

The Myth of the Soul

Is the Belief in Immortality Necessary or Even Desirable?

BY CLARENCE DARROW



THERE is, perhaps, no more striking example of the credulity of man than the wide-spread belief in immortality. This idea includes not only the belief that death is not the end of what we call life, but that personal identity involving memory persists beyond the grave. So determined is the ordinary individual to hold fast to this belief that, as a rule, he refuses to read or to think upon the subject lest it cast doubt upon his cherished dream. Of those who may chance to look at this contribution, many will do so with the determination not to be convinced, and will refuse even to consider the manifold reasons that might weaken their faith. I know that this is true, for I know the reluctance with which I long approached the subject and my firm determination not to give up my hope. Thus the myth will stand in the way of a sensible adjustment to facts.

Even many of those who claim to believe in immortality still tell themselves and others that neither side of the question is susceptible of proof. Just what can these hopeful ones believe that the word "proof" involves? The evidence against the persistence of personal consciousness is as strong as the evidence of gravitation, and much more obvious. It is as convincing and unassailable as the proof of the destruction of wood or coal by fire. If it is not certain that death ends personal identity and memory, then almost nothing that man accepts as true is susceptible of proof.

The beliefs of the race and its individuals are relics of the past. Without careful examination, no one can begin to understand how many of man's cherished opinions have no foundation in fact. The common experience of all men should teach them how easy it is to believe what they wish to accept. Experienced psychologists know perfectly well that if they desire to convince a man of some idea, they must first make him want to believe it. There are so many hopes, so many strong yearnings and desires attached to the doctrine of immortality that it is practically impossible to create in any mind the wish to be mortal. Still, in spite of strong desires, millions of people are filled with doubts and fears that will not down. After all, is it not better to look the question squarely in the face and find out whether we are harboring a delusion?

It is customary to speak of a "belief in immortality." First, then, let us see what is meant by the word "belief." If I take a train in Chicago at noon, bound for New York, I believe I will reach that city the next morning. I believe it because I have been to New York. I have read about the city, I have known many other people who have been there, and their stories are not inconsistent with any known facts in my own experience. I have even examined the time tables and I know just how I will go and how long the trip will take. In other words, when I board the train for New York, I believe I will reach that city because I have reason to believe it.

But if I am told that next week I shall start on a trip to Goofville: that I shall not take my body with me; that I shall stay for all eternity; can I find a single fact connected with my journey—the way I shall go, the time of the journey, the country I shall reach, its location in space, the way I

shall live there—or anything that would lead to a rational belief that I shall really make the trip? Have I ever known anyone who has made the journey and returned? If I am really to believe, I must try to get some information about all these important facts.

But people hesitate to ask questions about life after death. They do not ask, for they know that only silence comes out of the eternal darkness of endless space. If people really believed in a beautiful, happy, glorious land waiting to receive them when they died; if they believed that their friends would be waiting to meet them; if they believed that all pain and suffering would be left behind; why should they live through weeks, months, and even years of pain and torture while a cancer eats its way to the vital parts of the body? Why should one fight off death? Because he does not believe in any real sense; he only hopes. Everyone knows that there is no real evidence of any such state of bliss; so we are told not to search for proof. We are to accept through faith alone. But every thinking person knows that faith can only come through belief. Belief implies a condition of mind that accepts a certain idea. This condition can be brought about only by evidence. True, the evidence may be simply the unsupported statement of your grandmother; it may be wholly insufficient for reasoning men; but, good or bad, it must be enough for the believer or he could not believe.

Upon what evidence, then, are we asked to believe in immortality? There is no evidence. One is told to rely on faith, and no doubt this serves the purpose so long as one can believe blindly whatever he is told. But if there is no evidence upon which to build a positive belief in immortality, let us examine the other side of the question. Perhaps evidence can be found to support a positive conviction that immortality is a delusion.

The belief in immortality expresses itself in two different forms. On the one hand, there is a belief in the immortality of the "soul." This is sometimes interpreted to mean simply that the identity, the consciousness, the memory of the individual persists after death. On the other hand, many religious creeds formulated a belief in "the resurrection of the body"—which is something else again. It will be necessary to examine both forms of this belief in turn.

The idea of continued life after death is very old. It doubtless had its roots back in the childhood of the race. In view of the limited knowledge of primitive man, it was not unreasonable. His dead friends and relatives visited him in dreams and visions and were present in his feeling and imagination until they were forgotten. Therefore the lifeless body did not raise the question of dissolution, but rather of duality. It was thought that man was a dual being possessing a body and a soul as separate entities, and that when a man died, his soul was released from his body to continue its life apart. Consequently, food and drink were placed upon the graves of the dead to be used in the long journey into the unknown. In modified forms, this belief in the duality of man persists to the present day. But primitive man had no conception of life as having a beginning and an end. In this he was like the rest of the animals. Today, everyone of ordinary intelligence knows how life begins, and to examine the beginnings of life leads to inevitable

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ARE RELIGIONISTS HUMBLE?

BY GRACE ADAMS

DURING the past year the *Forum*, in accordance with its custom of encouraging its readers to take an active part in its discussions, offered a prize for the best definition of the Scientific Attitude. Many definitions were received and printed. In the editorial discussion of them and in some of the definitions themselves the antipathy between the assumptions of science and the assumptions of religion were noted and described in general terms. But one fundamental and very simple difference between the two points of view was not stressed.

Usually, in defining anything as intangible as an attitude, more or less vague generalities have to be resorted to. Yet in the case of the scientific attitude history fortunately offers, in the form of its first appearance, a very concrete example of its nature. Most attitudes, like most of the other mental traits, develop so slowly and ripen so gradually that, by the time anyone thinks to define them, they are so ingrained and natural it is difficult to separate them from similar mental traits and describe them succinctly. The scientific attitude, however, burst upon the world so suddenly in the sixteenth century and stood out so sharply against the prevailing theological attitude of the time and the mystical notions of all preceding ages that we can actually witness its birth in the theory of one man. The man was, of course, Copernicus and the theory that of heliocentricity.

This first of all scientific theories came into existence at the precise time that it did, not because any amazingly new facts were discovered then, but because Copernicus happened to be the first human being who was able to adopt a scientific point of view when thinking about the universe. The difference between his way of thinking and that of his pious colleagues, while certainly most extraordinary, was at the same time very simple and intelligible. All of the devout Christians of his day had the same good opinions of themselves that all the devout Christians since his day and all the devout Mohammedans and Buddhists and New Thinkers and Theosophists and Ethical Culturists of any day have had and still have of themselves. They might publicly and with much gnashing of teeth describe themselves to their Lord as unworthy and miserable sinners, but secretly they were perfectly sure that this same Lord knew just how fine and worthy they really were. And they were equally certain that He had invented the earth and everything on it and the heavens and everything in them just so those that worshiped with the proper ceremony could have a fairly decent temporary and a very elegant, permanent abode. Their only kick came from their opinion that their present home was not always quite satisfactory. Sometimes the sun shone too brightly and they became uncomfortably warm. At other times it rained too hard and they got disagreeably wet. But these inconveniences, they were convinced, were also meant entirely for them; so they concocted the "miserable sinner" gag to account for them.

