

Freedom Old and New

The Old Freedom. By Francis Neilson. B. W. Huebsch.

THIS is a concise study of the increasingly pressing economic problem. The author voices a regard for "the known rules of ancient liberty" and caters not at all to the modern way of paternalistic and socialistic palliatives. The book will surprise many by its impressive evidence that our economic salvation is to come by recovering lost liberties rather than by setting up new devices. Altogether, Mr. Neilson's work cannot fail to interest the great body of our American people whose instincts are justly and sanely conservative, to whom socialism and toryism are alike repugnant, and who are wide enough awake to know that our social structure is not yet secure and that it must be made secure even if we have to take some radical steps. These steps, the author indicates, are only such as are needed for the achievement of that amount of individual freedom which we in America have always intended to have.

Mr. Neilson takes as a text a recent pronouncement of Mr. Charles M. Schwab to the effect that the pressing need of the hour is "the putting of economic principles first" and the "economic use of everything." Mr. Neilson develops to fine purpose this excellent though neglected idea. As he sees it, there are certain clear-cut economic principles conformity to which has brought well-being and a peaceful order. He finds us far from conformity with such principles. He observes that political democracy can be of enduring value only so long as the people have equal economic opportunity; he points out that there can be no such equality of opportunity so long as any man must come to terms with a fellow-man for a "right to use the earth, the only source from which he can draw his sustenance." He holds that "only by taking the [site] value of land in taxation can labor, capital, and the public be treated fairly." For evidence he turns to the history of English landholding, and of the loss of equal rights which gradually came about. He outlines syndicalism, the various forms of socialism, and similar proposals, and shows why he thinks they will not do; he closes with a chapter entitled "The Way to Freedom." Mr. Neilson's "Way to Freedom" simmers down to a firm, well-directed recognition of the natural rights of the individual. He believes that thus only can we escape the fate which has already befallen Europe; that "by restoring natural rights we shall reset the old foundations and rebuild the best of our institutions, so that America can again open her gates to all who love liberty."

One must, in these days, call special attention to Mr. Neilson's exposition of two striking instances of the futility of what he aptly calls "non-essential reform." He points out that in the very Germany "where nearly everything was nationalized" there resulted "little or no satisfaction among the general mass of the workers"; that in Germany, where almost every known scheme of paternalistic palliative was in force, "poverty and pain were rampant in the land. At the last German general election, before the war began, the Social Democratic party asked for freedom of trade, freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of platform; they demanded the abolition of *lèse-majesté*. At that election the Social Democrats, for the first time since the Empire was founded, placed in the forefront of their programme the demand for the abolition of compulsory military service, and increased their voting strength by over 1,250,000 votes, and became the largest party in the Reichstag"; and the German Tories concluded it was time for a war. He points out also that "the whole gamut of non-essential reform" was run in England in the fourteen years prior to the war. "From small holdings and allotments to minimum wage for miners, from boards for sweated industries to licensing bills, from insurance for the workers to mental deficiency bills, from education to venereal diseases, from divorce to sanitation, from housing to the franchise, etc., etc., almost world without end. And yet no one was satisfied."

In a word, Mr. Neilson's book offers a valuable warning against various nostrums now being advertised and is an excellent tonic for those who believe that it is worth while to do something discriminating as well as resolute for the maintenance of the rights and principles which have produced the best in the America of the past and the present and which can be relied upon for greater things in the future if given a chance.

Hogan and Hennessy

Mr. Dooley On Making a Will and Other Necessary Evils. Charles Scribner's Sons.

"I HEAR Dooley's out iv a job," said Mr. Hennessy, passing his glass across the soda-fountain for a second ginger-ale cocktail.

"Thru," said Mr. Hogan, "as Shakespeare put it, 'O'Thello's occupation's gone.' Th' tap that wanst through Ar-rchey Road shed whatever soul is in two an' sivinty-five hundredths per cent. is dry, and a man don't need to travel somewhere east of Suez to raise a thur-rst, though he has to get a prescription from Doc O'Leary to lay it. So Dooley has ixchanged th' fountain f'r th' fountain-pen. He's got out a new remedy f'r th' hy-sterrix."

"Has it anny al-co-hol in it?" asked Mr. Hennessy.

