

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE POWER OF THE CHURCH

ONE OF THE CONCLUSIONS which may be drawn from Sir John Neale's excellent article "Elizabeth I and Her Cold War" [SR Oct. 1], is that in most respects the discussion could have concerned contemporary Roman Catholicism as well as historical. The analogy between Roman Catholicism and Soviet Communism need not be restricted to history. The power of the Roman Catholic Church to interfere ideologically in a country's affairs is as recent as last month's revolution in Argentina. SR is to be praised for having the courage to print an article which draws the analogy, even in an historical sense.

ALBERT ATWELL.

Ann Arbor, Mich.

THE QUEEN'S CATHOLIC HEROES

FROM "ELIZABETH I AND HER COLD WAR," by Sir John E. Neale: "But [English Catholics] knew that their Queen was no fanatic. . . ." Sir John might have clinched his point by noting that Lord Howard of Effingham became Lord High Admiral of the fleet under Elizabeth I and commanded the ships which defeated the Spanish Armada. The Howards—England's greatest aristocratic family—were and are almost invariably Catholic, and this great sailor was a Catholic.

REV. ELLIS JONES HOUGH.

Dexter, Mo.

WHY SOCIAL CLIQUES?

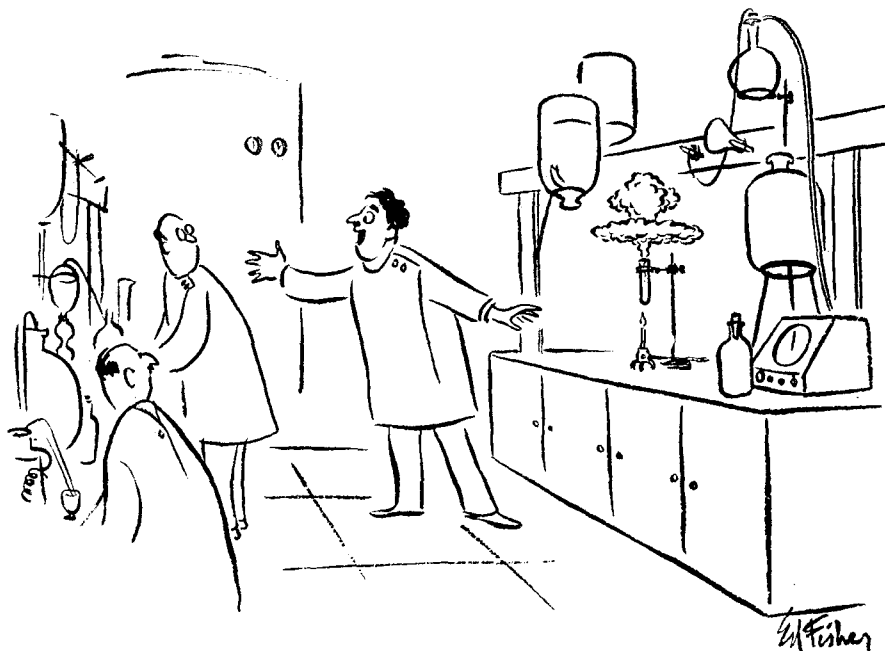
I WISH TO CONGRATULATE you on the fraternities article by William Carlson [SR Sept. 10]. Is not the purpose of universities to give an education in arts, literature, and sciences and, most particularly and importantly, at the present time to develop thought and to teach the importance of a democratic way of life? Once the purpose of fraternities was to favor discussion, at least such was the origin of the first Greek-letter fraternity in the United States, Phi Beta Kappa. It is to be regretted that this admirable function has been largely overshadowed and replaced by the undesirable aspects of social cliques.

K. EILEEN HITE.

Bedford Hills, N.Y.

ONLY A CLUB

CARLSON'S article, luridly titled, does small service to his cause, because of what appears to be a basic misconception of the fraternity situation. I think he overestimates the power of the national organizations and the National Interfraternity Conference, groups which may take themselves very seriously but which are laughed at and kidded by the large majority of undergraduate brotherhood



"I've tamed it!"

members. There are few phrases so damning as "professional fraternity man." The chief off-campus influence on the individual fraternity, because of its proximity, is its particular graduate association, and Carlson's localization of the chapters at his university hardly solves that problem.

People like Carlson, who use the word "discriminate" in a manner that Webster never intended, cloud the issues. The ideal fraternity regards itself as a social club, where men of common interest may gather. If an individual may have his own standard of choosing his friends, why not a fraternity, as long as there is no written law. Certain Greek-letter societies tend to attract athletes, others intellectuals, others party-boys, and when they vote on new members favor representatives of particular groups. It is their privilege. If Carlson thinks that by localizing his chapters he will solve the problems of excessive drinking, membership debt, and poor scholarship I urge him to spend a few days at a Harvard or Princeton club. Secret societies are as old as civilization itself. They satisfy man's desire to associate with a group. Carlson can abolish them at his university, but he will only drive them underground, where their excesses will be magnified.

A. L. GREEN.

New York, N.Y.

NEW LIGHT

LEO CHERNE'S REFERENCE ["The Loin Cloth or the Rajah?" SR Sept. 17] to the fear of the House Appropriations Committee that pictures of the little red

schoolhouse and the dust-storm might give the Communists wrong ideas makes me think of a remark made by one of our officials in Japan. He said that the Japanese, like the Europeans, complained of the sameness of American and Russian propaganda. Both seemed to stress high levels of production to the exclusion of nearly everything else. When, therefore, "Death of a Salesman" was broadcast the effect was electric. This throws a wholly new light on America, the Japanese said to themselves. We didn't realize that Americans were capable of self-criticism. Now that we do know it we are much more inclined to listen to what they have to say.

J. S. BIXLER.

Waterville, Me.

