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ANALYSIS

The Dreary Tinkle of Eden and Locarno

Can ANY KNELL of doom sound drearier than the combined tinkle of Eden and Locarno; like a recurrent dream in which some absurdly associated words prelude the nightmare—of war? These dismal reflections were evoked by a slight aberration in a foreign newspaper, which reported that Mr. Eden would represent Great Britain in a forthcoming conference at Locarno; in fact, it appears that the rendezvous is Lugano—but in spirit it remains Locarno. A reversion to this old concept was originally suggested by Sir Winston Churchill as a possible escape from the thorny dilemmas which we described in our last issue. Since then Dr. Adenauer has been prodded to move beyond his original, sterile attitude of virtual acquiescence in the partition of Germany and the incorporation of the Western sector in the Atlantic defence system. He has been stimulated by the rising in Berlin, which demanded German union within European union, and by the exigencies of electioneering; he felt himself unable to win without stressing this agreement with the resurgent masses of Berlin, whose voice was the spirit of Germany. Therefore he accepted wholeheartedly the suggestion for a conference with Russia and the Churchill proposal for allaying Russian fears of German union and strength; it was necessary for him to give the German people some apparently practical hope of attaining their desires. The British Prime Minister provided the policy, the German Chancellor provided the platform, and the election was won. The German people were able to record an overwhelming vote against the Reds, whom they detest, without fearing that they so risked the permanent division of their country. The usual post-election question now arises, will the policy work?

Military guarantees or general disarmament?

Are we really to believe that paper guarantees of military support will achieve anything in the situation prevailing between Russia and the West? And what else is a revival of the Locarno idea?
The EUROPEAN

We all know only too well the end of the long stream of paper pacts in the pre-war garden of Eden. Is paper, unsupported by any reality, likely to attain anything more in the post-war world? — and, in this context, can reality mean anything except disarmament? Distrust destroyed the pre-war system, and an even greater mistrust would certainly destroy a similar system in the post-war period. In the affairs of nations no-one really believes in armies marching except in pursuit of what they believe to be their vital national interests; least of all the Russians. An Anglo-American guarantee to come to the aid of Russia, in the event of an attack by an armed Germany, would not result in the disbandment of a single Russian division. The Russians would be entirely convinced that the West would not lift a finger to stop a German attack upon them, if it suited the Western book. They would judge the West by themselves and would be certain that England and America would change sides at the last moment, despite any guarantee or pact. And anyhow who is to judge who starts a modern war? — and how can it be judged, if the incidents which provoke it are prepared with sufficient subtlety? No realist on either side is going to believe for five minutes in these paper guarantees: they may be given, and even accepted with acclaim, as part of the ceaseless manoeuvring, but their real effect will be nil. Russia will vacate the eastern zone of Germany when it suits her, or when the pressure becomes too strong for her to remain. But any guarantee of security from the Western powers will weigh in her scales about as much as a cheque from a fraudulent banker in those of a cynical and dishonest lawyer; they think they know that game well enough, as they have played it so often themselves.

To a large extent these conditions prevailed in the pre-war world: they are entirely dominant in the post-war world, which has erected the denial of honour into the principle of a creed. On some occasion it would be interesting to enquire whether human society can exist much longer without some revival of the standards of private (and to some extent public) honour which have prevailed in Europe since the Hellenic dawn of our civilisation. For the moment we are only concerned to note that any arrangement between nations which at present rests on any such standard is humbug and illusion; consequently it would create not security, but an additional danger. When we are faced with the gangs now let loose upon the world, safety does not rest on promises not to shoot, nor on promises to shoot on one side or the other; it
ANALYSIS

can rest only on the removal of the guns. For the reasons stated in our last issue we believe that a real effort to secure general disarmament is the only hope. This grave matter must be lifted from the old world of out-worn policies which will end in even more bitter disillusion and even more disastrous experience. We need a new initiative; but that is to say something for which the world is not yet ready, because it means we need new men.

German Elections and Dr. Naumann; and, also, Mr. Crossman

Two days before the German Election the Daily Telegraph contained the following message from its special correspondent: “Dr. Werner Naumann, the star candidate, would have won his seat in Lower Saxony and might well have marched into the new Bonn Parliament at the head of a group of twenty M.P.’s backed by a million votes, but for the de-nazification proceedings against him. The D.R.P. has also been hit by its exclusion from the elections in a number of provinces”, etc.

So we reach a new definition of democracy: a foreign power can intervene in the internal affairs of a country, which it is occupying by military force, to pass a special decree for the purpose of enabling a candidate to be disqualified who is judged, even by the Press of the occupying power, to be certain to beat its local supporters; the electorate which desires to return the candidate to Parliament is thus disfranchised. Is not this precisely the definition of democracy in the countries occupied and controlled by the Soviet Union, which they have had the effrontery to describe as “peoples' democracies”? The conduct of Mr. Eden and Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick has reduced democracy in Germany to that condition of clowning farce which has reigned supreme in the British Foreign Office since the villains, in the shape of Burgess and Maclean, departed, and little except the harlequins and a few stage props remained. We may prove optimistic to assume that nothing but sheer silliness has operated at every point in this matter. The only two things certain are that the moral authority of Britain has lost heavily in face of Russia, and that the position of Dr. Naumann is immeasurably stronger than it was at the beginning of the year. His innocence of any offence has been effectively established, his character and ability have now been re-inforced by a world-wide publicity, he can enjoy the present position conferred upon him by the Foreign Office and await his future
justification with what his late chief used to describe as a “sovereign calm”.

For light relief to deeply interesting events we can always rely on a little bit of fun from the Left. Mr. Crossman in the appreciative columns of the *New Statesman and Nation* describes “what it feels like to be campaigning as a Socialist in Southern Germany”; sometimes at meetings he had his “mug of beer on the table in front” of him, and sometimes it seems he made a speech with the mug of beer inside him. But despite his frothiest exertions the number of the other mugs diminished; the vote of the Social Democratic party declined.

Foreign money to finance strikes?

A much less legitimate example of common European ideas reaching across frontiers was reported in the *Observer* of 13 September 1953: “the fact that the strike pay which the Electrical Trade Union ‘guerrilla’ strikers have been given falls far short of what they had been promised is causing discontent and some hardships.... Last week strikers were told that it was hoped French unions would give assistance.”

Two quite separate questions arise: can any British citizens speak in the election of another country if invited to do so; can money be sent from one country to another in support of political beliefs— or, far more reprehensible, we would have thought—in support of strikes; in fact was not permission given to British trade unionists to do the same things for French comrades during industrial troubles in France, when Sir Stafford Cripps was Chancellor of the Exchequer? Are all citizens still equal before the law—can anyone do it?— or must you first be “in on the racket”? We ask simply for information and enlightenment, in a spirit of analytical and purely academic enquiry.
LABOUR'S NEW PROGRAMME;
OR HOW TO GET THE WORST
OF BOTH WORLDS

by SIR OSWALD MOSLEY

THE LABOUR PARTY'S new programme Challenge to Britain is, in effect, an elaborate device to get the worst of both worlds. This is true in two respects: it combines all the disadvantages of autarchy, and a closely controlled system, with those of international capitalism, which expose the producer to a chaos of free competition in world markets: it also combines the disadvantages of nationalisation, which abandons the incentive of private enterprise, with a denial to the workers of any effective share in management, which might, in some degree, replace individual initiative with collective initiative. This remarkable combination of all possible errors would, in itself, be sufficient to destroy any country which was foolish enough to adopt the programme. If such a policy is added to the present difficulties of Britain, a disaster can occur very quickly. This pretentious document reveals that Labour is more conscious than ever before of the problems: the defect is not so much in the analysis, as in the entire failure to produce any solution, or even any proposal, which would not immediately aggravate the situation; fatally, if seriously applied. (In reading a Labour programme, it is necessary to remember that the Party has never yet made a real and thorough attempt to apply in practice the policy, which it professes in principle — nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange.)
The very first sentence of Challenge to Britain summarises the problem which the programme does nothing to remedy: “our standard of living is based on foreign trade to an extent unknown by any other major country. Here lies our wealth and our weakness” — we would add — the wealth of the few, and the weakness of the many who constitute the nation. Yet, after publishing this striking fact of which Labour was first informed over twenty years ago in the debates which preceded the downfall of MacDonald’s second government, the concrete proposal of the Party is to intensify the evil of which it complains: “we shall therefore have to export more and more in the years ahead. At the same time we can expect increasing difficulties in selling more of our traditional exports”. When the trouble is at length recognised, after the lapse of a generation spent in slow moving reflection and quick moving experience, an attempt to deal with the root of the problem might reasonably be expected, rather than advice to sell yet more goods abroad in conditions of even greater difficulty. The new obstacles to a trade which was already failing, are very clearly set out — “by the end of 1951 our pre-war volume of imports cost us one thousand millions more in exports” — “the long term trend is likely to be for our import prices to increase more than our export prices” — “the gold and dollar resources of the sterling area are now so low that they will not allow us to buy vital dollar imports, if dollar earnings fall seriously for a period measured in weeks. If those dollar earnings do fall sharply, even temporarily, this will imperil our currency, our jobs and our standard of living.” So the gravity of the problem is fairly and clearly stated in Labour’s new programme; what do they propose to do about it? The remedy is far from being so clear as the diagnosis — “to avoid a crisis we must push up the exports which earn us dollars or gold”. Yes, but how? — asks the reader, and is informed — “we should press the Americans to remove their restrictions,” and again — “more still could be done if the Americans gave up using high tariffs and other protective devices to limit competition from abroad”. So runs the pathetic refrain of a party which has at last learnt that dependence on foreign trade means dependence on the will of others. What serious hope has Labour of persuading American capitalism to dislocate its own industries in order to save British Socialism? Since Labour was last in office a change in administration has changed the American belief in the foreign doles, which sustained and succoured that party during a few years
LABOUR'S NEW PROGRAMME

of uneasy and ineffective power. So even this faint hope dies on their lips. Challenge to Britain continues — “Unfortunately, the new American Government is giving signs that earlier progress in reducing tariffs and other restrictions may not continue”. It would appear that the title of the programme should rather be Challenge to America — but this is a task to which even a party of Labour’s pretentions may feel inadequate (except on the inspiring occasions when Mr. Bevan kills giants with his mouth). The alternative to persuading the Republican Senators to injure their constituents for British benefit is shown to be the “siege” economy with which Mr. Harold Wilson and, in politer language, Mr. Gaitskell have long threatened an unshaken America — “we must restrict imports which cost us dollars or gold to the minimum requirements for full production”. But what happens if we fail to sell America sufficient exports to obtain that “minimum” requirement for full production? The Economist reminded us not long ago that this can very easily occur: in 1938 a fall of four per cent in American production entailed a forty per cent fall in British exports to America. The even greater delicacy of the post war situation was succinctly described by an American journalist: “Even a small American slump is a British nightmare. They remember all too vividly how the slight fall off in American business activity in 1949—a matter of five per cent which most Americans scarcely felt—helped to bring on the worst British crisis, from which Britain recovered only by devaluation, the Korean war, and the skin of her teeth.” It is not therefore surprising that the possibility of a real American recession receives about as much mention in a Labour programme as the name of the local devil in the wedding celebrations of a primitive tribe.

It is a policy designed to deal with things as they are; although it is virtually admitted that things cannot last as they are: “The post war days of pent up demand for everything everywhere, are gone, and Germany and Japan are getting back into their stride in world markets”.

The programme continues with all the smooth little platitudes which have dripped on two generations of unresponsive Parliamentarians — “Labour would favour a Permanent Sterling Area organisation” — well, what is it to do this time? — “the Sterling Area must also try to reach agreement with the United States to keep world raw material purchases and prices steady”: so, once again round the mulberry bush — then back to dependence on the
United States.

On the way to these striking conclusions, certain doubts assailed these original thinkers: the new Sterling Area Organisation "could only work if all the members desired and accepted it". Were any echoes of recent and acrimonious debates with Dr. Malan (and other Commonwealth statesmen who differ from Labour on the negro question) disturbing the harmonies of the programme makers? It may even have occurred to them that in the territories controlled by these statesmen, and their more ardent supporters, much of the "copper, lead, zinc, chromite, cobalt, and manganese" is to be found, which the Challenge to Britain mentions as a "steadily growing import need of the next twenty-five years" for the United States; so the challenge to Dr. Malan may have to be modified if this one serious hope of the Challenge to Britain is not to be abandoned. Not only will Mr. Bevan have to moderate his insults to America, but Mr. Griffiths will have to walk more warily in Africa (and brother Fenner will have to be muzzled, if any corn is to remain for the treading).

What other tasks, and opportunities, await the "Sterling Area Organisation"? — "Our sterling area plans for avoiding crises must also take account of our trade with European countries". Does this mean a European policy at last for Labour? — Has the new nationalism been abandoned (it was only twenty years behind the times, they resisted it to the death in 1930, when it might have worked) together with the new imperialism, which was only born after Labour's success in "liquidating" the Empire? — Have the theoretical internationalists of yesterday struggled so far forward as to become the practical Europeans of to-day? Let all rejoicing be restrained until the great plan for co-operation between the Sterling Area and Europe has been studied in every inspiring principle, and thoughtful detail: "At present the credit arrangements of the European payments union are too meagre. This ought to be remedied to avoid the necessity for sharp and sudden import restrictions by one member country against another as the result of events the other side of the Atlantic". So, there we have the European plan — twice round the mulberry bush, and back to dependence on America. One little thought emerges — if the wind from America strikes too cold, we must huddle together for a little warmth.