"It has th' kick. Bound in green, two hunder' an' twinty-wan pages, for th' price iv—but sh-h-h, if I was t' tell ye the price, Sicrety Burleson wad bill me f'r runnin' an ad. Howiver, it's the truth that the cost iv livin' is higher without Dooley's book than with it. An' why? F'r the same reason that Gallagher's woman liked t' see himself with a pipe in his mouth. 'When a man ain't smokin',' she says, 'he's shure t' be fumin'.' There's a good manny people now that ye'd think had niver known th' blessing iv a short clay, an' Dooley's the man t' cure thim. Whin ye come home next March afther havin' tea with the A-ho-haitches, ye'll like to read maybe what he says about St. Pathrick's Day before we borried the eighteenth amindment from th' Turks. But it's not just the fun iv th' book that does th' thrick, though on a night whin Charlie Chaplin's not in town I commind ye to Dooley's picter iv the home life iv our arrystocrisy as a substitute. Nor is it the clever way he has iv makin' a new sayin' out iv an ould wan, though between us there's only wan man in th' United States that's his akel in that, an' he lives in Canady. It's because Dooley has a fut an' knows how to put it down. It's a gr-rand thing these days, Hinmissy, to know where ye stand and t' find it's not on yer head. But ye'll niver keep y'r head up unless ye can put y'r fut down hard. Suppose now ye was out iv a job, and th' butcher was suin' ye f'r a meat-bill, and a man with a red shirt was heavin' bricks through the windy iv th' flat, and th' janitor had sthruck f'r the right iv collective bargaining, an' the polis out iv sympathy with th' janitor, an' ye tillygraft t' Washin'ton f'r protection, an' what do ye get? Next morning the Prsident writes to th' pa-apers: 'Me Fellow Citizens, I beg ye to be calm. Be placid and indushtrious,' he says. 'Ye may think,' he says, 'that the government is unaware iv the sitooation. But ye're wrong' he says. 'Me and th' participants in this dispute has arranged a conference t' be held afther I have adjusted th' affairs iv Europe an' have given Mexico the mandatory f'r Lodge,' he says. 'We will proceed then to vintillate our grievances not only, but to clear th' air be argymint,' he says. 'Meantime I exhort ye to continue production. Y'r fri'nd, Woodrow.' Afther readin' that ye'll wish ye'd voted for Dooley. Whin a ruction happens, a man that's stood behind the bar for forty years won't tell ye t' clear th' air with gas. He'll tell ye t' clear the room with half a yard iv gas-pipe. An' that's why the book is good f'r the hy-sterrix."

"Is it a book ye've been talkin' about all this while," said Mr. Hennessy. "Where's th' need of that?"

"I'm thinkin'," answered Mr. Hogan, "that the counthry'll need Dooley as a writer until it needs him again as a barkeep."

Varied Types

The Four Roads. By Sheila Kaye-Smith. George H. Doran Company.

Brute Gods. By Louis Wilkinson. Alfred A. Knopf.

The Old Card. By Roland Pertwee. Boni and Liveright.

MISS SHEILA KAYE-SMITH stands very much alone among the younger British novelists. She is neither an analyst nor a rebel. Hers was, quite clearly, not originally an acquiscent mind. But even rebellion holds no illusion for her and she clings ever more closely and tenaciously to old and simple things in the slow lives of her native peasantry. As she has written in her wistful "Counsel of Gilgamesh":

What canst thou know, O scholar,
Which hath not long been known?
What canst thou have, O spoiler,
Which dead men do not own?

So she turns to the earth of Sussex and to the men who till it, and finds among them an unborrowed dignity, a strength, a quiet hopefulness far removed from what seems to her the vain striving and crying that fills the world. She is sustained by a deep sense of the continuity of the life of her native fields. Senlac still keeps the bloody lakes: the echo of "battles long ago" floats over the gorse: the world war was but another, if mightier, act in an unending historic process.

The theme of "The Four Roads" is that of the impact of the war upon a group of Sussex yeomen. To these people it was a dim and remote thing. They read no newspapers and have no glib phrases. They answered its summons with heaviness and reluctance, but bore it with that large patience that belongs to the peasantry of all lands. And thus Miss Kaye-Smith's book, redolent as it is of her own land and shire, attains to an uncommon depth and universality of vision. The lads who fell in France "had not died for England—what did they know of England and the British Empire? They had died for a little corner of ground which was England to them, and the sprinkling of poor, common folk who lived in it. Before their dying eyes had risen not the vision of England's glory, but just these fields, with the ponds and the woods and the red roofs." And that has been true, of course, of the plain men of all countries and in all wars, and will always be true of them.