When they noticed the stars in the sky but could think of no

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The Myth of the Soul

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conclusions about the way life ends. If man has a soul, it must creep in somewhere during the period of gestation and growth.

All the higher forms of animal life grow from a single cell. Before the individual life can begin its development, it must be fertilized by union with another cell; then the cell divides and multiplies until it takes the form and pattern of its kind. At a certain regular time the being emerges into the world. During its term of life millions of cells in its body are born, die, and are replaced until, through age, disease, or some catastrophe, the cells fall apart and the individual life is ended.

It is obvious that but for the fertilization of the cell under right conditions, the being would not have lived. It is idle to say that the initial cell has a soul. In one sense it has life; but even that is precarious and depends for its continued life upon union with another cell of the proper kind. The human mother is the bearer of probably ten thousand of one kind of cell, and the human father of countless billions of the other kind. Only a very small fraction of these result in human life. If the unfertilized cells of the female and the unused cells of the male are human beings possessed of souls, then the population of the world is infinitely greater than has ever been dreamed. Of course no such idea as belief in the immortality of the germ cells would satisfy the yearnings of the individual for a survival of life after death.

If that which is called a "soul" is a separate entity apart from the body, when, then, and where and how was this soul placed in the human structure? The individual began with the union of two cells, neither of which had a soul. How could these two soulless cells produce a soul? I must leave this search to the metaphysicians. When they have found the answer, I hope they will tell me, for I should really like to know.

We know that a baby may live and fully develop in its mother's womb and then, through some shock at birth, may be born without life. In the past, these babies were promptly buried. But now we know that in many such cases, where the bodily structure is complete, the machine may be set to work by artificial respiration or electricity. Then it will run like any other human body through its allotted term of years. We also know that in many cases of drowning, or when some mishap virtually destroys life without hopelessly impairing the body, artificial means may set it in motion once more, so that it will complete its term of existence until the final catastrophe comes. Are we to believe that somewhere around the stillborn child and somewhere in the vicinity of the drowned man there hovers a detached soul waiting to be summoned back into the body by a pulmotor? This, too, must be left to the metaphysicians.

The beginnings of life yield no evidence of the beginnings of a soul. It is idle to say that the something in the human being which we call "life" is the soul itself, for the soul is generally taken to distinguish human beings from other forms of life. There is life in all animals and plants, and at least potential life in inorganic matter. This potential life is simply unreleased force and matter—the great storehouse from which all forms of life emerge and are constantly replenished. It is impossible to draw the line between inorganic matter and the simpler forms of plant life, and equally impossible to draw the line between plant life and animal life, or between other forms of animal life and what we human beings are pleased to call the highest form. If the thing which we call "life" is itself the soul, then cows have souls; and, in the very nature of things, we must allow souls to all forms of life and to inorganic matter as well.

Life itself is something very real, as distinguished from the soul. Every man knows that his life had a beginning. Can one imagine an organism that has a beginning and no end? If I did not exist in the infinite past, why should I, or could I, exist in the infinite future? "But," say some, "your consciousness, your memory may exist even after you are dead. This is what we mean by the soul." Let us examine this point a little.

I have no remembrance of the months that I lay in my mother's womb. I cannot recall the day of my birth nor the time when I first opened my eyes to the light of the sun. I cannot remember when I was an infant, or when I began to creep on the floor, or when I was taught to walk, or anything before I was five or six years old. Still, all of these events were important, wonderful, and strange in a new life. What I call my "consciousness," developed with my growth and the crowding experiences I met at every turn. I have a hazy recollection of the burial of a boy soldier who was shot toward the end of the Civil War. He was buried near the schoolhouse when I was seven years old. But I have no remembrance of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, although I must then have been eight years old. I must have known about it at the time, for my family and my community idolized Lincoln, and all America was in mourning at his death. Why do I remember the dead boy soldier who was buried a year before? Perhaps because I knew him well. Perhaps because

his family was close to my childish life. Possibly because it came to me as my first knowledge of death. At all events, it made so deep an impression that I recall it now.

"Ah, yes," say the believers in the soul, "what you say confirms our own belief. You certainly existed when these early experiences took place. You were conscious of them at the time, even though you are not aware of it now. In the same way, may not your consciousness persist after you die, even though you are not now aware of the fact?"

On the contrary, my fading memory of the events that filled the early years of my life leads me to the opposite conclusion. So far as these incidents are concerned, the mind and consciousness of the boy are already dead. Even now, am I fully alive? I am seventy-one years old. I often fail to recollect the names of some of those I knew full well. Many events do not make the lasting impression that they once did. I know that it will be only a few years, even if my body still survives decay, when few important matters will even register in my mind. I know how it is with the old. I know that physical life can persist beyond the time when the mind can fully function. I know that if I live to an extreme old age, my mind will fail. I shall eat and drink and go to my bed in an automatic way. Memory—which is all that binds me to the past—will already be dead. All that will remain will be a vegetative existence; I shall sit and doze in the chimney corner, and my body will function in a measure even though the ego will already be practically dead. I am sure that if I die of what is called "old age," my consciousness will gradually slip away with my fading emotions! I shall no more be aware of the near approach of final dissolution than is the dying tree.

In primitive times, before men knew anything about the human body or the universe of which it is a part, it was not unreasonable to believe in spirits, ghosts, and the duality of man. For one thing, celestial geography was much simpler then. Just above the earth was a firmament in which the stars were set, and above the firmament was heaven. The place was easy of access and in dreams the angels were seen going up and coming down on a ladder. But now we have a slightly more adequate conception of space and the infinite universe of which we are so small a part. Our great telescopes reveal countless worlds and planetary systems which make our own sink into utter insignificance in comparison. We have every reason to think that beyond our sight there is endless space filled with still more planets, so infinite in size and number that no brain has the smallest conception of their extent. Is there any reason to think that in this universe, with its myriads of worlds, there is no other life so important as our own? Is it possible that the inhabitants of the earth have been singled out for special favor and endowed with souls and immortal life? Is it at all reasonable to suppose that any special account is taken of the human atoms that forever come and go upon this planet?

If man has a soul that persists after death, that goes to a heaven of the blessed or to a hell of the damned, where are these places? It is not so easily imagined as it once was. How does the soul make its journey? What does immortal man find when he gets there, and how will he live after he reaches the end of endless space? We know that the atmosphere will be absent; that there will be no light, no heat—only the infinite reaches of darkness and frigidity. In view of modern knowledge, can anyone really believe in the persistence of individual life and memory?

