

15 CENTS A COPY

FIRST STATEMENT

IN THIS ISSUE—

LET'S WIN THE PEACE — IRVING LAYTON.

POEMS MARIO PRIZEK, JOHN SUTHERLAND
DONALD STEWART.

STORIES JIM DORKEN.

CONVALESCENCE IN WRITING— J. SUTHERLAND.

ARTICLES CRITICISM & REVIEWS

MAY, 1944.

VOL.2, NO.7.

U. S. LIBRARY
INADIAN PROSE & POETRY

JUN 1 1944

PERIODICALS

A Game of Chess

—JIM DORKEN

David did not answer. His eyes were following a squad, detailed for fatigue duty, marching three abreast, their implements tilted across their shoulders. Finally he turned his head, and the mousy light from the table-lamp made his eyes blink.

"I was wondering . . ." he began to say, but Ben exploded, "Christ, when aren't you? Since you were knee-high to a grasshopper you've been carrying that poky look on your face." He strode over to him and tapped him on the shoulder, not unkindly. "Nothing will wash it off. Not even the army. Not even this damn, bloody mess of a war." And smilingly, "Alright kid, what's it about?"

Instead of replying, David said abruptly, "How about a game of chess? I'll tell you some other time."

"Sure!"

Ben dived under the bed, poked and squirmed between the valises and after a few grunts emerged, holding a varnished oblong box in one hand and a chessboard in the other. David dumped the books and army pamphlets on the bed and straightened the table.

"Here I take another beating," Ben said cheerfully, settling himself into his chair. He arranged the shiny pieces slowly and

methodically. Across the hallway a radio was throbbing insistently in a low, monotonous hum. The occupant of the room was either gone out for the evening or fast asleep.

"Must we listen to that?" David said irritably. "Can't you turn the damn thing off? We haven't got that noise in our barracks."

Ben laughed. "I feel better now. I shan't imagine you envying me. You see for yourself what I've got to put up with."

Growling something indistinctly, David picked up a book from the bed and turned the pages aimlessly. For a few seconds neither of the brothers said a word. The light from the table-lamp flooded the chess-board, illuminating the black and white squares and giving the pieces an almost velvety appearance. One might imagine a military ball about to begin; the bishops with their sly, cruel mouths, the knights impatient and arrogant. The pawns alone seemed unconcerned, like two rows of flunkies awaiting the passage of the royal train.

The radio from across the hallway still continued to hum, but now disconsolately as if unsure of itself. And all of a sudden the hut door banged open; a loud, steady march of military boots began down the long hall. There was much laughter, and the loud voices blurred into meaningless screams. Then the noise from the tramping boots died down to an echo and as though the adjacent walls had absorbed it to themselves, disappeared.

"Your brother officers." David sneered, and jerked a thumb in the direction of the hallway. "A pack of drunken snobs."

Ben looked at his brother quizzically and rubbed the scar on his heavy chin. It was a tiny scar, like the permanent nick from a razor. He always did that when he was annoyed. He let his annoyance pass over and said nothing until David, giving a short, nervous, half-apologetic laugh ventured:

"Don't know what makes me so jumpy. It can't be the army has really been giving me coffee, can it?"

"There you go again," Ben replied, trying to control his anger. "The army, the army, always the army. What in the name of Jesus did you want to enlist for? The food is no good; the morale stinks; the officers are a pack of snobs; and Churchill has made a bargain with the devil. What has got into you anyway?"

David avoided his brother's eyes. His face flushed.

"When I see you staring out into space as you often do, I say to myself, 'David is an intellectual. Right now, he's probably

pulverizing Hegel.' And I'm envious, because I can't pulverize Mickey Mouse. Don't stop me! Listen to me! There are many times when I've said to myself, 'I wish I had my kid brother's brain. He knows everything and what he doesn't know he wants to know.' But lately —"

"You've had some doubts!" David broke in. Even to himself, as angry as he was, his words sounded menacing. He felt that needles were draining the blood from his cheeks. "So what! So who cares! When one is in the driver's seat, everything looks different. Without that serge and a batman . . ."

"You've said enough, David," his brother said quietly. "Did you come to play chess or to shout your fool head off?"

Whenever Ben was really angered he spoke quietly. He simply froze up. His face became sombre and his eyes, usually good-natured, lost their laughter and assumed a dull, perplexed expression. David began to reproach himself; he hadn't meant to quarrel with his brother. He loved him in a mixed-up way for his warm, inclusive nature — because he had nothing to fear from him. And so, still averting his eyes from Ben's face, he said, "Hell, you always get me wrong." He tried to laugh but failed, and that added a little to each other's irritation. "Can't you stand a bit of gaff, Herr Lieutenant?"

Ben said nothing but removing a rook, he began to drum the table with it. After all, David was his kid brother. Still, at twenty-four . . .

"My move." David hesitated for a moment before he nervously pushed the king's pawn two squares up.

"H'm. Rather orthodox."

"You should worry," David retorted. A thick frown settled on his forehead, dividing it neatly.

