

## The Critics Go to the Poll

**FIFTY** titles published between January 1 and May 30 were nominated by one or more of forty-eight leading newspaper critics in *SR*'s spring survey of important new books. "Midcentury," John Dos Passos's sequel to "U.S.A.," heads the list with thirteen votes. Second place goes to "Resistance, Rebellion, and Death," essays by the late Albert Camus, chosen by eleven critics; while nine favored Irving Stone's biographical romance about Michelangelo, "The Agony and the Ecstasy." Eight of the reviewers agreed on three books about faraway places, and six came out for Graham Greene's "A Burnt-Out Case."

### THIRTEEN VOTES

**MIDCENTURY.** By John Dos Passos. Houghton Mifflin. \$5.95.

In this novel, which utilizes many of the technical devices that gave "U.S.A." its unique quality, the "camera eye" of the author is focused on labor's bitter struggle for power. (Bradley, Butcher, Cross, Culligan, Derleth, Flowers, Freedley, Klein, de Morinni, Reid, Tinkle, Williams, Wyllie.)

### ELEVEN VOTES

**RESISTANCE, REBELLION, AND DEATH.** By Albert Camus. Knopf. \$4.

Twenty-three essays, written between 1943 and 1957 and selected by the author, give insight into his artistry, philosophy, and character. (Alexander, Beatty, Derleth, Menn, de Morinni, Nordell, Peckham, J. K. Reid, J. K. Sherman, Tinkle, Wyllie.)

### NINE VOTES

**THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY.** By Irving Stone. Doubleday. \$5.95.

Michelangelo, the Renaissance painter, sculptor, poet, and architect, is vividly evoked, if somewhat bowdlerized, in this biographical novel. (H. Alexander, J. E. Alexander, Bond, Butcher, Grunewald, Peckham, Perkin, Reid, Scratch.)

### EIGHT VOTES

**JAPANESE INN.** By Oliver Statler. Random House. \$6.50.

Much of Japan's colorful past flows through this semifictional story of the Minaguchi, a 400-year-old wayfarer's inn on the Tokaido, the great road between Tokyo and Kyoto. (Cox, Cromie, Culligan, Haas, Hogan, Laycock, de Morinni, Parsons.)

**RING OF BRIGHT WATER.** By Gavin Maxwell. Dutton. \$5.

A remote island on the northwest coast of Scotland is the setting, and two enchanting otters play the leads in an account of a modern-day Robinson Crusoe. (Bingham, Douglas, Grieg, Lawrence, MacGregor, McSherry, Scratch, Troy.)

**THE WHITE NILE.** By Alan Moorehead. Harper. \$5.95.

Richard Burton, David Livingstone, Samuel Baker, and Gordon of Khartoum are among the explorer-authors who appear in this study of the men who helped pioneer, and then wrote about, one of the world's greatest rivers. (Barkham, Butcher, Brunk, Douglas, Grunewald, McManis, Parsons, Sherman.)

### SIX VOTES

**A BURNT-OUT CASE.** By Graham Greene. Viking. \$3.95.

A spiritually depleted architect seeks refuge in a leprosy in the African jungle and finds salvation, of a sort, until the outside world bursts in. (Barkham, Brady, Chaney, Cross, Sherman, Thorpe.)

### OTHER SELECTIONS

**ABANDONED: The Story of the Greely Arctic Expedition 1881-1884.** By A. L. Todd. McGraw-Hill. \$5.95.

**THE AMERICA OF GEORGE ADE.**

Edited by Jean Shepherd. Putnam. \$4.

