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ANOTHER WORLD

WHILE the world we live in is neither "one," as Mr. Willkie proposed, nor "brave" and "new," as Aldous Huxley anticipated, it is certainly different from the world of a generation ago. Although no one who has not reached middle age can remember with much clarity the temper of life before the first world war, the record of those days is amply preserved in newspaper files, magazines, books, and plays, so that even a youthful explorer into the recent past can easily acquaint himself with the pleasant simplicity and happy optimism of that epoch. It was a time that has been variously chronicled, in Clarence Day's *Life with Father*, for example; or to choose a very different sphere of discourse, in Oscar Ameringer's *If You Don't Weaken.* It was a time when "politics" was widely regarded as merely a "game," and when people felt able to laugh a bit at Mr. Hearst's extraordinary telegram to an important artist he had sent to Cuba in 1901—"You furnish the pictures; I'll furnish the war."

In those days, the ethical problem of the individual was relatively simple. A man was expected to be sober, industrious, loyal, and kind in his personal life, and either a democrat or a republican in politics. The rosy dawn of the twentieth century was filled with the promise of endless progress. The statesmen of the period were preoccupied with the upward-and-onward themes of Manifest Destiny. Theodore Roosevelt, in his well-known imperialist exhortation, "The Strenuous Life," in 1899 told the nation of its opportunities and responsibilities:

> We cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines. All we can decide is whether we shall meet them in a way that will redound to the national credit, or whether we shall make of our dealings with these new problems a dark and shameful page in our history. . . . The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills "stern men with empires in their brains"—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties. . . .
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> I preach to you, then, my countrymen, that our country calls not for the life of ease but for the life of strenuous endeavor. The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then the bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.

These sentiments, widely echoed in more specific and warlike terms by others, were really the political version of social Darwinism, the doctrine that public leaders and economists used to urge a war with Spain on the people of the United States. A diplomat, John Barrett, asking for American supremacy in the Pacific, asserted: "The rule of the survival of the fittest applies to nations as well as to the animal kingdom. It is a cruel, relentless principle being exercised in a cruel, relentless competition of mighty forces; and these will trample over us without sympathy or remorse unless we are trained to endure and strong enough to stand the pace." Other authorities developed the theme of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the racial needs of the future: "We must not forget that the Anglo-Saxon race is expansive."

We have only to think how we would recoil from such statements, were they made today, to realize the tremendous change in attitude and outlook from that time to this. We *know,* today, the hideous consequences of racism, when practically applied. No prophet of doom is needed to make us realize that the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, when made the justification

of national expansionism, leads to the organization of great countries into enormous military machines. It has doubtless occurred to many readers of *Nineteen-Eighty-four* that the Korean war already resembles the endless frontier conflict of Orwell's gloomy expectation.

The sins of the fathers are indeed visited on the sons. and what was mere thoughtlessness on the part of earlier generations—in their contempt and condescension toward peoples of other colors and customs—is already producing its harvest of antipathy toward the United States, throughout the Orient. Edgar Ansel Mowrer, in the October *Harper's,* writes with considerable penetration on the Asiatic revolt against the West, showing that the psychological indignities heaped upon the colored and subject peoples of Asia weigh far more heavily in their minds than the economic exploitation they have experienced.

> We approach an answer to our question: Against what is Asia revolting? Asia, I believe, is revolting against *inequality of status*—revolting in the name, not of dialectical materialism, but of human dignity.
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> This revolt becomes economic wherever an economic fact is seen as discriminatory. It does not entail the claim of each people to live as well as all other peoples but to have a chance to; it need not entail the right of an individual to high wages, or even, so far, to enough to eat. It does include the right to own and operate their own means of production and the right to earn the same wages as any other fellow doing the same receive.
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> Asia's revolt becomes political when a people or an individual is denied equal rights because of some alleged natural inferiority. Thus Iran stands on the same right to nationalize industry as Socialist Britain. Egypt feels it is as justified in controlling the Suez Canal as the United States is in controlling the Panama Canal—indeed, more justified, for the Suez Canal cuts Egyptian territory.
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> Why are Japanese leaders reluctant to link Japanese rearmament with the re-acquisition of full independence? Most Japanese are anti-Communist. Hardly any can envisage national independence without a powerful armed force. Yet rather than have such a force imposed upon them by foreigners, they would rather get along without it for a while. It is inequality of status, I believe, that repels them. (In this respect their attitude seems identical with that of many Germans, to whom equality of status, *Gleiclhberechtigung,* has been a mania since 1919.)
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> What really confirmed many anti-Communist Viet-Namese (Indochinese) in their suspicion that France did not intend to grant them full independence? It was the refusal of the French to move out of the former Governor-General's palace in Saigon. This vast structure (I myself spent a night there) is large but not beautiful. Yet to the people of the young state it is a symbol of sovereignty that means far more than the realities of rule actually accumulating in their hands.
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> The acute national sensitivity of recently emancipated states like Indonesia, Burma, India, and Pakistan is a perfect example of craving for equality. In fact, the government of Indonesia recently went so far as to protest against having to receive any notes at all from foreign governments on the ground that they violated its sovereignty!

