

WORDS AND MEN

THERE are times when it seems as though the birth of a new race of human beings without memory would be about the best thing that could happen to the world. Or if it were possible to erase all recollection of past ideas of "reality," this might serve as well—or better, for people without the power of memory would also be people without imagination, while the obliteration of particular recollections is at least conceivable without a mutilation of human nature.

In a sense, our memories are the shells of yesterday's imaginings. They mark in our past experience the limits to which we have submitted. If we could remember only our dreams and our ideals—our purposes instead of their frustrations—then the power of the past over our minds would hardly exist, and "reality" would be thought of more as a kind of motion than as the "stopping places" which we list in our books as the events of history.

To say that our memories are lodged in words and that words weigh down our hearts and shackle our minds is to pay too great a tribute to the fearsome warnings of the semanticists. It is really ideas, of course, which confine the power of the imagination. Words are only the building blocks of ideas and to assign them a prior importance is to make the tail wag the dog. But when a man or a people comes to live more and more in the past, this seems to be very like what actually happens. We do become hypnotized by words, with their constellations of dead-letter meanings, submitting to their apparent finality in the same way that a waving flag can cause a rush of emotion in some individuals (although, when this happens, they are hardly behaving as "individuals"), or the frown of a stern parent can make a small child quail.

We must, we are counselled, have faith in the past. This is undoubtedly true. But what, in the past, is worth remembering? Human beings have so many pasts. Which past is most impressive to us? An unstable person may have the habit of dating everything that happens by its distance in time from when "father died." What kind of a "past" will he have? He lives through the desolate years, the years without paternally provided security. One of more positive outlook may suppose that a world worth living in began, in 1859, with publication of *The Origin of Species* and the resulting onset of ideas in the field of life sciences. The pious Christian regards the centuries before Christ as a sort of Time-Limbo, unpleasant to think about, during which no one worth thinking about could have lived.

These fragmentary and undoubtedly crude illustrations of the power of memory can be multiplied by each one for himself; the point is that memory, either personal or cultural, has a strong tendency to shape the nature of human hope and the conception of human possibility. And when conventional measures of the meaning and importance of past events are endlessly presented in the books which are read by the great majority of people, a kind of mass or public memory is the consequence, and this mass memory exerts an almost compulsive power over the human beings who participate in it.

Have we ever thought that the past as we know it is a past that is continually failing and dying out? The tide of life rises, and it recedes, and to one looking back on the formal pattern left by the waves, this periodicity seems a futile motion, an aimless activity. But what if we could feel within ourselves the surge of life which drove onward to the heights reached at the moment of the last burst of trial? Would our "memory" be the same? Would the limit be as real as the spirit

which contended against it? If we define the past in terms of the limits where we faltered and fell, we shall not know the true past at all. Or, perhaps we had better say that there is really no "true" past to remember, but that what is true in the past is what cannot be seen in the past, and has its living presence in us, today.

There are, at any rate, people whose lives are never circumscribed by memory—people whose *feeling* about the past is never allowed to prejudice their outlook on the present and the future. Their past is not a shadow which denies, not an impressive record of the limits and failures of human action, but a kind of unreal representation of things which happened but which perhaps need not have happened as they did. Such people refuse to expect, refuse to believe in the inevitability of, the frustration of their life purposes. There is something inside them which keeps on affirming that they are equal to whatever the circumstances of existence may bring. If we knew what that something is, and were to say so, we should doubtless be accused of trying to found a new religion—which is probably why, from Gautama Buddha onward, no great religious teacher has had much to say about the nature of the fearless drive in indomitable men—yet the fact that there are such people is certainly one of the most important things for a memory and failure-haunted civilization to recognize.

In passing, it ought to be admitted that one kind of disrespect for the past is merely ingenuous conceit—typified, perhaps, by Henry Ford's unhappy dictum, "History is bunk"; but this expression seems mostly an evidence of the weaknesses in Mr. Ford's strength, and not a measure of the man he was. History is bunk, if it is allowed to paralyze the will and to generate those endless fears and hatreds which have kept the Western world in a state of intermittent war for some two thousand years.

Nearly all history, moreover, affirms the delusions and incapacities of human beings. Philosophy and literature are the immortal

elements in history—they are its timeless ingredients, which give history whatever glow and fascination it possesses for the hungry mind.

