

L I T E R A R Y . . .

THE TRIVIAL ROUND

One of Rousseau's more neglected works is the first of his discourses, the *Discourse on Arts and Sciences*, which traces the decay of society to the advance of the arts and sciences. It is a violent, one-sided attack on society, which, in spite of its exceedingly radical outlook, won him the prize for which he was competing. Since Rousseau's time society is said to have made great improvements, and the arts and sciences have made amazing advances, the latter, it is true, largely stimulated by war.

The questions raised by contemplation of Rousseau's ideas of the relation of formal education to contemporary life remind me of a story once related by my friend O'Toole, scholar, literatus and man of affairs. A gentleman of Falstaffian proportions and tastes, and a confirmed admirer of Bernard Shaw, Damon Runyon and Von Rosenroth, he used to make his presence felt in the upper regions of Spring Garden Road before his departure for the Oriental Institute to study the life of Zoroaster preparatory to writing a book, since issued, (*En Soph and the Zend-Avesta*, London, 1943).

He had just returned from a lecture given by Peabody, then in the middle of his lecture series on this continent, on Solovoyov's conception of Tohuwabohu; at least, that's what he told me. Personally, I seldom attend lectures, particularly ones of this kind, but O'Toole seemed to enjoy the things and it's a free country.

"What the dickens was that . . . that thing you said he was lecturing on?" I asked, genuinely astonished that even O'Toole knew what it meant. "Solovoyov's conception of what?"

"It is only a technical term for the schlechte unendlichkeit, which you in your ignorance would call 'chaos.'" He seemed pleased about something, and I asked him if the lecture had been good.

"Mediocre," he sniffed audibly. "The idiot completely over-looked Von Rosenroth's influence on Solovoyov. But I heard an excellent story this afternoon (I sighed) which I will condescendingly relay to you. I know you haven't any lectures for an hour and a half or so, so it's no use making excuses to get away; besides, it'll be good for your uneducated soul. . . ."

"Uneducated, hell!" I was disturbed. "What d'you mean, uneducated? I get my first degree next year."

"Degree!" he sat back and laughed at me. "Listen. This'll illustrate the value of your precious degree. My story concerns little Oscar, who, at the tender age of sixteen, came to college, and left behind him a memorable example of Manhood, Gentleness and Learning which no one has bothered to follow. He was a success at everything he went in for, which was quite a lot. He was president of the Cercle Francais for two years, of the Classics Club for one and of the S. C. M. for one year in his undergraduate days. He was a model church-goer, and did not smoke. Needless to say, he never touched intoxicants, and did a frightful amount of work. His marks were never below first divs., and he majored in Classics with distinction. When he got his degree he also got half a dozen medals and things, and proceeded elsewhere for a while. He got homesick, however, and found residences rowdy, so back he came to take his master's (also in Classics with high honors, medals and things).

"He was a model graduate, just as he had been a model undergraduate; his comments on the themes he marked were made in beautiful copperplate, interspersed with authoritative quotations from proper Latin authors, and generally longer than the theme itself. He was in charge of the library for a while, and directed all the undergraduates away from the mediocrities they had been assigned to read to authors such as Plato, Aristotle and, occasionally, Hans Andersen. The authorities thought this too much of a good thing, and requested that he desist, but only because, as they carefully explained, undergraduates were not expected to show good judgment at such early ages.

"He realised his responsibilities to the undergraduates, (how few, alas, do) and was always a protector of them. Once, I remember, the Glee Club was doing a play, and one of the directors forgot to cut out a 'damn' in it. Oscar wrote a stinker of a letter to the editor of the Gazette; it must have contained fifteen hundred words, and was half Latin. Old Bert, who was editor in those days, had it translated: the gist was that Oscar was horrified to think that the Undergraduates had been subjected to such blasphemous drama and that someone ought to do something about it. Bert was too canny to risk being impeached for sedition by not printing it, so at the next Council meeting he asked the Council whether it wanted a special issue printed in which the letter should be printed. The Council thought he was joking, until they saw the signature and realised the mess they were in. When a righteous fella like Oscar starts a row, he won't stop it; any attempt to merely shelf the matter would look like black corruption to Oscar. The Council should have written a congratulatory letter to him, and appointed a committee to investigate the matter for the next five years, when Oscar might have forgotten about it. But they didn't. They wanted no part of the thing, and since the committee method is the way in which they usually deal with everything, it never occurred to them to use it in a crisis like this. They cursed the Editor freely for not keeping it and its consequences to himself, refused to finance a specially illustrated issue for it, and sent it to the Senate. It reached the Senate at about the same time as Oscar arrived in the Gazette office, wanting to know why in 'goodness' name hadn't his letter been published."

"Just a minute," I said. "Why the dickens should they worry about him? What could he do?"

