

The Critics Go to the Poll

THE LIVES and letters of three Americans who were storm centers of the recent past figure high in the results of *SR's* annual nationwide poll of leading newspaper critics. Of the forty-seven reviewers, eighteen chose Mark Schorer's "Sinclair Lewis: An American Life" as one of the most enjoyable books to appear in September and October; while "The Letters of H. L. Mencken" and W. A. Swanberg's "Citizen Hearst" received seven mentions each. In the fiction field, too, there was an unusual concentration of choice; J. D. Salinger's "Franny and Zooey" stands at the head of the list with no less than twelve votes. Two other popular novels are "Clock Without Hands," by Carson McCullers which was named by nine of the critics, and "Spirit Lake," by MacKinlay Kantor, with seven recommendations. A total of thirty-five other titles was submitted by from one to six of those responding to the poll.

Lists of the reviewers and of the books selected follow below.

SEVEN VOTES

CITIZEN HEARST: A Biography of William Randolph Hearst. By W. A. Swanberg. Scribners. \$7.50.

The baffling personality who built an enormous press empire, used it without scruple to alter U.S. political history, and amassed an incredible collection of paintings, sculpture, and even entire castles, is the fascinating if sometimes repellent subject of this biography. (Grunewald, Hogan, Manolis, Nordell, Peckham, Troy, Walraven.)

LETTERS OF H. L. MENCKEN. Edited by Guy J. Fogue. Knopf. \$7.95.

This small but pertinent selection from the thousands of letters still in existence shows that the *enfant terrible* of the Twenties was often wrong but never dull. (Benson, Cross, Derleth, Peckham, Perkin, Snajdr, Wyllie.)

SPIRIT LAKE. By MacKinlay Kantor. World. \$6.95.

A colorful panorama of the pioneering men and women who, in the 1850s, left the sedate Eastern seaboard to battle the hostile Indians and the menacing wilderness of the lonely Iowa territory. (Barkham, Benson, Bradley, Brunk, Kimmel, McSherry, Sherman.)

EIGHTEEN VOTES

SINCLAIR LEWIS: An American Life.

By Mark Schorer. McGraw-Hill. \$10.

This well-documented study of the writer who added "Babbit," "booster," and "Main Street" to the national argot contrasts the financially and critically successful public figure with the tormented private man. (Barkham, Bond, Bradley, Butcher, Cady, Copeland, Flowers, Grieg, Hogan, Lawrence, McSherry, Menn, Nordell, Peckham, Rogers, Sherman, Tinkle, Walraven.)

TWELVE VOTES

FRANNY AND ZOOEY. By J. D. Salinger. Little, Brown. \$4.

Two more instalments in the Glass family saga, these long short stories created something of a sensation on their first appearance in the *New Yorker* some years back, an evidence of Salinger's ability to make spiritual crisis as urgently compelling as a narrative of dramatic action. (Brady, Cross, Douglas, Kenney, Manolis, Menn, Nordell, Pasley, Sandrof, Sherman, Troy, Wyllie.)

NINE VOTES

CLOCK WITHOUT HANDS. By Carson McCullers. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.

The shadow of impending death and the complexity and tragic difficulty of human relationships are explored in this novel set in a small Southern town, the first book in nine years from the author of "The Member of the Wedding." (Bond, Bradley, Butcher, Flowers, Hobby, Norris, Sandrof, Snajdr, Strasfogel.)

OTHER SELECTIONS

ACTORS TALK ABOUT ACTING. By Lewis Funke and John E. Booth. Random House. \$6.95.

ADVENTURING AMONG WORDS. By Eric Partridge. Oxford. \$2.25.

THE AGE OF REASON BEGINS. By Will and Ariel Durant. Simon & Schuster. \$10.

BASEBALL IN AMERICA. By Robert Smith. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$10.

BEHIND THE GREEN CURTAINS. By Sean O'Casey. St. Martin's. \$2.95.

BLACK LIKE ME. By John Howard Griffin. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.50.

BLUEBELLS AND OTHER VERSE. By John Masefield. Macmillan. \$5.

THE CLOUD FOREST. By Peter Matthiessen. Viking. \$6.50.

