

THE FEW AND THE MANY

THE idea that one man, or a small handful, can never accomplish much in the direction of changing the ways of the world is a familiar one. One hears it, mostly, in regard to "idealistic" proposals such as, say, Simone Weil offers in *The Need for Roots*, or Edward Bellamy's dream of a peaceful, harmonious society in *Looking Backward*. What is perhaps true about this criticism is that the influence of a writer seldom works out in exactly the way that it seems to have been intended. Plato's adventurous attempt to establish his "Republic" on the island of Syracuse, under the benevolent despotism of the Tyrant of a Greek City State, ended in complete failure and a rather bad time for Plato himself. Bellamy's foray into practical politics was equally unsuccessful, and even Gandhi's heroic attempt to recreate the pattern of Indian life has levelled off, since his death, to what seems to be a "holding action" manned by followers still faithful to Gandhi's ideals.

What is easily overlooked, however, is the intangible, leavening influence of great ideas. The center of education established by Plato, the Academy, was begun by one man, but it lasted through 900 years. Probably, there were never more than twenty or thirty active members of the Academy, at any one time, yet to measure its influence in these terms would be not only misleading but wholly ridiculous. For a handful of people to undertake a pretentious political movement is a kind of folly, since the political forms of any age can never be much better than the characteristic temper of the population as a whole. But Plato, we think, despite the fact that he seemed to write at the political level in the *Republic*, was really interested in the quality of human feelings and the moral attitudes on which all human relationships, both personal and social, are based. Once in a great while, a moral

philosopher is born into an epoch when there seems to be opportunity for him to work not only for the spread of constructive ideas, but also for the establishment of at least a part of his thinking in the actual structure and laws of society. Thomas Paine was such a man. He was both a religious and a political philosopher, and a revolutionary leader to whom, if we may believe George Washington, the new republic of the United States owed its existence more than to any other single man. If the end of Paine's life was filled with bitter disappointments; if the people whom he served so well so easily forgot him, or never understood him at all; if his attack on sectarian prejudices created for him an unpopularity which overshadowed his political services to America—despite all these things, Paine did have the almost incalculable privilege of seeing at least some of the ideas he cherished and popularized embodied in the Constitution of the United States and made thereby the foundation of a new order of ages. Another man whose career in some ways paralleled Paine's suffered much more tragic disappointment. Joseph Mazzini, who was the chief inspiration for the Italian revolution, felt at the end of his life that the Italy he had helped to create was a travesty of the ideals he had struggled for. Almost literally, he died of a broken heart.

But, from the viewpoint of the development of *culture*, that a patriot dies of a broken heart may be itself a rich contribution to the future. Such men are modern images of Prometheus, who bring to the ordeal of suffering and frustration a dignity which is lacking in the lives of most of us. To fail in one's undertakings, not from any personal defect, but because of hopes too high to enlist enough support, or because the age is dark and the dream of progress premature, is a failure which cannot blemish the heart. It is the

Gethsemane which comes to every man who tries to serve his fellows, and because of the blame all ordinary men share for these undeserved sufferings, the allegories of suffering saviors and betrayed heroes are deeply printed on the consciousness of the race. "Guilt feelings," perhaps, are wasted energy and twisting to the normal emotions of human beings, but the guilt we bear for adding through our indifference to the sufferings of brave men ought not to be lightly thrust aside.

Ortega y Gasset wrote a notable book, *Revolt of the Masses*, chronicling the rise of the "mass man"—the man who wants only to be like every other man—who sets his sights to conform to the averages and the norms of mediocrity. What is needed, now, is another kind of revolt—a revolt against the notion that human beings are confined in possibilities by what the majority do. True individualism, though, is not a matter of being "against" the ways of others, but only of being *for* the spirit of self-discovery. At the heart of the problem of modern life is the idea that the human being, taken singly, is of no great importance and can do nothing notable by himself. It is true that, in some enterprises, a man can do very little by himself, but by himself he can become *able* to do great things with the help and cooperation of others.

The gospel of Buddhism was spread not by Gautama alone, but by scores, then hundreds, then thousands of disciples and followers. But Buddha, in becoming Buddha, had first to sit alone under the Bo Tree. Pythagoras, when he had returned from his travels to his native Samos, began with one disciple, whom, it is related, the Greek sage "paid" to undertake the study of philosophy! Later he established the Pythagorean School at Krotona, where hundreds of young men obtained education of a sort that was to make an ineffaceable mark upon the entire Hellenic world. Quaint evidence of the influence of the Pythagoreans is found in the fact that when one of the brotherhood found himself without funds in a

strange place, he had only to tell the innkeeper he was a Pythagorean, and that his bill would be paid by the next Pythagorean who came along. This was the character of the bond in the Pythagorean fraternity, and this the estimate in which its members were held among the Greeks. A Pythagorean could be trusted. As Myers remarked in his *History of Greece*: "It was a sort of moral reform league, characterized by certain ascetic tendencies, and which exerted a wide and important influence upon the political affairs and thought of the times."

