

HORIZON

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HORIZON

SUMMER, 1972 · VOLUME XIV, NUMBER 3

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Great Divides



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

British waiting to attack: July 1, 1916

To the generation that lived through it, th
World War was, and remains, the "Great
great not in glory—for there was little glor
great in its sheer destructive magnitude, in
paralleled size of its armies, the unparalleled
of its casualty lists, and most important, in th
ous wound it inflicted on the established c
things. The Great War seemed to close an e
some raging river sweeping away all bridges
past and future. In the current issue of H
Robert Cowley pinpoints what for England m
have been the day when that fateful breach
past occurred—July 1, 1916, the opening da
battle of the Somme, which eventually claim
than one million casualties. In a complex a
quent re-creation of that battle, beginning
64, Cowley describes what the Somme mean
soldiers in the field, to the generals in comma
what it meant, in the end, to England, which
wounds of the slaughter for a generation.

Like the Biblical Leviathan, the Grea
haunted the imaginations of thoughtful me
postwar years, among them one of the greate
film directors, Jean Renoir. In the 1937 film
piece *La Grande Illusion* Renoir gave his ar
the central question: what did the Great W
tend?—an answer that, for Renoir, was bo
with the war's final destruction of the old E
aristocracy. Renoir's film is described and its
tions analyzed by Stanley Kauffmann as pa
HORIZON series "Landmarks of Film History

Perhaps the most decisive single consequ
the Great War was the Russian Revolution
brought Lenin and the Bolsheviks to supreme
HORIZON publishes here excerpts from a l
manuscript biography of young Lenin writt
fellow revolutionary, Leon Trotsky. If we

and Trotsky as peculiarly modern figures, ky's account of Lenin's boyhood will come as a ct surprise. It not only shows Lenin as a hard- ng, hearty youth solidly rooted in a sensible, t Victorian middle-class family, it reveals ky himself as a child of the same vanished age, lly extolling the solid virtues of hard work, y living, and maternal devotion. In the moral most of us are far more "modern" than those odern revolutionaries, who grew up on the side of the war's great divide.

idea that history is demarcated by catastro- es deep in man's understanding, and no catas- has cast a stronger spell than the story of a sal flood. Beginning on page 104 of this issue, Burrow traces the historic career of the Flood ts origins as a general Mesopotamian myth, to tral place as a historic truth revealed in Scrip- o its strange metamorphosis into a scientific ne—known as "catastrophism"—expounded neteenth-century geologists, and to its final uendo into a quite local disaster that occurred, eologists say, along the Euphrates River some busand years ago.

dividing lines do not have to be catastrophic. ne with the most universal importance in hu- istory, the Neolithic revolution, saw a change as barely perceptible at first. As long as ten nd years ago—in some parts of the world at -men ceased to hunt and began to farm; they egan building cities. According to an essay by lumb, *that* epoch is now at an end. Throughout ed history, Dr. Plumb says, all civilizations, ver their differences, had one fundamental fea- common: the great majority of the population he soil. This is no longer true, and the various tions and disruptions of the twentieth century ns of this vast social upheaval: the disappear- f men from the land. Our ancient and familiar tions—government, religion, the family, the ne schools—arose to accommodate a society as chiefly agrarian. Now their usefulness has o an end—if not for us, then certainly for our children. With what can the foundations of be replaced? Indeed, can they be replaced? ever the answer, we are, according to Dr. , approaching a chasm in human history as nd as wide as the one between man the hunter an the planter. What awaits us on the other f the gulf remains in doubt. W.K.

History

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PALAZZO MEDICI-RICCARDI, FLORENCE—SCALA

The handsome young rider on the cover, thought to represent Lorenzo de' Medici, is a figure in the fresco (left) painted by Benozzo Gozzoli in 1459 for the chapel of the Medici-Riccardi Palace in Florence. In his splendid person the horseman embodies some of the great institutions of civilized society: the state (the Florentine Republic), religion (the fresco depicts the journey of the Magi), family (the proud Medici), education (producing "the Renaissance Man"), and the city (Florence again) as the center of commerce and culture. After ten thousand years of continuous existence, says J. H. Plumb in an essay beginning on the next page, all these institutions are in peril.

An epoch that started ten thousand years ago is ending. We are involved in

a revolution of society that is as complete and as profound as the one that changed man from hunter and food gatherer to settled farmer and craftsman. Ten thousand years ago the Neolithic revolution closed an age that had lasted for hundreds of thousands of years. The foundations of society created by that revolution have endured, no matter how sophisticated and elaborate the superstructure of civilization has become. Only within the last century have these foundations begun to crumble, as the new scientific and industrial revolutions spread with ever-increasing speed throughout the world.

But how few of us realize this is so. We rage against government, rage against churches, rage against cities, rage against schools, rage against marriage, and rage against men. Nothing seems to work, no

By J. H. PLUMB

er God nor government. Science, once e great hope, is now the Hypocritical llluter. Has this generation, we won-r, wrecked the great institutions that ve molded human life for so long family, organized religion, govern-ent? Whatever our political commit-ent, there lies a burden of guilt on any of us, a feeling that somehow we ve lost our way, that we are respon-le for the breakdown in social and ivate morality and in the discourse tween the generations.

The problem lies deeper, locked in story, and to understand it we need know what the Neolithic revolution d for the human race. First, it in-eased the food supply so that mil-ns of men and women replaced the attered tens of thousands of the nting and food-gathering era. But ture is capricious, so the fertility of ops and animals became a focus of pe and fear that gave rise to elab-ate rituals. At the earliest dawn of oan society organized religion is ere; temples with estates to support e gods, both benign and evil, and ir servants the priests.

Sometimes combined with, and some-es distinct from, the priesthood, re are civil magistrates, lawgivers, rriors. The most magnificent relics these early millenniums of the Neo-ic revolution are the ziggurats of mer, Akkad, and Babylon within ir fortress cities—monuments both their gods and to their godlike kings. Egypt the Pharaohs were god and g: they created temple cities built eternity.

Naturally such complex societies, ich arose with surprising speed once revolution got under way, made mmerce more steady and far-flung n it had been in the primitive hunt-days. And increased goods, whether m far or near, required numeration. early writing stems from the need list and record goods. Some socie-s, such as the Incas, developed only complicated knotting system, but ypt and China and Sumer devised ictorial shorthand that rapidly grew into a highly complex written language. This brilliant invention released new potentialities by creating a social memory that was more reliable and exact than oral traditions could ever be. With written language the creative genius of men had an exceptional instrument. Yet this instrument was available only for an elite. From the time writing was invented until the twentieth century only a small percentage of mankind could read and write: the educated class that could be supported by societies based on agriculture and crafts was always small.

From the time writing was invented until the twentieth century only a small percentage of mankind could read and write . . .

Imperial Rome, T'ang China, the France of Louis XIV, the Mexico City of Montezuma—all the civilizations that we know are children of the Neolithic revolution, certainly each with its own striking individuality and excellence, but also with the same basic structures, the structures that we first discern in ancient Egypt and in the valley of the Tigris-Euphrates. In all these civilizations the bulk of mankind toiled on the land, struggling to wring a living from the soil that would suffice to pay taxes, make offerings to the churches, and provide a surplus to sustain a social elite. In all this economic activity the basic unit was the family: some of the more sophisticated societies evolved more complex forms of economic organization, but the family group—father, mother, children—remained the most effective social and economic unit for ten thousand years.

The masses in all societies were illiterate and poor, and this was universally regarded as a part of the natural order. As the Sumerians put it, "men are slaves of the Gods": their duty was to work. At times, in all societies, the rage of the poor broke out in sporadic violence, but the remarkable fact is not the occasional rebellion but the millenniums of docility. This was due partly to men's terror of the mysterious forces of nature that dominated their lives and that could give or deny them abundance. They needed gods, and priests and ritual, especially ritual.

Religion touched millions of men in their daily lives. Every village, every community, whether in sophisticated societies or simple ones, had its temple, its priest, its communication with the gods. For ten millenniums men have been god-haunted through all the days of their lives.

Compared with religion, the secular forms of government were less powerful socially, even though they could often dominate the structure of organized religion; in Pharaonic Egypt or imperial China they absorbed many of its functions. Most societies possessed a warrior class from which a king was selected. The warrior class also developed into a landed aristocracy, except in imperial China, where the scholar-gentry disdained the profession of arms. Elsewhere the great landowners, together with successful merchants, lawyers, priests, and government officials provided the small governing elite, which tended to breed its own successors.

Theoretically, as in China, several societies provided a system by which the talented poor might rise. In practice this very rarely happened. In the epoch that is now closing, social mobility was extremely rare. Schools and universities, like all forms of private culture, were produced by and for the elite. Schools were often rigorous and austere, designed to transmit the culture of the ruling class to the next generation of rulers. From Tibet to Ireland they were dominated by classical

learning, for all societies revered the past as a storehouse of wisdom: history was used to demonstrate the divine nature of authority as well as the truth of religion, so that education was far more than learning a skill, it was the key to the understanding of life, of society, of the universal truths.

Although culture and the past belonged largely to the governing elite, there was still a need for public art, mainly monumental architecture, statuary, or descriptive pictures, that spoke of the majesty of kings or gods and helped to strengthen the social matrix that bound the governor and the governed together. The great public rituals of religion, whether it were a solemn Te Deum in Notre Dame or the dramatic human sacrifices in ancient Mexico, all forged a sense of identity between the governor and the governed. Civilization, whether primitive or advanced, was highly ceremonial.

No matter how complex these societies became, they bore a remarkable number of common features, not only in the way the majority of men and women obtained their livelihoods, but also in the structure of their institutions. Humanity was ruled by monarchs or priest-kings, there was organized religion supported by the state, there was an aristocracy of warriors and landowners. An elite of scholarly men came from these classes to serve the state or its church and maintain the authority of tradition; below them was a class of merchants whose wealth commanded special privileges but who were often at risk. The bulk of the population, however, lived in villages, tightly bred in tradition both in work and belief. Towns were small and cities few, and they were designed as centers of religion, government, crafts, and trade, sometimes one function dominating, sometimes another. And it must be stressed again that these societies were highly ceremonial, in secular as well as religious activity.

For more than ten thousand years this remained the basic pattern of human living everywhere. It began to crumble discernibly only a century or so ago. Even then such changes as occurred were very small and their significance not understood. Not until the twentieth century did it become obvious that an age-long social structure was breaking down, and not until after World War II that it was incapable of survival. Only now are there a few historians, a few sociologists, a few perceptive thinkers, who realize that we are—capitalist or communist—in the throes of a social revolution, and that the ills of our society, for which we so often assume the blame, arise from the fact that the old basic institutions are less and less suitable for the modern world. Confusion and chaos, so caused, are naturally greatest where society is freest and experimentation is permitted—in America and western Europe, for example, rather than in the communist East, where social institutions are held rigid, even though economic experimentation may possibly go deeper. The one exception may be China, where revolution has penetrated more deeply into society.

We have two epochs in conflict—an ancient system of institutions struggling with . . . a totally new economic life-style.

Let us look more closely at the revolution in which we are involved and at its consequences. It began haphazardly and, like the Neolithic revolution, went unnoticed by the world at large. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a few men in western Europe began to feel a new confidence, to believe that they or their descendants might outrank the ancients in knowledge and in achievement. Slowly, science captured more and more gif
men and secured greater and grea
triumphs, but to start with, it had li
or no effect on society. The idea ca
gradually to nonscientists that expe
mentation was admirable in itself a
should be applied to economic l
Again, this might have led nowhe
but Europe, and particularly Engla
had a buoyant market for goods
plentiful supply of money, an expa
ing population, a wide-ranging co
merce, and almost constant invol
ment in war—all of which stimula
production and helped bring about,
the beginning of the nineteenth c
tury, the first stages of the Industr
Revolution.

A hundred years later the Industr
Revolution had spread throughout E
rope and America, lifting mankind
a new level of civilization. Men left
countryside, until by the middle of
twentieth century the majority of p
ple in western Europe and Amer
were living in cities. Crafts had cea
to be of much importance, and prod
tion was now on a mass scale in la
factories. The world was richer tha
had ever been, although wealth was
ill distributed as it had been throu
out the earlier centuries.

A great revolution in living h
taken place within the institutions
the preindustrial world; but its cultu
its intellectual and religious attitud
were scarcely touched by the r
world. With every decade, howev
they were called into question. And
we have two epochs in conflict—an
cient system of institutions and c
tures struggling with a new system
production, a totally new econor
life-style. The old institutions dec
and new, more appropriate ones
not arise to replace them.

Take monarchy, the most sacred
lay institutions, one that emerged
the very dawn of recorded time: bef
1900, only France, Switzerland, and
few American nations had managed
discard it. World War I shattered
world's monarchies, and World W
II swept away the remains, except

or three countries where it was ed by obstinate tradition or lucky nce. Gone are the Czars, the Kai-s, the Emperors, Kings, Serene ghnesses, Grand Dukes, and Arch-kes: they linger in pathetic little ed courts huddled about Lausanne Estoril.

The aristocracy, that ancient warrior ss whose strength had won it titles, nes, honors, and land, found itself pped of rights, deprived of power, en slaughtered or chased into exile exist on a pittance—often forced to rk for a living. Even in England, ere the monarchic tradition is strong, power of the aristocracy was sharp-liminished. Now, not even the noble-n regard themselves as a race apart, above all others by God to advise gs and rule men. But no society has lved anything to provide the social esion or the dramatic ceremonial lity once given to life by the aris-racy and monarchy.

This new revolution has attacked man institutions more fundamental n monarchy and aristocracy, for all ial functions are in the grip of nge. Institutions that gave these ctions form and strength are now question. Let us take four, the city, anized religion, the family, and the ools—all of these institutions have millenniums been the matrix of so-y from China to Rome.

One of the first complex organiza-ns to arise from the Neolithic revo-on was the city. It provided, among er things, a vast center for religious emonial, as at Thebes or Chichén —which were created purely for this pose. In many other cities the sword d with religion; secular and spirit-authority might be combined in the e ruler, though sometimes the two horities remained distinct. There is more impressive image of this dual-than in the medieval cities of west-Europe, where cathedral and castle ide by side. Naturally, cities served er social purposes as well. Com-ce contributed to the growth of city, as did crafts and primitive in-dustry, so that the city became the economic center of the surrounding countryside, a market place for local and foreign goods.

Market places were an integral part of city life. With religion in need of ritual, and with secular authority in need of power, with commerce from afar providing exotic ideas as well as goods, cities became centers of art and cultural exchange, the natural home for a scholarly elite, the home of pleasure as well as religion. They became the heart of society, a mirage that enticed the ambitious, the creative, the seeker of power. Rarely has any human institution concentrated so much within itself. This is true of Montezuma's Mexico City, Socrates' Athens, Franklin's Philadelphia, or the Goncourts' Paris.

Look at the desolate center of Detroit, with its parking lots and ghettos cut by expressways . . . Everywhere from Marseilles to Seattle cities are emptying and dying.

But, what now? Look at the desolate center of Detroit, with its parking lots and ghettos cut by expressways that hurry the bankers and merchants out of the commercial areas as quickly as possible. Everywhere from Marseilles to Seattle cities are emptying and dying. For a century now they have had no defensive value —indeed, rather the reverse. They are now targets for holocausts and are totally indefensible. Castle and city walls are merely quaint symbols of a dead past.

Nor are they the seat of organized religion, the center of dramatic ritual, the home of priest-kings or even priests. Moscow's patriarch is an active civil servant, the Mufti of Cairo is of little account, Rome is no longer the Vatican, and the Dalai Lama, the last of the priest-kings, dwells in exile. The city churches themselves can scarcely maintain an existence; with next to no congregations they steadily close. London was happy to sell a Christopher Wren church to a Missouri town.

Nor are cities essential to government. Brazil can be governed as easily from Brasília as from Rio de Janeiro; and the President of the United States can govern from Florida, California, or the Spirit of '76. If the Pentagon were removed to Death Valley and the Treasury to Boise, Idaho, the government of the most complex society on earth would not suffer.

And neither commerce nor industry needs the city. The port of London has decayed to the point of death—dock after dock has closed. The volume of New York's trade diminishes. Markets are also finished: Les Halles have been uprooted, Covent Garden closed; shopping centers, vast and complex, root themselves in suburbia where people dwell, or wish to. All that is left—and for how long?—is the world of pleasure, the restaurants, the theatres, the shops for the rich or for tourists, whether from the suburbs, the provinces, or foreign lands. The majority of commercial enterprises could move from the great cities of the Western world with no loss: improved means of communication, one of the greatest triumphs of the new industrial and scientific world, have obliterated distance and made propinquity meaningless.

It is true that swarms of men and women still flow in and out of the cities every day; no pressing social need compels them except that their offices and factories happen to be located there. Sooner or later, commerce and industry will hive off to more appropriate social situations. That the city survived as the heart of civilized life for ten thousand years is no passport for

its survival in a scientific and industrial world.

But the city is still more vigorous than other institutions that are millenniums old. Organized religion, with the paraphernalia of temples, priests, and festivals, goes back to the first emergence of civilization as we know it, but that, too, is now only a shadow of what it was. In England, where, oddly enough, the decay of organized religion may have gone farthest, congregations at village churches are often under ten people. Chapels, the homes of vigorous dissenting groups in the nineteenth century—Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and the rest—are no better off.

The strongest church in the world—the Roman Catholic—is in convulsions, weakened by a declining priesthood and rent by a new radicalism. The dissolution of organized religion is further reflected in the growth of half-baked mysticism, the dabbling in magic and astrology, the spread of Buddhism and Christ cults among the middle-class young. The impulse to believe still runs strong in many young men and women, but they cannot accept the forms in which belief has been encased for centuries. Religion may persist, but what are unlikely to remain are the institutional manifestations that were a part of the secular structure of society.

Equally as interesting as the decay of formal, organized, church-structured religion is the new confusion of belief: the way the sexual revolution has spread like measles through religion. Roman Catholic priests and nuns demand the right to marry so that, of all things, they can be fulfilled as human beings; the Anglican Church cautiously commends extramarital relations and without much reluctance, accepts lesbianism and homosexuality; the Quakers, at least in England, accept the entire sexual revolution so long as love dominates. Strict belief in the Christian myth is no longer necessary when an Anglican bishop can state publicly that God is dead. Any clergyman of half a century ago, no matter what denomination he belonged to, would be appalled by the state of organized religion today. He would be as baffled as an eighteenth-century connoisseur of art confronted by a Jasper Johns.

For religion is not alone in collapsing into near anarchy—the same is true of all the arts. Painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and a great deal else would be incomprehensible to a cultured man of the nineteenth century; whereas an artistically inclined Greek of the fourth century B.C., or an Egyptian of 2000 B.C., or a mandarin of Han China would have had little difficulty in appreciating to the full the poetry, the painting, the sculpture, and the literature of the nineteenth century.

Roman Catholic priests and nuns demand the right to marry so that, of all things, they can be fulfilled as human beings . . .

The new social revolution penetrates deeper, far deeper, than this, into the very basis of society and its primary institution, the family. For ten thousand years and probably longer, but certainly for as long as we can discern, the family has been the basis of society, its most powerful social and economic unit. In most agrarian societies husband-wife-children grouped in a family are an adequate self-supporting work unit, in which there are carefully differentiated and accepted divisions of labor.

The family, of course, was far more than an economic unit. It was a school that provided not only technical education, but education for life. M
of humanity throughout history n
went to any other school. It was in
family that boys and girls learned t
skills as farmers or craftsmen or ho
keepers. As they learned, children
ceived also from their fathers
mothers the social morality—their
titudes to secular government as
as to sexual morals. With all hu
institutions the family had its cra
ing failures as well as its successes,
it was a highly complex and powe
institution, through which all hu
beings in all centuries of settled ag
ian life had to pass.

Now the economic and social fu
tion of the family is rapidly breal
down—it no longer teaches econo
skills and social morality. Schools
society at large have absorbed t
functions, with the result that the f
ily is now so reduced in social and
nomic function that it breaks d
very easily under its material stres
In the past, of course, men and wo
often grew to hate each other in m
riage, or to be bored, but the so
and economic bonds were so str
that in most societies divorce was
thinkable. A man might take co
bines or other wives, and in a
idiosyncratic societies a wife m
take lovers, but although a few s
eties permitted easy divorce, they w
very rare. In advanced or develo
societies divorce, except for the
rich and powerful, was almost impo
ble. But now the social and econo
weakness of family life is demonstr
by the steady increase in divorce
the growing acceptance of men
women living together without m
riage at all.

In the care and protection of c
dren the family still performs an
portant function that society as
cannot easily replace, but the edu
tion of children no longer takes p
within it. Schools themselves, howe
are in little better shape than fami
organized religion, or cities. Ther
a powerful radical movement to
school education; indeed schools

nstantly being denounced as prisons d concentration camps. "The belief at a highly industrialized society," ites Paul Goodman, "requires twelve twenty years of prior processing the young is an illusion or a hoax." ıpils denounce curricula as irrele- nt, and schoolmasters themselves ve little faith in what they teach, if e can judge by the constant soul- arching and debate that accompany y conference of teachers. And yet ore and more pupils are pressed into e system for longer and longer. Un- ppy, frustrated, disoriented, not ly do college campuses flash into ot, but so do high schools. The idea armed police in the corridors of a ıblic school is enough to make homas Arnold, who introduced the efect system, moan in his grave.

Increasingly, it is seen that the school unable to do what it did so power- lly and so effectively during the last ree or four hundred years—and in- ed what it is still doing in commun- countries—educate for living, incul- te or strengthen social principles. he problem is that an educational stem that was designed for an elite breaking down in the attempt to lucate the mass of industrial so- ety, for which it was never designed. n elite is willing to be disciplined, to arn seemingly arcane subjects, such Latin or medieval history or theol- gy, because the rewards of success are bvious—high professional office, sta- s in society, beckon at the end of the ad. For the masses pouring into the ıblic schools and universities all that ckons is a job in a factory or an fice, with no guarantee, even, of so- al status. What is available for every- ıe distinguishes no one.

We are at the end of ten thousand ars of history. We are in the middle a revolution more profound than ıy man has experienced, and thus we e affected more deeply than we real- e. Not only are age-old social insti- tions breaking down, but there is a eater problem. Men, women, and ildren are losing their ability to identify with society; they no longer have clear social roles to fulfill, to aspire to, to feel guilty about if they fail in them. For the last ten thousand years fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, in all societies have had defined social roles. And the crisis of identity we hear so much about arises not so much because the individual is lost, but because society no longer defines his function.

If mankind fails to find new institutions that enable him to cope with industrialized life, then there could be a retreat, and a very sharp retreat, from scientific, technological, urban civilization.

Consider the role of children. The power that parents hold over their children, and the need for the children to respect the authority and wisdom of age, have been almost universally accepted for the last ten thousand years. But now, with the weakening of the family, the respect and the subordination have both gone. Similarly the subordination of women; likewise the authority of men. Until recently, social roles were very strongly defined—of course, there were many who rebelled against them, many who failed to live up to them, and many more who found them constricting and disagreeable; but the majority of mankind accepted their social role, even if they rarely attained it. Women's liberation, the revolt of adolescence, and the decay of the patriarch are not signs of the sudden fever that has gripped this generation; rather they are the product of a social revolution, of a need for radical readjustment, one such as man has had to make only once before in his history.

Whether man can live in so profoundly new a social complex is open to doubt. Understanding may help a little. Governments are always more conservative with regard to social change than society itself (witness the problem of divorce in Italy or legalized abortion here), but if governments realized that the social experimentation of our day is not due to the sickness of youth or the corruption and self-indulgence of this generation but has profound social causes, perhaps then they might help rather than hinder experiment.

But in the end men and women must themselves evolve new institutions and find new social roles that satisfy the innate needs of man and provide those necessary deep psychic protections and safeguards that we all require. The new roles will spring from man's great biological adaptability, if they spring at all. If mankind fails to find new institutions that enable him to cope with industrialized life, then there could be a retreat, and a very sharp retreat, from scientific, technological, urban civilization. New York or London might become the new Nineveh and Tyre, buried under vast ruins of their own detritus. And possibly, perhaps even probably, man will fail to cope at all: his aggressive and acquisitive drives, which are perhaps his deepest, may prevail. He may blow himself up or pollute himself off the face of the earth.

All possibilities are open, but man's capacity for social evolution, as recorded in his history, is exceptional, and the human psyche is resilient and tough. If and when a new world emerges from the discords of the old, it will probably be both varied and strange. There is one thing we can be sure of—it will be little like the world that we now live in.

ONLY YESTERDAY: A large, cohesive family, c. 1900

Our Crumbling Institutions

The institutions of civilized life—essentially unchanged since the agricultural revolution of ten thousand years ago—are showing signs of strain, if not collapse. Here, and on the following pages, HORIZON documents Professor Plumb's thesis.



IN OLDER TIMES: An early Christian family, c. 2

The Family

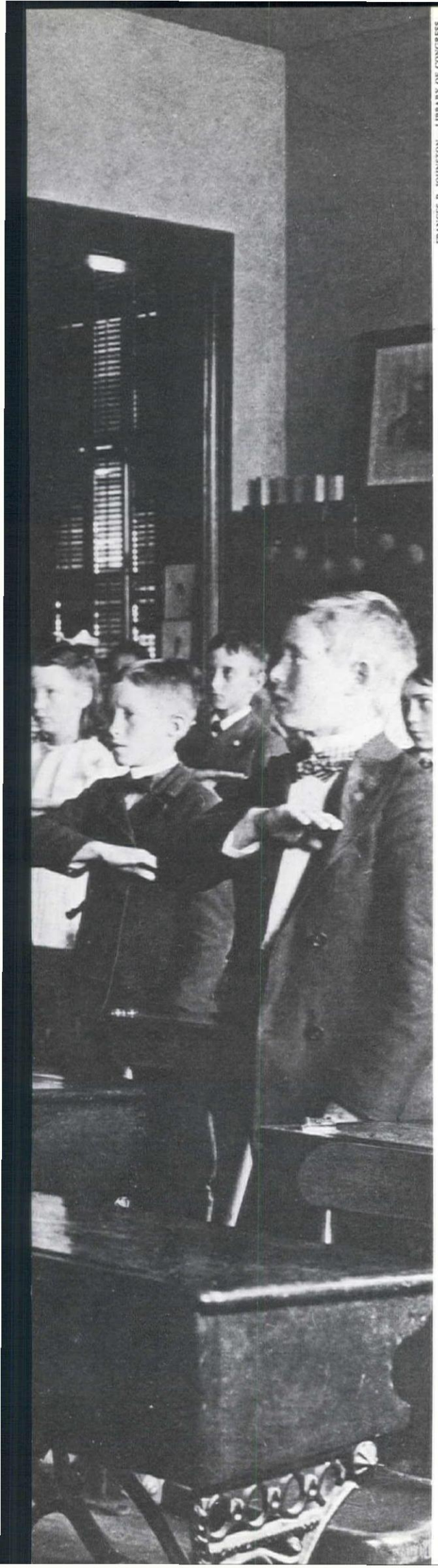
til this century everybody knew that the family was "a natural associa-
n of kindred," to quote the *Encyclopedia Britannica* for 1911. It seemed
be not only a basic but an inevitable institution. To the farmer, the
ily was a work team; to the artisan, the family household was a work-
ce. It was everybody's most important school, often the only one. A
n's relatives provided the bulk of his society. In our own time, how-
r, the world of the family has shrunk drastically. It is no longer a work
m, no longer the chief school for life, no longer a varied society in
lf. Many now claim that the family is even unfit for child rearing and
pose the young be reared by "communes" or by the state. For the first
e in history the family seems to be losing its ultimate reason for being.



BONNIE FREER—PHOTO TRENDS; ABOVE: BETTMANN ARCHIVE

TODAY: The communal household of "Hog Farm"





FRANCES B. JOHNSTON—LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



PALAZZO DUCALE, URBINO

IN OLDER TIMES: Ducal father tutors his son.

Education

Throughout the history of civilization the purpose of education has been beyond all dispute: to transmit to future adults the codified learning and culture that the adult world possessed. Whether a teacher stood before a village classroom or privately tutored the son of a lord, he represented that adult world and introduced the newcomers to it. Nobody doubted that he had much to teach and his students even more to learn. Students might rebel against a teacher, but not against the idea of being taught. Since the turn of the century, however, the entire rationale for education has been under attack. The teacher is not praised but criticized for merely transmitting adult mores to children. Adult codes appear irrelevant and restrictive, in a time of radical change a potential danger to the creativity and innocence of the young. The effects of this new belief—itself the product of revolutionary change—is obvious on all sides. Educators now speak of "de-schooling education" and allowing the young, as far as possible, to direct their own education. Teachers no longer claim authority because they no longer feel entitled to it. Students in rapidly increasing numbers now look on their schools as "prisons," and with police called in to keep order, a great many schools do indeed look like prisons.



UPI

TODAY: Policemen on guard in a New York City school

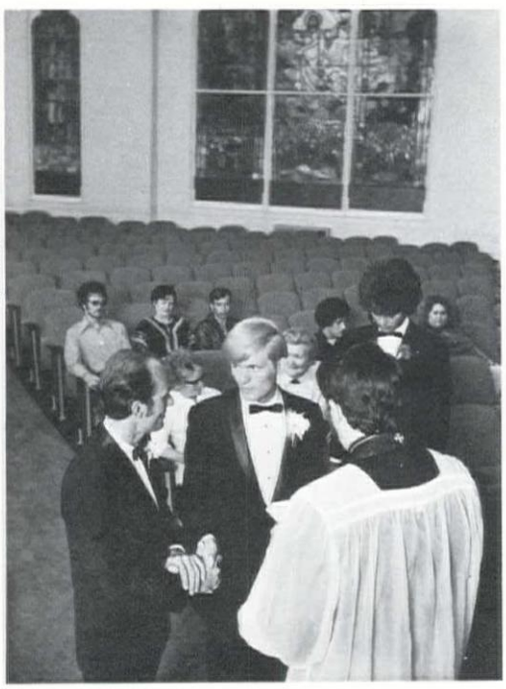
ONLY YESTERDAY: Pledging allegiance in 1899



IN OLDER TIMES: Mourning rites in ancient Egypt

Religion

Religion once loomed so large in man's life that civilization was inconceivable without it—even to a mocking Voltaire. Theology gave rich meaning to the universe; God's providence made sense of the vagaries of history and fortune. The local church was not only a place of worship, it was a civic center and a social forum that transformed its communicants into a community. If a man were an unbeliever, that, to his neighbors, was the most important fact about him. Yet today, the question of a man's faith hardly arises at all, for Western society has rapidly become the most secular civilization that has ever existed. In many countries, such as England, churchgoing itself is a vanishing practice. To many Americans as well, Sunday is no longer a day set aside, but merely a part of the weekend. Even the steady churchgoers are often "practical atheists," as a leading American divine has observed, so little does religion permeate their lives. Where people once heeded their clergy, today it is the churchmen who do the heeding, trying heroically to adapt their liturgies, their theologies, and even their politics to the passing currents of modern thought. Instead of encompassing life, organized religion has become one institution among many that are competing for modern man's divided attention.



Life MAGAZINE, © TIME INC.— GREY VILLET

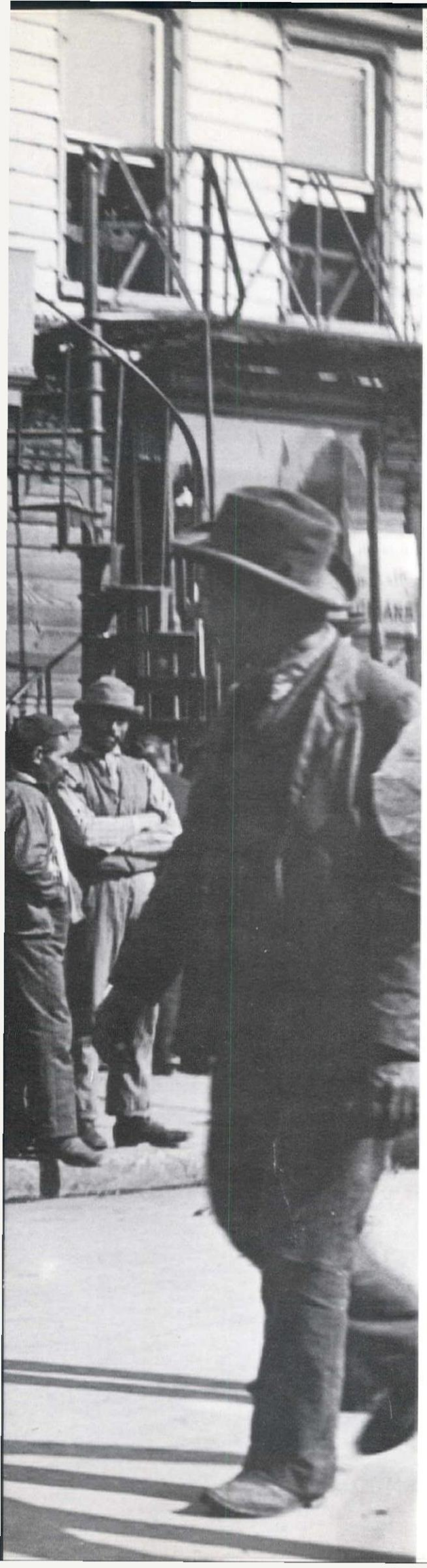
TODAY: A minister blesses a homosexual marriage.

