

The BOWLING GREEN by Christopher Morley

A Theologian

WRITING here about Don Marquis (May 15) I devoted so much space to archy the cockroach that I had to omit what I wanted to say of Mr. Marquis as divinity student. This came back to me the other day when a friend told me he was going to attend a kinsman's graduation from theological seminary. The thought occurred to me—but I did not say it, for it would have required some explanation—that the ideal graduation gifts for a young parson (with a sense of humor) would be two of Don Marquis's books: *The Old Soak's History of the World*, and *Chapters for the Orthodox*.

The Old Soak became folk-lore during the Bootleg era. He was not merely the denizen of "a nose-red city, pickled half the time," if Bartlett will pardon us. You will remember that beautiful portrait (as pathetic as comic) of the old boozier's fumbling mind, his incoherent attempts to express the simple kindness and good humor he had known in the reputable saloon—to say nothing of its stimulus to art ("hand-paintings"), politics, and home life. Mr. Clem Hawley was also no mean student of Holy Writ. His retelling of Old Testament stories, in his *History of the World*, is to me some of the most genuinely laughable stuff ever written. And in the course of his exegetics the Old Soak makes a profound remark which must be remembered by those who find themselves shocked by Mr. Marquis's apparent levity. The Old Soak vigorously objects to Mr. Hennerly Withers, the "dam little athyiss," laughing at the fable of Jonah. "Only its friends," he says, "got a right to laugh at that story." The laughter in *Chapters for the Orthodox* is sometimes cerebral, sometimes violently of the midriff, but those who will take pains to explore under the superficial shock will find it always the laughter of a friend.

The Old Soak, incidentally, always stood up for his trinity of fundamentals: the Bible, calomel, and straight whiskey. Mr. Marquis himself has been equally

conservative in his choice of apostolic matter. It has come down to us by unbroken laying on of hands. The literary genealogy of Mr. Hawley was suggested with gorgeous impudence when Mrs. Quickly's death-watch for Falstaff was echoed in the hired girl's epitaph on the parrot. I'm ashamed to say I had forgotten this colossal jape until I heard it again recently in the talking picture. They've been trying Al's home-made hootch on the parrot:—

He's gone, Mr. Hawley. He's d-d-d-dead! Seriously dead! It happened a half hour ago. I think it was his constitution undermined itself with that hootch Al brought here the other night, and I never will forgive myself, I won't. But he kept coixin' and coixin' for it that pretty that I couldn't refuse him. . . . And he kept drinking of it till he deceased himself with it. He called out to me about a half hour ago, he did. "Fair weather," he says, and then he laughed. Only he didn't laugh natural. Mr. Hawley, he laffed kind of puny and feeble like there was somethin' furrin weighin' onto his stomach. "I can't give you any more, Peter," I says to him, "for there ain't no more," I says. And then he stretched his neck out and bit the wire on his cage and squawked, for he says in a kind of sad voice: "Nellie was a lady, she was," he says.

And them was the last words he ever give utterings to. (*Exit Hired Girl, weeping.*)

But we are speaking of *Chapters for the Orthodox*, a book I have always felt restricted from discussion here on account of the author's affectionate partiality exhibited in the dedication. However, the formal phobias mean less and less as time shortens, and because I am fond of parsons and wish them well I set scruple aside. A man who