There are those who base their hope of a future life upon the resurrection of the body. This is a purely religious doctrine. It is safe to say that few intelligent men who are willing to look obvious facts in the face hold any such belief. Yet we are seriously told that Elijah was carried bodily to heaven in a chariot of fire, and that Jesus arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. The New Testament abounds in passages that support this doctrine. St. Paul states the tenet over and over again. In the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians he says: "If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? . . . And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain. . . . For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised." The Apostles' Creed says: "I believe in the resurrection of the body." This has been carried into substantially all the orthodox creeds; and while it is more or less minimized by neglect and omission, it is still a cardinal doctrine of the orthodox churches.

Two thousand years ago, in Palestine, little was known of man, of the earth, or of the universe. It was then currently believed that the earth was only four thousand years old, that life had begun anew after the deluge about two thousand years before, and that the entire earth was soon to be destroyed. Today it is fairly well established that man has been upon the earth for a million years. During that long stretch of time the world has changed many times; it is changing every moment. At least three or four ice ages have swept across continents, driving death before them, carrying human beings into the sea or burying them deep in the earth. Animals have fed on man and on each other. Every dead body, no matter whether consumed by fire or buried in the earth, has been re-

solved into its elements, so that the matter and energy that once formed human beings has fed animals and plants and other men. As the great naturalist, Fabre, has said: "At the banquet of life each is in turn a guest and a dish." Thus the body of every man now living is in part made from the bodies of those who have been dead for ages.

Yet we are still asked to believe in the resurrection of the body. By what alchemy, then, are the individual bodies that have successively fed the generations of men to be separated and restored to their former identities? And if I am to be resurrected, what particular I shall be called from the grave, from the animals and plants and the bodies of other men who shall inherit this body I now call my own? My body has been made over and over, piece by piece, as the days went by, and will continue to be so made until the end. It has changed so slowly that each new cell is fitted into the living part, and will go on changing until the final crisis comes. Is it the child in the mother's womb or the tottering frame of the old man that shall be brought back? The mere thought of such a resurrection beggars reason, ignores facts, and enthrones blind faith, wild dreams, hopeless hopes, and cowardly fears as sovereigns of the human mind.

Some of those who profess to believe in the immortality of man—whether it be of his soul or his body—have drawn what comfort they could from the modern scientific doctrine of the indestructibility of matter and force. This doctrine, they say, only confirms in scientific language what they have always believed. This, however, is pure sophistry. It is probably true that no matter or force has ever been or ever can be destroyed. But it is likewise true that there is no connection whatever between the notion that personal consciousness and memory persist after death and the scientific theory that matter and force are indestructible. For the scientific theory carries with it a corollary, that the forms of matter and energy are constantly changing through an endless cycle of new combinations. Of what possible use would it be, then, to have a consciousness that was immortal, but which, from the moment of death, was dispersed into new combinations, so that no two parts of the original identity could ever be reunited again?

These natural processes of change, which in the human being take the forms of growth, disease, senility, death, and decay, are essentially the same as the processes by which a lump of coal is disintegrated in burning. One may watch the lump of coal burning in the grate until nothing but ashes remains. Part of the coal goes up the chimney in the form of smoke; part of it radiates through the house as heat; the residue lies in the ashes on the hearth. So it is with human life. In all forms of life nature is engaged in combining, breaking down, and recombining her store of energy and matter into new forms. The thing we call "life" is nothing other than a state of equilibrium which endures for a short span of years between the two opposing tendencies of nature—the one that builds up, and the one that tears down. In old age, the tearing-down process has already gained the ascendancy, and when death intervenes, the equilibrium is finally upset by the complete stoppage of the building-up process, so that nothing remains but complete disintegration. The energy thus released may be converted into grass or trees or animal life; or it may lie dormant until caught up again in the crucible of nature's laboratory. But whatever happens, the man—the You and the I—like the lump of coal that has been burned, is gone—irrevocably dispersed. All the King's horses and all the King's men cannot restore it to its former unity.

ARE RELIGIONISTS HUMBLE?

(Continued from Page one)

way in which they could affect them materially, they decided that their influence must be somewhat spiritual. So they invented astrology. As soon as a new star was discovered they invented a role for it to play in shaping the destinies of men. The earth, naturally, had to be the center of their astrological system, for men, unless they had already gone to Heaven, dwelt only on the earth. If any facts seemed to show that the earth was not the center of the universe, the pious ones characteristically ignored these facts.

Now Copernicus for some inexplicable and contrary reason was unable to believe that men, or more explicitly Christians, were quite as important as they thought themselves to be. He could not see why an all-powerful Deity should go to so much trouble to create an entire universe just to please the kind of people he saw around him at Padua. So gradually he began to wonder if the planet on which these stupid little people happened to live was necessarily the center of this whole universe. After he had wondered for a while he became sure that it was not. When he remembered the astronomical facts which the astrologers had persistently ignored because no human influence could be assigned to them, he realized that these facts had always indicated that the sun, not the earth, must be the center about which all the planets revolved. Thus the heliocentric theory—the first scientific system—and all the subsequent history of science and all the correlated controversies which science has stirred up began with one man's inability to believe that any one group of people could be so all-important to God Almighty. The pious ones must have been very irritated when their God let Copernicus die a natural death before they had time to kill him.

This fundamental distinction between the religious and the irreligious exists just as surely today as it did during the Inquisition. There are, of course, many more infidels now and they are not all astronomers or even scientists but are also known as skeptics and agnostics and atheists. And there are many believers who accept the Copernican theory or the Darwinian theory, or any other theory that the state legislature allows them to accept, as unquestioningly and with as little intelligent understanding as they do the diversified rituals and dogmas and creeds of their own peculiar denominations. So when we talk about the theoretical assumptions of science and the theoretical assumption of religion we cannot be quite certain about what we are talking, for assumptions remain no more than assumptions and nobody bothers about them very much. They mean very little to anybody—even to the great minds that invented them. But

The idea that man is a being set apart, distinct from all the rest of nature, is born of man's emotions, of his loves and hates, of his hopes and fears, and of the primitive conceptions of undeveloped minds. The You or the I which is known to our friends does not consist of an immaterial something called a "soul" which cannot be conceived. We know perfectly well what we mean when we talk about this You and this Me; and it is equally plain that the whole fabric that makes up our separate personalities is destroyed, dispersed, disintegrated beyond repair by what we call "death."

Those who refuse to give up the idea of immortality declare that nature never creates a desire without providing the means for its satisfaction. They likewise insist that all people, from the rudest to the most civilized, yearn for another life. As a matter of fact, nature creates many desires which she does not satisfy; most of the wishes of men meet no fruition. But nature does not create any emotion demanding a future life. The only yearning which the individual has is to keep on living—which is a very different thing. This urge is found in every animal, in every plant. It is simply the momentum of a living structure; or, as Schopenhauer put it, "the will to live." What we long for is a continuation of our present state of existence, not an uncertain re-embodiment in a mysterious world of which we know nothing.