BETTMANN ARCHIVE; LEFT: STATE PUSHKIN MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, MOSCOW, COURTESY OF BERNARD BOTHMER

ONLY YESTERDAY: Church temperance group in Oregon, 1900




RANTE 56



BETTMANN ARCHIVE



ISRAEL MUSEUM, JERUSALEM — HIRMER

IN OLDER TIMES: Roman soldiers arresting Christ

Law and Order

There is no surer sign of the new revolution than the worldwide breakdown of law and order, striking in volatile America but visible on every continent. What is crumbling is not respect for laws and lawmakers but the authority inherent in the law, its ability to enforce itself. It is this that ultimately lies behind the continually mounting crime rate, the rising levels of violence, and the fear-haunted streets of great cities. It lies behind the endemic petty lawlessness—littering parks within view of a litter basket, for example, or smoking in front of no-smoking signs, as if the law compelled defiance. It is seen, too, in the growing indifference of onlookers to such petty malefactions, as if the law were no business of mere private men.

It is surely epitomized in the vanishing authority of the police, for the policeman's authority derives solely from the law's authority. Not long ago, a city patrolman walked his beat as the confident embodiment of invincible law. Today, policemen often feel like enemy intruders patrolling a conquered terrain. No superficial causes can explain the waning of the law's authority, for it rests on deeper foundations than, for example, current modes of "permissive" child rearing, or the relative strictness of courts. Ultimately, it depends on a belief that men in pacific times are scarcely aware they hold: the belief that the law embodies profoundly legitimate purposes—maintaining the common institutions and the way of life that people find natural and legitimate. Under the pounding of the new revolution, however, the great institutions of society no longer feel natural and legitimate and law itself loses its legitimacy, begins to seem arbitrary and alien. When W. S. Gilbert observed in 1880 that "a policeman's lot is not a happy one," he prophesied better than he knew.



JOHN COLLIER — BLACK STAR

TODAY: A Chicago policeman bloodied by rioters

ONLY YESTERDAY: A New York policeman towing a drunk

ONLY YESTERDAY: Dorrance, Kansas, population 281 in 1910, compressed all the basic urban institutions into a compact settlement.

MARTIN HURLIMANN



IN OLDER TIMES: The Acropolis dominates the Athenian polis.

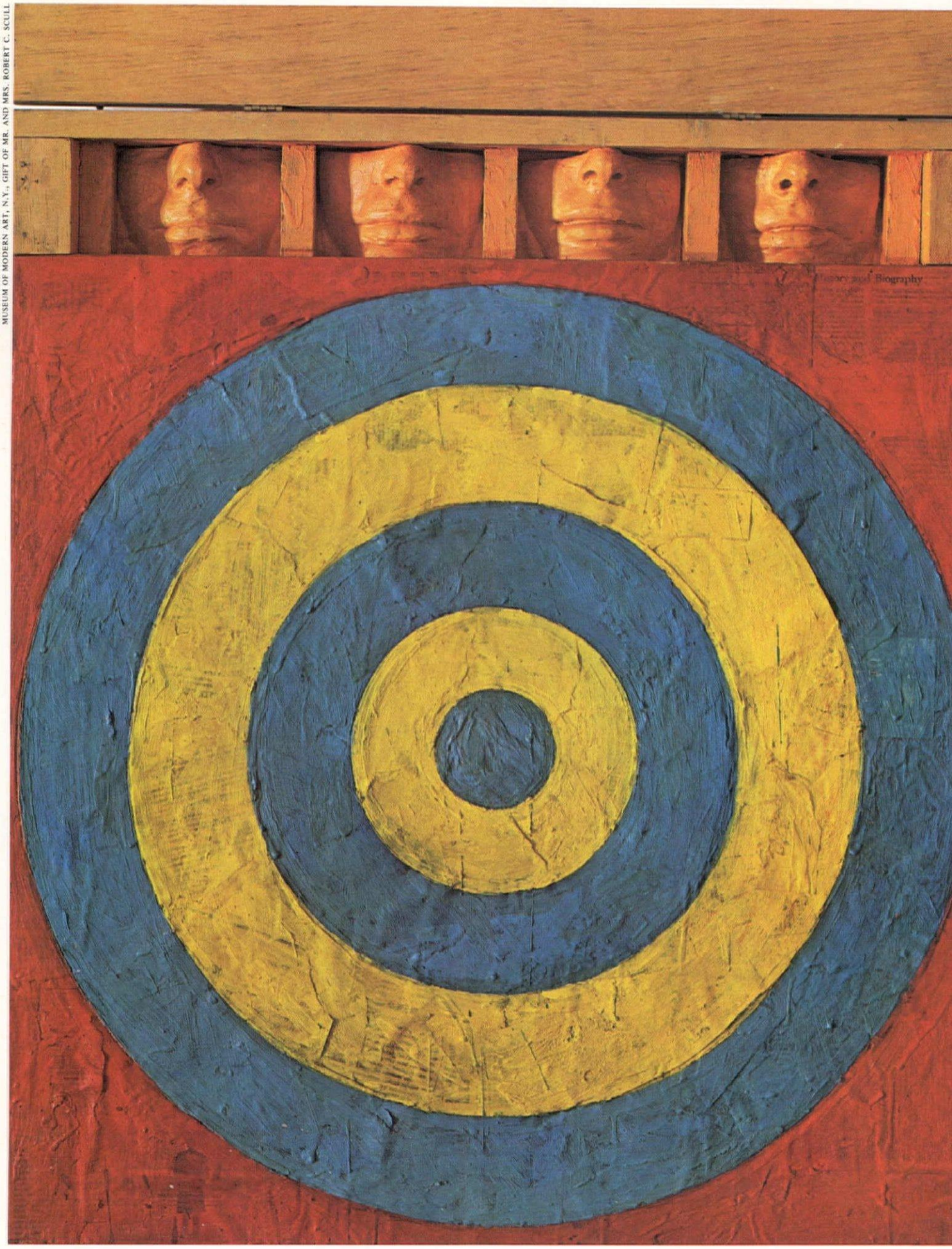
The Urban Center

Until a few generations ago, humankind tended to live compactly, drawing together not only in cities but in the countryside as well. Whether it was the Athenian polis or a compact prairie village, social life was built around a local center. In our own time, however, people are deliberately moving apart. Communicating by telephone and automobile, they no longer need propinquity as a basic human bond. Human society is ceasing to be the society of the people nearby. A truly radical transformation, it implies a social order comprised of like-minded groups rooted in no special place, a moral order in which the injunction "love thy neighbor" may become as irrelevant as neighbors. Every highway that opens up new terrain for scattered living brings this new world order closer. How men will adapt to this new revolutionary world is beyond anyone's power of prediction.



TODAY: Swirling superhighway depopulates a district of Detroit

ELLIOTT ERWITT—MAGNUM; ABOVE: KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, N.Y., GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. ROBERT C. SCULL

TARGET WITH FOUR FACES, 1955

Jasper Johns' Elusive Bull's-Eye

His paintings are enigmatic, hermetic, sometimes didactic—not pop art, nor op art, nor anti-art. They may also be the most influential works of the past decade

ɔer Johns's face, as a writer pointed some years ago, resembles that of liam S. Hart, the silent gunslinger the silent Westerns. The narrow, ıkled eyes stare flatly, with an exssion of ironic watchfulness, across V of a gun sight or the end of a ntbrush at—in either case—a tar. It is the mask of cool, of a dandy ɔ shuts up *and* puts up.

What goes on behind that mask has ıvoked reams of critical speculation more than a decade; it was fourn years ago, to be exact, that the ınty-eight-year-old Johns had his t show at Leo Castelli's gallery in w York. Since he afterward became he 1960's what Willem de Kooning s to the 1950's—the most influential ıerican artist of the decade—it is ficult to remember with what an air prodigy Jasper Johns burst upon w York. Trailing no discernible past ıind him, he landed on point at ter stage.

The biography is scanty: Born May 1930, in Augusta, Georgia, the son a farmer. Eighteen months of col- at the University of South Caro-a; one day at Hunter College in

get with Four Faces, *opposite, is the k that more than any other established ns's reputation as a major new artist. The ıted target here is surmounted by four arently imprisoned plaster casts of half a ale face. The effect for the viewer is sterious and somehow sinister as well.*



HANS NAMUTH

Jasper Johns in his studio

New York. Two years of Army service, mostly in Japan. Several years of drifting in Manhattan after he began, in 1952, to paint "seriously," supporting himself, but only just, through odd jobs, such as selling books and doing window displays for Tiffany's and other uptown stores with his friend Robert Rauschenberg. (Nearly all these early store-window Johnses have long since vanished. One, a papier-mâché clown with a red nose and button eyes, is now in a basement in Connecticut.)

"I had never heard of Jasper," Castelli recalls, "until I saw his *Green Target* in a show at the Jewish Museum in 1957. The name, the assonance I suppose—J. J.—stuck in my mind. And it was a very singular painting, quite unlike anything I'd seen before. I meant to look him up, but I couldn't find out anything about him. Nobody else had ever heard of him, either. Then I was visiting Bob Rauschenberg one day, and he happened to mention a young painter who lived in the loft below, a friend named Jasper Johns. So I asked if I could visit. When the door opened, I was stupefied. You see, there they all were, just stacked around the wall . . . the flags, the targets, everything Jasper had done up to then. Possibly every dealer has one exquisite moment of discovery in his life, which seems to justify all the buying and selling. Vollard's was meeting Picasso. Certainly mine was Jasper."

Success is the most obvious characteristic of Johns's reputation, and it has turned out to be both a problem and an emblem: a problem, because it is self-contradicting; an emblem, because it anticipated and colored the consumer frenzy of New York art in the 1960's. Johns's first show was sold out, and he was all but unanimously elected the historical alternative to the broad, slashing, romantic art of the abstract expressionists; with him, and Rauschenberg, the decade was given its birth certificate. The Museum of Modern Art, a rather more powerful taste-making instrument then than now, bought three canvases from Johns's first show in 1958, an unheard-of gesture to an unknown painter; several other museums followed suit. If

By ROBERT HUGHES

ever a reputation was launched by one swipe of the Establishment's hand, it was Johns's. This instant acceptance helped touch off the lunacies of pop ballyhoo: an avid public began looking for new Jaspers under every stone. To be seized as the paradigm of all-American success was a strange fate for so complex and reclusive an artist.

In 1959 Hilton Kramer (now an art critic for *The New York Times*) unburdened himself of the view that Johns's work was both "mock-naive" and corrupt: "His handpainted American flags, targets, numbers, and so on, are a kind of Grandma Moses version of Dada. But Dada sought to repudiate and criticize bourgeois values, whereas Johns . . . aims to please and confirm the decadent periphery of bourgeois taste." The years have not confirmed this irritable judgment. The "decadent periphery" was served not by Johns but by the hundreds of artists who, feeling the influence of his work, responded to it mechanically and blatantly, without a trace of the formidably intelligent maze of nuances, ironies, and sheer painterly skill with which Johns contrived to surround every image he produced.

It is grim enough to be the most influential artist in America, and New York's taxes on talent (to be paid at times, as by some abstract expressionists, in alcoholism, paranoia, and suicide) are dreadful. Johns's defense is withdrawal, a remarkable degree of public silence. Even his studio is an architectural irony: an unused bank on Houston Street in Manhattan, a bare room 100 feet square, with the old steel-sphinctered vaults below, where instead of bonds and safety-deposit boxes, Johns's paintings are stored. There can be no more succinct image of the interchangeability of imagination and capital that was the sustaining myth of the New York art market in the 1960's. The paintings Johns showed in 1958 have now increased in value forty or fifty fold. Johns's large painted version of Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion world map (pages 24–25) was



MAP, 1961

purchased last year for some $200,000 —the highest price yet for a work by a living American artist, and probably the highest ever paid for a picture by a man of forty-one.

These statistics are not, perhaps, very interesting in themselves. Who remembers last month's million-dollar Van Gogh? But they cast an oblique light on the difficulties of Johns's position. American culture consumes stars. But Johns, in his public and private attitudes, tries to eschew the role of culture hero. The model here is Marcel Duchamp, who was Johns's friend. Much of Johns's work is a sustained meditation on the lessons to be lear from the unique open-endedness Duchamp's work. *According to W* (pages 28–29) is Johns's equivalen Duchamp's *Tu m'* (1918), comp with a small canvas facing the ture surface and displaying the titl its back and a plaster cast of the of the art critic Barbara Rose. It sw from its half-chair at the top left-h corner and casts a shadow, in the n ner of the illusory shadows in champ's earlier work.

The ethics of Duchamp's life quite as important to Johns as aesthetics, or procedures, of his w

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, N.Y., FRACTIONAL GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. ROBERT C. SCULL



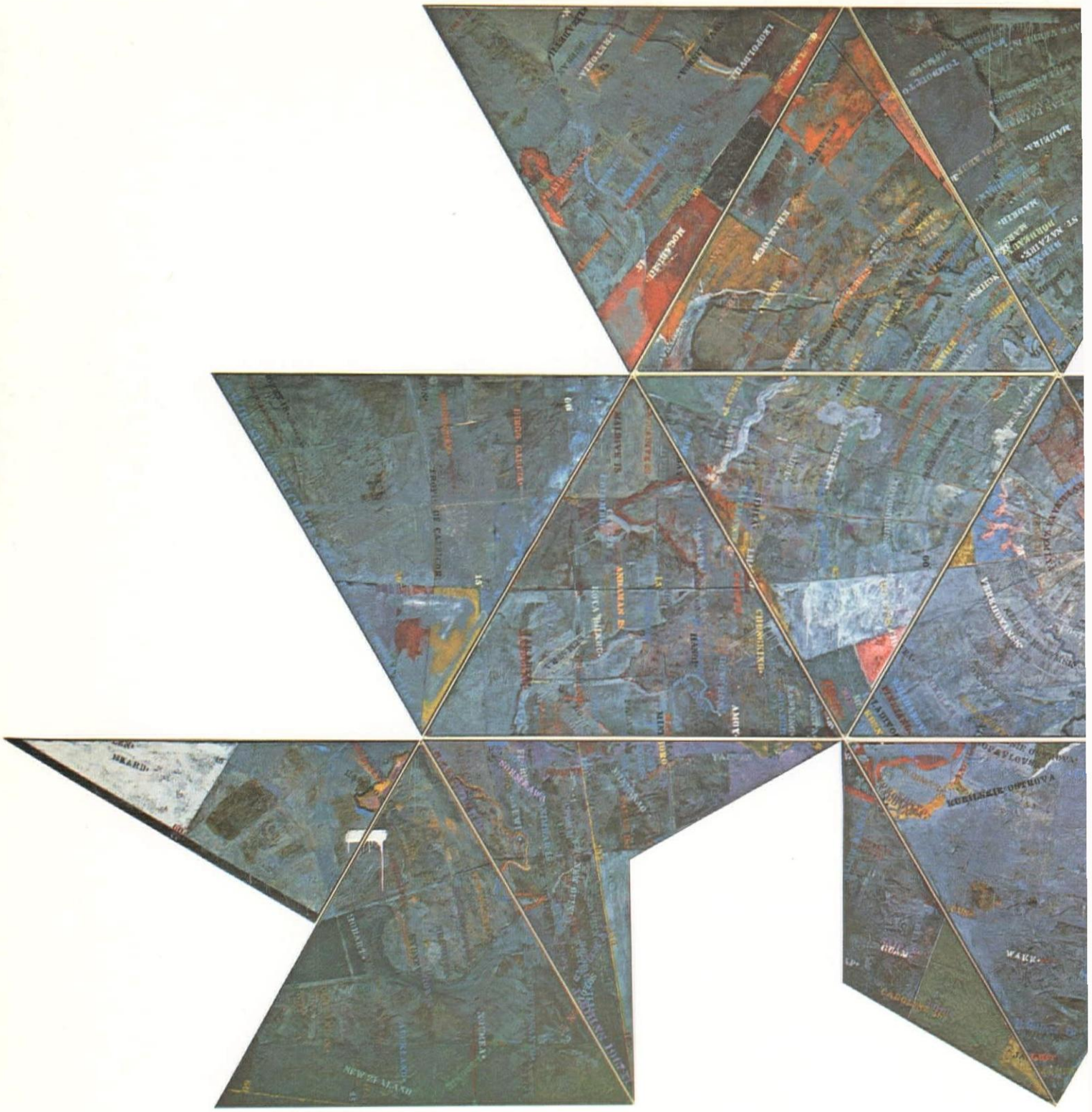
Hardly a literal guide to the forty-eight states, Map, *left, is a painting* of *a map, a kind of freely-rendered still life of a thoroughly familiar piece of graphic design. Johns displays the geography of this continent drenched in brilliant color—the California coast smeared with blue, the Atlantic Ocean brightened with red and yellow, the state of Kansas obliterated with some strokes of gray, the Gulf of Mexico awash in red. The lettering has been done with a stencil.*

a characteristically brief epitaph on champ in *Artforum* in 1968, Johns narked that "The self attempts bal- e, descends. Perfume—the air was stink of artists' egos. Himself, ickly torn to pieces. His tongue in cheek." This is precisely in the rit of Duchamp's statement that he only refutation is indifference," d his elegantly matter-of-fact com- nt on fame (including, naturally, his n): "The idea of the great star comes ectly from a sort of inflation of small ecdotes. It was the same in the past. s not enough that two centuries later have to look at certain people as though they were in a museum; the entire thing is based on a made-up history."

There are plenty of anecdotes about Johns. Some of them are even true, like the story about the origin of *Painted Bronze,* the celebrated cast-bronze ale cans Johns made in 1960 (page 26). De Kooning, irritated by Leo Castelli, was heard to grumble that "that son of a bitch could sell a couple of beer cans." Johns overheard, thought it not a bad idea, and went back to the studio and made the work, which Castelli duly sold to the collector Robert Scull for $1,200. But such anecdotes cannot be inflated, like the stories about Picasso's virility. Johns takes a dead-pan pleasure in giving the most banal reasons for calling works of art into existence. His American flag, he once solemnly told a reporter from *Time,* came to him in a dream. Maybe so, or maybe Johns said it did to have a little fun with the idea of romantic inspiration (a flag is not *Kubla Khan,* after all).

Irony lies at the bottom of all of Johns's autodidactic reasoning. Indeed, it is partly through Johns's application of Duchamp's ironies that Duchamp replaced Picasso as the prototype of the "modern artist" in America —no longer a culture hero, but a man of distances and margins, coneerned with the semantics of very precisely registered ambiguity. Cool replaces hot; the expressive personality gives way to the didactic one.

In the nineteenth century, Walter Pater wrote that art aspired to the condition of music—the perfect, internal harmony of parts. In the twentieth, Johns's proposition is that art aspires to the condition of silence. By definition no work of art can reach this state (art, inevitably, means *some* kind of discourse). But a void can surround an image; it can be enveloped by absences, as under a bell jar. So it is with the deliberate, one is tempted to write ostentatious, ordinariness of Johns's subject matter. There is not much to be thought, it seems, about a coat hanger, a flashlight, a set of numbers or letters, a brace of Ballantine ale cans, or—once you have dispensed with the patriotic associations, which are no concern of Johns's and have nothing to do with



MAP, 1967–1971

his art—an American flag. Why, then, make them subjects of art?

Because, as Johns once put it, "Using the design of the American flag took care of a great deal for me because I didn't have to design it. So I went on to similar things like targets —things that the mind already knows. That gave me room to work on other levels."

One very important aspect of Johns's art is his preoccupation with what is sometimes called information overload. Everyone today endures a battering surplus of images that have no parallels in earlier centuries. J. Huizinga, in *The Waning of the Middle Ages,* points to the silence of medieval life: no cars or machinery, not much noise in the village beyond the wind, human voices, the clatter of carts, and the sound of animals. Against this muted background, cathedral music must indeed have seemed celestial. There a hierarchy of sound, in contrast to continuous level of it.

The same is true of what we see, only in the ceaseless yabber of boards and neon signs, but in sphere of "fine" art. Never have many paintings and sculptures b simultaneously available to such a turally-obsessed audience. The clan



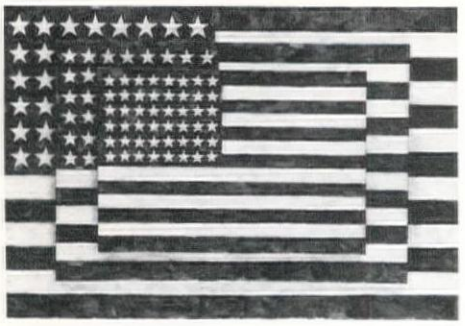
DR. PETER LUDWIG, WALLRAF-RICHARTZ MUSEUM, COLOGNE

Johns based this gigantic (30 by 15 feet) Map *on a famous projection invented by Buckminster Fuller—the Dymaxion Air-ocean World projection, which, says Fuller, "revealed the world's land masses as a one-world island at the bottom of the air-ocean." Fuller's map can be cut out and folded into a polyhedron; Johns's is intended to be flat. Johns originally painted it as an almost literal rendering of world geography, but he has recently reworked the surface into a thick, whirling collage made up of oil paint, varnish, wax, and swatches of newspaper.*

historical styles becomes a kind of mes Square. And what is the eye's sponse to these callousing demands its time and focus? It retracts. In-tention is elevated to a survival tech-que. How does one rescue an image any image—from this flux and re-rn it to credibility? As Johns has id, "Already it's a great deal to see ything *clearly*, for we don't see *ything* clearly."

Thus the hermetic appearance of Johns's early paintings and objects. They address themselves to attention, not description; inventory, not arrangement. They have no narrative content—not even the implied narrative of expressionist art, with its demonstration of the self through gesture. The diabolic rigor with which Johns keeps narrative out of his work can be indicated by one example. *Target with Four Faces* (page 20) involves a row of four plaster casts of part of a girl's face. Each is the same girl. But she became progressively more tired, and this showed in the casts as a nearly imperceptible slackening of her mouth. In the painting Johns reversed casts three and four, to avoid the look of accumulating expression—of a "story."

Despite (or thanks to) such hidden nuances, Johns's work can look be-



THREE FLAGS, 1958



PAINTED BRONZE, 1960



PAINTED BRONZE, 1960

wilderingly simple and bald, its declarations as flat as the enumerative descriptions in a catalogue novel by Butor or Robbe-Grillet. (This contributes to the common idea that his work has something to do with Neo-Dada, or the "revaluation" of ignoble subjects for their shock effect.) American flags are made of cloth. Can one imagine an American flag made of paint? And if there were an American flag made of paint, would it be a flag, or a painting, or both? And is a flag made of paint a painting *of* a flag, or does the fact of its being painted return it to the area of pure abstract design? The rendering of such a configuration in paint contrives in an extremely subtle way to change its use. For it will now attract more attention than is given to a flag. Perhaps a memory of my own will clarify the manner of this change. It has to do with shooting, and thus with targets.

As a boy in Australia one of my obsessions was target shooting with a .22 rifle. How a marksman sees a target defines its visual function, since a target has no use except to be shot at. And this way of seeing depends on selective inattention. Only the bull's-eye really matters. The outer rings are just for orientation. Looking at a target is an extreme case of hierarchical perception—10 for the bull, 7 for the innermost ring, and so on; and once you see a target aesthetically, as a unified design, its use is lost. The paradox is that a target is never scrutinized except in terms of an action that is not "seeing"—to wit, squeezing a trigger at the right moment. It is a sign, not an image. An image requires scrutiny and penetration; its "use" is the imaginative process of comprehending it, which happens more gradually. But one stares at a sign; it is unambiguous, clear and functional. Use and form are linked in a rigid way: use precedes form.

But what if use follows form? Can some change be made in the form of a target, and in the way of looking at it, that will cancel its use? That was the question Johns posed nearly twenty years ago in paintings like *Target with Four Faces* and *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955). His strategy was to switch the target's nature from sign back to image. You are forced to deal with the target's five rings—three greenish-blue ones, two yellow, centered on a rich red field—as painting and painting alone. This happens through the way they are painted: an even, sumptuous, almost edible skin of encaustic, so full of nuances and little incidents that the eye travels every inch of it with relish. No part is more "important," visually, than any other part, and the idea of putting a bullet through it comes absurd. What is there to aim Thus a sign, which can only be sta at, becomes a painterly image, wh must be scanned.

But then one's attention moves the boxes above, in which plaster c of human parts are set. And there still a degree of shock in realizing t Johns has pulled the reverse strate the human body, the image of art excellence, is treated utterly schen ically and rendered back into a syst of signs, anonymous paint-dipped sils that denote "face," "ear," "han or "penis." Johns's transformations the organic and the inorganic have and locked on a plane of logical pa dox. You are left wondering what resentation means. How can you rep sent a target or a flag when the act painting it is exposed so logically a process of changing its nature as s into a new nature as image? How you represent a number when a fig 7, whatever you do to it, remains sign, stays itself? How did object a symbol ever get so close? One beg to see why Leo Steinberg, confron for the first time with Johns's wo wrote in perplexity that "it is as if subjective consciousness . . . had cea to exist." And see, as well, what Joh meant when he said: "Generally, I opposed to painting which is concern



THE CRITIC SMILES, 1959



THE CRITIC SEES, 1961

The flag of his native land, like the map of it, is a motif that has preoccupied Johns, though both are divested of any political or patriotic significance in his canvases, one of which appears opposite at left. The pair of ale cans (opposite, center) is one of the works that inspired the pop-art movement, as is the bronze (opposite, right), which re-creates a coffee tin and paintbrushes. The objects at left are Johns's barbed offerings to his reviewers. The Critic Smiles *is a prone toothbrush bedecked with four molars.* The Critic Sees *is a bas-relief of a pair of eyeglasses shielding toothy mouths behind the lenses.*

th conceptions of simplicity. Everying looks very busy to me." Conceptal paradox is Jasper Johns's way of eing clearly.

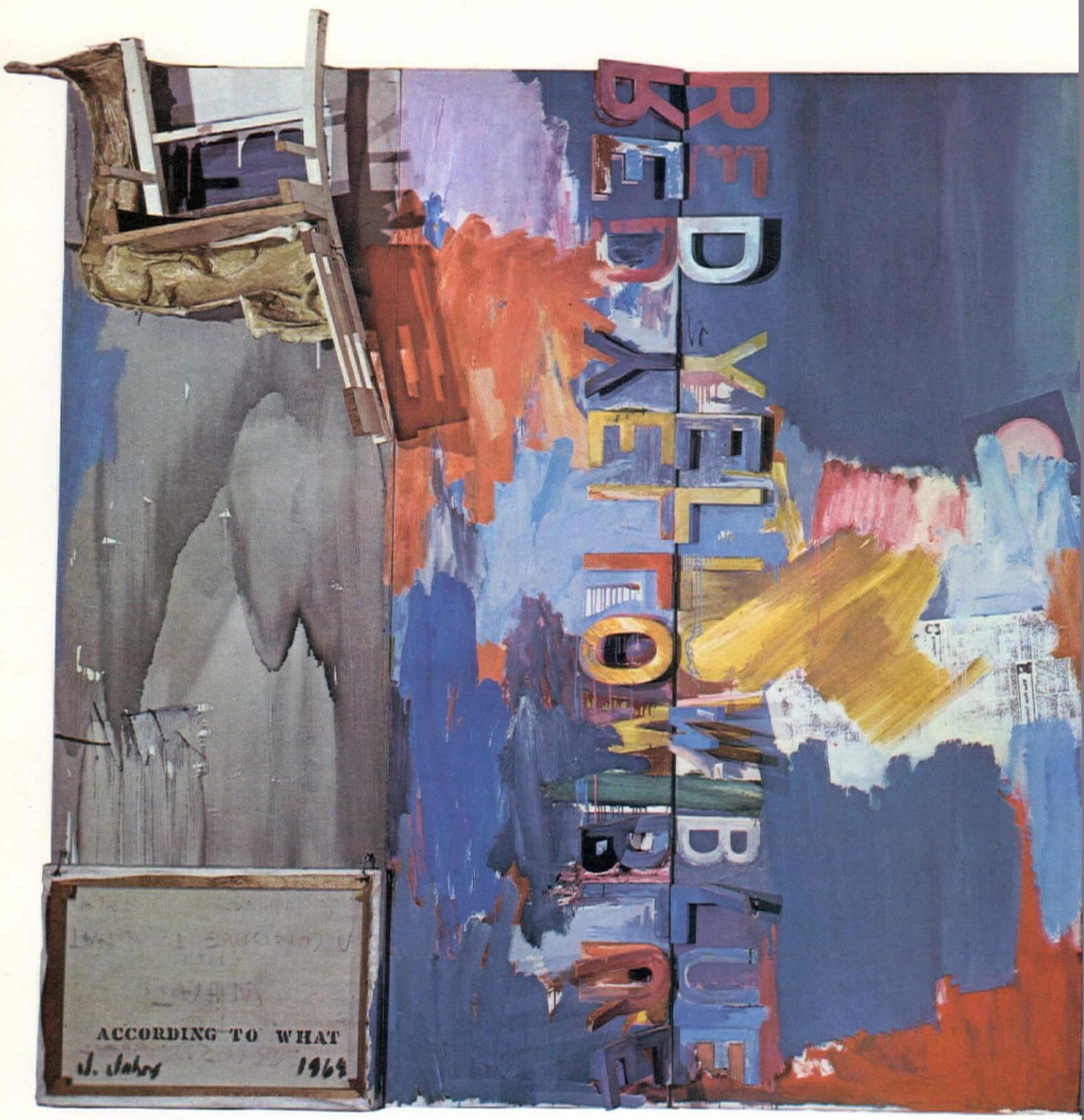
One could pursue this theme in his ork, almost without limit. An obous example is his play with colors d words *about* color: the letters E D, for instance, stenciled in *blue* int on an orange ground. Concept llides with sensation: the meanings ncel. The number paintings relate to is, and when Johns executed a lithoaph of the number 7 with the Mona sa smiling from the sheltering curve its downstroke, he formulated a illiant metaphor for the primitive rentment of abstractness that lurks hind all numbers. (Probably this es back to childhood. Children can mprehend numbers in their concrete rm: four cauliflowers, eight apples. t the existence of numbers without ings is frustrating.) The question even of *what?*" becomes the riddle the Sphinx, neatly suited to the ony enigma of Leonardo's smile.

The peculiar absurdities of measurent and quantification are, indeed, e of Johns's favorite themes. One of s recurring objects is a wooden ruler, hich crops up, in real or painted form, various drawings and prints. (The ototype here, one may assume, is ain Duchamp, whose *Three Standard Stoppages*, 1913–24, were invented as an absurd, nonreferential unit of chance measurement, made by dropping a thread one meter long from a height of one meter onto a board and fixing it where it landed—a useless ruler.) Johns's ruler exists and is calibrated, and the only trouble is, as a point of strict logic, that once inside the painting it has nothing at all to measure. A picture has limits (its edges) but the turbulent space of paint inside is not measurable. Pictorial space is *felt* space, a matter of nuance, not inches, and so two modes of experience are again displayed as paradoxical, self-canceling.

Again, in his painted maps—of which the Buckminster Fuller world map is a provisional summing up—Johns deploys a whole battery of paradoxes. To begin with, the maps of the United States or the world are both recognizable *and* useless. You cannot navigate by them. In a sense, they are brilliant parodies of the abstract expressionist ideas that surrounded Johns's early development. American painting was much involved with the idea of epic landscapes, of getting into the center of a thoroughly romantic, cosmic image (as Pollock, Rothko, and Newman did). Johns takes this to the mock-logical irony of displaying the *whole* American landscape in map form, drenched and half-drowned in churning swathes of violently brushed pigment. In a blink, the hand smears its way from Iowa to Nebraska. It leaves out California, as one might suppress a tree in a landscape. One moment Johns is affirming that limits (here, geographic limits) can be measured; and the next, he is denying all its accuracy by the broad, splashy paint.

As Johns once admitted, this idea of the impossibility of limits was suggested to him by a passage in Leonardo's *Trattato della Pittura,* arguing that "the boundary of a body is neither a part of the enclosed body nor a part of the surrounding atmosphere." But Johns's approach has as much to do with Magritte as with Leonardo. His representations of maps relate to Magritte's famous representation of a pipe, with the words *"Ceci n'est pas une pipe"* beneath it. Of course it is not; it is a *picture.* So are the "maps."

Few painters have the icy detachment that would let them follow Johns all the way into his labyrinth of contradiction. Yet his influence on other artists (especially American artists) has been vast, not only as a moral presence on the scene, but as a stylistic one, too. Even though much of pop art is a vulgarization of Johns's use of banal, everyday signs and things, the ancestry is clear. But what is not so commonly acknowledged is Johns's influence, es-



ACCORDING TO WHAT, 1964

According to What, *reproduced above, is a sixteen-foot-long canvas incorporating various objects. One of Johns's major works, it has been praised as the "capstone of a decade." At top left is a plaster cast of a female leg attached to a chair-half, upside down. A small canvas with title (bottom left) unhooks to reveal a portrait of Marcel Duchamp, Johns's Dadaist mentor. Some of the big letters to the right are painted, some are aluminum objects that swing back and forth.*

pecially through his flags, on "literal" abstraction and minimal art. Much fuss was made of the "objectness" of the paintings of certain abstractionists in the 1960's, like Frank Stella. But in the mid-1950's Johns had already done his flags with no field behind them; the image, or sign, was the entire painting. At this point, he said, "it was clear that the painting was an object not a window," tightly structured and dense.

The swing from abstract expressi
ism to the new literalism of the sixt
hinges on Johns's work. In this way,
begat two opposing tendencies, p
and minimal, that have fought it o
like Cain and Abel, in the galleries a
art reviews ever since—under th
sire's neutral and detached gaze. T
gives an additional edge to some
Johns's more openly polemic objec
like his famous *The Critic Sees* (196

COLL. OF EDWIN JANSS, JR., LOS ANGELES



pair of Sculpmetal spectacles, with ouths, not eyes, behind them. For, any standard, Johns is not only the itic's artist—having attracted more ords of explication, praise, and re- ike than anyone of his generation— t the critic's critic, too. In his work has contrived to expose and clarify ost of the interesting issues related to t in the past decade, and to do it tter than words normally can.