While with the passage of generations, the Pythagoreans disappeared, the principles for which they stood were re-embodied in the Platonic movement, and carried forward without break until the pall of the Dark Ages descended over Europe. Even afterward, isolated individuals gave expression to Pythagorean ideas, and the rebirth of intellectual activity in Europe was largely due to the stimulus of Platonic thought which filtered into France from Spain, where it had been preserved by the Arabian philosophers. Giordano Bruno, when brought before the Inquisition to explain his heretical notions, told his questioners that he reasoned after the manner of the Pythagoreans. Copernicus studied Pythagorean cosmology and Greek mathematics, and developed what he learned into a theory of heavenly motions which revolutionized the serious thought of Europe and gave birth to the modern science of astronomy.

It would be easy to show that the evolution of science and the development of modern technology have been due to the imagination and work of relatively very few distinguished individuals, but we are not here so much concerned with this aspect of our civilization. Actually, in this case, the genius of the few has contributed largely to the standardization of the life of the many. The achievements of science have not raised the estimate of man for himself, but, if anything, have worked in reverse. No matter how imposing the physical characteristics

of a civilization, the sense of dependency men feel is what determines their attitude toward themselves. "Science" may provide the excuse for a chattering egotism, but the first wind of misfortune turns this superficial self-esteem into cries of desperation and anguished complaints against the "authorities." Politicians start hunting scapegoats and now the demagogues, instead of the specialists, have their innings.

The submergence of the idea of human individuality beneath artificial standards of mechanical excellence—the product of special skills belonging to men who are not philosophers, but technicians at best, exploiters of psychological weakness at worst—may be seen in all phases of modern life. The entertainment industry offers many examples. Recently the *Nation* drama critic, Harold Clurman, reviewed a new first play, Louis Peterson's *Take a Giant Step*, offering comments which throw light on the incredible distortions of values imposed upon us by the delusion that technological excellence is the same as human excellence. Clurman speaks of "that purity, a reduction to the most artless terms of basic human sentiments," which he finds in the play, and adds, concerning its lack of literary "technology": "That there are awkward, unfulfilled, and possibly even trite moments disturbs me very little. O'Casey isn't as adroit as Coward; O'Neill isn't as smart as the writers of our entertainment industries. . . ." Now come the lines to which we draw special attention:

Most of show business is only window dressing. Our aversion to crudity in the theater is not a sign of taste; it is a commercial vice—inspired by the psychology of ticket agents and booking offices.

Clurman is saying that audiences often fail to recognize the spontaneous and the genuine in the drama because of the artificial scale of values created by the standards and methods of technology. Dependent people feel inadequate, hence they come to admire the things which conceal their inadequacy, just as women with bad complexions tend to make a cult out of the use of cosmetics, as though there were something

essentially superior to healthy skin in the use of the most fashionable blend of powder.

What can one man do? Even if he is not a Plato, he can honor in himself the things which in Plato made Plato great. This, incidentally, is all that Plato asked of any man. You do not have to agree with Plato in order to profit by his example. You do not have to agree with any man who thinks for himself in order to recognize the importance of what he attempts. The men who are creators of culture and civilization—who have generated for themselves and for those around them the humane temper in thought and decision—are simply men who have thought profoundly about what it means to be human. This meant, for them as for us, to reflect upon the universal questions—the wonder of man's creative powers, the mystery of good and evil, the cause of sorrow, and the extraordinary differences among men, differences in mind, differences in ethical perception. These are the questions which, the enthusiasts of technology and the admirers of a "mass" society tell us, philosophers have been arguing about for centuries, with no noticeable certainty at all.

This may be so; but philosophers and technologists have different definitions of certainty. In fact, the technologist's sort of certainty would be inhuman in philosophy and would bring an end to all growth of mind and heart. On the other hand, even a little of the philosopher's uncertainty in technology might make the difference between life and death for technologists, philosophers, and all the rest of us. And in this case, the gain would be most appreciated by the technologists, since, as Plato said, the philosopher's art consists in learning how to die easily.

Letter from **CENTRAL EUROPE**

MAYRHOFEN.—The summer of 1953 brought a record holiday season for Austria. Many thousands of guests arrived from all over the world—from Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, Sweden, Spain; from the U.S.A. as well as from Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. Some of the travelers reached this part of Central Europe by air, others by rail or bus, most of them by car.

