

## CIVILIZING AGENCIES

THE early days of American history have been studied for a variety of reasons, but we know of no book, save those compiled in pride by members of the craft, devoted to the role of Freemasons in the rooting of culture on the American Frontier. To be sure, journals like the Masonic *New Age* are continually printing articles on the illustrious Masons of the revolutionary epoch. One who follows these accounts will finally wonder if there was anyone of eminence, in those days, who was *not* a Mason. This, however, is not the primary reason for considering Freemasonry in Colonial and revolutionary America. Actually, the occasion for these reflections is a passage in a popular novel by Hervey Allen, in which the author describes with what seems authentic detail the contribution of Freemasonry in planting ideals in the minds of the rough and sometimes savage frontiersmen, and in supplying a concept of social relations which nurtured the feeling of brotherhood potential in the heart of every man.

This is far from being an advocacy of modern Masonry, of which we know too little to have any opinion at all—any, that is, beyond the hope that something of the quality of eighteenth-century Masonry still survives in modern masonic orders. It is rather to take note of the importance in men's lives of some influence embodying the idea of human fraternity and altruism—the sense of responsibility for the welfare of one's fellows. It seems clear that, in the eighteenth century, the best among men were often Masons. We doubt if this is true today, in the same way. The current of history seems to be successively animated by varying impulses. In the Middle Ages, men of power and ability were usually found within the Church—"boring from within," perhaps, but nevertheless within. We have in mind such individuals as Erigena, Claudius of Turin, and Nicholas of Cusa. Let a few centuries pass by,

and the field of honor passes to rebels and heretics of various sorts—Peter Abelard, Joachim of Flora, Roger Bacon, and others. Then came Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, and the great rush and conflict of the Reformation, followed by the Renaissance, and the transition to secular greatness among men.

Then, in the eighteenth century, new energies were released through the countless secret societies found throughout Europe, devoted, until then, to learning, culture, and science. These were embodiments of the new spirit of respect for man. As Una Birch remarks in *Secret Societies of the French Revolution*:

It remained for the utopians of the eighteenth century so to interpret the symbolism of the secret societies, so to affiliate them, and so to organize the forces of masonry, mysticism and magic, as for a few years to unite them into a power capable not only of inspiring but of precipitating the greatest social upheaval of Christendom.

It is difficult to believe or understand, that bodies holding differing doctrines, adherents of many rites, disciples of divergent masters, even commingled for a day in their enthusiasm for the common cause; yet this singular and Hegelian amalgamation seems in practice to have taken place. The principal force in the trinity of masonry, mysticism, and magic was masonry, and it, like many other innovations, was introduced into France from England. Just as Voltaire and Rousseau derived their philosophy from English sources, and applied the theories they absorbed in a direct manner to the life of their own country, so did the French people derive their masonic institutions from England, and apply them for purposes of social regeneration in a fashion never even contemplated in the land of their origin. The English Deists, Hume, Locke, and Toland, were responsible for the intellectual regeneration of France, just as the Legitimist lodges planted in that country after the Stuart downfall were responsible for the many lodges of tolerance, charity, truth, and candor which disseminated the seeds of the humanitarian movement on French soil. The Pantheisticon [of John Toland] became the model of French societies. .

. . The true history of the eighteenth century is the history of the aspiration of the human race. In France it was epitomized. The spiritual life of that nation, which was to lift the weight of material oppression from the shoulders of multitudes, had been cherished through dark years by the preachers of Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood. From the Swedenborgian stronghold of Avignon, from Martinist Lyons, from Narbonne, from Munich, and many another citadel of freedom there flashed on the grey night of feudalism, unseen but to the initiates, the watch-fires of great hope tended by those priests of progress who, though unable to lift the veil that shrouds the destiny of man and end of worlds, by faith were empowered to dedicate the future to the Unknown God.

Not without point, Miss Birch heads her book with a quotation from the great and somewhat heretical Catholic historian, Lord Acton, who wrote:

The appalling thing in the French Revolution is not the tumult, but the design. Through all the fire and smoke we perceive the evidence of calculating organization. The managers remain studiously concealed and masked, but there is no doubt about their presence from the first.

Whether or not we believe the French Revolution might have been avoided—at least in its bloodier aspects—the fact of the dynamic forces which were its primary inspiration can hardly be denied. The revolution grew from a kind of "grass-roots" movement of freedom-loving men—men who acquired their ideals and their dreams of progress and enlightenment from societies of a masonic character.

Today, there is as much hunger in the hearts of men as before the French Revolution. The difference, however, is that today no clear ideals are marked upon the horizon of human hopes. The "enemy," now, is as obscure as he was plain to see in the eighteenth century. Nor is the "secret society," whether of masonry or something else, a great attraction to men of responsibility.

