

to voice disrespect for spinsters in the teaching profession as "inhibited" and "frustrated." After all, many of our sex can never marry; women outnumber the men. There are plenty of other lines of work open to them today, where the spinster status is not unwelcome. But why drive them away from a profession which for generations has been natural and congenial to them? In the past hundreds of thousands of pupils have owed and given them deep gratitude and affection. Children have at home married women for mothers, to provide them with maternal instinct and care. Why should they not profit from a different type of nurture in school? The tendency of today to regard celibate teachers as "frustrated"—except the respected and competent nuns in the Catholic teaching orders—threatens deprivation to many children and hardship to women who, like those of past centuries, could give talents and wholehearted devotion to the teaching profession.

Married or unmarried, women's chances of getting professorships in colleges or universities have deteriorated, I fear, during the last thirty years. Most colleges for women, which during their early decades had a large majority of women on their faculties, have during the past quarter-century made great efforts to secure a considerable proportion of men. As it is far from easy for women to obtain a post of professorial rank in a co-educational institution, this has made the situation rather worse than it used to be. I do not know the solution except to try to persuade the men's colleges and the coeducational ones to realize that it is good for

young people to be taught by both sexes. Sometimes I think this can be done if we train up a sufficient number of distinguished women scholars and teachers. But can we, if girls are taught almost entirely by men professors and develop a kind of inferiority complex?

A few days ago (December 1952) I asked a young woman who was a junior with top marks at one of our best universities whether she had any woman professor. "No," she answered, "I haven't. I never thought of a woman professor. I don't believe I should like to study under one."

—From *"Many a Good Crusade,"* the memoirs of Virginia Crocheron Guildersleeve, former dean of Barnard College (to be published by Macmillan on Nov. 19).

## Bird Gag

"**R**UNNING GAGS" were very important in radio. A running gag is a comedy bit of business carried over from program to program that will stimulate the listener's interest to the point where he will want to tune in every week to follow the development of the gag.

They are difficult to develop. We stumbled on one that showed promise. We interviewed a retired fireman who owned a talking mynah bird. The mynah bird looks like a small patent-leather crow. Most of the talking birds repeat words they have been taught. The parrot will say "Polly wants a cracker" only if you start the conversation. The mynah can answer questions. The man we planned to interview would say, "What does

Mae West say?" and the bird would answer, "Come up and see me sometime. Come up and see me sometime." The first time the mynah bird appeared it talked all afternoon at rehearsal. It talked all night backstage. But when we were on the air and the bird was brought to the microphone it was mute. The owner pleaded with the mynah. He threatened it. Nothing audible happened. The audience started laughing. The owner was embarrassed. Finally, I invited him to bring the bird back on the program the next week and we would try again.

The following week the bird talked all day and night around the studio. When it was brought to the microphone the owner addressed the mynah with his usual opening line, "What does Mae West say?" The bird not only said nothing—it looked at the owner as though he owed three years' dues to the Audubon Society. Again the bird was speechless. Again there were threats, cajoling to no avail. Again I invited the owner back.

For five or six weeks the bird was brought back to the program. It still refused to talk. We were receiving hundreds of letters telling us how to get the bird to talk—"Put out the lights in the studio," "Soak its birdseed in hot milk," and so forth. We were getting newspaper publicity from coast to coast. Some Congressman down in Washington had advised another Congressman to listen to our bird and learn to shut up.

Just as we had a running gag that had caught the country's fancy, one of the advertising agency executives sent word that the mynah bird would have to be taken off the program. There was a rumor, he intimated, that we had concealed the original bird and were using a feathered decoy to make sure there would be no bird talk. We argued and argued and got no place. Trying to move the agency man was like an armless man trying to move his rook in a chess game.

For the final appearance of the mynah bird we allowed thirty minutes to permit the owner to shout his "What does Mae West say?" to his heart's content. After about twenty minutes of this solo the mynah bird gave up and answered, "Come up and see me sometime. Come up and see me sometime." Our running gag had run its course. The advertising man was wrong about the feathered decoy, but I learned early in radio never to argue with an executive. I always say, "The only thing you can tell an advertising man is that he is fortunate that he isn't in some other business."

—From *"Treadmill to Oblivion,"* by Fred Allen (to be published Nov. 4 by Little, Brown).