All men recognize the hopelessness of finding any evidence that the individual will persist beyond the grave. As a last resort, we are told that it is better that the doctrine be believed even if it is not true. We are assured that without this faith, life is only desolation and despair. However that may be, it remains that many of the conclusions of logic are not pleasant to contemplate; still, so long as men think and feel, at least some of them will use their faculties as best they can. For if we are to believe things that are not true, who is to write our creed? Is it safe to leave it to any man or organization to pick out the errors that we must accept? The whole history of the world has answered this question in a way that cannot be mistaken.

And after all, is the belief in immortality necessary or even desirable for man? Millions of men and women have no such faith; they go on with their daily tasks and feel joy and sorrow without the lure of immortal life. The things that really affect the happiness of the individual are the matters of daily living. They are the companionship of friends, the games and contemplations. They are misunderstandings and cruel judgments, false friends and debts, poverty and disease. They are our joys in our living companions and our sorrows over those who die. Whatever our faith, we mainly live in the present—in the here and now. Those who hold the view that man is mortal are never troubled by metaphysical problems. At the end of the day's labor we are glad to lose our consciousness in sleep; and intellectually, at least, we look forward to the long rest from the stresses and storms that are always incidental to existence.

When we fully understand the brevity of life, its fleeting joys and unavoidable pains; when we accept the facts that all men and women are approaching an inevitable doom; the consciousness of it should make us more kindly and considerate of each other. This feeling should make men and women use their best efforts to help their fellow travelers on the road, to make the path brighter and easier as we journey on. It should bring a closer kinship, a better understanding, and a deeper sympathy for the wayfarers who must live a common life and die a common death.

Resents The Argonaut's Blind Assault

Editor, Haldeman-Julius Weekly:
You are much to be congratulated on the production of your "Little Blue Books" despite the hostile opposition by the Argonaut. The sanity of the Argonaut staff critics is somewhat to be doubted, but, possibly, the error of their way may be attributed to a general lack of sociologic and economic knowledge and a downright want of business acumen. It might be an appropriate and charitable act on your part to send them a few of the aforesaid books so that those who have criticized your publications might lay the proper foundation for a just critical knowledge before venturing into an unknown and unfamiliar field.

The alteration of book-titles may be a bit misleading but it certainly is not reprehensible practice for it has decided advantages from a purely business standpoint. Warped minds and a want of logic only could disapprove of such action. It is admitted that some of your titles are more descriptive than the original ones and even if suggestive in some instances they are calculated to arouse interest and to procure sales. They are not calculated to deceive for there can be no deception where real value lies back of the books advertised.

The changing of the titles of classics has led to larger sales volume and has interested thousands of additional readers. Does the learned Argonaut doubt the advisability of spreading education? Would it stifle the resulting increase in the taste for good literature? Will it advocate the suppression of biological information? No reasonable objection can be taken to your method of selling in view of the fact that it results in an increase in the number of readers of good literature. The result here justifies the method.

No other publishing firm has rendered it possible for the public to procure good literature at a price within the means of all, wherefore, your actions merit praise, not condemnation. Might we infer from the facts that jealousy of a successful business enterprise rankles in the breasts of the managerial staff of the Argonaut?

I doubt whether the ethical Argonaut would find fault with the expurgated editions of Boccaccio, Rabelais, Casanova, Petronius and such literary gems. The deletions from them have been made possible by colossal ignorance, yet the Argonaut has not voiced its protest against such practice. Perhaps the reason is that they are too busy reading them in the secluded chambers of their own homes and enjoying the erotic impulses created in their own distorted minds. Submission to psychoanalysis might betray a smouldering hatred against the Argonaut who have attacked your publications with invective and vituperation, and that neurosis is born of envy, for, after all, the censors are competitors in your field.

I must admit to having read many of your "Little Blue Books." Now, I am described as one of those "near-literate" and "semi-wretches" by the Argonaut, but, let me add, so are those who wrote and published the criticisms for they could neither criticize nor judge had they not read the books themselves. Therefore, the only real objection any reader of your books can have is to be placed in the same class with such intolerant and arrant bigots. —Wayne Mortimer Collins, Attorney-at-Law, San Francisco, Calif.

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when we get down to practical human ways of thinking, the religionist still believes that the universe was created especially for themselves and that the earth, in particular, belongs to them. They feel that it is their prerogative and their duty to control it and everybody on it. While the non-religionists realize that no one man, no group of men, not even the whole race of men, is of any great importance in the universe. Thus we find an explanation for the paradoxical fact that the scientists, the skeptics and the atheists, who are denounced as materialistic cynics, are as a class tolerant men who let their neighbors live as they want to live; while the religionists, for all their pious slobbering about humility and charity and brotherly love, are as a class bigoted and intolerant tyrants.

The godly ones still feel sure that the earth is really theirs and they still take from the world whatever they want. They build their churches on the most valuable land in a city, expect and exact this city's protection; yet they never feel they owe the city one cent in taxes. If they can perch their church on the top of a towering hotel or a skyscraper office building and thus swindle the city out of the taxes for the whole structure, they believe that they are getting only a small part of the material blessings their lowly Savior intended them to have. Ministers expect free tuition at schools and colleges for their families of children, yet they must always be adequately paid for spreading the Word of the humble Christ.

If, in getting all the material possessions and earthly powers they think they are entitled to, the religious ones can make the irreligious uncomfortable, so much the better. Then they have even stronger proof of their cosmic superiority. In America their prohibition laws are a great aid to this superiority. But they become exceedingly grateful if anyone else tries to adopt their own tactics. Dr. John Roach Straton, for instance, can send through the mails any amount of literature informing Mr. Charles Smith that unless he quickly professes to a belief in a certain creed and gets himself ducked into cold water in a certain manner his soul is forever damned—which is certainly not very complimentary to Mr. Smith's character. Yet when Mr. Smith sends Dr. Straton a few harmless jokes, Dr. Straton complains that his sensibilities have been injured and straightway has Mr. Smith hailed to court. Similarly, when Mr. Smith goes to Arkansas and argues against a legislative bill much less vigorously than the pious ones are arguing for it, he is again clapped into jail.

It is rather rare, however, for the impious to use the methods of the pious. Intolerance is in its very nature militaristic, while tolerance is peace loving. So the strange paradox continues. The "materialistic cynics" appear as meek lambs beside the fierce lions roaring about humility and brotherly love.

IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS

BY ISAAC GOLDBERG

SOMETIMES I wonder whether people read what is printed or what they wish to see printed. Here is a letter, thirteen pages long, in which a Texan gentleman begins as follows: "Dear Sir: I have read with much interest in the Haldeman-Julius Monthly your article on Irving Berlin as a composer of music. If you are an intelligent musician you could not call him a composer at all; only a weak faker."

And more to the same purpose, in which certain incoherent accusations are made. These, for the fun of it, I am investigating; for plagiarism in music is very difficult to prove, and it is one of the most common of accusations.

Now, in the first place, the gentleman did not read the article to which he refers in the Haldeman-Julius Monthly; he read it in a monthly owned by Haldeman-Julius and now called, as it was already called in October, 1928, "The Debunker." So much for minor matters.