At the same time, his work exists with exemplary purity *as painting*, creating fresh structures of visual experience. "Everything in nature," Jasper Johns has remarked, "has limitless possibilities. In my work, there is some attempt to distinguish the possibilities." There is an echo in that sentence. Leonardo, with whom Johns is obsessed—it is a curious coincidence that his career as a painter started in 1952, the five-hundredth anniversary of Leonardo's birth—expressed the same amazement at the world's polymorphism: *"Il mondo e pieno d'infinite ragioni che non furono mai in isperienza"*—"The world is full of an infinity of causes which were never set forth in experience."

Few writers are better equipped to talk about modern artists than Robert Hughes, who is the art critic for Time.

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"With splendid eyes . . . and a cruel mouth like a carp's," this "glittering, slouching" young thing epitomizes the new ideal created and vigorously marketed by Paul Poiret. Her high-waisted dress, a 1912 sensation, includes a Poiret trademark: the lampshade tunic. Like the other Poiret creations on the following pages, this one was drawn by the gifted artist Georges Lepape.

The Man Who Banned The Corset

A decree from fashion's dictator Paul Poiret
delivered women from one snare,
but he would set new ones: the hobble skirt
and the calorie count

rely as much as any man
es, Paul Poiret, couturier,
rits a niche in the women's
eration hall of fame. For he
s the fashion revolutionary
o, at the beginning of this
ıtury, freed women from
: corset. "I declared war on
: corset," Poiret said. "Like
great revolutions, mine was
ried out in the name of Lib-
y, to give free play to the
mach, which could dilate
hout restriction."

Others had been trying to
ieve this since the 1850's,
t with little success. There
d been, for instance, the
ss-reform ladies, with Amelia
ks Bloomer in the forefront,
d the British Aesthetes, with
ir anti-whalebone doctrine
d unfettered Grecian dra-
ies. But Poiret had an ad-
ntage over his predecessors.
addition to the usual attri-
es of the dedicated revolutionary—
ense of mission and a full measure
ego—he possessed a remarkable
itude for drawing attention to him-
f. This instinct for showmanship
ried him to power in 1907, to reign
king of fashion for nearly a quarter
a century. During this time he left
imprint on dress, art, and decora-
n. Traces of his influence linger with



Poiret was a dandy who loved women and elegant cars.

us still, in relaxed, unconstructed clothing that reveals the figure, and in the revival of the Art-Deco style that he to a large extent created.

"Imperious and Venetian" in his own eyes, and looking to Jean Cocteau like "some sort of huge chestnut," Poiret presented an impressive appearance. Once he took over the world of fashion, he had no trouble in exerting a one-man rule, with a range of activities that extended from the designing of theatre costumes to the breaking down of social barriers. He expanded haute couture by branching out into related fields such as fabric design and interior decoration, and into the production of perfume and accessories, thus paving the way for wide-ranging enterprises of the mode like those of Dior, Cardin, and Yves Saint Laurent today.

"He was one of the very great creators in the history of fashion," a French authority has written. "A dress by Poiret is recognizable at a glance, like a painting by Renoir."

Poiret launched "the age of gold lamé." In his heyday, on the eve of World War I, he put women—uncorseted women—into pearl chin-straps and sent them off to the races wearing satin turbans spiked with tufts of aigrette feathers, trouser-skirts, and gold-embroidered Chinese cloaks. It was all part of the thrilling new vogue for Neo-Orientalism, a movement sparked by Poiret and Diaghilev's Ballet Russe, a vogue that made the generous Edwardian S-shaped figure, with its layers of lacy, complicated underclothes, seem hopelessly *démodé*.

By PHYLLIS FELDKAMP

ALL: *Les Choses de Paul Poiret*, 1911



In 1911 one wore harem pants chez soi . . .

"Yes," wrote Poiret, "I advocated the fall of the corset. I liberated the bust. When I declared war on the corset, women's bodies were divided into two distinct masses and the upper lobe appeared to be pulling the whole derrière section along behind it, like a trailer."

The elegant corset, of heavy colored silk or satin trimmed with real lace and ribbon bows, consisted of ten to fifteen curved pieces, not counting the gussets, and was traversed from end to end by dozens of whalebones and steel stays. Under it, a lady wore a garment called a chemise, which looked like a long nightshirt; over it, she—or more likely, her maid—hoisted voluminous linen pantaloons. On top of all this went a corset cover, a decorous bodice that concealed her stays. Finally, before being buttonhooked into her dress, she got into one, two, or even three elaborate petticoats coyly known as "frillies." The deployment of frillies was a tactic every flirt had to master. "As I knew my frillies were all right," said Elinor Glyn's Elizabeth in *The Visits of Elizabeth*, "I hammocked—and it was lovely."

The height of the corset-and-frillies era was *la belle époque*, when "Frou-Frou" was having her moment at Maxim's and when the real standard-bearers of the mode were the flamboyant demimondaines. These imposing creatures held up their vast and snowy bosoms with stiff, boardlike constructions that ironed out their plump stomachs and pinched their waists in sharply at the back.

Then, overnight, they disappeared. The images of their *grandes toilettes* and jeweled dog-collars vanished from the gilded frames of the theatre loges in what Cocteau has described as a sort of lap-dissolve: the hard lines of the great cocottes gave way to the fluid ones of the new ideal—the glittering, slouching Poiret girl in her flowing, high-waisted dress, with splendid eyes, a headache band, curly hair dressed like a poodle's, and a cruel mouth like a carp's. Girls become conscious of their bodies and of calorie counting. Extra fat could be covered up by petticoats and leg-of-mutton sleeves, but not by the slinky Poiret line.

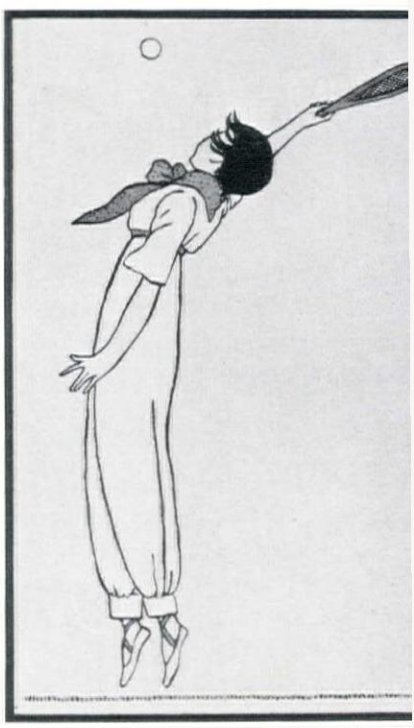
Years ahead of Rudi Gernreich's topless clothes and Saint Laurent's see-throughs, Poiret shocked the conventionally-minded by recommending that his customers wear nothing at all under the transparent tops of his dresses, advice that was eagerly taken by a fearless but not always shapely vanguard. The bra, as we know it, had yet to be invented. Breasts à la Poiret were breasts as nature made them, without benefit of modern sports and exercises, lifted only by the grosgrain cummerbunds he sewed inside the rib cages of his Empire-style dresses.

Pre-Poiret, overendowed ladies had worn "correctors," or "flatteners," while the underendowed had filled themselves out with the contemporary version of falsies—flounced linen "amplifiers." Such rectifiers were regarded as an improvement over both the cotton wadding that was stuffed into the tops of nineteenth-century corsets and the padded "bust improvers" introduced in the 1880's by Charles Frederick Worth, who fought a long, lonely battle against the cumbersome crinoline.

When Poiret started out in fashion, Paris was its undisputed ter. The son of a draper who h small store on the rue des Deux- in Paris, he showed his talent for d making early. He never played n with other children; his sisters some of their savings to buy hi miniature mannequin, which he clo with scraps of silk from the shop o umbrella maker to whom he was prenticed. Another of his talents– prodigality that was to lead to downfall—exhibited itself early, With the first sizable bonus he rece when he was working for the coutu Jacques Doucet, Poiret went out bought himself expensive opal cuffli

At that time, a handful of Paris signers, led by the powerful, cons ative house of Worth, dictated styles, which were then worn by a choice ladies. Sooner or later, the of the world followed their exam The Maison Worth, which had b pre-eminent since Charles Frede had made his international reputa under Napoleon III as couturier to empress Eugénie, was under the di tion of his sons, Monsieur Jean Monsieur Gaston.

Their clients included almost e royal family in Europe. While W dressed the aristocracy, the rival h



. . . *and outdoors, too*, pour le spor

)oucet produced flashier clothes for noted actresses and demimon-ıes. The brothers Worth knew of ret as Doucet's up-and-coming as-ant designer, who, besides creating :umes for Réjane and Sarah Bern-dt, had turned out as his first model eceptively plain little wrap of red chman's cloth that customers had ered four hundred times. They ımoned him into their presence.

ıs Monsieur Gaston explained to ret, his aristocratic clientele no ger dressed exclusively in gowns of :e: "Princesses sometimes take buses. :y even walk on foot in the street. My ther Jean has always refused to make ertain type of dress, a simple and ctical dress. And yet we are being ed for them. We are in the situation ı great restaurant which is only ac-tomed to serving truffles. But we obliged to create a department of :d potatoes."

Hired as the *pommes frites* specialist, iret was appalled to discover *"les ıbérances de Père Worth"* still influ-:ing the house. Charles Frederick's tes had run to dresses festooned with :graph wires on which flocks of swal-/s perched, or to embroideries of ge snails. Monsieur Jean, for his t, was upset by Poiret's novel inter-:tations of elegance. "You call that ress?" he would ask, looking at one Poiret's tailored models. "I call it a ce of trash."

Nor were all the princesses who ssed at Worth ready for Poiret's sions of the simple and practical. *uelle horreur!"* gasped a Russian ncess when she had a look at an tere black kimono coat by Poiret. In 1904, deciding the time had come trike out on his own, Poiret set him-f up, with his mother's backing, in a dest boutique on the rue Auber. ere and at the *hôtel particulier* on rue Pasquier where he installed him-f two years later, he put on fashion *ilés*, the first shows of their kind, for Parisian society women who, by in-ation only, packed the house each ernoon from five to seven.

According to one observer of the daily parade, mannequins undulated "in lighting knowingly lowered, with steps in voluptuous rhythm and in hieratic poses, women turbanned in red, in blue, or in multicolored madras, measuring their slow tread in girdles of silken velvet." A talented young photographer named Edward Steichen took soft-focus pictures of them. Their stance developed into the round-shouldered, hipbones-forward gait that lasted through the twenties and that Cocteau called "the praying mantis walk."

Poiret set the traditionalists back on their heels with his startling use of color.



Scheherazade turban with aigrette feathers

"I hunted down the morbid mauves, the neurasthenic pastels," he said, "and into this sheepcote I threw a few rough wolves—the reds, the greens, the violets and royal blues that made the pale and neutral colors sing." He chucked the corset, but he set a new snare. "I shackled the legs. I remember the tears, the cries, the grindings of the teeth this decree brought forth in the world of the mode. Women complained that they could not walk anymore, they could not get into a carriage. And yet everybody wore the narrow skirt."

With the hobble skirt came other Poiret trademarks: the soft, clinging bodice, the loose harem pants, the classical Grecian draperies, and the lampshade tunic. The draperies suited his friend Isadora Duncan, whom he introduced to Paris at one of his lavish parties, and were also appropriated by England's answer to Isadora, Maude Allen, who popularized an early see-through style sometimes referred to as "Le Nude." But impropriety in dress could not make much headway in England, at least not in the opinion of fashion scholar C. Willett Cunnington. "When the French dress designers, with their depraved minds, tried to bifurcate the hobble skirt into Turkish trousers," he has written, "the English conscience rebelled." The French took a practical view. Hobble skirts slit to the knee or divided into harem pants were, they found, the solution to what to wear while doing the tango, the new dance craze.

The mysterious East had become all the rage. Poiret, who had never been closer to Asia than a course in Tamil at the University of Paris, was largely responsible for the uncertain mélange of Oriental motifs that characterized the fashions of the day. He shifted his inspirational sights from classical Greece to Persia to ancient Egypt to China and back again before the public could catch up with him.

The intellectually inclined were then reading Dr. Joseph Charles-Victor Mardrus's highly colored translation into French of *The Arabian Nights*. The popular reading was Elinor Glyn's novel *Three Weeks*. In it, the heroine, a passionate Balkan queen, spends the major part of her time lolling about on a tiger-skin rug; and in many a fashionable house the "Turkish Corner," a nook *Vogue* had touted at the turn of the century as "a dream of comfort and elegance," was already an established feature. So was smoking hashish—or pretending to. Hookahs and foot-long cigarette holders were the chic accessories when one leaned languorously back on stacks of pillows under one of the new electric lamps.

In 1908 Poiret took over a dilapidated eighteenth-century *hôtel particulier* with a large courtyard in which chickens were running about loose and

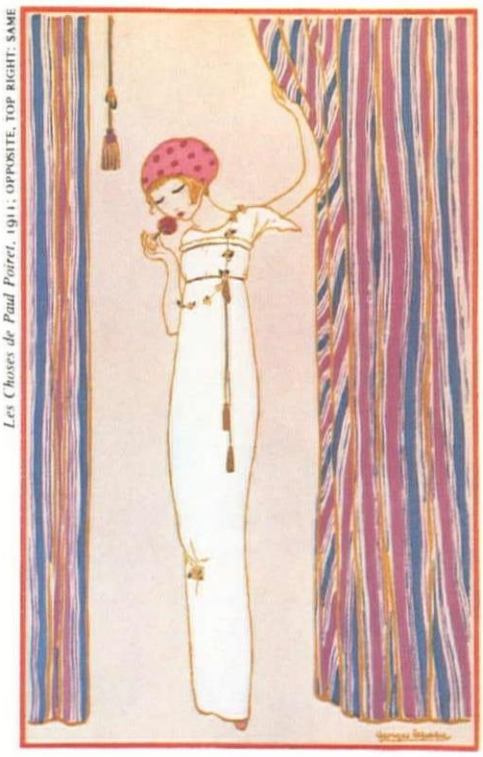
announced that he was going to do it over in high seraglio style. The news set off a boom in Oriental decorations. Dealers at the Flea Market experienced a run on such items as peacock feathers and bits of lacquer, as debutantes with hazy notions about the East went hunting for Oriental bric-a-brac. "Do you have any Coromandel?" one young thing asked another. "I should say I do," the second replied. "Why, I even have some signed by him."

To help him decorate his new house, Poiret had the collaboration of Suë et Mare. Louis Suë was an architect, furniture designer, and decorator who, with André Mare, organized an atelier that eventually employed artists like La Fresnaye, Dunoyer de Segonzac, Maillol, and Despiau. Suë et Mare's furnishings for Poiret—lush metallic curtains, lacquered panels, and thick Persian rugs—inspired the duchesses and actresses Poiret dressed to redo their own interiors, with a wealth of wrought-iron grills, Lalique glass, and lampshades with dangling silk fringe.

To the distress of their husbands, they also heaped floors and sofas with masses of cushions. For years to come, men on both sides of the Channel—and the ocean, for that matter—would grumble about pillows. "I say, Monica," complains a man sprawled across the floor in a 1924 *Punch* cartoon, "do let's leave Chelsea and sit on chairs again."

The part of pasha that Poiret so enjoyed playing was a matter of typecasting. Plump, gregarious, and epicurean, Poiret became an inveterate womanizer from the moment his early employer, Doucet, suggested he take a *petite amie* to be a truly worldly Parisian. He went on to a series of liaisons with willing actresses who seldom, in consequence, had to pay for their clothes. With mannequins and other young women on his staff, however, his manner was less sultanic than schoolmasterish, although he did once advise a virtuous *première* in his workroom that she would better understand the sensual charm of his creations if she had a lover.

Poiret's finest hour came one night in May, 1911, when in his Faubourg Saint Honoré house he gave a historic fete, the ball of *La Mille et Deuxième Nuit*. Raoul Dufy concocted the invitations. The guests were asked to come in Persian garb, and those who arrived in ordinary dinner or evening clothes were dispatched upstairs to choose costumes from a wardrobe their host had provided. Poiret's artist friends relied on ingenuity. Guy-Pierre Faucon-



Les Choses de Paul Poiret, 1911; OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: SAME

Enter shy miss, in Empire-style gown

net, who was out of funds, wrapped himself in several lengths of white sheeting, with a result so effectively Middle Eastern that many declared him the best-dressed man in the crowd. Steichen got by the door check in an African burnoose.

Snobs like the elderly lady in pink satin harem pants, accompanied by a gentleman clad as a janissary, claimed to have come merely out of curiosity. Spotting nobility among the throng, she observed that society must be turning topsy-turvy, for "*grandes dames* now accept invitations from their tradespeople."

A torch-bearing flunky naked t
waist and draped below in clo
gold escorted guests across eight
of carpet that Dunoyer de Seg
had painted especially for the
through a sanded, canopied fore
filled with spouting fountains to a
and gold portal leading to a seri
divertissements. One of these wa
sultan's favorite, Mme Poiret, in
lamé, imprisoned in a huge gilded
filled with rare birds and a cov
dancing girls who hummed Pe
airs as they fed their goldfish, adn
themselves in mirrors, and ate ices

Poiret himself, rigged out as a c
in a caftan of silver brocade wi
gigantic cabochon emerald at his
and a large turban on his head, rec
the salaams of his guests from a th
atop a tier of steps covered with w
ing nymphs. The nymphs were clo
mostly in beads and wore fright
expressions. Glowering through
tacles perched on his false nose,
couturier abandoned himself to
role and as the evening progre
flicked his tiny ivory whip at pa
houris.

Among the night's other enter
ments were a python tamer with
mond-encrusted teeth; a sook featu
a fortuneteller, a potter's wheel,
Turkish delight; and a slave-girl de
Tales from *The Arabian Nights*
declaimed by the great tragedian
ouard de Max, his eyes ringed
kohl and wearing a fortune in pe

A South American tourist
stumbled over several of the
odalisques that Poiret had arra
here and there in the garden, u
gauze, responded by quoting suit
from Omar Khayyám. As dinner
served, forty blackamoors bu
myrrh and incense. (Poiret had no
concocted the pungent perfume he
later to market under the name "N
of China.")

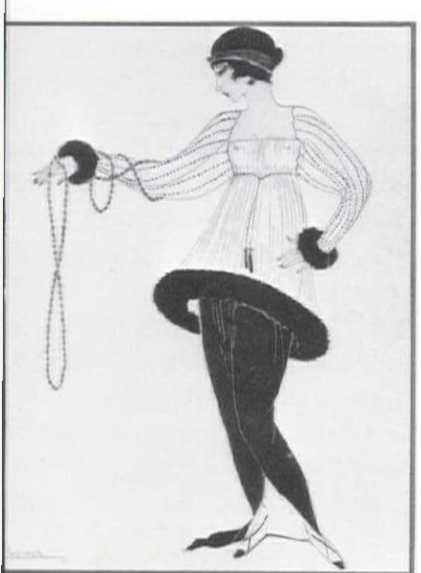
The Arabic dances outdoors
illuminated by swarms of phospho
cent insects that Poiret had positi
in the trees. When the time came,
midnight, to ignite the fireworks,

'ks nearly finished off the Boukhara
ɔets on the lawn. The insects re-
ed with the *feu d'artifice* did not
ɛt the peacock or the flamingos,
ch were indoors, but they did un-
ve the monkeys and the parakeets
ened to the branches; many of
n got loose and were found the next
ning shrieking up and down the
ımps Elysées.

'oiret gave other parties after that,
none ever equaled *La Mille et*
ıxième Nuit—not even the one he
ɛw at Butard, the hunting lodge
lt by Jacques Ange Gabriel for
ıis XV, although nine hundred bot-
' worth of champagne flowed and
ret received his three hundred
sts done up as Jupiter, his hair and
rd painted gold. But he never
ɒpped trying. He bought a yacht and
k dozens of friends on leisurely
diterranean cruises. When he sum-
red at Deauville, he rented a whole
ng of houses for friends, to be sure
ıaving congenial neighbors.

His black Hispano-Suiza leading the
y, Poiret toured Europe with his
nnequins, who wore glazed linen
s marked with the monogram
P." He started a decorating firm and
troduced" the sunken bathtub. He
ıed forces with Dufy to experiment
h dyes while Dufy created a group
uncommon silk fabrics that have
ɛe become collectors' items.

One of his most influential enter-
ses, the Ecole Martine, a school he
rted for the daughters of factory



et's hobble skirt: "I shackled the legs."

workers, led to the Art-Deco style. The girls were taken out to look at nature and then asked to paint the birds, trees, and flowers they had seen. Their fresh, naive pictures were used as basic designs for the production of pottery, fabrics, and wallpaper.

World War I, in which Poiret's army duties included the creation of new uniforms, altered his fortunes. When peace came, he opened a new salon on the Rond Point des Champs-Elysées, but he ran into financial difficulties. His nightclub, *L'Oasis*, had but a relatively brief success. The money and effort he put into decorating and furnishing three houseboats on the Seine for the 1925 Exposition des Arts-Décoratifs were largely wasted because the exposition opened at a time of year when all the rich had left for their country places.

As Poiret's power declined, in the 1920's, he went on the lecture circuit in the United States, where he was billed as the "King of Fashion." He was flattered by the title, he told his audiences, but he did not want to be a despot or a dictator. "I am not your master," he said. "I am your slave, hoping to divine your secret desires. Women are perpetually falling in love with change, perishing with thirst for something new."

But his ability to divine these secret desires waned. By the mid-1930's his prodigality and disdain for the practical side of business had done him in; he left his family and retired to the south of France to paint. During World War II he was once observed sauntering along the jetty of a Mediterranean port in an admiral's hat and a suit he had cut from a terry-cloth bathrobe, a pair of scissors in his pocket.

When his family located him Poiret had lost seventy pounds and was suffering from Parkinson's disease. He went back to Paris, and died there of a heart attack in 1944.

During the days of his fashion revolution Poiret bore in mind that "there has never been a truly new fashion



Eastern motif: slave, parrot, slinky dress

which has not caused, at the outset, as Beaumarchais said, a general hue and cry, a universal chorus of hatred and proscription." But when Gabrielle Chanel took over the clothing of the revolutionary figure early in the jazz age, Poiret behaved like a middle-aged conservative who does not want to be reminded of his own youthful indiscretions. "Women were beautiful and architectural like ships' figureheads," he said. "Now they look like undernourished telegraph operators."

Once, however, in 1927, he recovered his prophetic sense. In "Will Skirts Disappear?" an article for *The Forum*, he looked ahead toward our time, making an eerily accurate prediction of a synthetic, plastic future. He saw hats of spun glass, pants of natural palm fiber, fichus of incandescent vegetable silk. The Rodiers of the day would be supplied by their chemist with cellulosahs in acidulated tints, sulfurated glucosinahs that shimmered. Women would wear tunics of scintillating silver, apple-green gandourahs, trousers of paprika satin, pale blue shocks of hair. . . .

He was right.

The fashion editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin, *Phyllis Feldkamp spent twelve years in Paris free-lancing. Her article on Paul Poiret will appear in a book she has written with her husband Fred on the pleasures of life in France. Harper's Magazine Press will publish it this fall as* The Good Life—or What's Left of It.



THE WORLD'S GREAT EPICS I:

THE RAMAYANA

Throughout Southeast Asia hundreds of millions of people, a fifth of humanity, still listen, enthralled, to an ancient story: an exiled prince's long, thrilling struggle to rescue his beautiful wife from her demon abductor

By SANTHA RAMA RAU

It was, exotically enough, in L
Prabang, the royal capital of Laos,
I first realized that there was a diff
—indeed, to my conventional In
eyes, an altogether revolutionary
terpretation of the great Hindu
the *Ramayana*. Like most India
had been brought up on the imm
story of the *Ramayana*, on its po
its mythology, but most of all, o
moral substance, on the splendid
questioned prototypes it set in its
and heroine, Rama and Sita, o
perfect human beings.

Until then, I had never imagined
they could be less than ideal. So pe
was Rama in his piety, righteous
strength, obedience, and respect o



Life MAGAZINE, TIME INC., © CO RENTMEESTER

n that he rated the recognition of gods and was eventually elevated to ir number. Even so unorthodox a ndu as Mahatma Gandhi died from assassin's bullets with the hallowed he "Ram, Ram" as his last words, ultaneously forgiving his murderer invoking the blessing of the deity. ita, Rama's dutiful, loving, and inruptible wife, dedicated solely to the piness and welfare of her husband, become in India the ideal of Hindu manhood. A mother's last words to daughter after her marriage are traonally, "Be as Sita, be as Savitri" other devoted wife from the monuntal expanse of Hindu mythology). The *Ramayana* holds a special place in Indian hearts. Primarily, I suppose, it is because the basic story is so simple and so dramatic that, unlike the complexities of action and the huge cast of disparate and intricately related characters in the *Mahabharata,* the larger of the two great Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* is immediately and grippingly accessible to any age group. I can remember as a very young child how my grandmother would stretch out on the *thakhat,* a wooden platform covered with white hand-woven cotton and bolsters, set out in the courtyard of her house. It would be just at the time when the first cool of the brief evenings of the Hot Weather brought a light breeze through the orchards and gar-

At a festival of the Ramayana *in Prambanan, Java, a troupe of dancers re-creates the climax of the epic: Rama (danced by a woman) brandishes a sword, as his warriors circle the enemy, Ravana, who has raised one of them aloft. The carving below, of Rama and Sita, is from the temple in the background.*



YVES COFFIN

BOTH: LUC IONESCO



Ravana, though Rama's opponent, appears in some versions of the epic as a tragic hero. Each of the peoples of Southeast Asia has made the Ramayana *distinctly its own, and in this twelfth-century bas-relief at Angkor, in Cambodia, the demon king wears the features of a native Khmer.*

dens, and she would call the children of the family to her and would read to us.

As soon as we saw her large, worn copy of the *Ramayana,* we prepared ourselves for a treat. She would open the book at random and begin reading from the start of whichever adventure she happened on, explaining the difficult passages, sometimes asking what we would have done or what the truly virtuous person would have done in this or that predicament, subtly instilling in us the tenets of proper moral behavior. At last, when the kerosene lanterns had been lit and the silly moths had started bumping blindly into them, we would be sent off to bed, our heads filled with gods and demons and heroic deeds.

In essence, the *Ramayana* tells of the young Prince Rama of Ayodhya, whose father, in his declining years, impressed by the just, noble, and kingly qualities of his eldest son, decides to abdicate his throne and announce the coronation of Rama. Instead, through malice and trickery, he is compelled to send his son into exile for fourteen years, while a younger brother, Bharata, is crowned in Rama's place.

Rama, his loyal brother, Lakshmana, and his devoted wife, Sita, set out, followed by the lamentations of their subjects and the brokenhearted blessings of the dying king, to follow this destiny without bitterness, with good grace, and even with joyful expectations of learning much from the religious hermits and sages who have made their own rigorously austere enclaves of prayer and meditation in the forests. For ten years they wander, meeting wise men, having adventures and finding themselves in conflict with evil spirits and demons, living on whatever food they can find or on game that Rama and Lakshmana, both expert archers, manage to kill.

Eventually, news of Sita and the two brothers in their forest exile reaches Ravana, the ten-headed Demon King of Lanka—or, as we know it, Ceylon. Ravana's sister, a fierce giantess, has seen Rama on one of her mischief-making journeys, and she tries to seduce him. Meeting no success, she then tries her wiles on Lakshmana, and is spurned again. Convinced that both brothers are in love with Sita, she attempts, in a fit of jealousy, to swallow her. Lakshmana springs to Sita's defense and so mutilates the giantess that she returns to her brother with her nose, ears, and breasts severed manding revenge.

Ravana is not particularly inter in revenge, and it is only when he a description of Sita's unparal beauty, grace, and elegance that h termines to capture this pearl ar women for himself. He orders or his demon subjects to take the for a golden deer of incredible charm, bewitching liquid eyes, jewel-encri horns, and tiny hooves of alaba Sita sees this enchanting creature begs Rama to catch it for her.

Unable to resist her pleading, he out after the deer, instructing shmana to guard Sita every mor that he is gone. But no sooner ha little deer led Rama out of sight of forest dwelling than Lakshmana Sita hear the unmistakable voic Rama calling for help in increasi anguished tones. At first Lakshn refuses to leave Sita, but the dem imitation of Rama's voice is too istic and heart-rending for Sita to b and at last she presuades Lakshn to go to his brother's aid.

This is, of course, the momen ranged by Ravana to fly up from island stronghold on his miracu winged chariot, swifter than the w and carry Sita off to his palace. H less and overpowered, she can plead for mercy, weep at her credul ness, beg the rivers and forests to Rama *somehow* of her plight, and n practically, drop her few pieces of elry along the way as she and Rav speed back to Lanka. Only once ing the journey does any creature to stop the all-powerful Ravana. good king of the vultures attacks flying chariot, but falls, fatally woun to earth.

In his fabulous city, built mostl gold and protected by wide moats impregnable stone and metal w Ravana tries all the blandishment can think of to soften Sita's feelings ward him—jewelry, fine clothes, flowers to adorn her, handmaiden serve her, pleasure gardens and t animals to amuse her, musicians

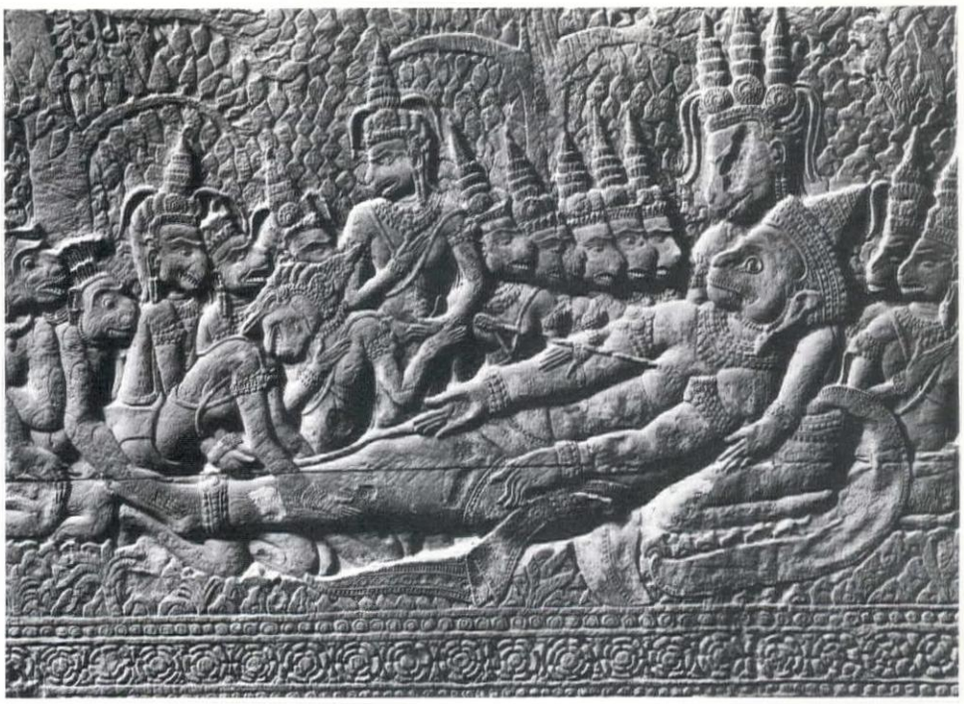
:ers to perform for her. But she is nant. Her marriage vows and her for Rama are unassailable. She accept none of Ravana's gifts; she ld rather go barefoot and wear the d remnants of her own sari, with- ornaments, her hair hanging loose untended, than be seduced by ka's king or the luxury he offers.

[eanwhile, Rama and Lakshmana, izing that they have been deceived a demon's stratagem, set out on a g journey across India looking for s to Sita's whereabouts. Eventually, r countless adventures and feats of rage and endurance, they find the ng king of the vultures, who lives y long enough to tell the brothers of 's fate and to identify her captor.

Now comes the almost equally nting problem of how to rescue her. ain the brothers overcome a series hazards and obstacles, fights and rayals, until they enlist as their allies griva, the king of the monkeys, and wise old general, Hanuman. Mon- scouts are sent out all over the ntry, but it is Hanuman who actu- penetrates Ravana's fortress, finds a, and gives her Rama's signet ring prove his good faith and to assure that rescue is on the way.

Hanuman, being, after all, a monkey, n't resist taunting Ravana by larking out in the palace gardens pulling up nts. Finally he insults the king by sing himself up on his coiled tail to t himself at a higher level than roy- y. Ravana would like to kill him, remembering that the code of bat- forbids the execution of an emissary m the opposing side, he spares his . To avenge the insult, however, he Hanuman's tail wrapped in oily s and set on fire—a most discourte- thing to do to a monkey. Hanu- n, irrepressible still, uses his flaming to set fire to whatever is combusti- in the fortress city, then flies back the brothers to recount his deeds.

Now Sugriva's great army of mon- s, led by Hanuman, mobilizes to ld a causeway with colossal boulders



The adventures of the Ramayana*'s numerous monkey heroes figure prominently in sculpture throughout Southeast Asia. In the one above, also at Angkor, a monkey king who has made the mistake of battling an ally of Rama lies dying in his wife's arms, the victim of Rama's arrow.*

from the Himalayas, and massive uprooted trees, across the strait that separates India from Ceylon. Remnants of the causeway, or at least of *a* causeway, can still be seen. And it is still called Rama's Bridge.