But what more can be said about freedom from the expectation of failure and disaster? Is it a mere foolhardiness, a blind and ignorant optimism, or is it something more? Something more, we think. First of all, it represents an unwillingness to accept any sort of certainty, whether of success or failure, at second-hand. A man of will and moral integrity will never accept defeat by hearsay. He *cannot*, and it is his soul-integrity which prevents him from agreeing with the popular or prevailing pessimism expressed by others. The man who refuses to be stopped by the judgments of others we sometimes look upon as a fool; but if he is a fool, he is only one in terms of lack of experience, which is something different from the foolishness of those who join the ranks of men who no longer try because they have heard that life is difficult. All honor belongs to the man who will always try to do what others say cannot be done. The others may happen to be right in saying that it cannot be done, but they are never right in refusing to try. And he—the man who does try—will foster and enlarge his capacity to try, even in his failures.

Our discourse, some may say, grows platitudinous. But how else shall we confront the formidable cultural memory which insists upon the weakness and ignobility of man? What if these doctrines be an outrageous lie? What if Pico were right—that the nature of man is his own to create, and that the power of the human imagination is the sovereign power in both heaven and earth?

It is for this reason, because of this possibility, that MANAS articles so frequently call to account the depressing pessimism of traditional Christianity and its low estimate of the capacities and potentialities of human beings. For the most part, Christianity is a religion of failure for failures. Not man, but Christ, is the triumphant figure in the Christian religion. And while the dogmas inherited by the West are no longer

believed in with any vigor, the influence of beliefs which focus on the idea of human weakness and sinful degradation is of a sort that needs no vigor to accomplish its stultifying effects. It is a man-denying religion and its psychological currents find new if metamorphosed channels in every theory or belief which shares in this basic contempt for human beings.

Another source of stultification of the will is the supremacy of the National State in the minds of men. Christianity may give us a low opinion of ourselves, but nationalism gives us a low opinion of others. And the State, for its own survival, seeks to forge our opinion of others into an engine of military power. National States are like clinging succubi—obsessions which command that human idealism be perverted to nationalist purposes; which seek to persuade us that the Nation-State is the source and the preserver of all that we hold dear. And when one such obsession is set against another, as in war, each is strengthened by the incalculable passions of fear and distrust.

But we shall never break the power of these delusions by declaiming against their ugliness. It is man that we must learn to believe in, and not the wickedness of the nations. To believe in man, however, seems almost to require a profound inquiry into the idea of immortality. MANAS has some subscribers who disagree with this judgment and who write to say that their minds are eased when we leave "immortality" alone for a while. But we cannot let it alone for long, if only because "belief in man" seems somewhat sentimental when embraced without some deep-rooted conviction of a transcendental reality in human beings. The fleeting mortality of our earthly lives belongs too much to the realm of memory, and not enough to the imagination. Immortality, in short, seems almost a pragmatic necessity, regardless of its metaphysical likelihood or ultimate "truth." We tend to share with H. T. Buckle the view that, "If immortality be untrue, it matters little whether anything else be true or not." Looking at the

world, today, it seems difficult to share any other view.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—A hundred years ago, on June 27, 1850, a child destined to bridge the East and the West was born to a British army surgeon and a Greek woman.

Today, no Westerner attempting a study of Japan and the Japanese people can do without acquainting himself with the writings of Lafcadio Hearn. It was Japan's good fortune that Hearn came to this country for a short visit which was to be prolonged for a dozen years until his death in 1904. He combined his powers of keen perception, sensitive feeling and sympathetic understanding to introduce and interpret Japan to the Western world. It was in this self-appointed task that Hearn made his lasting mark in history. It is for this that the Japanese still honor and respect this extraordinary man, and it is for this that Westerners remember him.

Hearn married a Japanese woman, was naturalized a Japanese citizen and assumed the Japanese name of Koizumi Yagumo. He loved Japan, but his love for this country did not end with his becoming a Japanese. His work is valuable because he maintained to the end his Occidental outlook in fulfilling his desire to acquaint the West with the country of his adoption. The Japanese have always been eager to learn of and to imitate the West, but this feeling was not in Hearn's times reciprocated seriously by the Westerners whose sense of superiority—and, of course, impatience—left no room for importation of thoughts and ideas from the East. Hearn tried in his simple way to stay this process.