In the second place, I begin the second paragraph of the article referred to by saying, plainly, "Berlin is not so much a composer as an assembler."

Off hand, I see that he needs to be a plagiarist. In common with most of the Tin-Pan-Alleyites he helps himself liberally to melodic slices from songs that the people know; it makes his own tunes pleasantly reminiscent and easy to remember. That is good business, if bad as art. Besides, to give the devil his due, Berlin has a natural vein of tunefulness.

So, I shall reserve comment about stolen violin cases and theme books; about affidavits presented to father-in-law Mackay; about the explosion of righteous wrath that is about to stun Berlin with its high-power detonation. All things are possible, as Leo Shestov—have you ever heard of that brilliant Russian?—once wrote. But, happily, not all things are probable.

ON WRITING ABOUT WRITING

I have had occasion, of late, to read through a number of literary histories. The languages involved were French, German, Yiddish, Spanish and English. I was bored, but I persisted because I was in search, after all, of information; and we must take our information where we can find it. So I dug and blasted, I cursed and dynamited, and rose at last, on the seventh day—for I had allowed myself not even the traditional one day off in seven—and found that the world was not good. And suddenly it struck me: what an impertinence it is, for men and women to write histories of literature when they can't write decently themselves. If a man wants to make a list of books, let him go to it. If he wants to print a digest of their contents, why that too is all to the good. But if he wants to make a thing that he calls a History of Literature, then let him show by his own writing that he is capable of appreciating and evaluating the writings of others. If his own work shows that he has no feeling for words, no ear for verbal rhythms and the music of language, no sense of construction, no intuition for beauty, then what in thunder is he doing in that galaxy?

Books are living things, or they are nothing. I speak, of course, chiefly of belles lettres. Life shapes them and, when they are truly written, they may help to shape life in turn. Please do not think that I mean, by beautiful writing, that curse of bookmen which consists in stringing a glitter of adjectives upon a tenuous line of ill-balanced emotionalism. I mean writing that finds its way to the heart of things, and then finds its way back; unafraid writing that catches hue and tint from the glare of reality.

I realize, and none more than I realize, that literary history must be history as well as literature. But is history an excuse for dullness? I have had, in the past few weeks, to read so many dates that meant nothing, so many titles that expressed nothing, so many lists of names and works that added up to nothing, that I seemed to be walking through a morgue. Everything was here: the shape of life, the size, the inert substance—everything but life itself.

It is altogether too bad that the province seems to be ruled over by men who have no vital interest in the matter at all. Rather a dozen questionable dates than a perfection of the calendar and mortal boredom in the text. Better still, technical as well as artistic perfection. It is much to ask for, but here, as elsewhere, to get little one must ask for much. A Darwin, a Huxley, could make science read with fascination; they could be at once precise and, in the finer sense, entertaining. I should like to sentence my crew to seven years servitude under such expository masters as these.

Ah, well. Let all the brethren now join me in the chorus of "My Blue Monday."

WRITE YOUR OWN MORAL

A few years ago two men stood arguing in a library. One was defending with passion the sanctity of the home; the other was rather calmly defending sexual freedom. He could not see that the new morality would break up the home; he thought, in fact, that it would bring a tonic honesty into a phase of life that cried to heaven for ventilation. He listened with amusement as he was called a Socialist, an Anarchist, a Free Lover, a Home-Wrecker (this, in his own home, which he has built at a sacrifice of many luxuries; built in a metaphorical, rather than a landlord, sense). Had you seen the man part that evening, you would have imagined that the exponent of orthodoxy repaired at once to the synagogue, and that the exponent of untrammelled sex went off to rape a few virgins. What really happened?

The defender of orthodox morality was lately discovered to have raped a number of virgins; he was discovered to be an international bigamist; at the very time of the argument he was the father of several children born of different women, out of wedlock; shortly thereafter he was to make unauthorized use of the name of the man with whom he was arguing. As yet, he has not been brought to justice because his conviction would mean dragging certain innocent men and women into a very unwelcome publicity.

How do I know all this? I was the man with whom he was arguing. Does it prove anything? Anything you will, except that all orthodox persons are necessarily like this malodorous—and, I believe, slightly psychopathic—fellow. And there you are, as Roxy says.

Tom Mooney—The American Dreyfus

By Miriam Allen deFord

"But," says Tom Mooney with a wry smile, "they really oughtn't to call me that, for Dreyfus served only four years on Devil's Island, and I've been in prison twelve years in all for a crime I didn't commit—two years in the San Francisco county jail and ten years here in San Quentin."

The Mooney who comes out in his waiter's white duck coat and seats himself on the prisoners' side of the long U-shaped table with its central ridge that fills the "reception room" at San Quentin, is a very different man in both appearance and temperament from the upstanding, pugnacious young Irishman who was seized upon as a victim after the Preparedness Day explosion in San Francisco in 1916. He is thin now, and a trifle bent, and looks far older than a man should in his early forties. His color, however, is better than one would expect after seeing a recent photograph of him.

"That was a good picture of me when it was taken," he remarks. "I was pretty sick then. I still have neuritis sometimes, but on the whole I'm feeling better."

But the most marked change from 1916 is in his personality. Tom Mooney has not developed a martyr complex; he looks on himself simply as a soldier in a long war, temporarily disabled but ready at any time to go on with the fight. Only, what he has undergone has softened and mellowed him; instead of being embittered by his experience, he is less bitter, more kindly, more tolerant, and more appreciative than he was in the old days. Even the scandalous interference of the California Federation of Labor officials he passes over with an understanding smile. Not that he has lost an atom of forthrightness and aggressiveness. He lays plans for his new campaign for release like a general; others will have to do the work on the outside, but there is no doubt whose brain will direct their operations.

Limited to writing one letter a day, Mooney has patiently collected and distributed a mass of

documents bearing on his case. In the huge file of manuscripts are appeals to the present and former governors of California from Woodrow Wilson; Franklin A. Griffin, the trial judge who sentenced him to hang; every living member of the jury; Duncan Matheson, captain of detectives of San Francisco, and the most hard-boiled police officer imaginable (he believes in whipping-posts for prisoners and defends the third degree); the late Charles Goff, in 1916 Captain of Police of San Francisco; William V. McNevin, foreman of the jury; James P. Brennan, one of the prosecuting attorneys; Mathew Brady, the district attorney; David Starr Jordan; William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor under President Wilson; Clarence Darrow; John Haynes Holmes; Stephen S. Wise; Claude G. Bowers; H. L. Mencken; Victor L. Berger; Fremont Older; President William Green of the A. F. of L.; Edward L. Parsons, Episcopal Bishop of California; Arthur Garfield Hays; and innumerable labor leaders and union officials.