Some of these reactions, we may say, are "childish," yet they are no more childish, certainly, and perhaps less dangerous, than the expansive utterances of fifty years ago by statesmen of the United States. We need to realize, moreover, that expressions of national egotism and prejudice, when allowed to become public today, are made to circle the globe within a few hours. Actually, the brown men of India, the yellow men of China, the black men of Africa, in many cases know more about the social injustices which occur in the United States than the average American. Our defects, no doubt, are not impartially reported, and the foreign journalists who tell other peoples about our bad habits probably have little interest in describing what virtues we possess. But the real issue is that private standards of personal morality are no longer enough to go by; regardless of national boundaries and differing constitutions, the impact of what we think and do is felt around the world, and this makes us, whether we want to be or not, citizens of the world.

The processes of cause and effect in the large-scale psycho-moral relationships of human beings have been vastly accelerated by the "progress" of the twentieth century. It was possible, thirty years ago, for Americans to regard

Gandhi as a funny man who insisted on walking around in a loin cloth proposing utterly impractical methods for ridding India of the British—who, "after all," had done a pretty good job for a country that "everyone" knows is in a terribly backward condition (no sanitation, etc.)—without any real harm seeming to result. But today, putting on a superior air toward Prime Minister Nehru, because he happens to have adopted policies and made decisions of which we disapprove, may have the effect of alienating many millions of people, the citizens of an independent sovereign power, for whom Nehru is the chosen and popular spokesman.

An incident reported by Mr. Mowrer is graphic illustration of the sort of offense Americans commit against the feelings of other peoples, almost without knowing it. Not long ago, a group of women from Pakistan—wives of officials attending UN sessions—were arrested in a New Rochelle department store, apparently because persons of their color were not welcome in that establishment. To the explanation of the New Rochelle police, that they thought the women were "Gypsies," Mr. Mowrer adds: "We may be sure that the answer of the indignant wives echoed around the world: 'And what's wrong with Gypsies?' "

While we are busy antagonizing the non-white populations of the world, simply from habitual attitudes inherited from the days when southern gentlemen spent their time thinking up arguments to justify chattel slavery of human beings, a large number of amateur spokesmen for America are doing their best to annoy the British by implying that there is no real difference between Communism and Socialism. The ties between the British and American people are strong, but if, by succumbing to hysteria, we come to show no respect for the social experiment going on in England, we shall eventually be the most friendless nation on earth.

The greatest mistake we could make would be to refuse to learn from the various manifestations of dissatisfaction and unrest throughout the world, and the programs and enterprises undertaken by others in the hope of solving their problems. Possession of the atom bomb and the most powerful navy in the world does not make us infallible political philosophers.

Fortunately, there are numerous signs of a profound awakening at many levels of life in the United States. In the *Woman's Home Companion* for October, for example, an article describes a "Community Self-Survey" conducted by the people of Minneapolis, in order to measure the extent of race and religious prejudice in that city. Under the guidance of field workers from Fisk University, citizens of Minneapolis took active part in the survey. Before long it was discovered that the pattern of social relationships founded on prejudice was actively approved by only a few bigots. Soon interested members of the community had formed committees to help make Minneapolis over into an inclusive instead of an exclusive human society. Negroes began to get jobs that had been denied them. A Jew was elected to office in a city-wide election. The writer of the article remarks:

> The simple truth is that among those who have practiced bigotry are many fundamentally sound people—people who can be reasoned with and who were confused or unduly influenced by a handful of highly vocal out-and-out bigots. By learning this lesson and acting upon it, Minneapolis accomplished wonders. Perhaps your town could—and should—too.