Hearn exemplified the truth that life can begin at forty, for he was forty years old when he came to Japan to begin his writings which were to open the eyes of the West to the Japanese life and thoughts. But more, he demonstrated that the East and the West could find a common and harmonious meeting place, if only in one man.

Very few Westerners could, of course, adjust themselves as did Hearn.

In his classic work, *Japan: An Attempt at Interpretation*, Hearn writes: "Faces are always smiling; the commonest incidences of everyday life are transfigured by a courtesy at once so artless and so faultless that it appears to spring directly from the heart without any teaching." He was enchanted by the old Japan and its childlike qualities, but he was keen enough to know from whence these outward charms came. He says, "In the gardens of certain Buddhist temples, there are trees which have been famous for centuries—trees trained and clipped into extraordinary shapes. By sword and law old Japanese society was pruned and clipped, bent and bound, just like these trees." Here may be found a reason why the Japanese have changed little intrinsically, despite the impact of Western civilization. And his writing on this point has the impact of an up-to-the-minute report, applicable to present-day Japan. For, he points out, "Though delivered from the bonds of feudal law, released from the shears of military rule, the great bulk of the social structure preserves its ancient aspects, just as the trees in the temple gardens would preserve their extraordinary shapes if the gardener died."

While Hearn can still be referred to by Westerners in order to understand Japan, his direct influence upon the present-day Japanese is more modest. As a teacher of English and English literature, he had no peer in making the West understandable to his students. The compilation of his lectures in a book, *A History of English Literature*, is still among the best to be found anywhere. Unfortunately, his writings were devoted exclusively to a Western audience, but then there were and are countless numbers who interpreted the West to the Japanese. Hearn left no imprint on Japanese literature. However, it might be said that he was one of those scholars who helped open the eyes of Japanese writers of their day to humanism. Addressing his students at Tokyo Imperial University, Hearn counseled that

the "future literature in this country be more or less founded upon a sympathy with, and a love for, the common, ignorant people, the great mass of the national humanity."

Hearn will always be remembered by the Japanese as their greatest bridge to the West. It is fitting that the first centenary of Lafcadio Hearn's birth is being remembered by both the Japanese and his Western admirers through a movement to commemorate his magnificent contributions to both the West and East. Among the projects proposed by the opening of a Hearn Centenary Fund drive are the publication of a Hearn anthology, the erection of stone markers to mark his final resting place as well as his home in Tokyo, and the repair and purchase by Matsue City of his home in Matsue. This house was designated a "Historic Monument" in 1940 by the Japanese Government, and its owner has religiously preserved it as left by Hearn. A Hearn University is also being planned.

Contributions to the Fund are being received by Mr. P. D. Perkins, Treasurer, Hearn Centenary Fund, Box 167, South Pasadena, Calif., or P.O. Box 24, Nakagyo Post Office, Kyoto, Japan.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE BERLIN CONGRESS

SIDNEY HOOK'S report on the Berlin Congress for Cultural Freedom in the current *Partisan Review* is worth special mention for a variety of reasons. In the first place, it is always noteworthy when something affirmative appears in journals chiefly devoted to "criticism."

The Berlin Congress was an affirmative occurrence. It met from June 25 to June 30, just as the news of the Korean invasion was released. None of the delegates was ignorant of the fact that their ominous proximity to Russian armament made their positions precarious. Not only were the widely-known anti-Communist delegates in danger of "off-the-record" kidnappings, but the Korean invasion brought a Soviet offensive in Germany within the realm of possibility. But there was no "failure of nerve" among these intellectuals.

Theodore Plivier, author of *Stalingrad*, reversed his decision to remain in hiding and flew to Berlin in order to give full emphasis to his contribution by inviting the dangers of a personal appearance. As Hook remarked, the attitude of nearly all delegates was something different from the timidity traditionally associated with learned societies. Twenty different countries were represented by more than one hundred delegates. Spontaneity and courage were reflected by the spirit of a German student who had travelled underground from the University of Leipzig to listen to the discussions and to speak on Soviet regimentation at the University level.

Since it is apparent to everyone that one of the most crucial contributing factors to totalitarian control is the inertia, or "normal" fearfulness, of men who theoretically know enough to oppose tyranny, the attitude of the Berlin delegates is something more than encouraging. Hook's summary of the accomplishments is as follows:

The first great achievement is to have held the Congress in Berlin and to have strengthened the

feeling of solidarity with those still struggling for freedom under conditions hard to imagine by Western intellectuals.