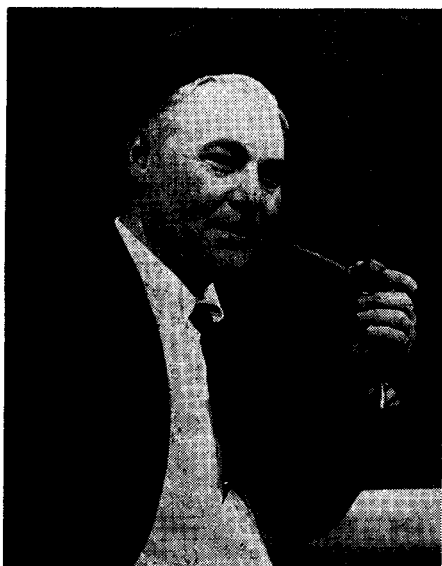
has been through the anxieties of the seminary, and emerged with his Bachelorhood of Sacred Theology, is surely grounded in faith to stand a few jolts. That book was timidly published (1934) and timidly dealt with by the Trade. My own feeling about it was that its only chance was to be offered as a translation from some other language, in which case it might perhaps have been a sensation. It would be hard to find any-

thing more in the spirit of Voltaire than the first story—*Miss Higginbotham Declines*—with its glorious opening sentence:—

It was Jehovah's custom, when he came to New York, to put on the material appearance and manner of a member of the Union League Club; indeed, he used the club itself a great deal.

I remember offering (don't laugh) to translate that story into French and try to get it published in the *S. R. L.* in that language, but could persuade no one—not even the author. But its delicate and reverent ribaldries would shock no one under the screen of a different tongue. The barb of the parable, as the new Bachelor will soon perceive, is a prickly one. Jehovah, brooding on the problems of humanity (and especially New York City) decides that what the world needs is another Begotten Son. This implies the necessity of finding for the purpose . . . but perhaps you'd better read it yourself.

In short, the book is devout to the point of scandal. Semi-religious people are always horrified by completely religious people; ethical ideas, as every philosopher has observed, are loaded with dynamite and perilous indeed for every kind of establishment. The world (said Santayana in a fine passage) is always a caricature of itself, always pretending to be something quite other than what it actually is. And to pretend to take those pretences literally is always horrifying. Nothing disturbs, or surprises, man so much as the discrepancy between his professions and his actual behavior; in that discrepancy lies the mother-lode of intellectual comedy. Marquis once remarked that he had a great idea: he was going to dramatize some of Bernard Shaw's plays. What he did in *Chapters for the Orthodox* had something of the same double-edged riposte: by taking ticklishly beautiful things with simple seriousness he explodes (in shattering laughter) the towering falsehoods of our genteel imposture.—And then humorously rebuilds them, knowing well that by make-believe we live. This book, which ranges from tender and moving fable to the most outrageous catcalls and trombone raspberries (uproarious, deplorable, with such blasphemous farcing as a Police Commissioner would not tolerate for even one performance) does actually come somewhere near expressing the blaze and bellylaugh of life. The prosecution of Jesus by the swine-dealer of Gadara (for having damaged the pork business), with Jehovah on the bench and Satan as prosecuting attorney, and a number of well-known contemporaries as jurymen, is a fair example of Marquis's audacious



DON MARQUIS

method. As a characteristic spoof of Britain, one of the demons (when called on to testify) speaks in a strong cockney accent. But it is impossible, as I should have known, to give any idea of a book like this without frightening or scandalizing the casual reader. Are they so few, I have sadly asked myself, who can see beneath this cosmic clowning the flash of its genial piety? Indeed, as Don said in his preface, he sports "in spiritual essence like a porpoise in the Gulf Stream."

It is in this book, à propos of nothing in particular, that Marquis pays his great—I wish I could say famous—tribute to Mark Twain: with whom he has so much in common. I think not only of his origin in a village near the Big River, and his feelings for bums, outcasts, freaks, ham actors, dogs, boys, newspaper men, drunkards, and Shakespeare; but also his passion for religion and Kelly pool, and a private vein of Elizabethan candor that is likely to remain private. I can think of nothing truer to say of *Chapters for the Orthodox* than this: it is the book Mark Twain must often have talked, and would have liked to write, but was too canny to do so.—That one-act skit of Faust in Hell . . . really Mr. Marquis, really. . . .