The Tyrolean hoteliers and business people are particularly glad about one fact—that, for the first time since World War II, the Germans have come in great numbers.

Foreigners are received here, of course, with equal courtesy, regardless of race or color. But on the other hand, it is no secret that the Germans have a special role in the economic life of this small and mountainous country. It is rather important for the Tyrol, for instance, that the German visitor come not only during the school holidays (as with most of the others), but practically all the year round. Thousands of Germans may easily spend even their week-ends in these beautiful surroundings. The fact that both (Germans and Austrians) speak the same language facilitates communication and, last but not least, the Tyroleans are fond of the German custom of visiting not only the luxurious hotels, but exploring, also, the smallest valleys, which often helps little villages to improve their economic situation.

From 1938 to 1945 the Tyrol was itself a part of Germany. After the war, the "Allies," while always speaking of the "nonsense of barriers," closed the frontiers as fast as possible. The Tyroleans saw little opportunity for visitors during those years and looked rather sadly to the future, as they believed that the Germans, after so terrible a defeat, would not be able to go on holidays for another hundred or at least fifty years. The "wonder" of German recovery, however, which had its start in 1950, and has since led to an unexpected and solid industrial development, has not only perplexed a great part of the world; it is responsible for the fact that thousands of happy German holiday-makers—on bicycles as well as in huge motorcars, equipped with both small and large

wallets—have been swarming over the Alps during the past six months, into the beautiful Tyrol, and are still doing so . . . to the joy and pleasure of Austrian hostelries and merchants.

Mayrhofen, a pleasant little holiday resort which still has a peasant-village-like character, at the end of the Zillertal, was last summer the meeting place of thousands of students from all parts of the globe. These young people, assembled by UNESCO, came here to polish up their German. There could hardly be any dispute as to the usefulness of this gathering of students on an international basis. We should not forget, however, that the other people besides "students" are far in the majority in every country and therefore form the pillars of the nations. From this point of view, it is rather satisfying to observe how Danish families on holidays contract friendships with Swiss families, Italians with Americans, French with Germans, Luxembourgers with Australians . . . and all of them with Austrians.

The governments of certain Western powers spend millions for propaganda purposes, praising the democracies and denouncing Communism and Fascism. Many people in Central Europe are of the opinion that this money ought to be saved or used for purposes which might serve the creation of genuine peace, instead of new antipathies.

Particularly during wartime do statesmen and journalists try to convince their populations that the "enemy" nations are populated by mean and brutal races. A holiday journey into one of those countries seems to be an excellent means of proving that most of the families on this globe have, in the long run, the same problems, and that, wherever the mentality appears to be different, the conditions and not the people are responsible. In other words: the people "abroad" are as good or as bad as we are ourselves. It would doubtless mean progress in international understanding if more people would make holiday visits to other countries.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

FOOTNOTE TO "THE ROOT IS MAN"

FOR those who have read or who are presently reading "The Responsibility of Peoples," first essay in Macdonald's *The Root Is Man* (reviewed recently in "Books for Our Time" MANAS, Oct. 14), Albrecht Goes' *The Unquiet Night* is worthwhile supplementary material. *The Unquiet Night* is a short, easy-to-read novel translated from the German and first issued by Houghton Mifflin in 1951. It is clearly the autobiography of a chaplain—Goes himself—who served with the German army during five wartime years. While incidents and names may be fictitious, the core of Goes' writing concerns the life he actually lived as an anti-Hitler conscript in Hitler's *Wehrmacht*.

As for the story: Returning to a hospital barracks in the Ukraine in 1942, the chaplain receives an order to officiate at an execution. A boy has been charged with desertion, and is to be shot the following morning. The graves registration office has already provided the coffin, the firing squad has been named, and but a few hours remain for the chaplain to try to bring some kind of solace to the condemned man. While deep in a study of the documents relating Private Baranowski's military history, the chaplain receives a call from a lieutenant detailed to command at the execution. Before the war, it develops, the lieutenant, too, had been a Protestant pastor, and he now arrives at a determination to refuse to carry out his orders. The Lieutenant is keenly aware of the mitigating circumstances surrounding Baranowski's "desertion," which makes him even surer that no purpose could possibly be served by execution. "Am I tomorrow to give the fire order to the squad?" he asks the chaplain. "By that time you will have prepared the prisoner for his death, and am I supposed to add the final touch to your work?"