Once the brothers and the monkey army have reached Lanka, helped by the military intelligence provided by a defecting brother of Ravana's about fortifications, defenses, and the deployment of troops, there begins the famous, the fabulous, the inexhaustibly thrilling ten-day battle, filled with individual acts of courage, heroic deeds, hand-to-hand combat, and the massacre of whole armies. One after another, the great generals and warriors of Ravana's forces bring out their troops to defeat the invaders. But in the end Rama is triumphant. He alone, after the mightiest of confrontations, kills the Demon King of Lanka and frees Sita.

A happy ending? Not quite yet.

The story has a curious epilogue, and perhaps it is this that gives the Laotian view of the epic such an unusual twist. When Sita at last comes out of captivity to greet her husband in an ecstatic reunion, she is met instead with chilly formality. It is one thing, Rama seems to claim, that she has sworn to her fidelity during her years in Ravana's palace, but quite another that she might be telling the truth. Who, after all, can testify to the virtue of a woman?

Sita, in despair, agrees to undergo an ordeal by fire to clear herself of suspicion, and Rama (outrageously ungallantly, in the Laotian opinion) allows her to perform this horrifying act of exculpation. The fire god Agni, and even the sky itself, stunned by Sita's bravery, proclaim her innocence, and only then does Rama accept her back, saying that *he* has never doubted her word. He only wanted public proof. The Laotians put considerable ironic emphasis on this blatant disingenuousness.

Even with some reservations, a happy ending *now?* Not quite yet.

There is a further episide—added, according to some scholars, many years after the original text—that gives more material for the Laotian view. When Rama and Sita finally return to Ayodhya, Bharata humbly restores the throne to its rightful heir, removing from it Rama's sandals, which he has left there for fourteen years as a symbol to remind the people of their true king. After the coronation, the festivities, and the beginning of a reign of such unprecedented peace and pros-

perity that even now a *"Ramarajya"* (rule of Rama) has come to mean a utopian state, Rama is still uncertain of Sita's purity.

One day he sees a washerman beating his wife. He learns that the washerman's neighbors think his wife has been unfaithful to him, so he has decided he must punish her publicly. This ridiculous incident, instead of arousing Rama's sympathy for the poor woman, so impresses him that he fears for Sita's, but primarily his own, reputation. He hears that there have been murmurs of doubt among some of his subjects. How, when her ordeal by fire had taken place hundreds of miles away, are they to be convinced?

In short, he cannot allow his reputation as the perfect, pious, and just monarch to be impaired by the suspicion that he has taken back an adulterous woman. His Public Image is at stake. What is more, Sita is pregnant. A ten-headed demon like Ravana as an heir? No, the risk is too great.

He banishes Sita to the forest, where she meets the sage and poet Valmiki, who gives her shelter. She tells him her story, from the beginning. In the seclusion of the forest, she bears twin sons who, when they are about fifteen years old, wander back to Ayodhya. There they enter the presence of the king, and Rama recognizes their likeness to him and the signs of their noble birth. Only then does he formally accept Sita back as his queen.

Well. I was taught that this was, indeed, a happy ending. Rama had put the welfare of his people, the need for an irreproachable monarch, above his own personal happiness and was rewarded by the reunion with his one great love and the blessings of the gods. In Laos I began to recognize the full reasons for the drastic change in emphasis that the more equitable and compassionate Laotians saw fit to put upon the teachings and the story of the *Ramayana*.

To them, Rama is far from a model of virtue, destined to be an incarnation of Vishnu, one of the basic triumvirate (with Siva and Brahma) of Hinduism. To them, not without justification, he is a preachy stick of a man, quite unfairly endowed with supernatural and godlike powers.

Ravana, on the other hand, appears to the Laotians to have shown commendable enterprise and ingenuity in capturing Sita. They feel that Sita is not altogether displeased at her predicament, and after all, doesn't Ravana treat her in a truly royal fashion? Could any woman ask for more admiration, cherishing, or lavishing of gifts and attention? And even though she is the helpless captive of the Demon King of Lanka, does he not behave in a most gentlemanly way toward her? He doesn't seduce her or rape her; he respects her wishes and would take her only if she were freely willing to accept his advances. And see how scrupulous he is about observing the military code with Hanuman—he could easily have had the monkey killed and avoided ruin. Besides all this, Ravana had acquired his princely position in a most worthy manner. He had so impressed the gods by his years of prayer, meditation, and asceticism that they had granted him magical powers and a of immortality: immunity from attack by gods, devils, or the spiri air, earth, or water; rashly, they omitted mortal man from the list.

The Laotians do not actually ch the outcome of the classic battle though Rama's victory clearly s to them unjust, supported as it wa the power of the gods and by the su naturally invested strength of the n keys. But they extend the story of war as long as they can before the luctantly, and with no sense of triun bring it to its traditional conclus

In the account of the reunion Rama and Sita, however, they do n reckless changes to suit their sens fair play. Shocked and disgusted Rama's heartlessness in subjecting to an ordeal by fire, they show Sit equally repelled and outraged by lack of trust in her innocence.

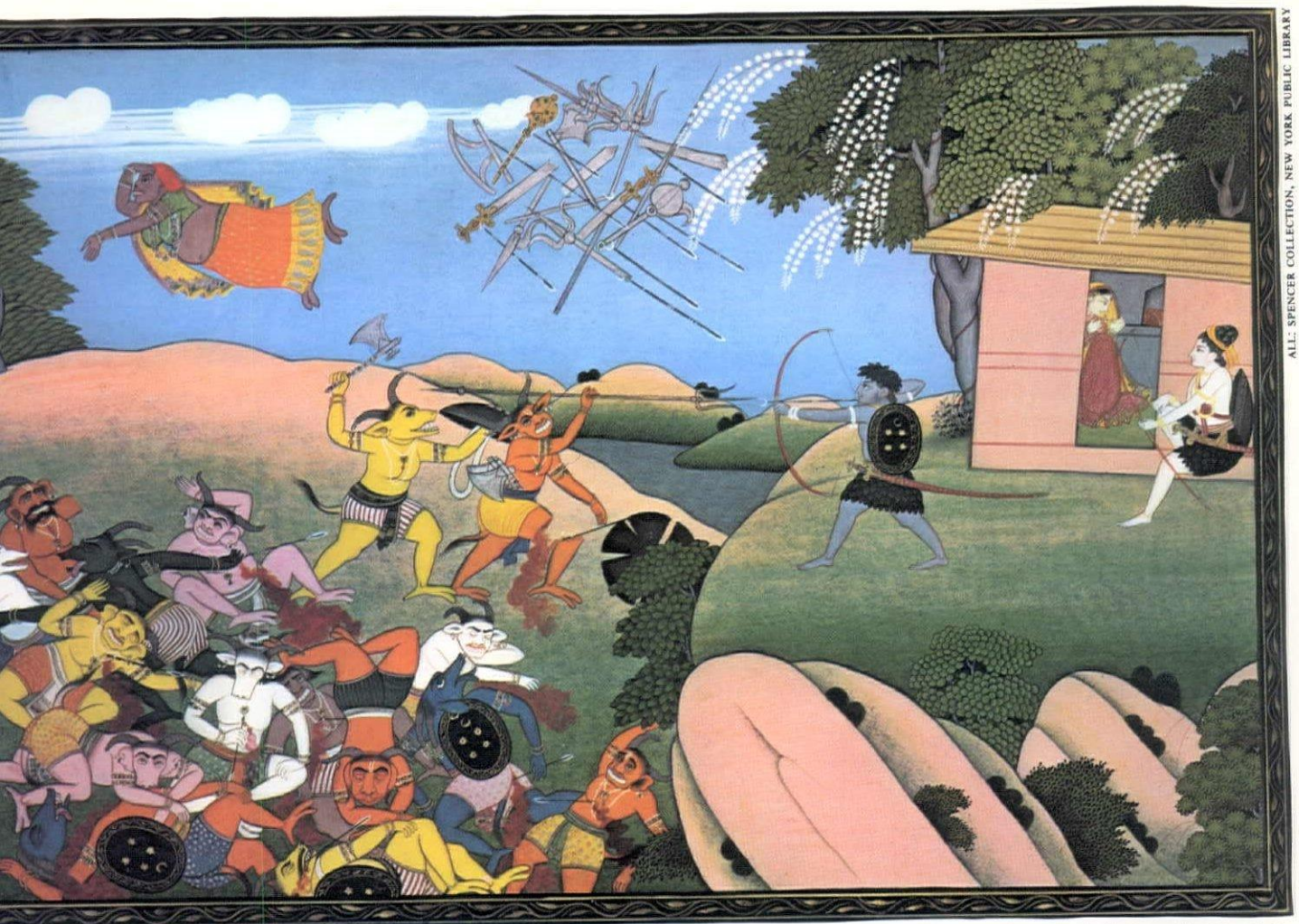
Sita had originally been a foundl A king had come upon her as a baby lying in a plowed field. Assun that she had been entrusted to him the deity and that her mother mus the goddess of the earth, he had na the baby Sita, meaning "furrow." had taken great care of her and brou

TEXT CONTINUED ON PA

THE RAMAYANA IN PICTURES

Though born in India, the *Ramayana* belongs to what has been called the "collective dream" of all Southeast Asia. Not only does each of India's peoples possess its own version in its own language; so, too, do the predominantly Buddhist Burmese, Thais, Cambodians, and Laotians, as well as the Moslem Malays and Indonesians. The paintings on the following pages, here reproduced for the first time, are illustrations from a mid-nineteenth-century manuscript containing a version from the Punjab, in northern India: each of the paintings depicts an episode of Rama's long and complicated story.

On the facing page the central character is the female demon Shurpanaka. Having vainly courted Rama, exiled prince of Ayodhya, and then his brother Lakshmana, she has concluded that both love Sita, and in a jealous fury has tried to kill her; Lakshmana has cut off her nose and ears. Now, she seeks vengeance on all three, first by a frontal attack (top), and next by invoking the aid of her brother Khara (bottom). When these attempts fail, she persuades another brother, the demon king Ravana, to fly north from his capital in Lanka—presumably Ceylon—in pursuit of Sita (the scene at the top of page 44). Ravana carries off Sita and takes her back to Lanka as his prisoner. After a long search, Rama and Lakshmana find out where she is; their monkey allies then build a causeway to Ceylon (pages 42–43) and Rama, crossing it, storms Ravana's capital and defeats him. Returning to Ayodhya, Rama is at last enthroned as its rightful king (page 44, bottom).



ALL: SPENCER COLLECTION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

le Lakshmana guards Sita, at right, Rama, the archer, repels an attack by demons seeking to avenge Shurpanaka, who is flying off at top left.



rpanaka (left center) asks her demon brother Khara, who is sitting cross-legged and with a donkey's head and horns, to help avenge her.



Rama's beloved Sita having been kidnapped and imprisoned in Ceylon, Rama's hordes of soldier-monkeys build a giant causeway fr



ross a rolling, demon-ridden sea. At left, Rama (dark) and his brother (light) hold a council of war, planning how they will attack Ravana.



Ten-headed Ravana travels from Ceylon in a flying chariot (twice shown), past a divine bird, Garuda (left), and many rishis, *beings who live in t*



Returning home after fourteen years of frenetic exile, Rama (center) is enthroned and crowned king of Ayodhya, to the cheers of his monkey alli

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

up with all the advantages of a ncess, knowing that the agricultural sperity of his kingdom depended on cherishing the child.

In at least one version of the *Ra-yana,* after Rama allowed Sita to re-n to her royal position, he still in-ed (in spite of the incontrovertible dence that the looks and bearing of sons supplies) on summoning an ormous assembly before which Sita ist publicly declare her innocence. cing this new ordeal, the modest Sita okes the Earth to attest to the truth her statement by giving a sign to the thered multitude. The Earth gave the imate in indignant motherly signs. e simply opened up and embraced r daughter with love, removing her rever from the power of unreasonable en. To the Laotians, at least, this ems the only proper ending, the only asonable penalty for Rama for put-ig his Public Image before the word his incomparably beautiful, loving, d irreproachable wife.

n other parts of Southeast Asia, and en in India, the ending of the story in yodhya takes on forms and colora-ns that happen to suit varying traits character or concepts of morality. ne similar account adds a postscript deeming Rama, showing him heart-oken and tormented with longing for s lost Sita. Even the gods feel they ust be merciful to a man in such re-orse and distress of spirit. The form eir mercy takes is a curious one—in-rpret it as cynically or as compas-nately as your nature dictates. They nd him Time, disguised as an ascetic no, in the Hindu code, has access to y household or personage, however and. Time offers Rama two choices, th the stipulation that he *must* accept e of them: he can either stay on earth unrelieved and isolated splendor as e revered, though companionless, onarch of his realm, or he can ascend heaven to rule over the gods.

I suppose you would have to know least a little about the quarrelsome-ss, unpredictability, jealousy, capriciousness, unexpected kindness and co-operation, and equally sudden venomousness and cruelty the Hindu pantheon displays in its interminable and checkered activities and confrontations in order to grasp the enormity of this decision.

But we will never know what Rama's decision might have been, for it is at this precise moment that an irascible but extremely powerful sage arrives to see him. The caller threatens frightful curses—and traditionally, nothing is to be more dreaded than a Brahman's curses—if he is not given an audience *at once.* Lakshmana, who receives the sage, knows that to interrupt an interview with Time carries, without exception, the penalty of death. Still, to save Rama from the sage's curses, and possibly also from having to make his dire decision, he interrupts the conference with Time. He then walks peacefully to the riverside to wait for his own death. Much moved by this noble self-sacrifice, the gods shower him with garlands and lift him up into heaven to join their company.

Rama's death may seem more morally equivocal. He commits suicide. As one version describes it, "With great dignity and ceremony he walked into the river Sarayu, where Brahma's voice welcomed him from heaven and he entered into the 'glory of Vishnu,'" becoming Vishnu's seventh incarnation.

Considering the long, expansive, and complicated history of the actual epic, it isn't difficult to understand why the *Ramayana* is open to a number of diverse, often contradictory, interpretations. Scholars differ widely on sources, origins, and dates, but there are a few points on which they agree.

It seems likely, for instance, that the *Mahabharata* was, to some extent, based on actual occurrences during the first of the Aryan invasions of India from the north, and that it, as well as the *Ramayana,* chronicles (however imaginatively) the dynasties of that historical period. The traditional date for the great war that took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, described in the *Mahabharata,* is 3102 B.C. The sequence of kings and the relationships of principalities as they grew up seem, even in their legendary form, to follow a logical and unbroken pattern.

Unquestionably, the earliest recountings of these historical events were handed down in the spoken language, Sanskrit, by storytellers—a tradition of oral communication of history and literature that still continues in India. It is equally certain that incidents and characters, details of personality, points of view, and descriptions were modified, dramatized, or simply changed to suit the mood or feeling of the narrator or the temper and wishes of a particular audience.

For the *Ramayana* there is further and more recent evidence of the historical movements and wars on which it may have been based. The Aryans expanded into the peninsula of south India about 800 B.C., and some scholars maintain that the army of monkeys who helped Rama in his invasion of Ceylon were a symbolic depiction of south India's original Dravidian inhabitants—smaller in build than the Aryans, darker of skin and hair, agile, and with their own kingdoms. This would suggest that the earliest version of the *Ramayana* might have been composed fifty or a hundred years later.

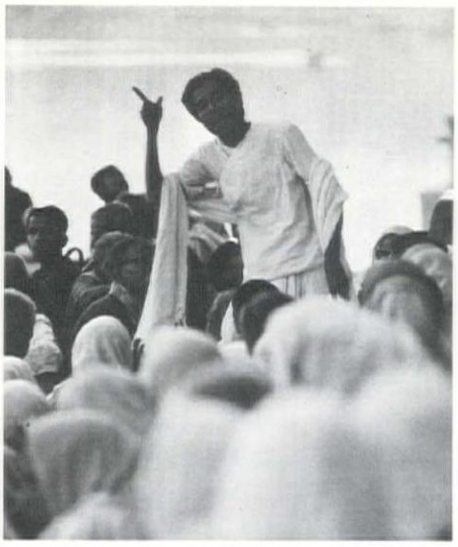
What seems more likely is that the story, passed on for centuries by word of mouth, was eventually recorded by Valmiki, or a poet assuming that name, who permitted himself the license of involving himself in the action and of writing the extraordinary poem—24,000 *slokas,* or 48,000 sixteen-syllable lines, divided into seven books—as if he had personally been the recipient of the classic tale and was committing it to writing for all humanity.

He couldn't have known that while Sanskrit would become a dead language, the story would continue to spread and grow and would be translated into dozens of regional Indian languages—it is his version of the *Ramayana* with which most Indians are

familiar. Even as early as about A.D. 80 the fame of the *Ramayana* had spread to the West as well. Dion Chrysostom, the Greek scholar, wrote that "even among the Indians, they say, Homer's poetry is sung, having been translated by them into their own dialect and tongue." It is charitably assumed that he must have meant that epics similar to Homer's had a wide currency in India.

The *Ramayana* was to spread well beyond the boundaries of India. From about the sixth century A.D. on, Indian religion and culture expanded east and south, covering the islands (except for the Philippines) and the mainland of Asia until it reached the frontiers of influence of that other great Asian cultural giant, China, in Vietnam. All through Southeast Asia the *Ramayana* was to be learned, embellished on, enlarged, or abbreviated; it would find its way into songs and ballads and into dance dramas such as the Ram Lila or the great repertoire of the Kathakali of India; it would be adapted for Indonesian puppet plays and carved in exquisite bas-reliefs around the walls of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, in what Benjamin Rowland has described as "a continuous stone tapestry."

In Southeast Asia, even after successive waves of military, religious, and cultural invasions converted some of the peoples of Islam and others to Buddhism (the tiny island of Bali is now the only Hindu country outside India), the power of the old epics has proved invincible. Devoutly Moslem audiences in Java watch all-night shows of their fanciful leather puppets acting out, in silhouette on a white screen, their favorite portions of the story. Buddhist Cambodians, seeing the huge *Ramayana* cast of characters, all with typical Khmer faces, on their temples and monuments, still feel a prideful ownership of the epic. In Laos or Thailand, both Buddhist countries, children watching village performances by strolling companies enthusiastically join in the action of the great ten-day war, gamboling with the monkeys and using



RAGHUBIR SINGH—WOODFIN CAMP, INC.

Beside the Ganges, a professional storyteller, above, narrates parts of the Ramayana. *Opposite, Balinese villagers, all men, sway and chant in the dance of the monkey warriors.*

small sticks and stones to represent the forest trees and Himalayan boulders with which Hanuman's army built Rama's Bridge.

And wherever you travel in India, you are certain to find reminders of the *Ramayana*, as casual as a passing reprimand to a child ("Would Rama have disobeyed his father?") or as profound as the inspired dedication that went into the carving of the sculptures of the great Kailasa rock temple at Ellora.

Late one full-moon night last summer, I went with some friends to a tiny enclave of eleventh-century India oddly preserved at one edge of the huge, sprawling, modern city of Bombay. It used to be a fishing village called Banganga, and although the Big Town with its concrete office buildings and high-rise apartment houses has overtaken it, Banganga still retains its character. There is no road to Banganga. You can reach it only by walking along the rocky seashore of Bombay Island, or by a long flight of shallow steps leading down from the thickly built-up hill behind it. In Banganga there is a sacred tank, and at the far end of the tank, the temple of Walkeshwar, the Sand Lord.

By that hour the stalls of Banganga's miniature bazaar were closed, and some shrouded figures slept on the ground between them. The only light, apart from the moon glittering and pling on the water, came from the c coal fire that glowed within the ten And the only noise, above the pe sive whispering of the sea, was chanting, punctuated by bells and c bals and drums.

We sat down on the worn steps rounding the tank to listen. On nights, devotees gather at the templ recite the *Ramayana*, all the through, for the sake of one tiny sode embedded in the proliferous thology that blossomed from the e On the long journey Rama and I shmana took through India in t search for Sita, the legend (in Bom at least) is that they stopped to res the beach at Banganga. There Ra in his pious way, modeled from the sand a lingam, the phallic symbol represents Siva. He worshiped be it, and his prayers were so fervent Siva offered Rama a favor. The brothers, tired and thirsty, and fin no fresh water on the island of B bay, humbly asked for water.

Siva then told Rama to shoot an row into the air, and at the place wh it returned to earth, a spring wo gush out—but not an ordinary spr for, miraculously, the water wo come from the sacred river Gange thousand miles away, and would ways remain pure. This is how the t ple tank, and that obscure little co of Bombay got its name: *ban* (arro *Ganga* (the Indian name for Ganges). And yet, it *is* unusual to fresh water so close to the ocean. yes, people do still drink from the t with no apparent ill effects. I am s there are perfectly adequate scien explanations of this minor pheno non, but as far as the local people concerned, Banganga will rem Rama's reward from Siva for his pi and his legacy to the present-day dians who live there.

Thanks to her many books and article India, Santha Rama Rau may be our b known interpreter of her homeland. also teaches at Sarah Lawrence Coll





JEAN RENOIR'S *LA GRANDE ILLUSION*

orld War I finished off the idea that dying for one's country was an aristocratic duty—and finished off e aristocrats who thought so. On this theme Renoir and a masterfully chosen cast made their classic film

ce 1938, when it was first shown in United States, Jean Renoir's fa- us film has been mistitled. It is called *nd Illusion,* but the French title is *Grande Illusion,* and as every high- ool student knows, this means *The Illusion.* The point is important, ause the proper title avoids an open- note of half-romantic, lofty regret. here is scarcely a list of great films, g or short, that does not include this . I saw it when it was first shown e and have seen it many times since, I can testify that it exemplifies an ient truth: good art survives because ve change, it can change with us.

n the winter of 1936–1937, when *La nde Illusion* was made, in the world he Spanish Civil War, of Mussolini Hitler gulping down the West, of an ravaging China, the film was a rning of the futility of war in the of growing wars, an anatomy of upheaval of 1914–1918 to show temporaries how grim machineries been set in motion. Today its paci- intent, as such, seems somewhat salient (though no less moving) be- se so many more human beings w how futile war is and know, too, no film can abolish it.

oday the film seems a hard percep- of inevitabilities, not glibly cynical in the largest classical sense, pessi- tic: a film that no longer asks for on but that *accompanies* us, noting best, prepared for our worst. Since



COURTESY L'AVANT-SCENE DU CINEMA

Erich von Stroheim was the German commander in La Grande Illusion, *filmed in 1937. Opposite, this 1967 photograph of Jean Renoir was taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson.*

this state of mind, this undepressed pessimism, is now widespread, this film continues to speak, out of the change it incorporates, to changing man.

Yet—in a wonderful and important way—*La Grande Illusion* is a period piece, and Renoir was the ideal maker for it. The history of film is full of remarkable confluences. D. W. Griffith came along just when the newborn medium needed a genius to formulate its language. Eisenstein and Pudovkin came along in the Soviet Union just when the new society needed new artists to celebrate it in this new form. Six hundred years of Renaissance humanism, predictably ripening to decline, found a film elegist in a Frenchman born and nourished in its center, the son of a painter who had given *la belle époque* some of its humane and sensual loveliness.

Jean Renoir, son of Pierre Auguste, was born in 1894 in Paris. He has written a biography called *Renoir, My Father,* which inevitably contains a good deal about himself. In 1913 the young Renoir enlisted in the cavalry, and in 1915 he was wounded in the leg. (He still limps.) In 1916, after his recovery, he became a pilot in a reconnaissance squadron. (Maréchal, a leading character in *La Grande Illusion,* is a reconnaissance pilot who is wounded.) When the war ended, Renoir worked in ceramics for about five years, then in 1923 he began to write and direct films. By the mid-1930's he was one of the eminent directors of France, having made such highly regarded films as *Boudu Saved from Drowning, The Crime of Monsieur Lange,* and an adaptation of Gorki's *The Lower Depths,* and was well launched on a career that, whatever one's opinion of individual works, has as a whole had a huge influence on the later film world.

By STANLEY KAUFFMANN

ALL COURTESY JANUS FILMS, INC.



1.



2.



3.

It would have been impossible for the man who made those early films to be unconcerned with what he saw happening in Europe and Asia and Africa in the mid-1930's. Renoir prepared to make *La Grande Illusion,* based on a story that he says "is absolutely true and was told to me by some of my comrades in the war." This combination—of authenticity and of response to a sense of historical twilight—roots the film firmly in its period, using the best of an age to bid that age farewell.

To collaborate on the script with him, Renoir engaged Charles Spaak, one of those important film figures of whom the public knows little, like Carl Mayer in the German 1920's and Cesare Zavattini in the Italian 1950's —the screenwriters who contributed greatly to celebrated eras. Spaak, the brother of Paul Henri Spaak, the former Belgian prime minister, wrote a number of memorable screenplays in a long career. By this time he had already written *La Kermesse Héroique (Carnival in Flanders)* for Jacques Feyder and the Gorki adaptation for Renoir.

This Spaak-Renoir screenplay tells the story of three French officers who are captured by the Germans and of one German officer who is their jailer. The drama is built in three sections. The first, after a brief prologue, takes place in an internment camp where the three Frenchmen try to tunnel to freedom but are transferred before the tunnel is ready. The second is in a fortress-prison, run by the German officer whom we met in the prologue, from which two of the Frenchmen escape with the help of the third. The last section is set in a German farmhouse where the two fugitives are sheltered for a time by a young widow who has a small daughter. And there is an epilogue, balancing the prologue, in which the two fugitives finally cross into Switzerland.

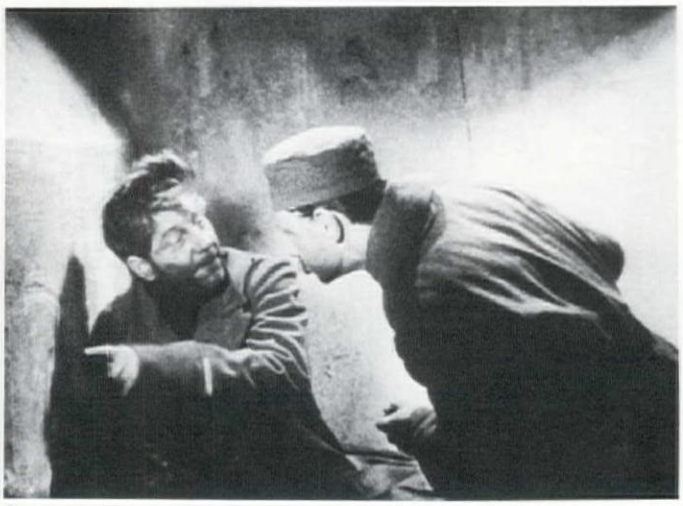
The movement of the film is thus toward freedom; but that freedom implies return to other "prisons," of renewed military service or other st enings of society. The officers' cha ters are unashamedly selected for trast and symbolism—beginning the fact that they are officers, not nary soldiers; but they are so well ten, and played, that the effect is n of artifice, only of reality. Boeldie an aristocrat, a career officer; Maré is a mechanic, who might never been an officer in an earlier, unm anized war; Rosenthal is a Vienna-J Jew, whose parents emigrated to Fra were naturalized, and prospered mi ily (a distinct suggestion of the R schilds). The German is Rauffens also an aristocrat, an aviator shoots down the first two Frenchi entertains them to lunch before the to prison camp, is himself subseque shot down and maimed, and ther appears eighteen months later as fortress commandant.

Maréchal and Rosenthal, French, are parvenus of different s Boeldieu and Rauffenstein, ener are both aristocrats and feel an affi War, says the film, is exclusively a ter of national loyalty only to non fessionals. To the international ot

Omission as effect: Maréchal (Jean Gabin) scratches at the wall of his cell (1), distracts the guard's attention (2), and bolts out. The camera does not follow him but waits until the half-conscious prisoner is dragged back (4) and flung down (5).



1.



2.



3.





4.



5.

Prison life: Planning an amateur theatrical, the French POW's unpack a box of costumes (1) and a youth tries on a gown and wig (2, 3). The men laugh but each is moved by this hint of femininity (4). The camera pulls back as loneliness sweeps the room.

ste, national loyalty is a matter of nor, but, of course, loyalty is only e aspect of chivalry.

For the role of the French aristocrat, noir got Pierre Fresnay, formerly of Comédie Française and a member the Compagnie des Quinze under famous Michel Saint-Denis. Maréal was played by the rapidly rising n Gabin, who had already played Renoir in *The Lower Depths* and s becoming a premier representative the screen of the French working ss. Marcel Dalio, an alumnus of the ris Conservatory and of revues, aldy a film veteran, played Rosenthal. e German widow was played by the minutive Dita Parlo, best known unthen as the bride in *L'Atalante,* the ly feature film made by the greatly ted and prematurely deceased Jean go. And in one of the masterstrokes casting in film history, Rauffenstein s played by Erich von Stroheim.

This fascinating man came from udy beginnings. One biography says t he was born in Vienna in 1885, rened a commission in the Austrian ny in 1909 to emigrate to America, ved a hitch in the U.S. cavalry, and then held a wide variety of jobs. He broke into films under D. W. Griffith as a stunt man in *The Birth of a Nation.* He acted monocled German officers in Hollywood during the war and became publicized as "the man you love to hate." He went on to write and direct and play in such films as *Blind Husbands* and *Foolish Wives,* which, though they were rococo melodramas, were made with visual splendor and sardonic "Continental" realism. In 1924 he made *Greed,* from the Frank Norris novel *McTeague,* which is generally held to be one of the best films ever made in the United States but which helped to seal Stroheim's fate as a prodigal and "difficult" director.

After a rocky Hollywood career, he went to France as an actor, in 1936, to find himself the object of a cult. (Renoir himself has said that he saw *Foolish Wives* twelve times and that it opened his eyes about film-making.) To *La Grande Illusion* Stroheim brought the right physique and temperament and age and experience, but he also brought an immense and exactly apposite mystique. His presence in the picture is so forceful that when Richard Griffith reviewed it (*The Nation,* October 22, 1938), he didn't begin with Renoir; his opening line was: "It is unkind of Erich von Stroheim to debunk war's illusions in this graceless year."

The film immediately sets its tone with rhetorical devices that are used throughout: irony and ellipsis. Maréchal, in a French army officers' mess, has a date with a girl but is suddenly ordered to take Boeldieu on a reconnaissance flight; the date, instead of being postponed a few hours, is ironically postponed a few years, if not forever, because they are shot down. The sequence in the French officers' mess cuts immediately to the German officers' mess. Ellipsis: we don't see the air fight. (We never see any battle in this war film.) Irony: the German officers' mess, save for a few details, is just like the French one.

In the first camp—let us call it Act





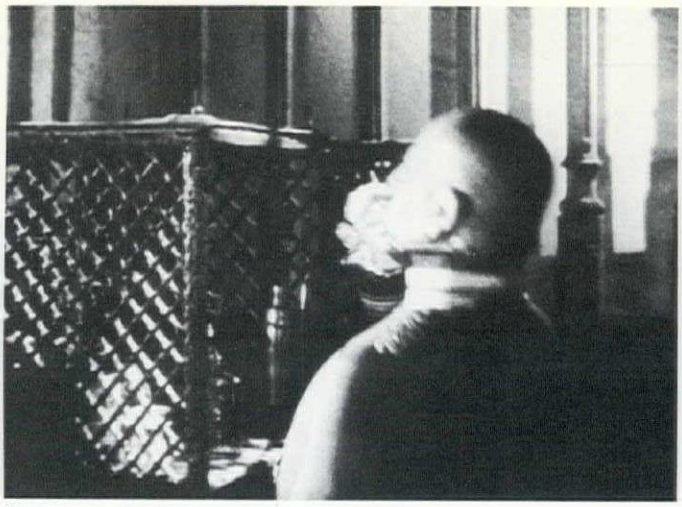
4.



5.



1.



2.



3.

One—we live with Boeldieu, the gentleman officer who keeps his white gloves fresh in prison, who says he has always called his wife and mother *vous,* yet who insists on doing his part in the dirty tunnel-digging. Maréchal is the *homme moyen,* but his self-knowledge of this—without self-dramatization—keeps the character from being stock. Among the other officers in the barracks are a teacher and an actor, but the most interesting is Rosenthal, the wealthy Jew.

Consider that this role was written in 1936, when the Nazis were already tormenting Jews in Germany and when anti-Semitic feeling was simmering in France and even in Britain; consider, too, that Renoir is unquestionably among the most humane of men, and your admiration grows for his insistence on drawing Rosenthal with honesty, instead of making him a saintly martyr as counterpropaganda against the times. Rosenthal is a decent enough fellow who wants to "belong" and who knows he doesn't "belong" completely, who is rich and will not hide it, in fact who boasts as proof of his "Frenchness" that his family owns a nice chunk of France. His family sends him big parcels of good food, which the Germans pass because they then have to give less food to that barracks. And Rosenthal uses these parcels as a means to be accepted.

In short, Rosenthal is a good image of the risen bourgeois European Jew, rather proud of all these facts, yet seeking to blend into a national landscape, morally no better or worse than most others, aware that he is tolerated, anxious to *be* tolerated, and willing to pay for it, on the implied ground that it is better to have purchased acceptance than to have none at all.

Thus we have in this barracks a model of European society, with all major strands represented except the peasant/worker—who was excluded arbitrarily because this is an officers' camp. We know, as we watch, that we are being shown a model, but it made with such fine observation a dexterity—and, to repeat, is so v performed—that it rings with tru

Two scenes, particularly, from One are notable. Rosenthal gets a b ket of costumes from home for a ca show. A boyish officer goes inside try on a dress and female wig. W he comes out—uneffeminately—lence gradually spreads around the crowded room. Memory and lonelin float over the men's heads, and m them still.

