

just a speculative poet who may value science very highly but does so as a well-groomed gentleman who knows it at a polite distance, afraid to soil his hands with its grimy details. These judgments illustrate the great tragedy of modern philosophy. In view of the enormous expansion of modern knowledge and the increased rigor of scientific accuracy, the philosopher can no longer pretend to universal knowledge and yet he cannot abandon the universe as his province. Genuinely devoted to philosophy's ancient and humanly indispensable task of drawing a picture or unified plan of the world in which we live, Santayana is willing to abandon the pretension to scientific accuracy and to face the problem as a poet or moralist. But whether because interest in a unified world view is weak and the possession of poetic faculty such as Santayana's uncommon, or whether because philosophy has been too long wedded to logical argumentation and scientific pretensions, the dominant tendency is to make philosophy like one of the special sciences, dealing in a technical way with a limited field. As philosophy is thus abandoning its old pretensions to be the sovereign and legislative science—it is no longer taught by the college president himself—all the fields of concrete information, physics, economics, politics, psychology, and even logic, are parcelled out among the special sciences and there is nothing left to the philosopher except the problem as to the nature of knowledge itself. On this problem Santayana has some suggestive hints, but no definitely worked out solution. Hence his essential loneliness. But perhaps every true philosopher like the true poet, is essentially lonely.

MORRIS R. COHEN.

Four Preludes on Playthings of the Wind

(*"The past is a bucket of ashes."*)

1.

The woman named Tomorrow
sits with a hairpin in her teeth
and takes her time
and does her hair the way she wants it
and fastens at last the last braid and coil
and puts the hairpin where it belongs
and turns and draws: Well, what of it?
My grandmother, Yesterday, is gone.
What of it? Let the dead be dead.

2.

The doors were cedar
and the panels strips of gold
and the girls were golden girls
and the panels read and the girls chanted:

We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

The doors are twisted on broken hinges.
Sheets of rain swish through on the wind
where the golden girls ran and the panels read:

We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

3.

It has happened before.
Strong men put up a city and got
a nation together,
And paid singers to sing and women
to warble:

We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

And while the singers sang
and the strong men listened
and paid the singers well
and felt good about it all,
there were rats and lizards who listened
.. and the only listeners left now
.. are .. the rats .. and the lizards.

And there are black crows
crying, "Caw, caw."
bringing mud and sticks
building a nest

over the words carved
on the doors where the panels were cedar
and the strips on the panels were gold
and the golden girls came singing:
We are the greatest city,
the greatest nation:
nothing like us ever was.

The only singers now are crows crying, "Caw, caw,"
And the sheets of rain whine in the wind and doorways.
And the only listeners now are .. the rats .. and the lizards.

4.

The feet of the rats
scribble on the door sills;
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints
chatter the pedigrees of the rats
and babble of the blood
and gabble of the breed
of the grandfathers and the great-grandfathers
of the rats.

And the wind shifts
and the dust on the door sill shifts
and even the writing of the rat footprints
tells us nothing, nothing at all
about the greatest city, the greatest nation
where the strong men listened
and the women warbled: Nothing like us ever was.

CARL SANDBURG.

Mandates

A SPIRITED debate in the British House of Commons on the tiny island of Nauru has raised once more the whole question of the League of Nations and its mandates. Nauru, a rock of almost solid phosphate, in the Pacific, was captured from the Germans in the first week of the war, and the Allies by a preliminary decision at Paris, confided the provisional mandate for its administration to the British Empire. The League as yet has neither confirmed this decision, nor drawn up the terms of the mandate. None the less, our government has laid a bill before Parliament which provides not merely for the administration of the island, but also for the disposal of its yield of phosphates. The rights of the existing company are bought out, and an imperial state monopoly will replace it. The phosphates are to be divided between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. If they cannot absorb the whole of the annual output, the residue may be sold to the rest of the world at the competitive market price. The attack on this cynical arrangement was delivered with fire and ability by Lord Robert Cecil and his little group of independent conservative Internationalists, with the support of the free liberals and labor. The debate was interesting, mainly because it showed the total inability of our governing class to understand the ethical ideas behind the League of Nations. The deal, they argued, was "good business," as it certainly is. Our agriculture needs phosphates, and by this arrangement it secures an adequate supply at cost price. That any other country may also need phosphates, that the League has been treated in this bill as a negligible unreality, that the mandates were to be held as "a sacred trust of civilization," that the riches of the soil of these territories should be shared on equal terms among all the members of the League—these are evidently the ideas only of a small minority. The government carried its bill by a huge majority, as it will carry the still less defensible arrangements for disposing of the oil of Mesopotamia. "Mandates" are today the cynic's favorite jest.

The history of this curious device of colonial mandates illustrates at once the strength and the weakness of idealistic movements in the world today. The repugnance which all socialists and some liberals felt at the thought of waging "a war of liberation" for the usual ends of conquest, had a certain influence upon the Allied governments. The pressure for a peace based on the Stockholm formulae was strong during the dark months of 1917.

Disillusion was at work more especially after the secret treaties were published. We know moreover that our acquisitive propensities are not favorably regarded in America. This volume of criticism was strong enough to suggest to our rulers that it might be wise to avoid the appearance of annexation. It was too weak to deter them from the reality. The notion of "mandates" fitted comfortably enough into the prevalent ideology of imperialism.

We always do profess to hold the territory which we seize, as a "sacred trust," much as we defend the taking of native land and the imposition of direct taxation by our passion to teach them "the dignity of labor." Great care was taken, however, to omit from the settlement every detail which might have led to an honest interpretation of the idea. The British Labor party, for example, had proposed that the whole of tropical Africa, and not merely the former German colonies, should be placed under the League of Nations. We hoped in this way to bring the Belgian, the Portuguese and the French colonies, worse governed by far from the native's standpoint than the German possessions, under the supervision of the League. That would have ended also our own recent policy of monopoly in the tropical vegetable oils, and also the odious French schemes for the military conscription of the natives. It was a part too of our plan that the mandated areas should be subject to searching and continuous inspection by officers of the League. More important, however, even than these details was our proposal that the League of Nations should be, above all things, an economic structure. We proposed to continue in peace for the benefit of all the world, the rationing of raw materials which the Allies had improvised during war. If the coal, the iron, the oil, the cotton, the wool, and the phosphates and the grain had been distributed under international control from the first day of the armistice onward, the Continent would have escaped the dearth which seems today to doom its civilization. The League could have governed by dispensing these necessary things, nor would any problem have arisen in regard to the oil of Mosul or the phosphates of Nauru. They would have been distributed in proportions fixed by a standing council of the League. None of these conditions commended themselves to the Allies. The power of a critical opposition disappeared in the hour of triumph, and the "mandates" served only as a disguise to cover the fact of annexation.