

**WHAT DO YOU** think of John Hersey's "Hiroshima?" Here's Sterling North's view of the much-discussed story of the atomic bombing, just published by Knopf (118 pp. \$1.75):

**A**MERICA'S guilty conscience helps sell books for John Hersey. We really want to love our enemies now that the war is over. So we are in great danger of forgetting that all Italians are not the

## Look Here, Mr. Hersey!

lovable hedonists of "A Bell for Adano" and that all Japs are not merely the innocent victims pictured in "Hiroshima."

We fought the war for excellent reasons after a remarkable amount of provocation and a good antidote for indiscriminately loving our enemies is to remember Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March.

Hersey's Tolstoyan compassion is touching and beautiful. But I hope he does not write a book about those charming people, the Nazis. Because if Mr. Hersey goes soft on the subject of the torturers, sadists, perverts and butchers who lay waste to a good part of Europe he will soon have several million Americans weeping into their beer about what good fellows the Germans are. For the sake of American children who may be asked to die fighting the still unrepentant Krauts, I hope Mr. Hersey will curb his literary fraternizing.

And now that that is off our chest may we say that the already overtouted "Hiroshima" (to which the New Yorker devoted its entire issue August 31) is a good piece of competent reporting and nothing more. It is not seen in perspective against our war with Japan. It offers no solutions, arrives at no conclusions.

The cross-section of individuals chosen is unfairly weighted to arouse our sympathy: obviously two doctors, a Methodist minister and a German Jesuit priest are not a scientifically chosen sample of the citizens of Hiroshima. That would make one third of the city Christian prelates and one third of them M. D.'s. The widowed seamstress and the girl office worker to some extent rectify this error.

Certainly Hersey, with considerable artistry, makes his readers experience the suffering and heartbreak of all these people. Certainly he drives home by implication our guilt as the war criminals who dropped the bomb. I am sure Mr. Hersey's intentions were of the best—that he was impelled by a driving desire to shock the world into realizing the horror of atomic bombing. But it is rather unfortunate that almost the only book on the bomb Americans are likely to read is one by an author who provokes emotion rather than thought.