The *Woman's Home Companion* has a circulation of more than four million, which makes the publication of this article an event of peculiar importance. Many small-circulation journals have agitated the race question and the issue of religious prejudice for years, but when one of the mass magazines strikes out editorially in this direction, there is hope that self-reform may reach the dimensions of a popular movement.

The recent publication of a number of novels devoted to the race question is further evidence of a rather basic change in attitude, or at least

evidence of the beginning of such a change. The movies, too, are contributing their influence to the drive against prejudice, and films of this sort, while often of no particular artistic merit, nevertheless embody a feeling of honest intentions that is uniquely refreshing in Hollywood productions. One such production, *The Well*, shortly to be released for exhibition, shows how race riots are caused by the spread of groundless rumor and mutual suspicions between the races.

Another encouraging sign is the advocacy by John Cowles, president of the Minneapolis *Star and Tribune*, of American support for the policy of Prime Minister Nehru in Asia. Recently returned from a tour of both Europe and Asia, Mr. Cowles declared his convictions in *Look* magazine, of which he is chairman of the board of directors. Arguing that India, with 360,000,000 people, is the last important stronghold of democracy in Asia, he asks whether Nehru must . . . "endorse as infallible every position that is taken by the American State Department in order to prove he is not 'pro-Communist'?"

This article is remarkable in several respects. Mr. Cowles believes that the failure of the American Government to support Nehru would be a blunder "almost as calamitous as the one we made in China." He continues: "If the United States is so foolish as to undermine Nehru's already weakening regime in India, the government or the chaos that comes after it in the world's second most populous nation may be far less to our liking." Other of his remarks are of equal interest:

> We . . . keep talking about the virtues of capitalism and free enterprise. We forget that capitalism as practiced in the rest of the world (. . . excluding in some degree the British Commonwealth and a handful of small countries) has meant the exploitation of the masses by a few rich people.
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> The United States is the only major country where capitalism has functioned in an economically fluid and socially mobile society and where the people generally have benefitted from the widespread increase in wealth which capitalism has produced....
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> The average Asian has no more comprehension *of* the ideology of Marxist Communism than he has of the Einstein Theory. The people's poverty and misery is so deep that they simply have concluded that any change would be for the better. (*Look*, Oct. 9.)

It seems fair to say that Mr. Cowles has made an unusual and apparently successful effort to see the great issues before the world through the eyes of others—the eyes of the millions of Asia—and has tried to report what he saw with accuracy. We quote from him at length for this reason. Surely, Asians will appreciate his efforts at interpretation of their views, and the hope for the peace of the world will be brought that much nearer to realization.

The attempt to understand other peoples is not a political form of action, although it may lead to great and beneficent political consequences. In any event, the profound need of the modern world is for its peoples to attempt to understand one another, for how can they ever begin to trust one another, unless there is first this effort to understand?

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—The Prime Minister's decision to go to the country has unleashed a political storm which will rage bitterly until the final results are made known. Election campaigns are fertile soil for lies, half-truths, vain, foolish and dishonest promises. This letter is not concerned with Party politics, but with the significance of the fundamental revolution in the conception of the function of government which has developed here since the end of the War. Formerly confined to the three essentials—the security of the state, the preservation of the peace, and the enforcement of contract—government now touches us at every point of our daily lives.

Whether or not there is a political science that can, if applied, produce the Ideal State, it is certain that no system, whatever its dynamic, can produce a state which transcends the moral qualities of its citizenship. For more important than policies are men, and insofar as policies tend towards the production of good citizens, they may be accounted good or bad.

What changes, then, are to be seen in the character of the people of these Isles during the past six years? In the view of your correspondent, there are two main developments, neither of which presages good.

The first is the decline in the standard of public life. The rule of Labour has been disfigured and marred by a series of scandals involving the honour of men exercising power and authority in the realm. Then there is the reaction of the people to this decline. Whereas, only a decade or two ago, a government convicted, as this government has been, of dishonesty, of complacency when exposed as grossly extravagant and indifferent to the expenditure of vast sums of an over-taxed people's money (e.g. the Ground-nuts Scheme, the Gambia egg scheme), would have felt under a moral necessity to go to the people, the present government, lacking a working majority, has clung to power without scruple.

Before me lies my morning newspaper. A banner across a page of it tells me that twenty-four criminal charges are now being heard against the Yorkshire Electricity Board—a public corporation set up by the government—the charges being those of criminal misuse of public money. Thus we have the curious spectacle of a government under the necessity of taking criminal proceedings against one of its own creations!