After the camp show, Maréchal put in solitary for insulting the Germ command. He sits torpidly in his c picking idly at the stone wall with spoon. When his guard comes in to t with him, he goes berserk and rus out through the open door. The cam does *not* go with him; it waits patie with the guard until, very shortly, subdued Maréchal is carried back i the cell by other German soldi (Another ellipsis.)

A second German guard exe plifies another system of Renoir's—crystallized vignette. This guard i middle-aged, round-shouldered m

Common man's survival: Maréchal and Rosenthal bid good night to Elsa (1), who has sheltered them, and retire (2). Maréchal pauses (3), sees Elsa through a doorway (4), and goes to embrace her (5). Maréchal and the camera have moved in a circle, underscoring the scene's emotional content.



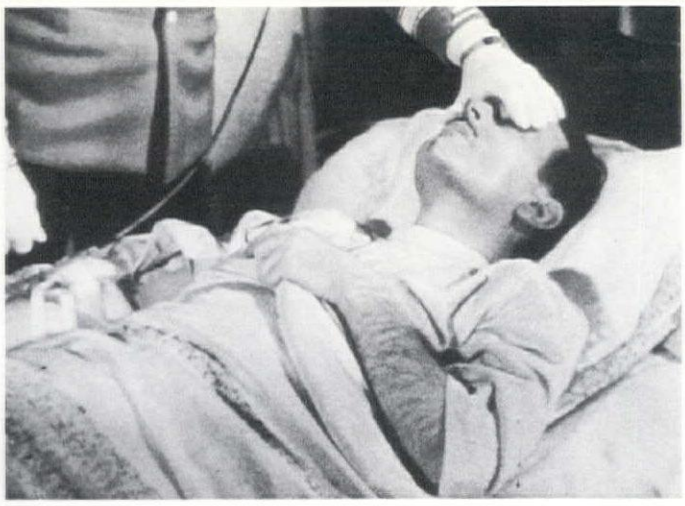
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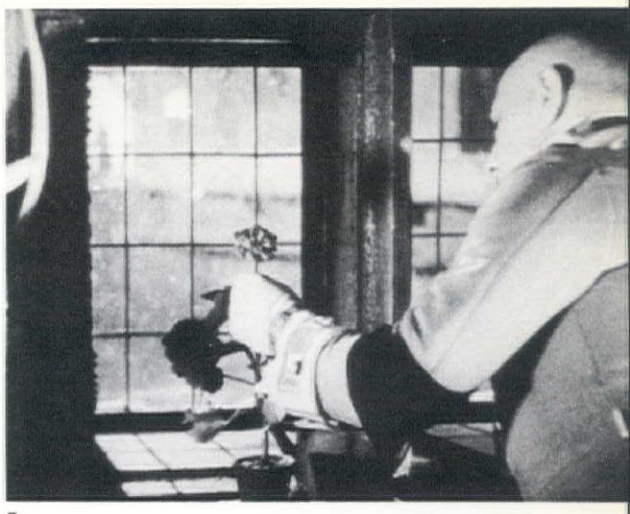
2.



3.



4.



5.

Aristocrat's death: Rauffenstein (1) sits beside Boeldieu, whom he has been forced to shoot; he turns briefly away to pour a drink (2) but is summoned by the nurse (3) and closes the dead man's eyes (4). Numbly he cuts the blossom from his geranium (5), the only flower growing in the prison fortress.

ce tells us of the man-
ermany, his manner
too, is imprisoned.
a Grande Illusion, I
brief appearance, as
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he castle—Act Two
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dens the social fab-
lizing the officer set;
ly, it gives each of
whom he can talk
em to comment on
lass paradigms, cen-
de their very exist-
a gentleman, Boel-
es his fellow officers
learly it is Rauffen-

stein, the jailer, who needs these conversations more than Boeldieu, the prisoner. (Another irony.)

The culminating irony of Act Two is the escape of Maréchal and Rosenthal, made possible by the decoy act of Boeldieu—the past recognizes that its last function is to make the future possible. Boeldieu climbs a parapet and plays a tune on a flute to distract the guards, and the irony is heightened when it is Rauffenstein himself, the other aristocrat, who shoots him when he refuses to come down.

The act ends with Boeldieu's death, surely one of the most masterly scenes ever filmed. He lies in Rauffenstein's room in great pain; the maimed German, the man who shot him, sits beside him, apologizing for his poor aim yet envying the other aristocrat his death in war. The nurse ends the conversation. Rauffenstein goes to a cabinet and pours a drink. The nurse calls him softly. He knows what has happened. Without turning, he takes the drink. Then, after closing Boeldieu's eyes, he cuts a geranium from a flower pot, which we know is the only flower in the fortress.

If the film ended here, with Boeldieu dead and Rauffenstein envious of him, with Maréchal and Rosenthal making their way through the snowy countryside to the border, it would in fact be a complete work, but of smaller dimension than it finally attains. Renoir is dealing not only with the past but with the future, not only with symbols of war but with war itself as a symbol of the world in which war happens.

The two fugitives trudge through the snow in mufti, which was part of their escape equipment. Rosenthal limps. He has sprained his ankle, and it keeps getting worse. His condition irritates Maréchal, and in a few days they quarrel. He says he never liked Jews anyway, and Rosenthal says he ought to have thought of that earlier. Maréchal stomps off alone, and Rosenthal sits on a rock, singing defiantly. His song



4.



5.



1.



2.

breaks off as (an ellipsis again) Maréchal suddenly reappears quietly. We have not seen him change his mind, we do not hear him apologize. We know he really does have anti-Semitism in him and that Rosenthal knows it and is prepared to live with it because he knows that Maréchal regrets having it —all this in Maréchal's silent reappearance at the edge of the frame.

The two men take refuge in a barn, where they are discovered by the owner, Elsa, a young widow. Her losses in the war—her husband and her brothers—have purged her of fear, even of hate. They stay with her until Rosenthal recovers, and they make a pet of Elsa's small daughter. Maréchal helps around the farm, and this leads to the film's one really bad scene. As he feeds the cow one day, he says to it: "You don't mind being fed by a Frenchman. . . . You're just a poor cow, and I'm just a poor soldier." How I wish that this heavily explicit scene had been omitted.

Maréchal and Elsa become lovers, but when Rosenthal's ankle is better, the two men must leave for the border. Maréchal tells Elsa that after the war, if he is not killed, he will come back for her and the child and take them to France. Both he and Elsa believe it equally: that is, they both know he really means it—at the moment. This is one more belief that (we feel) will be turned into illusion by the passage of time, like the larger beliefs of class and of war-with-a-purpose.

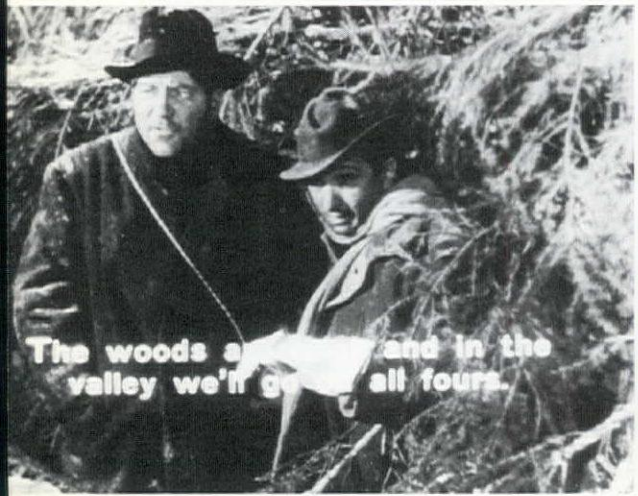
In the last scene, the epilogue, the two Frenchmen are standing in the snow, bidding farewell to one another before they try to cross a long valley to the border. Embracing, they call each other affectionately by the names that they have used angrily before. Then they start. A German border patrol spots them and fires a few times, but they have made it into Switzerland. In the last long shot we see two small figures struggling through the snow toward a village. Toward repatriation. Toward return to some sort of life and

Enriching, suppo the above, is, funda direction, his sheer ties. His skill with every scene (he has self), but two qua style are especially of a moving camera composition.

An example of th camera. When Mar first prison barrack close two-shot with former actor, talkin As they continue to era gently pulls bac dieu and others als large room, and *th* us that Maréchal i into a new commun

Deep-focus is so plex. Put much too there are two gene film-making. First, proach, developed Pudovkin and othe which relies on join gether in rhythmic

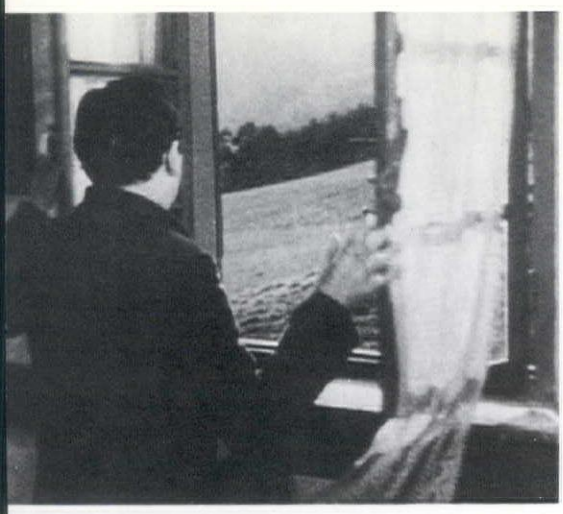
Crossing the border: The fugitives have reached the Swiss frontier (1); they say their farewell (2) lest they be killed in flight. The camera pans to border patrolmen (3), who take aim (4) but too late. The Frenchmen have fled—from prison, Germany, and (for the moment) war. The camera watches them go.

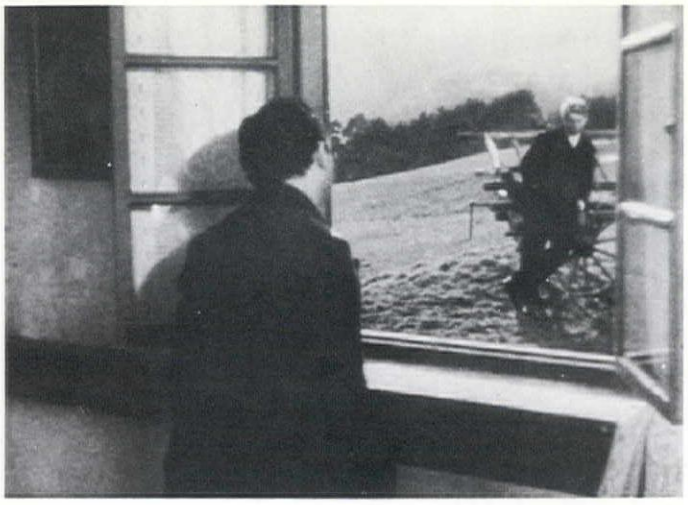


1.



2.





4.

The leave-taking: The escaped prisoners must make their break for France. Maréchal (1) sends Rosenthal to tell Elsa good-bye (2). Embarrassed, he opens the window (3), revealing Maréchal outside (4). This is an example of Renoir's deep-focus technique —the addition of a new plane to the screen.

onships so that an effect is created
t of the very way the pieces are
ined, an effect additional to the ef-
cts of the separate bits, just as an
peggio is an entity in itself made up
separate musical entities.

In the deep-focus approach the re-
nce is on the content of any one shot,
ther than on a succession of shots.
he shot may be one in which the
mera moves; it is the absence of cut-
g that makes the real difference.)
e French film critic André Bazin
aised Renoir because he "uncovered
e secret of a film form that would
rmit everything to be said without
opping the world up into little frag-
ents, that would reveal the hidden
eaning in people and things without
sturbing the unity natural to them."
One point that Bazin and other deep-
cus theorists have generally disre-
rded is that this deep-focus principle
about twenty-five hundred years old
d is usually called "the theatre."
enoir, who has written and directed
ays, simply combined the flow of
nema with the relationships within a
me that are standard practice in the
eatre.

One example. Maréchal and Rosenthal are in the farmyard, and the former says he hasn't the courage to tell Elsa that they must leave. Rosenthal agrees to do it, goes into the house, and delivers the message. Elsa nods and disappears. Then Rosenthal opens the curtained window and we see Maréchal, still where he was, out there in the yard leaning on a fence. The opening of that window, suddenly deepening the screen, the addition of that plane to the composition, creates a tension between Maréchal outside and what has just happened in the room—a device often used in the theatre by lifting a drop or lighting up a dark area.

Today the Big Illusion of the title includes at least three aspects: the illusion that war accomplishes anything; the illusion that, even without war, men will be brothers; and the illusion that truth can ever be anything more than a necessary illusion. Yet the presentation of all these illusions is here in the hands of a man committed to love.

In his book about his father Renoir says that when he and his brother were children, his parents often went to the theatre, leaving them in the care of a neighbor. Nevertheless, his parents would jump in a cab at intermission and rush home for a few minutes to make sure the children were all right. A child who has known a home like that must grow up to inevitable disappointments, but is secure against them. For the characters in *La Grande Illusion,* their figurative parents—the traditions and ideals of the past—will not be back at intermission; they will never be back. The film is a farewell to their memory and an acceptance of a world without them.

La Grande Illusion can be rented, in 16 mm. form, from Janus Films, 745 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10022. French dialogue, English subtitles. A paperbound edition of the screenplay, in very British English, is available from Simon and Schuster.

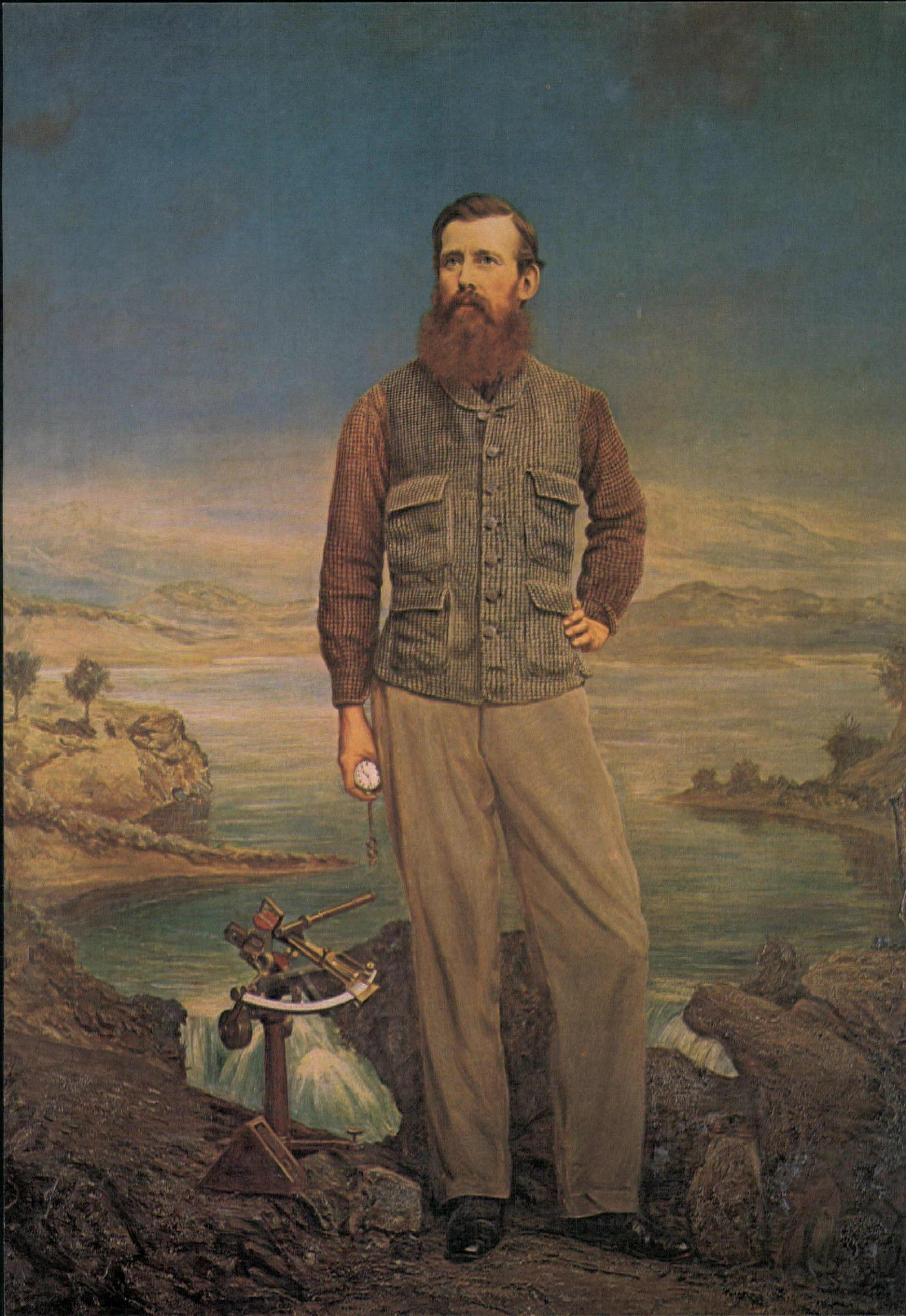




4.



5.



The Shooting of Captain Speke

The two most famous explorers of their day were to engage that afternoon in fierce debate. Where was the source of the Nile? Each man thought he knew. But as Sir Richard Burton waited for his rival to appear, the terrible news was announced

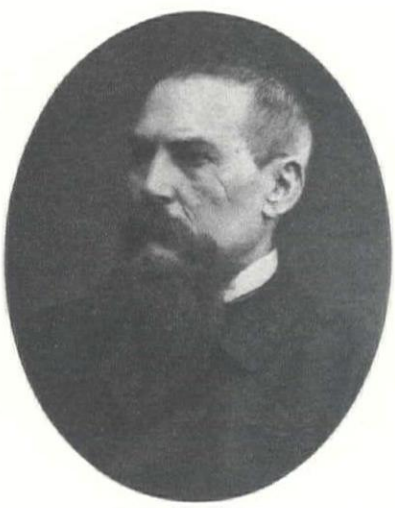
1 September 16, 1864, the English spa Bath, in Somerset, awoke in a state pleasurable, if slightly shamefaced, ticipation. Long past its prime as a hionable resort, its prevailing tone s set now by retired military men d colonial administrators, and the lls of its ancient abbey were crowded h memorials to the genteel departed. a wit wrote of them,

se walls, so full of monument and bust,
w how Bath's waters serve to lay the dust.

Bath's glorious Georgian squares l crescents, which made it one of the idsomest cities in Europe, were stly peeled and shabby, and petered ay into the countryside in half-com-ted speculations, abandoned since end of the spa's eighteenth-century om. The old place had subsided into vincial respectability and had ac-red a name for seedy dullness that to persist for another century.

eptember of 1864, nevertheless, was ala month for Bath. The British ociation for the Advancement of nce, founded thirty years earlier to er public interest in the sciences, holding its annual conference e. Savants and enthusiasts had ar-

1 Hanning Speke, sportsman and explorer, portrayed with sextant and shotgun by cataract of Lake Victoria, ultimate source he Nile, which he discovered in 1862.



Sir Richard Burton

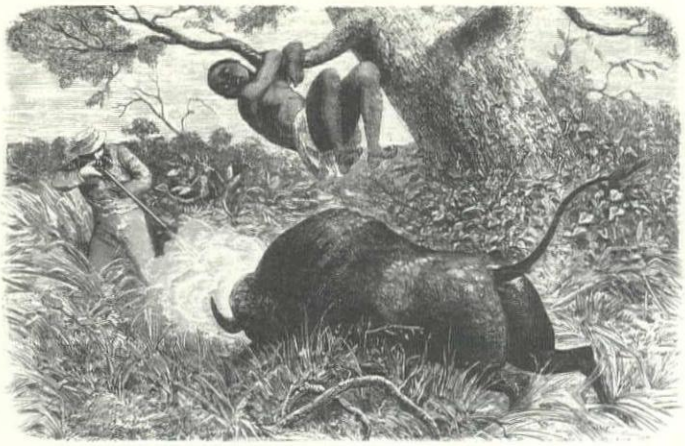
rived from all over the kingdom, and at a moment when applied science had reached the apogee of esteem, all educated eyes were turned to the proceedings at Somerset. The London newspapers carried long daily accounts, and the Bath *Chronicle* had imported forty typesetters from London to produce a daily newspaper that reported nothing else.

All the hotels and lodging houses were full. The more celebrated squares, parades, and terraces were alive with the comings and goings of the great, and the *Chronicle*'s social reporters (who continued until 1939 to record the arrival of hotel guests) could scarcely keep up with the soirées, concerts, balls and private dinner parties—over whose tables, between whose quadrilles, eminent men of science argued the possibilities of a fifth dimension or discussed the anthropologic characteristics of the Lapps.

For the general public the greatest scientific excitement of the day was exploration. The urge to open up the world was inextricably linked with the emotions of Empire, just beginning to be a popular enthusiasm, and anything to do with foreign discovery aroused an avid interest. The Royal Geographical Society, a powerful force in the land, held its own annual conference as Section E (Geography and Ethnology) of the British Association, and down at Bath the real lions of the month were the celebrities returned from, or at least concerned with, exotic parts.

Henry Bates, the Amazon naturalist, was there, and Bishop Colenso, as famous for his knowledge of Zulu life as for his theological heresies, and J. M. Stuart, the first man to cross Australia from south to north, who was visibly and satisfyingly shattered by his terrible journey two years before. Dr. Livingstone was staying in appropriate splendor at No. 13, The Circus, one of the finest houses in Bath, attended wherever he went by adulatory crowds: and present, too, though less easily recognized, were influential figures on the fringe of the exploratory saga, like Sir Roderick Murchison, President of the R.G.S., or Sir William Armstrong of Newcastle, whose patented rifle kept

By JAMES MORRIS



Speke, the passionate and expert hunter, fells an African buffalo.

the world, in a manner of speaking, safe for British adventure.

Bath that September, in fact, was like an analogue of the imperial momentum itself—the zest, the hero worship, the covert rivalries, the fascination of distant places and sensational goings-on, even the sanctimony: for as Dr. Livingstone told the mayor's banquet at the Guildhall, British discoveries were never selfishly hoarded but were "communicated to the world, and being known to the whole world were prevented from being lost."

But the sixteenth was an extra-special day. Among the celebrities in the city were the two most controversial figures of African exploration, Richard Burton and John Hanning Speke. They were enemies. Together they had gone to Africa to search for the source of the Nile River, the supreme prize of exploration. Speke claimed to have found the source during a solitary sortie, Burton doubted it, and the resulting quarrel had become public property.

They were theatrically contrasted antagonists. Speke, the scion of a well-known Somerset family, was an upstanding young Victorian gentleman of the middle rank, a sportsman to his finger tips, boyish and well spoken, his eyes frank, his ears slightly cauliflowered. Unmarried at thirty-seven, he was a local hero: his family home, Jordans, was only forty miles away, and he had relatives all over the county, including some on the outskirts of Bath.

Burton, on the other hand, could hardly have been more alien to the spa. He was the very antithesis of Victorian decorum. His eyes flamed, his black mustaches drooped, he had a profound knowledge of Oriental pornography and was reputed to have done dreadful things in many remote corners of the world. He had made a famous journey in disguise to the forbidden places of Mecca and had also been the first European to penetrate the scarcely less alarming city of Harar in Ethiopia. A true scholar and a marvelous linguist —he had translated the Portuguese poet Camoëns—Burton had recently married a harebrained, fanatic but doting Catholic, Isabel Arundell, and he lived in a more or less constant condition of fury.

These two men had not met since their return from Africa in 1859, but the newspapers and learned journals reverberated with their differences. The insults and innuendoes had grown more vicious each year, and as a climax to it all the R.G.S. had arranged a formal confrontation between them, to take place at 3 P.M. on the sixteenth as part of Section E's proceedings. It was the prospect of this meeting that gave Bath its half-illicit thrill that morning. Anything, it was thought, might happen.

The improbable setting for the clash between the heroes was the Mineral Water Hospital. This was almost as forbidding as it sounds. The principal hospital of the spa, using (as the Romans did) the local hot springs for the treatment of rheumatic complaints, it had been built more than a century before and was squeezed with gloomy classicism into the city's narrow medieval center. Long ahead of time that afternoon its hall was packed, but as three o'clock approached the eager audie began to sense that something wrong. Only two people were on platform—Burton himself, looking rifyingly severe, and his plump, de mined Isabel. None of the other di taries and celebrities were to be s Murchison, Livingstone, the memb of the council, or Speke.

The minutes passed. The Burtons there awkwardly. The dour builc brooded. The audience grew rest giving vent to its impatience, *Chronicle* reported, "by sounds m often heard from the audience c theatre than of a scientific meeting." last, twenty-five minutes late, M chison walked slowly onto the p form, followed by his council and t distinguished guests. He was hol a note, and when the audience fel lent, he read it aloud. Captain Sp he announced, was dead. He had b "missed in the field" while out sh ing the day before and had been fo "shot through the body close to heart. He lived only a few minutes.

"By God," Burton is supposed have exclaimed, collapsing into chair, "he's killed himself."

For the origins of this tragedy must go back to the moment, six y before, when Burton and Speke st at the brink of that supreme geogra revelation, the discovery of where Nile began.

The compelling fascination of Nile had exerted itself upon emp in existence long before the Bri Through the centuries historians, ographers, and romantics had pounded theories about its sou which had acquired in turn a fabul an intellectual, and a strategic m ing. The river was said to spring f "fountains" deep in the African rior, from a range of snow-cap peaks, from a system of great la or from Ptolemy's Mountains of Moon in Ethiopia. The source of Blue Nile had been identified by Scottish explorer James Bruce in 1 but the greater stream, the White

mained even in those days of Victo-
n enlightenment a total mystery.
Nobody knew where it came from.
was a superb enigma, and as the Brit-
responded to their imperial destiny,
the public began to acquire its pro-
ietary interest in the other side of
horizon, as the London strategists
olved the theory that control of
ypt was essential to the security of
itish India, so the problem of the
le became almost a national obses-
n. Like the ascent of Everest a cen-
y later, the British regarded it as a
allenge specific to themselves, and its
ution as the greatest prize awaiting
y British adventurer of the time.
Burton and Speke were the first to
ke the attempt. By 1858 most of
rica was imperfectly understood.
limanjaro and Kenya had been seen.
ch of the Niger had been navigated.
e Kalahari had been penetrated. The
thical Timbuktu had been reached
last, and had proved a dreary fraud.
e time was right, the pundits of
R.G.S. had thought, for a deter-
ned effort to reach the fountains of
Nile: so they commissioned Burton
d Speke, both officers of the Indian
ny, to make the attempt from the
t coast—the most direct route, it
s assumed, and one whose lower
rse had been well established by
erations of Arab slavers bringing
ir captives to Zanzibar for shipment.
e two soldiers had already been in
rica together, on a disastrous expe-
on to Somaliland. Burton, at thirty-
en, was famous for his journey to
cca: Speke, thirty-one, was un-
own but ambitious.
One would have thought them in-
mpatible from the start. Speke seems
ays to have been secretly, often
ntfully, in awe of Burton. Most
ple were. Not only could his man-
be scathing and his temper terrible,
his arrogance was based on such
uine accomplishments that it could
be shrugged off. He loved to argue,
disconcert, to outrage society and
k snooks at the Establishment. A
tless Anglo-Irishman, largely self-
educated—Oxford got rid of him as soon as it could—he was hampered by no class conventions and reveled in the fabled exploits of his past, such as his alleged affair with a nun in Goa, or his well-known investigation of the homosexual brothels of Karachi. In Africa Burton despised the blacks, whom it was fashionable to befriend, and openly cultivated the wicked but urbane Arab slave traders.

All this left Speke dazzled, slightly shocked, and doubtless envious. He resented Burton's command, and probably felt inadequate in the presence of Burton's flamboyant and sardonic authority. Speke was, in externals at least, the quintessential English gentleman, whose family came to England with the Conquest and had been providing quintessential English gentlefolk ever since. He had proved his courage in the Sikh wars of the 1840's, and was a good shot, an able geologist, and a knowledgeable botanist—as one acquaintance described him, "a right good, jolly, resolute fellow."

Most people liked him on sight. They thought him modest and straightforward. Only those who knew him better realized that, by a paradox not uncommon in men of his kind, he was blessed with a powerful inner mysticism, like a divining rod of the mind, which urged him to instinctive actions and conclusions and fired him with an irrational zeal.

Relations between the two men had not been good since the Somali expedition, which Speke believed to have been mismanaged by Burton, and during the long journey through the African bush they got steadily worse. Burton had always felt the attraction of Speke, but there was no pretending they had much in common. Burton was bored with blood sports, Speke adored them. Burton was a profoundly intellectual man, Speke a gentlemanly philistine. Burton picked up languages like stones from the ground, Speke was no linguist. Speke believed with Livingstone that one of the purposes of exploration was the extension of the Christian ethos; Burton, himself a half-convinced Moslem, was almost alone among the public figures of the time in believing that Islam could do better.

In February, 1858, they became the first Europeans to set eyes on Lake Tanganyika, which Burton thought might be the Nile's source: but it seemed to lie too low, and had no apparent outlet. Exhausted and sick—Speke was almost blind with trachoma, Burton half-paralyzed by malaria—they returned to recuperate at the slave-trading settlement of Kazeh, now called Tabora, which stood at a crossroads of the slave routes. There the acquaintance was further strained, Burton delighting in the company of the unprincipled Arab grandees of the place, Speke, one feels, severely disapproving of them and suspecting them of vices worse than slaving. So Burton was only too pleased when Speke, his eyesight recovered, proposed to make a solitary sortie to the north, leaving Burton to work up his notes and get his strength back. They had heard of another, larger body of water, Ukerewe, or the Northern Lake, three weeks' journey away. Might this not be the source of the Nile? Early in July, Speke set off on muleback with twenty porters and thirty armed guards, determined to find out.

So the controversy began. Twenty-five days later, on August 3, 1858, Speke became the first European to reach what is now Lake Victoria Nyanza. It is easy to imagine why the experience had for him an apocalyptic quality. Set among rolling, scrubby downland interspersed with forests of dark green, speckled with little islands haunted by ibis in the daytime and fireflies by night, splashed with gay tropic colors of mango, orchid, and wavering bird, and rippled always by a warm African breeze, the lake remains even now a marvelous surprise. Two hundred and fifty miles long (almost as large as Scotland), it is really an inland sea, and in that country seems spectacularly out of place, like an error

of creation, or at least an afterthought.

Speke has lately become a favorite victim for Freudian amateurs, and certainly his reactions to this grand vision invite analysis. First he shot a passing bird—as if (suggests his latest biographer, Alexander Maitland) "the brooding spirit with whom Speke held intensely private communion demanded a sacrifice of blood in return for its favours." Then he gave names to his discoveries: the hillock he stood upon he called Somerset, for his home county, the creek at his feet he called Jordans, after the paternal home, the lake he called Victoria Nyanza for the queen—herself, we are authoritatively told, a dream synonym for his own mother. He then went on to reach a dramatic, intuitive conclusion. He flatly decided, without further evidence, that this was the source of the Nile. He explored no more. He spent only three days on the lake. He spoke no local language. He saw no river outlet. Yet he *knew* that this was the beginning of the White Nile, and being now short of supplies, he hurried excitedly back to Kazeh to tell Burton.

His reception was caustic. "It was," Burton recorded dryly, "an inspiration perhaps. . . . The fortunate discoverer's conviction was strong; his reasons were weak." A local worthy had told Speke that Lake Victoria probably extended to the end of the world. "Strongly impressed by this statistical information," Burton commented in his best schoolmaster style, "my companion therefore planned the northern limit about 4°–5° degrees north lat." It was not that Burton dismissed Victoria as the main source of the Nile. It was Speke's irrational certainty that infuriated him, coupled no doubt with a nagging feeling that he had missed his own chance of glory by staying behind.

Like husband and wife at the end of a long day, they found they could not mention the subject without bickering, and so they returned laboriously and unhappily to the coast, sick, exhausted, and tired of each other. They had been in each other's company for nearly three years, and knew each other's every fault. When they got to Aden, it was agreed that Speke should go on to England at once and that Burton should follow a little later, when he had regained his strength. According to Burton, the parting was self-consciously cordial. "I shall hurry up, Jack," Burton said, "as soon as I can," and Speke is said to have replied: "Goodbye old fellow; you may be quite sure I shall not go up to the Royal Geographical Society until you come to the fore and we appear together. Make your mind quite easy about that."

But when Burton reached London, several weeks later, Speke's "discovery of the Nile's source" was already one of the excitements of the town. Speke had reported to the R.G.S. the very first day after his arrival. He had addressed a meeting of its members and had already been commissioned to take his own expedition back to Africa and confirm his conclusions. Burton arrived home almost disregarded in the aftermath of this triumph—"a mere skeleton," his wife recorded, "with brown-yellow skin hanging in bags, his eyes protruding, and his lips drawn away from his teeth." He must have been worth seeing, but nobody took much notice of him; the ground, he said, was "cut from under my feet." Speke was the man of the hour.

The squabble festered and brought out the worst in both of them. Burton retreated into bitter and often ill-judged sarcasm; Speke displayed an altogether unexpected streak of vindictive conceit. For the rest of their lives the two men never spoke to one another again, but their quarrel dragged on, attracting partisans on either side.

Now Speke, as it happened, was right. Against all the odds of probability, his emotional conviction on the shore of the Northern Lake was geographically correct. Two years later he was back in Africa with a very different companion, James Augustus Grant of the Indian army, who worshiped Speke with a spaniel-like devotion and wo never dream of contradicting h Once again, by design, accident, instinct, Speke was alone when reached Jinja, on the northern sh of Lake Victoria, and saw at last, July 21, 1862, the Nile falling ove rim in cataract and rainbow. This t he had no qualms when he returne camp and a waiting Grant. "Inf Sir Roderick Murchison that al well," he cabled home as soon as could, "and that the Nile is settl Then he set off down the course of river to Egypt, home, and glory.

