

Society on May 7, 1895. By coincidence that was the same year in which Marconi, who had been experimenting with a homemade apparatus, first sent signals over a mile. Nearby is a further Soviet claim on behalf of P. L. Shilling, who is alleged to have put on the first public demonstration of the electro-magnetic telegraph in St. Petersburg in 1832. That, oddly enough, was the same year when Samuel F. B. Morse began to work on the telegraph which was demonstrated to the U. S. Congress in 1844 and later won the acclaim of the world, less, I imagine, Russia, where the idea was old hat.

A display depicting Artek, the children's camp in the Crimea, which I visited in 1953, occupies one whole bright corner at the New York showing. Artek, as the billboards advertise, "processes" 7,000 children a year, among them 200-300 boys and girls from foreign countries. Happy little dolls in the form of happy little campers are shown bouncing all over Artek's grounds in the display, several of them, dark skinned. My memories of Artek are vivid indeed and I can still hear the spirited roar of the children as they sang their songs, as they surged around me, on order from their counselors, insisting I stay for lunch. Nor can I forget the lady doctor who directed the operation and who plunged her fork into a steak, lifted the meat whole off her plate, bit off a mouthful and with fork still in hand, asked me whether camps of this type existed in the U. S.

An extraordinary professional program for full press coverage of the Soviet Exhibition was mounted in New York, and writers were even provided in advance with pre-gummed stickers to affix to their calendars so they wouldn't forget the date of the press preview. Soviet delegates were at the door to hand out press kits. Something of a snafu occurred when in mid-showing on preview day the entire building was cleared of American press representatives in advance of President Eisenhower's arrival, leaving him alone with the police, detectives, Secret Service, State Department assistants, Russian press, and the Russian exhibitors. The authorities finally relented. Holders of White House press credentials were ushered through the door, then holders of working press cards and finally anybody with a police department press credential. There was a tremendous crush when the President arrived and began a rather brisk walk through the Exhibit with Mr. Kozlov at his elbow, a rather harried interpreter with his head wedged between their shoulders, and the press at their heels. At one point Cabot

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THE PHOENIX NEST

Wrecks to Riches

Edited by Martin Levin

ON PASSING A SMALL PLACE ON FIFTH AVENUE WHERE A BUILDING ONCE WAS

I've passed you several dozen times,
And (now your neighbors stand
without you)

I can't recall your face or lines,
Or anything at all about you.
Where did they take your bones,
and what

Became of your partitions?
The only epitaph you've got
Reads "Carpo Demolition."

Were you leather and luggage—
linen and lace,
Shirts or silver or silkware (Indo)?
Dowdy or dashing or fair of face?
Did I never pause to look in your
window?

Were you made of concrete, brick
or stone?

Were you columned or Victorian?
Were you plagued by age or broken
bones?

Did you have a past to glory in?

Did they give you biers and bearers
(pall)

And at the last lament you?
Or simply bring the wrecker's ball
And, quickly, uncement you.

—RICHARD LEMON.

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PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS PO-AMERIKANSKI

MY SAD and restless Russian soul is always fascinated by the Americans' supreme devotion to their constitutional right of pursuing happiness. By that, and also by the newly developed do-it-yourself American way of life. Having fled my own country with happiness pursuing hard on my heels, I cannot but admire the perseverance, the ruthlessness, the abandon with which the Americans try to achieve their goal. They devour a great multitude of books on the art of being happy, each containing a remarkable set of do-it-yourself instructions toward the ultimate objective.

I must confess that I have fallen under the spell of the chase although we Russians are not a do-it-yourself people. I have tried successively, if not successfully, to find happiness

through losing weight by eating more and through gaining weight by eating less; through living alone and liking it and through living with two sisters-in-law and not liking it; through influencing people and making enemies and through letting others influence me and making friends. I have also lived dangerously and the result of those experiments is a fine fat book on the mating habits of a small Russian community in New Hampshire called *Peytonskaya Ploschad*.

I have tried to achieve the state of nirvana by meditation and cogitation. It would have worked out well if I could only concentrate on pleasant subjects. But invariably some horrible thoughts crept into my meditations and cogitations, and I had to give up the method.

I have tried out a bed of nails. Sleeping on a bed of nails has its points but I would advise you against it. Suppose you grow accustomed to the bed of nails and begin to like it, and then suddenly a few nails break, or become dulled or dislocated, and your sleep is ruined. You toss restlessly on your bed. You are uncomfortable; you suffer; you are no longer happy.

I do like the peace of mind method of gaining happiness but that, too, has a flaw: it will bring you complete happiness only if you know that there is at least one person who envies you your peace of mind. If no one envies you your peace of mind you shall never have it.

—M. K. ARGUS.

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FUNNY MAN

WHEN they were filming "The Good Earth," the late Walter Connolly played the part of the comedy uncle. One morning's shooting on location was occupied by Connolly telling amusing stories to Chinese children. They had rounded up half a hundred of them from the Los Angeles environs. Connolly sat on a bench and told his stories to them with comic gestures and grimaces. It was the business of the Chinese children to respond to this with hearty laughter. And they did.