Few governments can show hands always and everywhere clean. But the public reaction to exposures such as this gives the measure of public opinion. Will there be an outcry? No! For reasons which may include physical and spiritual exhaustion following a great War, people have become indifferent to such aspects of public life.

Six years have brought about in England considerable modifications in the behaviour patterns of the people. There is an increasing tendency to shift all responsibility on to the shoulders of that vast, amorphous entity "the State." The accent is everywhere on "right" and the word "duty" is becoming démodé. It is seldom disputed that the standard of honesty prevailing before the War no longer exists. Often the State gives the appearance of having stimulated an amoral attitude, in which the State and the citizen are seen, not as two parts of an entity, but as two elements in opposition. This tendency is revealed unwittingly in casual forms of speech everywhere, so that the word "government" has come for many to be a synonym for "enemy."

It has been suggested that this rot began before the Socialist Party took over; that the first step in the decline in the standards of public life began when membership of Parliament, instead of involving the Member in financial loss, provided him with a comfortable income of $5,000 a year, and thus made political success financially lucrative. Today, a British MP is thus seen as a privileged member of the community, for he even

lunches in the House of Commons in a canteen subsidized by the overburdened taxpayer he represents!

Consider, for example, the economic status of the Prime Minister. His official salary is £10,000 a year, of which £4,000 is tax-free. To secure a comparable net income, an ordinary citizen has to have a gross, untaxed income of £100,00. He will, even then, have an income somewhat smaller than the Prime Minister. It would be absurd to pretend that financial rewards of this magnitude do not attract the political careerist (not that Mr. Attlee is that), or that the £5,000 per annum which goes to senior Ministers of the Crown is not a dazzling financial reward to most men.

Britain, just now, is immersed in the assessment of rival policies. Beyond these, however, and far more urgent, is the quality of the nation's character. In *The Decline of the West*, Spengler writes of the English: "The English people as a nation are just as unthinking, narrow, and unpractical in political matters as any other nation, but they possess—for all their liking for public debate—*a tradition of confidence."*

Are we in process of losing this? There is some evidence that we are.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
HAMLET AND MACBETH

IT may seem a thankless task, and of little service to subscribers, to review books no longer in print. From time to time, however, the special virtues of a volume stand out sufficiently to inspire a desire simply to confide the knowledge that its peculiarly valuable ideas are afloat in the world, even though pushed into an eddy by the fickle circumstances of publishing.

Some months ago we referred to a book of Shakespearean commentary by Mr. Roy Walker, the stock of which had been exhausted both in England and the United States. (*The Time is Out of Joint, a Study of Hamlet*, reviewed in MANAS for Nov. 29, 1950.) Subsequently we procured an earlier and even more out-of-print book by the same author, also based upon the philosophical and psychological insights afforded by the symbolism of Shakespeare's mightiest plays. Perhaps some day both of these books will once again be available for the general public; meantime, a point of departure for discussion is again offered by Mr. Walker, in *The Time is Free, a Study of Macbeth.*

One reason for our admiration of Mr. Walker's approach to Shakespearean study is that he always reminds us of something too valuable to be forgotten—that the art of imaginative literature serves a unique function in increasing man's understanding of man. The reason, we think, is that nearly all non-fiction writers are primarily concerned with the presentation or argument on the behalf of some particular thesis. And while intelligent argumentation is one of the processes by which the evaluative capacities of the human mind may be extended, the reader is also pressed by such formal pleas to come to some sort of conclusion on the subject. Thus, contentious writing leaves most of us with either an "anti" or "pro" bias. The great works of art in literature, on the other hand, are not argumentation, but rather an experience the reader is invited to share in whatever way he chooses. The good novelist or dramatist seldom tries to instruct the reader in definitive fashion, but rather holds open a door to the whole mental and emotional world the author himself lives in.