## Nocturne

By Elizabeth Bartlett

**I** HAVE stilled my heart with silent words  
To listen to the violins  
And sit and nod and dream of birds  
Flown far beyond their origins

The coward years have curbed my tongue  
That once spoke music of its own  
For rash it is to quote the young  
With voice grown harsh in feeble tone

In the quicksands of my mind I hear  
The brave loud cries—like sunken stones  
They croak bass to the fiddling year  
While an old man clings to tired bones

Half listen, half hear the cheating viols  
Sing the closing in of wings on strings  
As though a meeting were of souls  
To end all winters and all springs

# SR's Critics Poll for Fall

## The Nation's Reviewers Vote

**T**HIS fall will be a good season for Americans to curl up with a book and take a long look at their pasts. At least that's the word from the twenty-six literary editors of leading newspapers in all sections of the country who studied the publishers' new offerings and then responded to our invitation to name ten books they believe deserve the attention of discriminating readers. Thirty-one histories and biographies, most of them about American subjects, were recommended out of a total of eighty-six books in the "general" or non-fiction field. Of these, five "generals" were nominated by five or more editors.

It's another comparatively weak season for fiction, however. Only forty-seven titles were named in this category, although five of these received five or more nominations. The nature of these novels and volumes of short stories is so varied they have foiled our usually infinite capacity for making sweeping generalizations.

The eleven books most frequently recommended were:

"A Fable," by William Faulkner, eight votes.

"The Ramanaya," as retold by Aubrey Menen, eight votes.

"Beyond the Hundredth Meridian," by Wallace Stegner, seven votes.

"A Study of History," by A. J. Toynbee, seven votes.

"They Called Him Stonewall," by Burke Davis, seven votes.

"Abraham Lincoln, the Prairie Years and the War Years," by Carl Sandburg, five votes.

"The Buffalo Hunters," by Mari Sandoz, five votes.

"Call to Greatness," by Adlai E. Stevenson, five votes.

"The Go-Between," by L. P. Hartley, five votes.

"Most Likely to Succeed," by John Dos Passos, five votes.

"No Time for Sergeants," by Mac Hyman, five votes.

In the hope that you will find the critics' recommendations useful as a guide to your autumn reading, we publish the complete list below. The editor is grateful to Miss Marianne Gutman for assistance in compiling the returns. The descriptions after the titles are the work of John Haver-

stick and Whitney Balliett. The names in brackets are those of the critics making the nominations.

—RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

### General

#### SEVEN VOTES

**BEYOND THE HUNDREDTH MERIDIAN.** By Wallace Stegner. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$6.

The story of John Wesley Powell, who adventurously conquered the waters of the Grand Canyon and then scientifically studied and directed the development of the American West. (Bond, Cross, Herzberg, Hormel, O'Neill, Rothermel, Tinkle.)

**A STUDY OF HISTORY.** By Arnold J. Toynbee. Oxford University Press. Vols. VII-X. \$35.

The four latest volumes of Dr. Toynbee's monumental series. The subjects of the sections which make up these newest volumes are: Universal States, Universal Churches, Heroic Ages, Contacts Between Civilizations in Space—In Time, Law and Freedom in History, The Prospects of the Western Civilization, and The Inspiration of Historians. (Cross, Dolbier, Herzberg, Shockley, Smith, Wyllie, Yeiser.)

**THEY CALLED HIM STONEWALL.** By Burke Davis. Rinehart & Co. \$5.

A biography of General Stonewall Jackson, the nut-hard, sharp-thinking soldier, killed by one of his own men at Chancellorsville, who has been an inspiration to everyone, at one time or another, from Confederate boys to Papa Hemingway. (Bond, Bradley, Cady, Flowers, Hass, Shockley, Smith.)

#### FIVE VOTES

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN.** *The Prairie Years and the War Years.* By Carl Sandburg. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$7.50.

Six separate volumes of two bulky biographies of Lincoln have now been condensed by the author into one mammoth—and successful—union. (Babcock, Bradley, Flowers, John K. Sherman, Wyllie.)

**THE BUFFALO HUNTERS.** By Mari Sandoz. Hastings House. \$4.50.

A panorama, by the author of "Cheyenne Autumn," of the thundering days of hunting and hiding between 1867 and 1883 when the great buffalo herds in the West dwindled from a veritable ocean to a few hundreds. (Hass, Kogan, O'Neill, John K. Sherman, Snajdr.)