"Ah, I see you aren't familiar with the 'righteous graduate' type, they're all morals and principles—no compromise. Don't want anything themselves, you know, just want to do the right thing. They write letters to papers, and eventually the College loses face. Can't reason with 'em—they smell a rat if you do. Expect everything to be fair, square and above-board.

Cool is the wayward breath of time
That reaps the seeds so lightly in the air
The sun has set beneath the sleeping sea
Without a promise that the dawn be fair.

Low has the wind of night
Caressed the sleeping land,
And overhead the moon's new light
Binds the sea with a silvery band.

Deep in this shadowy vale,
Remembering dead hopes and live despair,
The visions of our passing beauty pale
To see the distant stars entangled in night's hair.

Cool as the wayward breath of time
That reaps the seeds so lightly in the air,
The sun has set beneath the sleeping sea;
I wonder, will the dawn be fair?

C. S. WEBBER.

He was the very apotheosis of the upright graduates. Wait 'til you see the Glee Club play next month and if you notice a lot of explosive 'gosh-darns,' 'gol-dings' and 'oh bothers' in it, you'll know why.

"Anyway, Oscar arrived at the Gazette, and Bert put him off with a line of twaddle about subordinate errors, and promised to investigate the matter. When Oscar had gone, he 'phoned the President of the Council and told him that he was going to tell Oscar that the Council was attending to the matter. The President called the Council in, and they cursed freely for a little while. Then the President called the secretary of the Senate, and told him that they would refer Oscar to the Senate.

"A little later, a meeting of the Senate, the Board, the Premier of the Province and the C.C.U.F. called in Oscar, and a long oration in Hebrew was delivered. They caught Oscar in his weak spot: Sanscrit he spoke fluently, besides Latin, Greek and Phoenician. It is said also that he had actually deciphered some Cretan from the Rio Tinto district, and knew more about the Eighteenth Dynasty love lyrics found in Thebes than any scholar in North America, but he knew no Hebrew. For three hours he heard the oration, and concluded that the matter was settled; at any rate, he hadn't the nerve to ask about it then. He continued his studies, and is now immersed in the early 1440 Hebrew edition of the Cabala. Thought he ought to learn it, you know."

"What's all this got to do with a degree?" I asked, thinking that I had him there.

"My dear imbecile," he replied. "If you take your education seriously, like our Oscar, you become like him. If not, what good does it do you. At the moment he is immersed in the heaviest metaphysics that exist. I would like, though, to get his opinion on Von Rosenroth. Useless stuff—education. Impractical."

"Then what the devil do you take it for?" I asked, considerably nettled. "Surely there must be some good in anything you take."

"Your sarcasm does you little credit, my dear fella. When you get your lovely degree, tied up with ribbons and all, I hope you do better. I'm impractical also, and it's a good way to pass the time. Good stuff to impress the yokels with; 'bye.'"

He left.

Six hundred and fifty students were able to take 5400 examinations this spring at the Milan University through the efforts of International Student Service who established a student foyer and stocked it with a circulating library of 1000 books and 1700 sets of mimeographed lecture notes.

Socialism From An Historical Point Of View

The need for socialism grows as the mass of industry grows. This is true for two reasons.

A hundred years ago a man with a thousand dollars and the needed brains could start manufacturing almost anything; now he needs a million dollars and a huge efficient organization in order to compete at all. Thus monopolies and the obvious injustices which they bring are possible and dangerous to an extent unheard of in the past. A huge corporation can control a whole industry and raise its prices to exorbitant levels; in the future, under a capitalist system, it will be able, by bungling and selfishness, to wreck the entire economy of a nation.

Because so much capital is invested in industry and so many people are dependent on it for a living, the law of supply and demand is not allowed to work. When supply of an article almost reaches demand, it is restricted by management, thus causing at one and the same time unemployment and an unnatural rise in prices; buying power is restricted; this spreads to other industries; unemployment causes a relative lowering of wages, and we have a depression. The magnitude of the depression increases relatively to the amount of money invested in industry and the proportion of the population dependent on industry for a living.

Thus the world's need for economic planning has been growing steadily for a hundred and fifty years—ever since the industrial revolution began.

We are on the crest of a great inevitable wave which is surging on, not because of itself, but be-

cause of the world's history. Feudalism declined and the age of industry came in because the world had reached certain milestones in its intellectual, trading, and industrial achievements. Capitalism grew because of the world's desire to utilize its new inventions and discoveries. Capitalism is dying and socialism coming because the development of industry has reached a stage where capitalism no longer makes the best use of the world's resources. When socialism, due to changing world conditions, can no longer fill the bill, a new order will take its place.

Economic planning, I say, is inevitable. We cannot stem the tide. We can only decide one issue: shall we have autocratic socialism, under a dictator, or shall we have democratic socialism, run by the people's elected representatives? Fifty years from now no other kinds of government will be possible.

F. HOLM.

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