

middle class. They do not look down or up at other people, but "sideways" and with "detached amusement." They seem unconcerned with conventional "success" but are proficient at whatever they do, and their mildly critical viewpoint is indispensable these days in any large corporation. Of course they spur the crudity of "How's business?" shop-talk. But they are always ready to discuss "the relationships of the company with the community" and to analyze any slump in sales as a serious "social problem."

The Upper Bohemians are just one of many discoveries in this wise and witty and slightly wicked book. Mr. Lynes takes his title from Shakespeare's "Henry the Fourth, Part One": "They surfeited with honey and began To loathe the taste of sweetness, whereof a little More than a little is by much too much." The application to the Eisenhower era is obvious, and so is the appropriateness to Mr. Lynes's subject, which is American society in a period of unalloyed security. The old, crass, but well-defined distinctions, he finds, are melting down into a sticky mass of "togetherness." High society, as in

Mrs. Vanderbilt's day, is non-existent or non-important. The phrase "servant class" has no meaning in the 87 per cent of American households where husbands are part-time wives, washing dishes, changing diapers, or flourishing the strings of their barbecue aprons. Mr. Lynes holds out little sympathy (or hope) for the husbands. "They have made their own beds, and now they must lie in them," he says. "Furthermore, the chances are that they must get up in the morning and make them again."

EVEN success is losing its importance, Mr. Lynes finds, as he examines the answers to questionnaires sent to hundreds of college seniors. A craze for "adjustment" is sweeping the younger generation, and the old-fashioned word "achievement" is rarely mentioned. "No life in the ulcer belt for me," writes one young man, and another says, "Why struggle on my own when I can enjoy the big psychological income of being a member of a big outfit?" American youth no longer looks for frontiers to push back—it seeks to swim along in the wake of a prosperous profession or corpo-

ration. And the girls want husbands who are "ambitious but not dangerously so."

All of this Mr. Lynes rather acutely blames on the Depression of the 1930s, which he believes left deeper scars on the American psyche than are generally recognized. "Faith in money as a goal to which to devote one's entire energies was destroyed," he says. But so far nothing equally compelling has risen to take its place with a large part of the population—at least as individuals. They seem to be content to subtract a drop of anonymous sweetness from the over-all store—and hope that nothing upsets the hive.

In his last book "The Tastemakers" (SR, Nov. 6, 1954) Mr. Lynes gave us an excellent summary of the fads and frenzies that have helped to shape American culture. In his famous *Harper's* article "Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow" he defined some intellectual levels that have prevailed during the current decade. In "Surfeit of Honey" he is breathing right down the neck of social history and stealing a look at the near future. What he says is not all honey, but it is all entertaining and remarkably illuminating.



—Fairlington.

The Nightmarish Suburbia of John Keats

A Review of "The Crack in the Picture Window," by Siegfried Mandel, who lives in Long Island suburbia.

MY REVIEW copy of John Keats's bilious indictment of suburbia has by now been well-thumbed by friends and neighbors who took to its gratuitous needling in very unkindly fashion. It's one thing to characterize the millions of suburban-development denizens as potential "Mongolian idiots" or "fools living in this nothing-down paradise" consisting of a range of \$5,000 boxes-on-slabs to \$50,000 split levels enveloped by a "steamy culture of social sickness," and another to make those tags stick.

We so-called fools became tired of putting up with scandalous postwar housing situations in the cities, and—especially veterans—took advantage of favorable low-interest mortgages to find a place in the suburbs for our

growing families. True, some of the "pioneers" who bought the first best thing they could get found that mercenary builders had presented them with a cat in a sack, but others who spent a little more time shopping came up with a substantial investment. Over a period of years what has a "renter" to show for his money? We suburban "idiots" on the other hand, who have been slowly whittling down the principal on mortgages, find that should we decide to sell all this money comes right back to us. Keats ridicules, for example, the Levittown developments, one of which is neighbor to my own on Long Island, but I have yet to hear of a Levittowner who did not turn a profit when selling.

Aside from the financial angle, the element of comparison is absent. When we suburbanites relax and recharge our mental batteries after a hectic day in the city and breathe the fume-free air in the quiet of the eve-

ning, we think with pity of our urban brethren cooped up in numbered apartments that resemble so many cells in a prison corridor from which they can reach the street by negotiating a mountain of stairs or a two-by-four elevator box instead of walking, as we do, right into a private backyard where our children can play on lawns rather than asphalt.

