

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

Blue, decayed streaks of silliness are healthy in art as in cheese.

I have the honour to offer a prize of ten pounds annually, as long as HORIZON is published, for the silliest contribution, to be called 'The Alfred Wallis Prize', and to be awarded by subscribers. All contributors will be eligible with preference for the old and famous rather than the young and contemporary. The work need not be complete in itself or in anything else.

Your obedient servant,

EVELYN WAUGH

LAW OFFICES OF

MILLER, CANFIELD, PADDOCK AND STONE

PENOBSCOT BUILDING, DETROIT

29 December 1942

Dear Mr. Connolly,

I should not think it worth while to notice Henry Miller's article in your November issue except for the fact that this curious medley of Arcadian dreaming and Marxian bitterness is apparently the work of an American and is accepted by you as an accurate picture of my country.

I doubt whether any hostile foreigner has ever regarded the United States with such wildly distorted vision, with such venom and such deep disgust. Surely none has ever expressed himself with such recklessly misplaced emphasis. It is an old aphorism that an American who goes abroad and dislikes Europe has not stayed there long enough, while one who goes abroad and then cannot endure his own country has stayed there too long. Evidently Mr. Miller has dwelt too long on the Left Bank; he reflects that contempt for the work of painstaking citizens which, in the words of Professor Von Mises, usually characterizes bohemians. Thus bankers and brokers are described as superfluous, carnivorous swindlers, newspapers are all venal, the workers are slaves, and all the ills of the world are laid at the doors of capitalists and politicians who destroy the natural goodness of man. Mr. Miller's love of anarchy, his faith in the noble savage, his eulogy of the primitive life on American Indian reservations and his fierce hatred of the machine age will not seem new to any reader of Babbitt's *Rousseau and Romanticism* or of Brandes' *Main Currents in Nineteenth-Century Literature*; it is astounding to see them uncritically accepted in 1942.

To Mr. Miller, the world, which has always been a battlefield, ought to be a picnic ground and would be so if it were not for the capitalists. Voltaire, it will be recalled, expected peace when the last prince had been strangled by the bowels of the last priest. We have almost achieved this goal without any appreciable resulting amelioration of man's estate. The business man is merely the latest bogey; all the altruists from the Third Earl of Shaftesbury to Bertrand and Dora Russell offer us these fraudulent explanations of why the world is not the paradise of which men dream. It is less flattering to human vanity but

more sensible to accept the conclusions of Aristotle and St. Paul that the ills of the world arise largely from the natural wickedness of men.

I don't hope to persuade Mr. Miller that America offers much beauty as well as energy and hope. Of course our life, like that of the rest of the world, has its dirty, sordid, and depressing aspects. Most of us and our ancestors have been too busy developing a continent to produce all the urbane, leisurely virtues of older cultures. Mr. Miller cannot have seen our lakes and rivers and forests, our gardens and parks and boulevards and playgrounds, our art galleries and symphony orchestras, our libraries and schools and hospitals. Has he no word of praise for our universal education, social security schemes and slum clearance projects? Do we not deserve some credit for a society in which, by President Roosevelt's own admission, two-thirds of the population are well-clad, well-housed and well-fed?

No doubt something can and will be done to make the world more beautiful and more comfortable, although it is neither possible nor desirable permanently to eliminate poverty and suffering. The unemployment problem can never be completely solved so long as indolent and incompetent people exist. But the necessary reforms of an ever-changing world must come from men who have character and education as well as humanitarian benevolence; such angry diatribes and neurotic vapourings as Mr. Miller's, such dyspepsia in the guise of *weltschmerz*, can only increase the amount of misunderstanding and hatred in the world.

Yours sincerely,

EDGAR H. AILES

Dear Sir,

19th February 1943

March 3, 1943, will be the eightieth birthday of one of the most distinguished living men of letters, Mr. Arthur Machen. His friends and admirers wish to honour the occasion by a birthday cheque, which will be of practical help to him. Subscriptions should be sent to Colin Summerford, c/o Westminster Bank, 1 Stratford Place, W.1; cheques being payable to the Arthur Machen Fund, and crossed Westminster Bank (Marylebone).

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