Welladay! (as Don says in the sonnets)—it's futile to try to suggest—in the clumsy sobriety of print—the quick-change paradoxes, the chameleon flicker, of a sultry mind. The methodical reader prefers something more static. And Marquis is also something that Mark Twain was not, a poet. In his verse too he has shown us that violent ricochet from fooling to loveliness. Both the long sonnet sequences (*To a Red-Haired Lady*, and *Love Sonnets of a Cave Man*) suddenly, after humorous chaff, burst with stunning effect into serious beauty at the end. In one of these he says:—

Serene, aloof and chill I love to sit,
Tranced in a thought of heaven and
earth and hell;
My dreams I hedge about with bitter
wit.

If my young theologian finds his graduation suggestion a puzzling one, let him consider another noble paradox. Marquis's finely realized play of the crucifixion, *The Dark Hours*, was produced, largely at his own charges, from profits made on the hokum of the dramatized *Old Soak*.

German Universities

SIR:—I am shocked at your comment about the question of our universities participating in the Göttingen celebration. Surely you haven't thought this thing through. You must know that the German universities like all their institutions have been thoroughly "gleichgeschaltet" and that all the teachers who do not profess to believe and to teach the Nazi Neo-Darkness have either been driven out of Germany or have escaped, or else are in concentration camps.

"Wretchedly bad manners" forsooth—in the same vein you might say of the mass murders and mass tortures committed by the dictators of Germany, Italy and Russia that it is all in the spirit of good clean fun.

That you who should be an apostle of civilization can voice such sentiments is very saddening, very disillusioning indeed. Please read Thomas Mann's letter to the University of Bonn.

LEUIS E. ASHER.

Chicago.

The Easter of an Anglers' Soul

'Neath Winchester Cathedral's ancient
stones,
Where pious dead await the Judgement
Day,
The hallowed earth envelops Walton's
bones
Clean picked by worms and centuries'
decay.
Wake, Izaak, wake; a shaft has pierced
the gloom;
Rise, Angler, rise and greet the laggard
morn;
Transfigured now what seemed a sombre
tomb;
Again a "fresh May morning" is reborn.
He stirs not, who is sleeping deep in God,
Is nevermore impatient for the beam
That roused him from the shallow Land
of Nod
To sally forth beside fair Itchen's stream.
There may he dream of giant tails and
fins
Till, at the Trump, the Last Great Rise
begins.

ARTHUR W. BELL.

Cheesemongers Please Assist

SIR:—I am writing or think I am writing a small, non-technical book about American cheese which I think is greatly unappreciated. I want to add a tiny anthology of literary references to or celebrations of American cheese. Do you know of any such? Or am I the first to celebrate our country's dairy produce?

CLIFTON FADIMAN.

40 West 57, N. Y. City.

To E. C. D.

Locksmith to a century
Confronted with forever,
Behold the Now essential,
And key the lock to Then and When
With Moments circumstantial!

EMILY M. TOMPKINS.

The verse above was written, by one of her students, to Esther Cloudman Dunn, professor of English in Smith College.

Lines Hoping To Be Contradicted

I have so many things to say,
But I shall probably be dumb
And on our long-expected day
Will only whisper, *You have come*. . . .
And O my dearest, what's worse yet,
A hidden pain, a sharp foreknowing:
Already, long before we've met
I feel the sting of your next Going.

EUSTACIA VYE.

The Last Writers' Congress

(Continued from page 10)

wing and revolutionary fiction since the last Congress is meagre. Novels have appeared by Fielding Burke and Leane Zugsmith. I have not, as yet, read these, and hence must reserve comment. The *New Masses* prize novel, "Marching, Marching!" appeared in 1935. It was a formula, badly written, utterly deficient in characterization. Edward Newhouse has written one slapdash novel. Clifton Cuthbert had produced a superficial strike novel.