**ANNIE'S CAPTAIN.** By Kathryn Hulme. Little, Brown. \$5.

## The Newspaper Critics

HOLMES ALEXANDER, *Tampa Tribune*

JAMES E. ALEXANDER, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

JOHN BARKHAM, *Saturday Review Syndicate*

RICHMOND C. BEATTY, *Nashville Tennessean*

MARY BINGHAM, *Louisville Courier-Journal*

ALICE DIXON BOND, *Boston Herald*

VAN ALLEN BRADLEY, *Chicago Daily News*

CHARLES A. BRADY, *Buffalo Evening News*

CHARLOTTE BRUNK, *Des Moines Register & Tribune*

FANNY BUTCHER, *Chicago Tribune*

J. C. CHANEY, *Raleigh News & Observer*

L.D.T. COX, JR., *Charlotte [N.C.] News*

ROBERT CROMIE, *Chicago Tribune*

LESLIE CROSS, *Milwaukee Journal*

GLENDY CULLIGAN, *Washington Post*

AUGUST DERLETH, *Madison, Wis., Capital Times*

MAURICE DOLBIER, *New York Herald Tribune*

MARY STAHLMAN DOUGLAS, *Nashville Banner*

PAUL FLOWERS, *Memphis Commercial Appeal*

GEORGE FREEDLEY, *New York Morning Telegraph*

MICHAEL GRIEG, *San Francisco Examiner*

HUDSON GRUNEWALD, *Washington Star*

VICTOR P. HAAS, *Omaha World-Herald*

WILLIAM HOGAN, *San Francisco Chronicle*

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS 1807-1886. By Martin B. Duberman. Houghton Mifflin. \$7.50.

THE CHATEAU. By William Maxwell. Knopf. \$4.95.

CHINA COURT. By Rumer Godden. Viking. \$4.50.

CITIZEN OF NEW SALEM. By Paul Horgan. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. \$3.75.

DOSTOYEVSKY: A Human Portrait. By Robert Payne. Knopf. \$5.75.

THE DOUBLE AXE. By Lauren R. Stevens. Scribners. \$3.95.

EAST ASIA: The Great Tradition. By Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank. Houghton Mifflin. \$12.50.

EINSTEIN ON PEACE. Edited by Otto Nathan and Heinz Norden. Simon & Schuster. \$8.50.

FACT OF CRYSTAL. By Abbie Huston Evans. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.75.

FATE IS THE HUNTER. By Ernest K. Gann. Simon & Schuster. \$6.

THE FUTURE OF MANKIND. By Karl Jaspers. University of Chicago. \$5.95.

THE GAY PLACE. By William Brammer. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.95.

GIVE ME MYSELF. By Susan Sherman. World. \$3.75.

THE GREAT LAKES FRONTIER. By John Anthony Caruso. Bobbs-Merrill. \$6.50.

HARVEST ON THE DON. By Mikhail Sholokhov. Knopf. \$5.

THE HERO. By Derek Monsey. Knopf. \$3.50.

A HOUSE CALLED MEMORY. By Richard Collier. Dutton. \$4.

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FRANCIS A. KLEIN, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*

JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE, *Newark News*

EDWARD A. LAYCOCK, *Boston Globe*

MARTHA MACGREGOR, *New York Post*

JOHN E. MC MANIS, *Detroit News*

JACK MCPHAUL, *Chicago Sun-Times*

ELIZABETH A. MCSHERRY, *Hartford Courant*

THORPE MENN, *Kansas City Star*

PEGGY DE MORINNI, *Buffalo Courier*

ROD NORDELL, *Christian Science Monitor*

MARGARET PARSONS, *Worcester Evening Gazette*

STANTON PECKHAM, *Denver Post*

ROBERT L. PERKIN, *Denver Rocky Mountain News*

STAN PROGAR, *Los Angeles Herald Express*

MARGARET WALRAVEN REID, *Wichita Falls [Tex.] Times*

WALTER SCRATCH, *Hollywood [Calif.] Citizen-News*

JOHN K. SHERMAN, *Minneapolis Star*

THOMAS B. SHERMAN, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

ROBERT I. SNAJDR, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

LON TINKLE, *Dallas News*

GEORGE TROY, *Providence Journal*

WIRT WILLIAMS, *Los Angeles Times*

JOHN COOK WYLLIE, *Richmond News Leader*

FREDERICK YEISER, *Cincinnati Enquirer*

# THE LITERARY SAMPLER

## EXCERPTS FROM FORTHCOMING BOOKS

### *Destiny and Toole County, Mont.*

**T**WO YEARS after President Harding took office, the symptoms of madness and badness later said to mark the decade of the 'twenties began to reveal themselves. Already in the spring of 1923, the failure of national prohibition was evident to everyone whose eyes were not sealed by bribes from the illicit liquor dispensers. Each drinker had his favorite speakeasy: these in New York expanded into night clubs with orchestras and floor shows under the expensive protection of the police. In Washington—though still behind the scenes—what proved to be the hottest scandal of recent American history was beginning to boil over a slow fire fed largely by the "Ohio gang." That this was known only to a few was due, perhaps, to the diversions furnished by the other madnests: the Coué craze based on a practice of self-hypnosis supposed to engender peace of mind; the marathon dance in which men and women collapsed and sometimes died after days of continuous dancing; the behavior of the young folk with their hip flasks, rolled stockings and automotive sexual experiment, and the controversy over Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, victims of the red-baiting hysteria which had caught so few reds but so many innocent citizens. But in the spring of 1923, the doings of the Ohio gang and its disciples were becoming known to the President of the United States and would soon, after his tragic death in August, engross the attention of most of the American people.

As spring moved into summer, however, in that tragic year, 1923, public attention was further diverted by a flurry of excitement in the state of Montana. Writers who reflect on the phases of American history have since seen that episode as peculiarly symptomatic of the age—of all our frontier ages, indeed, when a last-minute miracle saved the lucky adolescent nation from disaster.

The thing has happened often in this country [wrote Elmer Davis more than fifteen years later] on a larger scale. The European crop failure that got us out of the slump of the Seventies, the Klondike gold that helped cure the hard times of the Nineties, were

as unpredictable as the discovery of oil in Montana, and such things created the state of mind of the Twenties, in which everything was possible.

The oil seemed to the people of that northwestern state the direct expression of the Almighty's gratitude for good works. For Montana's powers—that-be had gone far out on a limb to save the newly poor of that land.

All the dry-farming areas were going broke in the early Twenties and families were moving away by the thousand. The leading men of Toole County, Mont., decided to stop that drift; they set all the destitute dry-landers to work building country roads, and paid them off with the county warrants. The roads led to nowhere in particular, the warrants were a local currency of dubious and diminishing value outside the county, but when at last the shortage of foreign exchange was about to wreck the experiment, somebody struck oil. Then the roads were needed to get to the oil fields and the warrants were easily paid off with taxes on the oil companies.

But like many a community in the high, wide and handsome days of the expanding frontier, Toole County was not content to relax and enjoy the return of prosperity. No, they must assist Divine Providence in leading them on to a bigger and better place in the sun.

No wonder that men who had had such a signal proof that Destiny was

on their side overreached themselves by offering a second challenge to probability.

The particular challenge had a comic look to more adult and realistic outsiders, though its consequences were serious enough to its promoters. The challenge was a prize fight. If Champion Jack Dempsey and Challenger Tommy Gibbons could be induced to stage a bout in the town of Shelby, county seat of Toole County, the community would become the Mecca of fight fans from coast to coast, from Canada to the Gulf. Shelby (population 2,000) would become a thriving and splendid city and the future of the county if not of the entire state would be assured.

The reason Elmer Davis so long remembered this ephemeral episode was that he was objectively involved. As they had foreseen the sardonic overtones of the Ford peace crusade eight years earlier, the editors of the *New York Times* were quick to perceive the Shelby possibilities and sent a reporter to cover the fight whose wit, they knew, would be equal to it.

The fight was scheduled for Independence Day. When Davis arrived, the week before, it was raining in Shelby. Perhaps it was the weather—the deep mud through which he had to wade and the leaden look from the skies with which Destiny was regarding the whole of Toole County—that made his preliminary by-line columns so pessimistic. It was not, certainly, any shadow of foreboding among the people. The Fate that had disclosed the gusher at the precise brink of bankruptcy could not let them down. That by June 30 they were already \$100,000 short on the money they had promised the Dempsey management led the reporters who had foregathered to wire their papers that the fight would be postponed if not canceled. But none of them understood the true gambling spirit of Shelby, once it was sure that the Almighty had loaded the dice.

Meanwhile, Davis took the pulse of the people. He pointed to the fact that the wife and kiddies of Tommy Gibbons were already at Shelby.

Domesticity [he wrote] is one reason why the populace of the Northwest is mostly pulling for Gibbons. A fam-



Elmer Davis—"we cannot depend on Fate to deal us an ace off the bottom of the deck."