So it is pertinent to ask: Where shall we look for the liberating and civilizing agencies of the future? Not in "organizations," perhaps, yet the dynamics of growth and constructive change will

be the same. Who knows—some loose fraternity, unnamed, unrecognized by those who strengthen its ranks, may be assembling even now, united by common perceptions which daily become clearer and more demanding of the allegiance of free men.

## *Letter from* **South Africa**

ALICE.—The recent elections in April this year have given rise to political developments which mark yet another turning point in South Africa's history. The first reaction to the result of the election was the announcement in June of the formation of two new political parties.

First may be mentioned the Liberal Party, headed by Mrs. Ballinger as national President, and having Alan Paton as one of its vice-presidents. These individuals belong to what is generally known as the "liberal element," and more derogatorily as "*Kaffir boeties*" in Afrikaner Nationalist circles. In explanation, the word "Kaffir" is used by the Afrikaner as a term of disparagement to refer to the African (Negro) section of the population; and "boetie" means brother. Mrs. Ballinger is one of three members, in the House of Assembly of 159 members, who represent specifically the Africans of the Cape Province who were removed from the common roll of voters by legislation in 1936. Alan Paton needs no introduction to the American people following his *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The Liberal Party has opened its doors for membership to persons of all races who accept its principles. It aims at establishing a tradition in which race shall not be a factor in determining citizenship rights and privileges. In other words, it rejects the racist basis of the present government's policies—indeed the basis of all previous South African governments. It sees in these policies only a worsening of present racial animosities and tensions, and feels that the only road to a solution lies in reversing the segregation philosophy of the country (see *MANAS* for April 30, 1952, p. 2). In the present mood of the country, with the Nationalists drunk with a sense of power, the United Party licking its wounds after a second defeat at the polls, and the non-white population growing more restive and suspicious of any avowed good intentions on the part of the whites, it seems that the Liberal Party has a stiff battle

ahead, and will need to devote quite some time to consolidating its position. Many of the non-whites have come to regard the liberals as more academic than practical in their protestations, sacrificing militancy for compromise. Yet this is the first forthright departure from the established beliefs in the country, and worthy of note.

The second party is the Union Federal Party formed in the Natal province under the leadership of Senator Nicholls. Natal happens to be the province where influence is predominantly English. Only recently the National Party of Dr. Malan began to organize in this area with a view to infiltrating and establishing a hold on what they regard as the last stronghold of British imperialism. Natal, be it noted, is not so much concerned with colour policies as with allegiance to the British Crown and Commonwealth. Even before Union was formed, Natal had a colour policy similar to the repressive practices of the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. A legacy of that policy is evident in the attitude toward the Indian population. With the march of time, and entrenchment in power, the Nationalists have grown more vocal and vehement about their intentions to establish a republic in South Africa, probably severed from the British connection. This is the real bone of contention in the case of Natal. Hence the Federal Party was launched with a view to keeping Natal out of such a republic and within the British Commonwealth of Nations. The party favours a change in the constitution of the country, from Union to a federation, in which each province will have much more autonomy and self-determination. In fact, Dr. A. Keppel-Jones in his book, *Friends or Foes*, suggested a solution to South Africa's ills along the lines of a federation of states in which the various racial groups would be free to have autonomy in their own spheres. But whether this is in the best interests of the country is a debatable point. Already the government has shown resentment toward the federal ideas of the new party. Recently, Mr. Louw, the Minister of Economic Affairs, threatened Natal with

economic sanctions, on the score that developments in this province had discredited the country abroad to the extent of making possible investors wary and even reluctant to put money into a country which to them seemed politically unstable. Natal in alarm called upon the government to give assurances that this was not in fact the collective view of the Administration.

Meanwhile, parliament has resumed the session which was adjourned for the purpose of conducting the elections. First on the agenda is a bill to amend the South Africa Act, so as to remove the Coloured (Mulatto) voters from the common roll. The matter is being dealt with by joint session of both houses—the constitutional requirement in cases involving franchise rights of any section. Dr. Malan was evidently hoping that a section of the Opposition would go over and vote with the government on this issue, so as to provide the necessary two thirds majority. He refused to consider any amendments from the opposition, and in so doing has probably robbed himself of the opportunity of getting the measure through. The debate on this issue was adjourned until August. Some observers feel that this is a move to obviate any loss of face by the government, should the bill not go through. The removal of the Coloured voters from the roll is merely part of an obviously studied move to further curtail the numbers of those who can vote against the government, and is but a step further along the road to the formation of the republic so dear to the sentiments of the Afrikaner Nationalists.

