginald Gardiner. Assisted by Xenia Bank, Florence Bray, John Philip, Eadie and Rack at the pianos. Settings by Rolf Gerard. Directed and presented by Edward Duryea Dowling. At the Booth Theatre, New York City. Opened October 2, 1952.