The game progressed slowly, the fortunes of battle changing with every move. After a half-an-hour the chess-men, black against white, were strewn over the board in clustering groups or outposts, making a pattern whose secret only the tense players could know. Ben marched his two knights well into the enemy's territory. He was excited to find that his position was nearly impregnable, enabling him to take the offensive and to drive David's men out of one pill-box after another. O yes, tonight it was different. Tonight, surely he would win. He scratched his razor-nick of a scar and chewed at his unlit pipe.

Why had he never won before? What was the matter with him anyway? In all the years that he had played his younger brother, he had never succeeded in wresting a single game from him. One night he managed to clinch a draw. That was many years ago. His failure had become a family joke. When his sisters wanted to be spiteful they would say, "You do such and such — just like you play chess." It hurt too. He felt that it carried the connotation of mental inferiority. And when his mother, a well-meaning, obtuse woman, tried to laugh it off for him — well, it only made it worse.

"Well!" she would say. "What can you expect? David is a student and you, heaven be praised, earn a good living. We can't all be so clever as David."

And David had been sent to college because he was nimble-witted and when he won the debate that year, his mother fussed about it to the family for weeks afterwards. She would tell the story to anyone with the willingness to listen, of how David had stood up on the platform looking like the Prime Minister in his black tuxedo, and how the audience had applauded his speech noisily. Even when he had barely scraped through the year, his mother excused him, saying, "David reads so much, he hasn't time for studies."

He, Ben, had gone straight into business. No one had expected him to do anything else. There was nothing sensational about him. He had none of his brother's restless energy. He was slow and plodding and cautious. He was incapable of making an epigram. In politics he was a Conservative perhaps as a reaction to David's speechifying about the wrongs done to the proletariat. When the war started, without saying a word to anyone, he went down quietly and enlisted in the Signal Corps. After six months in one of the country's army camps he had been sent to Brockville to try for a commission. Now a lieutenant he was stationed in Vimy where David, also in the Signal Corps, was learning to operate a wireless set. David had enlisted only after the German armies had invaded Russia.

"Are you going to move that piece today or tomorrow? David asked sarcastically.

"All in good time," Ben said. Making a flank movement with his rook he had the pleasure of seeing David wince.

"Not bad." David said slowly.

On looking up from the board Ben saw that David's face,

usually mobile, had become set as if the facial muscles had been stretched. His eyes actually looked frightened.

He's got his wind up, Ben thought; but he said nothing and waited for David's next play. It was a bad move. Opening his centre to two possible lines of attack, it sapped his whole system of defence. The initiative had now passed to Ben who was trying to manage his excitement. Easy now, he told himself. The game isn't over yet. Twice before the same thing had happened and each time Ben, through carelessness or some pricking of inferiority, had made a silly move and lost the game. He read in David's eyes that he expected him to do it again this time, but he knew that he wouldn't, that he was going to be alert and cautious, and that he was going to drive that slow brain of his until he had achieved his first victory. The two brothers were breathing heavily like wrestlers in each other's muscular grip; together with the insistent hum from the radio across the hallway it made the silence heavy, ominous.

"Check!"

David countered effectively.

"I don't care a button whether I win or lose," David said.

"I don't believe you," Ben retorted.

They were brothers.

And then without a warning David got up, said he was taking time out. He began to pace up and down the room, pausing to rearrange some books on the dresser. After a while he sat down and mechanically began to rub his palms against his tunic as if to dry the sweat in them. There wasn't a drop of blood in his cheeks. He turned to Ben:

"You've asked me why I enlisted. I'll tell you why."

"You don't have to. You enlisted because Russia was attacked."

"Yes, of course! Of course that was it! Before the Soviets got into this war, it was just another filthy imperialist swindle. Same as the last one. A scramble for markets and cheaper sources of profit."

"And what about the unemployed? The war was sprung to kill them off as well. You forgot to add that one!"

David clenched his fingers so that the blood rushed away from his knuckles.

"Very, very clever . . . It's still a good explanation. If you

know a better one I'd like to hear it. What about the depression? There was no money then. But there's lots of money now, eh? Why? Just answer me that one!"

"I'm a soldier," Ben laughed, "not a speech-maker. That's your department."

"To hell with you! It's morons like you that have gotten us into it. O yes you'll do your duty alright. But ask you to think — that's too hard. It's much easier to die nobly, brother, isn't it?"

Ben lit his pipe and started to puff slowly. He wasn't the least bit ruffled. They had had such arguments before and David's vocabulary of abuse, he knew, was an extensive one. Everyone was out of step but David. Besides, it was growing late. He was anxious to finish the game.

"Is that what you wanted to tell me?" Ben said quietly.

"No . . . no, that wasn't it at all. Big words don't fool any one. At least, not for long. Sooner or later you get found out . . . I couldn't make her suffer any more."

"Make whom suffer?" Ben asked impatiently.

It was as though one of the chess-men had spoken. David didn't look up. His voice was expressionless.

"When I told her I wanted to break the engagement, she cried hysterically. Then we went for a long walk and I tried to explain myself to her. It was the only honest thing I ever did. But she wouldn't listen. She just kept on crying silently and her eyes became swollen and I hated her because I pitied her and because she made me make her suffer."

"You didn't love Anne. What else could you do?" Ben said.