The chaplain and the ex-pastor reflect in agony on their dilemma. If Lieutenant Ernst

refuses to command the firing squad, his comrade reminds him, "the result would be one less decent officer in this criminal war, and one more inhuman one in his place. For replacements are easily found, they are cheap as dust." Yet despite his own unassailable logic, the chaplain admits it is impossible to have a "clear conscience in which to carry out a foul task." Is there some validity in maintaining "the principle of order"? Lieutenant Ernst isn't sure. He reflects:

I see. Do evil in order to avoid greater evil, is that what you're getting at? The sword as the symbol of order. But what sort of order are we upholding with our war? The order of the graveyard. And the last cemetery, the biggest one of all, will be prepared for us. And if by some chance we should live through it and should be asked: 'What did you do?' then we survivors will all say with one accord: 'We bear no responsibility, for we only carried out the orders of others. I can see it all already, brother, that vast army of men, each protesting his innocence, washing his hands of all guilt. They will need a huge towel on which to dry so many hands, a towel as large as a winding sheet. No, let us be serious. This is what I wish to ask you: are we in any way better than the Kartuschkes and their like? Or are we perhaps not even more corrupt than they? For we know what we are doing.

The Unquiet Night simultaneously reveals that many humane men were caught in the huge process of German militarization, and that often the day-to-day inhumanities of wartime are inherent in the war process—during World War II all cruelty did not originate in the warped minds of Nazi leaders. Kartuschke, of whom the Lieutenant speaks, is indeed a worthless, even evil man, but his particular kind of evil is associated with all armies:

You ask me what distinguishes people like us from people like Kartuschke. Perhaps the difference lies in this, that we never, not even for a single hour, call evil good. It is true, bitterly true, that we are all ensnared in this witches' sabbath, that we are all guilty, every one of us. Nor is Baranowski guiltless; and had he been a British soldier, some English chaplain would have had to bear the guilt of accompanying him to his death. Our guilt is this, we live. And so we must live with our guilt. One day it

will all be over, the war and Hitler will belong to the past, and then we shall have a task to tackle for which we shall need to be as honorable as we can be. What will then count will be our deepest personal feelings about this war and all its works. It will not be just a simple question of hating war. Hatred, one might say, is an active passion, and as such it must be exorcized. What must be done is to show people what a dirty business it has all been. Let the *Iliad* remain the *Iliad*, and the *Nibelungenlied* what it has always been, we must still show them that there is more nobility in rocking a cradle or wielding a pickaxe than in running after any Iron Cross.

So *The Unquiet Night* is considerably more than the drama of a tragic execution; it is also evidence that if one fights as a part of an army, and whomever one fights, the dehumanization of mankind proceeds apace. The chaplain has many dealings with military prisoners and ponders "unquietly" on the fact that "in those military prisons young boys were frequently to be found who in the remote civilian world would never under any conditions have seen the inside of a jail; their offenses were such as only a military code would ever have dreamed of punishing. Insubordination, for instance, often meant nothing more than that the poor fellow had lost control of his nerves."

Finally, as the blindfold covers the boy's eyes and a still conscience-ravaged Lieutenant Ernst gives the order to fire, one wonders whether Baranowski can possibly suffer more in death than he did as a creature of an army. (For the cause of his death was simply a normal reaction, as a normal human being.) If the order for execution had been stayed, Baranowski's prospect would still have been to continue to serve in uniform—perhaps not just until the end of World War II, but until the end of his active life, in one army or another—and he might, in wartime, have been executed by some other military authority, for the same reasons.

"You handled it extremely well," said the legal officer to the chaplain after the body had been nailed in its coffin and all ranks dismissed. Indeed, the chaplain had handled the matter as

well as one could, breaking through most of the layers of fear and sadness encrusting the condemned man's mind, even finally re-establishing some faith in human understanding and fellowship. But what does it mean to say that one "handled" his part in an execution "well"? As the chaplain sums up his feelings, "the guilty and the guiltless die, while the anxious wait, apprehensive. How much longer will the cruel indecision last? How long will the Kartuschkes rule?"

COMMENTARY

A QUESTIONABLE SECRET

EXCEPT for an article by a German contributor (*Frontiers*, MANAS, Sept. 16), nothing has been published in these pages concerning the Rosenberg case. MANAS attempts to deal with current subjects only when it feels able to offer comment not usually provided elsewhere.

The opposition of MANAS to capital punishment is on record. The fact that the prosecution of the Rosenbergs occurred at a time of extreme national anxiety and fear of Communism was pointed out by all liberal journals of opinion. It seems quite clear that the death penalty would not have been exacted, if American animosities toward Russia had not been at fever heat.