Judge Griffin, McNevin, and Fremont Older, together with representatives of the Scripps-Howard paper in San Francisco, recently accompanied Frank P. Walsh on an official embassy to Gov. C. C. Young. They made the strongest possible representations to him, offering (what every informed person has long known) unimpeachable evidence of the perjury of the chief witnesses, F. C. Oxman, John McDonald, and the Edeau women, and of the conspiracy of Charles Fickert, then district attorney. The only result was to elicit a promise from the governor for further considerations of the case, coupled with a threat that he would not be influenced by "drives" or appeals. Governor Young has already had all the papers in the case for eighteen months, and it is quite obvious that he is in no hurry to pardon Mooney. To Judge Griffin's direct statement that he now realized he had sentenced an innocent man, the governor merely stated that he was in San Francisco on Preparedness Day in 1916 (he is a former Berkeley educator), and that though he was "not satisfied" with some aspects

of the trials arising from it, he yet was not convinced of Mooney's innocence! He has since written to the judge, however, in a more ameliorative strain.

Mooney's refusal to accept parole, which has been practically (though not officially) tendered to him by the governor, has caused misunderstanding among many of his friends. And yet it is the only consistent attitude he could take. To apply for parole a man must virtually admit his guilt, and promise no repetition of criminality while he is out of prison. Such a statement would be a nullification of Mooney's whole position. As an innocent man, falsely imprisoned, the acceptance of a full pardon for a crime of which he was not guilty is the utmost concession he can make. For years he fought vainly for a new trial or nothing; when he became convinced that this was legally impossible, since it would place him in jeopardy of his life twice on the same charge, he consented to accept a pardon. But he will die in San Quentin before he will ask for a parole. This stand the governor either cannot or will not understand, as all his utterances on the point bear evidence.

The situation in regard to Warren Billings is even more complicated. Since Billings had previously been convicted in another labor case, he is serving his sentence at Folsom, the state prison for recidivists. According to California law, a man twice convicted of a felony (whether falsely or not) cannot be pardoned by the governor except on recommendation of a majority of the judges of the State Supreme Court. If it is so difficult to persuade the governor to pardon Mooney, one may imagine the further difficulty of securing the judges' approval. The first job on hand is to free Mooney; his pardon would provide a basis for the appeal for Billings, and would besides free him to work for Billings himself on the outside. It may confidently be asserted that Mooney has not forgotten or neglected Billings; everything he plans has the welfare of his younger fellow-victim in mind.

One of the most interesting of the "exhibits" in this latest compilation of evidence on Mooney's

behalf is the long affidavit of Alfred H. Spink, a former newspaper man resident in Oakland in 1916. The information contained in it Mr. Spink withheld until the death of his wife in 1927, since she was afraid of becoming involved in the case. Mr. Spink is now seventy-five years old, and lives in Oak Park, Ill. In his affidavit he tells of his acquaintance in Oakland with an alleged and confessed German spy named Powell Mertz. This Mertz warned Spink and his wife not to go to San Francisco on Preparedness Day to see the parade, because "something awful was going to happen." Although such a statement is, of course, far from conclusive in itself, it adds weight of a new character to the evidence of Mooney's innocence.

He himself says: "I can prove my case on three things alone—the Oxman perjury, the Denmore dictograph disclosures, and the photograph of Rena and myself on the roof of the Eilers building, two minutes before the explosion."

The Eilers building, now torn down, was more than two miles from Steuart Street, a block from the Ferry building, where the ex-

pllosion occurred. A clock contained in the picture, which showed the time, was constantly re-photographed by detectives until the hands ceased to be visible.

"You say that Governor Young has had your case under advisement for eighteen months," one remarks to Mooney, "and that he requires 'several more months' before he will render a decision. What are you going to do if he decides against you, as at present it is most probable that he will do?"

Mooney smiles—a smile with no touch of conscious pathos in it, but infinitely moving for all that.

"Why," he answers, "the governor's term will expire in January, 1931. We'll just get to work on the next governor. It needs a lot of money to keep on fighting for so long, but Clarence Darrow has promised to help me raise it, and we'll just keep working away until some governor—this one or another—realizes that I'm innocent and pardons me."

"You see," he adds quietly, "I'm not impatient. Two years more doesn't mean much to me—I've been in prison so long."

MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY IN MODERN LAW

BY FRANK SWANCARA

I. BEQUESTS OF "INFIDELS" AND THE LAW OF CHARITABLE TRUSTS

THERE are various branches of the law which show the influence of medieval theology. Naturally so, because the law was made by those who adhered to such theology. Lawmakers and judges, sharing in the prevailing beliefs, sought to prohibit or prevent the doing of any act or the expression of any opinion which would tend to produce a doubt regarding the truth of the fundamentals of such theology. The judge-made law concerning that common law crime of blasphemy originated in that way. Closely allied to the law making certain acts constitute the crime of blasphemy is a point in the law of charitable trusts, and since this point possesses a general as well as a technical interest, and is a curiosity of the law not observed by writers on legal topics, it will be dwelt upon in this article.

Assuming the possibility that any Atheist or Agnostic may have any money or other property to dispose of by will, it is proposed here to consider what he may do, successfully, by means of establishing by will a trust under which the trustees are directed to use the funds in accordance with the provisions of the trust.

It is well understood that so-called "charitable trusts" may be validly created by Christians. They may direct, as they frequently do, that the property bequeathed be used in aid of the propagation of some particular religious faith. Thus a Protestant may establish a trust for the maintenance of preachers and of preaching, or for the support of a course of denominational sermons. A Catholic may, in like manner, aid a Catholic Church, or he may create a trust wherein the trustees are directed to expend funds to procure the saying of "masses" for the repose of the souls of himself and relatives. The "infidel" may, of course, establish like trusts, that is, trusts for like purposes, but it is not usually his intention to do so. He would prefer to aid scientific research, or encourage the publication of historical works.

Suppose that the "infidel," as the term is understood among orthodox Christians, creates by will or otherwise a trust whereby the property is to be used in aid of the publication and circulation of literature which assumes that there is no future state of man and discards the fundamentals of the Christian religion aside from its secular precepts. If past court decisions are to be regarded as still the law, the trust is void. If the trust is created by will, pious heirs at law will take advantage of its invalidity, and, in the absence of a residuary clause declaring otherwise, obtain possession of the property in their capacity as heirs. The law does not allow the "infidel" the same chance to disseminate what he regards as the truth as it allows the Christian to aid in the teaching of what the latter regards as true.

In 1865 one Levi Nice, of Philadelphia, died leaving a will wherein it was provided that, after a certain event, his real estate "shall go and be held in fee simple by the Infidel Society in Philadelphia, . . . and to be held and disposed of by them for the purpose of building a hall and for the free discussion of religion, politics, etc." The trust was held void. Among the reasons for declaring it void are those appearing in the following part of the court's opinion (*Zeisweiss v. James* 63 P. St. 465):

It must certainly be considered as well settled that the religion revealed in the Bible is not to be openly reviled, ridiculed or blasphemed, to the annoyance of sincere believers who compose the great mass of the good people of the Commonwealth. . . . I can conceive of nothing so likely—so sure, indeed, to produce these consequences as a hall desecrated in perpetuity for the free discussion of religion, politics, et cetera, under the direction and administration of a society of infidels. Indeed, I would go further, and adopt the sentiment and language of Mr. Justice Duncan . . . "It would prove a nursery of vice, a school of preparation to qualify young men for the gallows and young women for the brothel, and there is not a skeptic of decent manners and good morals who would not consider such a debating club as a common nuisance and disgrace to the city."