"I don't know. Maybe I did love her. Maybe I loved her all the time without knowing it. Anne . . . Anne was a wonderful woman, Ben. Hell, I'm all mixed up."

"Go on." Ben said kindly. "Get it off your chest. I'm listening."

"I think I'm a coward, Ben." David said slowly. "Or am I? Hell, I wish I knew. I wish I could say to myself once and for all, 'This is what you are.' I'd be happy then. I would go about and say to every one, 'I'm a coward, you know.' And before they had a chance to say anything I would shout, 'Yes, I'm an awful coward.' I'd be happy then, I tell you. It's this . . . this not knowing who you are that's got me down. I failed once and ran away. It may happen again . . . on the battlefield. But I tell you I couldn't see her suffer any more. There was no other bond left to us but her suffering. She

would begin to cry after I had humiliated her and her tears would make me pity her. Then I would take her in my arms and I would be happy that such a wonderful bond of sympathy existed between us. Sadism? No. That was the only way I could establish any communication between us. Through misery, through suffering. Now do you know why I enlisted?"

David had spoken with passion and he looked at Ben as if expecting him to say something. Ben said nothing. He was thinking of a witticism David had made on a gayer occasion, 'We are punished not for our sins but for our stupidity.'

As if he had read his brother's thought David went on: "A failure, that's me. Whatever I've tried in the army has been a flop. They gave me a try at a commission same as you. But you can't get it by knowing how to spell 'dipsomaniac.' Thought without action is a disease. There's one of my epigrams. Mine is only a verbal cleverness, however." And then he added bitterly, "Maybe I should try something simple, like basket-making."

"Oh, it's not that bad." Ben said gently. He recalled his mother's pride in David and the many years of unsuccessful chess-playing against him.

David got up and began to pace the room again. When he sat down he was still agitated but the blood had returned to his cheeks. He regarded Ben thoughtfully for a moment.

"Surprised?" He asked.

"By what?"

"By what I've told you of course."

"A little. I hadn't figured you out like that. Maybe what you need is a forty-eighter."

"You're hopeless, Ben." David flung out angrily. "Maybe what I object to is being one indistinguishable uniform among thousands. Who knows me? I'm just a number. I'm told when to get up, what to eat, where to go and what to do when I've gotten there. I'm filled with loathing for myself and for my species when we're marched onto the square and off again. A hundred times a day I say to myself, 'What if I were to drop out of this meaningless brown river. Drop to the bottom, so to speak. Who would notice me?' But they do. They never stop noticing you. Even when you're a dead pidgeon, there's some one who takes down your number . . . Hell, I wish they blow me to bits!"

Ben had let his pipe go out. He now lit it again and puffed

until the hollow had a blazing coal in it. His patience was almost at an end. He wanted to say to his brother what an ass he thought him, what an immature, melodramatic fool he was. What he did say was:

"Better than I, Dave, you know what this war is about. It seems to me that you're an individualist. Despite your fine talk about —"

"Say it!" David interrupted. "Despite my fine talk about humanity and the new world I can't merge myself with others. Heavens, man, don't you think I've said that to myself a thousand times?" The reaction had set in and now he hated his brother for having confided in him. "I haven't got your stolid nature. When I march in a platoon I feel that I'm suffocating. I could beat with my fists the soldiers who surround me. Yes, I could kill them for being so sheeplike."

David flung out his arm and with the side of his palm flicked a pawn so that it toppled over and rolled about on the board.

"That's the way I feel, Ben. As insignificant as that. Do you understand now?"

And then because somehow it didn't look right to see that pawn sprawling on the chess-board, David picked it up and stood it upright on its proper square. As if the movement of his arm had crystallized his thoughts he said:

"Let's finish the game. It's my move. At least I can still beat you in chess."

"I've got this game sewn up," Ben said.

"Just the same I'll win. Your move."

Ben seemed to waver a moment and then recalled his knight.

"That'll cost you the game!" David exclaimed. "That's the slip I was waiting for."

He was right. Fifteen minutes later the game was over. David had won.

"Well, I'm still the champion." David said.

"You always were." Ben said quietly.

There was a moment's silence.

"Let's go for a walk." David said.

"Sure."

They put on their greatcoats and strode out into the sharp, cold night. The radio across the hallway was still humming to itself.

Umbra

I

Within the circle of an hour's death,
 Past the unboxed body measured in the hall,
 Beyond the chanting waters, in the dark
 The pale moon raised itself above the wall.
 — And can't remember whether we have seen before
 Or were seen with,
 Or, having seen, forgot the inner door;
 But as if a ghost had lost itself
 Within the mind there throbs a time
 Of things before it was —
 So early seen
 So clearly known,
 But now not shown,
 Except the moon unrest the mind.

