

## 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 FAIRLY HAZARD Editorial Assistant, PETER RITNER

Book Review Editor, RAYMOND WALTERS, JR. Feature Editor, ROLAND GELATT

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

Publisher, J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Publisher, W. D. PATTERSON

Contents Copyrighted, 1954, by The Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

### The Dream That Molds Reality

"NOT with dreams but with blood and with iron, Shall a nation be molded to last." So wrote Swinburne in a day when Britain was reaching the peak of imperial power. Literary fashion, and present-day taste, have swept the poet who roused a generation by the passion and energy of his verse into the comparative desuetude of anthologies and academic lecture halls. And time, and the march of events, are rapidly negating his words as they have already his art. For the tragic experience of recent years has proved beyond a doubt that blood and iron alone are no longer potent to mold a nation to last. Providence may always be on the side of the last reserve as Napoleon believed, but the last reserve, alas, is now such as to blot out all civilization if it be unleashed. So, if blood and iron are not enough, what is left but dreams? Dreams that may seem illusory today but tomorrow may be fact, dreams that translated into action may save mankind from the doom which their neglect must surely bring upon it?

No one who is awake to realities would deny the necessity of armaments in this present of mounting pressures and irreconcilable tensions. Until all nations will agree to forego the recourse to arms every nation must prepare to meet it. It is the only *modus vivendi* for the moment. But it is the way of death, not of life, in the long run.

Through all its history mankind has hugged the dream of permanent peace only to find itself now at the edge of permanent disaster. But that is no reason to despair of peace, only the reason to rouse stronger efforts to secure it. Catastrophe may be around

the corner, but society cannot afford to admit it. To feel it inevitable is to surrender the battle before it is begun. It may be a dream that nations can live in harmony, but without the dream there is no possibility that they can. And yet the dream must be secured by more than faith; it can only be attained by faith and works.

There was recently held the annual meeting of an organization founded on faith and devoted to work, an organization which has been attacked as visionary but which—however in the beginning it may have seemed to hitch its wagon to a star—at this meeting proved itself to be intensely practical. The United World Federalists are now enlisted in a program of immediate possibility and importance. They are dedicated to the support of the United Nations, not merely vaguely and generally dedicated to its support but to a definite campaign to secure such changes in its constitution as time and eventualities have proved desirable or necessary. Provision for possible change was made by the international representatives who drew up the United Nations charter and who provided that it should come under examination for revision in 1955. Supporters of the U.N. from Secretary Dulles and its first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, to lawyers and statesmen the world over have since gone on record as to the need for alteration of some of the articles of the original document. The veto, the regulation of armaments and atomic power, the prevention of aggression, the recruiting and maintenance of a U.N. inspection and police force, the nature and jurisdiction of war courts—these are among the subjects to which the experts, and with

them the World Federalists, are turning their attention.

Probably there are few thoughtful persons today who have not been troubled by the fact that in a time of national and international stress the individual as such can make so little a contribution to solving the problems which beset the country and the world. Yet, after all, it is the sum of the individuals who make the nations, and the sum total of the individuals' opinions which influences, if it does not directly shape, the policy of the lawmakers and the legislators. Though the voice of any one person may be too weak to reach those charged with the stupendous responsibility for peace and war—for the preservation of society—the voice of the multitude which is composed of the individuals, transmitted through an organization, may have tremendous effectiveness. The United Nations, surely the last, best hope of humanity, offers for the first time in history an instrument which, if supported by faith and rendered more pliable to the needs of internationalism by wisdom, may eventually bring to reality man's unquenchable hope for peace. And the United World Federalists offers a concrete program by which the United Nations may be supported. To espouse the lesser organization is to promote the greater. And to promote the greater is perhaps to save the world. —A. L.

### J. K. Lasser

The world of authors and publishers lost a wise and friendly counselor in the untimely death of J. K. Lasser. He had encompassed many careers in his life, but throughout them all—tax expert, author, accountant, educator, publishing consultant, columnist—ran the theme of devoted, tireless service to books.

A frequent contributor to *SR* on publishing problems, Mr. Lasser also gave unstintingly of his time and energy to the American Book Publishers Council, the Book Manufacturers Institute, the Association of University Presses, to trade magazines, to the Association of American Advertising Agencies, to authors, and to various universities.

It is worth noting that the last letter from him to *The Saturday Review*—received only a few days before his death—concerned the exhaustive program he had worked out voluntarily to obtain what he regarded as just and necessary tax relief for all authors.

One prominent publisher said, "He was the man you turned to when you really had a problem. And he talked to you in specifics, not generalities."

## STOUT VS. CERF

EXPLAINING THE CONTROVERSY between Rex Stout and Benjamin Cerf over the Grosse Pointe and the future of the reprint house, I have just read Benjamin Cerf's *TRUTH* in SR May 8.