**CALL TO GREATNESS.** By Adlai E. Stevenson. Harper & Bros. \$2.25.

In book form the three Godkin Lectures the 1952 Democratic Presidential nominee delivered at Harvard last March. (Dolbier, Rothermel, Shockley, Thomas B. Sherman, Wyllie.)

#### FOUR VOTES

**IN THE CAUSE OF PEACE.** By Trygve Lie. The Macmillan Co. \$6.

A fully documented record, by the genial, earnest Mr. Lie, of his seven years as the United Nation's first Secretary General, in which he tells of the innumerable imbroglios he was partner to during those setting-up years, how the Secretariat works, how the personnel was chosen, and what, to his mind, will be the most sensible program for the U.N. to follow if it is to survive for at least the next twenty years. (Bond, Dolbier, Hormel, Rothermel.)

**JESUS AND HIS TIMES.** By Daniel-Rops. Translated by Rudy Millar. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$5.

A biography of Jesus and of His times, by

the eminent French Catholic theologian. For this American edition of the book the King James version of the Bible is substituted, where necessary in the text, for the author's original Douay translation. (Cady, Emmart, Hass, John K. Sherman.)

**MELBOURNE.** By Lord David Cecil. The Bobbs-Merrill Co. \$5.

New material has been added to the widely read biography of fifteen years ago, "The Young Melbourne." The work now carries Melbourne into his mature years, his career as a reform Prime Minister (who did not believe in reform), and his Indian summer friendship with the young Queen Victoria. (Babcock, Cross, Herzberg, Yeiser.)

**SUNSET AND EVENING STAR.** By Sean O'Casey. The Macmillan Co. \$5.

The grande finale of the great Irish dramatist's story of his own life, rounded out with some tributes to his native land, some glimpses of the George Bernard Shaws, and some reflections on old age. (Cross, Hormel, Tinkle, Wyllie.)

#### THREE VOTES

**THE AGE OF MOUNTAINEERING.** By James Ramsey Ullman. J. B. Lippincott Co. \$6.

The author of "The White Tower" writes a history of the techniques and achievements in mountain climbing, going as far back as Saussure in 1786, the first climber to conquer Mt. Blanc. (Bond, Bradley, Douglas.)

**THE JACKSONIANS.** By Leonard D. White. The Macmillan Co. \$8.

The third and final volume of Mr. White's study of the executive branch of the Government and its growth from the time of Jefferson's incumbency to the end of Buchanan's tenure. (Herzberg, O'Neill, Snajdr.)

**THE LOVE LETTERS OF PHYLLIS McGINLEY.** Viking Press. \$3.

The latest work of one of the brightest practitioners of the art of light verse. (Bradley, Herzberg, Jackson.)

**MY SEVERAL WORLDS.** By Pearl S. Buck. The John Day Co. \$5.

Miss Buck has produced a complete record of her personal life, feelings, likes, and dislikes pertaining especially to her knowledge of China and ending up with her efforts during the last twenty years to put down her roots back here in America. (Babcock, Hormel, Jackson.)

**THE ROOSEVELT FAMILY OF SAGAMORE HILL.** By Hermann Hagedorn. The Macmillan Co. \$5.

A review of the strenuous life and times of Teddy Roosevelt, with special attention given to his life with Mrs. Roosevelt and their six children at the pleasant retreat in Oyster Bay, Long Island, which was recently made a national shrine. (Cady, O'Neill, Shockley.)

**THE WOMAN WITHIN.** By Ellen Glasgow. Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$5.

A posthumously published companion piece to her "A Certain Measure"; a little less of her literary life and a little more of her personal one. (Cross, Dolbier, Wyllie.)

#### TWO VOTES

**THE ART OF EATING.** By M. F. K. Fisher. World Publishing Co. \$6.

The collected works, from "Serve It Forth" (1937) to "An Alphabet for Gourmets" (1949), of one of the leading gastronomic experts of this fat age. (Jackson, Yeiser.)

**ATOMS IN THE FAMILY.** By Laura Fermi. The University of Chicago Press. \$4.

A look at the atom bomb from the vantage point of the kitchen stove—a somewhat soothing interpretation of it and her husband's part

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