

# A moving plea to subscribers on the move

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But since your cooperation is essential in helping us solve one of them, we hope you won't mind wading through the next few paragraphs to find out how you can help us save money, improve subscription service, and continue *Saturday Review's* editorial growth.

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We would rather put that same money and manpower to work on the editorial side—continuing to add to *Saturday Review* new and important material to increase your reading enjoyment each week.

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## Not a Million Laughs

COMEDY, which not so long ago was painfully absent from our screens, is now present, almost equally painfully, in abundance. Young Stanley Shapiro is perhaps primarily responsible for this state of things. The success of his "Pillow Talk" a few years back undoubtedly inspired the present cycle of frothy, handsomely dressed, and slyly suggestive pictures that seem to be coming at us from all directions—including Mr. Shapiro himself. His current "That Touch of Mink," costarring Cary Grant and Doris Day, is a deft reworking of the same basic situations that served him so well in his earlier films, and as such it towers above its contemporaries. Unfortunately, although this is intended as praise for a picture that abounds in bright moments and even brighter lines, it is actually no tribute at all—simply a statement of fact. It is no trick for an average man to tower above midgets.

And midgets are what we are getting these days, mite-sized comedy ideas woefully inflated by their writers and disastrously mismanaged by their costly but noncomic stars. Take, for example, "The Notorious Landlady," with Kim Novak in the title role. Miss Novak may be decorated enough in the series of costumes she designed for herself, but her fixed expression of gloomy seductiveness hardly sets a key for sprightly comedy. Nor for that matter does the strangely muddled script by Larry Gelbart and Blake Edwards. It vacillates between risqué sophistication, a supine murder mystery, and Mack Sennett slapstick, with the last—a chase cleverly (and appropriately) cut to the "Pirates of Penzance" overture—apparently introduced as a last-ditch measure to establish once and for all that humor was intended. Jack Lemmon, whether screwing up his courage to sip a drink that might be poisoned, or dashing down two flights of stairs preparatory to bursting open a locked door, renders the script an assistance beyond the call of duty; but Fred Astaire brings nothing beyond his customary jaunty walk to his role of a State Department attaché stationed in London.

Charlton Heston, out of togas at last, is as unlikely a choice for comedy as Miss Novak, and proves it beyond all doubt in "The Pigeon That Took Rome." Working with a dour intensity, he knits his noble brow and shouts through his magnificent teeth and strides the streets of Rome at double-quick march in a vain attempt to translate

frantic activity into hectic humor. Not that the script provides him with a great deal to go on. Derived from Donald Downes's novel "The Easter Dinner," it puts Heston, an American line captain at Anzio, in Rome as an undercover agent during the last months of the Nazi occupation.

What follows is almost a catalogue of bad jokes. A pregnant girl in search of a husband is unleashed against the unsuspecting captain and his highly susceptible sergeant, Harry Guardino; and, as the final boff, there is a wedding that must be hustled through so that the girl can keep a pressing engagement with the stork. Carrier pigeons supplied by the U.S. Army are served up as squab for an Easter dinner, and the captain's guileless Italian underground helpers substitute German-trained pigeons in the cotes. These promptly fly all his hard-gained military secrets right back to Nazi headquarters.

Our ultimate breakthrough from *Anzio*, the film suggests, was the result of a wild bit of misinformation concocted by the captain to confuse the Nazis, but flown straight to the beachhead by a lone, surviving squab from our side.

Quite apart from yielding an astonishingly low quotient of laughs, the film is also tasteless in detail, ugly in its outlook on life and people, and a disservice to both the American forces and the Italian underground. "But it's only a comedy," producer, writer, director Melville Shavelson may explain. The picture he has put together, unhappily, is no laughing matter.

World War II also supplies the background for a curious hodge-podge called "The Best of Enemies," costarring David Niven and that expert Italian actor, Alberto Sordi. The film gives every evidence of having been drastically and injudiciously edited down. Michael Wilding, for example, simply disappears halfway into the picture—no apologies, no explanation. Despite this, and a script that may know where it is going but is never too clear about how to get there, the film starts from a valid premise for humor—the mutual antagonism between a British and an Italian officer in the desert campaign of 1941. Their growing respect for each other generates a warmth that all but melt away the many ineptitudes, and their grudging admiration touches off smiles that reach far deeper than the mechanical belly laughs of most of today's comedies.

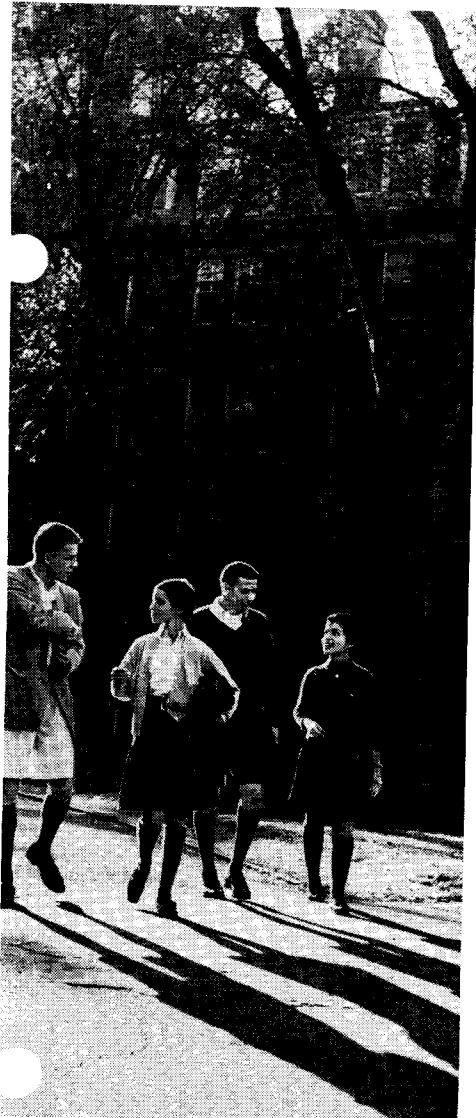
—ARTHUR KNIGHT.