THE COMING FURY. By Bruce Catton. Doubleday. \$7.50.

THE COUNTRYWOMAN. By Paul Smith. Scribners. \$4.50.

THE EMERGING SOUTH. By Thomas D. Clark. Oxford. \$6.

THE END OF THE BATTLE. By Evelyn Waugh. Little, Brown. \$4.50.

EUROPE: Or Up and Down with Schreiber and Baggish. By Richard Stern. McGraw-Hill. \$4.95.

FALSE ENTRY. By Hortense Calisher. Little, Brown. \$5.

(Continued on page 47)

The Newspaper Critics

HOLMES ALEXANDER, *Tampa Tribune*
JOHN BARKHAM, *Saturday Review Syndicate*

C. A. BENSON, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*
ALICE DIXON BOND, *Boston Herald*
VAN ALLEN BRADLEY, *Chicago Daily News*
CHARLES A. BRADY, *Buffalo Evening News*

DAVID R. BRANCH, *St. Petersburg Times*
CHARLOTTE BRUNK, *Des Moines Register*
FANNY BUTCHER, *Chicago Tribune*
ERNEST CADY, *Columbus Dispatch*
J. A. CHANEY, *Raleigh News and Observer*
EDITH COPELAND, *Daily Oklahoman*
LESLIE CROSS, *Milwaukee Journal*
PEGGY DE MORRINI, *Buffalo Courier Express*

AUGUST DERLETH, *Sauk City Capital Times*

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. HASS, [Omaha] *World-Herald*
DIANA HOBBY, *Houston Post*

WILLIAM HOGAN, *San Francisco Chronicle*

HERBERT P. KENNEY, JR., *Indianapolis News*

L. F. KIMMEL, *Wichita [Kans.] Eagle*

ROBERT R. KIRSCH, *Los Angeles Times*

FRANCIS KLEIN, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*

JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE, *Newark News*

RICHARD McLAUGHLIN, *Springfield [Mass.] Republican*

ELIZABETH A. McSHERRY, *Hartford Courant*

PAUL G. MANOLIS, *Oakland Tribune*

THORPE MENN, *Kansas City Star*

ROD NORDELL, *Christian Science Monitor*

HOKE NORRIS, *Chicago Sun-Times*

VIRGINIA PASLEY, *Newsday*

STANTON PECKHAM, *Denver Post*

ROBERT L. PERKIN, *Rocky Mountain News*

W. G. ROGERS, *Saturday Review Syndicate*

IVAN SANDROF, *Worcester Telegram*

JOHN K. SHERMAN, *Minneapolis Star & Tribune*

ROBERT I. SNAJDR, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

IAN STRASFOGEL, *Cincinnati Inquirer*

LON TINKLE, *Dallas Morning News*

GEORGE TROY, *Providence Journal*

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

LAWRENCE F. WILLARD, *New Haven Register*

JOHN COOK WYLLIE, *Richmond News Leader*

THE LITERARY SAMPLER

EXCERPTS FROM NEW AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Taste of Terror

I'M MRS. TAYLOR.

I don't want to talk about what happened after we'd moved in with the Meads and the Indins come.

My little boy got burnt something terrible when they threw him in the fireplace. Course I wasn't there—afterwards. For awhile. Not till—Morning.

Mrs. Mead was there. She had some dried comfrey roots, a big poke of them, and she put them to soak; then she made poultices out of them roots. I guess it didn't do much good, cause they said Bubby cried all night.

Seemed like I could hear him a-yelling, clear down to the camp. I couldn't really have heard him but—Kind of seemed like it.

And when I got back, I had some green hyson tea. I guess maybe the Indins didn't know what it was, for they hadn't took it off. I gathered up some of the meal they'd spilt, and with the meal and the green tea I made some new poultices. They helped Bubby.

Guess he'll always be scarred. Real bad. But tain't like he was a girl.

I'm glad he's a boy. I wouldn't want him to be no girl. If he was a girl, and growed tall as Harriet, maybe they'd took him along, too.

