

be sister to Miss Rau's Baba, for Mirabi too is looking for escape, adventure, and love. These she finds in the person of a young Englishman, a friend of her thoroughly westernized Oxford-educated brother, who is just home from England and about to take up a post as civil magistrate in the British government of the country. The family's opposition to this match between their cherished daughter and the Englishman is, like most of the crises that arise in their midst, muted. We feel a kind of uncertainty in the whole business, as though the author herself were not sure of the authenticity of these reactions, and so plays them down.

With the surge of anti-British violence among the Indians, it is the younger generation that is immediately and fatefully involved, brother against brother, friend against friend, and finally lover against lover. Faced with the terrible alternative of following her own people into the unguessable future of national independence and all the rewards and penalties which it holds for them, or repudiating them in the name of love, Mirabi makes the sterner choice.

Heritage of the Old Enemy

With India and things Indian very much in the world's awareness, the question arises whether these novels owe their interest to having been written by Indians or to the intrinsic appeal of their subject matter and their style. It is still too early to say. Indians have achieved national independence, but freedom seems to reveal a kind of split personality in the outlook of the present articulate generation, which, repudiating the West, now finds itself on equal terms with the old enemy, yet ironically dependent on him for audience, for the very medium of communication—a single unifying language—and even for the background of experience which is the stuff of art.

The problems that confront Indian artists, writers particularly, are tremendous, but so are their inherent intellectual and creative talents as we know through Indian painters, dancers, and dramatists. The writers are just beginning to come into their own.

A Drama Critic Reviews the Political Stage

MARYA MANNES

THROUGH THESE MEN: SOME ASPECTS OF OUR PASSING HISTORY, by John Mason Brown. Harper. \$4.

In his preface, John Mason Brown apologizes for "trespassing on the property of experts." He needn't. It is precisely because Brown has written with balance and brilliance of books and theater for most of his life and has ranged so freely in the creative past and present that this chronicle of the past three political years has such flavor and immediacy. Whether he writes of Truman leaving the White House or Eisenhower entering, of the two campaign trains of 1952—tracks apart—of the wild, wonderful conventions, or of the men of law and science and letters who make our climate, Brown finds art and life inextricable; just as his involvement in the Second World War made him realize (presumably for the first time) that "both the creation and enjoyment of the arts depends upon conditions of living and thinking which governments make possible." It would be a good world indeed in which governments returned the compliment. As it is, this book is an admirable corrective for the artist who shuns politics and the politician who ignores art, for it is plainly written here that the men in whom our best hopes reside are wise in both. Brown's chapters on Adlai Stevenson, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and Walter Lippmann are in their various ways eloquent defenses of the universal mind: of intellect tempered with compassion, of courage channeled by discipline, of vision predicated on reality.

Eisenhower in Past Tense

Let no one think, however, that Brown is the partisan liberal, the champion of the egghead. I doubt whether there exists a more complete appreciation of the character and capacities of President Eisenhower than in these pages. In decrying the attempts of the intellectually

rarefied to "reduce Eisenhower to a Babbitt," Brown says, "the error of the intellectuals was the old and familiar one of denying intelligence to a person who is not an intellectual. It was as silly in its way as the form it took in reverse when anti-intellectuals questioned Stevenson's practical intelligence on the ground that he was an egghead, or tried to paint him as a comedian, incapable of serious thought . . ."

In comparing Eisenhower's mind with Stevenson's, Brown continues, "His cultural range was infinitely more limited, his mind much less agile. It was specific not conceptual, strong rather than subtle, and ungiven to meditation. Its being a very different kind of mind . . . accustomed to dealing with very different problems, in no way meant that it was not an exceptional one. Precise, vigorous, and incisive, it spoke for a firm will, a humble heart, and a temperament which, in spite of its fire, knew the value of patience."

Brown speaks in the past tense because most of his knowledge of the President was derived when Eisenhower was a candidate for the Presidency and, later, new to the job of governing. It would be interesting to know whether a more recent contact and appraisal would transpose his account to the present tense. Certainly, he speaks of qualities in the President, including a power of expression in speech and print, a clarity of intent and action, which are seldom apparent now.

YET it is this unshakable fairness of Brown's, based on the humility of an inquiring mind and the observation of a free one, that makes this book so valuable. The reader who may feel that Brown has been perhaps too admiring of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and his U.N. achievements can find in another chapter these words on the foreign policy of Secretary Dulles:

"The great brave decisions . . . had all been taken before he came into office and were largely the result of the courage and brilliance of Dean Acheson, his incredibly misrepresented, persecuted, and vilified predecessor."

No, Brown is no partisan. Yet he is no please-all-er either, even if the wit, grace, and fluency that have made his lectures adored in the women's clubs of the country also make this one of the easiest books to read. He is a very serious and often indignant man, merciless in his contempt of McCarthy and his fellows, of all the elements that de-mean and could destroy the country Brown loves and knows so well.

Stevenson and Oppenheimer

It is no accident that his most impressive chapters concern Adlai Stevenson and Robert Oppenheimer, for such men, by the very nature of their being, are targets of the extremists and destroyers.

In writing of them he writes most clearly of himself. "The gaiety of Stevenson's mind is shining. Its wit has conscience. It is corrective and, when need be, chastising, but it is not cynical or mean. Beneath the laughter lies the Lincolnian sadness so often, because so unavoidably, noted. This melancholy is not the sadness of surrender or the whine of futility. It comes from the recognition of human wrongs and follies and the splendor of an ideal that must be reached for even if it can never be realized."