The second is to have created a nucleus for a Western community of intellectuals who will have no truck with "neutrality" in the struggle for freedom either at home or abroad.

Its Manifesto of Freedom expresses the least common denominator of democratic faith for individuals who differ about specific political and economic programs.

Its Message to the East brings assurance to intellectuals beyond the Iron Curtain that they are not forgotten, that the conflict of our time as seen by their colleagues on this side, is not a conflict between East and West but between free thought and enslavement.

In the last portion of Hook's report, mention is made of an international committee of twenty-five, under an executive committee, whose function it shall be to organize the Congress on a permanent basis. The first name to appear on the committee is that of Ignazio Silone. This brief piece of information will please all of those who know the Italian internationalist as one of the finest writers and clearest thinkers of his generation. Some years ago, just following the appearance of his *Seed Beneath the Snow*, Silone found it necessary to write an informal letter to the many friends who were puzzled by his growing disinclination to analyze Fascist upheavals in Marxist terms. Silone adopted a "cultural approach" to political matters, apparently during the time when his novels were in preparation, yet it seems to us that it was precisely at this point that he began to make his most valuable *political* contributions. He criticized Socialism as a Socialist, but also as a non-sectarian human being who sees that any particular theory or program can never be better than the breadth of perception in the men who apply it.

I should have begun [he writes] by saying that the tragedy of socialism reminds me of the hunter who went out to shoot quail and found wolves instead; he had the wrong ammunition. Socialism and communism have lost much of their contact with reality. They have suffered their worst defeats from

forces which they thought had nothing to do with dialectical materialism or the class struggle, and which, for that reason, they refused to take seriously.

The most important of our moral tasks today consists in liberating our spirits from the racket of gunfire, the trajectory of propaganda warfare and journalistic nonsense in general. My hero, Pietro Spina [in *Bread and Wine* and *The Seed Beneath the Snow*], was snatched away from active work for the Party and from the frenzy of public meetings. Suddenly he was alone with himself, in a great quiet that enabled him to renew his contact with nature, with men, with elemental forces that he had forgotten. Before hearing the grass slowly stirring under the snow or mice darting through a cellar—and my book is alive with mice—one has to develop a highly specialized ear. But after one has learned to register the sounds of life, they soon become louder than any bursting bomb.

There is no theory whatever that is revolutionary in itself and that cannot be used for reactionary purposes. Today the problem before us is, "What sort of socialism?" For fascism is also a type of socialism; and in one sense it has even played a useful role by absorbing and incorporating into itself all the harmful and diseased elements which socialism had suffered. Precisely for that reason, it has presented socialism with an opportunity for renovation and purification. Fascism has cried for Barabbas, has made him its leader, but that is nothing for which it should be envied. Let the fascists have their Barabbas, while we continue with the essential task of criticizing our own ideology. History is made by men, not by social determinisms, and I confess that I am not pessimistic.

We have all heard it said that the masses will not fight except for material things, and hence must always be guided by mediocre ends and mediocre people. I believe, on the contrary, that the masses have rejected the leadership of the democrats and the socialists because it was middling and muddling. If mediocrity were good enough for the masses, the Social Democrats would never have lost their influence over the German workers. It is precisely because the masses suffer from a feeling of mediocrity that they refuse to accept mediocre leaders. . . .

There is still another myth to be refuted. It is that in all countries where the means of expressing opinions are monopolized by the State, men can no longer think freely or boldly. But the truth is quite the contrary: that the greatest, the most audacious thoughts on liberty have come from nations where liberty had ceased to exist. The human mind will

never let itself be transformed into a machine. Human liberty and human dignity are conceptions that will never perish.

It may strike those who share our enthusiasm for Silone as more than a happy coincidence that he is now able to play a part in formulating the educational policies of a body such as the Cultural Congress, especially since the latter has now demonstrated a right to talk about "internationalism. "

Since the *PR* reporter of the conference was Sidney Hook, it may also be appropriate to include with Silone's remarks a paragraph contributed to *PR's* lengthy discussion of "Religion and the Intellectuals" by Hook earlier in this year. Hook, we may see, is not only a master at polemics but someone who reveres the integrity of the human spirit, and whose criticisms are of value to men of affirmative faiths, even when denunciatory. For his denunciations are directed against weakness of intellectual integrity, not against persons. He here describes the new "failure of nerve" of intellectuals in general, with particular reference to an unfortunate propensity for holing up among the oversimplifications of religion, which applies to political as well as theological sects:

Considering the renaissance of religion among intellectuals, certain special features, cultural and psychological, should be noted.