Need these trivial absurdities detain us any longer? Let us search the programme for any serious thought, or even serious
LABOUR’S NEW PROGRAMME

hope. The slogan — policy “Attack World Poverty” is taken over from the Bevanites, and embodied in the official programme. This section begins grandiloquently; “While we were in office we were able to carry many of our ideals into practice in Asia. But in Africa the Tories are now doing their best to wreck the foundations we were building.” This can only mean that Labour boasts of having got rid of the empire in Asia in double quick time, with the aid of Lord Mountbatten — “liquidation,” not “building,” was the more accurate term employed by Sir Stafford Cripps — but now complains that the Tory tempo to the same objective in Africa is less rapid. Yet, Mr. Lyttleton has assured them that he is doing his best to follow suit, by declaring himself, in colonial policies, a devoted adherent of Mr. Creech Jones—he may be slower, but, in the end, he is no less sure in the policy of scuttle. Labour now proposes that immense sums of money should be spent in these regions; having ensured that the British people should derive no benefit. They are warned to defer their hopes. — “We must be prepared to send development goods abroad without any hope of immediate payment. Payment will come later when the British equipment has done the job and the additional imports from the sterling area are earning dollars in the United States.” But how do they know that these dollar earners — the Gold Coast for instance — will remain in the Commonwealth, or even in the sterling area, when they are thus equipped by British money? They have been given full political freedom by a Tory Government under Labour pressure, and they may well consider it will pay them better to leave an empire for which they have no great regard, and to make direct arrangements with the United States, or with Russia — for whose propaganda they are now “ripe”. Is it conceivable that Labour would then intervene to win back by force what reason had led them to abandon? But, all this talk of British equipment — what, in hard fact, does it amount to? In the most optimistic statements of the Labour leaders (optimistic for the overseas recipients, but pessimistic for the British donors) a surplus of some three hundred million pounds per annum of production, over a meagre and restricted home consumption, is set as the target for investment abroad; has this sum any more relation to the size of the problem than a flea to the back of an elephant? Muffled admission of this plangent fact is made in Challenge to Britain—“the size of the problem is vast, it calls for international solution”. And what is “international solution”?
— in the plain language of reality it means that America pays; and, in the very plain language of a Republican Congress, which has had more than enough of paying for the upkeep of people who have not yet learnt how to help themselves — America won’t pay. Labour may suggest, beg and pray — until the flag turns from pink to purple: America will not damage her own industries by admitting to her markets goods that Britain cannot sell elsewhere, and will not burden her budget to provide for every coolie in Asia the wherewithall to buy goods from Lancashire. The simple fact will remain — America won’t pay, and America won’t play. Whether this fact is greeted with the saponaceous pleading of a Morrison, or the raucous abuse of a Bevan, it is a fact which, in the end, will have to be faced. So, in the grandiose references to "Overseas Responsibilities," as in "the Sterling Area Organisation" and in "the European Payments Union," we come back to America: three times round the mulberry bush; then back to America.

After these reiterated suggestions that a capitalist America should support a Socialist Britain with all the ardour of a successful businessman keeping a chorus girl on the sly (these Labour politicians seem always to have a rather exaggerated view of their own attractions), it requires a careful search to discover in what respect Britain is expected to help herself. We are told that we must "select those of our industries which have big export possibilities and above all engineering and chemicals... expand their productivity with the greatest possible speed" etc. etc. The small question remains, how to do it? — These industries have been built by a very brilliant private enterprise, which is gradually failing because it cannot find markets. What is a Labour Government going to do for them, beyond impeding them by controls? We are told that "in the first place there must be a guarantee of raw materials" — but how? Our supply of raw materials is threatened because we have difficulty in selling sufficient exports on world markets to pay for them. Labour would remedy this situation by bulk buying. But, leaving aside the proved inefficiency of bulk buying under Labour, how can we buy in bulk unless we have the means of payment — and how can we have the means of payment, unless we can sell exports abroad. At this point the gay circuit of the mulberry bush becomes a vicious circle. We are back to Labour’s pathetic belief in the magic power of new industries which have been built by private enterprise. Hitherto such exports
as Comets, and other miracles of British design, owe nothing to Labour except the red tape which nearly strangled them. No statistical analysis is supplied; showing to what extent the sale of Comets, for instance, would replace in a relatively peaceful world our stable exports of the past — maybe such figures would blow a last illusion to smithereens. And what is to replace this private enterprise, which provides the last hope of Labour? — "We propose that the State should try to build and operate new enterprises or acquire controlling interest in old enterprises or both." The State — let it be noted — always the State — is to do everything; not the workers — never the workers. No wonder a flood of resolutions is reported to be reaching the Party Conference Agenda, in favour of a greater measure of worker's participation in management, control, and profit. But this last echo of working class opinion within the Labour Party will agitate in vain; they are up against the new bosses — the bureaucrats — the boys with jobs, and the jobs made for the boys — the whole great apparatus and paraphenalia of the Labour "State". The Webbs have won, except that their great disinterest has been stifled in the great vested interest which their party has created. Cole, Hobson, Orage, and the earlier Guild Socialists have lost — hopelessly, so far as the Labour Party is concerned. Cole in his later years writes timid, but still lucid, little articles in the New Statesman and Nation, warning Labour to be careful how it monkeys with capitalism. He once said of the Webbs that at least they had "the courage of their obsolescence"; what a pity that he has not had the courage of his own prematurity.

So Labour's programme is truly a design to get the worst of both worlds. They get rid of individual initiative without securing instead the collective initiative of the workers. They tie us up at home, not to give us freedom from chaos abroad, but to tie us more securely to it. England might tolerate a period of autarchic regulations in order to create a new system, which is free from the dumping, undercutting and cheap labour competition that world finance brings to the present international markets; the country might welcome also some curtailment of private enterprise in order to engage the eager participation of the workers in their own industries; but to be tied up and handed over, as a helpless bundle of a plaything, to present world anarchy, is a fate which few in the end will be prepared to suffer for the pleasure of the busy little bureaucrats, who derive interest, if not profit, from the aimless
sadism of the modern State.

There we can leave this plan to free us from the dollar system by binding us more tightly to it. How long will it survive in a world of reality, which is ready to listen to doctrines of reality? Smooth little men are now drifting on smooth waters, in the gentle sunshine of continual make-believe: the storm clouds which have been slowly gathering over the British economy for the last fifty years (even Mr. Butler admits it now) have been held back by the winds of two wars, and two armament booms; the accumulated force of the tempest will in the end be the worse, for this respite. When it strikes, unreality will vanish in an hour; the doctrines, and the men of reality, will then enter—in real challenge. How long, and how successfully will such policies as a *Challenge to Britain* then struggle against such doctrines as European Socialism; a post-war creed which has been born of experience, both real and hard? When international socialism, leaning on international capitalism and claiming a difference by giving another name, is challenged by European Socialism; which seeks to unite all Europe into one nation, to pool all African possessions for common development by the European peoples, to link both with the European overseas Empires and with South America, as the only escape into a system large and strong enough to be free of world chaos:—when bureaucratic Socialism is challenged by the new Syndicalism; which combines a system of complete workers’ ownership for developed industries with entire freedom for the creative pioneer in industry and science to work for the full reward he is now denied:—will this argument between the old and the new last long; particularly when the door to a fresh popular appeal, now closed by artificial prosperity and the still intact money power of vested interests and of Trade Unions, is burst open by a tornado—which sweeps away most things that are? We shall see; and, possibly, soon.
THE ROLLING-STRIKE
IN ACTION

by F. J. BROWN

THE LATEST target for the Communist offensive against
British industry has also become the training ground for a
new technique. New technique to Britain, that is, since it has been
tried—with varying degrees of success—in France, Australia,
and elsewhere. The so-called "rolling-strike" is a new importation
to the field of British industry. It began in motor and engineering,
and has now spread to the electrical industry.

In the rolling-strike, one industry is picked upon as the target
and an all-out effort is made to bring about the first strike there.
So far, there is nothing new about it; it is after this initial success
that the new element has its place. The "contact department," the
section of the strike committee especially concerned with
spreading the strikers' version of affairs to other firms throughout
the industry, goes to work with a special purpose. That purpose,
openly the one of recruiting financial and other support, has in the
past been secretly to endeavour to bring about further stoppages
in sympathy with the strikers. In the rolling-strike plan, however,
the purpose is the more subtle one of watching, learning, and pre-
paring the ground for the next strike, after the present one has
ended.

Instead of seeking the impossible in the form of a sustained,
general stoppage throughout an industry, the architects of the
rolling-strike seek the much more attainable object of a constant
series of restricted strikes rolling round the industry. The ad-
vantages of such a technique are obvious. Only once in a generation
can the most skilful team of agitators hope to bring out a whole
industry on strike and keep it there for months on end. But by
the use of the new technique an industry can be just as effectively paralysed. A series of strikes which seizes upon one factory at a time, causes difficulties and bottlenecks for as long as possible and then, as soon as it has been settled at its place of origin, rolls on to another great works, achieves the same result as a full-scale stoppage.

Ever since the Communist World Federation of Trades Unions concentrated its attention upon European metal and engineering workers, the motor industry of Britain has been the major target of Communist activity and the scene of this new technique. Although the W.F.T.U. in particular and the leaders of World Communism in general may be well satisfied with the results, nobody else can be. Certainly the British workers concerned who have had the experience of seeing their union organisations perverted for Communist purposes and who have learned through personal hardship and suffering the truth of the old adage that the Communist agitator is “the moneylenders’ and pawnbrokers’ best friend” have had nothing to be pleased about.

This dissatisfaction of the ordinary workers with Communist strike-leaders came to a head after the Park Royal strike ended in the latter half of 1952. The pattern of this shameful picture was plain to the point of crudity. The men were brought out on strike on the Communists’ favourite issue of “redundancy,” the redundancy having been caused by the Communists who had caused a bottle-neck by a stoppage on a trivial issue. After remaining on strike for fourteen weeks, the men went back to work on terms which had been offered on the second day!

Even the British Communists can hardly have felt unqualified satisfaction with this strike, since their methods were exposed in the Union Journal and the indignant workers threw the Communists out of their prominent positions in the union bodies.

Although the long-term results may have harmed the Communists and their cause there can be no doubt that the stoppage did great damage to the industry. In one year of such actions, the year that included the Park Royal dispute, they lost an uncounted amount of wealth through the delay to exports, the defence drive suffered great difficulties, and the motor workers themselves lost an estimated two million pounds in wages.

To take the story of Park Royal to our hearts and assume with self-satisfaction that Communism is being choked by its own successes, would be to play into the hands of those who are fighting
an underground war against the sinews of our nation. The British workers may suffer as the nation suffers; on balance and in the long run, the open Communist Party in Britain may suffer; but the real purpose of Communism is served so long as these strikes roll round our vital industries without a serious effort being made to strike back at their leaders. That purpose is the destruction of our life through the crippling of our industry.

CHAUCEER’S POEM
OF SOME LENGTH

by HARVEY BLACK

NO ONE, born and bred in a world of tribal huts, or prefabs, is likely to be immediately sensitive to the architectural proportions of, say, Regents Park Terrace, though he may easily measure the columns, doorsteps, chimneys, etc., and work out algebraic relationships between the various data thus obtained. Such a procedure is not far removed from the attempts, made from time to time, to analyse and explain the ‘structure’ of The Canterbury Tales.

Most of us have in fact been brought up in a world which does not know the long poem, except perhaps as a scholastic exercise. Poetry is regarded almost exclusively in terms of the good line, or at most the limerick or sonnet, though such ‘poems’ can run to volumes if the poet does not know when to stop. Efforts to grasp the totality of a great poem are usually no more than the trotting out of yardstick measurements remembered from School Certificate papers on Milton or Vergil — “Ah yes, in medias res.” — or the profound observation “It begins at the beginning, proceeds to the middle and ends at the end.”
The long poem of our time is as yet unfinished, so we are not in a position to make the latter remark about the Cantos. However, it is from study of the Cantos that we can most readily recapture a sense of the significance of the whole in such works as far removed as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. Ezra Pound had to help us to the Cantos in the first place by pointing to Dante. Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, though not the only elements in the structure of the *Commedia*, form a sequence which can easily be understood by all but the most obtuse. Pound, indicating the allegorical and analogical levels of the *Commedia*, then asked us to think of a similar formula in which Hell, Purgatory and Paradise were all there at the same time. To avoid viewing the Cantos exclusively in terms of Dante, and in so doing allowing them to be considered too much as a second *Commedia*, I suggest that it is now time to examine them in relation to another point on the literary compass, *The Canterbury Tales*.

A re-reading of Chaucer, after the special experience of the Cantos, throws much light on the problem of relationship between the Tales. It is also good that Chaucer should occasionally be compared to other writers than Boccaccio, Chrestien de Troyes, Lorris, Clopinel, or the ‘analogues,’ and not discussed entirely (à la Coghill) as a dramatist without a Theatre, another Shakespeare that would have been.

So far the attempts to ‘prove’ that the Tales are more than a casually assembled anthology, have not been happy ones. There are obvious difficulties. Even the two standard editions, Skeat and Robinson, disagree about the order in which they arrange the various MSS fragments or ‘groups,’ therefore any scheme of relationship must be flexible enough to allow for this uncertainty about the order of some of the Tales. Of the ‘schemes’ forthcoming there have been the mechanistic, that Chaucer was writing various essays on the ‘marriage problem’ (The Knight’s Tale, The Wife of Bath’s Prologue, The Clerk’s Tale, The Merchant’s Tale, The Franklin’s Tale, The Nonnes Priestes Tale, The Manciple’s Tale, and most of the others—in fact if you live in a Christian civilisation, not primarily concerned with the ‘problem of death,’ marriage, or its physical counterpart, is going to take up a good deal of your attention); that he was trying to show up ecclesiastical abuses (an anglican in disguise; no one has yet assumed him to be John of Gaunt writing in code), and that he establishes his relationship between tales by ‘theme lines,’ such as “allone
withouten any compagnie," repeated in different contexts. Others, to avoid spoiling their case by a mechanistic explanation, have confined themselves to phrases that could almost equally well be used to describe many other literary works. Chesterton speaks of the ‘pilgrimmage of life’ and Lowes of the ‘Comedie Humaine’.