THE FATHERS WERE HERETICS

CONGRATULATIONS on the brave editorial "Are Subversives Really Subversive?" [SR Sept. 3]. The American people—inheritors of the greatest of all traditions, freedom—ought to take Millis's words to heart. For far too long now we've submitted to the "police state" mentality and the fearmongers who advocate it.

Let us all get back to basic thinking, which must include the concept that truth has nothing to fear. No human document or any human system is sacred; therefore, an open mind and a hopeful attitude toward novel thoughts are essential. Where would we be today if the Founding Fathers had been afraid of heresy?

CLYDE S. KING.

May's Landing, N.J.



Comédie-Française

ON Tuesday evening, October 25, the world's oldest and most prolific repertory company will make its first appearance in New York. To those fortunates who have visited Paris the Comédie-Française needs no introduction. It is the solid cornerstone of the French theatre and the most elegant fleur in the proud bouquet of French culture. Associated with it through the years have been such celebrated figures as Clairon (1743-66), Talma (1787-1826), Rachel (1838-58), Sarah Bernhardt (1862-80), Mounet-Sully (1872-1916), and—among moderns—Raimu, Fernand Ledoux, Madeleine Renaud, Jean-Louis Barrault, Marie Bell, Edwige Feuillère, and Pierre Fresnay.

In a brief interview at the Comédie-Française's hallowed Paris headquarters its present administrator, Pierre Descaves, explained the choice of plays for this American tour: "What we would like to do is to present the American public a rose without thorns, and in an effort to do that we decided to bring only comedies." Three M. Descaves considers to be the foundation of the Comédie-Française comic repertory. Leading off Oct. 25-Nov. 1 is Molière's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," which New Yorkers last saw with Bobby Clark in 1946. Following that will be Beaumarchais' "Le Barbier de Seville," with Marivaux' "Arlequin poli par l'Amour" (Nov. 8-13). For the final bill the company will present Marivaux' "Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard," with Musset's "Un Caprice" as a curtain-raiser. Incidentally, there is a recording of this last Marivaux comedy available (Period Records, \$5.95), which will make it possible for those of shaky French to attune their ears to the dialogue in advance.

There are other and practical reasons for confining the repertoire to comedy. The Comédie-Française's two theatres in Paris must continue a full schedule of plays without the services of the performers sent overseas. If it had to send over enough top tragedians and comedians to handle both tragedy and comedy domestic operations would be paralyzed. Therefore, the plan is to send a different company here next season with Racine, Corneille, and one modern dramatist. This second tour of course depends on our enthusiasm for the comedies this fall.

M. Descaves promises that the

company will not be disappointed if the reception in New York does not equal that they received in Moscow season before last. Not only were all seats sold out weeks in advance, but the first performance was attended by Malenkov, Molotov, Bulganin, Gromyko, and every other prominent public official. While this spectacular interest might have been a tribute to the Comédie-Française, M. Descaves admits that curiosity about the first foreign company to penetrate the Iron Curtain since the war was responsible for part of it. One actor was asked, "You must be very unhappy in France. When will you have the revolution?" and "Why aren't your schools compulsory? If they were you'd have fewer illiterates."

THE actors America will see on this first tour include twelve of the thirty-two *sociétaires* in the company plus four out of forty-eight *pensionnaires*. (A *pensionnaire* is a young actor on salary who may leave the company if he so desires. When a *pensionnaire* has proved himself he may be invited to become a *sociétaire*, in which case he must play exclusively with the Comédie-Française for twenty years, although he is permitted to make motion pictures. When he signed his contract M. Charon saucily described his fate as "*un enterrement première-classe*." A *sociétaire* shares in the profits and has a voice in the company's policies, although the administrator appointed for a six-year period makes most of the important decisions. This age-honored system provides the actor with great security, but restricts his freedom, with disputes developing on such matters as the roles actors must play and the casts directors must accept.)

Included in the sixteen total are the handsome Maurice Escande, the flawless Jacques Charon, the buffooning Louis Seigner, the bursting Beatrice Bretty, and the musical-voiced Mony Dalmes. As a special treat the Comédie-Française also brought along Marie Sabouret, considered to be its most beautiful actress. With the company, too, is *sociétaire* Jean Meyer, regarded by many as the finest director in the French theatre. M. Meyer has directed "Port-Royal" and "Les Amants Magnifiques," currently the two most successful plays in the Paris repertoire—not to be given here. In addition to



—Sam Levin.

Marie Sabouret—"most beautiful."

acting in two of the plays here, M. Meyer had his hands full breaking in French-Canadian dancers for his production of "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme." His introduction of a ballet into this play refutes the myth that the Comédie-Française performs Molière *exactly* as he was performed in 1680. As M. Descaves puts the conservative theatre's attitude towards new *mise-en-scenes*, "We welcome the spirit of innovation so long as it does not contradict the spirit of tradition."

But tradition is very important in France, and even more so at the Comédie-Française. Its primary reason for being is the reincarnation generation after generation of the great plays of the French theatre (the best of the more than 2,500 the Comédie has produced during 275 years of existence). If it also produces new plays of quality by such writers as Molière, Cocteau, Obey, Mauriac, and Claudel, these new plays are chosen cautiously. First they are submitted to Robert Kemp, drama critic of *Le Monde*. If he approves they are then passed on to a commission of three. If they still survive the author of each is invited to read his play before a final commission of nine *sociétaires*.

To make all this possible the French Government gives the Comédie-Française a subsidy of \$1,000,000 a year, in addition to relief from taxes. While the American tour has been undertaken by impresario Sol Hurok, who risks a possible operating loss during the troupe's short stay on Broadway, the production expenses have to all intents and purposes been paid for by the French Government. It is a rich present for American