Miss Kaye-Smith's treatment of her theme is original and simple at the same time and illustrates once more the structural flexibility of the novel. The book is divided into seven sections, each of which treats the life and the story involved from the point of view of one of the seven chief characters and is headed by that character's name. But in each section the background, both in nature and in man—the latter represented by the parents of the central family—remains the same. Thus there are nine people in the book and each of these nine is an achievement of a very high order. Miss Kaye-Smith's descriptions of scenery are often wordy in style and blurred in impression, but her men and women have a solidity and earth-born reality that few of our contemporaries can surpass. She has the rare gift of appearing to let her characters feel and act directly before our eyes, whereas in most novels we are always aware of seeing them through the ever present medium of the author's mind and art. This is the oldest way of presenting character in action, and still the noblest. To possess that power at all is to have proven the authenticity of one's creative gift.

There could be no greater contrast than that between Miss Sheila Kaye-Smith's quiet strength and Mr. Louis Wilkinson's morose, analytical restlessness. From any conventional point of view she might be thought by far the more virile. It could be fairly urged, on the other hand, that in the present state of the world hard and close thinking is more important than beautiful creation, even when such thinking is done by a somewhat harsh and very unquiet mind. It is certain, at all events, that some of Mr. Wilkinson's friends and reviewers have done him a dis-

service in spreading the impression here and there that his work is, as the foolish phrase goes, "not meat for little people and for fools," that is to say, raw and a little salacious. "Brute Gods," at least, is nothing of this sort. It is a book quite without sensuous appeal. It is earnest and its earnestness is touched with pain. But the pain is either disguised under the coldness of the style and execution, or it is transferred to the nagging dislike with which Mr. Wilkinson pursues at least two of his characters.

The story deals with the inner perplexities of a youth of nineteen. He lives, like most young middle class people all over the world, amid stereotyped moral phrases, and catches glimpses of passions and events that seem to bear no relation to those phrases at all. His brother, who has returned from the war fatally weary and disillusioned, helps Alec Glaive, quite unintentionally, to see things in a different light, and the sensitive and finely tempered youth knows revolt and agony and despair. But the merits of the story are in its details rather than in its larger outlines. Mr. Wilkinson has gone on little excursions of moral discovery and has undoubtedly extended the boundaries of the novelist's field of observation. The analysis, for instance, of the elder Glaive's "jealous moral indignation" at the escapades of his son, is, so far as we know, the first treatment in literature of an unlovely but important fact of the moral life. So is Alec's astonished recognition of the fact that the most radical leader of men, the preacher of immediate, direct action, can end his call to such action by an appeal to false and absurd sentimentalities, to conventional lies concerning matters of common knowledge but universal silence. It is unfortunate that, toward the end, Mr. Wilkinson's power of detached analysis deserts him. He himself yields finally to a delusion as romantic as any he assails. That Alec Glaive suffered through his recognition of the impermanence of the deepest and most transfiguring of human instincts is true. His determination, however, to join one of the monastic orders of the Anglican Church has nothing to do with him, but is due to a strain of morbidness in Mr. Wilkinson's own mind. The same is true of the treatment of Gillian Collett. In a word, Mr. Wilkinson himself is really nothing of a pagan and transfers the dark troubles of his own soul to people who would probably have arranged their lives much more naïvely and spontaneously. But there can be no doubt of his seriousness as an observer and of his ability as an artist to construct a striking record.

Mr. Roland Pertwee's "The Old Card" is a pleasant and unpretentious book of an older kind and belongs to an older world. The kindness, the humor, the moral preoccupation—in a sense so amusingly different from Mr. Wilkinson's—determine its artistic date and character. But Mr. Pertwee's player-folk of the British provinces are also very different, and instructively different, from those of Dickens. The Vincent Crummleses were really a very decent lot. But they were so quite unconsciously. Mr. Eliphalet Cardomay, on the contrary, is a teetotaler, a moral man, and a gentleman with a touch of belligerency. He deprecates the little irregularities of the life about him and is bent on having his people quite as "nice" as any one else among the British middle classes. So is Mr. Pertwee himself, who writes of the provincial theatre from a large stock of personal experience. His best and most moving episode is the old provincial actor's attempt to star in London. Cardomay cannot learn the new tricks. He has spouted "noble" speeches in "The Night Cry" and "The Vespers" too long. Realistic acting is beyond him. But he has the grace and intelligence to realize the excellencies of the new manner. And so, since he considers the screen unworthy of his ancient and honorable art, he returns to the provinces where his pathetic style of declamation still finds an echo in untutored hearts. He is throughout a charming and interesting old fellow whom it is pleasant to know both for his own sake and for the light his character sheds on certain not very well-known phases of the moral and professional history of the British stage.