II

Questions must not be asked, nor answers spoken.
 The violation of death is worse than a life
 Of violation —
 Let no more be said —
 Only of things taken too late,
 Only of things taken too soon.
 And sometimes not at all.
 This silence balanced on the point of hope
 Fails to enrich the mind.
 Where is a haven? Where are we to find
 A coffin for the anxious heart?
 Questions must not be asked; but, as a token to fear,
 Shadows the moon, blooms the dark earth,
 And blast the man

III

"To be or not to be" is not.
The problem is there
Seated with Miss Jones at the table,
With ices, and the crises,
(The violent dress
Does so depress
Her breasts, that they are not
All they should be).
One can't preserve a settled dignity,
And so one coughs,
"More soda, please!"
Between the moon and something else
She grins vermillionly, and
Blesses little children over gin,
But now the mind is filled beyond the measure
Of irony.
Even in slight pressure there is pleasure —
But move the knee.
Three times the flesh recoils.
And fragrant oils
Laden the air with atoms of olfactory bliss
And the moment's wild suspense.
There is no will
Between the moon and something else —
"Three drops are dangerous, sir!"

IV

Thus nothing happens, but one sees
The ghost of ruins in each builded house,
The thrust of brittle beams snapped short,
The fractured wall —
As if all held too much,
And suddenly in the apocalyptic dusk
The house looms whole and dark
Against the rising gloom.

MARIO PRIZEK

Let's Win the Peace

IRVING LAYTON

Now that victory over Fascism is close at hand, it is only reasonable that some people should talk openly about the likelihood of World War III. Nerves which have become habituated to tumult and slaughter perhaps dread an abnormal interval of peace. The war has acted as a powerful stimulant to the feeble hormones of many baffled individuals. Its effect on them has been in the nature of an aphrodisiac. They have been given a sense of excited activity which peace, colourless and unhectic, had deprived them of. Furthermore, propaganda has made so many otherwise overlooked sections of the population feel important that the war's finish tomorrow would be construed by them as a personal insult. Together with those of chronic alarmists and religious cranks, who don't see in the present conflict a big enough carnage to justify their millennial prophecies, the croakings of this morbid phalanx of despair may be dismissed as wishful thinking.

When, however, an able political analyst like Dorothy Thompson warns us that another war is in the making the matter becomes serious. Nor has she been the only one to do so. In recent months, just when the German armies have been routed on every front, a number of distinguished journalists, including Freda Kirchwey of the Nation, have underscored the diplomatic rifts between the Allies and their implication for the post-war world. Politics makes strange bedfellows — and they're beginning to jab each other under the blankets. Despite Moscow and Teheran, mile-stones on the road to international amity, United Nations remains only a clever slogan for winning the war. Envisaging the cynicism stemming from the failure to inject reality into that slogan, conscientious writers and politicians have expressed concern with the war's political direction. They insist that its continuance makes another conflict inevitable; that, truthfully, its eggs already have

been laid in the fox-holes of the present one.

"Madness!" say the decent, virtuous people everywhere. They mistake, however, their own shudderings for political realities. The war that broke out in September 1939 appeared no less an impossible piece of madness to the men and women who survived the last one. The arguments have a familiar ring. "Just imagine what the next war would be like!" Shudder. Shudder. Such people are the salt of the earth and their moral revulsion does them credit. Innocence at all times is a charming virtue, never more so than in these bloody, disloyal times. If only a permanent political philosophy could be founded on a moral shudder.

But if common sense and the experience of the last three decades have proven anything, it is that moral intuitions are futile, in fact dangerous, when unsupported by a wisdom which makes provision for their successful expression. People shuddered when Japan invaded Manchuria and bombed its peaceful inhabitants into submission. They shuddered again when Mussolini opened his enormous mouth to swallow Ethiopia. The peoples of France and Britain shuddered — O how they shuddered — when the cynical Hoare-Laval agreement was finally exposed: did that prevent their governments from shipping war supplies to the Blackshirt legions? The moral twitchings became even more agitated during the Spanish Civil War: did that prevent the disgusting fraud of Non-intervention? When the turn of Czechoslovakia arrived, we hadn't a shudder left in our systems. A few sandbags in the principal parks of London was the best that we could do.

Let us admit it openly: we were accomplices before the crime. We helped to arm Hitler, and Mussolini, and Hirohito, the unholy trinity against whom our statesmen now unleash their most violent rhetoric. Our own Prime Minister publicly congratulated himself that he had secured excellent business relations with the Japanese — we were shipping them scrap iron and metals — one month before the outbreak of the war. The bank of England loaned Hitler money which they had withheld from the liberal Bruening; the Bank of France was no less unreasonably generous. Directly or indirectly we connived at, encouraged and supported every one of Hitler's aggressions. With a wink and a nod and a final handclasp under the table, we assured Hitler that it was quite safe for him to rob and plunder his neighbours. The Right Book Club issued hundreds of pamphlets, brochures, and leafy volumes to justify his brutal

crimes. All the best people were eager to invite this neurotic thug to their exclusive dinner parties. The infatuation was so blind that when Litvinov, speaking for the one country that recognized the menace of Fascism, pleaded for collective security at the League of Nations, he could only get the empty benches to listen to him. He was told in a cultured British accent to go back to Moscow, there to enjoy his pipe dream of peace.