Thus it is possible for the genius of Shakespeare to survive innumerable arguments and to remain, after all is said, a suggestive interpreter of life's experience *in the context of life's familiar motions and problems*, rather than in the context of blunt intellectual persuasion. Further, because Shakespeare and other great artists are not obligated to give all of their supporting reasons for their attitudes, intuitions and underlying convictions, they may feel more free to express them. As an English essayist once remarked, it is necessary to recognize that feelings and intuitions may reveal truth quite as accurately as logic, theories, "scientific facts" and debates. On this point, a passage quoted by Roy Walker from Edward Dowden is especially apt:

> However we may account for it the fact is unquestionable that some of the richest creative natures of the world have all their lives been believers, if not with their intellect at least with their instinctive feelings and their imagination in much of the old-wives' lore of the nursery. . . . We slighter and smaller natures can deprive ourselves altogether of the sense for such phenomena; we can elevate ourselves into a rare atmosphere of intellectuality and incredulity. The wider and richer natures of creative artists have received too large an inheritance from the race, and have too fully absorbed all the influences of their environment for this to be possible in their case. While dim recollections and forefeelings haunt their blood they cannot enclose themselves in a little pinfold of demonstrable knowledge, and call it the universe.

Mr. Walker's commentary on this passage suggests the mainspring of his persistent study of Shakespeare. Can we not all have sympathy for such attempts to discover universal human denominators in "the poetic language of vision through tragedy," a language which needs no religious interpreters to assist us in the understanding of "Good" and "Evil?"

> If we can remember [Mr. Walker writes] that our scientific twentieth century has produced mythologies of a far more demonic and destructive character, we may accept Dowden's nineteenth-century verdict, and grant Shakespeare's mythology wiser than our own. Our little pinfold of demonstrable knowledge is still a pinfold. We have need of the "great realist" who revealed in the poetic language of vision through the myth of tragedy what theologians name divine grace, and what theologians name Satanic temptation.

Before turning to *Macbeth*, we might first note another man's testimony as to the value which can be derived from study of Shakespeare, who, like Plato, showed serious concern for the religious and social issues of his day. But what has the sixteenth century to do with us? Theodore Spencer, in his *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, indicates the special relevance Shakespeare's moment in history may have for our own times:

> There are periods in recorded human history when the essential problems that concern human nature come to the surface with more than usual urgency and are expressed with more than usual vigor. We are living in such a period ourselves; Shakespeare lived in another: the difference between them may perhaps be summed up by saying that Shakespeare's age was breaking into chaos, while our age is trying to turn chaos into order. Shakespeare's age produced a new set of terms and references in the light of which the old problems—the problem of good and evil, of the dignity or worthlessness of man, the problem of reality—were being considered with a fresh vitality. These problems were so alive, so much a part of the age, that they became available for a popular form of literature.

Mr. Walker, however, is dealing with something he considers even more fundamental than the climate of opinion in the Elizabethan age as contrasted with our own. He is concerned with the mysterious and dramatic tension between the good and the evil *within* man. Here is a sample of Mr. Walker's philosophical approach, made vital by his own conviction that everything important about Shakespeare is important because it has to do with "everyman," regardless of the century or period selected for background. We are all "Hamlet," at times, and at other times Macbeth, facing an inner psychological stress in two different ways, just as the whole world at times is confronted by "order breaking into chaos" (Macbeth), and at other times tries "to turn chaos into order" (Hamlet):

> Between Macbeth and Hamlet there *is* a fundamental relationship: "It has often been observed that Hamlet and Macbeth are complementary characters," Dover Wilson observes, and Max Plowman wisely wrote that *"Macbeth* is the contrary of *Hamlet.* Whether it was written in contrast is another matter, a poet hardly works in that abstract fashion." Yet the contrast is real, and I have tried to hint at it in the complementary quotations used as titles for the two studies. [*The Time is Out of Joint* and *The Time is Free.*] The realisation of the kingdom of God is within Hamlet, and because—distrusting Ophelia—the world is a prison and Denmark a dungeon, he must needs distrust the kingdom in himself too and fear that the spirit he has seen may be the devil. When at last he rediscovers the kingdom of heaven he knows he must die to purge his sins before he can be reborn into it; born this time into a kingdom which he is within. The kingdom in *Macbeth* shadows forth the kingdom of heaven on earth, obscured for a time by the blanket of the dark but never sundered from heaven. The tragedy is focused on the direction of awareness of the kingdom of heaven within and the attempt of the human vassals of evil to usurp the divine-temporal kingship. Hamlet is noble despite his world; the world is noble despite Macbeth. If the central tragic figures reflect the spiritual experiences of the poet, we may say that the desperate misanthropy of *Hamlet* has become the agonised *mea culpa* of *Macbeth.*

And here are we, noble despite our world, living in a world that is also, in totality of meaning, noble despite us. We are also "desperate misanthropists" and agonized criers of *"mea culpa,"* are we not? We doubt if Mr. Walker, or anyone else, needs to prove his contention that Shakespeare spoke a language of self-inquiry that will never die away.