I have great admiration for Mr. Cerf as a joke collector, but as a reporter he seems to have some flaws. Speaking of paperback reprints, he says, "Today the average returns are close to 50 per cent." Nonsense. They are much closer to 25 per cent than to 50 per cent. Mr. Cerf says, "Guarantees for new titles have shrunk to about a quarter of what they were six short months ago." That is even farther from the truth. The only substantial shrinkage in guarantees has been in the upper brackets—the extravagant bids for a few big titles. In the past six months the average shrinkage in guarantees has been, not 75 per cent as Mr. Cerf says, but more like 10 per cent.

Mr. Cerf says, "It pleases Mr. Stout to believe that a publisher makes a sinful fortune out of every piece of trash he sponsors, while the author is fobbed off with a miserable pittance." If it is true that I believe such bosh I am of course an ignorant jackass, so I beg Mr. Cerf to tell me how he learned that I believe that. I have never said or written anything that could possibly be so construed. Can it be that Mr. Cerf has started to write his own jokes?

That must be it. Speaking of a discussion of reprint royalties that went on back in 1945, he says, "Rex had no interest in examining mere statistics." More nonsense. It was the statistics I had collected, which the hard-cover publishers could not impugn, that caused Mr. Cerf and other publishers to realize how bum a deal they had made with the reprint houses. It was the statistics I had collected that revealed the fantastic incompetence of the hard-cover publishers as businessmen.

One more Cerf joke. He says, "Mr. Stout . . . is renewing his threats to set up a new reprint house run by and for the authors." That is wholly untrue, and I wonder where Mr. Cerf got his plot. I have made no threat. I have never believed or suggested that authors could successfully run a reprint house.

I'll bet Mr. Cerf the price of a year's subscription to the *Saturday Review* that I can write a column about him and reprints that will be funnier than the one he wrote about me and reprints.

REX STOUT.

Brewster, N. Y.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Soon to appear in SR will be a full report on the present state of paperback publishing which will further illuminate the conditions over which Messrs. Cerf and Stout are in dispute.

## SCIENCE-FICTION IN THE VANGUARD

APPARENTLY HARRISON SMITH hasn't read much science-fiction lately, or he wouldn't say [SR May 22] that it "deals



"I always get a friendly reception . . . I tell them I'm related to Ernest Hemingway."

with the development of machines and leaves humanity exactly where it is."

The very point of the mature science-fiction being written today is that it deals increasingly with sociological and psychological problems, and with all possible varieties of societal development. Olaf Stapledon, with his tremendous "Last and First Men," led the way.

That is why, far from "beginning to bore their readers," today's best science-fiction novels are in the vanguard of the books, "illuminated by hope," for which Mr. Smith calls so eloquently and persuasively.

MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD.

San Francisco, Calif.

## FILLING A REAL NEED

I WAS ONE who felt remorse when you became *The Saturday Review* and were no longer *The Saturday Review of Literature*. I am now pleased with the new title, inasmuch as you are filling a real need as a comprehensive guide to the arts of our current mode of civilization—TV, Recordings, Movies, Radio. Being a tape-recording enthusiast, I am particularly pleased with your new feature on that subject.

MARIE J. LAUN.

Elkhart Lake, Wisc.

## WHERE THE FISH WERE TAKEN OUT

A BOUQUET OF ROSES to author Russell Potter for his provocative and well-written article on the fate of the lecture circuit in America today ["Talking Things Over," SR May 22].

Although it may seem to be quarreling over extremely minor points, it is possible that Mr. Potter's reference to "chautauqua" as "a word that is untranslatable into any foreign language" might draw fire from students of Indian lore.

It may be a moot question as to wheth-

er the language of the Seneca Indians, most numerous and militant of the Six Nations of the Iroquois, may be considered "foreign"; but the Senecas had a very real meaning for the word. According to historian Arch Merrill, "chautauqua" is a Seneca word meaning "where the fish were taken out."

Apparently the Senecas who inhabited the western New York state country had known and named picturesque Chautauqua Lake, the site of today's most active remaining chautauqua institution, as a place of abundant fishing, surrounded by lovely countryside. It is not difficult to see how the "camp meetings, addressed by circuit riders, itinerant ministers, and lay preachers," functioning during the summer months, should embrace the melodious Indian word "chautauqua."

LEE STOHLBROST.

Boulder, Colo.

## SIR JAMES BARRIE, M.A.

IN HIS REVIEW of R. B. Robertson's "Of Whales and Men" [SR May 22] William McFee "without research" mentions Sir James Barrie in a list of doctors who became successful writers. Perhaps a little research might have been in order as, of course, Sir James Barrie never was a doctor or even a medical student; he graduated M.A. from Edinburgh University in the early 1880's.

L. R. C. AGNEW.

Gainesville, Fla.

## IN PRINT

IN SR May 1, Professor C. Wright Mills remarks that "The Sociology of Georg Simmel," edited and translated by Kurt H. Wolff, is out of print. This title is very much in print.

JEREMIAH KAPLAN,  
The Free Press.

Glencoe, Ill.