First of all the intellectuals mainly concerned are literary and political—individuals who are not professionally interested in ideas from the point of view of their validity. With notable exceptions they had never earned their right to religious disbelief to begin with, but had inherited it as a result of the struggle of an earlier generation. They were largely ignorant of theology and philosophy, ignorant of the facts of historical evil, ignorant of the recalcitrance of human habit and of the depth and varieties of human limitation. It would be false to say that any group was properly prepared for the modern world in the sense of anticipating its horrors. But these intellectuals were pitifully unprepared to understand them even after they happened, and to re-examine their assumptions about the modern world in the spirit of critical realism rather than of panic or

despair. The shock of recent events bewildered them to such an extent that they have become intellectually, not more skeptical, but more credulous, abandoning beliefs never properly understood, for others understood even less. Some have become so obsessed with the animality of man that they can see no grandeur at all in human life; so fearful of the possibilities of human cruelty, that they are blind to still existing possibilities of human intelligence and courage, so resigned to the betrayal of all ideals, that they can no longer make distinctions and regard all social philosophies which are not theocentric as different roads to the culture of 1984.

The delegates to the Berlin Cultural Congress have apparently emerged from these understandable confusions with whole skins, and tough ones. We surmise that Hook was pleased to be able to report the Cultural Congress as he did, and, to the extent that it furthers the spirit of social and personal introspection exemplified by Silone, we can feel rather sure that other things worth noting will be forthcoming from the Congress.

COMMENTARY **PSYCHOLOGISTS ACT**

IT may be a break with editorial precedent, but this week we are able to say something complimentary concerning academic psychologists. The psychologists, it seems, are the first organized professors who have taken militant action in response to the August 25 decision of the Board of Regents of the University of California to discharge the faculty members (31) who refused to sign loyalty oaths. Early in September, the American Psychological Association sent telegrams to Governor Earl Warren of California, and President Robert Gordon Sproul of the University of California, advising them that the Association was recommending to its members that they not accept positions as teachers in the state university system of California "until such time as tenure conditions improve." This was done by the annual convention of the Psychological Association, on the unanimous recommendation of its board of directors. The Association also made it known that the placement service of the Association would "refuse assistance in filling vacancies in this [California] system until such time as tenure conditions meet acceptable standards."

According to the *Open Forum*, American Civil Liberties Union organ in Southern California, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, a division of the APA, has requested its members not to accept positions vacated by persons discharged in violation of the principles of academic freedom. Dr. David Krech, president of the Society, is a member of the University of California psychology department. Commenting on the position taken by the Society, he said that the University psychology department was one of the best in the world and that the "possible deterioration of an important research and teaching center" concerned psychologists, along with the issue of academic freedom.

The Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues will probably establish a legal defense fund to assist any social psychologist "threatened with dismissal, firing or unjust dealings" in connection with academic freedom. This fund, Dr. Krech said, will be used "to fight the University of California, if needed, or any future situation that may arise."

Meanwhile, the Berkeley Chapter of the American Association of University Professors has requested its national body to undertake a thorough investigation of academic freedom in the University of California.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

GIVE-AND-TAKE between parent and child naturally centers itself around the child's desire to think and do unprecedented things, and the desire of the parent to protect the young one against the results of unwisdom. From the days when the child first became mobile, the parent has found herself saying "No, don't touch that—it will burn." Or, "Stop; don't eat that—it will make you sick."

In a universe of infinite possibilities for distressing as well as for happy experiences, the innocence of the child calls for alert protection. Then, when the mind first begins to awaken sufficiently to allow conversation and argument, the parent may use Reason to insure that the child will "not do" certain things which are inordinately dangerous or harmful. All of this is natural—inevitable—with the conscientious parent. Yet from the moment when a child reaches the age of conversation and argument, the parent must watch himself or herself closely, to avoid too much "authority."