So, in the end, it was to prove. S sequent explorers were to demonst that the White Nile ran out of L Victoria into Lake Albert and supplemented by water from var tributaries before it joined the Nile at Khartoum and proce through Egypt to the Mediterran But to Speke's dismay, it was still settled in 1863. Once again there an intuitive element to his convict He had certainly proved that the issued from Victoria, but in follo it to Egypt he had taken one big s cut and had never circumnavigated lake itself. It was perfectly possible an even greater or higher source elsewhere. Speke and Grant retu to London to find that, though Q and public received them as he among the specialists there was do

Theoretical geographers distru Speke's dogmatic assurance—bra now, and tinged with a kind of tro frenzy. Even the R.G.S., Speke's sponsor, had new reservations. young charmer of 1858 had soured age. The meaner side of his char showed more often, and his nar ness of education, his country-sc philosophies, did not much endear to the bookish world of science. was a poor speaker, and he had d oped an unhappy knack of antago ing people. But he still had many porters, just as Burton had a ho enemies, for the rift between the had taken on new dimensions.

Each man represented a conte

y attitude toward Africa as a whole. rton's approach was essentially olarly: he was interested in Africa its own sake, frequently contemp- us, often appalled, but neither cen- ious nor anxious to improve it. eke's approach was more construc- e. He believed it the Christian West's ty to reform the continent by trade d devout example, propagated by vernment-supported missionaries in barbaric kingdoms of the interior.

heir antipathy was now irreconcil- e, with that special bitterness that ainted with lost intimacy. When, in summer of 1864, the R.G.S. invited m both to debate the issue at Bath, common acquaintance told Burton at Speke's reaction had been. If rton appeared at Bath, Speke was orted to have said, "I will kick n." "Well," Burton replied, "that les it. By God, he shall kick me!" Burton and his wife characteristically up at a hotel near the railway sta- n, well off the fashionable round, Speke, no less typically, stayed h his uncle, John Fuller, at his eeable country house, Neston Park, ich still stands hospitable and un- ered just over the Wiltshire bor- about ten miles from Bath. There be little doubt as to which of the als felt the more assured. Burton s at the peak of his powers, wittier, re sardonic, and cleverer than ever. eke, by contrast, was not only nerv- s but perhaps regretful: he had car- d the enmity too far, and thus he ced himself at a moral as well as an ellectual disadvantage. Besides, in ight debate he would be horri- outclassed; incoherent before the ndliest of audiences, he was slightly f, had poor eyes, and was in a de- ssed condition, anyway.

They saw one another for the first e since 1859 at a preliminary meet- of Section E at the hospital on the before the debate. It was a mo- nt charged with unexpected pathos, ve are to believe Isabel Burton's ac- nt. The two men did not speak, but their eyes met. "I shall never forget his face," wrote Isabel of Speke. "It was full of sorrow, and yearning, and perplexity. Then he seemed turned to stone." After a while, she reported, he began to fidget, and exclaiming half aloud, "Oh, I cannot stand this any longer," got up from his seat. "Shall you want your chair again, sir?" said a man standing behind. "May I have it? Shall you come back?" "I hope not," Speke said, and left the hall.

So, at least, Mrs. Burton described it. Certainly Speke left, and following the habit of a lifetime, drove out to Neston, up the steep Box Hill, past Brunel's famous railway tunnel, to let off steam with an afternoon's shooting. By two thirty, we are told, he and his cousin, George Fuller, with the gamekeeper Daniel Davis, were out in the fields looking for partridges.

Neston stands on an outcrop of the Cotswolds to the north, and the field where Speke died is a bleak place, stony, bare, and gray, where the autumn light is often moist and misty and the air is dank. Low, unmortared walls cross it, and on a hazy September afternoon the group of cottages that stand beyond look chilly and uninviting. It seems a very long way from the urbanities of Bath, but it was native ground for Speke. Not only was that field his uncle's property, but in a house just across the Bath road lived his elder brother, William, heir to Jordans. Speke had, in fact, hurried from Section E straight home to his roots: away from the word-splitting and the hypothetical, back to the rough, where a chap was not stifled by theories or twisted by recriminations but could breathe freely among his own kind, in good country air, with a gun under his arm.

According to George Fuller's later account, the three men were well apart as they crossed the field. Fuller was about sixty yards from Speke, and Davis was about two hundred yards from Fuller, marking birds. At about four o'clock a shot sounded. Speke was at that moment crossing a dry-stone wall two or three feet high, and others looked round to see him falling off it. They ran to the spot and found him bleeding severely from the chest. He was conscious and asked them not to move him: but by the time Fuller had got hold of a doctor and returned to the scene, Speke had died where he had fallen, watched by the helpless keeper.

The news did not reach Burton that night. Speke's body was taken to his brother's house, and an inquest was convened for the following day, the day of the great debate. When, next morning, the news was announced to Section E, even Burton was stunned for a moment. Unable, he said, to speak himself, he asked Murchison to read a statement on his behalf, expressing his "sincere admiration of Speke's character and enterprise," despite their differences of opinion.

Within a few moments, though, he had recovered sufficiently to read a paper he happened to have with him about the present state of Dahomey, in West Africa, with particular reference to the habit of human sacrifice. Isabel says that he spoke haltingly, and with a voice that trembled, but if we are to believe the Bath *Chronicle,* at least he stuck it out gamely.

"Captain Speke came to a bad end," Burton wrote to a friend five days later, "but no one knows anything about it." In Somerset, nevertheless, he was given the farewell appropriate to a hero and a favorite son. Mr. Hall of Bath was commissioned to take a death mask, and the corpse was buried in the family vault at Dowlish Wake near Ilminster, some forty miles from the spa. Muffled bells tolled all day in Ilminster and Taunton, the county seat; and Murchison, Livingstone, and Grant all went to the funeral—Grant, indeed, descending momentarily into the vault with the coffin, carrying a wreath of laurel leaves and white everlasting flowers and sobbing sobs "audible all over the sacred building." Speke's father was granted the right to augment the family arms with the

"supporters following: that is to say, on the dexter side a Crocodile, and on the sinister side a Hippopotamus."

But how he really died remains obscure to this day. "The charitable say he shot himself," Burton wrote, "the uncharitable say that I shot him." Murder by Burton is certainly a tempting hypothesis. Burton was widely rumored to have murdered an Arab during his journey to Mecca, a legend he happily propagated by silence, and there is an undeniably persuasive *frisson* to the vision of the great pornographer, cloaked and satanic, skulking in the lee of the death wall that September afternoon. But he was not really the murdering kind. He loved to shock, not to kill. He was a generous man at heart, and moreover, he retained to the end a genuine if wry affection for Speke.

When he and his wife returned to their hotel that evening, so Isabel tells us, he wept bitterly, crying over and over again "Jack! Jack!" But Burton did not immediately moderate his attacks on Speke, and the argument he had intended to present at Bath he published in a nasty little book, *The Nile Basin,* which his best friends thought in bad taste. Yet in a later work, *Zanzibar,* he published a poem, ostensibly by Isabel, more probably by himself, that summed up his relationship with Speke in a tone of sentimental and even sensual regret:

Yet were we comrades for years and years,
And endured in its troth our companionship
Through a life of chances, of hopes, and fears;
Nor a word of harshness e'er passed the lip,
Nor a thought unkind dwelt in either heart,
Till we chanced—by what chance did it hap?
—to part.

It was Speke, not Burton, who was the man of violence. He it was who, confronted by emotional crises, relieved the strain by going out and killing something, and there were many besides Burton to assume, in September, 1864, that what he chose to kill that particular day was himself. The evidence at the inquest was, as might be expected, conciliatory—suicide was a great disgrace to a Victorian family. It was held at the home of Speke's brother, a local magistrate, with a jury of local people, and the principal witness was Speke's cousin, supported by a gamekeeper in his employ and a local surgeon. Neither Fuller nor Davis, it appeared, saw the shot fired. Fuller scarcely heard it. The surgeon gave plain, anatomical details, and the jury dutifully returned a verdict of accidental death. The hammer of Speke's gun, suggested the *Times* diplomatically a day or two later, must have "struck against a stone or hitched in a bough."

A squat memorial stone still stands on the site of the tragedy, unsuspected by the passing motorists a hundred yards away and seldom visited by the cottagers across the field ("It's still there so far as I know," as one lady observed to me recently, "if the vandals haven't got it"). And the inscription upon it, at the very spot where the tragedy occurred, boldly admits of no doubt: "Here the distinguished and enterprising African traveller, Captain John Hanning Speke, Lost his life in the accidental explosion of his gun, September 15, 1864."

But kind words butter no parsnips, as they say in Somerset. Is it likely that Speke would shoot himself accidentally? Burton thought not. Writing some years later, he recalled Speke's particular caution with weapons: "I observed that even when our canoe was shaken and upthrown by the hippopotamus he never allowed his gun to look at him or at others." The *Times* thought perhaps overfamiliarity with weapons had bred carelessness, and others suggested that Speke was handier with rifles than he was with shotguns. George Fuller claimed, fifty years later, that both he and the gamekeeper had noticed Speke's lax handling of his gun, which was why they kept well away from him in the field. Still, Speke was always very proud of his gunmanship, and most people thought it odd that after a lifetime's practice he should make so elementary an error as to shoot himself dead by mistake.

Is it likely, then, that Speke wo
have committed suicide? On the f
of it, no. He was a soldier born a
bred, nobody denied him courage, a
his principles were militantly Christi
With his candid blue eyes, his ma
carriage, and his sixth-form appeal,
did not seem the kind to opt out. Al
all, as the *Chronicle* said in its obitu
notice, he was "one of the bravest a
most undaunted sons of the nobl
nation upon earth."

But his style was deceptive. L
many another gentlemanly son of
noblest nation, he was not entir
what he seemed. He could be spite
He was often depressed. If he did
actually lie in his books and letters,
did not always tell the whole tru
Besides, though the Spekes were tra
tionally soldiers, squires, or clergym
they had their share of eccentricit
Speke's brother Benjamin, who
taken holy orders, married against
family's wishes, ran away to Lond
was once arrested as a murder susp
and for a time vanished altogeth
claiming afterward that he had b
locked up in a dungeon in the Stra

Speke was not one of your calm a
measured English paragons: he wa
man of tormented impulses, suppres
fervors, and unforgiving grudges. C
stitutionally he seems, when one g
to know him, quite a likely suic
circumstantially, it might be thoug
he had reason enough to despair.

He was right about the Nile, as
know now, but was he *sure* he
right? Did he have doubts about ot
sources of the river, was he nerv
about the lacunae in his knowled
which Burton would certainly expo
At moments of stress, as of trium
Speke habitually expressed himself
bloodshed, if only the controlled blo
shed of a shotgun and a passing b
Perhaps that subconscious urge to
as an outlet for the emotions, wer
stage farther that day and became
instinct of self-destruction—someth
less than a controlled suicide but m
than pure accident.

But we shall never know. In the



D. J. WHEADON, CHARD, SOMERSET

Speke's tomb lies in the vault of his rural parish church.



MANSELL COLLECTION

Burton's tomb, a marble tent, squats in a London suburb.

ry since that inquest the truth has be-
me still further muffled, for it turned
t that George Fuller was so unreliable
witness as to make the inquest evi-
nce meaningless. In two depositions
later contradicted much of what was
d that day—about the type of gun
eke was using, about its condition
en he found it, about Speke's posture
he crossed the wall, even about the
ne of death. Speke, Fuller now main-
ned, had never been to Bath that
rning, and certainly had never met
rton, whose reference to their last
counter was "a specimen from the
ny heroics of Richard Burton, that
characteristic of his vivid imagina-
n." As for the death weapon, it van-
ed, and has never been found.

Thus we must draw our own conclu-
ns. The facts are few and dubious.
is hazy, blurred in the mist of that
ernoon long ago, so that we can only
low the example of John Hanning
eke himself, and honor our instincts.
Burton lived for another twenty-six
ars. He never went back to Africa,
d doubtless regretted to the end of
life the day he allowed Speke to go
to the Northern Lake without him.
t he made his fortune with the first
expurgated translation of *The Ara-
n Nights,* and after a lifetime of furi-
s controversy, fluctuation, scholar-
p, and adventure, died famous and a
ight of the Bath—suspect to the end
ong the orthodox, looking in old age as magnificently sinister as ever, and idolized still by the faithful, fatuous Isabel, who took the posthumous precaution of burning most of his journals and many unpublished manuscripts.

For his tomb Isabel erected, in the Catholic cemetery of Mortlake, London, an Arab tent made of marble, fitted up as a chapel inside, with real camel bells that tinkled when the door was opened and room for two coffins. It is still there, chipped and forlorn, directly opposite the headquarters of the East Sheen Scout Group. If you stand in Worple Street, while the commuter trains rattle by and the jets scream over to London Airport, you can see its pyramidal mock draperies protruding over the cemetery wall. Isabel has long since been reunited with Richard inside, and on a slab at the sealed door is a poem by Justin Huntly McCarthy:

> Oh, last and noblest of the errant knights,
> The English soldier and the Arab Shiek [sic],
> Oh, Singer of the East who loved so well
> The deathless wonder of the Arabian Nights,
> Who touched Camoens lute and still would seek
> Ever new deeds until the end, farewell.

But Speke is buried with a solider romance. Deep in the green silence of the Somerset countryside, among thatch and apple orchards, stands the church of St. Andrew at Dowlish Wake, in a village still insulated against the traffic of the main roads, unhurried and unperturbed. This is the sanctuary of the Spekes. Spekes are everywhere inside. There are Speke memorial windows. There are Speke commemorative plaques. There is a Speke vault and a Speke chapel. Three Spekes are on the list of rectors, two Spekes served in the First World War, four Spekes died in the Second. Here is a pair of fifteenth-century Spekes, recumbent with weepers near the altar, and here, in brass, is the sixteenth-century Speke *"qui edificavit hanc partem ecclesie."*

At the heart of it all, flanked by a Union Jack brought home from Jinja, John Hanning Speke himself stands in stately, life-size bust, bearded and masterly, above the big black marble sarcophagus containing his remains—ornamented by laurel leaves, embellished with gun, sword, and sextant, and supported, as the College of Heralds decreed, by a Crocodile on the dexter side and a large Hippopotamus sinister.

So Speke won in the end. There are still Spekes about in that countryside, much respected still—"people of the old sort, you know"—and true to his heritage, the explorer is among them. A family man to the last, an English gentleman of the rooted kind, his half-suppressed, half-ashamed romanticism sustains him in death as it impelled him in life. In 1875 Henry Stanley established, once and for all, the truth of that tragic intuition on the shores of the Northern Lake, and since then no one has disputed Speke's right to the proud Latin epitaph upon his tomb: E NILO PRAECLARUS—ILLUSTRIOUS FOR THE NILE.

The Bloodiest Battle in History

It was the Somme in 1916, and there, on the windy downlands of northern France, the "flower" of European manhood was slaughtered. How much else was lost in what F. Scott Fitzgerald called "the last love battle"?

By ROBERT COWLEY

The old Roman road from Albert to Bapaume is twelve miles long and absolutely straight. Even allowing for a token deceleration through the three or four brief villages along the way, with their harsh straggle of brick houses and barns, you can scarcely avoid making the trip in twenty minutes or less. La Boisselle, Pozières, Le Sars: the highway is their main street, and except for an occasional tractor, nothing holds you up.

The beginning of the great plain of northern France is a landscape empty of surprises until you notice the cemeteries. They seem to sprout up everywhere and in the most unlikely places: not only by the side of the road, but out in the middle of a wheat field or in the shadow of a dark and isolated burst of woodland. A faint ground swell may produce hundreds of headstones, a long gully, thousands, close-packed in orderly rows and boxed behind brick walls, like weathered tent cities turned into marble by mistake. The cemeteries give you a start at first, but you are past them soon enough.

More than half a century ago, when the First World War battle of the Somme was fought here in 1916, it was inconceivable that the land could ever again support anything but cemeteries. Five months of massed artillery fire turned these rich plains and gentle downs into a wasteland, "the most terrifying devastated area perhaps ever seen on our planet," the poet Edmund Blunden wrote. Wilfred Owen, who may have been the most talented of the extraordinary group of British writers to serve on the Somme, surveyed the awesome prospect of the battlefield soon after the storm had subsided. He was fresh from England, and the contact must have been unbearable. "It is pock-marked like a body of foulest disease," he told his mother, "and its odour is the breath of cancer."

Everything about the battle of the Somme stupefies: the pulverized landscape, the profligate expenditure of matériel, the astronomical carnage, and not least, the infinitesimal gains made by the greatest and most prolonged offensive that armies had yet attempted. From July until mid-November, 1916, the British ground their way up the road from Albert, a few hundred blasted yards at a time. They never did reach Bapaume that year, though troops shivering in the slimy trenches and waterlogged shell holes that pas for the ultimate front line could m out the tallest buildings three m away, their fractured roofs show above a last, long, tantalizing rise. where did the British, or their Fre allies fighting astride the river Som drive the German Army back m than seven miles on a front twenty- miles long; in places they gained n ing at all. They called it a victory a way, and perhaps it was by West Front standards. The debate has ne been settled to anyone's real satisfact

The debate goes on about the los too. Nobody knows exactly how m were killed, wounded, or taken p oner in those four and a half mon over the years informed estimates h varied by the hundreds of thousa Three million men fought on Somme at one time or another; haps a third of them became casualt The figure most widely accepted to is 600,000 *for each side*. If that is unreasonable, then neither is the e mate of 200,000 to 300,000 dead think 7,000 corpses to the square is not much of an exaggeration, ten the acre shall we say, and your nose you where they lay thickest," w



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Next stop, Berlin: On their way to the front, soldiers of the New Armies wave for an official photographer.

harles Carrington, who was there. All n agree on one point, however: the mme is the bloodiest battle in history. Only consider the evidence recorded the memorial arch at Thiepval. It n be seen for miles, its rusty brick tbacks squatting dourly on the ridge- e. You might mistake it for a factory first. From a distance, the stone cing around the lower piers looks rangely weathered—but then, as you mb the steps, the weathering resolves to names, thousands upon thousands them, etched into the graying mar- e. The names—"these intolerably meless names," Siegfried Sassoon lled them—seem to spurt out of the one of the graceless central arch, arting at such a height that you have bend your neck back sharply to ake out the topmost ones. The names undate the walls of the subarchways th the same torrential weight. This is e memorial to the British and Empire ad in the battle of the Somme who ve no known grave—in that sinister phemism of the Great War, "the issing." There are 73,077 names on e Thiepval arch.

If time has made these names more meless than intolerable, it has not yet erased the trauma: the Somme, as Correlli Barnett has written, left "a lasting and terrible impression on the British memory." What amount of pain is concealed in the words you see again and again, scrawled in the cemetery registers: "Beautifully kept, as always"? It is hard to grasp how people in places like Accrington and Grimsby must have felt when, in a period of days in July, 1916, they received hundreds of telegrams of condolence. In some working-class towns there were streets from which all the men simply vanished; too often the officers responsible for keeping casualty lists had been swept away with the rest. *The Times* printed sixty-eight columns of names of men killed and wounded in the first four weeks. And even now, every autumn, an old lady arrives in a chauffered Rolls at the Guards Cemetery in Lesboeufs. With ghostly regularity she has returned on the same date, the day her husband was killed here, as if clinging to an old grief like Miss Havisham to her wedding dress.

There is a good deal of truth in the assertion that "the flower of British manhood" fell at the Somme—that the dead and maimed represented "the heart of a whole generation." The men who went over the top on those chalky downlands were the best the country had to offer, the volunteers of 1914 and 1915 who had swelled, by the hundreds of thousands, the "New Armies" raised by the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener. "Never before," said the Official History of the eve of the Somme, "had the ranks of a British Army on the field of battle contained the finest of all classes of the nation in physique, brains and education."

Recruiting officers had been overwhelmed by men of all ages, rushing to join before it was too late. Schoolboy chums had bicycled over dusty country lanes to regimental depots and had been told to come back when they were older; they had simply gone somewhere else and had falsified their ages. Leeds, Birmingham, and other big towns had raised, sometimes at their own expense, "City" or "Pals" battalions (as they were called in the north of England). So had individual occupations—the 3rd Manchester Pals, for instance, were drawn from the clerks and warehousemen of the city, and the 15th Highland Light Infantry from the Glas-



Wilfred Owen



Robert Graves



Siegfried Sassoon



Harold M

gow tramways department. They were men with a simple old-world faith in God, King, and Country, and they really did regard the war as a struggle to save civilization as they knew it. "I forgot my pacifism—I was ready to believe the worst of Germans," wrote Robert Graves, who apparently felt more relieved to miss his first term at Oxford than scared to go to war. Two years later, he would nearly die of wounds at the Somme.

But then, the heaviest proportion of losses were always among junior officers like Graves—the subalterns who, at that stage of the war, came exclusively from the public schools and universities. These young men of the upper classes were precisely the ones destined to become the next generation of British leaders: the politicians, colonial officials, high civil servants, teachers, writers, and innovators in general. During the months of the Somme, the Roll of Honour in the *Illustrated London News* or the *Sphere,* that social page of the war dead, overflowed with their soft, well-scrubbed, and aristocratic faces. The future military theorist and historian, Basil Liddell Hart, went to France in charge of eight junior officers; he was himself just twenty-one. Five of them died on the first day of the battle, and the rest, including Liddell Hart, were all casualties by the end of July. The front-line officers were usually a head taller than the working-class men they commanded, they were required to go before them in an attack, to set an example, and most of them still wore different, and easily recognizable, uniforms. (Along with so much else, the Somme changed that: subalterns began carrying rifles and dressing like their men.)

One of the appalling things about the Somme is that none of the people responsible were ever sure what they wanted the battle to accomplish. The site of the attack was chosen for political, not strategic, reasons: the British and French armies joined just north of the banks of the Somme River, in the department of the same name, and Marshall Joffre, the French commander in chief, persuaded his British counterpart, Sir Douglas Haig, that the two allies should go on the offensive side by side. Haig was realistic enough to see that the Somme area was of little military importance, as well as being an excessively strong part of the German line, and he would have preferred to strike elsewhere. But apparently the dapper little Lowland Scot, the martial blend in a famous distilling family, tended to be shy in debate.

Then, in February, 1916, the Germans attacked at Verdun, and as the French desperately fed division after division into that notorious sausage grinder, a collapse seemed near if some sort of diversion was not soon mounted: *faute de mieux,* preparations for the Somme went on. As if carried away by the heady immensity of his own operation, Haig became convinced that a breakout was possible after all. He spoke hopefully of sending his cavalry through the ruptured German line, and of reaching Bapaume and the open country beyond in the first days of July.

"You must know that I feel that every step in my plan has been taken with the Divine help," he wrote to his wife on June 30, the eve of the Big Push. Haig was by no means alone in his trust in the Almighty. That night a young subaltern named J. S. Engall was confiding similar thoughts to his parents. He described a communion service that he had attended with many of his comrades, and added: "I have a strong feeling that I shall come through safely; nevertheless should it be God's holy will to call me away, I am quite prepared to go. . . . I could not wish for a finer death . . ."

His letter must have reached home at about the same time as the telegr from the War Office. Engall was one the twenty thousand Englishmen w died the next day, a day that has b called the most disastrous in the l tory of British arms since Hastings.

You signed on to die—we all r ognized that," said the old colo who was my landlord in London, night shortly before I went to Somme. "But then, there is no grea thrill in life than to come close to l ing it." He only talked to me about war that once, and I wonder if he rea supposed that someone my age wo understand. A contemporary of his cently wrote that "it seemed that only real life was to be found wh there was the greatest chance of me ing death." Such sentiments do not over easily in the era of Vietnam, a yet the reasoning came naturally to tl generation. How else do you expl the events of July 1? The day co happen not only because of what m expected of themselves but because what they had allowed their leaders expect of them.

They were so young, the dead of Somme, and their youth is almost m painful to contemplate than their nu bers. An oblique reference in this me oir, a passing mention in that bi raphy, give you an idea of who th were—or of what they might have l come. "I went down to Oxford," wri Julian Huxley, "and was offered a f lowship in Zoology at New College was taking the place of my erstwh tutor, Geoffrey Smith, whose brilli career was cut short when he was kil on the Somme." Here is Harold M millan, remembering his friend Edwa Tennant ("Bimbo" to all), killed



d Asquith



Edmund Blunden



H. H. Munro (Saki)



Basil Liddell Hart

ptember at the age of nineteen: Born of talented parents, he seemed illustrate in his person all the Elizathan ardour that still gave some enantment and excitement to war." Poor jester Bim," Lady Cynthia squith lamented.) Or listen to the et Siegfried Sassoon, talking about a low officer from Cambridge, whose ecialty was the history of Roman itain: ". . . there was an expression veiled melancholy on his face, as if were inwardly warned that he would ver see his home in Wiltshire again. couple of months afterwards I saw s name in one of the long lists of e killed."

The true lost generation of Sassoon's ne lies under those fields. You could ck any of the cemeteries of the mme and arrive at the same consion, but the one I particularly reember is the cemetery of the Devonire Regiment, near Fricourt. It is nall as these places go, merely two ngish rows of headstones at the top a steep and wooded bank. Everydy in it (except for one 1918 burial) ed on July 1, 1916.

The headstones are the same as those all the British cemeteries. They are e sections of marble plank, endlessly wed off at regular intervals, with the gimental seal carved above the pertint information—name, rank, serial mber, date of death, and age. Often u find just the words: "A Soldier of e Great War" or "A Soldier of the vonshire Regiment." At the base of ny of the headstones, but half-scured by flowers and ornamental shes, are short inscriptions that the en) Imperial War Graves Comssion permitted widows or families select. Here, as in the other cemeteries, the inscriptions seldom vary, and in the aggregate they have an unexpected power—homely sentiments that, like the Great War itself, better belong to the nineteenth century than to the twentieth: "In Loving Memory/ Anchored Safe/Where Storms are Over" (11255 Private William Browning/Devonshire Rgt./1st July 1916/ Age 19) . . . "Until the Day Dawns" (Age 18) . . . "His Time was Short" (Age 20). Occasionally there is a hint less of a heavenly future than of a promising past cut short in the little valley below: "Late of the Malay States/Elder Son/Of Gerald Davidson/Suez, Egypt" (Age 31). The mark of the Empire is stamped all over this place.

On July 1 the Devonshires had gone down this bank by the hundreds, one long line plodding after another. Their orders required them to advance at an even walking pace, but they could not have moved much faster if they had wanted to. Each one carried "fighting order" weighing at least sixty-six pounds. This included their rifles, steel helmets, trench shovels, wire cutters, water bottles, rolled groundsheets, haversacks (containing mess tins, towels, shaving kits, iodine, field dressings, extra cheese, and extra socks), two gas helmets and tear goggles, two bandoleers of small arms ammunition, two Mills grenades, and two sandbags. Sixty-six pounds was more than half the average weight of the British soldier in 1916; an Army mule was not expected to carry more than a third of its weight. But it was thought that they would need these things on the other side.

Like everyone else that morning, the Devonshires came under fire immediately from a machine gun across the valley. Scores were hit. Was Private 11255 Anchored Safe in those first moments, I wonder, or did he find his Shelter from Earthly Storms on the German wire below? ("I've seen 'em, I've seen 'em," the song went. "Hanging on the old barbed wire.") Did the Day begin to Dawn for A Soldier of the Great War in the obliterating explosion of a whiz-bang where the railroad tracks once ran below?

Summer days as perfect as July 1, 1916, are extraordinary in that part of the world. Everyone who survived remembered the blue, cloudless sky and the broiling sun. As he looked on from a support trench, Sassoon penciled an entry in his notebook: "I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell . . ." Six British corps, thirteen divisions, or 140,000 infantry, went over the top that morning. The British had fired 1,627,824 shells in the seven days leading up to Z Day. It only remained for the infantry to walk over. But the damage too often proved to be only cosmetic. No one, apparently, suspected the extent to which the Germans had honeycombed the chalk soil of the Somme ridges with deep dugouts, most of them impervious to even the heaviest shells. Some were tunneled as much as thirty or forty feet below the long, gray grass and the ever-present poppies, and were equipped with bunks and electric lights; a few of the officers' quarters had paneled walls decorated with cretonne. When the shelling started, the German front-line garrisons crowded into these claustrophobic shafts, short of food and space, assaulted by lyddite fumes and the seismic din overhead, but otherwise safe. The moment the barrage lifted, they were ready to dash up and run to the nearest shell crater, dragging machine guns and ammunition boxes with them.

If both sides literally found themselves racing against death, one intervening presence gave the Germans the edge they needed. That was their barbed wire. Like metallic hedgerows, belts of

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it stretched for mile after unbroken mile, hanging in festoons from post to post or simply lying in piles, as much as forty yards wide in places. One variety had barbs as thick as a man's thumb. "It was so dense," a British private remembered, "that daylight could barely be seen through it. Through the glasses it looked like a black mass."

But the British showed a gift for creating their own obstacles, and the time of the attack, 7:30 A.M., was one of them. By then the sun was already high and there was neither semidarkness nor morning haze to confound the view of the enemy gunners. The French had insisted—and once again Haig had backed down—that the attack be made in full daylight, to allow the artillery a final opportunity to check its effectiveness. The "bewildering tumult" of those last minutes "seemed to grow more insistent with the growing brilliance of the atmosphere and the intenser blue of the July sky." The writer was R. H. Tawney, in years to come a prophet of a socialist England and a major economic thinker, but that morning an anonymous NCO of the Manchester Pals, crouching by a trench ladder somewhere in the same valley that the Devonshires had to cross.

"It was not a succession of explosions or a continuous roar," he said. "It was not a noise; it was a symphony." Others would speak of the same orchestral grandeur of the guns—which swelled to a finale with the kettledrum-like detonation of eleven underground mines, heaving earth and shattered bodies hundreds of feet in the air. To a young Australian officer, Adrian Stephen, watching from an artillery observation post ten miles to the north of Tawney, that "jerky roar . . . flung from horizon to horizon" was "wonderful music—the mightiest I have ever heard. . . . One felt inclined to laugh with the fierce exhilaration of it. After all, it was our voice, the voice of a whole Empire at war."

Then, abruptly, the imperial music stopped. Whistles blew up and down the line, sixteen miles of whistles blowing, with an occasional blast from a hunting horn. Subalterns leaped up on the parapets, gesturing to the men in the packed trenches to follow. Some Highland infantrymen went forward to the skirl of bagpipes, while two companies of Northumberland Fusiliers plodded under the arching path of a rugby ball, drop-kicked, the Official History recorded, "by an eminent North Country player." Like an apparition from another century, one battalion advanced to the beat of a single big drum. But for the most part, bravado of this sort was the stuff of the illustrated weeklies. "They got going without delay," an officer in an Ulster battalion said, "no fuss, no shouting, no running, everything solid and thorough—just like the men themselves. Here and there a boy would wave his hand to me as I shouted good luck to them through my megaphone. And all had a cheery face. Most were carrying loads. Fancy advancing against heavy fire with a big roll of barbed wire on your shoulders."

You would like to freeze the picture forever at this instant: the companies that had crept out in advance of zero time rising (with what effort) from the mustard and the dew-laden grass; the NCO's shouting to the men filing through the gaps in their wire to form up—"Don't bunch. . . . Keep up up on the left"; the bent brown figures moving with a deliberate lack of urgency, generally uphill and everywhere in the open, cocked rifles slung over their right shoulders; the untarnished bayonets of the New Armies flashing in the morning sun; the hares starting at their feet; the smoke candles belching opaque columns, white, green, and orange, and Scots in hodden-gray kilts disappearing into the vapors; the football of the Northumberlands reaching the apex of its flight.

That moment was, as it was meant to be, a consummation. So much was involved in it, so much was at stake—the treasure of Empire and of youth, the sureties of the past, the hopes of the future, but not least, the illusions of

present. "The first line appeared to c
tinue without end to right and left.
was quickly followed by a second, th
a third and fourth. They came on a
steady, easy pace as if"—the onlool
was a German officer waiting with
men in the shell craters opposite—
if expecting to find nothing alive in
trenches."

Already the picture is marred
close-up. Men slip down the ladde
dead before they hit the bottom
the trench, or crumble in piles, blo
ing the narrow passages cut throu
their own wire. Others, moving acr
the open to the jumping-off pla
never reach their own front line.
whiz-bang clips a sergeant in the thr
and his head disappears. A bullet
flates a bagpipe. The rugby ball g
bouncing off, the men behind it "h
up," the Official History reports, "b
continuous hail of bullets not far fr
their front trenches. . . . whole lines
were swept down dead or wounded
every further attempt to get forward
rushes." German batteries, untouch
by the bombardment, catch jamm
assembly trenches just before zero,
cones of the explosions giving the
pression of a thick belt of poplar tr

For the first and probably last ti
at the Somme, machine guns, not ar
lery, apparently did more killing. Th
methodical work had an unreal, alm
epic quality, sweeping away thousa
as effortlessly as a storyteller's scy
in a *Ramayana* battle. Men fell, t
pled in windrows like cornstalks, of
before they had crossed the first h
dred yards of No Man's Land; la
burial parties would collect long li
of corpses immediately in front of
British wire.