In a later case (*Manners v. Library Company*, 93 Pa. St. 165), acrid verbiage was omitted, and the court stated the law to be as follows: "A man may do many things while living which the law will not do for him after he is dead. He may deny the existence of a God, and employ his fortune in the dissemination of infidel views, but should he leave his fortune in trust for such purposes, the law will strike down the trust as *contra bonos mores*."

It is possible, however, for the "infidel" to evade the consequences of establishing a trust for the purpose of opposing the fundamentals of the Christian religion, and yet aid in the establishment of a "nursery of vice" in the form of an open forum where theology may be

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What is

- (1) A QUAKER?
(2) MR. HOOVER?

Is President-Elect Hoover a Quaker? He is called a Quaker. But what is a Quaker? But what business has a Quaker on a battleship? L. M. Birkhead contributes an important article to the March, 1929, DEBUNKER, entitled "President Hoover and Quakerism." Read it! Send \$1.50 now (\$2 Canadian and foreign) for a year. Address The Debunker, Girard, Kansas.

freely discussed. He can make a direct gift or bequest of the money to existing individuals, and select such persons, as beneficiaries or legatees, who are likely to use the gift or bequest as he would desire it to be used. This was the conclusion reached by the House of Lords in England in 1917 in sustaining the will of Charles Bowman who by his will made a gift of property to the "Secular Society, Ltd." (1917 A. C. 496.)

It is possible, also, for the Atheist or Agnostic to establish a trust for purposes which stand midway between atheism and the orthodox tenets. He may, for example, create a valid trust for the promotion of Unitarianism. At any rate, such a trust has been declared valid (31 Harv. Law Rev. 292). He may take comfort from the following remarks of Lord Parker in the Bowman case:

If there is any doctrine vital to Protestant Christianity it would appear to be that of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and yet in the case of trusts for the religion of Unitarians no distinction has been drawn between those who do and who do not hold this doctrine. It would seem to follow that a trust for the purpose of any kind of monotheistic theism would be a good charitable trust and that it is not illegal or contrary to public policy to deny the authority of the Old or New Testament.

Undoubtedly, in this advanced age, a trust for the promotion of Unitarianism would be upheld by the courts, because, as said by an English judge, "Unitarians are commonly and always have been considered as a part of the Christian community" (9 Cl. and F. 355) and, as said by another English judge (*id.* p. 540), "Unitarians profess to be Christians . . . and . . . there is nothing unlawful at common law in reverently doubting or denying doctrines parcel of Christianity, however fundamental."

If an Atheist or Agnostic desires to establish a trust for the promotion of non-Christian, or even atheistic opinions, the safe way is to make a liberal branch Unitarianism the beneficiary. And it is the most effective way. If in executing the trust the trustees succeed in causing some "Fundamentalist," or any one who would otherwise adhere to orthodox and medieval tenets, to become a Unitarian, enough is accomplished. The Christian who thus intellectually advances is able to see and appreciate the viewpoint of any kind of non-believer, and for that reason becomes incapable of a desire to persecute any one, even an Atheist. What Agnostics desire is not that the world adopt their conclusions that the orthodox beliefs are unsupported by the evidence but that society do not discriminate against them on account of their opinions. They want liberty, not only for themselves but also for others, including their persecutors. Since the Unitarians have dispensed with the belief in the "deity of Christ," vicarious atonement, and "original sin," they have discarded enough of the fundamentals of orthodox Christianity to make them refrain from doing ill to their fellow-men on account of differences of opinion. Hence if an Agnostic aids them, and their modern creed, he aids himself. The law has sufficiently advanced to permit the aid of the Unitarian Church by means of a charitable trust.

If the "infidel" desires to aid an "infidel" movement which is as radical as Atheism he must, in the words of the Pennsylvania court, do it "while living." His gifts must be direct, *inter vivos*.

While the Pennsylvania court has referred to an "infidel" open forum as a "nursery of vice," it may be well to observe that Unitarianism has furnished neither criminals for the "gallows" or women for the "brothel," but has gained the support of persons of the greatest intellectual capacity. It may be well to note here the prime object of the Secular Society, Ltd., mentioned in the Bowman case in England. That object was: "To promote, in such ways as may from time to time be determined, the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon super-natural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action."

In commenting on the Bowman case, an editorial note in 31 Harvard Law Review, 292, observes that the "sincere disbeliever . . . believes that the spread of what he regards as truth and the removal of what he regards as superstition would conduce to the benefit of mankind."

IN THE WORLD OF BOOKS

BY ISAAC GOLDBERG

ALTER BRODY AND NEW VALUES IN AMERICAN DRAMA

Mr. Brody has just published, through the firm of Coward-McCann, Inc., of New York City, a collection of Four Folk Plays of the American Jew, entitled "Lamentations" (\$2.50). The book, tastefully executed in all mechanical details, has a fanciful frontispiece by Hugo Gellert—that old reliable of the radical press—which catches the sordidness, the thwarted domesticity and the tortured poetry of the Bronx milieu in which the plays take place.

Because these are uncommon pieces in any case, and because they represent a highly successful effort in a venture that fairly lures one to disaster, I wish to dwell upon them somewhat at length. For I believe that with these four playlets—"Loving in the Night," "Recess for Memorials," "Rapunzel" and "A House of Mourning"—Mr. Brody has done something new and something important. The worth of what he has accomplished is the more likely to be overlooked because he has achieved his aim with not a trace of sensationalism. His esthetic problem, that of transferring from one tongue to another an entire scale of psychological values, is far more than a feat of translation. It is nothing less than transubstantiation.

Let me explain. Students of Yiddish literature have often speculated upon the future of Yiddish. In America, as all may see who do not blind themselves, the speech is decaying; it is virtually doomed to an early death. Especially is this true of its esthetic potentialities. The Yiddish spirit, or ethos, or whatever you choose to call it, does not, fortunately, depend upon any single tongue. It has shown, in all ages, a remarkable adaptability to whatever language lay nearest to its needs. Therefore, reasoned some of us, let us not weep ineffectual tears over the inevitable; Yiddish may die, but its soul goes marching on. The survival of a language is not determined by the sentimental heroics of its speakers; it follows the line of economic power. The spirit of Yiddish, however, may survive in any language in which the gifted Jew has something to say.