Neville Coghill has noticed that the distinguishing feature of *The Canterbury Tales* is that, unlike *The Decameron* or similar collections, the tellers have a chance to establish their personal characters. From this he would have us believe that the tales only exist to tell us more about the tellers, and that the whole exists merely as an extended general prologue, a collection of *dramatis personae* waiting for a stage (Mr. Coghill’s thoughts are never far from the Playhouse). However, if we leave on one side Mr. Coghill’s acrobatics and turn his thesis the right way up, we shall find that the rôle of the tellers, the interludes and the prologues is to supplement the tales, rather than vice versa. For example, some of the most important tales have little or no supplement. We have sparse information on the Nun’s priest, and the Knight, who tells the story that sets the tone for all the others, is described conventionally. The Wife of Bath does not tell an important tale but she is given a chance to make up for this in her supplement, her monologue that would have delighted the heart of Robert Browning. Similarly, the Pardoner’s story about the Pardoner makes up for his lack of inspiration when it comes to the art of more conventional narrative.

There has never been any doubt about the placing of the first group of tales, told by the Knight, the Miller, the Reeve and the Cook. The Knight is the most important social figure in the gathering, and his tale is concerned with chivalry and love-making on the courtly level. But more than this, it paints Chaucer’s ‘timeless frieze,’ the classical world of ancient Greece — ancient medieval Greece — against which all the other events have their being. It might have been Ovid writing of the sacrifices by Emmelye, Palamon and Arcite to Diana, Venus and Mars, but to Chaucer’s audience it was the Knight who endowed his story with the true feeling for ceremonial and pageantry. He was already becoming an old world figure himself, no longer as well-off as Knights had once been, and economising by wearing his scarred campaign equipment on a pilgrimmage. His story might have been a tragedy ending with the memorable lines on the death of Arcite. That it was not so is the significant medieval element
in Chaucer’s conception. Physical death cannot be the operative factor in a Christian epoch. At such a time High Comedy replaces the classic tragedian’s preoccupation with death, with all things coming to dust.

Palamon and Arcite has the makings of a tragedy, but Chaucer transcends the tragic elements. They are there, as they might have been in a pagan legend, but the emphasis is on the yonge freshe folkes whose longings are brought to fruition, and the story ends with the marriage of Emmelye and Palamon.

The next story, told by the Miller, is also concerned with the success of two young lovers, no longer living in a distant, for us doubly remote, past, but in an eternal here and now; no doubt why the tale is so popular, and why the epithet ‘modern’ is frequently applied to Chaucer by people who have never read anything pre-Chaucerian—it surely takes more than a sexual interest to popularise a medieval text or get The Miller’s Tale into The Oxford Book of Light Verse.

We are still in the Garden of Eden (not Milton’s garden) and the personal magnetism and directness of the three characters have the effect of hiding from us the implications of the tricks they play on each other or on the old Carpenter. We are wholeheartedly on their side. The vividness and real presence are everywhere fostered by the type of detail which the narrative uses. Alisoun...as any wezele hir body gent and smal,...a barmcloth upon her lendes, ful of many a goore...a likerous ye...hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye...when she understands her lover’s desire, coquettsishly turns her head away and then agrees to yield. There is still quelque chose spirituelle which dominates the movement of the bodies.

After this the Reeve’s Tale carries us further down the social and emotional scale. It is more dependent on ‘la belle chose’ (as the Wife of Bath puts it) standing alone. One of the boys has to make do with the girl’s mother but that doesn’t seem to make much difference. The girl herself is different from the previous two—thick and wel ygrown with buttocks brode, and brestes rounde and hye, and with kamus nose, symbolising no doubt many other characteristics inherited from father miller. Though her love-making seems restricted to the exercise of a bodily function it is a healthy one, and we still see the world through the eyes of the lovers, laughing off the head-bashing and corn-stealing episodes as minor accessories to the main job in hand. We are helped in this by Chaucer’s putting the story into the mouth of the Reeve.
Like many of the readers who identify themselves with Malyn and the students, the Reeve may have white hair but his tail is still green, though his tap of life has been running nearly long enough to empty his barrel. Finally Chaucer adds a nuance to make the most convinced moral purist weaken in his condemnation—there are tears in the eyes of Malyn when Aleyn has to get up and leave her in the morning.

The Cook’s Tale, the last of the group, remains unfinished. From the introductory stanzas, which are all that Chaucer wrote or that have survived, we know that the setting was even further down the social scale. The exuberant copulating of the Reeve’s story had taken place in the country in a milieu of students and independent propriétaires. The Cook’s Tale begins in a town setting, and tells of a woman who, under pretence of keeping a shop, kept a bawdy house. Perhaps Chaucer found it difficult to chart the elysium of that part of humanity whose Eden is the world of the Bordello, of Circe’s ingle. It is difficult to present such a scene from the standpoint of the inmate, and to avoid falling into the cliché of the “repentant morning after” with its emphasis on squalor. For Chaucer’s purpose the latter aspect had to be kept in the background, at this stage in *The Canterbury Tales*. It was not until Nashe wrote (in code) his *Choice of Valentines*, about the loft, “where Venus’ bouncing vestals skirmish oft,” that the required tone was obtained for a sympathetic presentation of the maison close.

The dominant mood throughout this first group of tales is that of Pippa—God’s in His Heaven, all’s right with the world; other things, complicated things, are relatively unimportant. This is the scene and mood to which the middle-aged and elderly lovers, and even the tricksters, of later tales look back with a certain amount of nostalgia.

The central groups of tales seem to be variations, often in a minor key, of motifs established in the first movement. Therefore a rigid view of their arrangement is not necessary to see their pattern. The relations indicated by the text are sufficient to work on. The Parson’s Tale is obviously at the end, and with a connecting link is preceded by the Manciple’s Tale. The E group, containing the Clerk’s Tale and the Merchant’s Tale, obviously comes after the D group, containing the Wife of Bath’s Tale, because January’s brother is made to refer to the Wife of Bath’s prologue as an example of what marriage means to a man. The F group, containing the
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Squire's and Franklin's Tales, seems to fall easily into place after D and E because it answers the Wife of Bath's claim to absolute sovereignty, and the Clerk's account of Griselda's absolute submission:

Love wol not been constreyned by maistrye
Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon
Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!
Love is a thyng as any spirit free.

The folkes of the middle group are no longer so young or so freshe. If the medieval view of life has consigned death to a rôle of minor importance, then copulation, its adjuncts and consequences, in marriage troubles and jealousies, are still going to command a great deal of attention. The flirting of the Wife of Bath with Jankin, during the life of her fourth husband, harks back to the adventures of another Alisoun with her Nicholas. But this time we learn how Jankin later became the fifth husband and how he administered much rougher treatment than all the other four, until, as a result of one little episode the Wife of Bath became somewhat deaf. The 'ground base' of this 'triangle' situation recurs many times in different circumstances and with different consequences. There is the Merchant's Tale with the story of May in the Pear Tree, the merry pranks of the Friar in the Shipman's Tale, the poignant ending of the Manciple's tale of the crow, and the touching display of gentilesse by the husband in the Franklin's Tale.

There are the trickery and deceit practised by the corn-stealing Miller, the craft of Nicholas, the pathetic situation of the Carpenter at the end of the Miller's Tale, and red-hot revenge of Absolon, the pranks of the Clerks on the Miller and his family, and the daughter abandoned by her lover in the morning. These secondary considerations in the main stories come to be primary in the middle groups of tales. We are told of the Canon who obtains money from Parsons by promising to let them into the secrets of alchemy, of the extortions by the Summoner, and the two inhuman mothers who deceive their sons to have Constance committed to the mercy of the sea, and the Gods. In the Physician's Tale we hear of the girl to whom threatened seduction means death, and in the Squire's Tale of the abandoned bird lamenting for her departed lover.

The nobility or gentilesse with which the dying Arcite commends
his rival to Emmelye, returns again in fragments. The King, in the Man of Law's Tale, reminds us that it is not altogether absent from the world of mortals. The patient wife in the Clerk's Tale, at the worst moment of her sorrow, puts herself in the background and says "Go litel son...". In the Franklin's Tale the husband insists that his wife shall keep her troth, even if it means yielding to the desires of her lover. His magnanimous action caused the lover to relent and also the magician who held the lover in thrall. Above the gentilesse there is the piety or grace manifested in the little scholar of the Prioress' Tale, and in the story of St. Cecilia.

Among these themes and reiterations of the permanent in different contexts there are certain nonce episodes, things that do not recur. There are the potted tragedies of the Monk's attempt at a tale, the non-human villainy which exists outside the province of the Christian world in the Prioress' Tale, the magic and fayerie of the Squire's Tale with its ring, mirror and horse, the changing of the old hag to a young woman in the Wife of Bath's Tale. Perhaps the fayerie represents the search in books for something as magic and nebulous as the first Eden seems to be. Then there is the occasional turn to religion, or something that seems like religion, when we try to buy ourselves out of the results of our actions, providing as we do so a good laugh and a good living for Ye Olde Spiv, the Pardoner (the religious aspect of this perennial figure is usually overstressed by controversialists. He is more the patent medicine vendor).

Most important of all the middle episodes are the fragments of a paradise still far distant in the future, like the fragments which Pound mentions in the Pisan Cantos. The Franklin's Tale, with its noble action inciting others to respond in like manner, and the Nun's Priest's Tale, where villainy is no more than the wiles of a fox and the 'sex war' the rhetorical yatter of a cock and his hens; these are the moments which remind us that life is good, when the Garden of Eden has been left a long way behind and when the only Paradise we have is a painted one.

Before we can get any nearer to the real Paradise we must endure the rigours of the Parson's Tale. It is not, on the face of it, an inspiring tale; it may be difficult to work up enthusiasm for it as the climax and finale. But then it avoids the pitfalls that attend the approach to things celestial. We are well aware of what happened when Milton tried to march into the halls of heaven at the head of a puritan army. "Who is this guy, God, anyway" as the
The Texan remarked on getting to the third book of *Paradise Lost*. Dante approached the celestial in humbler wise, through the medium of Beatrice, the medieval equation or direct relationship between the beauty that is immediate and attainable and the beauty that is permanent and celestial. Chaucer does not go so far. He ends with the exhortation of the Parson, though it is well to remember that the Parson's Tale is not meant to be heaven.

What was composite and complete in the first Elysium contained impurities which later grew to unmanageable size. But in so doing they became easily recognisable and could be dealt with. Surely the Parson gives us due warning that this is what he is helping us to do. "Manye been the weyes espirituels that leden folk to our Lord Jhesu Crist; and to the regne of glorie. Of which weyes there is a ful noble wey and a ful covenable which may nat fayle to man ne to womman that thurgh synne hath misgoon fro the right wey of Jerusalem celestial; and this wey is cleped Penitence."

There is much that a study of the Cantos can do to aid the modern reader to grasp the essential unity of Chaucer's conception. *The Canterbury Tales* in turn offer an experience which enables us to see the form which the Cantos are taking in a new light, for Chaucer's method is in some respects nearer to that of Pound than the scheme used in the other medieval comedy, Dante's *Divina Commedia*.
At last the wearisome journey through the dirty, congested streets of London was over. Switching off the engine of the Silver Eagle, I got out, took my bag from under the tonneau cover, and leaving the car under a plane-tree, opposite the entrance to my club, crossed the cul-de-sac, and walked up the stone steps and pushed open the doors. It was quiet and cool inside; most of the members were away on holiday. There was no one in the porter's lodge, so I put down my bag and walked up the stairs to the bar. The bar was closed. I went into the reading room, with its wide windows overlooking St. James's Park, and at first saw no stir of life in there; but gradually, as my eyes became accustomed to the forms on the sofas and in the chairs, I was aware of slow abdominal heavings which accompanied varied noises, emitted periodically from open mouths, and susurrating lips and nostrils.

London was hot and quiet that evening. Summer was nearly gone; the air, shimmering over slate roofs and melting tarmac, was sultry. I walked up to Piccadilly, and so to Leicester Square. At eight o'clock the man I had come to London to see was to speak by St. Martin's Lane.

A new era in life was beginning: I wanted to be its historian. I wanted to empty myself of preconceived opinions, if I could, in order to get the feeling of the people. They seemed to be half resigned to what might come, unable to alter or deflect, in the least
way, the thing they all felt they should dread. But a few, at least, had an air of purpose, young men and women giving out handbills and chanting slogans, "No War for Warsaw—Remember the War Dead of 1914-18, have they died in vain?" and "Who the Heck, Cares for Beck?"

I wondered how the crowd would respond to the speaker when he came, whether violently or with acclaim: this man who had tried with all of himself for so many fruitless years to slay the minotaur bred from the golden calf, this man who had given up much in the near-hopeless task of persuading forty million people to set about building a new civilisation, a great sterling area freed of international money, in their country and Empire. Oh yes, I knew it was near-hopeless, for I knew the idiom of history, I knew the lives of the reformers, saints, and prophets. All were maligned in their initial activities.

"Where is he, the son of consolation?" wrote Sir Henry Rider Haggard, who had worked and pleaded for English land and English people, more than forty years before, and prophesied the trade wars of the twentieth century, and their causes. "When he arises, to lead the people to the promised land, he will be the greatest man of his age, and countless generations will rise up to call him blessed."

Meanwhile, would the modern Theseus be stoned?