The Germans had cleverly p
tioned their trenches along the c
of the ridge where the great plain f
away, leaving the British with few fo
holds on the high ground when
battle began. Machine guns kept th
from exploiting the ones they had. N
Thiepval, a village that the Germ
had turned into a fortress, an Uls

ficer named Crozier glanced through
e trees (or what was left of them) on
s way forward: ". . . my eyes are
veted on a sight I shall never see
ain. It is the 32nd Division at its
st. I see rows upon rows of British
ldiers lying dead, dying or wounded,
No Man's Land. Here and there I
e an officer urging on his followers.
ccasionally I can see the hands
rown up and then a body flops on
e ground . . ." Crozier and his men
d been held in reserve; it was now
A.M., and according to the timetable,
iepval should have fallen fifteen
inutes before. He soon learned what
d gone wrong. "Again I look south-
ard from a different angle and per-
ive heaped up masses of British
rpses suspended on the German wire,
nile live men rush forward in orderly
ocession to swell the weight of num-
rs in the spider's web. . . . Thiepval
lage is masked with a wall of
rpses."

Attackers snagged kilts or equipment
the wire, tore their clothes off to get
e of it, or ran back and forth look-
g for openings until gunned down.
e Somme wire would become tangled
the memory of one generation of
nglishmen, civilian soldiers who
uld promise themselves, with such
mentable consequences for the next,
ever Again!

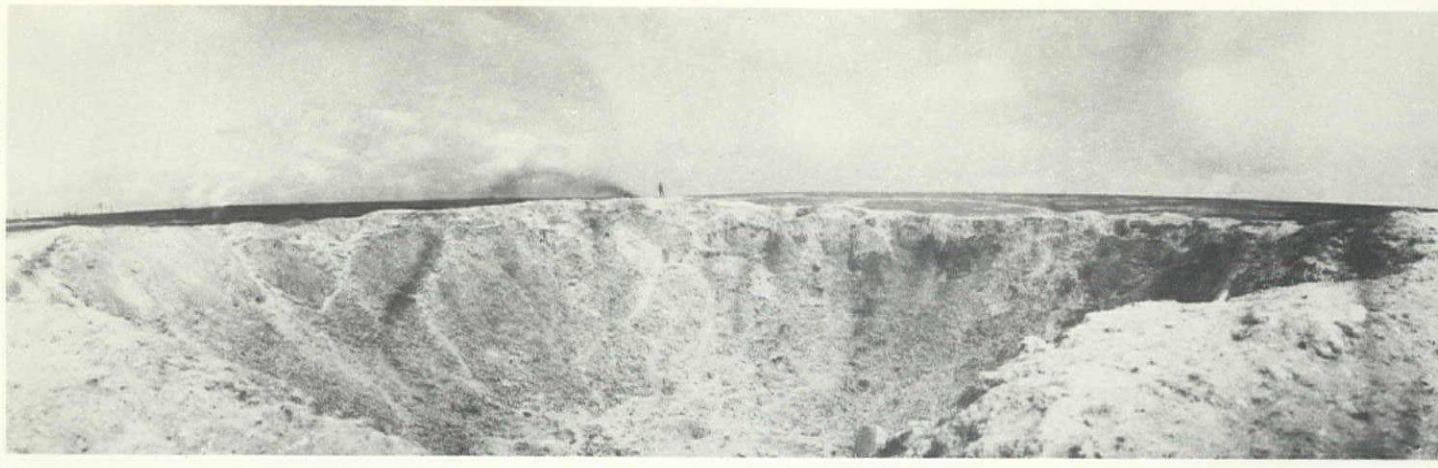
An hour passed. By now the smoke
ndles had burned out, disclosing a
ene of eerie emptiness. Charles Car-
ngton, a schoolboy-turned-subaltern,
anned his bit of front for signs of
ogress, hopeful or otherwise: though
e landscape "must have contained
,000 men, no one could be seen," he
rote. For a while yet, the high grass
uld keep the secret of the morning.
me 20,000 men had been killed out-
ht or would die of wounds: 19,240
the official figure for July 1, and that
ay err on the conservative side. I
ve heard that 23,000 or 24,000 may
a truer estimate. The total Brit-
losses approached 60,000—two
sualties for every yard of front. But
er a point the arithmetic of oblivion
becomes meaningless—and in any event, something *was* settled. Along the southern half of the attack, the Allies did push their way up the Somme ridges, and that was success enough for the generals.

Two years in the making and ten minutes in the destroying": the epitaph that one writer bestowed on the New Armies hardly exaggerated. Perhaps something else was destroyed with them. F. Scott Fitzgerald once said of the Great War that "this took religion and years of plenty and tremendous sureties and the exact relation that existed between the classes. . . . You had to have a whole-souled sentimental equipment going back further than you could remember." The spontaneous growth of the New Armies could only have happened because of that past. I can't help thinking that the men who came through July 1 had crossed the divide from one era to another, our own, as boldly and as blindly as they would have negotiated any historical No Man's Land. Could they, or the drafts that succeeded them, be blamed if their faith in God, King, and Country stood up imperfectly to the machine gun and the high-explosive shell?

On the evening of July 2 Haig estimated that his total casualties were "over 40,000 to date." But, he congratulated himself in his diary, "This cannot be considered severe in view of the numbers engaged." Doubtless the lack of solid information reaching him contributed to his early optimism. Closer to the front, however, where the true extent of the disaster was appreciated, a mood of incapacitating depression took hold of corps and division commands. For the next few days the British were mainly content to rest on the small successes of July 1, or to reinforce its failures. They allowed woods and support trenches hastily vacated by the Germans to remain unoccupied—and soon the Germans returned, in force. They sent unenthusiastic battalions over ground already strewn with corpses—and soon there were a few hundred more of England's flower rotting in the sun.

Attrition became the announced justification for continuing the stalled offensive. If the enemy were bled white enough, the reasoning went, he would eventually have to give in. Attrition, which we have come to think of in terms of the body count, is an inspiration peculiar to this century. Sometimes, however, an uneasy question arises: just who was attriting whom? This may explain why the British official historians took such pains to prove that the Germans had lost more men than the Allies at the Somme. "Of course they didn't want their casualties to be greater than those of the Germans," an archivist at the Imperial War Museum in London told me. "That would have made it a defeat, wouldn't it?"

The war entered a new phase after July 1. "From then onward things hardened into a more relentless, mechanized affair, took on a more sinister aspect," wrote the poet David Jones, who fought with one of the Welsh regiments. The Somme was, as a German military historian put it, "the first material-battle of the World War" — and in the material respect, the British would have, finally, the edge. The fighting crept up the ridges flanking the Roman road and spilled over onto that plain that seems so high, though it is never more than 500-odd feet above sea level. The woods that lie scattered along the edge of the plain seemed to magnetize the action now. Mametz, Trônes, Delville, High Wood—the British became as obsessed with taking them as the Germans did with holding them. In more peaceful times, local men of property had mainly kept them as private hunting preserves; they still do. Two years of neglect had turned these places into formidable obstacles. "To talk of a wood is to talk rot," one British officer said of a leafy objective he had been ordered to secure at all costs. "It was the most dreadful tangle of dense trees and undergrowth imaginable, with deep yawning broken trenches criss-crossing about it; every



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Underground war: At La Boisselle on July 1, 1916, an explosive charge at the end of a tunnel left a crater 90 feet deep in the German front

tree broken off at top or bottom and branches cut away, so that the floor . . . was almost an impossible tangle of timber, trenches, undergrowth, etc., blown to pieces by British and German heavy guns for a week."

Mametz Wood was probably the most famous, partly because persons such as Gerald Brennan and Liddell Hart happened through, and partly because other notable talents such as Graves, Jones, and Sassoon had, by chance or by background, found their way into the Welsh regiments that took most of Mametz. The Welsh went into the wood at dawn on July 10. Let us follow the action of the next twenty-four hours through the eyes and ears of one soldier, Private John Ball, the protagonist of *In Parenthesis*, David Jones's long narrative poem. The day begins with the men rising "dry mouthed from the chalk" and moving up a shorelike incline, wave after diminishing wave, toward the dark wood. A bewildered half-dozen bunch, "like sheep where the wall is tumbled," at a spot where artillery has blasted a passage, and are picked off by Brandenburgers perched in the trees. Ball trips on German wire camouflaged in the undergrowth. All sense of order vanishes. The survivors are engulfed by a "denseness of hazel-brush and body high bramble." The struggle for the wood becomes a confusion of bombs winged above thornbushes, of gray figures withdrawing into further thickets, and of the ominous clank of a machine-gun tripod; of coming into a clearing to find newly-dead comrades "distinguished only in their variant mutilation"; of stragglers gathering and falling back and trying vainly to dig in ("But it's no good you can't do it with these toy spades"); of the man next to you hit and dying in your arms ("And get back to that digging can't yer—this ain't a bloody wake"); of trees crashing on wounded men; and of water parties arriving at last with half their bottles punctured.

Night falls: barrage mingles with deafening counterbarrage, and platoons grope forward through the "mazy charnel-ways" of this nightmare wood, seeking "to distinguish men from walking trees and branchy moving like a Birnam copse." Men panic. In the light of a flare, Ball glimpses the severed head of a friend, grinning "like the Cheshire cat." In the early morning hours he, too, is hit in the legs and manages to crawl back to safety: "To groves always men come both to their joy and their undoing."

Robert Graves picked his way through the rubble of corpses in Mametz Wood one chilly July evening, while searching for German overcoats to use as blankets. He came across two men who had "succeeded in bayoneting each other simultaneously"—an unforgettable pair—and were sustained in an upright position by the tree trunk against which they had fallen. Graves collected the overcoats; still feeling superstitious about taking from the dead, he told himself that they were only a loan. But the conventional barriers between living and dead were, in fact, disappearing. The living cad food and water and collected souve from the dead, joked about them slept next to them, and built up t parapets with them when sandbags out. The two came to have a kind ecological interdependence, like t of the Laplander and the reind Once death ceased to be essenti tragic, a whole underpinning of and literature gave way. Heroes c for no reason—if, indeed, there w heroes left.

But we cannot leave Mametz W without mentioning one further i in its catalogue of horrors: poison On the night of July 17–18 the G mans fired gas shells filled with le phosgene for the first time, instead the usual chlorine gas released fr stationary cylinders. The only shells until then had been the lach matory kind that smelled of str onions: the standing order was no bother about gas masks, and that ni Graves's company, moving up fr Mametz Wood, lost half a dozen m

At about the same time, Basil Lid Hart was leading his company of Yo shiremen through the wood in the posite direction. "We suddenly hear lot of shells landing around us, but they did not explode with a bang, imagined that they must be dud until there was a strong smell of gas. Coughing violently, I stayed to w and divert the platoons that were lowing." The next morning he was s back on a stretcher, "feeling bad, still unaware how bad." The tall, t subaltern had been a runner in sch

d his strong lungs probably saved his . His war was over, but the most uential military historian of our e would spend the rest of his life borating on the original lessons of Somme. In eighteen days he had n enough of generals who bungled d missed chances by what he called rigidity of their own inertia: his as would not be lost on other gen-tions of military leaders, whether y were Nazis blitzkrieging through ance and Russia or the Israelis who ice burst across the Sinai.

By the middle of the month the Brit- confronted not only the German ond fixed line of defense but the oblem of how to avoid a repetition the July 1 slaughter when they rmed it. This time they tried some-ng new, surprise. In the darkness er midnight on July 14, lines of men hed wormlike up the slopes, follow- white tapes laid down earlier in No an's Land, and assembled as close to enemy wire as they could get with-t risking discovery. For once the itish had not tipped their hand with prolonged bombardment. At 3:20 M., just as the sky was beginning to le, the artillery opened fire. Five nutes later the infantry went for-rd. It breached a three-and-a-half-le gap in the enemy's last completed nch system before the morning was er, and established a secure foothold ng the crest of the ridge.

Liddell Hart, who came up after-rd, was treated to the unaccustomed ectacle of gray-clad corpses outnum-ring khaki ones. Some twenty-two ousand English troops had taken rt, hardly more than the number o had died on July 1. Something e in the experience of the Western ont happened that day. Open coun-, untouched by fighting, beckoned. trols, and even a careless brigadier, ntured far out into the wheat and rley, growing wild now, and saw thing but a few horse-drawn guns d limbers disappearing, pell-mell, to rear. High Wood, a seventy-five-e copse that managed to dominate the plateau from its slight eminence, lay empty.

But the infantry, according to plan, stopped to wait for the cavalry. The cavalry did not appear until just before 7 P.M. After a day of rain showers the sky was clearing, and the wide fields were flooded with that haunting amber light of midsummer evenings in northern France, faintly chilly yet almost Mediterranean. Two squadrons advanced, pennants fluttering, bugles blowing, lances spearing an occasional fugitive hidden in the ripening grain. It was a scene as memorable as it was meaningless. By 9:30, when darkness made further mounted action impracticable, the horsemen drew up in the shelter of a convenient road bank. They had advanced less than a mile, and they were withdrawn that night. Meanwhile, two battalions of infantry had finally penetrated High Wood, but were held up by the undergrowth, a few Germans, the magnifying shadows, and their own inanition. High Wood—or what was left of it—would not fall for another two months.

Like the sepia-toned photographs of the Big Push that appeared week after week in the *Illustrated London News*, there is an unreal quality, monochromatic and at times out of focus, to events during the rest of the summer. The British attacked, the Germans counterattacked: little of value was gained, little was lost. British casualties settled down to a norm of 2,500 per day, and the Germans probably suffered about the same number. That ominous phrase, "at all costs," seemed to creep into the official language of both sides in direct proportion to diminishing results. As the German Supreme Commander, General Erich von Falkenhayn, announced, "The enemy must not be allowed to advance except over corpses."

"At all costs": Both high commands made particularly liberal use of the words at Delville Wood, which earned a reputation as the worst battle-hell of the Somme. The "Devil's Wood" became an inferno. Smoke and gases formed a canopy impervious to light, and trees continued to burn in spite of heavy rains. Those 154 acres consumed six German divisions. A South African survivor spoke of seeing the earth "strewn every yard with the rags of human bodies." Today, only one stump of the original wood remains, wedged like a piece of Tasso's oak between two intertwining trunks.

"At all costs": In July and August, the Australians purchased, for a price of twenty-three thousand men, a mile square of crater fields around the village of Pozières—high, even by the going rate. Everyone speaks of the shellfire. Frank Richards, who served as a private in the Welsh Fusiliers, and who later wrote an extraordinary memoir of the war out of boredom with life on the dole, describes a scene of death warmed over that sounds like a black satire of war. Richards and his company were holding a shallow trench running through a village cemetery near High Wood when a German barrage caught them: "In the cemetery the shells were throwing corpses and coffins clean out of the graves, and some of our killed were now lying alongside of them. We could only sit tight and grin and bear it. One shell burst just outside the trench not far from me, and a man had one side of his face cut clean away by a piece of shell. He was also hit low down but was still conscious. His two pals were deliberating whether they would put him out of his misery or not; fortunately they were spared that, as he died before they had made up their minds. One of our old stretcher-bearers went mad and started to undress himself. He was uttering horrible screams, and we had to fight with him and overpower him . . ."

"At all costs": At the end of July Haig wrote in his diary that "Our losses in July's fighting totalled about 120,000 more than they would have been had we not attacked. They cannot be regarded as sufficient to justify any anxiety as to our ability to continue the offensive." One of the most chilling

things about the Somme is that basically decent men could regard these figures so dispassionately. But their apparent indifference may have been no more than a reflection of the chasm then existing between leaders and led. Their backgrounds, predominantly upper class and strenuously insulated from the masses they would command, had hardly prepared them to act in any other way. The Great War generals were the same persons who thought that £75 a year was a proper wage for a working man and whose only sight of the East End slums was from the window of an express speeding out of Liverpool Street. The gap would narrow in the Second World War, largely because the men who became its generals had themselves endured the democratizing miseries of the trenches as young captains and majors. "Indeed, of all the war," a young Guards officer admitted to his mother, "I think the most interesting (and humbling too) experience is the knowledge one gets of the poorer classes." The writer was a future Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan.

The Somme had gotten so far out of control that at times it assumed the character less of battle than of natural disaster. Nothing, apparently, not even the introduction of a possibly decisive secret weapon, could alter the inevitability of stalemate. The secret weapon was the tank. Though the idea of a heavily-armored vehicle running on caterpillar treads had been discussed for several years, it took the initiative of Winston Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, to order the earliest working model of a "land battleship." Early in 1915 he illegally allotted some £70,000 of Admiralty funds for the experiment. When he was forced to resign that spring as a result of the Gallipoli fiasco, he convinced his successor, Arthur Balfour, not to scrap it. A single prototype, christened the H.M.S. *Centipede,* gave a secret performance before a select audience of Cabinet ministers and War Office and GHQ representatives in February, 1916. David Lloyd George, then Minister of Munitions, watched the "ungainly monster," trapezoid-shaped and splendidly ponderous, "plough through thick entanglements, wallow through deep mud, and heave its huge bulk over parapets and various trenches. . . . Mr. Balfour's delight was as great as my own, and it was only with difficulty that some of us persuaded him to disembark from H.M. Landship while she crossed the last test, a trench several feet wide."

The boyish enthusiasm of the politicians was catching, and the Army ordered a hundred of the tanks. The Mark I tank was big enough to carry a hot and uncomfortable crew of one officer and seven men. Its maximum speed was 3.7 mph and it got one-half mile to the gallon. Two heavy wheels connected to the back provided an additional aid to steering. Much to the consternation of Churchill, who warned of exposing the secret prematurely, Haig determined to use tanks in a third all-out attempt to crack the German line, this time on September 15. The general appeared more eager to redeem the fading prospects of his offensive than to give the tank a fair trial. Crews were scarcely trained and had only the sketchiest of tactical guidelines to follow; some of the delicate behemoths were already worn out from long hours on the proving grounds.

Instead of concentrating the machines in the hope of a single, shattering breakout—the "expanding torrent" principle that Liddell Hart would preach with such effect—Haig allowed them to be parceled out in "packets" scattered along a ten-mile front. In some places the tanks went ahead of the infantry, clearing the way, in others they crawled at a respectful distance behind it, mopping up, accompanied by an officer and six men who moved the wounded from their path. Tanks broke down immediately, split their treads, got stuck in the crater fields or hung up astride German trenches, lost direction and fired on their own men,

Zero time, Z Day: At 7:30 A.M. on Ju
1916, a motion-picture camera records
first moments of the Big Push. From to
bottom, opposite, troops crouch in a
low assault trench, then follow an o
over the top. In the third picture, a
(far right) is hit as he stands up,
slides back into the deserted trench, a

obeyed confused orders to turn b
or cruised around killing aimle
until hit and disabled. (Their opera
speed turned out to be 1/2 n
making them choice targets.) A
Germans even panicked at the sigh
them and ran or surrendered. Ha
Macmillan noted "one or two of t
strange objects moving about, and
definitely bogged down in a huge s
hole. They were useful, but not c
sive," he concluded after the debu
the dominant weapon of land war
in the twentieth century. Macm
himself was wounded in the thigh
pelvis while trying to silence a mac
gun. He managed to roll down in
crater, where he lay for twelve ho
pretending to be dead when Ger
counterattackers surged around the
In his pocket he carried a copy
Aeschylus's *Prometheus* in Gr
which he read intermittently. "It w
play I knew very well, and seemed
inappropriate to my position." T
was the way it was with the educ
elite of Macmillan's generation,
their cultivated chutzpah would o
seem worth a multitude of faults l
on. He nearly died of his wounds.

But useless though the secret wea
may have been, it provided the p
with an incident. Toward 8:30 A.M
reconnaissance plane reported sigh
a tank "with large numbers of Bri
troops following it" through the n
street of Flers, a village a mile an
half behind the German front l
Correspondents hungering for a b
of good news fleshed out this infor
tion with a meaty detail—the tro
were cheering. This was what cau
the imagination at home, and it
vided Haig with the public-relat
triumph that had eluded him all s

CONTINUED ON PAG





"Shockingly Mad, Madder Than Ever, Quite Mad!"

So said Horace Walpole about a painting by Henry Fuseli. But the young Romantic Age had a penchant for madness; hence all the mad scenes that marked its artists' revolt against reason



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The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters *is Goya's title for this engraving, one of the famous* Caprichos *series, published in 1799.* Mad Kate *(opposite), the melodramatic study of a demented woman, is the work of Henry Fuseli, the Swiss painter who transplanted himself to London in the 1760's and became part of the English romantic movement.* Kate *is an illustration for a poem by William Cowper (himself intermittently mad), which features her as the village lunatic, driven out of her wits by the death of her lover. Fuseli shows her crouching on a rock, hair and dress aswirl—an apt symbol of the mad underworld of European romanticism.*

e art of the preceding epoch had ebrated the Great and the Beautiful; was an age of equestrian statues and paintings of gentlewomen being enaded in pleasure gardens. But n, almost as though the French volution had given the starting sig- for this kind of terror as well, the oco dream dissolves into the ro- ntic nightmare, and the arts proceed disgorge all the suppressed fears and ocities of the human imagination. w it is not field marshals on horse- k but demons of lust who ride wild- s and broomsticks in Goya's *Ca- chos;* the only beautiful women are ones being sold by hideous whore- ngers, and the myth of a polite, fectible society is transformed into ulsive images.

Here, a century before Freud, Goya vides the illustrations for a jungle k of the psychopathic subconscious. the *capricho* entitled *The Sleep of ason Produces Monsters* (right) he n shows us how it was done: a por- it of the artist as a young dreamer, nted by the phantoms that have sprung from his own overheated brain. We know that Goya had firsthand knowledge of the sleep of reason, for he went to the madhouse of Saragossa to study scenes of demonic possession among the violently insane. The result is a typically ambiguous painting known as *The Madhouse* (page 81), in which the half-naked lunatics perform their antics before black-robed visitors who seem, on closer inspection, to be rather more sinister than the inmates.

Goya is a very Spanish painter, but these were not merely local lunacies, escaped from an asylum where the Inquisition still held sway and madness was regarded as a kind of *lèse-majestè* against God. Throughout Europe there were young romantics who were as fascinated by the irrational as their fathers had been by the promise that reason would solve everything. The French Revolution, originally advertised as the culmination of the age of reason, had served to destroy both the old order and the belief that intellect could be elevated to take its place. Now it was the emotions' turn to be consulted

By FREDERIC V. GRUNFELD

about the future of mankind. Hence the cult of feeling that arrives with the romantic quest for new forms of art and society. Passion is at a premium. Poetry, says Wordsworth in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, represents "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." For Keats, all human passions are, like love, "creative of essential beauty." Blake says that "Exuberance is Beauty," and as usual goes straight to the heart of the matter: "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires."

Like Goya, Blake felt a special affinity for the creatures of the mental underworld. His engraving of *The Madhouse* presents a compassionate view of that dreaded London institution, Bedlam (originally Bethlehem Hospital), where—as he says in his great poetic vision of Jerusalem—men have built "Dens of despair in the house of bread" (Bethlehem means "house of bread" in Hebrew).

His friend Henry Fuseli did a drawing of a still more theatrical madhouse episode showing a lunatic trying to escape from his warders. Based on "a real scene in the Hospital of S. Spirito at Rome," it was supposed to depict a certain psychological type whose favorite subjects are said to be "Spectres, Demons, and madmen; fantoms, exterminating angels; murders and acts of violence." This description could very well apply to Fuseli himself and his penchant for drawing the macabre: an old man watching a young girl imprisoned with a skeleton, a beautiful woman arranging her hair as the executioner, with his axe at the ready, looks on, an incubus squatting on a sleeping girl's chest while a nightmare sticks her fell head through the bed curtains.

His painting of *The Mandrake*, now lost, struck the aging Horace Walpole as "shockingly mad, madder than ever, quite mad!" but Fuseli would hardly have regarded that as an insult. Much of the time he was trading on madness the way lesser painters exploited sunsets. For his Shakespeare illustrations he painted, among others, the mad Lady Macbeth and Lear raging on the heath; from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to justify still another madhouse scene, he chose the vision of the lazar house (Book XI) whose inmates suffer from "Daemoniac Phrenzie, moaping Melancholie/And Moon-struck madness, pining Atrophie . . ."

The way to the asylum thus becomes a pilgrimage for artists with sketchbooks under their arms. In the 1820's Géricault, the first of the great French romantic painters, set up his easel in the Salpétrière Hospital in Paris to do a series of ten portraits of mental patients. The idea had been suggested to him by a young psychiatrist, Dr. Georget, whose book *De la Folie* had made him an authority on madness at twenty-five; Géricault intended to record the particular facial expressions associated with various types of madness—kleptomania, hysteria, criminal compulsion, and so on. Géricault's friend Delacroix followed his example and produced two historical paintings of *Tasso in the Madhouse* (see opposite). Both show the great sixteenth-century poet lost in schizoid reveries, ignoring the taunts of his fellow inmates.

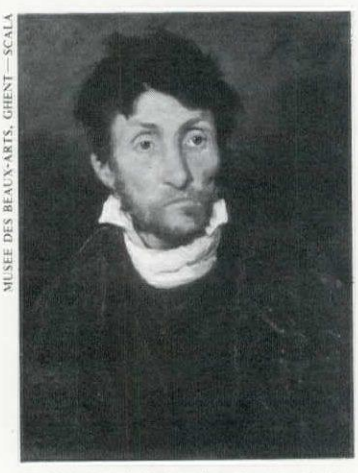
It is no coincidence that Delacroix's *Tasso* bears a marked resemblance the traditional "Christ Mocked Soldiers." To the romantics Tasso a Christlike culture hero, a poet went mad for the sake of his art. of the earliest German romantics, helm Heinse, was the first to about Tasso as the exemplary madm who had fallen victim to the wor conspiracy against love and gen Then Goethe took up the theme, write one of his finest dramas ab him; Liszt composed a piano piece two symphonic tone poems; Doniz a three-act opera. Lord Byron, in *Lament of Tasso*, has the poet fal imprisoned for imputed insanity in asylum where he is made to su "Sickness of heart, and narrowness place":

Where laughter is not mirth, nor though the mind,
Nor words a language, nor ev'n men n kind;
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,
And each is tortured in his separate hell—
For we are crowded in our solitudes—
Many, but each divided by the wall,
Which echoes Madness in her babbling moods . . .

Though he claims to have been when he came, he feels himself slo going mad "From long infection den like this,/Where the mind rots genial with the abyss . . ."

None of this has much to do the actual life of Tasso, who was fined by the Duke of Ferrara for defensible reason that he was ins and had to be kept out of the wa the Inquisition. But the function of romantic artist-madman is literary, historical; he provides access to long-neglected darker sides of pas and imagination and helps to demo the eighteenth-century convention man is subject to the rule of reason

Madness makes all symbols poss and the sleep of reason is one of ways a writer can probe and exp the limits of his domain. Goet Faust is the exemplary neurotic of



MUSEE DES BEAUX-ARTS, GHENT — SCALA

Titled Mad Murderer, *or sometimes* Kleptomaniac, *this is the portrait of an inmate of a Paris asylum painted in the 1820's by Théodore Géricault, who was among the first artists to become interested in the theme of madness.*

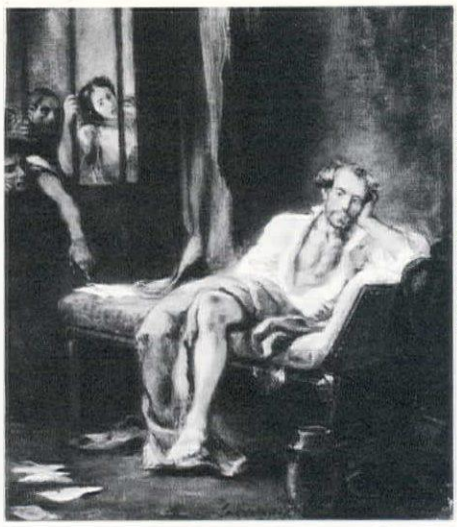
e ("Two souls live, *Ach!* within my east . . ."), and Gretchen goes com-tely mad; together, with the help of ir therapist, Mephistopheles, they eak through to deeper psychological els than any characters since Shakes-are's. It was Shakespeare, inciden-ly, who taught the romantic play-ights how sweet are the uses of anity in the theatre ("The lunatic, lover, and the poet/Are of imagi-tion all compact . . ."). The great d scenes in works like *Faust* and *cia di Lammermoor*—the frenzied gh, the disheveled hair, the plaintive ty sung by witless maid—all derive one way or another from Ophelia, ar, or Lady Macbeth.

These are symptoms of a literary mentia that takes a tremendous toll ong Bellini's and Donizetti's hero-s. For a clinical description of a ical case we need look no farther n Sir Walter Scott's *Bride of Lam-rmoor,* the novel on which Doni-ti's *Lucia* is based. The story comes a climax after Lucy has stabbed her ected bridegroom on their wedding ht and her parents find her in the mney corner of the bridal chamber,

> ted, or rather crouched like a hare upon form—her head-gear dishevelled; her ht-clothes torn and dabbled with blood, her eyes glazed, and her features con-sed into a wild paroxysm of insanity. hen she saw herself discovered, she gib-ed, made mouths, and pointed at them h her bloody fingers, with the frantic tures of an exulting demoniac.

It is hardly suprising that this horror ry should have been written, or her dictated, when Scott was in an nost continual opium stupor, taking much as two hundred drops of danum and six grains of opium a y to relieve the pain of a stomach ment. Afterward, when he had re-vered from both the treatment and disease, he was unable to remem-any details of what he had written, d found the results "monstrous ss and grotesque."

All the literary opium eaters—nota-



COLLECTION OF OSKAR REINHART, WINTERTHUR

Tasso in the Madhouse *was painted by Eugène Delacroix in 1824 and, above, in 1827. Tasso, the sixteenth-century Italian poet imprisoned for insanity, became a kind of culture hero to Delacroix and his contemporaries.*

bly Coleridge, Crabbe, and De Quincey—wrote about lunacy and hallucination, but they were a long way from being the only ones who were attracted to the theme: some of the most eminently sober and even-keeled of writers introduced mad scenes in their work, often as much for stylistic as for psychological reasons. On the operatic stage, where there was a near epidemic of lunacy, it afforded composers a marvelous opportunity to write delirious music for the coloratura soprano.

More often, however, madness had a deeply rooted allegoric purpose in romantic art. The artist feels an instinctive brotherhood with the madman in his isolation, which so closely parallels his own increasing alienation from the "normal" nineteenth-century world. This is not to imply that the romantics were mad—some of them were—or that madness is the prevailing tendency in their work: there are a great many rationalist currents in romanticism that run counter to this one. But the romantic is at least aware that he is no longer living in an age of reason, and he recognizes some of his own features in the grimaces of the lunatic. Eventually he may conclude that the whole of human life is madness, or that he has been born into a mad age. "I was born in 1813," says Sören Kierkegaard, "in that mad year when so many other mad bank-notes were put into circulation, and I can be best compared to one of them."

The comparison is not as unflattering to him as it would have been a century earlier, for the romantics had revived the ancient belief that madness is orphic knowledge. Insanity, says Charles Nodier, the teacher of Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset, represents an upward step in the evolution of consciousness:

> Lunatics . . . occupy the highest degree of the scale that separates our planet from its satellite, and since they communicate to this degree with a world of thought that is unknown to us, it is only natural that we do not understand them, and it is absurd to conclude that their ideas lack sense and lucidity, since they belong to an order of sensations and comprehensions which are totally inaccessible to us, with our education and habits.

Nodier also wrote that one meets the most reasonable people in the madhouse. This is a time-honored literary conceit, even older than *Don Quixote,* and one to which most of the visionary writers were inclined to subscribe. Blake felt that way about Bedlam, and noted that "there are probably men shut up as mad in Bedlam, who are not so: that possibly the madmen outside have shut up the sane people."

A reasonably good case could be made for the thesis that Blake himself was mad, in a harmless way. He saw visions, tipped his hat to the apostle Paul, spoke of having had conversations with Milton, and drew "visionary heads" of, among others, the "Man who instructed Mr. Blake in Painting &c in his Dreams."

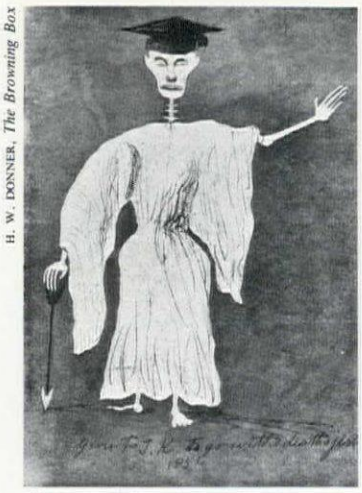
At a time when the line between genius and insanity was being ever more finely drawn, madness was obviously more than just a theme for painters and poets: it became a recognized mode of romantic destiny. Friedrich Hölderlin, the greatest of the German

visionary poets, spent nearly forty of his seventy-three years as an incurably withdrawn mental patient. Donizetti, the composer of mad scenes in half a dozen operas, lost his mind at forty-seven and was committed to an asylum near Paris. Gérard de Nerval, the French storyteller and poet, was institutionalized several times before he finally committed suicide. Robert Schumann, the German romantic composer par excellence, spent the last two years of his life in an asylum suffering from auditory hallucinations. Nikolaus Lenau, the leading Austrian poet of the epoch, died after six years in an asylum. And the Marquis de Sade, one of the great *provocateurs* in the underground movement against reason, spent many years of his life in prisons and asylums as punishment for private visions that proved to be far less cruel than those that became public policy under the Terror.

In his psychoanalytic study of *Madness and Civilization* the French historian Michel Foucault describes Sade's case as a key to the new mental images that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, among them "the complicity of desire and murder, of cruelty and the longing to suffer, of sovereignty and slavery, of insult and humiliation." In Foucault's view, the dialectics of sadism correspond to the passions of the age:

> Sadism is not a name finally given to a practice as old as Eros; it is a massive cultural fact which appeared precisely at the end of the eighteenth century, and which constitutes one of the greatest conversions of Western imagination: unreason transformed into delirium of the heart, madness of desire, the insane dialogue of love and death in the limitless presumption of appetite. . . .

