

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## PAPERBACKS AND DIGNITY

THE ARTICLE BY Thomas E. Cooney ["The Booming Bust of the Paperbacks, SR Nov. 6] and the cartoons of paperbound covers by Ed Fisher raised a minor storm of protest in this office. The unhappiness was particularly acute about the Ed Fisher drawings which, as your worthy sheet said, "are more than merely a spoof."

Partly this is because of the high awareness on the part of everyone here of the very problem pointed out in the piece, and of the strenuous efforts which we have made to avoid the very things Fisher was illustrating. I enclose copies of our editions of "Oliver Twist," "Moby Dick," and "Alice in Wonderland" to illustrate the point.

I do not believe the Darwin, Spengler, and Xenophon have been done in paper, but the Veblen was done by New American Library in a very dignified edition indeed.

FREEMAN LEWIS, vice president.  
Pocket Books, Inc.

New York, N.Y.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cartoonist Ed Fisher's spoof on the paperbacks was a deliberate attempt to reduce to an absurdity the seductio ad absurdum aspect of this field of publishing. His cartoon parody selected some highly improbable titles and showed how these might be "paperbacked" by cheapie publishers. Several of these titles, of course, have actually been published in reputable covers, as the accompanying illustrations make clear. We are certain that the publishers of these particular titles understand who and what our real targets were in the feature by Mr. Fisher. SR believes that unless the paperback industry as a whole accepts a clear re-



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH  
"98 — 99 — 100."

sponsibility for raising the general level of the paperbacks from a combination peep-show and sadist's parlor, all books, paperback or otherwise, will suffer.

## THE QUESTIONS

CONGRATULATIONS to Christopher La Farge for his brilliant essay on Spillane. ["Mickey Spillane and His Bloody Hammer" SR Nov. 6.] The questions he raises are probably the questions of our times.

I would like to see your magazine devote an entire issue (or close to it) to the theme of violence in TV, radio, movies, etc. To compare this fantastic blood-bath to the output of say, England,

or the Scandinavian countries. What is responsible for this terrorism? Where will it lead? How can it be counteracted? Perhaps La Farge or someone equally gifted could be persuaded to undertake such a project.

Let's have more of these analyses.

M. M. LEVIN.

New York, N. Y.

## GUILT BY PARABLE?

CHRISTOPHER LA FARGE's article [SR Nov. 6] on Mickey Spillane is one of the most curious, not to say specious, I have ever read, so curious as to suggest that the very title is a misnomer. It should be called "McCarthyism" instead. It gives one the feeling that here is an author (backed by an editor) who has a violent bias against a current bogey but instead of having the wit or the documentary facts for a direct approach resolves upon "guilt by parable."

"So you want to know about McCarthy, do you?" he seems to be asking a group of readers who presumptively are eagerly awaiting, or at least needing such information. "Well, I'll tell you how to find out. Just read this absolutely thoroughly documented account of Mickey Spillane. That's all you need to know about McCarthy."

Talk about demagoguery! Haven't you got a mirror?

ELLIS O. JONES.

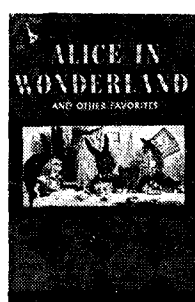
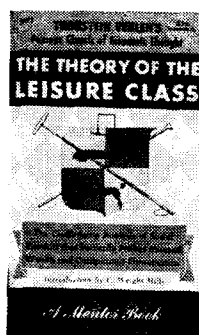
Washington, D. C.

## WELL WRITTEN

I READ with interest and understanding "Mickey Spillane and his Bloody Hammer," by Christopher La Farge. I wish to commend La Farge on his well-written article: BRAVO.

GEORGE J. LITIF A/2C  
USAF.

Sheppard AFB, Tex.



At top, the real; at bottom, Ed Fisher in *The Saturday Review*.