Let us, I say, admit all this openly. For unless we do so, and unless we draw the proper conclusions from the facts, this frightful bloodletting will be a monstrous, unforgiveable crime. It will mean a betrayal of people's hopes greater and more shameful than that which occurred after the last shambles. And the consequences will be even more terrible. Instead of one Hitler, ten will arise to scourge the human race. The fabric of morality will be shattered forever, and tyrannies will spring up beside which Fascism will appear beneficent. We were blind. We were indifferent to human suffering. We were incredibly stupid. In this indictment I include not only our leaders but also the many people who through intellectual and moral inertia allowed themselves to be misled and duped. Unless the bombs that have fallen on Berlin have also bombed that inertia and stupidity out of us, we shall have done nothing but added to the total sum of human wretchedness.

Why was Hitler for so long a time winning? Why did he succeed in getting so many to do his dirty work for him — both in his own country and out of it? He had willing tools, quislings and under-cover agents long before the fall of Norway exposed them to public execration. His network of contemptible spies and saboteurs extended everywhere; not a single country was immune. He found helpers in the highest and lowest places, men and women who worked fanatically to extend his black empire, capitalist and proletarian, farmer and intellectual. History some day will give the final answer; for now it is sufficient to say that Hitler was the amorphous embodiment of capitalism's decay. Like some primitive monster, he crawled out of its slime and corruption.

The frictions, conflicts, stresses and strains, the economic, political, and psychological tensions which an outmoded productive system generates in its dying phase — these he cleverly manipulated in his struggle for power. More fortunate in this than imperialistic Rome, he had no call to manufacture divisions: they already existed to hand. There was the constant antagonism between rich

and poor, exacerbated by economic depression; the discord between agrarian and urbanite; the psychotic fears of the middle class. A competitive society is a society without a common ethos. Where groups and classes exist, having contradictory economic interests, they will pursue those interests with a banal ferocity. There will be insecurity; insecurity breeds fear; fear, hatred. The pattern is as old as Greece and Rome. With good reason, Plato had equated Justice with social harmony. A competitive society which hurls class against class, group against group, is morally sick. It must disintegrate or submit to dictatorship. Playrights and poets, novelists like D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, have given literary expression to the hatred and self-contempt which like chlorine gas was seeping through our civilization. Very few really escaped it. There was a little corner in people's hearts that was Hitler's before he ever started. That was the chief reason for his success — that plus the heavy backing from the Ruhr industrialists.

After that it was touch and go. One country after another fell to Hitler because like Germany itself they were internally divided. Or because the Western democracies led by heartless politicians serving special interests, duped themselves into believing that the intended victim was the peoples of the Soviet Union. France fell because its privileged groups preferred defeat by the Nazis to social reform. Their slogan, uttered with passionate insistence in all the Rightist newspapers was, "Better Hitler than Leon Blum." Well, they got Hitler but they also got a great deal they hadn't bargained for. And if the execution of Pucheu means anything, their troubles have only started.

We were saved at the last hour, first by the British, afterwards by the Russians. At this date the Nazis have been chased into Czechoslovakia and are still fleeing. Good. Excellent. But while there is fulsome admiration for the Russian victories, there is no comprehension or even curiosity as to what made these victories possible. Here again, our rulers have acted with their usual astuteness. They have allowed only so much of the truth about the Soviet Union to reach the masses as our military alliance with that country has dictated. The Russians have been praised for their scorched earth policy, for their valour, for their fighting spirit, for their brilliant generalship, and even for having Stalin as their leader. The one thing that they have not been praised for is for having established a classless society. The Soviet Union owes its

victories to economic democracy. In that country the lands, mines, factories, all the means of production are publicly owned. They belong to the people and can never be alienated from them. That is the fundamental law of the land. No individual through his ownership of a machine can exploit the labour of another. It is this which explains the Russians' self-denial, their furious zeal, and their astounding successes.

Since the isolation of the Soviet Union — engineered by the miserable Lavals and Chamberlains — was a contributory factor in the war's outbreak, it must never again be allowed to happen. We have much to learn from the Russians as they have from us. The historic conferences at Moscow and Teheran laid the groundwork for post-war collaboration between the Allies. In the achievement of that aim lies our only hope for avoiding another world conflict. Let us not, however, mistake the wish for the fact. Although the world has moved on since 1939, some people still need reminding on that point. These are the same people who would like to go back to old-fashioned imperialism, power politics, and backstairs diplomacy. Priding themselves on being tough and realistic, they are not yet convinced that Machiavellianism is a mug's game. What they want and what the people want are two different things.

The war has thrown up genuine democratic leaders like Tito and De Gaulle. This is the century of the common man. Everywhere the people are on the march, putting an end forever to poverty — today an economic anachronism — the exploitation of backward nations, social and political injustice. Combining intelligence with moral indignation they plan, to quote from the concluding part of De Gaulle's speech to the Consultative Assembly to establish a system in which "the great sources of national wealth will belong to the nation, and the direction and control of this wealth by the state will be undertaken with the assistance of workers and entrepreneurs . . . Lastly, this system will work in harmony with every other nation cooperating within an international setup so arranged that, in a world where henceforth independence will be law, each nation, can develop along its own lines, without having to bear political and economic oppression."

This is the authentic voice of democracy.