In conclusion, it may be added that the Minister of Finance has just introduced his budget which will ever be remembered for its severity. New taxes have been imposed on practically all sections. These include taxes on automobiles, tires and tubes, gasoline; taxes on companies except gold-mining; compulsory savings levies; increases on the price of bread; new surcharges in income tax. The general impression seems to be that, for one thing, the people are being called to

pay for the excesses of an administration that has not been exactly responsible—a government that has spent sums of money on its *apartheid* schemes whilst failing to cope with the ever spiraling cost of living. For another, it appears that there is not much substance in the repeated assertion by the government that the finances of the country are sound, and that there is confidence abroad in the economic stability of South Africa! It looks more as if the country is being called upon to provide from within what it cannot derive through help from outside sources. Were there not so much demoralizing tragedy in the story of South Africa, onlookers might almost smile at the pointless floundering that characterizes goings-on in this corner of the globe.

SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### MICHENER'S ASIA

FOR those who have not yet read James Michener's *The Voice of Asia* (Random House, 1951), we have a few sample passages to present, in support of our support of what Justice William O. Douglas and Stringfellow Barr have been saying for a long time. The fact that Douglas' utterances are not always popular we ascribe to the fact that no one comes by a truly global view without undergoing a painful separation from numerous delusions concerning presumed national superiority, and when a man is much in the public eye his separation from public delusion is apt to be fiercely resented.

Before proceeding to interesting citations from the text, however, we should like to honor Mr. Michener for his introductory chapter, "The Coward." Here he tells how he was persuaded to omit one of his stories from the original *Tales of the South Pacific*, even though this particular character study, "Lobeck, The Asiatic," in his opinion, contained some of the most important thinking of the entire volume. Perhaps the critics who read *Tales* in manuscript disliked the implications of "Lobeck's" view—that the whole of Asia would some day be united against Western imperialism—or perhaps they felt that ideological discussions were out of place in a book that was primarily "entertaining." In any case, Michener came to regard his yielding to their advice as cowardly default, and *The Voice of Asia* was inspired in part by his desire to make up for this previous failure to say, "Asia cannot be divided and conquered."

In this book, then, Michener steps outside the role of storyteller and attempts a bit of global prophecy, beginning with the story of Lobeck, left out of *Tales of the South Pacific*. From this the reader learns how easy it is for the typical American to close his eyes to the true shape of Asiatic destiny. Lobeck's companions in arms promptly label him "Asiatic"—a term reserved for

anything beyond the bounds of sanity—when he suggests that the Chinese and Japanese will eventually become allies. Later the same proclivity for deriding men who have disturbing insights is illustrated by Michener's description of how eager many Americans are to undervalue the global significance of Nehru's regime in India and the principles for which he stands. Nehru, after all, can be said to be merely an "Asiatic," and therefore not to be taken too seriously.

Turning to the passages promised, we offer first a discussion of colonialism, entitled "Observations":

If Korea is a test of America as a nation, Indonesia is a test of Americans as individuals. Do we really believe in democracy? Do we really believe in self-determination and government by the people?

Few Americans visit Indonesia today without instinctively wishing that the Dutch were back in control. Say, the way things were in 1935. There were no serious uprisings. American ships were not scorned in Javanese ports. No American newspapermen were murdered on the highway. And the investor's dollar was safe and returned up to 12 per cent annually. Those were the good old days. The Indonesian knew his place and there was none of this jabbering about freedom.

Comparing 1935 with today's near anarchy one begins to rationalize that perhaps even the Indonesian himself was better off under Dutch rule. True, there was political injustice then, but if the Dutch had been given time, sooner or later reforms would have been launched. There were many economic wrongs in 1935, but you could trust time to show the Dutch that these should be eliminated. Many indefensible aspects of colonialism persisted in 1935, but any day now the Dutch were going to initiate Christian equality.

Rubbish! If American slavery had not been terminated once and for all in 1865, there would be good-souled men today in Atlanta and New York who would be saying, "There are some injustices, yes, but any day now slaves are going to get a square deal."

The evil fact about colonialism in Asia is that the laudable reforms were always just about to take place. They rarely did. There was only one alternative: Indonesian revolt and Indian revolt and Indo-Chinese revolt and general Asiatic revolt.

We helped create Asia as it is today. We must accept that creation and co-operate with its people as they work toward something better. Indonesia is a good place to start. We must understand this mighty nation. We must work patiently with it on Indonesian terms. And we must dedicate ourselves to the accomplishment—after present temporary annoyances have passed—of lasting friendship between the Republic of Indonesia and the Republic of the United States. This course will have difficulties. But we know that the old days are gone. We have a chance to co-operate in working out something better.

More along the Douglas-Barr line, reminiscent of earlier conclusions of Edmond Taylor in *Richer by Asia*:

Most Americans underestimate India's leadership in Asia. Indonesians, Malayans, and Burmans in particular consider India Asia's unifying force. When Nehru speaks of Asia's spiritual values, he strikes a vibrant chord in these nations. When he sponsors a third way between communism and capitalism, he expresses their hopes. While I was in Burma one of the leading newspapers stated that Burma could have no foreign policy that did not coincide with India's, that in effect Nehru was Burma's foreign minister.