To John Keats our suburban developments are unrelieved nightmares peopled by such soapish characters as John and Mary Drone, who hopelessly overextend themselves to buy a home with less selectivity than drunks: Ronald Suave, a slick sales agent; Robert Razor, the builder who cuts corners and throats of victims; and the SOB Bank that specializes in fleecing operations. For good measure Keats sticks the Drones with a group of viciously cartooned neighbors whose names—the Fecunds, Spleens, Amiables, Faints, and Mrs. Ardis Voter—indicate their inadequacy. For recreation our suburban wives indulge in endless "hen" sessions and daytime coffee *klatsches* topped at night by unmentionable party games. Afflicted by bottomless despondency incurred by deadly routine, hounded by financial insecurity, and engulfed by mass mediocrity, Keats's creatures bear so little resemblance to fact—as I have observed it on Long Island and

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Hours of Truth

"The Day the Money Stopped," by **Brendan Gill** (Doubleday. 193 pp. \$2.95), examines the ties—other than the expected inheritance—that bind the members of a wealthy family.

By Milton Crane

BRENDAN GILL'S second novel, a worthy successor to "The Trouble of One House," is the product of a fine sensibility and a remarkable craftsmanship. "The Day the Money Stopped" lovingly examines the bonds of affection, interest, resentment, and hatred that unite a scapegrace elder brother, Charlie Morrow, with his stiff, proper, and successful younger brother, Richard, and his gentle and pliant sister Kathie after the death of their father. Mr. Gill brings together these three in Richard's office on the day that Charlie has come to learn the contents of their father's will—"the day the money stopped."

With consummate skill the Morrows (and Richard's secretary Ellen Wells, the only other character of the book) create themselves and their lives in conversation and suggested action. Strictly speaking, nothing happens in the course of the novel's single day; but we are left knowing everything we need to know about the Morrows' past: the inexplicable indulgence of the father to Charlie, now so rudely ended; the mystery of the mother's death; the collapse of Charlie's marriage; and the new hope for Charlie and Ellen. That all this—and more—should be clearly and solidly set forth in a few hours' time in the single setting of Richard's office without declining into a novelistic equivalent of a well-made play is a measure of Mr. Gill's art.

For the action of "The Day the Money Stopped" is truly action, action of psychology and character, and yet it is externalized as satisfactorily as one could wish. We are shown Charlie on the threshold of his brother's office, beginning a conversation with Ellen, whom he has just met. In two dozen pages Mr. Gill has Charlie condemn himself out of his own mouth as irresponsible, extravagant, and faithless; but he also succeeds (miraculously, if one considers how often playwrights and novelists

are shipwrecked in this effort) in making us believe that Charlie is a genuinely winning personality. This he must do, of course, if he is to convince us that Charlie can persuade Ellen, after a few hours' acquaintance, that he will be able to obliterate the memory of her unhappy marriage (which also has its roots in the tangled history of the Morrows). It may be, indeed, that we more readily believe in Charlie's power to beguile than in his own transformation—the former being visible and the latter only presumptive, though highly probable.

The conception and construction of "The Day the Money Stopped" suggest a play rather than a novel. We see Charlie first in his relation to Richard, then to Kathie, and finally to Ellen; but each relationship undergoes a change under our eyes, and the ultimate resolution, effected by the quixotry and filial love of the prodigal, is the alteration in Charlie himself.

The dramatic feeling of the novel is enhanced by the economy and deftness of Mr. Gill's construction of scenes and by his admirable handling of dialogue. We may hope that Mr. Gill will not make us wait five years for his third novel.



Brendan Gill—"... economy and deftness."



—Jacket for "The Day the Money Stopped."

Verve and Versatility

"Able Baker and Other Stories," by **Joseph Whitehill** (Little, Brown. 302 pp. \$3.75), is a collection of tales by a promising young writer with a fondness for violent climaxes.

By William Peden

"ABLE BAKER AND OTHERS" is the first published volume of a twenty-nine year-old American author whose short stories have already won an Atlantic "First" Award, an O. Henry Award, and two Ellery Queen's Awards. Joseph Whitehill is an accomplished storyteller with a penchant for variety: his settings range from below decks of a merchant ship to the swimming pool of a lush Las Vegas resort, a munitions factory in Kansas, and a skiing retreat in the New Hampshire mountains; his characters, in addition to Chief Engineer Able Baker, include a Mexican skin diver, an amorous rooming-house proprietress, and a Greek muscle-man.

In Chief Engineer Baker Mr. Whitehill has produced a character with the resourcefulness of Hopalong Cassidy, the vitality of Tugboat Annie, and the sagacity of Ephraim Tutt. Able Baker is likely to please a good many readers; it will be interesting to see whether this fat, amiable, and compassionate human being follows his predecessors to the pot of gold at the foot of the Hollywood rainbow. Mr. Whitehill knows intimately and understands well this genial sailor and his ship, the *Serafina*. Around such an incident as Baker's efforts to repair a broken fan belt in the blower