I returned to the club; it was early yet. After supper at the long table, where sat Fleet Street men and other writers—I had always been lonely among them, I felt myself to be a sort of albino bird—I walked down Piccadilly with two acquaintances, in the bright lights and the seeming-careless crowds. How long before those lights were put out? I did not feel that the people were careless; but behind the eyes of every man and woman one sensed an evaded question, an avoided dread. What was to be, would be; meanwhile the lights were bright, food and drink were pleasant things taken amidst the laughter and talk of friends, this new film is good, let us get in before the last house begins. That seemed to be the feeling. Men still moving in the crowds with handbills; the bold type and cheap paper glanced at, before being dropped on the pavement, to be forgotten; to fall on the stony ground, now trodden by the young men and their girls, the ghosts of tomorrow,

"Whose world is but the trembling of a flare
And heaven but as the highway for a shell,"

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but to-night the lights are bright, and the handbills, given out by men moving quickly, men in drab clothing of office, shop, and factory, flutter unheeded into the gutter.

Down past the square of plane trees and gaudy lights of the cinema palaces the crowd waits, while under the wall of a tall brick building stands a black van with loud speakers and platform on its roof, with the Union Jack; and beside and before it, the banner line, *Britons Fight for Britain Only*, and *People's Peace and Greater Britain*, upheld by men who have come here after their day's work, inspired by their vision of fairer things.

And then a roar of cheering and (strangely, I feel) no booing, no opposition, no counter-demonstration of the Communists, and the name of their hero roared out, as the tall figure, the ex-cavalryman of 1914, seconded to the Royal Flying Corps, with one leg shattered in a Maurice Farman crash, now wearing grey double-breasted suit, climbs to the platform, and stands gravely still, not smiling, but with set face, as he lifts his arm in salute and acknowledgement of the greeting. It takes some minutes for their devotion to release itself, and the words can come from the tense figure now crouching as though to attack an invisible giant, the Minotaur about to devour a whole generation of youth; holding the stalk of the microphone with one hand — "To-night the British people are here—to tell Parliament, to tell the old Parties, to tell their financial masters, the truth—that if any foreign power attacks Britain, every member of our Party will fight in defence of Britain!—but just as straightly we tell them this!—we will not permit a million British youths to die in their moneylenders' quarrel!"

Wandering on the outskirts of the crowd, kept by the police maintaining the traffic-flows from enlarging itself beyond the space allotted for the reception of free speech, I sought to find what the casual sightseers were thinking. They were not hostile. Were they, with the exception of the faithful followers massed under the high wall of the brick building, indifferent? Or were they those who accepted things as they were, as they were coming in the future, with no question—people who did not believe in miracles? Who felt the events of the world too much for them; who since early consciousness had been frustrated in nearly all, if not all, of the secret inner hopes and tenderness of the interior heart? Was their attitude that of people who could not help themselves? Were they, each one, crouching within the little ego, void of the
still small voice, the glimmer of each soul dulled out under the bushel of circumstance—the circumstance of one business against another business, of each for himself, of unemployment, poor housing conditions, malnutrition, the wheat berry permanently stripped of its goodness, people fed on the destroying white bread of 'ordinary life,' with its eternal wars and mutilation, its diseases and frustrations, until the final peace of death? Was war a relief from petty circumstance, a heightening of life while life lasted? Surely not: nobody in Europe was cheering, as in the capital cities during the beginning of August 1914. There was no excitement, no resentment, no enthusiasm: there was passivity: and save from the figure now raving on the raised platform, there were no words.

The gesture had been made; the gesture was suspended in time. At least this man had given hope and a vision of nobility to a few thousand men and women. He had worked, he had endured ridicule, hate, misprision, and untruth. He had said, in effect, during so many years, “Let us put our own house in order before we interfere with others outside the estate of our British Empire. Let us develop that great estate, let us devote our lives in service, as true leaders of all within the Empire! Let us build a wonderful civilisation which will far surpass anything Germany or Italy or any other nation can build; for ‘we have one-fifth of the world in trust to us, a heritage won by our forefathers’.” He had tried to fight a financial system “a hundred years out of date,” which had £4,000,000,000 invested abroad, outside the Empire, for the sake of greater profit. This man had devoted his life, not for money, but for the sake of children with rickets and sad reflective eyes in the Motherland and in the Empire—50,000,000 of them, in Sir John Boyd-Orr’s figures, “permanently undernourished”.

At least I can testify that those who followed him felt a light shining within themselves, as with happy faces and shouts of confidence they walked in procession through the streets, inspired for the moment that they were the heralds of a great destiny, the pioneers of a Greater Britain.

I noticed on that clear August night the amused laughs of the bystanders, the sceptical tolerance on the faces of those looking from the windows of various buildings in which were clubs, for it was a warm night, and many of the windows were open to the summer air of London. I remember, too, an old woman selling flowers, an old Cockney woman in shawl, bonnet, and old-fashioned
skirts, crying out in a shrill voice, "Gawd bless you, Sir, you've always tried to save our boys!" as the procession passed through the lighted streets and lines of cars to the Embankment.

Back in my club, I heard someone in the bar say, dismissing the incident, "The same old speech".

Yes, I thought, the same old speech; always untimely yet thousands of years old; the same stony pathway; the same death and resurrection.

Outside in the city streets omnibuses and motor-coaches were moving to their assembly places, for the evacuation of London children. I saw them as I wandered about in the warm summer night, feeling myself to be tranquil, free, a ghost among men, a phoenix of a lost European generation.

About a week previously, I had written a letter to Sir Oswald Mosley with a suggestion that I should fly to Germany and see Hitler, to whom, as one old soldier of 1914 to another, I had a suggestion to make: for I did not believe that the English people, the Russian people, the French, the Poles, and the German people really had any ineradicable or fundamental antagonisms, apart from the international money system based on competitive export trade. What was needed was a central force or power—and that power was in the microphone of the radio—to draw the apparently irreconcilable ideologies together. So many people were right in what they claimed and believed; they were not wrong; they were right. The Communists were right in the essential purity of their ideas, the Fascists were right in their constructive patriotism; the democracies were right in their essential tolerance; many Jews were both kind and magnanimous. The world would respond to a large gesture: I knew it: I had always known it: a gesture to cast out fear.

I knew the chances of being able to see the German führer were remote, but I had posted the letter before reflection could cancel the impulse. I saw a formula for peace; I would speak it; so by all the power of the dead in all wars, let that voice speak! But not, for Christ's sake with the formal top-hat and careerist reservation of embassy officials. No wonder Hitler had felt himself disintegrating! Those gilded sepulchred minds! What were they? Who were they? What genius had they? What vision? Did they talk with the tongues of angels? Had they clarity, even?

A hundred such thoughts; and a pale face in the morning. Say
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nothing to anybody: these people are the war.

There were times, of course, when I felt the burden of my hopes to be too great for me, that I could not move the vast human apathy about me, and that failure was inherent in all I had undertaken, by the defects of my nature. This mood was probably akin to that described in a previous age as being tempted by the Devil. It was a mood of exhaustion and misery. For I knew that human despair and hopelessness underlay the weeds in my fields, and of other fields near and far; what the countryman was, and what he should have been in the regard of the nation, were so apart that I despaired of even stammering a portion of the truth. That truth was correlated with the truth of the coming war; the frustration of the better England remained all about me. A man with a clear mind had only to read a newspaper to see what was being prepared; and to know that vast sacrifices of the usurious interests would have to be made before the new world could begin.

Most well-to-do people had no idea how, in the year 1939, millions of little children in Britain were being blasted nervously, ravaged mentally, and undernourished physically, in all the great industrial areas over which hung a perpetual pall of smoke denying the very truth of heaven. Wars in such a system of living circumstances were inevitable; and middle-aged near-impotence salves its decaying soul by thoughts of putting the blame for such conditions either on "inevitability," or some European or Asiatic Ogre. Six million souls in Great Britain permanently undernourished in 1939 — and a potential great estate of Empire of one-fifth of the world lying in stagnation and squalor! Arise, Britain, arise into Greater Britain! Withdraw from international usury, and build your own wonderful civilisation, with sweat and strain and service!

What my unsophisticated youthful self had learned, with tremendous shock, in the no-man's-land fraternisation of Christmas Day, 1914, following on the terrible fighting around Ypres, had remained with me ever since, constantly in every hour and day and week and month for twenty-five years; and now it seemed to be the consummation of my life: and in the sunrise upon Westminster Bridge I felt that the power was upon me, as a medium or trustee of the dead and surviving British soldiers of the front-line of the Great War, to speak with authority to the living embodiment of the soldiers, the dead and the surviving, of the German army.

"Nobody would be happier than we if... it were possible for
us to apply the industry of our people to the production of more useful things than instruments for the destruction of human life and property..."

"We all know how many millions of fearless opponents, contemptuous of death, faced us, alas, in the World War. But history has often shown of us Germans that we understand less the art of living reasonably than that of dying nobly. I know that if ever this nation should be attacked the German soldier will do more than his duty, remembering from the experiences of one and a half decades what is the fate of a conquered people..."

"I cannot better conclude...than by repeating our confession of faith in peace. The nature of our new constitution makes it possible for us in Germany to put a stop to the machinations of the war agitators. May the other nations too be able to give bold expression to their real inner longing for peace. Whoever lights the torch of war in Europe can wish for nothing but chaos. We, however, live in the firm conviction that in our time will be fulfilled, not the decline but the renaissance of the West. That Germany may make an imperishable contribution to this great work is our proud hope and our unshakable belief."

Those phrases of the May, 1935, speech had expressed the authentic genius, the deep feeling based on suffering and experience, the magnanimity of the ex-soldier who had the gift of tongues; but if that authenticity were frustrated finally, if God was mocked by so-called science disintegrating the very source of the power of life, such a misery would come upon hundreds of millions of people, for whom it might be as if the sun were breaking out of its orbit, leaving a charred mankind to be frosted over with icy annihilation.

I stared down at the ebb-tide of the Thames, trying to maintain myself for my task.

The massed misery of existence in one battlefield after another, of life sapped by sleeplessness and exposure, the horizon of life lost in the flooded winter crater-zones, was known only by the enduring common soldier and the little officer of the infantry; and even then, only an exceptional integrity could resolve its Truth, maintain its inner clarity among normal human beings who do not think, and do not care to think, beyond the immediacy of their self-ful living. And what was the small and obscure life of one such man, its happiness or even its continuation, against such a threatening misery of un-understanding? Was there no formula, no idiom of
understanding? Men talked of mysteries such as the mind of Shakespeare, or of Lawrence of Arabia, which were not mysteries to me. They were plain and simple men, as I saw them, uncomplicated by the sophistries of the market place; I knew the processes of careful work by which they had come to their clarity, and so built their worlds of deed and word. There was no mystery in a flower or a bird; there was infinite care and infinite work—the same things—and the essence of all things was the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of Life. All things were made by work. To the true artist, the self-cleared man or woman, came the Holy Ghost, to which he trusted himself, and could do no wrong. By study and by thought, by meditation and by observation, by knowing oneself or by striving to know oneself, in trust of the Holy Ghost or the spirit of life, a man came to see plain, to see with truth; and thus he knew other men, the rare great workers called men of genius and the slower craftsmen and simple men who would live their lives in the sun, and ask no more than that they might work for their bread, and for a continuation of their useful work. Was all this to be turned against itself, was all the self-hate of a repressive financial civilisation to destroy a generation, perhaps two generations, of European youth; and even what was called Europe? Was Russia waiting for the two giants of Europe to bleed themselves white, and then to step over the prostrate bodies and bolshevise the earth, as Sir Oswald Mosley had shouted throughout the poorer places of England for years?

I saw the dawn come up the river, and then the low rays of the sun.

What would avail my life, or what was left of my life if, after twenty years of striving for that plain-seeing called truth, I turned away from my knowledge and hid myself in the little fearful ego, a farmer not thinking beyond his family on a farm? Had I no wider responsibility? In the growing fear and apprehension coming over the world, was it better to remain silent, or was it better to risk losing all by speaking out, however ineffectually? I did not want fame, or my name to be known among men; I knew the vanity of such illusions; but the poor man working in the fields, the man in the thin coat in the dole-queue, the artisan soon to be taken from his home to wear a uniform and carry a rifle and bayonet, or to be told to fly through the air and sooner or later to be broken by iron and to be charred by fire, who could
A CHRONICLE WRIT IN DARKNESS

speak for him if not myself? Had I not, when trusting myself
to the Holy Ghost, the gift of clarity? Would not this be im-
mediately recognisable if I went, my unafraid self, in the name and
spirit of the camaraderie, with all the hopes of the dead and the
living of that day of Peace, the Christmas of 1914? For the
phoenix of Germany was akin to the phoenix of myself.

Might not such a gesture, for once in history, be taken at its
just and truthful value; and with the aid of that modern miracle,
the radio, and served by the hope of all men of good-will, so
promulgate the beginning of the new world, the brave new world?

Speak for us, brother; the snows of death are on our brows.

The sun arose above the warehouses along the Thames east of
the bridge; but as morning grew, and the movement of men and
vehicles impinged upon my eyes and ears, I felt a coldness growing
upon me; and when just after noon I went before the man in
whose ability and realistic vision I believed, I could not speak more
than a few words. With his invariable courtesy he rose to greet
me, but the calm and aloof strength of his usual self was withdrawn,
as though for the moment he had expended all of his life, and was
poor. He held my letter half-crumpled in his hand, as though it
had been thrust hastily into his pocket.

"I have been thinking about your letter," he said.

I waited; I knew the answer. He looked before him a moment
before saying, "I am afraid the curtain is down".

I nodded. There was little more to be said. But I said, "What
will you do?". He shifted his weight, from the leg broken in
the aircraft crash, and permanently crippled after he had re-joined
his lancer regiment in the flooded trenches of the battle of Loos,
before he had properly recovered. With eyes averted, he
said, "They might shoot me as Jaurés was shot in Paris in 1914".