Like the average American I was shocked to find that most of Asia is quite bored by the American-Russian struggle. They deem it merely a contest between capitalism and communism and cannot project themselves into the fight. They have known Western capitalism unfavorably. They understand that communism is no relief. Their hope is to escape each of the systems.

I met few Asians who were pro-communist. Patriots especially recognized that their homelands would lose much if Chinese communism swept Asia. But they were not paralyzed by the prospect, admitting that perhaps in the long run a home-grown communism might be both inescapable and constructive.

On the other hand, they also admitted that given time and growth, a capitalism like America's might be even more advantageous. But to get excited about either system was useless.

In Michener's opinion, Nehru is an incomprehensible figure to most Westerners simply because they do not know what he means

when he insists that there is a "spiritual content to Asiatic life that must always be taken into account," a "content" entirely different from that of the religions of the West. Despite the religious fanaticism of many sects in India, this cultural heartland of the East is addicted to philosophy, and to profound deliberation on the ethical dimensions of political events. If the West can boast of men with similar aspiration, the Asiatics have not been granted the privilege of meeting them, for, as Michener puts it very simply, "The nature of our contacts with Asia has prevented intercourse of a high philosophical nature." There has been something appallingly one-sided about the cultural interchange between Asia and the Western world. While a Nehru, a Gandhi, or a Radhakrishnan, three important Asians of their time, sought out—and sought sympathetically—the roots of the best in Western idealism, the Western imperialists who have controlled the political destinies of the East have persisted in regarding Asians chiefly in terms of population figures. As a result, we know little or nothing of the actual weaknesses or strengths of the Asiatic mind, while leading Indian statesmen know a great deal about ours. Thus Michener's insistence that we recognize a world of ideas and aspirations as well as a world of guns and population statistics, and wake up to the fact that it is completely impossible to build a "one world" harmony without willingness to learn whatever we can from philosophic backgrounds different from our own. Michener feels that these considerations have already assumed crucial importance. He writes, "It would be ridiculous to expect aggressive pioneering businessmen to be addicted to cosmological speculation. And a missionary by definition goes abroad to effect conversion from what is defined as a lower religion to what he believes is a higher. Asia has not been particularly impressed with the spirituality of such visitors. But now America is a grown nation forced to exercise a considerable world leadership. If we continue to send Asia only pragmatic businessmen and hortatory missionaries, we will lose contact

with those very Asians whose friendship we need."

The last of our quotations from this book is included especially for the benefit of those who may have been interested by our discussion of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in *Frontiers* for April 29, and May 13. Michener's views of the influence of religion in Asia, and particularly in India, provide an impressive summary of how the philosophical content of religion may affect politics. He writes:

The oldest continuing civilized religion in the world is Hinduism. No analogy can be used to describe this curious and powerful religion. It resembles no other. It probably covers a wider range of human experience than any other religion and automatically provides a haven for almost any level of intelligence. In its basest manifestations it seems merely a sexual orgy. In its sublimes", especially in the god-man dialogue of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, it equals in compassionate wisdom the holy books of any other religion. Hinduism has been tried in various other countries—Indo-China and Indonesia, for example—but it has never flourished outside of India and has always been quickly supplanted. But within India it has had an astonishing vitality, withstanding the assaults by Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Ultimately it will probably form a barrier isolating India from the rest of Asia. This has already happened with Pakistan, for rightly or wrongly India's Muslims came to believe that no minority could possibly live freely within a Hindu state. In fact, there is grave apprehension in India right now over the likelihood that orthodox Hinduism will gradually strangle the democracy and force a theocratic fascism upon the nation. There is a great possibility that this might happen. If it does, India will regress into a true dark age and any hope of contact with the rest of Asia will be forlorn. On the other hand, if the spiritual values of Hinduism illuminate a true popular democracy, India would probably find her leadership increasing, for the teachings of the *Bhagavad-Gita* concerning good citizenship are among the most profound on earth.

*The Voice of Asia*, incidentally, is now available in a thirty-five cent "Bantam Giant," which, by September, 1952, had already gone through two printings.

## COMMENTARY

### LANGUAGE OF SYMBOLS

IN *Bedford Village*, the frontier romance by Hervey Allen (see lead article), the author makes considerable point of the fact that the Indians are familiar with the Masonic "greeting" sign, and certain Masonic "grips," also, are discovered to be a part of tribal lore. Lest this be supposed the product of an enthusiastic imagination on the part of Mr. Allen, we have a story of our own to relate, bearing out the idea of a universal language of symbolism.

