especially in the eyes of curious Texans who have been raised on highly colored legends about the rancho old Captain King established in 1852. We find an odd puzzler in the book: Mr. Goodwyn has accomplished what he set out to do, but still he hasn't told the story of the King Ranch. Persons who yearn for the full, rich narrative of the empire of ruby-red cattle, spouting oil wells and Kentucky Derby-winning race hosses, such as Assault, are due disappointment when they realize that Mr. Goodwyn has related *his* life and experiences on the ranch — with a few allegories thrown in for good measure. The book is largely an autobiography, and, almost incidentally, Mr. Goodwyn gets in some of the main points of the vast King spread; these include the development of the Santa Gertrudis breed of beef cattle, the killing of predators, the raising of fine horses, the discovery of oil and a program of ripping up hundreds of thousands of acres of brush and the planting of the cleared land to nutritious grass.

The author, presently a professor of Spanish at the University of Maryland, spent his childhood on the ranch and later was a teacher in one of the King's schools and also a justice of the peace whose main official duty was that of performing wedding ceremonies for Mexican couples on the ranch. He soaked up lore and folk songs and learned to make a guitar sing heart tunes of border-country love. But a yearning for things more scholarly pulled him away from the somnolent villages of the King domain. He is an established writer with two previous books, one of which, "The Magic of Limping John," was selected by the Texas Institute of Letters as "the best Texas book" of 1944. Mr. Goodwyn is a cousin of J. Frank Dobie, the range boss of tale-spinning in the sunny Southwest. Now if Cousin "Pancho" Dobie could be turned loose on the King range with full liberty to nose into the records and track down the legends, what a wonderful book he could turn out! But he isn't apt to ride into this rich pasture of lore.

Up to now Bob Kleberg, president of the King Ranch, hasn't consented to the writing of the King Ranch story, for, as he has said in letters, he doesn't want the family and the business operation revealed as a full-dress yarn would have to do it. The family has always been publicity-shy, and because of this the King is known as "a walled empire." There have been all sorts of rumors about supposed happenings behind the "iron curtain" which has been guarded by cowboys with saddle guns about the size of light artillery. In recent years, the King has been more hospitable, and many invited guests visit there.

No other cattle outfit in the world has anything like the color of the King Ranch. It is a land of lore, of dunes, of brush, of legend and mystery. For many lonely miles the whitecaps come leaping out of the Gulf and lap at its sandy shore. There are gray, stooped old men who were born on the ranch and have never made a boot track off it, and don't want to. Many of the Latin-American hands can't speak English, and there are flashing eyes and hot blood.

While Mr. Goodwyn doesn't tell the real story, his book is well written and is highly entertaining; he set out to tell his experiences and he has done a good job of that.

LEWIS NORDYKE

POPULAR CULTURE

The Great Audience, by Gilbert Seldes. *New York: Viking. $3.75*

The familiar essay is in ill repute nowadays. A cult of objectivity seems to have overtaken our letters, and writers prefer to express themselves through facts and statistics culled from encyclopaedias and research bureaus rather than through the direct revelation of personality. In "The Great Audience" Gilbert Seldes has returned to the nineteenth-century tradition of belles-lettres and has presented us with a dissertation on the movies, the radio, television and comic books in the manner made famous by Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt.

With disarming frankness and an almost naive charm Mr. Seldes sets forth his likes and dislikes, his hopes and fears, and even his prejudices. He thinks that Hollywood movies are less mature than British films, that many actresses do not know how to act, that many writers can not write, that John Ford's "The Informer" is a great picture, that most radio programs are geared to an adolescent level, that comic books are detrimental to the nation's young, and that American intellectuals as a class have tended to isolate themselves from the realities of common life. He complains about the effects of censorship upon our films and castigates Hollywood producers for catering to a huge mass audience that attends movie theaters by force of habit, while the needs of another and potentially even larger audience of people with taste and refinement have been completely neglected.

Mr. Seldes, of course, has a constitutional right to express his views; and since he writes with elegance and ease and wit, I would not quarrel with him merely on the score of opinion alone. But unfortunately he has mistaken the nature of his own book completely. Instead of presenting it as a familiar essay whose only justification need be charm of style (who takes the absurd story of Ho-ti and Bo-bo in "A Dissertation on Roast Pig" seriously?), he fancies it as an expert analysis of the movies, the radio, television, and comic books, and their effect upon the people who patronize them. He also thinks of his book as a profound critique of our tastes and standards, and by implication, of our entire civilization; and it seems to have been accepted as such by many critics, Mr. Edmund Wilson even pronouncing it a "definitive" work.

I find little justification for such pretensions. Mr. Seldes lacks the qualifications for the kind of study he evidently intended. To analyze the influence of the movies, radio, television and comic books upon our civilization one must first have a broad conception of the idea of civilization itself. One must be a trained sociologist, a political scientist, a historian of culture. Preferably a man with the profound insight of a Toynbee, a Sorokin or a Veblen is required. Mr. Seldes himself, I suppose, would hardly claim to possess such insight; and, indeed, I would not even mention such an obvious point if I were not so flabbergasted by the aura of respect with which this book has been surrounded.