COMMENTARY
THE CHALLENGE OF OUR WORLD

WHILE this week's lead article draws our attention to large-scale problems, proposing that, with respect to our habits of irresponsibility, we have reached the end of the tether, there are surely subtler aspects of the end-of-the-tether situation. It would not be difficult to compile a long list of familiar forms of self-indulgence which doctors and other specialists tell us have got to stop.

Nutritionists, for example, assert that a virtual crisis has been reached in the depletion of food-stuffs through destructive methods of agriculture and the use of adulterants and vitamin-eliminating methods in the processing of foods. Psychologists are no longer casual about the kind of thinking we do. Neuroticism is not just an epithet—it is a psycho-somatic affliction that leaves its mark on the lives of millions—and its cause is rooted in the debilitating negative egotism of self-hate, self-distrust, and consequent abnormal self-assertion. Our feelings of insecurity are as great as those manifested by underprivileged and exploited peoples, while our extraordinary technological power gives our unstable emotional condition the appearance of a menace to the rest of the world. That the neuroses of other nations seem as great or greater than our own hardly helps the situation.

The fact that these dangerous tendencies have all been described by members of our own society is encouraging evidence of a potential capacity to outgrow them—to begin to live as sane human beings in a more or less insane world. But the effort required of individuals for this change to take place—an effort required of practically *all* individuals—is both continuously demanding and unpleasantly difficult, although it *might* be regarded as a genuine adventure. A change is really a new beginning, and this means taking nothing for granted. It means to question—not necessarily to discard—the most familiar of our convictions and beliefs. Every crystallized notion of good and evil ought to be re-examined, every assumption about men, methods and events revaluated. Above all, we need to expose to ourselves our unconscious egotisms—which may be far more dangerous than the conscious ones—and to decide whether they are really justified, or whether they are simply forms of defensiveness we have adopted to protect an ill-founded self-esteem.

Only a little of this practice, which everyone can undertake, would go far to strengthen the men who bear the tremendous burden of the moral leadership of the world.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A COMMUNICATION from one of our subscribers seems worthy of reproduction almost entire. Though written as simply a friendly letter, it carries weight as the expression of one who has himself undertaken a few modest "educational experiments."

The first portion of the letter is chiefly a summary of the obvious and familiar shortcomings of our educational system, but such summaries have a value, regardless of how repetitious they may be of the criticisms Progressive educators have been making for years—and are especially valuable if they are followed by some recommendations. There is one point, however, that we would add: the youngest of children often go to school—any school—with a vibrant enthusiasm, wanting to learn in company with others of the same age. In other words, the kindergarteners and early graders don't seem to know that they are in a compulsory school system. Their natural eagerness has, we think, a bearing upon the suggestion of cooperation between older and younger children, in preserving the feeling of adventure in learning, which, being innate, *ought* to be preservable.

Finally we suggest that our correspondent look up the achievements of the Town and Country School, established and managed by Caroline Pratt. Her book, *I Learn From Children* was reviewed in MANAS for July 29, 1949. Miss Pratt's basic convictions seem identical with those of our correspondent.

> There are several reasons why school children, particularly those in high school, do not have a more dynamic interest in school work. One reason, of course, is that the older the child becomes and the more his mind begins to control his actions, the less he sees of practical use in long hours and many months in school each year with respect to his life outside school and especially to his future. In a dim sort of way, he realizes that school must somehow be important, for he is assured of it on every hand by adults. Also, he knows that for most jobs, a high school diploma is quite necessary. But, for all that, he fails to see how much of what he is taught will fit into his future needs.
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> The stereotyped and inflexible system does not, cannot take much into account the differences, inclinations and aptitudes of children. In classes of thirty or more the teacher may get to know each of the pupils fairly well and realize his particular needs, but it is a wise and adept teacher, indeed, who can find the time to work individually with them to draw out and develop their capacities, while some teachers never even perceive the true natures of their pupils, much less know how to enlarge them. Individual attention is still more difficult in high schools, where classes are limited to from thirty minutes to an hour, with a different teacher for each class.
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> It seems to me that a strong reason for apathy on the part of pupils lies in the rigid severance of knowledge into "subjects," the boundaries of which are so decisively marked. The school day is divided into six to eight periods during each of which a new subject is taken up and concentrated on for thirty minutes to an hour. There is very little relationship of one with the other. History has no mathematics, math no civics, civics no sociology or biology, and the latter no languages. This seems to me an arbitrary and unnatural way of acquiring knowledge.
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> I believe that with a course of study wherein these lines are not drawn—where all the subjects necessary to a rounded education are combined and interrelated—two or three hours a day would instill more knowledge and be infinitely more interesting than the six to eight hours now employed. There would then be ample time for field trips, for practical applications, for special efforts toward creativity and initiative, for gardening, for animal husbandry and nature study. City children too often grow up woefully ignorant of the world outside their own hedged-in neighborhood with its barren streets and vacant lots. I remember the classic example of a young friend who had never seen a baby chick. He is perhaps the exception, but how many are truly familiar with all the things a farm boy comes by naturally? How many have experienced the thrill of interest that a 4H Club member has in his calf, or pig, or horse, or his crop of grain or vegetables? How many know the wonder of walking through a field of corn or sugar cane, with its smells and rustling sounds, and its leaves brushing arms and face, the soil for which he has himself prepared and the seed of which he has planted and nursed to maturity?