Years ago, in Connecticut, we made the acquaintance of a private game warden who ranged over the woodlands not far from New Haven in behalf of a water company. During a conversation with him, he told of a lantern-slide talk given before his lodge by Hiram Bingham, former governor of Connecticut. Mr. Bingham, it will be remembered, led exploration parties into the high Andes of South America, and described his travels and discoveries in a fascinating volume, *Inca Land*, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1922. The subject of his talk before the New Haven Masonic lodge was the civilization of the Incas, and he told the members that his original reason for becoming a Mason was that he found that Masonic ritual promised to be a key to interpreting Inca symbols!

If books on the migration of symbols are to be believed, it seems at least a possibility that, at some time in the distant past, a language of symbols once girdled the earth, and that the vocabulary of this language was conceived in the spirit of brotherhood and fostered by the elders of ancient communities to safeguard and transmit to future generations the quality of commitment to social ideals. Certain it is that, in the West, such brotherhoods have existed from the days of Pythagoras, and there is no reason to think so universal a tendency would be absent from so-called "aboriginal" cultures. (In fact, this temper of life in some non-industrialized societies—the

Hopi society, for example—has been widely noted by modern sociologists.)

It is even a possibility that this sort of symbolism is spontaneous in its development, as Charles Jung suggested in *Integration of Personality*, after years of study of the ciphers of the medieval alchemists. At any rate, there is something heartening in the idea that nature itself may be on the side of idealism in human life, with virtually "organic" laws governing its conservation and expression. If so, then the "higher nature" in man may be something more than a construction by ethical theorists.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

SOME weeks ago, we said, here: "There is a great deal of truth in saying that self-reliance is the only thing which *cannot* be taught, but it seems equally true to say that self-reliance is the *only* thing that can be taught." We now have a comment from a reader, indicating that this and other things in the Aug. 12 column puzzled him. He also expresses a desire for more comment, generally, from readers:

Prompted by your request in the column of August 12, I pen, herewith, some questions and comments which have, as you hoped, arisen in my mind upon reading said column.

I confess I am completely floored by the assertion that ". . . to be *really* interested in a child means relinquishing of all concern in what his standard of values will ultimately become."

Now, I have held that a large amount of trouble is caused by parents who have *no* concern regarding what their children's ultimate standard of values will become. These parents pack them off to nursery and Sunday schools, allowing anything and everything that can blot out the individual child's ability to make moral discriminations and decisions to happen, and never consider that they have done anything but the "highest good." Surely this cannot be what is meant by the above quoted statement.

I plan to teach my daughter, now two, to value Truth, above all, for without Truth, she can never achieve self-mastery, and without self-mastery, there is no happiness. Should she fail to master her temper, or worse, fail to attempt it, I would be deeply concerned—as deeply concerned as I am when I fail in attempts to master similar defects in myself. Is this the kind of moralizing to be avoided? I don't think so, but I fail to understand what is actually meant, and will appreciate some assistance.

Now, regarding the paradoxical self-reliance question, I quote, "For instance, there is a great deal of truth in saying that self-reliance is the only thing which *cannot* be taught, but it seems equally true to say that self-reliance is the *only* thing that can be taught."

Here I have a glimmering of light, and should like to expound a bit.

Self-reliance, like courage, is basic, a part of the individual's make-up and hence, cannot be taught (but, like courage, can be learned), but self-reliance can, I think, be taught indirectly to the very young, growing child by discouraging, and denying indulgence in, its opposite, dependency. To illustrate: Daughter, in the playroom, throws a ball, which rolls under the bed. Instead of getting the ball herself, she runs and gets Mama and wants her to get the ball. Mama, instead of performing sweet duty, says, "You can get it yourself," points to the seemingly inaccessible ball and walks out of the room. Daughter gets the ball herself. This tableau took place quite recently, and has had a salutary effect on my daughter's latent self-reliance.

I conclude that self-reliance, in these circumstances, can be taught, but do not understand the assertion that it is the *only* thing that can be taught. I hope you will unfold an explanation in the near future.

In closing, I would like to say that I enjoy "Children. . . and Ourselves" very much and find it very helpful and stimulating. I am delighted by the request for questions and comments, as MANAS is a very worthy project and any opportunity, no matter how small, to participate in it, is most welcome to me. Here's to more questions and comments.

The catch in the statement, ". . . to be really interested in a child means relinquishing of all concern in what his standard of values will ultimately become," is the word "standard," and the sentiment is not so idiotic as it sounds. If we are really "interested" in a child, we certainly know that his search for values will constitute a vital, perhaps the most vital, part of his life and happiness. But it is *his* search, not ours. If we love him, we will respect this fact. If we love a child, we cannot be indifferent to any cruelty or unkindness he manifests—but if we react or oppose him, this perhaps should not be to "teach" him our special value determinants so much as to honestly express commitment to our own values.