Triumph

Not lulled by sleep's pretenses, when I see
The star above me in the cave of night
Wink dimly at the zero sign of being,
I rise to force my image on the room.

Glad as I walk to feel my blundering form
Trample on shapes of things that, during day,
Like snakes raise threatening heads to strike, and now
Drop their defenceless shadows on the floor,
Striding in might across their heaps of dead,
I pull a hidden cord, and seem to hear
The loud bulb shatter silence with its peals
And fill the darkness with the noise of light.

Afterwards iron stillness. But I stand
Not moving, while unceasing swarms of light
Crawl slowly on their heavy wings, and hive
Their honey in the white comb of the walls:

Brooding all-powerful above their work,
I let my shadow, humid over them,
Tilt like a weighted petal, or a cloud
That fills them with a prescience of rain.

JOHN SUTHERLAND

Meditation

On the Approach of Peace

Peace has its hazards for the warrior
outliving battle. Stricken unawares
by strife's cessation in once-livid skies
he is estranged from death and grows afraid
of unheroic dying day by day.
Where there is no barrage to scream his doom

but only the complaint of nightingales
 time vanquishes. It is the wound that change
 impresses from all quarters he will fear
 who never was a coward ranged with steel;
 and habit will unspring his wire-taut nerves
 which no alarm had troubled. Common reach

will prove too mean for whom the bullet's speed
 compacted distance to his finger-tip.

And once unarmored what an enemy
 in legion minutes and unnumbered days
 and season's unrelenting pendulum
 will now affront him. O the taste of death
 always against the tongue is bearable
 beside the poison killing undiscerned.
 Peace he will win, but peace may conquer him.

For, tutored to a text-book death, his brain
 will fumble with the thousand various foes
 that noiselessly invade him. Waked at night
 to crushing quiet his protesting sweat
 will not defend him from his single self.
 Nor will he know the picric of despair
 before its onset, so he might adjust
 a masked protection. Nor his old pretense
 of guessing a trajectory will save
 his heart from flesh and marrow piercing love
 where he must stand exposed of every sense
 at all times to the mortars of desire.

If he was brave he must be stronger now
 and break and mend himself of graver wounds
 and patch his courage daily till he die
 by random infiltration where he most
 mocked at attack. Humility built high
 and thick for rampart, careless pride will breach
 and front him naked to deflecting fire.
 Or if he map offensives to outflank
 persistent doubt, while moving up his faith,
 a shaft may crack that geared his confidence
 and he is lost.

There is a war within

that sounds no bugle and no victory
 with graven monument and medalled breast
 And battle fiercer in its noiselessness
 and harsh defeat unhistoried, and wounds
 unseen that never heal. And there is strife
 enough to balance all inglorious death
 or shameless decadence that slowly kills.
 No pyramid or obelisk entombs
 the brightest agony or noblest cause
 that earth has wept to silence and to sleep
 unmemoried, unsung.

—DONALD STEWART

Convalescence and Writing

—JOHN SUTHERLAND

(Note:- This is the last of two selections from an essay on Nietzsche)

After the passages in praise of his excellent books, it is strange to hear Nietzsche declaring in *Ecce Homo* that nothing is so painful to a writer as his own writing, and nothing so desirable as to put his finished book behind him. The average writer whose work is an absorbing experience wants a period of rest when it is over: Nietzsche (if we can accept his own account, and there is no reason why we should not) undergoes almost an illness and needs a period of convalescence. How is it that in the same book in which he declares himself a fatality, he says that his writing affects him like a mortal sickness? Perhaps no real contradiction exists: perhaps he is simply capable on one occasion of taking an immense pride in his work and on another of feeling an intense dislike for it. After an interval of time, it may be possible to write

an autobiography praising the excellence of one's own books; to consider *Zarathustra* as the harbinger of joy who has dowered mankind with tasks that will keep it occupied for thousands of years; but just after the period of conception it all seems like a poison to the flesh.

His reaction to a finished book has two possible explanations. There is the need, after the book is completed, of bringing it to an audience: the practical need of relating one's work to some kind of actual circumstances. One dons all of the seven skins, anticipating the rebuffs that habitually follow the exposure of the book for sale. With Nietzsche, there is also the necessity of making a private adjustment to reality after being carried away by the storm of the dream. At the time of writing "one walks for seven or eight hours without a suggestion of fatigue"; it is fair to assume that, having walked so far without tiring, one arrives at a place without knowing exactly how one has got there: the book itself, like the moods that produced it, has lifted us out of the usual context and dropped us in an unfamiliar locality. We get a tremendous release through writing and then, without any warning, we are deposited on the plains of an ordinary existence. Nietzsche's feeling of depression is the counter-effect of the health and good spirits described so exultingly in this passage: "My most creative moments were always accompanied by unusual muscular activity. The body is inspired: let us waive the question of the 'soul'. I might often have been seen dancing in those days. Without a suggestion of fatigue I could then walk for seven or eight hours on end among the hills. I slept well and laughed well. I was perfectly robust and patient." The writing period, then, is one of health, while the aftermath is like a sickness.