We would appreciate hearing from other readers who know of instances in which the sort of experiment this correspondent suggests has been undertaken. Once again, Caroline Pratt utilized this method in her Town and Country School. Also, we have seen the same method employed in the Gandhi-inspired school of "Sevagram," near Wardha in India. But there must have been many other efforts in this direction.

> Anyone who has tried to manage a large class of pupils knows the resulting feelings of inadequacy and frustration. This is particularly the case when taking the class on an industry tour or on any kind of field trip. The benefit of such endeavors seems to diminish in proportion to the size of the class. The ideal probably would be found in a group of three or four, or at the most five. But since the cost and availability of teachers makes this an impossibility, why not offer upper-class children the opportunity of working with such small groups of younger pupils under the overall guidance of the teachers? Such a plan might have a double effect, benefitting the older child as much, and perhaps more, than the students under his direction, for while the whole group would gain by the more intimate relationship thus brought about, the student in charge would gain a new feeling of responsibility.
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> The program, however, could well be spoiled by early mistakes. If, for instance, those who were chosen should be the less popular, though more studious, members of the class, the whole scheme might die aborning, first for lack of willingness to participate, and second, because the children placed in the charge of a somewhat lack-lustre person would both consciously and subconsciously rebel. This problem, however, could be anticipated and solved by first choosing some of the more popular students for the work, while still observing the rules of requirements and qualifications.
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> The type of activities chosen would have a bearing on the success of the plan. At least in the beginning, and until a natural and happy relationship of the younger with the older students is established, work should be confined to practical applications rather than to academic theory. Such things as gardening, manual arts, physical education, on-the-spot studies of industry would be ideal beginnings. As the program advanced the activities could take any desired form, and it seems to me that a natural evolution of such relationships might provide immeasurable opportunities for expansion.

FRONTIERS

The Promise of Maturity

ONE of the common problems of an age of specialization is the difficulty involved in organizing and making use of the findings of the specialists. Much of the information they collect seems doomed to be forgotten, buried under the mass of subsequent accumulations Occasionally, however, the specialists come up with discoveries which ought to be put to use immediately, because of the likelihood that they will have a transforming influence on our lives. Such discoveries, one could argue, are always of the sort which we ought to have recognized without the vast apparatus and learned flourishes of "scientific research," yet the fact is that large numbers of people require the assurance of scientific authority before they will accept even fairly obvious realities of human experience, so that it is necessary to admit the value of science, as a persuasive agency, in matters of this sort.

For example, at the recent Gerontological Congress held at St. Louis, attended by 540 scientific workers in the field of the problems of "aging," it was made clear that the best years of a man's or woman's life come after the fiftieth birthday. The evidence for this conclusion is many-sided and impressive. The net result of the Congress, judging from reports of papers presented, is a practical reversal of popular beliefs on the subject of "age," and a somewhat dramatic reproach to the intensely "biological" view of the nature of man which has prevailed during the past fifty or seventy-five years. Youth does indeed possess peculiar virtues, but they are virtues which come to us as the unearned increment of being alive; and, as the "aging process" sets in, they leave us just as inevitably as they came, unless, by some alchemy of human decision and action, we capture their essence and hold them forever as qualities of mind.