Having adopted the formula that the Burden of Proof that this or that should Not be done rests on parental shoulders, a parent is often led to continue automatically the use of the same method. And this is definitely one of the greatest psychological mistakes a parent can make, however understandable. *The youth's growth in sense of responsibility depends upon his being allowed to himself undertake a Burden of Proof that new and unprecedented behavior is Good, not upon the parent proving that the "new" is Not Good.*

Choice of playmates during the early years, choice of recreation and reading matter, choice of first girl friends and boy friends—all these should be left to the child or youth to prove worthy, while the parent strives to withhold absolute judgment—and absolute prohibitions—for at least a small period of time. *Whatever* the child does

seems valuable to *him*, or he would not choose it. The first step in education towards responsibility entails his learning how to defend his preferences by his demeanor and his reason. Thus his own evaluative powers are awakened. No matter, as has been seriously suggested before, if many of such attempts seem transparent rationalizations, for the powers of mind are at least at work, however faultily, and there is all the hope and time in the world for their refinement.

But will the child be interested in trying to prove to parents that his choices are valuable? And if so, what sort of proof will be recognized as such by parents? The child will be more than interested in trying to justify his choices to his parents if any genuine love or affection exists in the family—he will be rather deeply devoted to the task. Even if there is a lack in the amount of family affection, the child knows that he will benefit much from the parents' help and support, and may easily wish to win approval on this ground alone. In either case, it is wise for the parent to explain to his child, over and over again, and in a thousand different ways, that his reason for giving more assistance than that of minimal food and shelter is because he thinks the child's influence Good, and *worth* cooperative assistance.

Here we arrive at the door of metaphysics, or at least at the threshold of Platonism, our implicit assumption being that no one should support and cherish a child just because the child is there, but only when or because the child's Beauty, Goodness or devotion to Truth can be believed in. (We are waiting for someone to ask us our opinion of an alternative to "raising" a child who does not answer to this description, and may regretfully leave town if the query ever arrives.)

We *want* to believe, we may tell our children, in their new ambitions, in the way they spend their time, in the worthwhileness of their companionships or romances, but that we think it reasonable to see some proof *that we can understand*. This is not unreasonable. Progress through life often involves proving ourselves to

others, *first*, on *their* terms. If a research bureau hires an ambitious young scientist, he must demonstrate that the cost of his further training and experimentation is a worthy investment. Later he may win such a name for himself that his recommendations and departures from usual opinion will be accepted on face value, because of confidence established. But the initial stage of his support is one during which the burden of proof rests squarely upon him. If he can't furnish it, support, or at least a portion of it, is withdrawn.

This is another way of approaching something we have called "The Contract Theory of Education." The primary purpose of such a formulation is to make the position and attitude of the parent comprehensible to the young in rational terms. The next purpose, hardly less important, is to draw out the very best constructive efforts from the child and to focus his attention at once upon his own responsibility. Letting youngsters try to prove they are Right will always be more rewarding than trying to prove they are wrong. The attitudes we look for and expect in children are the attitudes most likely to grow under the influence of our parenthood.

This, we feel, has considerable bearing upon the question of adolescent emotional involvements. The parent whose precautions lead him to interfere with young persons of opposite sex who seem to spend an inordinate amount of time together, the parent who opposes a romance with moral suasion and the placing of supposedly concealed obstacles, may end only by helping the young lovers to feel they have "accomplished enough" whenever they manage to get together. This is regrettable. Their mutual goal for accomplishment should be the constructive enlargement of the scope of their lives, a deepening of their common resolves, and a maturing of harmonious cooperation with their parents. Youths engaged in reaching these ends, even if only to "show" their parents, automatically provide their own most effective restraints against unbalanced emotions—the restraint which self-

discipline imposes more surely than any other sort of "control."

FRONTIERS

Human Nature—"Theirs and Ours"

SOME years ago, a thoughtful letter to an editor called attention to the almost unbelievable contradictions of human nature. The letter appeared at a time when the full reports about the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and death camps were being published. Acknowledging the insane brutalities of the Germans who operated these camps, the writer then told of his own experience of being picked up by Germans after a shipwreck at sea, and being treated by them with extreme kindness. This was not a matter of matching an atrocity story with something "good" about Germans, but a reflective questioning of the mysteries of human nature.