Nietzsche knew enough of invalidism from personal experience to place a high value on good health. His men of the future are described in the *Gaya Scienza* in these words: "We firstlings of a yet untried future — we require for a new end also a new means, namely a new healthiness, stronger, sharper, tougher, bolder, and merrier than all healthiness hitherto. He who longeth to experience a whole range of hitherto recognizable values and desirabilities, requireth one thing above all for that purpose, great healthiness — such healthiness as one not only possesses, but also constantly acquires and must acquire, because one increasingly sacrifices it again and must sacrifice it." Now, there would possibly be some

justice in referring the reader, as one can do with other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, to the contrast between the writer and his doctrine; to the fact that Nietzsche himself, the only extant discoverer of the new ideal, was not only not in good health for the voyage but was forced to wage a struggle against increasing bad health. But this argument is a matter of opinion — it may not be necessary that the teacher should exemplify his doctrine — and in any case the matter of Nietzsche's health has another kind of significance. It depends upon how we define the health that Nietzsche talks about, accepting his own conditions for it. A health which he says one "acquires"; not only that, but which one can willingly sacrifice and can acquire again and again: "We argonauts", he says in the same passage, "are often enough shipwrecked and brought to grief, but nevertheless dangerously healthy, always healthy again." Evidently then it is spiritual health, not physical health, that is being talked about: it is not possible to acquire physical health in this rapid manner — not possible to replace diseased body with healthy body with the same magical ease that is here described. It is not physical, yet it insists on comparing itself to the physical. These men of the future are compared to argonauts: "There are sharper, tougher, bolder, and merrier than others around them; they are able to circumnavigate all the coast of this ideal Mediterranean Sea; they do experience shipwreck and endure the grief that accompanies physical adventure." Is Nietzsche then only speaking in a figurative sense? Is this simply his way of making vivid the struggle of his intellectual heroes — that is, if all the heroes of his future world are to be intellectual ones? Or does he, even while being aware that he is describing spiritual health, unconsciously being allocating to it some of the territory and rights of physical health?

I think it is clear that what Nietzsche is talking about is not mental well-being or physical well-being considered by themselves: rather, it is a nervous health that somehow affects the physical constitution. The miracle that he describes in the above passage when he talks about his state during a time of writing can no more occur with such ease and suddenness than health of the *Gaya Scienza* kind can be acquired again and again. In the former passage he is talking about hospital health: the kind derived from the doctor's optimistic checkup; the flattering comment of the thermometer chart. This is still true, although in this

case he is his own doctor and records his own temperature. It is a health of confidence; it can be deflated as rapidly as inflated, regardless of the accompanying physical consequences. Nietzsche is aware not only that "he is sleeping and eating well", aware of the fact that he "is often seen dancing and walks for seven or eight hours without a suggestion of fatigue", but even notices the fact that "he laughed well". The feeling of health that he now possesses is so unusual that he takes delight in recording its slightest aspect: at the same time, because of the very fact that his health is so precious his examination seems to come from the fear that it will vanish momentarily. "I was at that time perfectly robust" — not at all times then perfectly robust, and the emphasis of "perfectly" suggests the tenuous character of the health that he has grasped. This health, primarily one of good spirits, only exists because it is making a successful fight against the chronic illness of bad spirits.

Elsewhere in *Ecce Homo* there is a vivid picture of Nietzsche in the actual process of writing. If a modern cameraman had stalked him at the time he could not have secured a more literal record. By the word inspiration he understands "an ecstasy such that the immense strain of it is sometimes relaxed by a flood of tears along with which one steps either rushed or involuntarily lagged alternately. There is a feeling that one is completely out of hand, with the very distinct consciousness of an endless number of fine thrills and quiverings to the very toes; — there is a depth of happiness in which the painfullest and gloomiest do not operate as antithesis, but as condition, as demanded in the sense of necessary shades of colour in such an overflow of light . . . Everything happens quite involuntarily, as if in a tempestuous outburst of freedom, of absoluteness, of power and divinity." We should notice that here is no philosopher writing out of a mood of calm contemplation: if reason flashes by it is like a bird of light that one tries to seize from the air. And this passage clarifies, I think, the meaning of the word healthiness. It does amount to a delicate balance of two moods — the brighter mood surmounting the darker one, but only continuing in existence because of it: owing all its life to the successful fight it makes against this opponent. It Nietzsche preaches war, here is the internal basis for it; if he demands from the higher man continuous struggle and endeavour, here is evidence that he passed through the fire himself; if he

calls truth hard and dangerous he does so because he must descend into darkness to secure it, and while achieving success, must skirt the edges of failure. Nietzsche describes a self that contains amazing heights and depths: a self that is able to harbour joy and grief in such perfect balance already has one significant height and depth. He admires a self that is able to turn "even the worst things to their own advantage": able primarily, that is, to harness its own unhappiness to its own advantage. He says that this self shall eternally recur: having the capacity to renew health — to overcome in life disaster and death — it has an excuse for believing that it can do so. Evidently these and other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy derive ultimately from his experience of inspiration: this may be the inevitable result of his determination to rely upon himself in all circumstances. The beams of thought revolve inwards and light up the process occurring inside him, instead of illuminating the objective truths at which they aim.