Now, however, comes an analysis of the Rosenbergs' trial which raises other considerations. While not, to our way of thinking, necessarily clearing the accused of the charge of espionage, this analysis does give new force to the view that capital punishment should be abolished, if only because it is the one penalty which cannot be revoked at some later date.

The analysis is contained in *Freedom's Electrocutation*, by Irwin Edelman, at one time a member of the Los Angeles chapter of the Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case. We say, "at one time," for Edelman was expelled from the Committee shortly after his pamphlet appeared, and this curious fact is a further reason for looking into what he wrote. We are told, moreover, that a reading of Edelman's pamphlet was at least one of the reasons why Justice Douglas granted a last-minute stay of execution to the Rosenbergs.

The facts detailed by Edelman may be briefly reviewed. The prosecution set out to prove that the Rosenbergs betrayed to the Russians secret information regarding the construction of the atom bomb. When a drawing said to represent a

cross-section of the bomb was introduced into evidence by the prosecution—a drawing made from memory by David Greenglass, who was testifying against the Rosenbergs—a defense attorney invited the Court to impound the drawing "so that it remains secret to the Court, the jury and counsel." This meant, Edelman suggests, that "the defense conceded the existence of an atom-bomb secret." Edelman discusses this incident at length, but his major conclusion is that it was now unnecessary for the prosecution to prove that a "secret" did in fact exist.

Edelman gathers testimony from a variety of sources to show that the drawing could not have had the crucial importance which was attached to it. The *Scientific American* remarked: "What the newspapers failed to note was that without quantitative data and other necessary accompanying information the Greenglass bomb was not much of a secret." In a later pamphlet, Edelman presents an extract from a letter by Dr. Harold C. Urey to the President, urging clemency for the Rosenbergs, in which the noted physicist said he was "outraged by the verdict," and stated that he had "found the testimony of the Rosenbergs more believable than that of the Greenglasses." Further, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, while noting that in a case with trial by jury the law does not permit the appeals court to consider the credibility of the witnesses, declared in its opinion: "Doubtless, if that [Greenglass] testimony were disregarded, the conviction could not stand."

Edelman believes that if there had been expert testimony concerning whether or not the drawing which Greenglass testified he gave to Rosenberg—and reproduced from memory at the time of the trial—did in fact represent a vital secret concerning the atom bomb, the verdict might have been different. He notes that "the Atomic Energy Commission had declassified this 'secret' before it was produced in court," and if this is true, then the great show of "secrecy" over this part of the legal proceedings seems to have

been rather unnecessary. At any rate, the claim of the presiding judge, when sentencing the Rosenbergs to the electric chair, that the action of which they were convicted made them responsible for the casualties of war in Korea, and the casualties of wars to come, was certainly a strained interpretation of whatever guilt was theirs. Even the Joint-House Senate Committee, in a report on Soviet Atomic Espionage, published shortly after the sentencing of the Rosenbergs, remarked: "The bomb sketches and explanations that Greenglass—as a virtual layman—could prepare must have counted for little compared with the authentic scientific commentary upon atomic weapons that Fuchs transmitted."

We do not present these things with any pretense to knowledge of the court record, nor from the viewpoint of legal analysis. Mr. Edelman, however, has assembled what appear to be facts of notable significance in relation to the conduct of the trial of the Rosenbergs, and, so far, has had little success in presenting them to the public. Their importance, now, is in illustrating how heavily national hysteria may weigh in the scales of justice.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

HUMOR, like music, is not easily written about. Both are creations of a spontaneous self within man,—a being which speaks a different language from that of intellectual analysis. Yet humor, like music, has a logic. Both clearly grow from the power to distinguish the harmonious from the inharmonious. The distinction between the gift for humor or the gift for music and the intellectual disciplines lies in the fact that the former represent direct perception, while "reasoning" is an effort to approach some kind of reality by an uphill climb. Not forgetting, then, that the mind is the only thing we climb with, and even that our capacity for humor may improve as our intellectual abilities are refined, humor and music enjoy a special role in human expression.

Between "children and ourselves," both humor and music are potential common denominators. Neither are respecters of age and, indeed, since children often seem capable of more genuine enjoyment of humor than adults, we may conclude they are then better humorists. For they can, if happy children, find more things to laugh at than their parents, and this is a fair mark of achievement. In fact, with normally happy children, all one has to do to provoke merriment is to look at them fixedly and wiggle an eyebrow. When a child laughs at a wiggled eyebrow, he laughs because he so enjoys the suggestion that an adult is something besides the impressive solemnity he usually presents to the world. An inner, gremlin self has taken command of usually disciplined facial muscles, and with gremlins' doings the child feels at home. Similarly, the child especially appreciates all adults who make fun of themselves, especially, again, if they do so by exaggerating some of their own habitual mannerisms. By such means the cultural overlay of habits and speech is penetrated, with mutual appreciation of what lies beneath.