The comparison is not peculiarly a "German" one, of course, but has less dramatic counterparts among all other peoples. C. E. M. Joad, in the *New Statesman and Nation* for Sept. 2, generalizes on one aspect of the problem:

Men everywhere want the same things, peace and prosperity and comfort and the ability to go about their lives undisturbed and to develop their personalities. Bring the representatives of different nations together in a favourable atmosphere: then, always provided that they are not acting as the representatives *of* their nations, these good things will tend to be realized. But while these are the things that men want, while these are the things that they could have, what they do in fact have are wars and threats of war. Why? I have asked myself this question hundreds of times but have never found the answer.

It seems to us that raising questions of this sort may ultimately be far more important for the making of genuine peace than all the "plans" for world organization ever invented. What men will do on behalf of their nations is obviously measured by them on a scale of moral values quite different from the ones which they apply to the conduct of their personal lives. This was the theme of Reinhold Niebuhr's excellent book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, and even before

Mr. Niebuhr was born it was the contention of anarchist thinkers.

But to recognize the fact is not to solve the problem. Actually, the terrible things done on behalf of nationalism are peculiarly shocking because they are not acts of merely personal greed or passion. They represent some sort of distorted altruism, some consecration to ends beyond a selfish good or gain. It may be asked: Which is better—to act cruelly or destructively for the sake of some "cause," or to be so indifferent to group considerations that *nothing* either good or evil is done except for oneself?

The restrictions of this question make an impossible dilemma. No answer, we think, should be attempted, and yet the question should be thought about, if only to call attention to the fact that a large part of human behavior falls into one of these two categories.

Mr. Joad tells of a Quaker seminar he attended in Switzerland. Visitors from a number of countries were present, and in the course of the meeting the talk naturally flowed to the threat of another world war.

It was [writes Mr. Joad] against this background, the background of the possible destruction of Western civilisation, that the somewhat startling intervention of the representative from Senegal must be recorded. "You are talking," he said in effect, 'of the possible destruction of your civilisation, as if it were an unmixed disaster. But is it? Suppose that it was only good riddance to bad rubbish. Your civilisation is hopelessly materialistic. You acknowledge only two values, money and power, and in pursuit of them you have brought death and destruction into the world on an unprecedented scale. Why should anybody regret the fact that you are about to destroy yourselves?' The African's sentiment was echoed and his question pressed by an Arab and a Tamil from Southern India.

The question is one that changes the context on the problems of human nature in a startling but entirely wholesome manner. From the African and Arab and Tamil point of view, the issue is not why the German character contains such puzzling

contradictions, but whether or not the "character" of the entire West has earned the right to survival.

The decent, home-loving, package-sending, churchgoing, folk-dancing American—or Englishman, or Frenchman—is likely to be a little upset by the Sene-gambian's charges. He is not materialistic; he has been criticizing "modern materialism" for years. The trouble is, the Sene-gambian hasn't been around; he hasn't met the *real* Americans or Englishmen or Frenchmen. He knows these people only by what their "nations" have done and are doing. It might, for example, have been a Korean instead of a Sene-gambian who attended the Quaker seminar. And he might have made the acquaintance of America by being somewhere in the neighborhood of the 650 to 1000 tons of high explosives which are now being dropped on Korean towns. And if by some strange accident he should happen to have some knowledge of recent history, he will know that in the great London Blitz, the greatest tonnage dropped by the Nazis in one day was estimated to be about 550 tons. From the point of view of a Korean who had the misfortune to be born north of the thirty-eighth parallel, the larger bombs do not become emissaries of peace and freedom because they happen to have an American origin.

Dropping bombs on Koreans is something all Americans are doing by proxy—through just a few Americans. The few are doing it, and most of the rest of us are encouraging them, not because we like to drop bombs on small Asiatic villages with people in them, but because we think that we must, that there is nothing else to do. The villages have no adequate supplies to meet such disaster from the sky, but we haven't thought about that—and if we had, it wouldn't make much difference. War creates its own bitter necessities. And we know that the same young men who drop the bombs, and the officers who command them, and the public which supports them, would be glad to give a homeless, parentless Korean waif a chocolate bar after the village is occupied. We are

essentially a kind people, spontaneously friendly. Everybody knows that.