In this picture in *Ecce Homo* we have the *Gaya Scienza* as exemplified by its chief exponent. Looked at from this direction it changes its appearance. It has even less to do than we had imagined with joys of a simple kind: it despises them as much as it does the simple griefs. We understand also why this science is more profound than sadness: it contains sadness in itself — it is the two things in one. Knowing nothing at all of respected middle paths, at an unexpected moment it takes wings on an ecstasy beyond the understanding of average individuals: the ecstasy that belongs to the great artist, and not to any conceivable type of human being who may exist in the future. It has these periods of great joy; but the rest of the time it walks about with leaden feet and gets cold comfort from its philosophy. It is not an accident that words as incongruous as gaiety and science are joined together: it results from the wish to make gaiety a science. One is so anxious during the time of depression to bring joy back that one invents conditions for its existence; and having it in one's grasp one is so delighted and at the same time so fearful of losing it that the elements in its composition are indelibly marked on the mind.

Nietzsche not only adopts healthiness as the special virtue of his higher man, but draws upon the idea of illness whenever he wants a special term of abuse. Thus of Wagner he says his health is the same thing as sickness; progress for him means to go back-

ward; he says that Christianity is spawned among the invalids and is preached by people who are sick; a pale cast of sickness likewise hangs over those individuals who make their feeble progress up to Zarathustra's cave. Zarathustra has his private troubles: "One morning, not long after his return to his cave, Zarathustra sprang up from his couch like a madman, crying with a frightful voice, and acting as if someone still lay on the couch who did not wish to rise." He tries to welcome this "abysmal thought" which is stretched out before him with the appearance of an invalid: "Joy to me! Joy to me! Come hither! Give me thy hand — Hah! Let be! Aha! — disgust disgust disgust — alas to me." He cannot overcome the repulsion and hardly has he spoken these words when "he falls down as one dead". Zarathustra has reached the fartherest point of the Mediterranean coast of the ideal — the conception of eternal recurrence — and he endures a grief and shipwreck unlike anything that he has ever experienced; it is only during a long period of convalescence that he reconciles himself to the new circumstances. He sacrifices his health by grappling with a dangerous truth; he acquires it again by persuading himself of the beauty and wisdom of the truth. Nietzsche's own illness was a spiritual one and he is still drawing for his truths upon the old experience. He dips his pen in the nightmarish past: thus his "day" hovers uncertainly between its dawn and noontide. Side by side with a desire for health there exists a belief in the superlative qualities of sickness: the belief that as an invalid we were most heroic and came face to face with the hardest kind of reality. Nietzsche can say of Wagner, with him to be healthy means to go backward: but the description applies better to Nietzsche himself. The healthy man must keep the whiphand over the sick man — the feeling of exaltation must rule that of depression — but the two things are inextricably bound together and one cannot exist without the other. "The painfulest and the gloomiest are the necessary shades of colour in such an overflow of light." We spar with sickness and keep it at a safe distance: but we are secretly aware that our power consists in an ability to mirror the conflicts and troubles of an old period of illness.

Nietzsche perpetuates the state of convalescence as a condition of his writing. His description of great healthiness during a period of creative work does not apply to a man who is suddenly healthy beyond his everyday health, but to a convalescent who

is making a fresh discovery of his health. When he writes, he walks in the mountains taking the most solitary paths: he takes exercise as if he were under the doctor's orders and enjoys the air of the higher altitudes. It is easy to see that from the unusual muscular activity come the sensations of health, vigour and power; and that in the presence of solitude he is able to experience himself and his own thoughts on a more acceptable plane. Under these favourable circumstances the tight knot of the feelings unravels itself and the introspective gaze turns outward as well as inward. He paints a story of his thoughts and emotions against the backdrop of the mountains. And he accepts still broader conditions in order to maintain his creative poise between the health of optimism and the sickness of despair. Again, like a convalescent, he moves from place to place, settling for only a month or two at most, and always expecting the miracle of health to appear at the turning of a corner. Fresh surroundings renew the creative impulse, and provide the stimulation necessary to recreate the network of the past experience. His imagination grows static unless he feeds it with change: it is only alive and stirring as long as it is conscious of an altered environment. It can cast up the past in glowing colours as long as the convalescent's mood of optimism is maintained.

Nietzsche, I think, is right in regarding the period of convalescence that produced *the Dawn of Day* as a turning point in his career. As argued above, the basis of the self is so radically changed that a new self seems to have been exchanged for the old one. The new ego becomes, to an important extent, its own standard of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood: developed beyond the social needs it has thwarted the barbs of social opinion: become internally powerful, it is able to subdue and draw sustenance from its private griefs. And this ego finds its focus in the act of creative composition. All the thwarting and frustration of the early years of Nietzsche's life; all the envy and hatred as well as the ambition, the joy and the vanity, secure full expression in the "tempestuous outbursts of freedom, of absoluteness, of power and divinity." This experience of inspiration — which Nietzsche was so proud of, declaring that no one in two thousand years had had a comparable experience — is the crystallization of his being, and cannot be disregarded in any account of his philosophy. He insists that he has put an end to the falsehood of two thousand years. But how? By an experience of inspiration, unmatched in the same two thousand years.