Of course, there is a great difference between humor which takes note of personal foibles and humor which shows contempt for self. The child may laugh at heavily self-deprecatory clowning, but he will not truly like it. He wishes to respect his parent, and he wishes the parent to respect himself. But what we mean by self-respect, and what we think the child feels, is not disturbed by showing a propensity for detecting nonsense as well as substance in our manners and those of our time. Everyone, it might be said, stumbles around up to his ears in nonsense his whole life through. The extravagant claims and dramatic fears of political demagogues, the pomposity of bureaucratic utterances, the claims of practically every form of advertising—including that of orthodox religions and nationalisms—all this should more easily inspire laughter than awe. The humorist, perhaps, is simply a man who is aware of the vast amount of nonsense which surrounds him, and the depth of his capacity for humor may be revealed by the number of occasions for humor he finds.

Even so, the *humane* humorist is not primarily a satirist, being able to see, in the characteristic delusions of others, reflections of some of his own weaknesses. He has to be sure that his humor is not in any sense vindictive, that it sees the nonsense in the attitudes of his compatriots as well as in the attitudes of those with whom he does not associate. Jokes about Stalin, for instance, were a partially saving grace in Russia, where, we understand, they abounded, and of lesser value in the United States—where jokes about Congress could be of more constructive point. (The English seem to have learned a lot about the art of joking without belittling, by the way, and this may have something to do with the notably impersonal conduct of their political life.)

Anyway, the reason for enjoying a bit of humor based upon characteristics of our neighbors should be something better than a desire to lessen their stature while elevating our own. Parents

who encourage children to make fun of the people across the street may prevent a child from learning to value their good qualities, while, on the other hand, an active dislike for another family may be alleviated by a light, humorous touch. Here, too, a capacity to laugh at the way *we* sometimes look at *others* helps keep our perspectives straight and our humor liberal. Partisan humor is the lowest sort, and the distinction between partisan and nonpartisan humor one of the most important distinctions our progeny can learn from us.

Thinking over the selections in the "Books for Our Time" series, we recall that several of these volumes, though dealing with the most serious subjects, are nonetheless permeated by humor. In *The Human Situation*, for instance, Macneile Dixon confesses that he is among those who sometimes love nonsense fully as much as good sense. Dixon is a master at revealing the anomalies in common attitudes, helping us to see how far we still have to go before we can think ourselves wise men and philosophers. Yet if we can see the distance ahead of us, and if we let no one insist that we have already arrived, nothing can stop us from eventually completing the journey.

Robert Hutchins' discussion of higher education is full of illuminating humor, too. No one gets the impression from any of Hutchins' works that he is lacking in self-respect, but at the same time his wry asides prevent the reader from mistaking the author for a pompous fool simply because he has positive beliefs. While Dixon's humor exposes disproportions of attitude, Hutchins emphasizes disproportions of logic, helping one to feel that there is nothing more deserving of laughter than someone who, running along a track of reason, long ago derailed himself without being aware of it. At this point we might surmise that, while a disciplined logical mind by no means makes a humorist, a disciplined logical mind is essential for humor that is truly keen. Even hyenas, they say, can laugh, not to mention

chimpanzees, but to know when a laugh is really called for—that is the secret.

In *Richer by Asia*, Edmond Taylor shows a wealth of appreciation for incongruity, which helps his book immeasurably with the color of local illustrations. While less folksy than Justice Douglas in the latter's Asian travelogues, Taylor illustrates his central arguments concerning the psychological contents of cultural delusions with wondrously amusing incidents. So, even for those who warn us of the grave dangers surrounding our political existence, a sense of humor may help to get their points across.

If we were all wise men, all our humor would be delightful. With most of us, however, the lack of sufficient wisdom leaves something to be desired in our attempts at levity. Too often they are slightly strained attempts, and conscious effort at humor can never equal spontaneous flow. But most of us have another shortcoming in regard to humor, and this one can be more easily corrected. We don't read enough books of humorous vein to keep our own sense of proportion up to its present capacity. So, for the sake of your children, try a little more humor on your reading bill-of-fare, even if it be only P. G. Wodehouse. There are worse exemplars of the art, as a matter of fact, and *Quick Service*, currently available, has insights which, though not quite bordering on the profound, amount to an enjoyable schooling in human foible.