Then he said, "I shall keep on, while I can, to give a platform
for peace should our people want it".

Then he said, "I cannot see my country sink".

"Goodbye, sir," I said, and left his office.

Outside the newsbills read Nazis Seize Danzig Customs.

On the Saturday morning, as I was leaving, the hall porter,
sorting letters, said casually.

"Well, it's begun. They've bombed Warsaw this morning.
Will you be wanting your bedroom to-night? I could do with
it. Members are returning to Town."
"No, thank you. Who told you?"
"Mr. Negley Farson just came in and told me. I'll cross your name off number ten then. Going home to Norfolk?"
"Yes, I'm a farmer this war. How queer."
"It's a queer business altogether," he replied grimly. He was a Belfast man, an old soldier, with a wound still unhealed from the last war. "Bloody queer, if you ask my opinion!" he iterated, and as his grim stare was maintained upon me, I began to wonder if he thought I might be responsible.
"I heard where you'd been last night," he went on, in a lowered voice, "and I reckon Ould England could do with a few more blokes like him!" Then in his metallic Northern Irish brogue, as another member came in, "I hear the Nationals of Golders Green and St. John's Wood have bought up all the bully beef in London, and all I can say to that is, they can have their bully beef! Well, goodbye, sir, and good luck to ye! I'll post any letters on to Norfolk. Goodbye, and don't forget a turkey for me at Christmas!"

It was a dull journey home. All the way I passed omnibuses and coaches, filled with evacuated children with labels on their jackets. Nobody where I stopped for food or drink or petrol spoke of the war. England seemed very quiet, as at something that was passing away, the old way of life, the old world.
TELEVISION WONDERLAND

THOSE intellectual snobs who spurn television as a low-brow entertainment for the groundlings are missing one of the most revealing and epoch-making developments of modern times, which cannot fail to have dramatic consequences. For the first time millions are being let behind the scenes and are able to view their former heroes at the closest possible range, as they have in the past only been seen by the privileged few of their immediate acquaintance. How many of the 'great' will survive projection onto the flimmering screens of millions of parlours and sitting rooms throughout the land?

Those who have so far been too snobbish to indulge in the latest poor man's luxury are advised to overcome their squeamishness and to glance into this fish-bowl of our time, when they will discover the strangest creatures swimming on the other side of the glass, revealing themselves in all their incredible fantasy to the eyes of millions. They will discover a Wonderland which Lewis Carroll himself would have envied—at the bottom of the cathode tube. No wonder television is popular!

What caricatures of themselves these strange beings present to the unrelenting eye of the electronic camera. For the first time millions are realising that even Low at his best could not catch in mere line drawing the fantastic reality which the television screen portrays.

Who would have realised without its aid with what bustling, burbling vigour Bob Boothby presents his case, or how acid the milk of human kindness can be soured in a Michael Foot, until he has seen them facing each other across a narrow table? Who would have dared to imagine the epitome of all Trade Union
bosses, complete with paunch and double chins, until they had seen the T.U.C. chief, O'Brien, evading all the questions of the journalist panel with the most ancient and hoary of platitudes?

What joy it is to see the waggling nanny-goat beard of Aylmer Vailance beneath the cadaverous face and glinting eyes of this doyen of Left intellectuals! What a revelation to watch a group of journalists treat the unctuous, self-righteous Nehru as if he were a reincarnation of Jesus Christ — how dramatic to see that Oriental mask drop for a moment to expose the flash of teeth and spurt of venom of an Indian cobra at the first mention of Mau Mau!

This is the fascination of Television: no-one can escape the all-seeing eye. Gone is the protection of the carefully re-edited written word, gone the manuscript of the 'momentous' speech reeking with midnight oil. Faced with the ordeal of immediate reply in unrehearsed debate or journalist interrogation, the victim must be himself with every nuance of his facial expression revealed to millions to betray his inward thoughts. The 'great' have never been so stripped of their pretensions as when they face that camera to sink or swim in the parlour fish-bowl.

Who can withstand such a test? Certainly not an O'Brien or a Nehru. The pomposity of the one whistles to the world through his deflated skin; while the oily subtlety of the other cannot disguise the underlying gleam of hate. Still less can an Eden or a Butler, whose mouthing platitudes before their recent journey to America failed to overcome the false cold impact of their 'charming' smiles.

Only the completely uninhibited, the supremely unselfconscious can survive this all-revealing, close-up view. Hence the triumph of Bob Boothby, who casts dignity to the winds to ride off on his latest hobby-horse. The greatest of all the Television stars, Gilbert Harding, makes no attempt to curb passing fits of ill-temper, to the delight of viewers — and the indignation of the pundits.

Television has unquestionably a great part to play in the modern world. It takes the millions behind the scenes from which they were formerly excluded — and this is not only true of the Coronation ceremony which finally put the new medium on the political map — so that political personalities will now have to present themselves to the closest scrutiny — warts and all — whether they have the Cromwellian audacity or not.

No wonder the Church dignitaries are struggling to keep this
TELEVISION WONDERLAND

new medium under state control, for they at least have seen its future potentialities — did not the Coronation immensely enhance their prestige? Yet it must not be laid in chains. For the first time the people too may sit at the high table and see the mighty face to face. No-one must be permitted to prevent this epoch-making confrontation.

What will be the outcome? Will the intuition of the people read their characters from the faces of those who have been foisted upon them by Party and Press? Will Television have the same devastating effect upon the merely pretentious that the intimate atmosphere of the House of Commons used to have in its great debating days?

Time will show; and meanwhile the fish gaze at us out of the Television tank, as large as life and twice as natural, proving that truth is stranger than fiction, for nothing could be more curious than these creatures themselves.

A.R.
PLUMES of smoke were rising from the paddle steamers on the Bosphorus; the motor ferry, resembling the Brighton Pavilion water-borne, was in mid-voyage, its cupolas outlined in sharp relief against the dark blue islands. Above the layers of smoke and mist the domes of Santa Sophia and the Blue Mosque were catching the morning sun. Like the cupolas of the ferry they floated, but at a higher level; and the colours seen from the balcony of my hotel were blue and grey and gold, except for the scarlet of the cherries being hawked in the street below. How pleasant it would have been just to sit here and reflect on the water and the hills, with one finger in the book telling how five hundred years ago in 1453, Sultan Mehmet II finally captured Istanbul from the Byzantines and entered the city in triumph; how pleasant to loiter nostalgically over the history of that strange empire whose very name has now become synonymous with all that is devious, mysterious and eccentric. Byzantium—what a name it is—a compendium of symbols and mysteries. “At this point, the Byzantine Emperor Leo the Isaurian . . . ” “But he had not reckoned with the Palaeologoi . . . ” the history books are full of such asides, but never a word of explanation. Byzantium, like an unfathomable maze, sets the eastern boundary to the history of medieval Europe. If the history books are to be taken literally, always excepting *The Legacy of Byzantium*, which is not quite in the same class as the ones I have in mind, nothing ever
went into the maze, and nothing ever came out. Even after the Crusaders had turned aside from their objective to sack the City everything seemed to go on as before, and seemed to go on for such a long time—a passive empire lasting for more than a thousand years. One may be forgiven for wondering sometimes whether such a thing can ever have really existed at all, whether it was not just a convenient fiction for historians who wished to show that events had moved too far away from the familiar territories of Western Europe to be worth accurate reporting, much as the old map-makers wrote off large sections of the globe as Unknowne Landes and peopled them with monsters. "Anthropophagoi, Palaeologoi, Dinosaurs and Isaurians—who is to know the difference?

But suppose one has read *The Legacy of Byzantium*, and suppose one has mastered the intricacies of the Palaeologoi and knows them for what they were; and has appreciated the significance, in terms of European Defence, of the eastern campaigns against the Mamelukes and the Ottomans lasting for more than two centuries; suppose one has read of the endless dynastic intrigues and clerical brawls, of the poets and commentators and collators in whom the City seems at all times unproductively to have abounded; what then? The fantasies of Gustave Moreau and the declining years of the last century haunt one still—of jewels on naked flesh, of a Babylon grown elegant and scientific in debauchery. Or there is William Yeats's vision of a City of incandescent mosaic and peerless artifacts where golden nightingales sang out over a gong-tormented sea.

Yes, indeed, on the balcony of the Park Hotel in the morning sunshine it would have been pleasant enough to sit for an hour or two and consider just in what sense Byzantium existed, as the ships drew their streamers of smoke behind them across the water and the haze dispersed to give lengthening vistas of sea and islands and the domes and minarets rising in clearer perspectives against a brightening sky. But there was work to be done and I had no Turkish. Worse still, the rate of exchange has been fixed so unfavourably that my hotel bill for two days was running into the region of £30. At whatever sacrifice to my meditations on the myth of Byzantium, I must change some money at a favourable rate. This is how the matter lies. The pound sterling is officially exchanged at a rate of seven Turkish pounds. Railway tickets and air tickets must be bought in Turkish pounds, but they are
priced so high that to pay for them in Turkish pounds I must exchange twice the number of sterling pounds on my letter of credit that it would take were I travelling from London to Istanbul, instead of from Istanbul to London. In fact a ticket for which I would pay £60 in London will cost me £120 if I buy it in Istanbul. However, on the free market travellers' cheques or sterling notes can be changed at a rate of thirteen Turkish pounds to the pound sterling. One gets twice as much for one's money, or in other words can buy one's £60 ticket for £60. But transactions on the free market are illegal, and the bank is only permitted to make payments in Turkish pounds, not in any other currency. Now, my money is locked up in a letter of credit. My problem is simply this: how to get the use of that money without losing half of it or half of its purchasing power.

To cope with such difficulties it was clear from the outset that I should need a Turkish phrase book. Halfway down Independence Street I found just what I wanted—a little brochure with a Union Jack on the cover, and printed in large letters the words—

**PRATIK INGILIZCE KONUSMA ONDERI**

For fifty kuruş it seemed good value, with instructions at the beginning on how to pronounce the alphabet, how to form the plural and how to use the definite article, followed by word lists of *The Numbers, Dates, The Weather* and so forth. The word list for *Eating* is the best. I pass over the *Cold Meal* where there is but a poor choice between oysters and sausages; *The Warm Meal* is the one to study; it goes on for five pages and makes the Lord Mayor's Banquet look a provincial supper party. Few Lord Mayors or mistresses of all-eclectic kitchens ever regaled their guests with such dishes in succession as toasted veal with truffles, a rosebeef with potatoes, two toasted mutton kidneys with vegetables, a leg of chicken toasted in curl-paper, a young partridge with cabbage, followed by two small warm pastes and a fried gudgeon or a rost of rebit with a salad of celery, to be followed by a dessert of a tart or a cake with jelly of apple or marmalade of apricot, biscuits, cheese of gruyere, a dram glass of cognac, cigars and a toothpick.

Not surprising, after such a menu, that the list of common *Table*
Appointments should begin with silver plates, or that among the Kitchen Utensils should figure such necessaries as a tub, a chopper, a skimmer, a tranier and last (for the gudgeanos?) an earthen pot.

As a contrast to the luxuries of the table, The Family gives an austere picture of the Turkish life-cycle. A young man meets a young girl (sic) during the childhood; the growth, the manhood or the womanhood are followed by the betrothal, the marriage, the paternity, the maternity and the divorce. The oldness and the death ensue. But the father and the mother leave the son who in the course of the youngness meets another young girl with whom he for a while eats the rosebeef of betrothal and the leg of a chicken toasted in curl-paper, symbolic of conjugal love, until by a rigid determinism they decline into the divorce, oldness and death—which is the meaning of the earthen pot. This is not a life-cycle by any means exclusively Turkish. I say an austere picture advisedly, for, unlike the French phrase book with its set of emotions conventionally thought apt for the various experiences of life, my Turkish book keeps grimly silent about the reactions of Turks to such major upheavals and experiences as for example the betrothal or the maternity. The only hint that Turks may lead as richly emotional lives as our own is hidden in the items of the menu; the rosebeef with its suggestions of an early-summer flowering and physical vigour; the curl-paper that stands for a certain placid vanity, an ordered domestic satisfaction; the two small warm pastes, a flabby deterioration into a relationship that is neither hot nor cold. As for the yawning earthen pot, does that not suggest, more forcefully than any gamut of explicit miseries, the crude horrors of the grave?

Austere, yes—a certain direct philosophy of life inherited from the tents and tribes of Central Asia from which these people came; but although four-fifths of the nation remain peasants, in Istanbul, which is a great port and an industrial centre, commercialism has superimposed a more sophisticated melancholy on the natural tristesse of the Turks. The lament for the hard lot of the peasant that strikes so insistently through the music of the common people is transformed at the level of the middle class into a lament for the old days of polite learning and good taste when Istanbul was still the capital of a great empire, as witness this standard conversation between bookseller and client:—

Bookseller: We have all books of all languages. I can get also
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all books which I have not in the shop.

Client: I do not doubt that.

Bookseller: Here is, sir, my catalogue. You will find in it a choice of the most foreign remarkable books.

Client: I thank you, but yet a word. Opportunely can I ask you if you impress any works?

Bookseller (imitating Dr. Johnson): Yes sir, if they are suitable works.

Client: Then, do you impress a metaphysical work?

Bookseller: But, sir, who is interested today of philosophy?

This was in the old times; now only the romans are read.

Client: Then you are impressing exclusively romans?

Bookseller: Very surely, because the impression of romans is constituting presently a very good business.

Client: You are right, I can not say anything. The people is only reading light works. The ideas are too changed.