English, naturally, has been replacing Yiddish among the Jews as fast as they could adapt themselves to the life of the nation. This is not only conscious assimilation; it is a natural process that has bred languages from the first and that will breed them to the last. Yiddish newspapers print English sections; Yiddish writers attempt original compositions in English. Years ago, Morris Rosenfeld tried his hand at English poetry; he was not the only one. The trend is unmistakable.

Brody, as I have said, does more. He charges English with a Jewish quality; he does so without perpetrating the sort of thing that he has himself wittily christened Yidgin English—the sort of mongrel dialect that you find in Anna Yezierska and others of her tribe. I

should not be surprised if his original inspiration had been John Millington Synge, in such a concentrated masterpiece as the unforgettable play, "Riders to the Sea." Synge, of course, worked in an Irish English. Brody's language is not a dialect or a variation of English; it represents the successful transfusion, so to speak, of Yiddish blood into English veins.

His conception of drama is subtle; he scorns effects too easily obtained. His dramas, in fact, could be acted in utter darkness, for their power is inherent in the voices of his people. Voices out of the darkness—that might be their actual and their metaphorical epigraph. A couple in bed, exchanging complaints about their childlessness; the woman, loving her husband for what he might be, hating him because he is not a father; both caught, eventually, by the very passion that refuses them offspring. And there you have "Loving in the Night." Two old women discussing, during a synagogue interlude, their unfortunate children. And there you have "Recess for Memorials." A child of poverty suddenly regaining her sight and terrified at the loss of a deeper vision: "Rapunzel." A cursing housewife, blaming her husband for the death of their child, only to find that during her passionate harangue he has himself gone the way of death. "A House of Mourning."

In these pieces—I should like to see a courageous experimental director mount them, in their stark but penetrating simplicity—there is a music of speech that adds to the stuff of drama the cadence of irrefutable reality. Perhaps a sound instinct led Mr. Brody to make most of his characters women. Yiddish, in its origins, is the feminine aspect of the Hebrew soul. It was called, for a long time, *weiber-teutsch*, which is to say women's German. It was read chiefly by women, and was written chiefly for them, since they could not read their prayers in the Holy Tongue. Into Yiddish rhythms, into Yiddish figures of speech, into the very intonations of the language, flowed the soul of eager, burdened motherhood. These rhythms, this intonation, Brody has caught almost inerrantly.

So doing, he has added to our American drama a scale of new values that do not depend upon freaky scenery, jazzed-up accoutrements, and bass-drum diction. I hope that he will try to develop the material into a play of regulation length, involving more characters and weaving a more complicated texture. From the purely artistic standpoint, I should say, Brody has, in these "Lamentations," made to American drama one of the most vital contributions since O'Neill first flashed across our horizon. They read beautifully; in the right hands, they should be made to act beautifully, too.

THE CHURCH BREAKS DOWN

There is hope for the world. Don't commit suicide yet. Bishop William Lawrence, speaking the other day before the Harvard Medical School on "Social Infection and the Community"—he meant the well-known venereal diseases—declared that the policy of silence has proved to be a failure. "In the past," he confessed, "I have distrusted the advice of those who have pressed for common education in sex; but in spite of tradition, prejudice and taste, I have been driven to the conclusion that the lid of silence must be wrenched off, and the subject treated in its fulness, as embodying facts of physical, social, moral and spiritual truth."

Education of this nature, the Bishop went on to say, must somehow be brought down to the little child from 3 to 9 years of age, taught preferably by his mother.

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Who shall say that there is no hope when one of the highest dignitaries of the Church admits the collapse of the ecclesiastical policy of silence and frankly adopts the program of the modern sexual hygienist?

ANTHOLOGIES

AN ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD POETRY. Edited by Mark Van Doren. New York. A. & C. Boni. \$5.

POETRY OF THE ORIENT. An Anthology of the Classic Secular Poetry of the Major Eastern Nations. New York. A. A. Knopf. \$5.

GREAT SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE WORLD. Edited by Barrett H. Clark. New York. McBride. \$5.

It is the regular thing—I do it myself on occasion, as do many others who must read not only for pleasure but for professional reasons—to damn anthologies on general principles. It is so easy to complain that a great specimen has been overlooked, or that a mediocre one has been included. Then again, it is so clearly a matter of one's own taste against that of the editor. Making a real anthology is no easy task. It requires not only a vast background of study, but a catholicity of taste that must never become mere uncritical hospitality. I have often said that the person who likes everything really likes nothing. I have my suspicions of the ardent devotee who likes everything that Shakespeare or Beethoven wrote, because I am rather well satisfied that there are plenty of gaps in the immortal Will and in the equally immortal Ludwig. An anthologist—and we are all of us anthologists, since we cannot remember everything we read or hear, and naturally treasure up our own salient memories—an anthologist is known as much by the company he does not keep as by the company he keeps. True culture, as Nietzsche and Voltaire knew, and as Ellis in our day knows, consists as much in what you reject as in what you accept. Nor need you always accept what I do, or reject in the same imitative manner.

For the average reader, then, who cannot be a specialist in drama, fiction, biography, music and poetry, a sensitive anthologist is a valuable ally. And for even the specialist, such volumes as I have listed at the head of this harangue contain, if not novelties always, a fine and discriminating selection.

Mr. Van Doren's collection covers a wide range. I find that he has selections not only from the Hebrews—what would a world anthology be without some of the magnificent poetry of the Bible?—but from the Jews. I am glad that he had the taste to represent not only Bialik, one of the leaders of the contemporary renaissance, but Yeohash, perhaps the greatest poetic spirit that modern Yiddish has produced. The collection, printed on India paper, runs well beyond 1,300 pages.

The collection by Eunice Tietjens is limited to the major Eastern nations; it is not cluttered with the familiar religious verses, but specializes in the secular expressions of the Orient. I thank her for her omission of the religious excerpts, not so much because of any impatience with religion, but because such exclusion left more room for a less familiar aspect of Arabian, Persian, Hindu, Japanese and Chinese poetic artistry. The volume is most tastefully designed and executed.

Clark's collection—he is responsible for many of the translations—ranges the world in much the same manner that his previous collection of stories and short novels did. He begins with Socrates and ends with Hector Berlioz. Between the impertinent questioner and the romantic composer he selects, by centuries, representative biographical studies by notable essayists. In a day when the passionate vogue of biography attests a new interest in humanity, in the human-all-too-human, such an anthology of life-stories should find a ready welcome. It should be, indeed, especially valuable as an opportunity to compare our Emil Ludwigs, our Lytton Starcheys, our Gamaliel Bradfords, and the rest, with their immediate and remote literary ancestors. I do not think that the comparison would lead to an unqualified victory for the moderns. Yet the gains of contemporary biography will remain.

No man is a hero to his valet. True. And we want the valet's point of view to balance the view of the hero-worshiper. But, on the other hand, the hero is not always a valet. There are great men, and we may admire their greatness without placing them impossibly high upon a twenty-four carat pedestal.

All three of these anthologies have my recommendation as sound selections, as serviceable books of pleasant appearance, as admirable points of departure into the special regions whence they came.

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