One of the best periods in an artist's life is his first period. The young writer bursts upon the scene with a fresh sensibility. He has energy and ambition, and he is working under the stimulus of receiving recognition. He has not, as yet, had to cope with the corrupting problems and temptations that come with success and a reputation. He is still not wanted by Hollywood. We have before us a younger generation of American writers. Besides their youth, they have had, if one can believe what critics like Hicks, Cowley, and Gold said around 1935, all the advantages which come from associating themselves with the revolutionary movement. Their books have been lauded and advertised as works with a social conscience. They are living in one of the most interesting periods in the entire history of the world. They are writing of characters and events in a country that is very dynamic. They have material to utilize which has hitherto not been adequately treated in American literature. They are in a country which is at the beginning of its literary tradition rather than at the end. And this is their record during a period which should be their most fertile one. Why? If only a few had not published books, it would be an individual manifestation. It would be a matter of time. But here we do not have merely a few isolated cases. There are too many, and in my list, I have not cited all whom I might have mentioned. There are still more: Henry Hart, Dale Curran, the young poets, the playwrights, many of the critics. We must examine this record and consider it as a social manifestation.

This record provides us with a subject of investigation. It forces us to ask questions. And these questions cannot be answered in any cursory fashion. Now, when another Writers' Congress is in the offing, it is pointed and pertinent to conduct this investigation. What has been the record of the youngest and assumedly the most energetic generation of American writers in the interim between the two Congresses? What, in brief, have they been doing?

Besides his novels, "Studs Lonigan" and "A World I Never Made," James T. Farrell is the author of "A Note on Literary Criticism"; his most recent book is a collection of short stories, "Can All This Grandeur Perish?"

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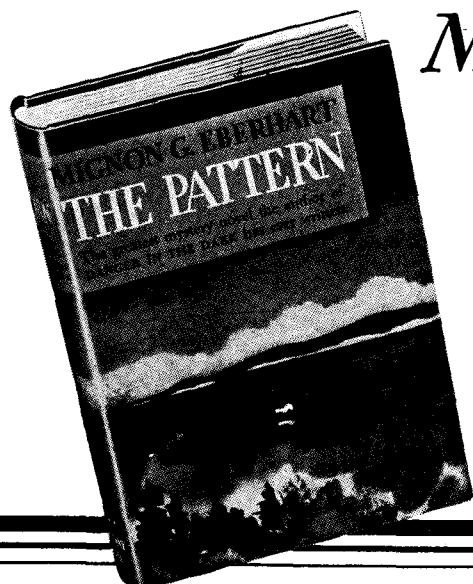
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A Tercentenary Symposium

FACTORS DETERMINING HUMAN BEHAVIOR. Harvard Tercentenary Publications—1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1937. \$2.50.

Reviewed by SOL WIENER GINSBURG, M.D.

TO celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the University and to give "corporate expression of gratitude to all who have built and enriched her life" Harvard summoned three score and more of the world's outstanding scholars to meet within her gates and to bring to an assembly of their intellectual peers the fruits of their attainments, each in his own province of learning. It is an alluring prospect to gather the great in many fields from scattered lands and bid them lend their acumen, experience, and achievement to the contemplation of human behavior. To judge solely from the volume here under review, the first of three such collections of essays read at the conference, the scheme was richer in promise than in fulfillment.

True, it would be a foolhardy scientist who would attempt to encompass, even from the narrower viewpoint of his own specialty, the entire field of behavior. War and sadism; culture and neurosis; poverty and nutrition; the state and authority; crime and punishment; disease and cure; heredity and environment. Need we wonder that the scientists have gazed, wondered, and retreated into the safer confines of academic usage?

There is opportunity here but for the briefest glance at the individual contributions. The structuralists are two: Adrian, the renowned Cambridge physiologist, who discusses briefly the implications of the concept of cortical (frontal) dominance in the control of behavior and confesses his belief that "it is, in fact, unlikely that neurological research will give new methods of control over human behavior." It is tempting to linger over the challenge he issues—"When all is said, a knowledge of physiology offers only one certain, though perhaps unattainable, method by which human behavior could

be improved. That is to breed men with larger brains." But Adrian is probably wiser in merely leaving us with the thought that "the importance of the cortex would be so magnified that the result would be beyond the power of human thought."