Behind the original statement, we suspect, is the feeling that a "standard" is by definition a preconception, and that we should start off with an entirely fresh *mental* slate regarding the child. Only in this way, it could be argued, can we learn the most from him, be fully open to him, and be a

companion in growth instead of a sometimes tyrannical pedagogue. Then, last but not least, one might say that until we have adopted the attitude described, and lived with it personally, we have no right to suspect children of propensities for "evil." Perhaps the child would be more instead of less "moral" if we didn't watch his "standards"—above all, if we didn't hire professionals to do it, or let a Church make a project of indoctrination. The faith of the person in question, for instance, happens to be that the really hands-off way is probably the best way to encourage a genuine "ethical sense"; one thing is sure, whatever develops in the child under these conditions *will* be genuinely his—something one can rely on, not merely a hodgepodge of precepts repeated by others. Should we, do we really have the right to, worry about our children in *advance*, especially when they are quite young?

As to "self-reliance" being both unteachable and, in a sense, the only thing which can be taught: All significant learning depends upon a sort of self-initiation, a revelation from within. Other forms of learning, in this case, may be impediments; at the best, mental furniture on which we can sit but in which we cannot travel. No matter how much we "instruct," cajole, or even successfully condition, we cannot teach the reality of anything to anybody. We can talk *about* love, honor, truth, but this is not teaching, if by teaching we mean to imply the successful transference of a sense of reality—a wisdom—from one person to another. Of course, the same is true of self-reliance, except that since it is the very quality of self-initiation, which "self-reliance" symbolizes, standing at the portal of every gate to wisdom, whenever we encourage others *toward* self-reliance we are coming closest to teaching what is truly worth while.

Another correspondent raises a further dimension of the same problem, coming out strongly for the quality of "loyalty" as the desideratum of the happiest upbringings. Perhaps the original suggestion from our "extremist" and

this idea have something in common, even though there might be some disagreement over terms. The point in common, if there is one, would be that the parent who refrains from trying to mold a child in the image of his own "values" shows a basic loyalty to the child as an individual. Also, both interested parties, we suspect, have heard a little too much parental prattle quoting child-psychology texts. Anyway, here are comments indicating further thoughts on "self-reliance":

Loyalty will be learned by the child if his family is loyal to the best side of his nature. Why is it so terribly important to the youngster to hear his father or mother speak slightly or unfairly about him to those who seem to be, to him, on a "removed" relationship? Because the statements are out of the emotional context of the home, and therefore they seem impersonal—and somehow, then, "This is true, this is what Father or Mother REALLY thinks of me." On the other hand, if a child has failed wilfully to water the lawn, allowing himself to finish the funny papers instead, and then overhears some member of his family say to that next-door neighbor a kindly thing about him—a reciprocal feeling of loyalty may carry him into his chores, and arouse in him the desire to be as good as his family thinks him.

So often the school will point the finger at the home as the source of all maladjustment. Often the parents will berate the schools. But so often in either place the weakness is that the heart-bond of loyalty has been lost. A child can bear spankings, and scoldings, and try to be better, if he believes that those who guide him feel he is capable of doing much better and, more important, are willing to "bet on it." He must lose all heart for the task of self-improvement if he hears useless disparagement of him. It means he *doesn't matter*.

A number of terms seem to be over-used by young initiates into psychology, the new parents of new children, but they represent all the philosophy they can find to tie to in that most serious endeavor—to do right by their children. One of these helpful terms is T.L.C., tender, loving, care. They are told that if a child gets cuddling as a babe, he is off to a happy start. But when the mind of the child awakes, it also needs respect. The habit and practice of constantly discussing our children, our husbands, our wives,

and relatives, with others in terms of psychological drives and tensions, is a very dangerous one for this delicate bond of respect. It breeds above all the suspicion that if these intimate aspects of character can be so casually dissected, then we had best not trust with our confidence those for whom nothing is sacred.

One of the most common remarks by which parents limit a child—usually said to an "outsider," with the young one standing there, considered as some kind of a bush or a stone without any ears or heart—is, "Oh, Mary is terribly jealous of her baby-brother. She pinches him, etc., etc." Of course, Mother has heard that the pattern of jealousy is to be expected, and other patterns as well, depending on whether the child is No. 1, No. 2, or No. 3, as to seniority rights . . . To use speech in this way is "immature." It is irresponsible to create images in the child's mind about himself, unless we want those images perpetuated. The habit of the uneducated mother who calls her child "bad" is no worse. Far better to use physical correction for physical misdeeds, than to give a child's mind unfruitful words to dwell on.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Tragedy—Not On-Stage

SELDOM has development of theater art been more hampered by reactionary tendencies than in the United States today. One proof of this may be found in the fact that so many plays are printed and never produced; and that these printings (most of them) have been in literary quarterlies and magazines of small circulation, to this instant unmolested by Congressional Committees. Plain-spoken and truly-aware drama is staged only in the smallest experimental theaters; and there's a not-insignificant increase in verse-drama and presentations in foreign tongues concerning distant locales. The fear of censorship is obvious in tacit admissions that it's safer to deal with vital questions equidistantly (by parallels of far times and places). Also, that the average censor won't understand French or modern poetry?

