

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISEASES OF ADOLESCENCE

ISN'T THE MALE animal *ever* going to learn that more and more space, bigger and better weapons of whatever sort, aren't really going to solve any problems of human relations? Arthur C. Clarke, in "The Morality of Space" (SR Oct. 5), asserts that the necessity of coping with the elements of space in order to survive will preclude men from fighting each other, when he has already admitted that the problems of obtaining national supremacy in space are being discussed. The early Elizabethan navigators who opened up the world as Clarke puts it did it much less from a sense of wonder than a sense of grab. So long as it is felt that "to restore a sense of wonder to the world" can only be done by grabbing more and more physical space it looks as if "humanity will succumb to the diseases of its adolescence."

EVE TILTON.

Kent, O.

MIRACLE DRUG

ARTHUR CLARKE is possibly over-optimistic in failing to weigh the effect of the heavy hand of the politician on the make-up of the exploring and, particularly, the colonizing parties. But whether directed by scientist or commissar, there can be little question that his remedy is the specific miracle drug for at least the temporary remission of many of our ills.

RAYMOND D. SMITH.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

LORD RUSSELL'S "TRIAL"

BRAND BLANSHARD in his appreciative review of Lord Russell's "Why I Am Not a Christian" (SR Oct. 5) quite appropriately refers to the shameful episode of Russell's exclusion from the faculty of the College of the City of New York. But his statement that Judge McGeehan, "tried the suit and duly pronounced Russell unfit to teach" gives an entirely false impression of what actually happened. The suit was never tried, and although the judge did pronounce Russell unfit there was nothing "duly" about the way this was accomplished.

The taxpayer-parent who brought the suit challenged the right of the Board of Higher Education to employ Russell on a number of grounds: that he was an alien, that he had not been selected by competitive examination, and that he was morally unsuitable. The Board, acting through its city appointed lawyer, the Corporation Counsel, challenged the right of this taxpayer-parent to bring the proceeding and the validity of the grounds alleged. Normally the judge before whom such a challenge is argued does no more than determine whether, on the facts stated, a claim for relief has been made out. If he decides this in the affirmative then the party against whom the proceeding is instituted, in this instance the Board of Higher Education, is

given the opportunity of disputing the facts by an answer. Only then could there be any trial with the taking of testimony, any decision having the effect, as here, of banning Russell.

But in this case Judge McGeehan not only decided that a sufficient claim had been asserted, but took it on himself to deprive the Board of all opportunity to dispute the facts. So he made a final decision on the merits as though there had, in fact, been a trial. This was all the more shocking because Russell was not represented and, after the axe had fallen, was denied the right to contest the result.

There is one other aspect of this matter that needs to be recalled—the role played by Mayor LaGuardia. For he instructed his appointee, the Corporation Counsel, not to appeal the decision. And when the Board tried to appeal through independent counsel the courts ruled that it had no right to do so. One of the lawyers who acted for the Board (without fee) now sits on the United States Supreme Court—John M. Harlan.

It should also be noted that no one has ever paid attention to Judge McGeehan's ruling that the professors at the City College must be appointed by competitive examination.

OSMOND K. FRAENKEL.

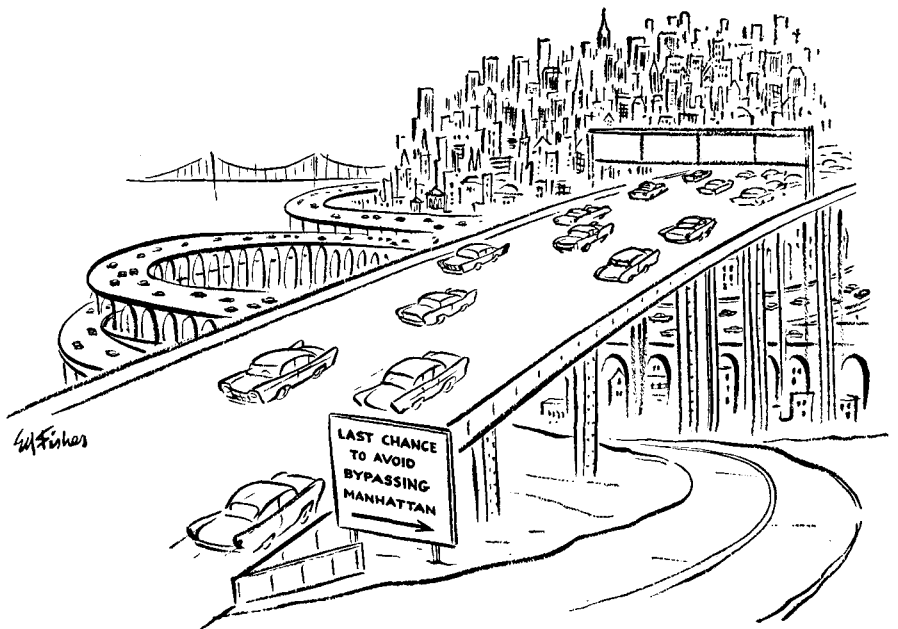
New York, N. Y.