Mr. Seldes's inability to handle his subject is apparent from his numerous errors of fact and the misleading statements scattered across his pages. The very opening sentence of his section on motion pictures contains an error. "Except for the makers of baby foods," he declares, "no industry in the United States has been so indifferent to the steady falling away of its customers as the movies have been." But the Hollywood producers are *not* indifferent to this problem, although they have not as yet found any answer except to wage a spurious advertising campaign to the effect that "the movies are better than ever."

Mr. Seldes is also misleading in his idea that movies are made for a single mass audience. This is an oversimplification of an extremely complex situation. Not all films are made for the same audience. The industry recognizes differences in taste and preference and, within limitations, tries to satisfy them. The recent cycle of films dealing with Negro discrimination ("Pinky," "Lost Boundaries," "Intruder in the Dust") — to mention but one example — is not intended for the same audience that attends Monogram's "quickies" and Republic's "Westerns." It is quite true, of course, that Hollywood rarely produces films primarily for intellectuals, critics, concert-goers, art addicts, and similar select groups; but this is an old complaint.

Mr. Seldes is also mistaken in declaring that "democracy created capitalism, not vice versa." Such historians as Henri Pirenne, William Cunningham and Werner Sombart have shown conclusively that the origin of capitalism is to be found in the Middle Ages, and that the rise of a merchant class in the medieval cities led both to the establishment of absolute monarchy in England and France — this was a great improvement over feudal anarchy — and then to its overthrow in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Capitalism, it would be more correct to state, created democracy: this is one of its shining achievements.

A rigorous analysis of this book would impeach its entire text. In fact, the author commits the very faults that he attacks in others. He denounces Hollywood films for their lack of reality and for the dream world which they frequently present; but many of his own conceptions are equally nebulous and remote from reality. "I am," he declares sententiously, "proposing a revaluation of the popular arts in terms of physics rather than aesthetics, in terms of social effect rather than private pleasure." The "physics" here is purely imaginary; and as for appraising art in terms of its social effect, an idea which Mr. Seldes presents as though he were discovering a new theory of the universe, the Marxian critics have been doing this for decades, and the Catholic Church for centuries.

When Mr. Seldes states that the radio and the movies "create the climate of feeling in which all of us live," he is, I fear, once again transcending the limits of reality. As a scientific concept, the term, "the climate of feeling," has no more validity than the glamour of a Hollywood movie: it can mean anything from an adolescent necking party to a convention of the DAR. It may also be noted that the "climate of feeling," whatever it means, has been created in our age by many factors, such as the end of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier, World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression, the rise of Fascism and National Socialism, and World War II with its aftermath. Mr. Seldes's tendency toward excessive simplification, the result of his lack of training as a sociologist or a political scientist, at times veers dangerously close to absurdity.

Mr. Seldes questions the competence of Mr. Walter Winchell to act as a news analyst. What right, he asks, has this "entertainer," this "unabashed gossip" with a "staccato delivery," who is hardly "an expert on international affairs," to "advise congressmen and denounce ministers of state"?

Here Mr. Seldes has delivered, although he may not realize it himself, a valid criticism of his own work. What right has he to analyze the effect of the popular arts upon our culture, a problem that has confounded religious leaders, psychiatrists, philosophers, sociologists and statesmen?

Mr. Seldes is as much of an "entertainer" as Mr. Winchell. This, indeed, is the real value of his book. As an essay in familiar style "The Great Audience" can be accepted for its charm and readability; but as a serious study of the effects of motion pictures, radio, television and comic books, it can not be seriously accepted.

HARRY FELDMAN

RENAISSANCE MAN

Michelangelo, by Michele Saponaro. Translated by C. J. Richards. *New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy. $4.00*

This short biography of Michelangelo dramatizes his life of struggle, whether with marble or the spirit. The Renaissance ended with Michelangelo's long career. He was the prototype of the Renaissance man: master of sculpture, painting, poetry and architecture. In his youth he astonished the Florentines with his "David"; in his old age, his cupola crowned the building of St. Peter's. He was a giant in a turbulent age much like our own, an age which saw Italy sink to foreign servitude for two centuries. Some of Michelangelo's titanic compulsion animates this "Life," which is romantic in attitude and episodic in form. The twenty photographic plates are excellent.

EDWIN CLARK

INHABITANTS OF THIS HOUSE

The inhabitants of this house, with winter's leave
To move about in seasonless reprieve
And, as if we were somehow theirs, to share
With us our stubborn artifice of air —
Slight, delicate moths with powder-mottled wings,
Ungainly wasps with slackened winter stings,
Pin-point, crab-legged spiders, bronze-bellied flies
And ancient jewels of beetles, with great, false eyes —
Must have some view of this, the enfolding world
From which, were man to blast it, they would be hurled.
Companions of our patience, as we wait
For what, if death were fatal, would be fate,
They are silent as are we, the powerless
Possessors of a power to dispossess.
Silent, and enviably unconcerned,
Not knowing all the worlds which have been burned
Nor those in danger of burning, only sure
That they possess the endurance to endure
Having no fear with which to nourish doubt
Nor wit to turn their wisdom inside out.

RAYMOND HOLDEN