A gruesome summary of facts provides sufficient preface. Remaining the (now sterile) hub, New York City boasts less than half its number of stages in operation "on Broadway." The imagination is strained to recall that over sixty theaters attracted paying box-office during World-War-I years. And back in that now-fabulous period, over 2,000 road-show theaters prospered throughout the country. Today, not counting little theaters and community playhouses (which are, by the way, accomplishing vastly less than in the depression years of the Thirties), about fifty legitimate stages survive on the West Coast and in all the hinterlands! To be sure, financing problems have had a great deal to do with this. Where it cost \$15,000 to put on a Broadway play in the Thirties, it now costs \$45,000. And there is also a shortage of stages by reason of the high cost of building and repairs.

Nor is paucity of genuine original productions altogether blamable for virtual absence of good theater criticism (one exception, that of Eric Bentley). The finger of fear has touched the commentators, most of whom concentrate attention on superficial technical novelties (Greek "restoration," circle-theater, bizarre juxtapositions in costumes and scenery, modern and ancient), upon

"cute" anachronistic dialogue, and cleverness of modern magic-lantern lighting, and etc., *ad nauseam*. These so-called "critics" might be expected to issue banal statements about banal productions; but even where scripts (often enigmatically) remark relevantly about real problems, such angles are glossed over. And negatively, too, most critics fail—practically never commenting, for instance, on the deplorable *weakness of line* in almost all later contemporary presentations, wherein playwrights rely upon intricate symbolisms and allegories and even (twitteringly) on mere *story*, instead of providing the pungent, stirring statements and counter-statements to voice the *conflicts* which always have been and always will be what create the tensions essential to first-rate drama. We need to return to Louis Jouvet's dictum: "The art of pleasing in the theater is the art of writing plays." Not only has the director become more important than the writer of the script, but *spectacle* (overwhelming sets and mob-like casts) has superseded essential drama.

Dark though the shadow of censorship, more is still allowed to be said on the stage than in movies or television. Clifford Odets and Lillian Hellman are on the Hollywood Blacklist, but they still write for Broadway. Cinema long has been blamed for the senescence of the legitimate stage. Yet movies now suffer, also, with film houses closing by the thousands. And that new enemy of motion pictures, television, is exhibiting tawdry stuff which is less actual competition (for good audiences) than even the flimsiest motion pictures. Three-dimension movies have proved only a jack-in-the-box novelty.

It's easy to cry the obvious (commercialism—an always-present factor anywhere and in any time); and more fundamental elements have contributed. Enough writers of honest conviction continue to appear, eager to be heard, regardless whether paid (and honest actors always, apparently, are ready to give their time). One element, clearly, is that the opportunities to be heard, at *any* price, are dwindling in relation to quantity of material nevertheless still written. This undeniably is disproportionate to the money-factor. As in the Central European countries throughout the Thirties, many productions

(notoriously) have been banned through the actions of their own backers, before or during rehearsals. Reasons given? That they were not in "good taste!"—usually. Scores of embryo dramatists have been influenced into directing their talents to other forms of writing; and corroboration of the existence of more audience than was asserted to exist for un-Philistine entertainment is found in the tremendous increase in readings of other types of writing (poetry chiefly) throughout the United States.

*Poets'* theaters have been developing since World War II. Among these is one at Cambridge, Mass., which recently put on Richard Eberhart's *The Visionary Farms*, subsequently published in *New World Writing*, No. 3. . . . And there've been rare inland exceptions in better straight theater, too—for instance, Margo Jones' Theater in Dallas, Texas (doing only first-run plays and classics)—with no lack of audience for first-class entertainment, if and when various physical disparities are overcome (that is, mainly between the money spent and cash receipts).

At Theater San Francisco this year was staged one of the new verse plays to which reference has been made *High Sinners, Low Angels*, by James Schevill, winner along with George P. Elliott of a Ford Foundation Fellowship for a year's research in theater (poetic drama) and compilation of an anthology of poetic drama. Schevill's work is of added interest because essentially a *musical comedy* (with songs and lyrics composed by him), and experimenting with economical staging of a musical—*viz.*, large orchestra, large chorus, and huge dance ensembles not required. Having already put on Richard McBride's *From Out the Whale's Mouth*, this theater also will soon stage a new poetic drama by this playwright. At various West Coast theaters likewise have been staged plays of Jean Paul Sartre and other foreign playwrights employing valid socio-contextual material. Lengths of runs and sizes of audiences have been considerably more encouraging to young Coast dramatists than in the East—where, for instance, the *Noone* of Gil Orlovitz (an "off-Broadway" production, early in 1953) managed to attract near-full houses for only two evenings.