For the most part, it has been the ephemeral qualities of youth which our civilization has worshipped—the physical strength and endurance of the athlete, the characterless symmetry of the youthful female form, and the gay irresponsibility of delayed adolescence. To get old, in the minds of many people, means to be overtaken by a disaster which has its only historical counterpart in the doctrine of Original Sin. Neither offense, we may note, can be escaped by human beings, the only advantage of the sin of "oldness" being that it attacks but a portion of our lives.

What the gerontologists have done is to suggest that there is a genuine alternative to regarding old age as an unfortunate cycle of withering away into death. Reporting the findings of these specialists, John J. O'Neill, science editor of the New York *Herald Tribune,* describes their first international meeting:

> When the first such congress was held in Liege, Belgium, ten years ago, the scientists surveyed the situation and found almost nothing was known about the subject. The general impression was that when individuals had passed through the reproductive period they were nothing but rapidly maturing human junk to be slipped quietly out of the picture as mercifully as the social system permitted and as quickly as the economic situation required.

Mr. O'Neill summarizes the views of the St. Louis Congress held this year:

> The full flowering of human life does not take place in the reproductive period ending in the mid-forties, with an inevitable period of degeneration following. Instead, the greatest development of the human being is achieved in the period of maturity, to which the reproductive period is but a slightly related prelude. It is only in the greatest extension of the maturity period to the latter decades that the fully evolved human being develops.

Dr. T. Paulus, of the University of Liege, presented this conclusion in more analytical terms:

> Clinical experience shows that men are led (and occasionally frustrated) not only by the lower psysiological drives, but also, though less conspicuously, by higher needs for truth, beauty, value, love, self-expression and realization, the gratification of which is necessary for a well integrated, productive, altruistic, healthy and happy personality.

> These higher needs appear later in life and make themselves felt only after the more vital ones have been satisfied. Their gratification requires a longer period of maturation and trial and error, during which the individual progressively discovers his full potentialities, becomes himself in the true sense of the word and substitutes for the irrational super-ego a more personal ego ideal.

Despite the language of the Belgian doctor, which clearly reflects the biological emphasis of the past in words like "drives" and "gratification," these findings clearly imply that a new center of integration for the human being is ready to take over after the "change of life" has been passed. This segment of the life-cycle, then, ought to be rich with opportunity for an intensified life of the mind. In a culture with full appreciation of such possibilities, young people would be helped to look forward to this time of life as the period of greatest human fulfillment. The fear of "getting old" would be forgotten, and the serenity and wisdom of maturity would be honored above all other human qualities.

An interesting confirmation of this analysis occurs in an article in *This Week* for July 29. The writer, John E. Gibson, reports that while psychologists have found that the ability to absorb knowledge or information diminishes with age, and that, after sixty, "the ability to learn new things is appreciably lessened," the "ability to *think and reason* keeps on increasing with age—provided these faculties are given sufficient exercise." Mr. Gibson also notes that the "average" person's mental abilities go into early decline, not because they must, but because most people stop using these faculties after they leave school. Among persons of continuously active intelligence, the capacity to think increases in direct proportion to age.

Physiology adds its testimony. Mr. O'Neill reports on the work of Drs. Fazekas and Alman of Georgetown University:

> They found there is a constant decrease in the bloodflow to the brain, and its rate of using nutrition, during the first six decades, but thereafter it remained constant. Despite the diminished blood supply in old age, the brain continued to extract its full nutritional requirements from the blood stream, even in cases of advanced hardening of the brain arteries. Drugs that diminished the body's blood supply failed to reduce the metabolic rate of the aged brain. (*Herald Tribune,* Sept. 23.)

From the foregoing, it seems legitimate to suggest, if not to conclude, that the operations of memory—involving the absorption of large amounts of factual material—require a vigorous and youthful body, whereas the higher intellectual processes are more independent of physiological foundation. A kind of "emancipation," to speak in deliberately dualistic terms, seems an important concomitant of age, through which, by both natural development and inner inclination, the nobler qualities of the soul obtain free and unfettered expression.

Ordinarily, an elderly man is measured by the degree of economic independence he has achieved; an elderly woman, by her capacity to "stay young" in appearance and to maintain an interest in the activities of daughters and granddaughters. Here, however, in the findings of the gerontologists, is a new ideal at which maturing people may aim. Conceivably, if the older generation can learn to be more natural, by responding to these inner tendencies of maturity, the younger generation may learn to be more sensible in its own pursuits, having before it an example which will make "growing up" seem more worth while.