The second of the organicists is Collip, the Canadian biochemist, whose summation of much of our present knowledge of Hormones in Relation to Human Behavior is characteristically concise and conservative. With little waste he has discussed the evidence that the endocrine glands help determine human behavior and has illustrated his thesis from clinical medicine, zoölogy, and genetics. This is a field to which Collip has himself made the most important contributions, and it is exciting to watch the rush of progress in a field so long disturbed by quackeries and pseudo-science.

Rudolph Carnap, formerly of Prague and now at the University of Chicago, contributes an entirely characteristic essay on Logic. For Carnap it is essential that we obtain an adequate conception of the province of logic to enable us to "distinguish between thinking which is irrational or illogical and thinking which is reasonable or logical, and thus win a richer understanding of the ways in which logical and illogical thought may influence the activities of men." A perusal of this paper leaves one with a deep feeling of the magnitude of this task, and a new understanding of how men are "deceived by their desires and count on just that behavior in others which would coincide with their own needs."

There follows President Lowell's charming and enlightening excursion into the development of the British Parliamentary System. How beautifully it illustrates his theme: "I propose to show that the parliamentary system as it now stands was by no means contemplated by the men who brought it about; that it was in fact quite contrary to their theories of government; that the steps they took were consciously and rationally undertaken to meet certain immediate needs without a thought of possible ultimate

consequences; but that they naturally led to the system finally evolved." And how important it is that this thesis be fully appreciated!

Anthropology is ably represented by Malinowski and a restatement of his well known concept of Culture as a Determinant of Behavior. In a brief essay he has contrived to discuss such diverse, yet basic, matters as the culture of a typical nomad tribe (the Massai); to contrast it with that of a sedentary agricultural people (the Chagga); to speculate on "diseases of culture"; the family and social structure; primitive economics and other related matters and to allow us at least a glimpse of the "anthropology" of New York City.

The "professional" psychologists are three, Piaget, Jung, and Janet. This is not the place to attempt a critical evaluation of their contributions. Each has here summarized his already fully stated position, and the literature is abundant and profound in statement for and against these various concepts.

It is my opinion that the most glaring defect in this Symposium is the omission of any statement of Freud's contributions and the Freudian position. I am aware that this was probably brought about by external factors and reflects in no way the attitude of the University. But even though Freud himself was not available, certainly one of his brilliant pupils might well have been asked to the Conference. No attempt to understand human behavior in all its complexities and ramifications has been as fruitful and as daring as the psychoanalytic and none has influenced profoundly as many and diverse fields of scientific discipline.

Apocrypha out of Cambridge relates that on at least two occasions Jung was introduced as "Professor Freud." Perhaps this represented "collectively" unconscious wishful thinking.

Dr. Ginsburg, a practising psychiatrist, has in preparation a book on ethics.

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 9)

ply you will surely get, for any one who has read Mr. Looney's book with an open mind, has an open mind no longer, he is a disciple of Mr. Looney and the Shakespeare Fellowship, which now has branches in every civilized country.

When I read Mr. Barrell's paper in the S. R. L. of May first, I was moved to write to the editor, asking him to beware of articles by contributors who had not read "Shakespeare Identified." Then I thought it would be an unnecessary warning. Then the next issue appeared, with a paper written in the well-known vein of the Stratfordian adherents, and I decided it would be more help for our Oxford side than if it had not been printed! And I feel justified in my decision by the delightful page in a recent issue, whereon Mr. Barrell agrees that Mr. Stoll gives no evidence of having read the two basic books of the controversy.

The greatest literary question of the ages has been opened up by *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and for that gesture, no praise is too high.

CAROLYN WELLS.

New York City.

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