## The Other Cambridge

QUIET of a sort has come to the grounds of Harvard University. Regular students are off on summer vacation and the faculty, of course, is on leave running the government. Minding the store this summer, and ready to take visitors through the grounds on a moment's call, are members of the Crimson Key, an honorary society. Key people must pass a test in the history of Harvard, give a demonstration tour, and prepare research on anecdotes about the place, which are then put in the files for future guides.

We were on the grounds recently, where we reported, as all good tourists



—Monkmeyer.

John Harvards and Cliffies—  
but in Lamont Library, no.

should, to the feet of the statue of John Harvard which surveys Harvard Yard. We thereupon learned, in rapid order, that the Harvard Yard is a yard and not a campus, a word which they use at—you should pardon the expression—Princeton; that John Harvard didn't found the place; and that the statue, which is reputed to be, along with the images of Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia and Abraham Lincoln in Washington, the most photographed in the East, is not really John Harvard at all, but a freshman in the Class of '88 who posed for sculptor Daniel Chester French.

The real truth is—and it is about time it all came out—that Harvard was established by a vote of the Massachusetts Bay Corporation in 1636, sixteen years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. That October the General Court set aside 400 pounds, or one quarter of the colony's tax levy, "towards a schoole or colledge." A dozen freshmen began classes just 324 summers ago, living in one house and taught by one master. The yard was in fact a cow field, and a fence had to be put up to keep the cows and the students separated. Harvard got to be called that because a young Puritan minister died in the autumn of 1638, soon after the seat of learning began to function. His will awarded his books and half his estate to the new college, and in thanks the General Court decided to name it after him. Cambridge, the new city which was growing outside the limits of the yard, was named after the English college where many of the colonists had matriculated. I trust it's all clear so far.

Harvard's freshmen still live in dormitories bordering the Yard, aged buildings entwined with ivy and history. Stoughton Hall is named for William Stoughton who presided at the Salem witch trials in 1692, and is said to have regretted not having burned all the defendants. Stoughton Hall and Halworthy were built with funds collected by the college in 1805 when it ran lotteries to raise money for new freshman dormitories. As questionable as it may now appear, the winning numbers in the two draws were on tickets which had not been sold, and since the college held them no prize was awarded. No riots followed, such being the altruism of Crimson supporters, and the dormitories rose forthwith.

Hollis Hall, where Emerson and

Thoreau lived, and which is still used, was constructed in 1763, and a dozen years later it was being put to patriotic purposes as a barracks for colonial troops. Massachusetts Hall, swathed in ivy, can recall the days of 1720 when it first went up, and lecturers have been haranguing the learners in Harvard Hall since 1760. One of its tender stories involves George Lyman Kittredge, a hard-bitten scholar whose habits of severe gradings were resented by the students. At the end of his last lecture, when it is tradition at the university to applaud the professor, not a sound echoed in the hall. The students filed out, but by the time Kittredge had collected his papers and put on his hat, a long line stretched across the Yard from the Hall to the John Harvard statue. As he appeared the entire assemblage sang Fair Harvard. He listened to it as he walked, and as he came to the line's end he turned, tipped his hat, and was gone.

THERE are times when student exuberance overcomes Harvard's attention to tradition. A famous pump in a corner of the old yard was installed in 1936 to replace the original, which was first put there in 1764. The original blew up when it was fitted with a booby trap that was set off by an unsuspecting professor. The perpetrator of this detonation, a forerunner of the *Organisation de l'Armée Secrète*, was a local Harvard club called the Med Fac which took its name from the medical school then just beginning and which delighted in practical jokes. A famed caper of Med Fac that also had its explosive repercussions involved a letter which it sent to the czar of Russia advising his excellency that he had been nominated for an honorary degree. According to the accounts that are now being bandied about the Yard, the czar was ecstatic on receipt of the news and advised his correspondents he would be in America with the spring to accept the honor. There began a series of expensive gifts that were sent from Russia to his benefactors at Harvard. Some Harvard historians trace the beginnings of the cold war to the day when the news reached the czar that the whole invitation was just a grand college boffola.

Members of the Harvard *Crimson* and the *Lampoon* are among the university's most active pranksters today. Under cover of a snowstorm one year a squad of Rangers from the *Crimson* stole a celebrated ibis that crowns the *Lampoon's* building, and presented it as a token of friendship to the Russian ambassador who was visiting in Boston. He accepted it with pleasure, and was moved to return it only after finding