

COMMENT

THE Lynskey Tribunal is not a subject which bears any direct relation to a review of literature and art, but there are one or two things which should be said about it which only we militant reactionary aesthetes are capable of saying. The Tribunal is a record of a love affair, and, like most love affairs, it is based on illusion. It records the love which rakish Big Business bears for homely respectable Miss Bureaucracy and the delicate feminine backslidings of that lady (such a nice girl) when wooed by wicked rich financiers with their expense accounts and private dining-rooms. Nobody quite lost their virtue, but the findings will probably disclose that it was a very near thing. To a detached observer what stands out most is the complete and utter dullness of the two conflicting ways of life, both so highly honoured in our society. Which would you rather be? A business man bowling to and fro between London and Manchester, always looking for a fourth at cards, eating, for the sake of trade, innumerable bad luncheons with people you've never met, dining at dog racing tracks with minor politicians, taking them to English seaside hotels for windy negotiations, waiting in ministries for permits to make profits which are at once removed by taxation, swapping Christmas presents, jollyng up the wives of public figures—or a servant of the State, poor but enormously respectable, buoyed up by a sense of collective self-righteousness which obliterates every defect, inflated by touched caps and dispatch-cases, and so smothered by the ennui of routine, the gnawings of fear and envy that any old Park Lane jackdaw appearing on the window-sill bedazzles like a peacock?

For two months now the public have absorbed every detail of this confused attempt at seduction—in itself an unsavoury sign, for it shows the growing-up, in our happy little Socialist brotherhood, of exactly the same spirit which informed the Russian purges. Sir Hartley Shawcross in no way resembles Vyshinsky, but his role of public prosecutor carries with it the prestige of a prima donna and one can see arising through the increasing public interest in this affair a relationship between the people and their prosecutor which does not preclude an eventual complicity, as between mob and matador, were these tribunals to replace watching test matches, darts and football as the national sport.

For the spectator, even the newspaper-reader, derives from their consideration a sense of virtue. He feels that he is all out to end corruption in public life: he does not realize that the sentiment he experiences is in reality a form of resentment, a hatred of anybody having any advantages or privileges and ultimately any pleasures which he does not enjoy himself, and that this resentment is a particular ailment of democracies and one which can be just as easily let loose against foreign travel, art exhibitions, long-hair, honeymoon couples, Oscar Wilde, actresses or bottle parties, as against the protagonists at Westminster Hall. There is probably not one of us who could stand up to the searching methods of such an inquiry without revealing much that was ridiculous, a little that was pathetic, and a grain that was criminal in the conduct of our own lives over a long period of time. Let us hope we never become so important in the public eye as to deserve one.

Incidentally the pages of newsprint devoted to the question of the new suit for one or the whisky for another has happily lulled us through the crisis in China, appalling for most of us in its eventual consequences, and through a variety of difficult and unpleasant situations at home and abroad whose nature is only to be gleaned from unsportsmanlike journals like the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*. But it was all over in time for Christmas. Who's next?

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The HORIZON prize for a short novel has been awarded to Mary MacCarthy, the American writer, for *The Oasis*, which will appear as the complete issue for February. The story was written especially for the competition. One hundred and twenty entries were received. The prize money amounts to two hundred pounds and a dozen bottles of sherry. HORIZON intends to continue during 1949, despite the usual crop of rumours to the contrary, and we hope that an index to the first nine years (1-108) will be available early in the New Year. New subscriptions and renewals are welcome.

Translated from the Anglo-Saxon by

EDWIN MORGAN

THE RUIN

WONDER holds these walls. Under destiny destruction
 Castles has split apart; gigantic battlements are crumbling,
 Roofs sunk in ruin, riven towers fallen,
 Gates and turrets lost, hoarfrost for mortar,
 Rain-bastions beaten, cleft, pierced, perished,
 Eaten away by time. Earth's fist and grasp
 Holds mason and man, all decayed, departed;
 The soil grips hard; there a hundred generations
 Of the people have dwindled and gone. This wall bore well,
 Moss-grey and reddened, the revolutions of kingdoms,
 Stoutly withstood tempests. That great gate fell . . .
 Magnificent rose the fortresses, the lavish swimming-halls,
 The profuse and lofty glory of spires, the clangour of armies,
 The drinking-halls crammed with every man's delight,
 Till that was overturned by steadfast fate.
 The broad walls were sundered: the plague-days came:
 The brave men were rapt away by the bereaver,
 Their war-ramparts razed to desolate foundations,
 Their cities crumbled down. The restorers lie asleep,
 Armies of men in the earth. And so those halls are wastes,
 The once purple gates, and the bricks and wood are lying
 Scattered with the smashed roofs. Death crushed that place,
 Struck it flat to the hill, where once many a man
 Brilliant with gold and adazzle with costliest war-trappings,
 Happy, proud, and wine-flushed, glittered there in his
 battle-armour,
 Gazed over his treasures, on the silver and the curious stones,
 On the rich goods and possessions, on the precious cut jewels,
 And on this splendid city of the far-spread kingdom.
 The stone courts stood then; the hot stream broke
 Welling strongly through the stone; all was close and sweet
 In the bright bosom of the walls; and where the baths lay
 Hot at the heart of the place, that was the best of all. . . .