Avoiding the trams, trolley-buses and taxis that hurtled up and down the fierce gradients with their loads of impassive passengers in cloth caps, I found my way down the cobbled streets to the bank. I glanced at the reproductions in the shop windows of the mustachioed sultan entering the Capital of the Greeks half a millennium ago in all the glamour of victory. The celebrations of this great event have been discreet and tactful to avoid giving offence to the Greeks with whom the Turks are now allied. The times are changed, the ideas too. Marshal Papagos paid a state visit to mark the occasion and offer his government’s congratulations. My bank manager, a Greek, though dubious about Turkish fiscal policy, lent a sympathetic if sceptical ear to my yarn about a walking tour through lonely Macedonia. As I left his office very satisfied with the results of the interview, I heard a voice drawling out a familiar phrase:

"Say, I want you to issue me with a thousand dollar bills."

An older man than myself, I wondered how he would stand up to the rigours of the Macedonian hills. Consulting the book, I found that such a conversational gambit should be accepted thus:

Banker: Dollars are very dear presently, you must pay three per cent.


Client: In this case, I beg you to pay me with gold. I need absolutely to have that money, and I am pressed to get off.

Banker: All right, here is your money with gold.

Client: This piece seems a little defective.

Banker: Excuse me, you are wrong. It has no defectuosity.

Client (in mounting temper): This also is very light, it seems to be false.

Banker (aggrieved): You have very troubled me, sir. We will weight it. (Business with scales). You see, it has the required weight. That will cost you twenty dollars.

But the phrasebook said nothing about a visit to the Currency Control, or what to do if you wanted something signed in the lunch hour.

However, as my personal problems were so happily resolved, I felt free to devote my undivided attention to further improving my Turkish. I went up to the Park, chose a seat commanding a magnificent view of the Golden Horn, and flourishing my Pratik, waited for a likely victim.

Ingilizce konusurmusunuz?

He shook his head, but after some miming I gathered that he was a photographer, a profession beyond the scope of my book. Shrug­ging my shoulders, I handed it to him. He thumbed it through, halted at The Hairdresser, and motioned to me that we should begin:

Patron: You are late today.

Barber: Please excuse me, but it has not been possible to come sooner.

Patron: Make haste and sharpen the razor, after soaping my visage.

Barber: All right, sir.

Patron: You have let the brush go in my mouth.

Barber: Because you have spoken when I did not expect it.

Patron: You have cut my visage. It is bleeding.

Barber: No, I have not cut your visage, there was only a pimple and I have taken it away.

At this callous impertinence he roared with laughter, drew his finger across his throat from ear to ear, shook hands and went away.
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If this is what happens at the barber's, how frightful to go to the dentist, with his double talk of palliatives, stuffed teeth and "a little courage suffices," followed by CRACK! and the incoherent cry of the patient: "But I would not let take away this tooth!"

I returned to the hotel meditating on a leg of chicken toasted in curl-paper. That afternoon, if I had not sat dreaming too long on the balcony, I might have gone to gaze on artifacts.

THEATRE IN PARIS
JEAN VILAR AND LORENZACCIO
by JACQUES BROUSSE

The Théâtre National Populaire, an immense theatre, so large that U.N.O. has twice used it for its fruitful sessions, was built at the same time as the Palais de Chaillot, of which it is a part, by the government of Léon Blum. A theatre for the Parisian workers appeared to be an urgent need, the Comédie Française was so expensive that it could not hope to bring factory workers and the great masterpieces of French drama together. The result of the enterprise, in this sphere as in so many others, did not quite correspond with the good intentions of the worthy people and the absurd intellectuals who surrounded Léon Blum, for not only did they nominate a director without talent, they also failed to provide him with the necessary funds. So for ten years a few old conciègres and seedy students went to ache with boredom at performances of the classics where incredibly mediocre actors performed before even more incredibly mediocre scenery; and emerged filled with respectful amazement. As to the workers, they had naturally returned meanwhile to the football stadium, cinema and café. This satisfactory state of affairs continued under Vichy and the fourth Republic, until the day in 1951 when Jean Vilar was nominated as director of the Palais de Chaillot. Whereupon a revolution which the socialist minister of 1936 would have been incapable of imagining took place, after fifteen years. M. Jean
Vilar is among those who learnt the love of his art from that saint of the theatre, Charles Dullin. After the defeat of 1940 he was one of a troupe of young actors which, like Molière's, travelled through France acting in village halls, the courtyards of inns, and so on. This experience undoubtedly gave him a taste, and a respect, for working-class audiences. It was in 1945 that, after various attempts, he first became well known as a producer, with his production for French audiences of *Murder in the Cathedral*. As a result of his interpretation of the part of Thomas à Becket, and the amazing effects he drew from the chorus in particular (in French they recited prose, not verse, which increased the difficulty) T. S. Eliot's great drama was acted 250 times. The Avignon Festivals, where every summer since 1947 he has created modern plays as well as classic masterpieces, have crowned his achievement.

The fact that he has a theatre of his own has not lessened M. Vilar's creative efforts. Stressing the social aspect of his artistic activities, he leaves Chaillot each autumn and each spring, and takes his company to act in badly equipped theatres round the working-class districts of Paris, places where European industrialism is displayed in all its horror. His public, particularly the young, are delighted when the time comes for his return to Paris, where they crowd into Jean Vilar's theatre. Thus he has made himself a vast and enthusiastic audience, drawn from all classes of society.

Many of the modern plays he has created have been of no great interest; on the other hand all his productions of the classics have been in their various ways worthwhile. It is true that M. Vilar has not always solved the problem of the immense size of stage and auditorium at Chaillot. While Corneille's *Le Cid* was an unforgettable success, Molière's plays with two or three characters like *L'Avare*, or even *Murder in the Cathedral*, seemed at times to dissolve in space. *Lorenzaccio*, however, a romantic drama modelled on Shakespeare, with many performers and numerous changes of scene, enabled him to use all the resources of the great theatre. It has been a triumph, confounding all his detractors.

The play itself is a prodigy. Written when Alfred de Musset was twenty-four, it is the only French romantic play which has retained its vigour and quality throughout the years. While the absurd plays of Victor Hugo (a recent revival at the *Comédie Française* of *Ruy Blas* showed how completely ridiculous they appear to us now) were forever being given, *Lorenzaccio* was forgotten for more than sixty years, and had to wait to be staged for the turn
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of the century and Sarah Bernhardt.

Musset certainly had *Hamlet* in mind when he conceived the story of the young Florentine who, in order to rid his native city of the tyrant imposed upon it by the Medicis, makes himself the companion of his debauches, and to still his suspicions feigns, not madness like Shakespeare's hero, but cowardice. (For the first time, Vilar's interpretation reveals certain more complicated ties between the two men, to which the text makes rapid but quite clear allusions.) But the new twist to the story lies in the idea of making Lorenzaccio fall into his own trap. After a time he can no longer do without the orgies in which he participates with Alexander Medici. The truth is, he is too intelligent; he knows the republicans are nothing but well-meaning chatterers, and that the people are stupid and ungrateful. All the great Florentine families who are not already corrupted by the tyrant turn their backs on him, and he goes to his destiny alone, lucid and despairing.

He clings to the idea of the murder he will commit, in order not to despise himself completely, and succeeds in killing Alexander; but, as he had foreseen, the city hurries to elect a new duke, on whose orders he, in turn, is assassinated.

The action of the play is in a series of plots, intrigues and glittering fiestas; and the genius of the young poet, who has surrounded his hero with a crowd of secondary characters drawn with astonishing firmness, has been able to re-create Renaissance Florence — aristocratic and plebeian, ardent and voluptuous. And because not only imagination, but also clear thinking has gone into this re-creation, the spectator is given the opportunity to appreciate and judge the effects, not only of tyranny, but also of the stupidity, cowardice and baseness of democratic assemblies. It is therefore no exaggeration to speak of genius in connection with this play, in which Musset showed that *la vérité, probablement, est triste*, as Renan said, at a time when the other poets of his day were indulging in a perfectly grotesque orgy of idealistic and demagogic illusions.

Gérard Philippe takes the part of Lorenzaccio. He is known to English audiences through *La Ronde* and *Les Belles de Nuit*. Such a well known film star has doubtless helped the popular success of M. Vilar's company; but in his case, unlike that of M. Marais, the success is deserved, for M. Philippe is not only our best romantic jeune premier, he is also very nearly a great actor. His performance is admirable. Pale, sarcasms and blasphemies on his lips, at once
THEATRE IN PARIS

young yet worn, furious, disenchanted, he *is* Lorenzaccio; and his supple, flexible voice and perfectly clear diction do justice to every nuance of de Musset’s lines.

M. Vilar has a rather questionable theory about what he calls the *nudity* of the stage— that is, absence of scenery, which he replaces with sombre draperies. It is true that he succeeds surprisingly, with the aid of clever lighting, in suggesting space, distance; and Gischia’s costumes stand out in all their brilliance as the performers group and re-group themselves. But unfortunates like myself, whose imagination has lost some of its youthful vigour, sometimes feel a little uneasy in this shadowy Florence, dark even at high noon after morning Mass.

These, however, are small points of little importance. All that matters is that a masterpiece has been restored to us in all its beauty, and that France has had, for the past few years, a great theatrical producer.

THE EUROPEAN AT TABLE

"ADIEU PANIERS, VENDANGES SONT FAITES"

by ROBIN ADAIR

Whatever the source of this nostalgic folklore quotation, the paraphrase, murmured annually for many successive years, is: *Adieu valises, vacances sont faites.*

Every year, returning in leisurely fashion from the house in Les Landes; a few days in Bordeaux with a Vendange luncheon at Pontet-Canet, Gruaud Larose or some other château of our acquaintance; Paris and the new plays; a dozen or so of *maremnes vertes* and in some years a few precocious *escargots de bourgoyne*; perhaps even a whiff of the very early *truffes*— until finally the white cliffs of Dover, which usually meant a somewhat peevish discussion with tired customs officials about the "weight" of the Armagnac we had carefully brought back in the car.
The autumn tints as one drove through Kent offered some consolation, and one found them again in London after creeping through suburban fogs. They were in all the latest tweeds — one's shirtmaker even had a “new” tie — but supremely, they were hanging in the windows of the poultry, game and fishmongers.

Perfect month in fact for the gourmet: oysters and a bottle of Chablis, game and a bottle of Burgundy; grouse, still with us; partridges, pheasant, hare. Later on, snipe, woodcock, wild-duck and, if the gourmet is also a chasseur, what blissful months are still in store for him.... “Corroding, carking care vanishes into thin air when the ardent lover of these pursuits gives himself thoroughly up for the nonce to the enjoyment of them....”

But here, now, I would like to be very practical and address myself to those only who really wish to cook something quite delicious. At the very start of the game season there is one quite marvellous thing to try. It is the terrine de gibier. Any game may be used, furred or feathered; or a mixture, and as we all know there is sometimes a plethora — we have either shot or been sent more than we can cope with — it is the perfect solution.

Whatever the “thing” is — and I shall refer, for convenience sake to “the birds” although it could be equally well a hare, even a humble rabbit — they are plucked and prepared as for roasting. Now carve them, raw, keeping on one side all the best pieces — fillets or breasts. The rest, legs, tougher parts, are put through a mincing machine or very finely chopped. You have also some pork, half fat, or a piece of raw bacon or ham. This also is minced, and you want about the same quantity of minced pork (or bacon) as you have of minced game.

Now take your best “fillet” pieces, lay them flat in a dish and sprinkle with salt, freshly ground pepper-corns, herbs — thyme, parsley, bayleaves, rosemary, marjoram — and pour over a small glass each of brandy and madeira or brown sherry; leave this to “marinate,” i.e. soak, turning the pieces over occasionally. We now have three main parts of our birds: the marinating fillets; the minced, tougher parts and the carcasses. These latter we put in a saucepan with more herbs, carrot, onion, a little garlic, salt and pepper, covering amply with cold water. Bring to the boil and simmer till well reduced; in fact we want to make a rich and concentrated game stock.

In a large mixing bowl put the minced game and pork. Plenty of salt and pepper and nutmeg. Since it is not very agreeable to
taste raw meat the only way to judge the sufficiency of seasoning is to smell it. Before you start seasoning you will find a rather sickly, fade, as the French call it, smell. The spicing should eliminate this and experience will teach you. Onion, shallot — or garlic — may be introduced, but with discretion and very finely chopped. If truffles are to be used, practically no onion. Anyway, mash and work the mixture thoroughly with a fork or wooden spoon. I always give it a final mixing with my hands. Chopped almonds, pistachio nuts or, of course, the wonderful truffles are an improvement, and of the latter you cut neat pieces to keep on one side, chopping the trimmings into the mince.

One is now ready to fill the terrines, which are the vessels in which the thing is cooked. Round, oval or rectangular, they are usually of attractive fire-proof glazed pottery or china. Glass ones can be used, but are not so pleasant to look at.

On the bottom of each place one bay leaf; then, a wafer-thin slice of streaky bacon on top of which, packed down with one's knuckles, a layer of the mince. Now a layer of our fine, marinated fillets; one or two slices of truffle — or almond, or pistachio nut — more mince; fillets, mince and so on, until all is used up, finishing of course with a layer of mince and packing down well with the knuckles. With a sharp, pointed knife make a hole in the centre and pour in the liquid from the marinade. Stand the terrines in a baking-dish of boiling water and cook them in a moderate oven for about forty minutes or so. Impossible to give exact timing. Towards the end of the cooking, pierce the centres with a sharp knife or skewer, press down gently and if you see a pink oozing, you know it requires more cooking.

About halfway through the cooking the “pies” — for such they really are, en terrine instead of being in a crust — will have formed a sort of “island” in their dishes; you fill up the surrounding “sea” with the concentrated stock which has been cooking all this time.

When they are done, remove and cool them. Cover each with a piece of grease-proof paper, a weight — such as an old-fashioned flat-iron — on each, and put away to set and become really cold.