So we are caught. We hate to drop bombs, but we must. And of course, this is no purposeless inhumanity, but one of those inevitable though tragic by-products of the struggle of a great State and a great people to prevent the spread of an insidious infection, to assure the security of a free way of life.

But it is this necessity of tragedy which the Sene-gambian youth thinks the world might very well do without. Having no particular security of his own worth talking about, he takes a long view of Western civilization—the view which sees the struggles between Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Democracy as typifying a single great social phenomenon—Western Civilization.

If the Sene-gambian youth knew the West better—if he had lived with us in our homes, eaten our food, played with our children, gone to picnics with us, and attended one of our Progressive schools, he would know better. But how could a black Sene-gambian ever do these things? So he doesn't care if we blow ourselves off the earth.

He is wrong, of course. Everybody who is indifferent to other people being blown off the earth is wrong. But how are you going to convince him of it? This may not seem like a very important question, just now. We are having another "emergency," and prefer to shoot first and answer questions afterward. But if the shooting lasts so long that we never do try to convince him, we shall, whether we want to or not, be proving that he is right. And then the Sene-gambians may start asking themselves questions about the people of the West—about how they can be such nice people and at the same time so hideously destructive.

Has it Occurred to Us?

THE United States is said to contain eight million more women than men at the present time. This statistic may be exaggerated or misleading, or both, but even if the number has been eight-folded, we still have a million "extra women" to conjure with, and this is more than ample for our purposes. Has it occurred to us—experts aside—that these women may be a hidden asset that no one has yet tabulated correctly? Isn't it possible that some new significance should be attached to this odd multitude? Is it, perhaps, a free quantity which may cast a deciding vote in the "battle of the sexes"?

The vote, the pay-check, the legal position—all these are gains in the emancipation of women. But, women or men, none lives by legislation alone. Do not women need freedom, also, from their "sex"? Consider how those who do not marry (whether out of personal disinclination, or because of the above-mentioned over-population) are still pitied, quite regardless of their own feelings in the matter.

Doubtless many of the superfluous millions prefer the traditional commiseration, but it is the rebellious minority whose standard we are trying to interpret. We do not even have a proper name for them. "Spinster" and "maiden lady" are too incongruous for the independent woman of today; "independent" has too negative a flavor; "single," while accurate, might be objected to for the sake of the married women: who would want to imply that marriage destroys singularity? The nameless ones have yet to achieve that measure of distinction in the public mind which entitles them to a title of their own. But this circumstance will discourage none of the new species, for they must be aware that, notwithstanding scientific practice, the essence of a phenomenon is more important—and forever more elusive—than its name or description.

If we dare to describe the species at all, let us first admit that it is made up of *both* sexes, and, taking leave of statistics, let us simply speak of the human being, irrespective of sex. A human being cannot avoid human relationships, but when we have said this, we have not said much clearly. Has it occurred to us that, contrary to ordinary opinion, a

human relationship does not have to be emotional in character? "Platonic friendship?" Yes—but how much does even this term mean to us?

Are we unaware that human beings may be drawn together and work together with no desire to invade each other's personal emotional sphere? Or do we know those who will not accede to the bidding of what psychologists call the possessive instinct? Actually, the business world, the art world, and the field of science afford many opportunities for combining complementary traits and talents in partnerships of fruitfulness, of long duration, and of impersonal character. And it is probably true that every person has evidence, in certain of his own relationships, that enthusiastic cooperation is possible without the disturbances of emotional involvement. The race of man exhibits infinitely more human differences than biological distinctions, and thus the play of opposites is immeasurably more subtle *outside* considerations of sex. But the home is not to be excluded in this connection. Some families seem to provide the ideal occasion for integrity in human relationships, and some marriage partners have a stronger and surer sense of the inviolability of the human mind and heart than the average "independent" man or woman. We must waive marriage as a disqualification, and recognize that one may belong to the nameless category of "single" or "whole" human beings regardless of sex or status. In fact, as we observe the regenerating influence of family love in certain rare instances that fall within our experience, we may question whether marriage—that is, the family—is not precisely the place where the finest human relationships were "meant" to arise. Has it occurred to us that some day all human beings may desire the *n*th freedom, freedom from "sex"—freedom to use their capacities and powers, whatever they are, as self-respecting individuals? Sex is not a shackle for the mind unless "thinking makes it so." It is at best a superficial distinction which the human being naturally transcends whenever he is most completely himself.