FRONTIERS

Decline of Martial Virtues

OUTSIDE the home of Patrick Lydon, in Middlesbrough, England, the neighbors have erected a scrawled, white wash sign, "Welcome home, Paddy," But Paddy will not be home for a while, unless the recent sentence of this former fusilier to a year's imprisonment is reversed by the British War Office. For Lydon returned from Korea, where he had gone as a volunteer, as a man branded with the charge of "cowardice in the face of the enemy." He is said to have "cowered" at the bottom of a foxhole when 6,000 Chinese troops attacked his sector of the Korean front in November, 1951.

The curious thing about the case of Lydon is the sympathy his punishment has aroused. Since sentence was pronounced on Oct. 22, the London newspapers have been showered with letters, "the majority of them," dispatches tell us, "sympathizing with Lydon." One paper, the *Daily Sketch*, published a full page of letters, in one of which a veteran declared: "Lydon should have been decorated with a medal, not courtmartialled. It takes guts to admit you are afraid, especially in front of your mates." A former sergeant, writing to the *Daily Mirror*, recalled seeing "perfect soldiers reduced in a few seconds to nervous wrecks, whimpering and crying and refusing to move out of their foxhole for food, let alone to fight." He added: "There were hundreds of such men and their comrades covered up for them."

Of what happened to Lydon in Korea, or what he did, we know only the barest facts. Whether he deserves a "decoration," or simply the sympathy of all those who might, under similar circumstances, do likewise, we cannot say. But what is plain from the news dispatches from London is that the British people have changed a great deal in the past thirty-five years or so in their attitude toward war. As the Reuters correspondent remarks: "In World War I many British soldiers were executed on the battlefields

for cowardice and few people shed tears for them." Today, it is different. It is different, perhaps, because it is very difficult for a great many people to justify to themselves the Korean war. And it may be different, also, because war itself appears more and more to be a futile thing, pursued at incalculable cost, with never any gain beyond the ability to assure ourselves that far worse conditions have been averted.

Nearly twelve years ago, Raoul de Roussy de Sales wrote an article for the *Atlantic Monthly* (January, 1942) in which he proposed that the people of the most highly developed nations of the West felt so much abhorrence of war that they found it difficult to be effective fighters. War, for the West, is against the grain, requiring a reversal of deep-lying attitudes and tendencies. If this is the case—and we think it is—then Fusilier Patrick Lydon's behavior maybe at least in part a symptom of basic moral rejection. Courage requires, among other things, wholeness of heart. It is a rare man who, doubting his cause, can still pursue it with courage. Indecision and succumbing to the disabling furies of fear may mark the atavism of our civilization as much as it displays the weakness of a youth in perilous situation. A man may volunteer to fight, but he cannot unvolunteer himself if he should change his mind. This, for some, may prove a more perilous situation than any threatening guns of an enemy can create. A man with a gun may be under orders, but he is also alone with himself in an increasingly incomprehensible world. Assailed by doubts, by the grim and unimagined reality of combat, he may find himself stripped of his flimsily constructed faith and loyalties. He may become a very poor soldier, in the eyes of the world, but who knows what sort of *man* he becomes? The British public, apparently, is asking just such questions, if the letters about Lydon to the newspapers are any measure of public opinion.

There are similar goings-on in the United States. While Hanson W. Baldwin, New York *Times* military expert, who writes on "What's

Wrong with the Regulars?" (in the *Saturday Evening Post* for Oct. 31), would hardly agree, there are intimations in his article that Americans are rapidly losing their taste for warlike enterprise. Mr. Baldwin thinks there ought to be more band-playing and "glory of the regiment" to stimulate interest and respect for military careers. The move to democratize the services, he finds, has not improved morale. Then there are lots of technical reasons why soldiering has become unpopular. Mr. Baldwin contributes a well-rounded analysis of the problem confronting the top-rank managers of the military forces of the United States, but the points of interest, here, are covered in a few brief paragraphs. For example:

The psychological changes in the American character supply another part of the explanation. The evidence on this score is not complete, but it is indicative—and frightening. American youth apparently wants security more than adventure. War, depression, war and more war—plus the over-luxurious lives we lead and the overprotectiveness of the average American mother—have apparently created a yearning for security, which the state has tried to satisfy economically and which the armed forces have had to recognize in their training programs and in the amenities. A sure thing for a low reward, rather than a gamble for high stakes, is the goal of more and more American youths, the glamour has gone from the long chance, and the hazardous services—the air forces, the marines, paratroopers—have all felt the trend. The services can get—and are getting—plenty of men today who don't want to "worry about nothing." The services need, preeminently, leaders, but men with integrity, force and quick and active minds are the scarcest commodity in America today. The growth of two national attitudes—the "work-less-and-make-more" philosophy of so many of our labor leaders; and the "it's-all-right-if-you-can-get-away-with-it" philosophy of so many of our political leaders, athletic directors and basket-ball coaches—have had their effect upon our characteristics.