And of Oppenheimer: "His face is a mind openly at work, at once a reflector and a light. Though in no ordinary sense handsome, it nonetheless has a strange beauty . . . of intensity, of awareness, of sensitivity and wisdom, and that grief can bestow like a decoration." Brown ends his long, deeply engrossing chapter on the scientist this way:

"Few ever believed Oppenheimer guilty . . . but more and more Americans have come to feel guilty themselves because of what he was forced to endure. Our shame for the injustice done him in our name and allegedly in our interest in part explains the wide esteem in which he is now held. In his presence it is not his mind alone which makes us uneasy. It is our consciences."

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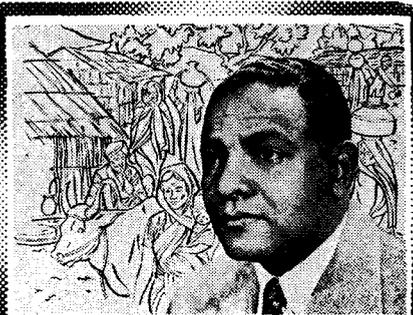
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A PANTHEON BOOK

Manners

In a Classless Society

AUGUST HECKSCHER

GOOD BEHAVIOUR, by Harold Nicolson. Doubleday. \$4.

Sir Harold Nicolson writes about manners not as a historian might—he is too random and haphazard for that—or (as he is the first to claim) as a sociologist. He is the essayist, inspired by a mood he describes as “inquisitive and benevolent optimism”; and he is ready at any point to interject his highly individualized opinions.

Thus Sir Harold quite obviously does not have a traditional regard for the English daisy. “An age which could indulge ecstatically in the belief that the common daisy of the fields was the loveliest of nature’s flowers,” he says of the age of chivalry, “could induce itself to believe anything.” Of the elaborate ceremony of the Orient he can declare that he writes with “an ignorance of the subject unredeemed by any glow of sympathy, any impulse of attraction, any stirring even of curiosity.” (Yet he writes entertainingly of this, as in all the other parts of his book.) The early Christian Fathers also lack his sympathy so far as civility is concerned: “It was not by any charm of manner that the Christians succeeded, within three centuries, in altering the conscience of this world.”

The nineteenth-century cult of “respectability” comes off as badly. Sir Harold quotes grimly the Victorian injunction to young ladies that their primary duty in life is “to smooth the bed of sickness and cheer the decline of age.” The famous English public schools, he admits, may have performed their function, but that function is one which scarcely elicits his enthusiasm. Through these institutions, he says, “The governing classes were provided with a constant supply of young men, uniform in manners, indistinguishable in intellect or character, and prepared to defend their caste privileges against internal and external proletariats.”

Sir Harold also has his strong

likes: the Greek ideal, with its variety and grace (and notwithstanding its residual cruelties and its subjection of women); the Roman *gravitas*, fit quality for a people whose contribution was in the fields of war, administration, jurisprudence, and engineering; above all, the manners of a Chaucer and a Shakespeare. He likes the American manners, too—



though he professes not to understand them, and considers us a people too sensitive to endure comment.

ALL THIS is delightfully personal, and Sir Harold seems content to leave it so. He searches for no broad conclusions and makes only a guess about the future. Yet underneath the random observations there is a strain of well-formed judgment. What does he really mean by “good behaviour”? He means the standard of behavior traditionally derived from a minority, which expresses feelings of the heart and has for its end the making of life easier and more agreeable for others. When behavior remains at the level of self-gratification or when it degenerates into formal etiquette, it fails in the essentials of civility. When it serves the purpose of maintaining a group in power, it lacks, however elegant or superficially pleasing it may appear, the quality which justifies its being called “good.”

In British society a tendency to

ward decentralization, with a balance between the various classes, helped diffuse the pattern of civility. From the beginning, a certain tolerance and forbearance mitigated the pretensions of the ruling elite. In France the opposite development took place. Sir Harold points out how the code of the drawing room, the court, and the boudoir reached out from the center to form the same bourgeois values of *l'honnête homme*. Artificiality was transcended in the conviction, alive to this day, that the wise man is set apart by a special competence in the art of living. “To get the very most out of one’s own individuality” was how Montaigne defined the goal, and individuality implied consideration for others.

The ‘Gay Science’

It did not, however, imply a lack of passion. Men and women were to live life as it came, attentive to the subtleties of their moods and humors yet never wholly slaves to them. As Walter F. Kerr wrote the other day in his review of a Turgenev comedy, “Balance already exists in each of the characters: if they are capable of any excess, they are also capable of measuring that excess intelligently. Against a fine supply of animal spirits runs a steady, very high degree of consciousness.” That consciousness, with its sense of limits and apprehensions of delicacy, is the individual’s key to conduct.

“Good behaviour” is thus inherently liberal and active, free from the constraints of social compulsions or taboos. It is as changeful as the relations of men, and the best of its practitioners have almost always been innovators. The knights of the age of chivalry spoke in this regard of the “gay science.” For Shakespeare ceremony was an “idol” worshiped by dull men. “Dear Kate,” says his Henry V, “You and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country’s fashion. We are the makers of manners, Kate.” Sir Harold sees manners always waiting to be made; he has no doubt that they will continue to be made even through an iron century.

Florent Americana

But how? And of what sort will they be? It is the theme of this book that civility has invariably been the crea-