At noontime Connolly was seated alone eating his location lunch sandwiches when a little four-year-old youngster approached and studied him for a considerable period. Then sum-

moning his courage, he asked, "Are you the funny man?" Connolly with appropriate gestures and grimaces, answered, "Yes, I am the funny man." The boy's next question was: "Why don't I laugh?"

—HOWARD LINDSAY.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

IT'S ALWAYS hard to decide how much advice to take from a professional and when to strike out on your own. A lot of people who aren't doctors know quite a bit about illnesses from having been sick. If a person breaks his leg, there are a few little things he knows about broken legs that the doctor will never understand without breaking his.

One of the bitterest conflicts between amateur and professional is in the matter of house design. Architects know more about houses, but the greatest experts in the world on how a man and his wife live in a house are the man and his wife. Particularly his wife. Architects are impatient with wives who draw their dream homes on the backs of brown paper bags. Wives are angered by architects who are trying to build them the *architects'* idea of their perfect home. It includes none of the impractical little suggestions on the back of the paper bag.

Architects haven't been used as much as they should have been and it's partially their own fault. Architects ought to try to understand that people don't always want a house where there is a place for everything. If there is a place to put everything, most people put it someplace else. What people want is a few odd cubby holes that are not designed for anything. They want a closet or a small room that just isn't *meant* for anything.

Owners like to convert parts of their house into other parts. About twenty-five years ago, it was popular to convert cellars into playrooms. ("Whoopee rooms.") Now architects are building finished playrooms into every home. They aren't being used as much as they were, either. Ping-pong tables are down and the box with the Christmas tree lights is piled on top of the bar. Someday a bright young architect is going to make a fortune just by understanding people. He's going to sell plans for converting those store-bought playrooms into fruit cellars, coal bins, and storage places for old ice skates.

Architects have got to learn that people don't want houses that are smarter than they are.

—ANDREW ROONEY.

BELLES-LETTRES

From the Call to the Fall

"The Prophetic Voice in Modern Fiction," by William R. Mueller (Association Press; Haddam House. 156 pp. \$3.50), explores the religious themes in the novels of six writers from Kafka to Camus. R. W. Lewis, who teaches at Rutgers University, is the author of *"The Picaresque Saint."*

By R. W. B. Lewis

THE ANALYSIS of modern literature in religious terms has become a major American intellectual enterprise in recent years; at the moment it looks like the most serious (in several senses) literary development since the peak years of the New Criticism. There must be many reasons for this critical shift. But chief among them, certainly, are those summarized by William R. Mueller, in the well-balanced introduction to his book *"The Prophetic Voice in Modern Fiction"* (a book written for Haddam House, "an editorial venture in the area of religious literature"). Mr. Mueller points to "a paradoxical situation," wherein "much of our ostensibly religious writing" is mawkish, sentimental, flabby, and offensive; while at the same time, "the most profound religious writing is frequently to be found in works which may initially appear to have little or nothing to do" with religious experience. The works in question are the best of twentieth-century fiction. It is in modern novels, says Mr. Mueller, that we hear the voices we need to hear—voices resembling to some extent those of the ancient prophets, announcing and commenting on the deeply disturbing spiritual condition of the age. (Mr. Mueller's use of the word "prophetic," incidentally, is both precise and illuminating.)

In view of the present situation, Mr. Mueller has had the excellent idea of bringing each of six modern novels together with the Old and New Testaments in a kind of dialogue on

some of the great issues affecting the nature and destiny of man. The novels chosen are at least among the best of our time, though some, perhaps, were picked less on their own merits than as illustrative of a pre-existent theme. The themes, in addition, fulfill an ancient and traditional order, and the novels, too, are so arranged—thus: the theme of vocation (Joyce's *"A Portrait of the Artist"*); sin or "the fall" (Camus's *"The Fall"*); judgment (Kafka's *"The Trial"*); suffering (Faulkner's *"The Sound and the Fury"*); love (Graham Greene's *"The Heart of the Matter"*), and redemption or the theme of the redeemable "remnant" (Silone's *"A Handful of Blackberries"*). Modern fiction, as inspected by Mr. Mueller, ambiguously re-enacts the basic Christian career from the divine call through sin, judgment, and suffering to acceptance, love, and redemption.

MR. MUELLER'S idea is not only good, it is courageous; for he has willingly exposed himself to attacks from all sides. For one thing, the Bible is not everywhere regarded as adequate for the full reach of the dialogue he proposes; many items which have agitated the Christian spirit over the centuries originated not in the Bible but in the dogmatizing of the Church Fathers and the ruminations of the Christian community in council assembled. For another, more austere literary critics are ready to pounce on any seeming "distortion" of a text due to extraliterary interests. It may be emphasized that Mr. Mueller does his knowing best to avoid that danger. His aim is to "let the Bible and modern fiction speak freely from their own inner beings"; the novel speaks first in each chapter, then the Bible, then the two voices are compared. Yet one feels, after all, that the Bible has been allowed to settle the terms and topics of discussion in advance; so that if the novels speak freely, they do so on matters not necessarily of their own choosing.

We are in dense cultural thickets here, where every man has his own notion of the right way out. But for this reviewer the danger is not any loss of novelistic "integrity"; it is the possible loss of a religious content in modern fiction which is not susceptible of formulation in Biblical terms, and hence may be overlooked. New

