

to follow the example of Wright I can't imagine. In an interview that appeared in the *Paris Review* in 1955 Ellison said, "I recognize no dichotomy between art and protest." He is not living in an ivory tower, as Howe seems to assume, but he is first of all a writer and not merely a Negro writer.

Howe speaks of "the unqualified assertion of self-liberation" in the Fifties. "Freedom can be fought for," he insists, "but it cannot always be willed or asserted into existence." Ellison knows this too, but he also believes that the American Negro writer should take as much advantage as possible of the cultural heritage of all writers, black and white.

Unlike Baldwin, who is a better essayist at the moment than he is a novelist—though that doesn't mean that he isn't a fine novelist—Ellison, in the pieces in this book, never comes close to the standard he set with *Invisible Man*. But the essays are worth reading because of what they tell us about Ellison and his novel. I am tempted to say, paraphrasing Howe on Wright, "The day *Invisible Man* appeared, American culture was changed forever." Not only had an American Negro writer asserted his right to a share of the cultural inheritance of Western civilization; he had justified his claim by producing a novel of high quality and remarkable originality. The struggle for democracy must go on, but the novel is not the best weapon in that combat. What such a novel as *Invisible Man* does do is to demonstrate that the American Negro is deserving of not only political and economic but also cultural equality.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

ON THE FRINGE

Man in the Gray Flannel Physique

Victor Obeck is six feet tall and weighs 210 pounds. At first glance, the impression is that someone has put a suit on the rock of Gibraltar. He is professor of education and director of athletics at New York University. He is also one of the leading movers behind the booming popularity of the isometric system of exercise in this country. His book on the subject, *How To Exercise Without Moving a Muscle* (Pocket Books), will appear at the end of this month.

Illustrated with sixty-seven "how-to" photographs plus drawings, this paperback offers a program of exercises, fifteen each for men, women, and children. Since each exercise is done for only six seconds, the entire series takes only one minute and a half daily, and no special equipment is needed. Note: Professor Obeck advises that the daily ninety seconds of isometrics be followed by three minutes of some vigorous activity—jumping rope, running, etc.—to pep up the cardiovascular (blood and lungs) system.

What is isometrics? "The word comes from the Latin 'iso' meaning 'same' and 'metric' meaning 'measurement.' It's holding a muscle in static contraction against some immovable resistance.

"I think the calendar—your age—and

the scales are a lot of crap. Take what you've got and get it where it ought to be. I'm not talking about weight loss or muscle girth. You won't lose weight with isometrics and it won't increase the girth of a muscle. Isometrics tone up muscles—'all systems go' is the way I put it in my book. A muscle should do what a girdle does.

"You know, going around and talking up a book like mine, you learn a great deal about people and what parts of their bodies they are concerned with from the questions they ask."

[There will be a short pause here. The reader may insert two paragraphs' worth of anything he likes in place of two paragraphs' worth of interview with Victor Obeck which I have decided to drop.]

"There was a gal who was able to put two inches on her bosom through isometrics. Well, she really didn't but it seems that way. You see, isometrics works with muscles, not glands. And the mammaries are just that, glands. But the pectorals beneath them are muscles. By toning up the pectorals—well, you see what I mean.

"We took twenty-two Madison Avenue businessmen with pot bellies and had them do one isometric each morning for their stomachs. Here, I'll show you the exercise. Just suck in your stomach as hard as you can and keep pulling it in—forget about throwing out your chest—while you count 1,001, 1,002, 1,003 up to 1,006. And don't hold your breath."