Yes, my husband was there, at first. Guess folks are always going to ask that. They'll say, Mrs. Taylor, wasn't your husband to home? And he was there, for he snuck off to seek aid. But they had guns smack against his head. Any man blames my husband has got to realize that. And then figure out what *he* could of done, if Indins had guns against *his* head.

So I'm not blaming Husband. Not no way.

The rest of it. No, please.

I don't want to talk about it.

—From *"Spirit Lake,"* by MacKinlay Kantor (to be published later this month by World).

Circle of Death

THERE are deserts of sand, deserts of stone, deserts of ice. But since August 1945, Hiroshima—or more exactly the spot where Hiroshima once stood—has constituted a new, peculiar and original sort of wilderness: an atomic desert, the handiwork of *homo sapiens*, and beneath its grey-black

surface there still remain the traces of his activity and the pitiful remnants of his fellow men.

The survivors, and the tens of thousands who lived elsewhere who had come to dig among the ruins for relatives and friends, gradually moved outwards in their search, away from the inner "Circle of Death" until they were digging one, two, and even three miles away from the point of maximum destruction. And the Circle of Death, this evil, harrowed, desolate expanse, now lay lifeless, enclosed within the green waters of the many-mouthed River Ohta, upon whose surface, with each ebb and flow of the tide, corpses, like autumn leaves, floated now upstream, now down: strangely enough the male corpses all floated upon their backs and female ones upon their bellies.

Only a handful of foolhardy men now ventured into this no-man's land. They dug in the ruins, searching for any buried object that might be sold for money.

It was in little groups of three or four people that they thus searched for loot, and they soon acquired a remarkable knowledge of the terrain. They were particularly on the look-out for metals, since any form of scrap possessed a rarity value after all the years of collecting and commandeering for the metal-hungry forces of Japan. What they searched for with especial thoroughness beneath the ashes and charred beams were old bathrooms. For many a household had managed throughout all the war years to preserve its *goemon-buro*, or deep, copper hip-bath, and these were now worth almost their weight in gold.

—From *"Children of the Ashes,"* by Robert Jungk (to be published later this month by Harcourt, Brace & World).

No Cross to Bear

AT NIGHT, my mother reads palms in restaurants, compensating by her acting abilities and great assurance for her total ignorance of that ancient art. Later came the already-mentioned showcase at the Negresco, the hawking of jewelry from hotel to hotel, the part interest in the taxi and another in a vegetable stall at the Marché de la Buffa. Throughout those years the sym-

bolic beeksteak always appeared punctually before me at noon, and nobody in Nice ever saw me either ill-shod or poorly clothed. There was nothing I could do to help, and my budding virility only deepened my feeling of helplessness and frustration. I felt guilty for having failed her so badly as a child prodigy and I never really forgave myself my lack of musical genius; to this day I cannot hear the names of Menuhin or Heifetz without a pang of remorse. Some thirty years later, when I was French Consul General in Los Angeles, it happened that my official duties called on me to present the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor to Jascha Heifetz. After pinning the Cross on the chest of the great violinist and reciting the traditional formula: "Monsieur Jascha Heifetz, in the name of the President of the Republic, and by virtue of the powers conferred upon me, I hereby name you Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor," I suddenly heard myself saying, in an only too audible whisper, with my eyes raised to the ceiling: "I can't help it, I just didn't have it in me."

The maestro showed some sign of astonishment: "I beg your pardon, Monsieur le Consul General?"

I hastily kissed him on both cheeks as tradition required, and thus terminated the ceremony.

—From *"Promise at Dawn,"* by Romain Gary (to be published later this month by Harper).

Miniature Skeletons

WE THINK of the skeleton in the closet as some really scandalous secret. But most homes are filled with little skeletons; the ordinary foibles and weaknesses of men and women; the conspiracy of lies to make an impression on others; the hypocritical poses for the outside world, which cannot be hidden between husband and wife, making one of them at least a silent partner in the deception; the dishonesties in word and deed of people who pride themselves on integrity; the crudeness and unsentimentality of the physical relationship, while in public there is the social grace of gallantry and love; the dignity in public contrasted with the contempt in the private relationship. These are some of the miniature skeletons that