You can't turn back the clock, they say. There's no going back to the horse-and-buggy age. But what if we are obliged to admit that military morale and industrial efficiency with its massive depersonalization of social functions simply do not go together? What if war, itself,

cannot be made to make enough sense in a complex, technological society?

Or, to set the problem differently: What if proper administration and better psychological guidance for generals are not the things which will build for us a better army; what if *nothing* will build us a better army except an uncompromising barbarization of our common life to the point where we become dulled to the inner repugnance for war and all its works?

Finally, what if the attitudes of youth described by Hanson Baldwin are no more than a natural reaction to the formidable structure which determined misuse of our power over nature has erected? We may blame "Mom-ism," or call to account our "soft" ways of living; or single out our educators as guilty of subverting the simple loyalties of a century ago—we may do all these things, and be completely wrong in our assessment of the situation. War is only one aspect of the dehumanizing process of modern life, through which individuals come to feel insignificant and overshadowed by the ponderous forces which move them about and establish the narrowing limits of approved behavior. What is left but a suspicious and unenthusiastic conformity, or a rebellion which cuts one off from the "safe" avenues of adjustment to the conditions of survival? Conceivably, one further alternative exists—the solution of "crack-up," chosen, perhaps, by Fusilier Lydon, who felt he just couldn't go on?

A procedural change in the replacement routines of the Army, described by Hanson Baldwin, happens to illustrate the psychological complications which may arise from a decision made without regard for human values:

In Korea, as in World War II, the individual-replacement system—supposed to be more economical in man power, but devastating to morale of the unit and of the Army—was used. Under this system, replacements are "bodies," or numbers, rather than human beings, shuttled more or less namelessly from replacement-training centers into the overseas pipe lines and into any units. No units can ever attain

and retain homogeneity. Soldiers rarely feel they belong.

This is the place, perhaps, to say a word or two in behalf of those who may be charged with making these blunders. What else are they to do? All our administrators are indoctrinated with the gospel of efficiency. And where, moreover, is it written in the Manual of Arms that the human being is an End in Himself? At what point in his plans should the Pentagon schemer pause to consider that men, to be serviceable machines of war, must not be treated entirely as machines, but that some attention to their mental processes, their hopes and longings, is in order? How Machiavellian must you get, in order to balance "human values" with military necessity and efficiency? Baldwin puts it in another way:

In short, the services, the Congress and the nation have spent much effort, time, and ingenuity—on the whole, with great success—in devising new machines, building new weapons, procuring new equipment, perfecting and polishing the push-button phase of push-button war. But we have tended to overlook the man who pushes the button; instead of strengthening him, we have weakened him. Men, not machines, make war, and it is men, not machines, that are our sure shield against military disaster.

Among military commentators, Mr. Baldwin has always had our respect. His articles and essays on his chosen subject always seem tempered with a sense of justice and a humane regard for the values of civilization. Yet in this paragraph we have illustrated the inevitable presumption of all theories of the "management of men." The army, of course, or military establishments in general, are the purest examples of "management of men" in practice, so that no special apologies for the notion seem called for when military matters are discussed, yet the bald expression that some men may "weaken" others is repugnant in the extreme. Just because we speak and write this way, as a matter of course, should be enough to make us question the whole idea. In a really "free society," no one could have an institutional position by means of which he could "weaken" or "strengthen" anybody else. This is an

unholy sort of power. A man may help others to find greater strength in themselves, by setting an example in his own life, or he may have an opposite influence. This is an inevitable part of human experience. But democratic institutions, as we understand this phrase, are burdened with the task of helping men to find strength in themselves. Any other sort of strength is transient, subject to sudden failure, when the stimulus provided is removed.

The greatest weakness of all that can overtake a civilization, so far as we can see, lies in the theory that men have to be "manipulated" in order to be strong, brave, and free. We find it hard to believe that Hanson Baldwin is a subscriber to this theory. Yet this is at least one implication of an article which proposes that the "glamor" must be restored to military life in order to stem the tide of resignations from West Point (doubled, percentagewise, in the past two years), and improve the re-enlistment rate (which has dropped from 60 per cent before World War II to 6 percent at the end of 1952) for the Army.

Perhaps we should stop looking for scapegoats on whom to blame these discouraging trends, simply admit that the civilization we have made is changing much more rapidly than we realize, and set about fundamental inquiry into what is happening to us. It seems doubtful, however, that we will be able to take on such investigations until we have given up the notion that winning wars is an objective to which all other ends may be justifiably sacrificed.