But even in the West, new plays too often have little genuine newness except in the names of the budding playwrights who have (understandably enough) written more-or-less competent pieces in imitation of current theater fashion—and the plays have served foremostly as media for young actors yearning to get movie or other contracts. The Actors Workshop in San Francisco, one of the best, stages only older plays—no new work! And the university and community theaters in the West are as depressingly timorous as anywhere about producing (other than older work whose vintage gets past, despite perhaps-revolutionary implications) anything suggesting "red" taint. This is not to propose advocacy of communistic ideas—far from that!—but to point out that almost anything which may be interpreted as criticism of the capitalist *status quo* is smelled out for persecutory attack by Senator Joseph McCarthy and his followers. Actually, little may be remarked about any of the arts, without taking note of this warping situation.

To balance the account further, be it recorded that not all of movie Hollywood is unforgivably corrupt. There even are a few honest big-name actors. One is Charles Laughton, who has been responsible for a really basic theater modification in recent years—in the "Quartet" style of presentation. This sort of dramatization of what wasn't originally written for stage at all provides a new linkage between the written and the spoken word. The momentous thing has been the re-emphasizing of the primary importance of speech to the literary vehicle—a kind of revival of *story-telling* and return to bardic poetry renditions. His work has had important relation to the experimentations of young dramatists in verse as, for instance, in his presentations of *John Brown's Body* (and also, with this, demonstrating that audiences *do* exist for unconventionally-staged plays). And no matter that Laughton is a "ham" actor to many sophisticates, and that few dramatic critics have acknowledged this contribution. For antecedent, in fact, no better reference can be made than to one who has been commonly dubbed a "ham" poet, that same Vachel Lindsay, who years ago became a prophet without honor in attempts to make theater out of poetry.

Coincident with such trends, essentially naturalistic in presentation methods, there's also definite indication of redevelopments, perhaps from the stylized staging of Moliere. A great deal of recent study, too, has been given the Elizabethan stage; and *if* there is to be a major poetic revival in theater, Ben Jonson's works probably will figure heavily as influence on the new playwrights.

Turning back to the possibilities of poetic drama in bringing to the stage new productions with better marks of broader social significance—in this respect, the elements (the free *intellectual*, at least, atmosphere) of Greek revival aren't entirely negligible, if of no real consequence in trivial aspects of staging. Increasing emphasis upon influences stemming from Sophocles (Æschylus—curtain for O'Neill!—generally being felt, for later modern taste, to have overdone the declamatory and hortatory . . . and Euripides of course to have been over-refined—and is this where T. S. Eliot entered?) has had and is having occasional remarkable effects. What had been a glib tendency toward a sterile development from the dialogues of Plato (the "clever" repartee of semi-nonsense of the late Thirties and earlier Forties) has assumed more telling forms partly traceable to temple rites and ancient choral odes. What's very near to prattle when bandied back and forth between protagonists who aren't in fundamental dramatic opposition becomes somewhat impressive when intoned as an ironical hymn. And this is but one of the less-consequential results of the new use of verse, which—as already remarked—has provided a kind of safety-screen (imagined or not) for what otherwise might be suspected as "dangerous" realism. Not for the first time, a form which at first glance seemed to be escape into the fantastical has proved better choice of subtler weapons.

Almost irrelevant to the picture of theater must be considered such spectacular operations as that of Huntington Hartford's financing a new palace for theater on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Besides the plans for a television and concert theater in the "round" (an idea already explored for several years by the Circle Theatre) and a three-dimensional motion picture house, there is to be a 1,200-seat legitimate theater. It's no wild guess to surmise that

here will be produced merely plays of Ibsen, Shakespeare, etc., and the more popular New York road-shows.

All this doesn't make a pleasing backdrop. What with the elements of valid progress not only constricted by the outward and practical difficulties of attracting or even *reaching* audiences, but further reciprocally limited by tendencies among the best young writers (however explainable or in some respects admirable, surely not to prove vitally sustaining to a theater which might reach enough persons to have actual share in influencing American culture). However, such are incontrovertible facts about our theater. Like the prospects for world accord among nations, that of a new millennium for theater appears blocked by those same repressive factors in human nature which led the Romans to abandon attempts to emulate Greek drama and to gawk instead at the slaughter of the arena.

A black conclusion? But, unhappily, the unavoidable one. Perhaps in some other clime, during this mid-Twentieth Century, may be developments presaging some glorious new Elizabethan theater era. But not in America.

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