If you are fortunate enough to have a large stock of game and have made several terrines, cover them with clarified fat and you can keep them, in a suitably cold place, for weeks, almost months. A most useful stand-by.
NEW BOOKS

MUSSOLINI AND MR. COOTE

*Mussolini — An Intimate Life*, by Paolo Monelli. Thames and Hudson. 21s.

If there were an annual prize, presented by the Rockefeller Trust, for examples of truly British frivolity (in face of great issues) this reviewer would be inclined to recommend Mr. Colin Coote for 1953. An article entitled *The Mussolini Legend* appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 24, as an expanded review of Signor Monelli’s ‘intimate life’ of Mussolini.

Mr. Coote’s candidacy for this hypothetical prize is strengthened early in the article. “Perhaps in a few more years men will ask ‘Who was Mussolini?’ The possibility is a fearful verdict on the calibre of one who ruled fifty million people for over twenty years.” This kind of game could be played with anyone. Substitute Wagner, or Sir Alexander Fleming, or Pontius Pilate, and the same fearful possibility could be postulated. Nowhere in the article does Mr. Coote suggest evidence that Mussolini is likely to be forgotten: a visit to contemporary Italy and a reading of the contemporary Italian Press suggests no such idea. Not a week passes without some new revelation, some new appraisal of the dead dictator; numerous daily and weekly newspapers are published by his supporters, whose votes have increased by a square root system over the last seven years.

“Certainly Mussolini’s end was squalid enough to freeze the blood.” Squalid for whom? For those who, in the words of the B.B.C., *executed* Mussolini, without a trial, in the name of Italian communism; squalid for those who added to political assassination something yet more monstrous: the assassination of Clara Pattaçı, the Duce’s mistress. (In what civilised country in the world is an unpopular man’s mistress *executed* — without her executioners being brought to trial?) But for Mussolini no more squalid than the deaths which other great men suffered at the hands of the mob. We should not forget that in the Roman world crucifixion was regarded as not only the most painful death, but also the most dishonouring, the most squalid.
NEW BOOKS

“The case, as put by Professor Salemini among others, that Italy would have recovered from the post-1918 chaos without Mussolini is very strong. With some exceptions, he and his cronies were typical condottieri—which is the Italian word for thugs.” Of course, Mr. Coote’s translation from Italian is far-fetched, to say the least; but in this paragraph he also confounds his own case. First, he admits by implication that with Mussolini Italy did recover from the post-1918 chaos: second, he hopefully suggests, with a professor to help him, that this recovery would have been automatic anyway. One may be sceptical here.

This reviewer is no purblind idolater of Mussolini: certain remarks of the late Duce (War is to man, as maternity is to woman) strike him as freezingly rhetorical; certain actions, such as the treatment of North African Arabs and Ethiopians, offend his moral sense as much as Mr. Coote’s. But in politics one is not dealing with cases of conscience; against a background of general folly, cruelty and ignorance, against a backdrop of British as well as German war crimes, of American as well as Communist mistreatment of prisoners, in fact, against the human backdrop in general, one is attempting a balance; and in that balance what Mussolini did for Italy, morally, spiritually, is enormous. Of course, he left behind magnificent stations, noble cities such as Venice and Rome less ruined by the twentieth century than English cities (at the gentle hands of democracy is Regent Street as well preserved as the Lungotevere?) but far more important, he gave back to Italy (the foundation of so much of European culture) pride and a positive sense of belonging to the noble nations. The great Italian contributions to modern art, to the cinema, may often come from anti-Fascists; but one doubts whether the surprising resilience of defeated Italy would have been possible without the school of Fascism.

Perhaps Mr. Coote’s selectest utterance is this: “There is nothing new in Fascism, Nazism or Communism. They are not philosophies. They are abscesses.” There is no point in insulting the reader’s intelligence by countering this, by listing the thinkers from Plato onwards censured by Dr. Popper for having contributed to these philosophies. But the remark itself is worth preserving as what it is possible to find, grandly featured, on the fourth page of the Daily Telegraph.

Of course, Mussolini’s greatest mistake was in backing the wrong side in the war: sic Coote, et alii. But can one judge history in these terms? Mussolini did believe in the ideas for which he struggled and for which he was jeered and shrieked at... a blotched corpse hanging by its heels, like some horrible sawdust doll. He threw Italy into the alliance with Germany: the great attempt to create a European unity. A failure, the unity (due as much to German mistakes as to Russian and American superiority in factory-power); a mis-alliance, the alliance? But then, in her great attempt, England was allied to Russia. And to-day, the
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alliance is a mis-alliance, democratic Europe is split down the middle, peace is less secure than ever, and the four freedoms as much forgotten as the national independence of Poland. In politics, as in life, there are no angels and devils: there are only men, blown upon by different passions, thwarted and botched by different flaws, inspired by different dreams. Mussolini dreamed that a National Socialist Europe, having defeated Communism, could create such prosperity that a European détente would at last be possible. He was as aware as anyone of the excesses in Germany. Would those excesses have outlasted victory? To this question each has his answer. But to those of the allies who have seen the nightmare into which their dream has turned it is more fitting to remain silent, for a century or two, about mistakes, crimes, betrayals. History will judge. Meanwhile, on the more pedestrian level of fitting England into what is left of Europe, it is worth quoting Mr. Coote’s aphorism: “We British are not always so loved as we deserve to be; and there is a small section in many countries whose dislike of us is almost pathological.” But how could anyone dislike a nation of which Mr. Coote is so very, very typical?

D.S.

BACK DOOR TO WAR

Back Door to War, by Charles Callan Tansill, published by Henry Regnery Co., Chicago, $6.50.

THERE HAVE been many rumours seeping out of America that the catastrophe of Pearl Harbour was deliberately provoked by President Roosevelt in order to get his fellow-countrymen “blooded”, as a means of forcing them into a European war against the entrenched opposition of Isolationist opinion. Hitherto such statements have appeared only in somewhat hysterical pamphlets which could be dismissed as emanating from an irresponsible “lunatic fringe”. Now, however, they have received the strongest possible confirmation in a voluminous, carefully annotated, work based upon State Department documents.

Professor Charles Callan Tansill cannot possibly be dismissed as either irresponsible or ‘lunatic’. From 1918 to 1928 he served as technical adviser to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; he has published many books on the history of American diplomacy, and is professor of American Diplomatic History at Georgetown
University, Washington.

Such a man was eminently suited to write the history of the diplomatic manoeuvres which ended in America's entry into the war in 1941; and after considerable resistance the Government archives were opened to his scrutiny. This authoritative book is the result of his researches.

Although it makes fascinating reading, and covers the trends of American diplomacy from Versailles to Pearl Harbour, the highlights, as indicated by the title, are the failure of Roosevelt to find any *casus belli* with Germany which the American people would have regarded as sufficiently grave to justify a declaration of war, and the eventual expedient of provoking the Japanese into an overt attack which would overwhelm Isolationist opposition to entry into the war in Europe.

Strangely, Tansill suggests the President was much more successful in prodding both Britain and France into war over Poland. He comments on the situation in September 1939 as follows:

"From the battered walls of Warsaw there were loud murmurs about broken British promises. When their muted echoes reached London, Neville Chamberlain must have remembered the constant "needling from Washington" in favour of a more resolute stand against Hitler, and Joseph Kennedy must have had reluctant recollections of the many occasions when the President "kept telling him to put some iron up Chamberlain's backside". Germany had been baited into a war with Britain and France when she would have preferred a conflict with Russia over the Ukraine. Chamberlain got plenty of iron up his backside, but it was Nazi hot metal that seared him and all Britain and helped to break into bits a proud Empire that all the King's horses and all the King's men can never put together again."

The American people proved much less easy to involve in this conflict, from which Russia alone could benefit. Despite the President's repeated breaches of international law governing the conduct of neutrals, Hitler could not be provoked into any overt action against American ships or naval vessels, so that eventually Roosevelt had to seek the 'back door to war' by provoking the much more vulnerable Japanese.

By the freezing of Japanese funds in the U.S.A., on 26th July 1941, Japan was effectively deprived of those sources of oil and petrol without which no modern nation can wage war. While her vital reserves of petroleum dwindled in the next few months, Japan strove despairingly to find some compromise with increasingly hostile American demands; but, meanwhile, in accord with her vigorous tradition, made preparations for just such a blow at American naval strength in the Pacific, as had been delivered on Port Arthur in 1905 in the prelude to her highly successful war against Russia.

When the Japanese finally fixed 29th November as the last date
for negotiation of an agreement — 'after that things are going automatically to happen' — Roosevelt's only concern, as late as 25th November, was 'how we should manoeuvre them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much damage to ourselves'.

Yet Roosevelt made little attempt to warn Honolulu of the coming storm. Even when Japanese messages had been intercepted and decoded pinning down the time of the 'first shot' to 7th December, still Pearl Harbour was given no alert. By 9 a.m. (Washington time) on the fatal day Intelligence circles informed the head of the Chiefs of Staff that Japanese instructions meant 'a surprise attack at Pearl Harbour to-day'. Tansill comments:

"He still had plenty of time to contact Honolulu by means of the scrambler telephone on his desk... for some reason he chose to send the alert to Honolulu by R.C.A. and did not even take the precaution to have it stamped 'priority'. As the Army Pearl Harbour Board significantly remarked: 'We find no justification for a failure to send this message by multiple secret means, either through the Navy radio or the F.B.I. radio or the scrambler telephone, or all three'. Was the General under Presidential orders to break military regulations with regard to the transmission of important military information?"

In any case the message arrived hours after the Japanese bombs. The last paragraph of this amazing book is well worth quoting:—

"The President and Harry Hopkins viewed these dread contingencies with amazing equanimity. In the quiet atmosphere of the oval study in the White House, with all incoming telephone calls shut off, the Chief Executive calmly studied his well-filled stamp albums, while Hopkins fondled Fala, the White House scottie. At one o'clock, Death stood in the doorway. The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbour. America had suddenly been thrust into a war she is still fighting."

Nor is the last sentence anachronistic. This book was first published in May 1952 and the war that America was 'still fighting' had reached a new phase in Korea.

A.R.
THE LIFE AND WORK OF SOPHOCLES

The Life and Work of Sophocles, by F. H. J. Letters, Sheed and Ward, 18s.

Very few Greek scholars seem to have read contemporary English poetry till quite recently, with the result that they have approached the ancient poets almost in vacuo. It is not unfair to say that half the value of their criticism was destroyed by their assumption of the universal validity of mid-Victorian morality—a assumption which could make Samuel Butler claim that the Odyssey must have been written by a woman, because of its “purity and sweetness,” or Bowra ignore the implications of an utterly alien and non-puritan religious outlook in his translation as late as 1930.

Mr. Letters avoids this trap remarkably well in the first half of this study of Sophocles, though his background description does read a little like a crib from Pausanias. He coughs rather too apologetically for 1953 when discussing—as he must discuss—the hellenic attitude to homosexuality, and ought to show that he has read Kitto’s Pelican volume before he accepts the obsolete hen-coop theory of the status of respectable Greek women. One doubts whether the practice ever inhibited normal heterosexual love-marriages in Greece or anywhere else; while infant-exposure suggests too high rather than too low a birthrate. Xenophon’s girl-wife is only one aspect of a picture which must include Aristophanes’ Lysistrata to be complete.

The actual biography of this curiously Yeats-like dramatist, whose long life almost exactly covered the period from Marathon to the end of the Peloponnesian Wars, need not detain us. The half-dozen plays, to a brilliantly careful analysis of which Mr. Letters devotes the latter and larger portion of his book, deserve more detailed consideration. In this connection it is pleasant to note the retreat of the Arnold school before a criticism which regards Greek drama more as it would regard a new translation by Arthur Waley of a set of Japanese Nō plays. Indeed, the parallel of alien quality between the two types of drama is well worth indicating.

The most important plays, ignoring the slight if puzzling Philoctetes and the isolated Trachiniae, on the murder of Hercules, are the Oedipus trilogy, the Ajax and the Electra. Here, as with a Nō play, it must be remembered that the issue is
one of the interpretation of a traditional ritual, rather than one of poetic invention. This fact was often forgotten by the nineteenth century, which accounts for its persistent mis-interpretation of character, particularly of Antigone, Creon, the Sophoclean Orestes, and, not surprisingly, the minor roles of Ismene and Chrysothemis.

The key to most of these problems lies in realising that filial piety was the fundamental virtue to a Greek, as it was, until recently, to a Chinese; and in much the same way. Creon’s “cruelty” to Antigone in having her buried alive for defying his edict against giving the last rites to her rebel brother, Polynices, is a case in point. Polynices had died in arms against Creon, his sovereign. In Greek, as in Confucian, morality to afford him burial was to share his crime. Cruelty does not enter the case, for Antigone would have gone painlessly to the electric chair had it existed in archaic Thebes, and Creon would have gone down to history as the “Filially Pious Ruler” of the “Analects”. Victorians always forget that virtues are subdivided into degrees of priority, particularly in a patriarchal society.

It might not be too much to claim that filial piety explains all Greek plays, in one sense or another, although Mr. Letters merely indicates the virtue as a possible solution. Ajax’s insanity and suicide arise from his anger at the award of Hector’s arms to Odysseus: the anger itself is Athene’s instrument of vengeance on him for his impiously unfilial boast to his father Telamon, that he needed none of her aid in battle. Orestes’s callous gaiety, when killing his mother Clytaemnestra, derives from his knowledge that to avenge his father is more virtuous than to spare his mother. The “timorous” counsels of Ismene to Antigone and of Chrysothemis to Electra do not derive from cowardice but from a greater sense of real filial piety (read here “patriotism”) than either of their headstrong and uncalculating protagonists.

Mr. Letters writes with a clarity one would wish to see more often in semi-popular studies of this kind, in spite of a somewhat awkward and cliché-laden introductory style. His book, non-specialist though it is, ought to be useful as a Jowitt-disinfectant on civilised shelves.

