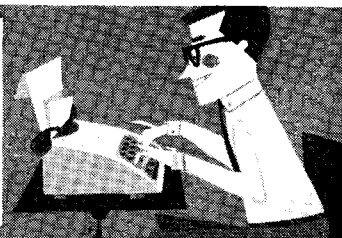


Top of My Head



The Less the Merrier

TELEVISION is such a caliginous art that with the season only just getting into full swing there is already a forecast for the coming season that will erase the mistakes of this season by simply cutting the length of the programs. Hour shows are out. Half-hour shows are in. *Gunsmoke* is *mauvais goût*. *The Munsters* is chic.

Cutting the shows in half is, for many of the new programs, half a step in the right direction. Time of course being only relative, one may watch an hour show and it will seem to be only a few minutes, while watching a half-hour show could seem an eternity. George Burns and the unforgettable Gracie Allen used to do a joke on the Einstein theory of relativity. George explained it to Gracie:

"It's very simple, Gracie. I'll explain it to you. Albert Einstein was a great man. His theory of relativity is like a man kiss-

ing a girl for a minute and it seems like only one second. But a man sitting on a hot stove for one second seems like a whole minute."

And Gracie replied:

"From that Einstein made a living?"

Not only Einstein, Gracie, but the networks seem to be doing pretty well with that theory. And not by only cutting the hour to a half-hour but, according to a headline in *Broadcasting* magazine, "Shorter and Funnier in 1965-66." They're going for laughs next season. And, to make certain, they have a lot of tapes on tap.

Following the pattern of the *Bewitched* show and *The Munsters*, new situation comedies are being developed that lean heavily on fantasy. One such show already being filmed will include an automobile that talks. Why not? We've had a dog that talked, we have a talking horse. No one ever thought of

a parakeet that talks. I suppose it's because a parakeet talks. But Ann Sothern has been engaged to be the talking automobile.

"What are you doing these days, Ann?"

"I'm an automobile."

Trend-following has been a worrisome pattern into which television has fallen for many years. This season Elizabeth Montgomery materialized as a wife who is a witch in *Bewitched* and the show became a top-ranking half-hour. All the other TV wives have been lovable and adorable and we love them and adore them because they are lovable and adorable. It's obvious that it's too late for these lovable and adorable creatures to become witches. But for a change how about a shrew that we can hate? It can be done very simply by changing the *w* to a *b*.

The forecast also states there will be more Westerns but in half-hour form. This development is of course due to the fact that the fast guns of the West have become so quick on the draw that now it takes them only half the time it used to take. Western fans who may feel cheated in losing this extra half-hour are cautioned to be happy the networks did not decide to eliminate Westerns entirely and to remember that half a bonanza is better than none.

The network reasoning for cutting an hour to a half-hour is not quite clear to me. Is it the opinion of the program people that a half-hour show will be half as bad as an hour show? Or are they thinking that in a half-hour show the writing will suddenly seem twice as good? Or is the thinking that for fans who may be discontented with a half-hour program the writing will be twice as bad to make it seem an hour? At any rate, it would seem that now the clock has become the new yardstick for quality entertainment.

But there's a happy side to it. If this trend of shorter programs works out, it may become possible for program



executives to consider once again cutting down to the old Kukla and Ollie fifteen-minute size. And there's a program with which to bring back quality television. There were many of those in the early days of television, including fifteen-minute newscasts before they became half-hour newscasts.

This trend may eventually cut the five-minute weather reports to two and a half minutes. And everyone knows that two and a half minutes of bad weather is better than a half-hour of bad road. If brevity is going to be the new soul of wit, I think I've overstayed.

—GOODMAN ACE.



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SR's Check List of the Week's New Books

Anthologies

NEW WRITINGS BY SWINBURNE: A Medley of Poems, Critical Essays, Hoaxes and Burlesques. Edited by Cecil Y. Lang. Syracuse Univ. Press. \$6.50.

Crime, Suspense

THE GENTLE ASSASSIN. By Clay Richards. Bobbs-Merrill. \$3.50.

Current Affairs

THE FOURTH DIMENSION OF FOREIGN POLICY. By Philip H. Coombs. Harper & Row, for the Council on Foreign Relations. Hardbound, \$3.50. Paperback, \$1.95.

History

THE KNIGHTED SKIES: A Pictorial History of World War I in the Air. By Edward Jablonski. Putnam. \$7.95.

THE SANTO TOMAS STORY. By A. V. H. Hartendorp. McGraw-Hill. \$8.50.

THE THOUSAND DAYS: John Fitzgerald Kennedy as President. Text by Paul Ballot. Citadel. \$4.95 to Dec. 26; \$5.95 thereafter.

Literary History, Criticism

GOETHE: A Critical Introduction. By Henry C. Hatfield. Harvard Univ. Press. \$4.50.

NATHANAEL WEST: The Ironic Prophet. By Victor Comerchero. Syracuse Univ. Press. \$5.95.

ON ACT AND SCENE DIVISION IN THE SHAKESPEARE FIRST FOLIO. By T. W. Baldwin. Southern Illinois University Press. \$5.50.

Miscellany

A NEW DICTIONARY OF BIRDS. By Landborough Thomson. McGraw-Hill. \$17.50.

A NEW LOOK AT ARITHMETIC. By Irving Adler. John Day. \$6.95.

WINES OF ITALY. By Luigi Veronelli. McGraw-Hill. \$20.

Personal History

CHARLES NODIER: Pilot of Romanticism. By A. Richard Oliver. Syracuse Univ. Press. \$5.95.

JOHN GOWER. By John Fisher. New York Univ. Press. \$10.

WITH GOD IN RUSSIA. By Walter Ciszek, S.J., and Daniel L. Flaherty, S.J. McGraw-Hill. \$5.95.

Psychology

EDUCATIONAL TESTING FOR MILLIONS. By Gene R. Hawes. McGraw-Hill. \$6.50.

Reference

LANGENSCHIEDT'S CONCISE GERMAN DICTIONARY (German - English/English - German). By Heinz Messinger and Werner Rudenberg. Barnes & Noble. Thumb-indexed. \$8.50.

Religion, Philosophy

HOBBS STUDIES. Edited by K. C. Brown. Harvard Univ. Press. \$7.50.

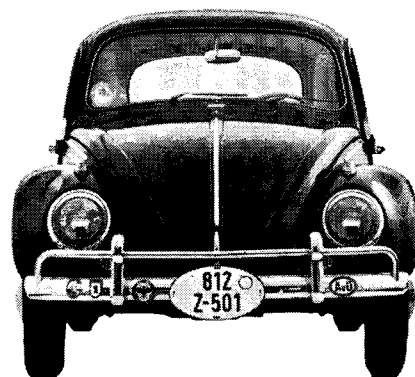
A THOUSAND LIVES AWAY: Buddhism in Contemporary Burma. By Winston L. King. Harvard Univ. Press. \$5.25.

Sociology

SOCIAL WELFARE FORUM, 1964. By the National Conference on Social Welfare. Columbia Univ. Press. \$6.

SOCIAL WELFARE PRACTICE, 1964. By the National Conference on Social Welfare. Columbia Univ. Press. \$6.

SCIENCE AS A CULTURAL FORCE. Edited by Harry Woolf and others. Johns Hopkins. \$3.95. —Compiled by RUTH BROWN.



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