ALCOHOLIC HAZARD

REGARDING "Smudging the Subconscious" (SR Oct. 5), I would like to add that the subliminal machine might be extremely hazardous to alcoholics, particularly considering the number of breweries and distilleries which sponsor TV programs.

LARRY STORY.

Melstone, Mont.



UNKNOWN SUBJECT

OBJECTIONABLE as most television commercials are, at least we are free now to turn down the volume or leave the room. Are we to be subjected to commercials without our even knowing it?

JAY A. ROSAEN.

Redwood City, Calif.

SICKENED

AT FIRST I thought N. C. must be using a hypothetical case to point out the trend so obvious in our mass communications. When I realized he wasn't I was first angered, then sickened. That such a "thing" actually exists is staggering.

MRS. G. R. DEERING.

Manhattan Beach, Calif.

IDIOTS, UNITE!

HERE IS ONE appropriately gray-headed lady (of normally pacifist tendencies) who will shout "Shoot if you must . . . ! But spare your country's id!" Id-iots of the world, unite!

DORIS BEARD.

San Francisco, Calif.

FULL OF TIMID PEOPLE

IT IS EVIDENT that a great deal must be learned about these new "subliminal" dangers to the human mind. We cannot afford to wait for "1984." The mental balance, the very sanity of our people is at stake. I suggest that the Government investigate the nature of the human mind. In that way we may hope to avoid the consequences of a brave new world top-full of timid people.

HARVARD HOLLENBERG.

New York, N. Y.



BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

The Innocent and the Damned

MOLLY KAZAN'S new play "The Egghead," constitutes a reasonably engrossing and well-written drama of political intrigue. A passionately liberal university professor finds a former Negro student who is being investigated by the FBI as a suspected Communist. The professor refuses to cooperate with the FBI beyond giving his word that he will not reveal the FBI's visit to the ex-student. Furthermore, he stubbornly schedules a lecture to his class by the suspected Red. The mysteries of whether the suspect really is a Communist, and which of six people who knew about the FBI visit tipped him off, make good suspense. Yet Mrs. Kazan is attempting something more than entertainment. Because her own husband once felt it his duty to reveal the names of Communists who had been in the Party with him, and suffered the disdain of many for so doing, Mrs. Kazan has a real grievance here. Her egghead professor becomes a scathing portrait of the well-meaning "liberal" who condemned Mr. Kazan's "informing." And, conversely, she defends cooperation with the FBI by holding that the danger of subversion is greater than some of us believe it to be. As arbiter she sets up an ex-Communist German refugee professor. This man, who has been through the European mill, sees Americans as irresponsibly naive about the whole business; like Graham Greene, he decries our "innocence." His message and Mrs. Kazan's is that we should grow up and toughen up.

"The Egghead" is most effective when attacking the "intellectual" who refuses to see the total picture. Its most memorable moment comes when the professor's gentle young wife finally lets him have it. "Talk about prejudice," she says. "You don't like the younger generation. You think they're going to the dogs—and you don't like Germans—and you don't like Catholics—and you don't like Southerners. That's quite a list!" But because the playwright wants to present the picture as it is in life, such dramatic outbursts occur only occasionally. And the majority of the evening is concerned with making each necessary event in the demonstration seem plausible. In this the performers provide valuable assistance. Never letting herself be more-or-less heroic than any really good wife, Phyllis Love is heartbreakingly

genuine. And Karl Malden takes pains not to let the professor disintegrate into caricature.

But for all its plausibility and moments of excitement, "The Egghead" has important shortcomings. The Red threat seems mild and vague rather than urgent. The professor seems too politically unsophisticated to pass, let alone teach, a course in political science. And at the end of the play, when Mrs. Kazan suddenly tries to defend the man she has destroyed, she states his value without being able to demonstrate it or even to find for him a positive course of action. Thus, at the same time that we applaud her for not ending with a phony action or speech, we are also left unsatisfied, because of the imponderables remaining to be thrashed out before we can conclusively judge the ethics of the play. Mrs. Kazan might well be persuaded to apply some of her honesty and talent to a second play exploring the Egghead-in-Transition. Or, at the very least, to add to the published edition of the play a Shavian forecast of what happens to all the characters.

PETER USTINOV'S "Romanoff and Juliet" was reviewed in these columns (SR Oct. 13, 1956). Now, the Broadway production seems just as hilarious when Mr. Ustinov is doing his comic routines and just as gratuitous when he is not. The comedy defeats itself with its whimsical artificiality and superfluity of witty embroidery. The notion of a zany but practical prime minister in a tiny country that keeps the peace by "balance of feebleness" is delightful. But the broad parodies of the American and Soviet embassies and the unreal love affair between the American ambassador's daughter and the Soviet ambassador's son dissipate our interest. But if fun and wit are enough, Mr. Ustinov gives the funniest and wittiest performance of the season.

THE Tyrone Guthrie production of Schiller's "Mary Stuart" succeeds in making a rather remote historical drama surprisingly unoboring. Eva Le Gallienne and Irene Worth contrast splendidly as the two queens, and the supporting cast plays with unpretentious conviction. Donald Oenslager's fluid scenery and Alvin Colt's beautiful costumes contribute enormously to this memorable production.

—HENRY HEWES.

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