MILES KIRK.
A VISIT TO THE SLEEPMASTER

by ANNA KAVAN

WHAT huge fortunes the sleepmasters must be amassing! Everyone knows they are far and away the richest members of a community where the gift of natural sleep has been almost lost. They tell us that ceremonial adjuncts are indispensable when sleep has to be invoked ritualistically, and that such objects are bound to increase and become more elaborate as time goes on. All the same, it's a disturbing reflection that all this paraphernalia has to be bought from one of their sleepmaking emporia. Why is so little known about what goes on in these places? One doesn't like the notion of profiteering: it's unpleasant to think of fortunes being made out of people's misfortunes. In the public interest there should be an investigation—more information should be available on this important topic. Why don't the authorities take control, and, by doing so, put an end to the rumours that they've come to an understanding with the heads of the sleep trade?

And now, having launched a formal appeal in the right quarter, let us put journalism aside and follow the hypothetical case of a certain X, an average client about to enter the emporium he has chosen.

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It is not X's first visit; he won't have reached years of discretion without having to consult a sleepmaster at some stage. So he goes in with his suspicions alerted; with eyes open and wits about
him. From the moment he crosses the threshold, however, both wits and senses are under constant high-powered bombardment by the famous emporium atmosphere that at first is so wonderfully soothing (so it should be, considering that it’s backed by unlimited resources and the most advanced techniques). In less than a minute he’s under the influence, a special kind of amnesia sets in, preventing him from recalling his earlier visits at all clearly. They don’t matter, anyhow; whatever happened before, this time everything will be all right—that is what’s being suggested to him by all he sees and hears, by each breath he draws. Just as in any prosperous store, goods are artfully displayed all around to the best advantage; as he looks, his optimism increases; among all this stuff he can’t fail to find what is necessary for his particular case.

Everybody is most helpful and encouraging; not only the assistants, but the master himself, who comes to advise, and whose advice X is more than willing to take, eagerly accepting each article shown to him, the more complicated the better; such intricate devices must have the desired effect—that’s what he is thinking. The head of the establishment has settled him in a comfortable chair: he has nothing to do but look on, while the assistants dart about, busily finding the various objects their chief indicates. What a decent fellow this sleepmaster is: X can’t help liking him, his manner has precisely the right blend of kindness and authority to inspire trust; he’s genial, yet bluff and outspoken, with no nonsense, no tricks, none of that slippery affectation often called charm. One knows exactly where one is with a man like him. How lucky that X put his case in such excellent hands...

All of a sudden a pause, a silence, rouses him from his dreaming. He looks round, startled, and sees that operations have been suspended. The assistants, no longer busy on his behalf, are bunched together in an idle whispering group. The sleepmaster seems to have lost interest—to have forgotten about him—and is reading a letter he’s brought out of his pocket. Nervous, bewildered, X tries timidly to attract his attention, not knowing what has gone wrong. But the other merely glances over the top of the paper as if he’d never seen him before, and then goes on reading.

To his horror, X realises that somehow or other he has offended the great man. Merciful heavens! what’s to be done now? Hardly knowing what he is saying, he stammers incoherent excuses, apologies for anything, everything, until the sleepmaster stops him abruptly by standing up. “Have it your own way,” he says
A VISIT TO THE SLEEPMASTER

curtly, as if X had been the one to break off negotiations. “Don’t imagine it makes any difference to me.” And he starts stalking off in a huff.

Panic-stricken by this time, X rushes after him, wildly offering to buy everything in sight, begging to be told of still more complicated and expensive apparatus—anything to conciliate the personage on whom his well-being depends. He protests that there must have been a misunderstanding; all he asks is the privilege of being allowed to follow the master’s distinguished advice; of putting himself unreservedly in his hands. Etc., etc.

Taking not the slightest notice of all this, the adamantine director keeps on his way without speaking a word, ignoring the wretched customer who trots along at his heels, sweating and trembling. In haughty silence he strides rapidly from one department to another, till X (debilitated already by lack of sleep) is almost at the point of collapse. At last the master whips round to confront him, when he’s been rendered sufficiently abject and disintegrated to agree to whatever that functionary likes to propose, without daring to protest against the mountain of goods being debited to him.

Now the fun really begins, as X slavishly abases himself before the sleepmaster, much to the amusement of the assistants, who don’t bother to maintain a pretence of politeness, but snigger openly at his humiliation. The final climax arrives with the presentation of the bill. Petrified with horror, X gapes speechlessly at the appalling total. There he stands absolutely aghast in the midst of his tormentors, clutching the paper with shaking and clammy hands. The assistants indulge in the weirdest contortions, clasping themselves, rocking backwards and forwards, almost bursting their sides with laughter at the gasping noises, the grunts and hisses, issuing from his mouth as if he’d never learnt to speak, as he tries to explain that all his earthly possessions won’t pay the colossal sum.

Although he too is laughing so much that he can hardly get the words out, the sleepmaster shouts: “Dirty swindler! trying to get goods out of honest people under false pretences. . . . Pay up, or it will be the worse for you!” Then, still doubled up with mirth, he moves aside, making sure that X can see the man in police uniform who has just come in at the door.

Terrified into finding his voice by this sight, the miserable X begs for mercy, cries that he simply has not got the money, practically
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groveling before the remorseless director, who says: "Well, I'll be lenient with you; you can work off the debt—unless you'd rather work harder in jail." Like a conjurer, he produces a fresh paper from somewhere (of course it's been waiting ready prepared from the start), and, quite unmoved by X's pitiable condition, holds it in front of him, thrusting a pen into his hand, and eventually, since he's too far gone to do it himself, steering his hand to the dotted line with the words: "sign here."

Helpless in his clutches, X allows his fingers to be guided into making a signature. It's done. With a triumphant insulting flick of the wrist, the sleepmaster snatches the fatal paper and carefully pockets it.

Suddenly then, in the midst of this shambles of fear and confusion, X understands that he has been tricked into signing away a lifetime of labour for nothing at all. Never again can he consider his life his own: he is the sleepmaster's slave for ever. He can't even say that at this exorbitant price he has bought what he came for; he can't even shed his ignominious downfall in sleep. His anguish swells with increasing intensity towards bursting point; towards the point where it must break out in violence against the unscrupulous rogue whose pocket contains his fate. But the room whirls around him, he's all confused, laughter crashes thunderously in his ears. And the violence gets lost somewhere, dissolved in anguish, there is only the need to escape from the rocking and roaring room, with all the wreck of his life and sleep shattered and falling about him.

Somebody gives him a push. Somebody else puts his hat on his head, jamming it over his eyes so that he can't see the hands that take turns in shoving him roughly along: he never knows who is responsible for the final thrust that sends him hurtling out into a muddy backstreet behind the building.
LETTERS

THE IRISH QUESTION

To the Editor of The European.
From Mr. Cahir Healy, M.P. for Fermanagh and South Tyrone.

Sir,

The Northern Unionists arbitrarily selected six counties out of the Nation’s thirty-two as the largest area in which they could secure a permanent majority. When the issue of an Irish Republic was put to the electors of all Ireland at a General Election in 1918, eighty per cent voted for a Republic and twenty per cent against. It was the will of the minority which prevailed. No wonder the statesmen of the world smile sceptically when British statesmen at international conferences wax eloquent upon the virtues of democracy.

If your Unionist correspondent takes exception to the description of a “police state” how can he explain the operation of the Public Order Act 1951? Tourists on first entry think they have stepped into a place on the verge of revolution. As they come for enjoyment and rest many get out at the first opportunity. If they go away with the idea that the six counties of Northern Ireland is a police state, do the facts not justify their conclusions?

There are three thousand Royal Ulster Constabulary, together with almost ten thousand “B Special” constables — in all, thirteen thousand armed policemen. Glasgow, with a larger population and many unruly foreign seamen to control, and Birmingham, with a like population to that of Northern Ireland, both manage with less than two thousand unarmed police.

De Valera has made the Northern Government a most generous offer in order to settle the age-old dispute between Ireland and Britain. He says he will leave them their present powers undisturbed for those administrative areas in which they have a majority, provided the powers now reserved to Westminster are transferred to a Parliament of the Irish Nation, in which the North will be over-represented. He is also willing that the British Government should be empowered to see that his undertaking is implemented to the letter. This would secure a united Ireland. The world would welcome the emergence of such a blessed event, after the struggle and the bitterness of the centuries.

Sir Winston Churchill in 1912, when he was less entangled in a party group than he is to-day, said: “Whatever Ulster’s rights
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may be, she cannot stand in the way of the rest of Ireland. Half a province cannot impose a permanent veto on the nation. It cannot obstruct forever the reconciliation between the British and Irish democracies and deny all satisfaction to the united wishes of the British Empire.”

It was the late Auditor-General of the Northern Government who said the late Lord Craigavon made a somewhat similar declaration to him on an occasion before his death.

The friends of your correspondent, Mr. Douglas, know very well they cannot stand forever as a wall fixed between the peoples of Ireland and Britain. All argument to the contrary is as futile as would be an attempt to keep out the filling tide.

Yours, etc.,

CAHIR HEALY.

THE LIVING ROOM

To the Editor, The European.

Sir,

Mr. Gardiner writes so well that it would be infuriating to feel obliged to agree with him on any matter under the sun. But here, in his taut and tentative dissection of Graham Greene’s play, there is no such obligation. Indeed (one feels) the frightful consequence of such agreement would be to plant the seeds of self doubt in Mr. Gardiner’s mind, and to send him in search of either Mr. Greene’s or Mr. Eliot’s God. Mr. Gardiner doth indeed protest too much: here, surely, is a critic who dotes on Prufrock; who weeps in secret for all “adolescents of middle age”; who does not think the mermaids will sing for him! Here (one feels again) is one with a sad and sympathetic understanding of what the French call “la crise de quarante ans”—one with a charming affection for all young girls with “the ineffable in their eyes”... and brisk little pagan bodies!

But this is all guesswork. What is sure is that the main weakness of Mr. Gardiner’s criticism is that he has missed the main weakness—the cloudy issues— of Mr. Greene’s play. He has approached and attacked The Living Room purely upon a psychological level; ignoring the symbolic and expressionist levels upon which the author has chosen to build — jerry build — his play. At some moments the personae of The Living Room are less of characters than puppets: it is important, I think, to know that the strings are there, particularly when—as in this instance—the manipulation
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is at fault. Mr. Greene (pace Mr. Gardiner) is at the mercy not of “a huge undefined abstraction of ‘youth’ and ‘innocence’”; but of the precise perceptions which he has failed to translate into terms of theatrical symbolism. Failed because we never can be sure where the symbolism begins and the realism stops; because the writing is muddled, the production is fussy and superficial, and the acting of the priest and the psychologist is bad even by West End standards.

But two things at least in the play “come off”; and it is significant that when Mr. Greene is successful he is successful on twin levels—the naturalistic and the symbolic are one and the same thing. Mr. Gardiner too hastily dismisses Aunt Teresa and her closet complex: here, I swear, is wit, pathos and a glimpse of genuine old lace. Mr. Gardiner should take a closer look at the inhibitions which so often surround the antimacassar, the seed-cake and the Queen Anne tea-pot. Lavender ladies would no more dream of going to the lavatory than of reading The European. And this inhibition, this “isolated characteristic,” needs no more investigation than Mr. Greene has chosen to make. It is natural in the play, as in life. It is another hurdle for Rose to fall at. Aunt Teresa is sweet; she is sympathetic... is there perhaps a ray of hope for Rose there? Of course not. What use is youth and courage, antiseptic honesty, against a closet complex and a closed mind?

The climactic scene, which “fails to convince” Mr. Gardiner, again convinces me, and again on twin levels. From a psychological viewpoint the girl’s suicide is terrifyingly credible; it also stands as a symbol of—what? oh dear, these abstractions!—betrayed youth; tarnished innocence...? Yes, surely yes: they live, these children; they are at home now in Chislehurst for the summer holidays; they are the lonely, the “deep” ones; they were not allowed to go on the Senior Girls’ trip to Jugoslavia... Rose is a thousand girls; stumbling through adolescence with the Penguin Poets; discovering the shortest drop over the convent wall; learning that the seedy and the second-rate can be lovely... that the pain of grief is the same as the pain of pleasure, and that both touch piercingly to the heart. “You loved her because she was capable of despair,” says the priest to the psychologist, “So did I. Some of us are too small to contain that terrible tide—she wasn’t, and we loved her for that.” And the analogy is not with Chaplin, but with the situation at the end of Mr. Greene’s best novel, The Heart of the Matter. “Mortal Sin”? Only God knows what that is; and none of Mr. Greene’s Catholic priests would presume to tell us.

I have one further criticism of Mr. Gardiner’s review. To extract and isolate odd scraps of dialogue from a play may or may not be a legitimate aid to criticism, but here the ethics of the matter are unimportant: Mr. Gardiner’s selection is fair and typical. But it is wrong of him to fault an author for allowing a second-rate
psychologist to talk like one, and for attributing to a young girl naivety and the trite phrase. I feel sure that Mr. Greene could have made his priest talk like St. Thomas Aquinas (he very nearly did sometimes!), his psychologist talk like Freud, and his young girl talk like a Bloomsbury librarian — had he wished to do so.

But in the penultimate paragraph of his review Mr. Gardiner has written one magnificent and illuminating sentence. "The most serious criticism of all is that this play does not convey any genuine conviction of the religious imperative, any real desire for Grace." This is the truest and most important thing that any London critic has written about the mixed grill sprinkled with holy water which looks like driving both the "Tea for Two" and the "Drinks Time" play out of the commercial theatre. God has come to stay: can "Binkie" and Co. afford to steel their hearts against him?

Yours, etc.

Michael Harald.