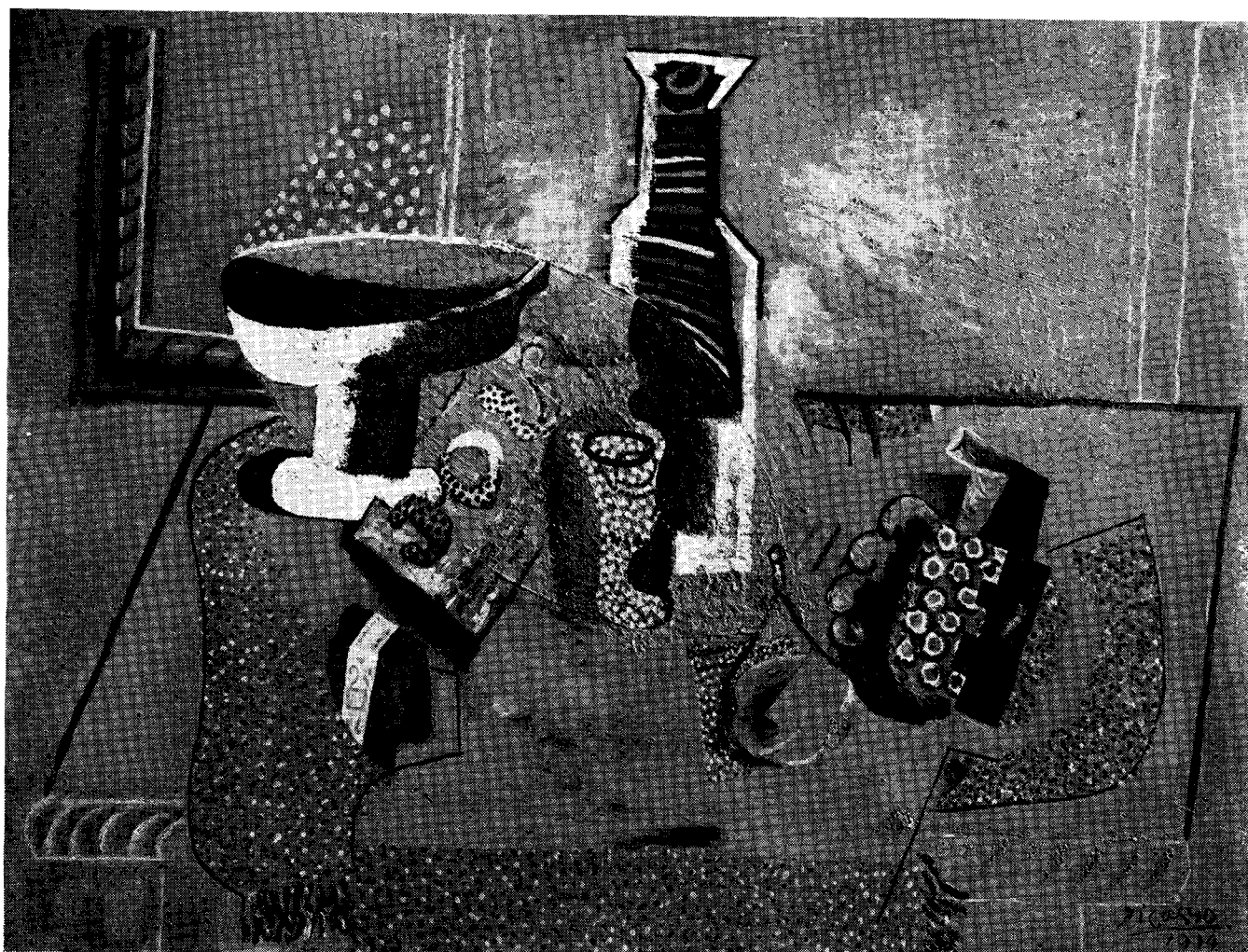
I sucked in my stomach and began counting. By 1,003 my poor old stomach felt as if it was giving a bear hug to a pin cushion. A few thousand years later, I reached 1,006. "You feel that? In one month, those twenty-two Madison Avenue men had an average waist measurement loss of two and one-half inches. We tied that exercise to their first business phone call of the day. Telephone bell rings come six seconds apart. They were to begin their isometric on the first ring and hold until the second ring. It was automatically timed for them. If you do the same exercise standing up, it will also help your fanny muscles. Most isometrics work on more than one part of the body at the same time.

"Best of all, you can do the exercises anywhere. The book includes isometrics you can do while driving your car or watching TV. Here's one I do when I get bored in a waiting room or during a dull lecture. Sit on the edge of your chair. Up straight. Put your hands down

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"Believe me, they're not one whit happier than I am."



"Green Still Life," by Pablo Picasso

—Museum of Modern Art, Lillie P. Bliss Collection.

The Cook and the Book

By PHYLLIS MCGINLEY, *whose latest book, "Sixpence in Her Shoe" (Dutton), is devoted to the art of housewifery, including cooking.*

HOUSEWIVES are a wonderful race. As their part-time biographer, I am constantly dazzled by the variety of their talents.

Just look at all the things they do these latter days—run for office, cut their own hair, repair the plumbing, have babies, write symphonies, make coffee tables out of hat stands and husbands out of bachelors, lay linoleum, concoct perfectly dry Martinis, brave the evening traffic better than an ambulance driver, diagnose diseases, and still understand Sanskrit, adolescents, and African violets. Recently they have even been learning to cook.

If that assertion sounds startling, let

me amend it to "learning to cook as well as men." For while women have always been able to get a meal to the table, they were seldom, in the old days, equals of the great male chefs. They knew the practical value of food preparation but not its theory; were interested in cooking as a domestic good rather than as a fine art. Now all that is being changed. And I think it has to do not with higher education or sun spots as some have claimed, but with the decline of the Hired Girl. Housewives, no longer at the mercy of what their Bridgets or their Willy Maes were willing (or able) to contrive, are staffing their own kitchens. And being the gifted creatures they are, their cuisine has vastly improved under personal management. They now design their own menus, make friends with their own stoves, become daring, experimental, imaginative. Also they read Cook Books.

In fact I am beginning to think they must have time to read little else. For publishers are a canny tribe and would never mine a vein of illusory gold. Yet week after week, cook books continue to pour from the presses and continue to be bought in astonishing numbers. I am told they are supplanting textbooks and juveniles as the unfailing cash crop of the business. There was a time not too long ago when a housewife's whole kitchen library was apt to consist of a tattered copy of *The Settlement Cook Book*, that admirable dictionary, supplemented perhaps by a disorderly file of clippings from the women's magazines.

Now knowledgeable chatelaines collect recipes as connoisseurs collect porcelains or music boxes. And, as I have said, the volumes are immoderately available for collection. International food, regional food, food easy to prepare or difficult enough to fascinate a Savarin, food fresh or frozen, exotic or bland, designed for invalids, children, dieters, budgeteers—directions for them all stock the shelves of every bookshop in the country. Some of them are simple commercial lists, hardly worth the bother of printing. The majority, however, are in-