# Seeing Things

## THE LUNTS TRIUMPHANT

**I**F NOAH were theatre-minded and alive today, and faced the problem of drawing up a passenger list as restricted as the one for which he is remembered, the couple above all couples that he would save would be the Lunts. Admirable actors individually, Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt are matchless as a pair. This is scarcely news. It is a jubilant fact which everyone has acknowledged since the two of them, having conquered singly, she in "Dulcy," he in "Clarence" and "Outward Bound," made their first joint conquest in "The Guardsman." That was thirty years ago, when they had been married a mere two years.

Time is a topic which it is safest to sweep under the rug when writing about actors. When it comes to age they have the right to be as vague as women voters and go through the decades being "over twenty-one." They are as young as they can make us believe they are, and not a day older. Inasmuch as the Lunts have obviously found that fountain which Ponce de León was once thought to have sought in vain, the mere mention of the passing years would in their case seem to be a rude irrelevance. And so it would be if only the years that they have passed acting together had not contributed to the richness of their acting. This is the only way in which time has touched them.

Noel Coward's "Quadrille"\* is the twenty-fifth play in which the Lunts have been co-starred, and the third by Mr. Coward (the other two being, of course, "Design for Living" and "Point Valaine"). Since "Caprice" in 1928 they have not acted separately, except two years back when Mr. Lunt decided as a lark to introduce the first four or five performances of the "Cosi Fan Tutte" he had directed at the "Met" by crossing the stage in silence to light some candles as a bewigged flunkey, and in the process shed a dazzling light on the art of a true actor.

Inevitably, it is as a couple that the Lunts are thought of, a couple in which each is so good that there is no better half. Perhaps pair would be the

more accurate word, because "couple" for some conjures the image of an average husband and wife, hearth-bound, the contented victims of an unexciting routine, and dulled by domesticity. That the Lunts are happy in their marriage has long been as manifest as the happiness they give audiences wherever and whenever they face the footlights. But dull they are not, and never have been. Nor has there ever been anything average, hearthbound, or routine about them.

The honorary degree they received at Dartmouth last June was the first joint one the college had conferred in its 185 years. In his citation President John Sloan Dickey explained this by saying, "What the Lunts have joined together Dartmouth will not set asunder." Yet even he, it is significant to note, did not refer to "these partners without peer" as "Mr. and Mrs. Lunt." Though their marriage is one of their triumphs, they have never, in Congreve's phrase, "dwindled into matrimony" to this extent.

In every way the Lunts are exceptional. Instead of being subdued by marriage, they have been liberated by it, as all of us have pointed out again

and again. Their being husband and wife has always legalized their on-stage audacities whether earthly or Olympian. Among the many continuities of their shared careers is the honest and unblushing abandon with which they have romped through love scene after love scene. As long ago as "Caprice" their brilliant lack of inhibitions caused one respectable old lady, after they had engaged in jubilant dalliance, to sigh with relief, "It is nice, my dear, to know they are *really* married, isn't it?"

The Lunts have always played love scenes as if they were not married. In the last act of "Quadrille" they again play such a scene as if they had never met before. This time they do not sweep through it with bravura. They act it gently, quietly, with a tenderness that is melting.

**I**S IT comedy the Lunts are asked to supply with or without reinforcement from the lines they are speaking? Or pathos, nostalgia, suspense, a sense of the heart unburdened or of diamond-bright worldliness? All these they can conjure without apparent effort, because they have not only had the skill but the will to master their craft. No two people in our times have lived theatre more completely than they, and none have more athletic consciences about their work. Though they create the illusion of spontaneity, the Lunts generate the confidence which comes from knowing that they have left nothing to chance. Every inflection, every gesture, is something one senses with



—Vandamm.

Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt—"the mention of passing years . . . a rude irrelevance."

\*QUADRILLE, a new play by Noel Coward. Directed by Alfred Lunt. Settings and costumes by Cecil Beaton. Presented by John C. Wilson and H. M. Tennent, Ltd. With a cast including Mr. Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Brian Aherne, Edna Best, Brenda Forbes, Dorothy Sands, Jerome Kilty, Michael Lewis, etc. At the Coronet Theatre, New York City. Opened November 3, 1954.