Obviously, it isn't necessary "to be in a habitual state of licentious insanity" (as Sade's police record described him) before one can write about it; the authors of some of the maddest mad scenes were unequivocally sane. But there were more than a few who wrote



H. W. DONNER, *The Browning Box*

This macabre drawing shows the poet Thomas Beddoes as a skeleton clad in academic robes. It was drawn in 1847 by a ten-year-old child—the son of Beddoes's executor—two years before the poet succeeded in poisoning himself.

about insanity because they had a strong streak of it in themselves. Heinrich von Kleist, the great poet of the German romantic theatre, belongs to this category: he pictured the world as a stage battleground on which to act out his sexual fantasies. The climactic scene of Kleist's masterpiece, *Penthesilea,* is a kind of inverted prophecy of the sadistic finale with which he was to end his own life: in 1811, shortly after his thirty-fourth birthday, he shot his mistress and himself.

Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, is a neo-Grecian version of that familiar romantic figure, *la belle dame sans merci*—a man-eating woman who destroys her lover in a sudden fit of feminist resentment. She has met Achilles on the battlefield and yielded him her heart, and for a time love triumphs over war. Then, while the nuptial feast is being made ready, her Amazon blood lust surges up again. Tracking Achilles with her hounds, she shoots him through the throat just as he is about to throw himself at her feet:

> He falls . . .
> yet still he lives, the most unfortunate of men,
> despite the arrow jutting far out from his neck;
> choking and groaning, he picks himself up,
> pitches forward,
> and rises once again, and tries to flee.
> But she cries kill!—kill, Tigris! kill, Leane!
> kill, Dirke! Melampus! Sphinx! kill, Hyrkaon
> and falls on him—with the whole pack, O Dia
> and seizes him, seizes his helmet crest,
> and pulls him to the ground, a bitch-hound
> among hounds,
> one striking at his breast, the other at his back
> till the ground trembles with his fall.
> He, wallowing in the purple of his blood,
> touches her gentle cheek and cries:
> "Penthesilea! my bride! what are you doing?
> is this the feast of roses that you promised me
> But she—the lioness has heard him,
> the ravenous cat who prowls
> the snowy wastelands, howling after game—
> she pounces, tearing the armor from his body
> and now she sinks her teeth into his white
> breast,
> she and the dogs, her rivals;
> Oxus and Dirke drive their fangs into his right
> she into his left side; when I came upon them
> the blood was dripping from her mouth and
> hands.

This is a scene that left most Kleist's contemporaries speechless w horror. His penchant for cruel a unusual punishments anticipates Theatre of Cruelty, with which other mad genius of the stage, Anto Artaud,* attempted to reform the t atre of the twentieth century. Certai he would have agreed with Artaud t cruelty is what cements the world gether, that cruelty "molds the featu of the created world." Kleist represe an extreme case of the artist who id tifies himself with madness and w compels his nightmares to repres him on the public stage.

Most of the other romantics w wrote about insanity preferred play a kind of cat-and-mouse game with "I have pray'd/For madness as a bl ing," Byron says, speaking throu the mask of the melancholy *Manfr* though one of the sanest men who e lived, he was not averse to giving impression that he was "Mad, bad a dangerous to know" (as Lady Carol Lamb was delighted to attest).

Such literary posturings sometim led to a denouement where real m ness took over from the simulated ki Only rarely, however, does anyone g us an insider's view of insanity—p haps because it is so difficult to w

*See "A Vocation for Madness," which appeared in Spring, 1970, issue of HORIZON.

herently about incoherence. The one mantic writer who speaks eloquently d from personal experience about at it actually means to go mad is érard de Nerval, who manages to be th poetic and explicit about his ychotic interludes.

Nerval was thirty-three when he suf- ed his first severe attack of hallucitions in 1841. One evening as he was lking through Paris he felt himself gically attracted by an eastern star. its magnetism drew him onward he gan shedding his "terrestrial gar- nts" and scattering them on the ewalk. "The roadway seemed to lead ntinually upwards and the star to ow bigger," he writes in *Aurélia*. hen I stood still, my arms out- etched, waiting for the moment when soul should break free from my dy, attracted magnetically by the s of the star. A shudder went through . Regret for the earth and for those oved there gripped my heart, and so dently within myself did I beseech the irit drawing me up towards it that it med as if I went down again among n. A night patrol surrounded me."

He spent the night in jail, still hallu- nating. Friends came to fetch him in morning, and he was transferred to rivate clinic, where the visions con- ued for many weeks. The continents ened up before him; he saw to the ds of the earth, "beyond the Moun- ns of the Moon and ancient Ethi- ia," to Granada and the banks of Rhine, but "Everywhere the suffer- image of the eternal Mother was ng, weeping, or languishing." It oc- red to him, then, that he was em- rked on the kind of spiritual journey ich the ancients must have regarded a descent into hell.

After eight months his visions had sided and Nerval seemed cured. He overed sufficiently to make a journey the Near East, but there were to be ther schizophrenic episodes, and he mmitted suicide in 1855. Accord- to his doctor, Emile Blanche, érard de Nerval hanged himself because he saw his madness face to face."

At least his insanity seems to have been no impediment to his poetry; on the contrary, it led him to that curious concept, *supernaturalisme*, which was to exert a powerful influence on the early surrealist poets. T. S. Eliot acknowledged another sort of debt when he quoted from him in *The Waste Land* —the desolate lines in which Nerval describes himself as *"El desdichado,"* a man abandoned by fate, *"Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie."* In the same poem Nerval speaks of the "black sun" of his melancholia, and yet, precisely like an exiled prince, he takes a certain defiant pride in his outcast state. Madness, he suggests, is a gift that is not to be taken lightly, since it leads to the liberation of the poet's second sight.

This is very close to Georg Büchner's view of insanity as an ecstatic dance of freedom that mimes man's revolt against the restraints of civilization. Büchner's madmen are heroes, not villains, and their actions anticipate R. D. Laing's contention that madness is often nothing more than a desperate bid for liberty. The title role of Büchner's play *Woyzeck* (better known in this country in Alban Berg's operatic version, *Wozzeck*) presents a case in point, where madness is the only possible solution to an otherwise insoluble problem.



STAATSBIBLIOTHEK, BERLIN

Heinrich von Kleist, whose portrait this is, was the wild man of German romantic poetry. In 1808 he wrote a play about a murderous bride; three years later, at the age of thirty-four, he proceeded to kill both his mistress and himself.

And Büchner's *Lenz*—perhaps the finest short story in the German language, certainly of the romantic century—is one great, never-ending mad scene. It is based on the life of the young poet Reinhold Lenz, a close friend of Goethe's, who lived in a mountain village under a clergyman's care while slowly going mad. No one, not even Nerval, has succeeded as well as Büchner in capturing the terrible tension and impatience of insanity:

> But only as long as there was light in the valley were things bearable to Lenz; as evening came on he was overcome by a strange anxiety, he felt he wanted to run after the sun. As his surroundings grew darker in shadow, everything seemed dreamlike to him, repugnant; anxiety took hold of him like a child who must sleep in the dark; he felt as if he were blind. And now it grew, this mountain of madness shot up at his feet; the hopeless thought that everything was a dream spread itself out in front of him; he clung to all solid objects. Figures rapidly passed him by, he pressed toward them; they were shadows, life withdrew from him, his limbs were numb. He spoke, he sang, he recited passages from Shakespeare, he grasped at everything that might make his blood flow faster, he tried everything, but—he was cold, cold!

As a sustained exploration of madness in literature, Büchner's *Lenz* is eclipsed only by an American novel that deals with insanity on the sea rather than in the mountains and has the hero's blood running hot rather than cold when the lunacy is upon him:

> Often, when forced from his hammock by exhausting and intolerably vivid dreams of the night, which, resuming his own intense thoughts through the day, carried them on amid a clashing of frenzies, and whirled them round and round in his blazing brain, till the very throbbing of his life-spot became insufferable anguish; and when, as was sometimes the case, these spiritual throes in him heaved his being up from its base, and a chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and lightnings shot up, and accursed fiends beckoned him

to leap down among them; when this hell in himself yawned beneath him, a wild cry would be heard through the ship; and with glaring eyes Ahab would burst from his state-room, as though escaping from a bed that was on fire.

As Herman Melville says earlier in *Moby Dick,* "Human madness is oftentimes a cunning and most feline thing. When you think it fled, it may have but become transfigured into still subtler form." When he himself pursues this essence to its roots in totem and taboo, it leads him, as it has the earlier romantics, to that dark and mysterious realm of the subconscious, "where far beneath the fantastic towers of man's upper earth, his root of grandeur, his whole awful essence sits in bearded state . . ." But Melville did not possess the temperament to pull the beard of the king he found there enthroned; that literary feat was reserved for the Englishman Thomas Lovell Beddoes, whose five-act black comedy *Death's Jest Book* is probably the most bizarre piece of writing produced during the romantic age.

Beddoes, who was born in 1803 and committed suicide in 1849, belongs to the great tradition of English eccentrics. He left Oxford to go to Germany and Switzerland, where he spent more than twenty years studying anatomy and dabbling in literature. If Keats was "half in love with easeful death," Beddoes was wholly in love with it, and *Death's Jest Book* is his obsessional masterpiece—a sprawling, blood-drenched fantasy into which he projected his most sadistic dreams about corpses and ghosts and madness and revenge. His style is archaic, modeled on the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, and the action, centered on the revolt of the court fool, takes place at a German court in the Middle Ages. This sense of being twice removed from reality in time and language gives Beddoes's work a strangely psychotic quality, as though it were taking place in the hermetic asylum of his mind's eye:

FOOL: I will now speak a word in earnest, and hereafter jest with you no more: for I lay down my profession of folly. Why should I wear bells to ring the changes of your follies on? Doth the besonneted moon wear bells, she that is the parasite and zany of the stars, and your queen, ye apes of madness? As I live I grow ashamed of the duality of my legs, for they and the apparel, forked or furbelowed, upon them constitute humanity; the brain no longer; and I wish I were an honest fellow of four shins when I look into the note-book of your absurdities. I will abdicate.

THE LADY: Brave! but how dispose of your dominions, most magnanimous zany?

FOOL: My heirs at law are manifold. Yonder minister shall have my jacket; he needs many colours for his deeds. You shall inherit my mantle; for your sins, (be it whispered,) chatter with the teeth for cold; and charity, which should be their greatcoat, you have not in the heart. . . . But now for my crown. O cap and bells, ye eternal emblems, hieroglyphics of man's supreme right in nature; O ye, that only fall on the deserving, while oak, palm, laurel, and bay rankle on *their* foreheads, whose deserts are oft more payable at the other extremity: who shall be honoured with you? Come candidates, the cap and bells are empty.

THE LADY: Those you should send to England, for the bad poets and the critics who praise them.

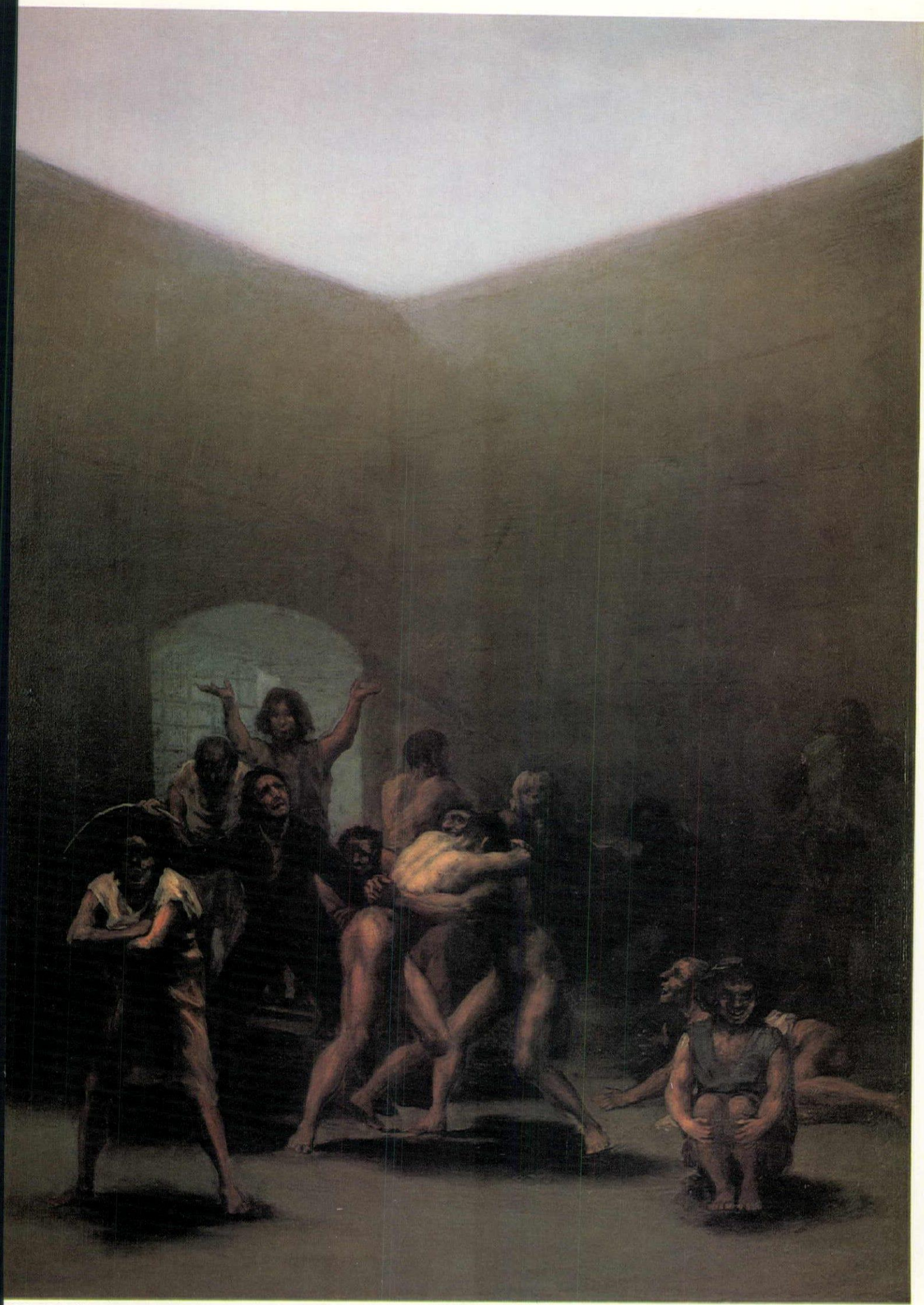
FOOL: Albeit worthy, those merry men cannot this once obtain the prize. I will yield Death the crown of folly. He hath no hair, and in this weather might catch cold and die . . . Let him wear the cap, let him toll the bells; he shall be our new court-fool: and, when the world is old and dead, the thin wit shall find the angel's record of man's works and deeds, and write with a lipless grin on the innocent first page for a title, "Here begins Death's Jest-book."

An anatomist by training and pathologist by instinct, Beddoes subjected death and madness to the most minute clinical investigation before giving them, as it were, a clean bill of health. It is said that he was constitutionally unable to finish anything, but after several unsuccessful suicide attempts—the next-to-the-last cost him a leg—he was finally able to put an end to his life with curare. "I am food for *what I am good for*—worms," begins his suic note, in which he thoughtfully queathed fifty bottles of Moët champagne to a cousin "to drink health in." Even in this last ironic ture there is a hint of that arcane se of mummery that makes *Death's Book* such a lovely piece of abs theatre.

The madman as a symbol is a liv reproach to the skeptical, scient view of man and the universe, wh underlies everything that used to known as Progress, and which, ever the 1800's, was felt to be badly in n of reappraisal. The madman as me phor is also the one who opens the t door to that nether world where fict and reality have quite a different r tionship from the one we know fr the daily newspapers. And it is h far beneath the fantastic towers man's upper earth, that the artist n hope to reclaim his lost legacy dreams, myths, and mystic flights imagination.

This is a search in which he has vested an almost Messianic longing has gone on uninterruptedly for t hundred years, in the work of D stoevsky and Kafka and Joyce, Bau laire and Robbe-Grillet and Nabok Still the madman remains with us one of the great themes of art: inde all art is now mad, madder than ev quite mad! if regarded from the sta point of a "sane" observer, circa 18 Yet the artist has no choice but to c tinue the search. He knows, of cou that dealing with madness is play with Promethean fire. "It is not oth wise possible," says Goethe. "Whoe stands thus at the edge of the abyss to die or go mad; there is no merc

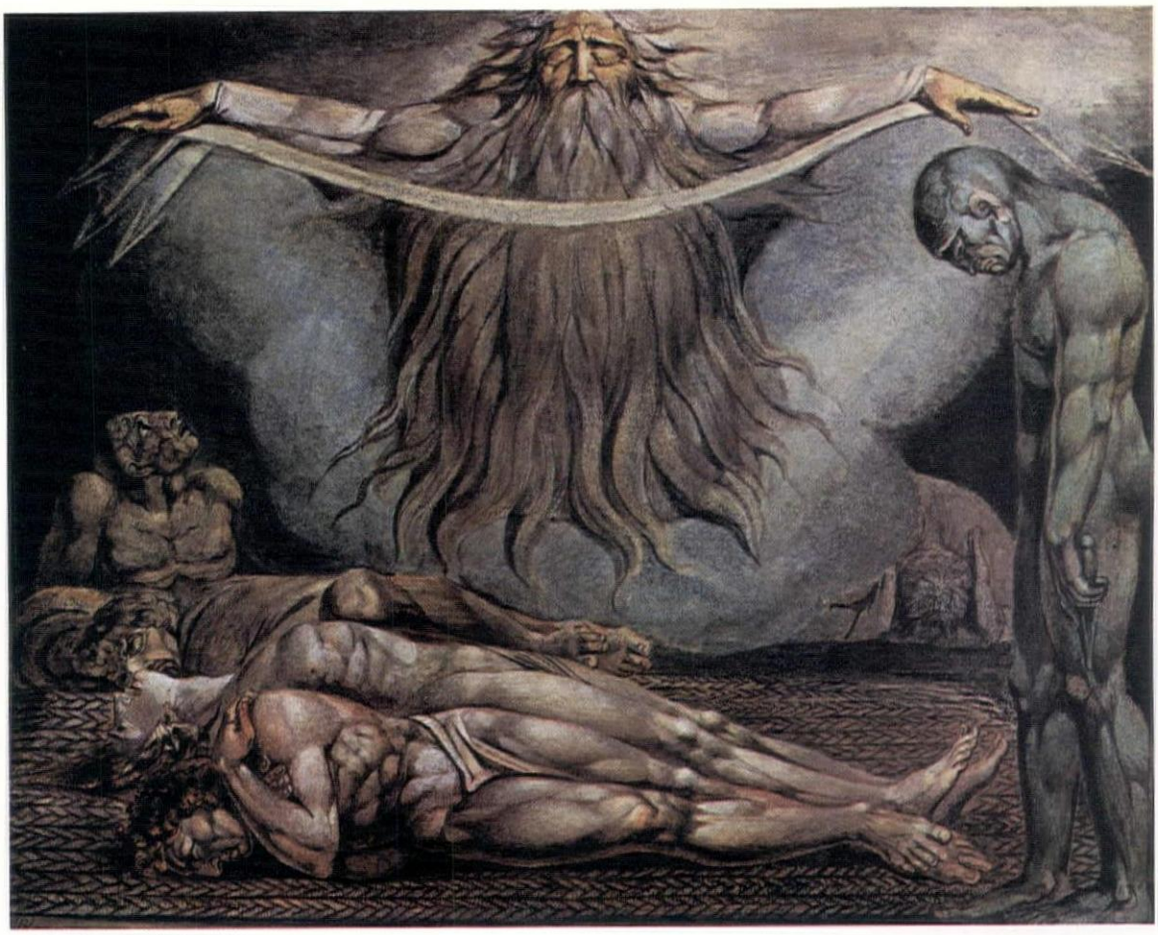
The Madhouse *by Goya, opposite, was scribed by the painter as a "corral of n men and two who are fighting, nude, their keeper beating them . . ." Were it for his black uniform, the keeper would indistinguishable from his charges. Goya stricken with temporary madness in 1 about two years before he did this paint*



THE MEADOWS MUSEUM, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, DALLAS

e Madhouse"

TATE GALLERY



"The House of Death"

William Blake: "From the Centre of His Own Cryst

FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, CAMBRIDGE



William Blake with the painter John Varley

If William Blake is among the fauna in the darker reaches of the roman forest, it is not as a verifiable psychotic but as a visionary. In T. S. Elio words, "Blake was naked and saw men naked, and from the centre of h own crystal." One of the most limpid of English poets, Blake was an equa explicit painter—except that his very simplicity becomes puzzling. His pai ings lack many of the conventional techniques of realistic art, but Blake w not a primitive and was quite capable of painting realistically—except th he did not care to. Nature, the great deity of Wordsworth, was to Blake delusive goddess. What he wanted to paint were his visions of God and t truth he found in his own imagination. He had no taste for worldly pursui *The House of Death*, above, is his idea of what this earthly life is all abo A disembodied figure of Death and another representing Despair preside ov a scene "Of gastly Spasm, or racking torture, qualmes/Of heart-sick Agon all feavorous kinds . . ." So runs the passage in *Paradise Lost* probably us by Blake as his text for this painting. He often painted from texts, as preache preach from them.

Born in 1757, Blake spent most of his life in London, earning what little could as a poet, painter, and engraver. When he was sixty, a group of you painters adopted him and cared for him during his last years. One of the John Linnell, made the pencil sketch on this page showing the aged Bla with another of these disciples, John Varley. During this period Blake pr duced a series of *Visionary Portraits* to show his friends the kinds of supe natural visitors he was receiving daily. Among them was the spectral fl whose likeness appears on the opposite page. The flea told Blake that all fle were inhabited by the souls of bloodthirsty humans. Blake died in 1827, sin ing on his deathbed of the heaven he saw before him.

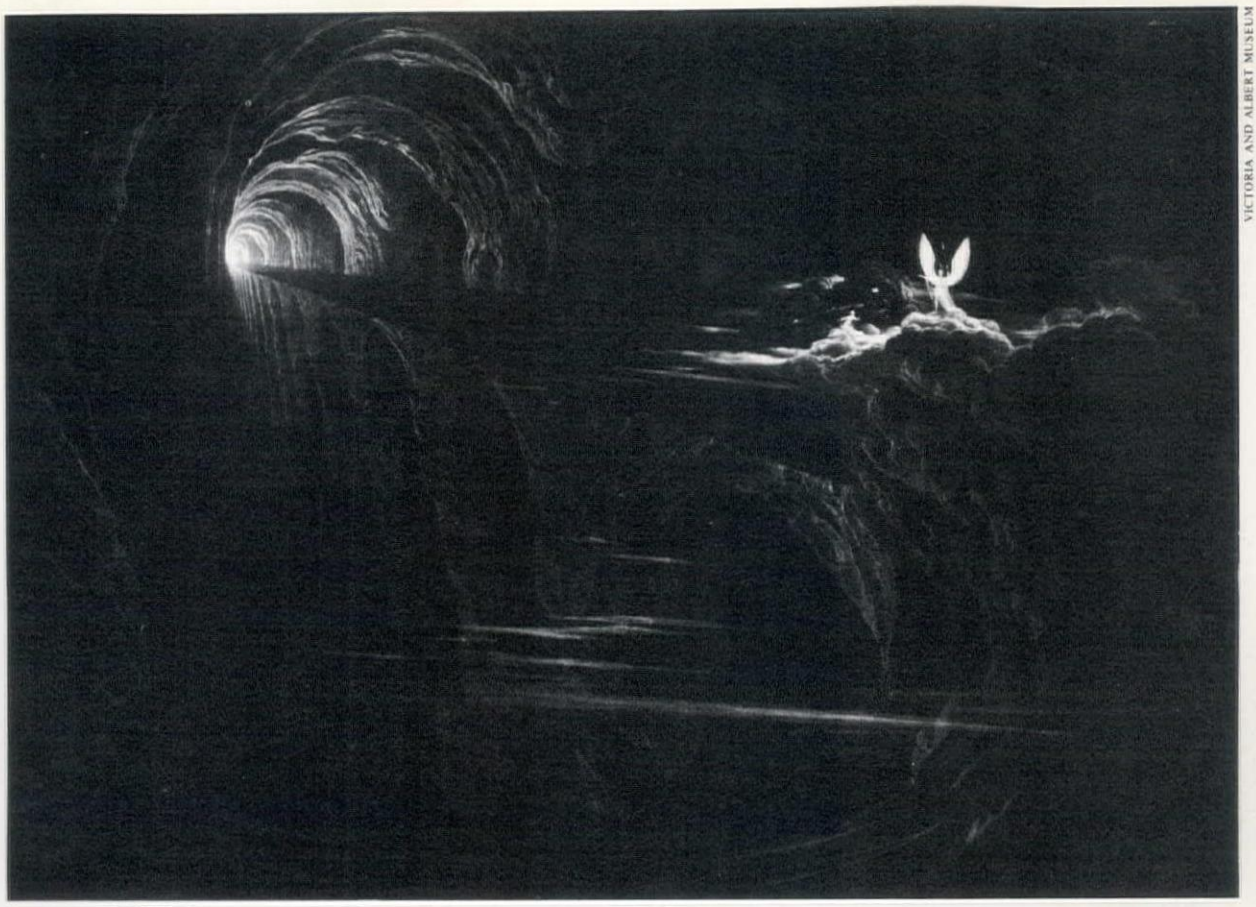


TATE GALLERY

Ghost of a Flea"



SOUTHAMPTON ART GALLERY, COURTESY OF THAMES AND HUDSON



VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

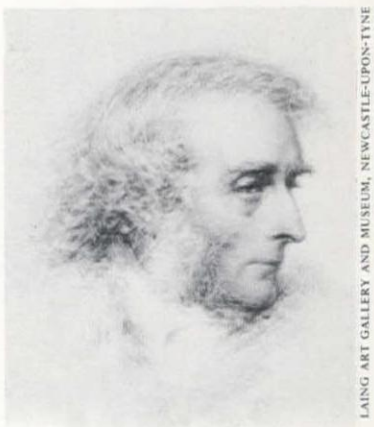
"Bridge of Chiros"

"A Great Soul Lapped in Majestic and Unearthly Dreams"

Such was the painter John Martin, at least in the opinion of the novelist Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton and of most of his contemporaries. "Mad Martin," as he was called (for no better reason than for being the brother of a pyromaniac) was one of the most lauded painters of the early nineteenth century. Like Blake, he was no realist, preferring instead the landscapes of imagination. *Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion*, a work of 1812, re-creates some immense and rocky isle of Martin's own dreams. In the foreground is "Sadak," who sets out to find the waters of forgetfulness. According to the legend, a jinni directs Sadak to his fearful destination at the edge of an abyss —just the spot for a good romantic shudder—then reappears, hurls him into the tides, and takes his leave. The *Bridge of Chiros*, engraved some fourteen years later, is another overwhelming landscape. This one is reminiscent of industrial England—a railroad bridge or a mine shaft might have been in Martin's imagination.

Martin thought the chief aim of the painter should be to astonish the viewer, by the sheer size of his canvas, if nothing else. He was a student of world history and believed in "catastrophism," the theory that the earth had taken its present form through a series of cataclysms. To the delight of his public, he re-created a number of these events on canvas. Princess Charlotte of England and Louis Philippe of France were among his warmest admirers.

Though Martin's reputation was never dampened by the waters of oblivion in his lifetime, it has been unfortunately drowned by them since. The handsome portrait of the artist seen at right was drawn by his son.



LAING ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

Portrait of John Martin

"Sadak in Search of the Waters of Oblivion"





BOTH: TATE GALLERY

The Lunacy of Richard Dadd



"The Child's Problem"

According to Sacheverell Sitwell, Richard Dadd was "the only good painter who worked through a lifetime of mental disease." *The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke*, of which a detail appears at left, is his masterpiece, or at least his surviving masterpiece, for Dadd lived in insane asylums nearly half a century and much of his work was lost or destroyed. The painting depicts a strange world amid the creeping vines: fallen hazel nuts and stems of grass give scale to the miniature landscape. It is populated by, among others, the king and queen of fairies (center, top), two buxom women with winged hats (left), an odd couple (center) costumed in the mode of the 1840's, and a cross-eyed gnome hunched distractedly before the "fairy feller," whose axe will never fall. It is all as inexplicable as the title.

Born in 1817, Richard Dadd early proved to have great artistic gifts, which his adoring father had the means to encourage. The family even moved to London to enroll the young man at the Royal Academy. He was just beginning to be well known and to receive important commissions when a hallucinatory psychosis overwhelmed him. In 1843, aged twenty-six, he stabbed his father to death. Pronounced a criminal lunatic, he was locked away for the rest of his life. Ordinarily a gentle man, Dadd attracted the sympathy of a physician who urged him to paint.

Among his surviving drawings is the one above, entitled *The Child's Problem*. In it, a crazed little boy is advancing upon his sleeping father, whose head is partially shrouded. In the background hangs an engraving, famous in its day, of a black slave begging for his freedom; there is also a classical nude and a picture of a ship in a gale. The drawing surely contains a clue, however mysterious, as to why Richard Dadd became a patricide.

'The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke"

"Principal Hobgoblin Painter to the Devil"

So said the critics of Henry Fuseli, and undoubtedly he was pleased. "I was born in February or March," he wrote, "it was a cursed cold month, as you may guess from my diminutive stature and crabbed disposition." His self-portrait, below, is crabbedness incarnate—beaky nose, bony fingers, bushy brows. He was known, even to friends, as "the terrible Fuseli," for he lived in perpetual anger. The rumor went around that he consumed a plate of raw meat each night at bedtime in order to make his dreams the more fearsome. Fuseli, however, was no lunatic, and his eccentric behavior had an element of showmanship about it. He had many devotees, among them William Blake, who praised his friend in a sardonic bit of doggerel:

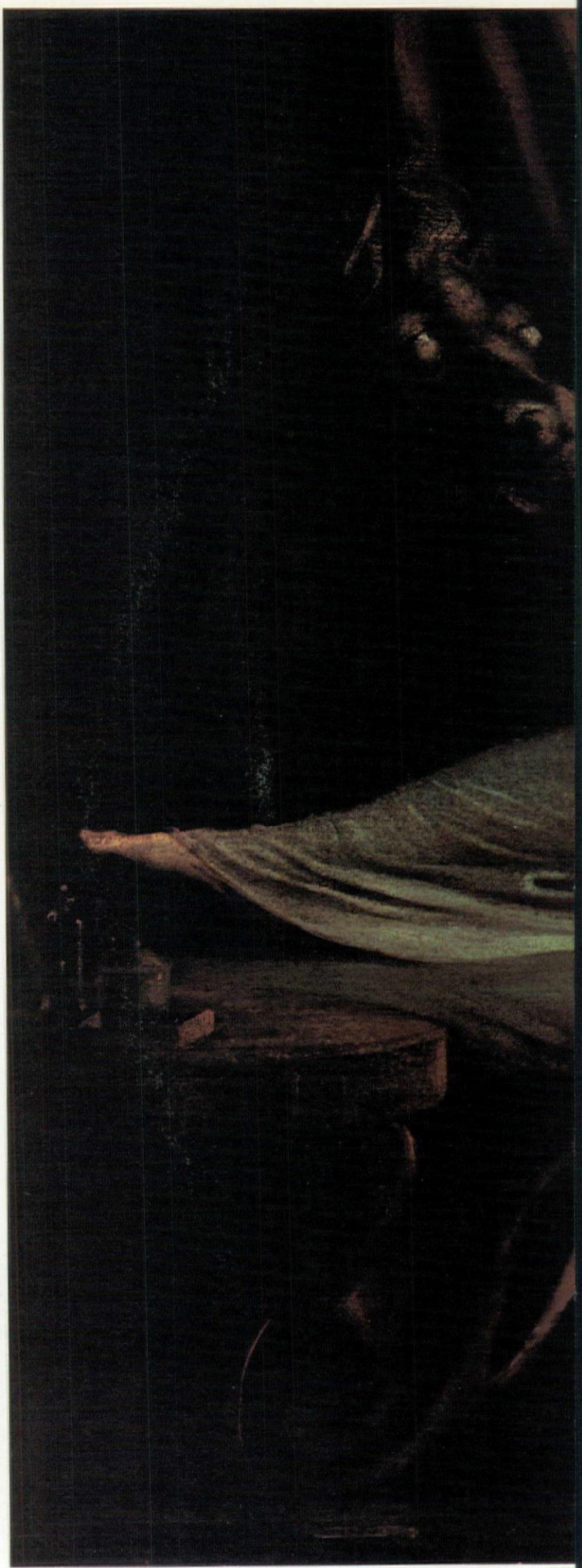
> The only Man that e'er I knew
> Who did not make me almost spew
> Was Fuseli: he was both Turk & Jew—
> And so, dear Christian Friends, how do you do?

Fuseli shared and in large part instigated the taste for the macabre that characterized his age. *The Nightmare*, right, was painted in 1781 and made him internationally famous. A hundred years hence, an engraving of this frightful scene was to be found in the office of Sigmund Freud, who greatly admired it. The term "nightmare" originally meant a dream of being suffocated or crushed, and Fuseli interprets this literally: a fiend is squatting on the chest of his curvaceous victim, while his horse peers wildly through the bed curtains. The physiologist Erasmus Darwin also liked the painting, so much so that he paid tribute to it in verse:

> So on his Nightmare, through the evening fog,
> Flits the squab Fiend o'er fen, and lake, and bog;
> Seeks some love-Wilder'd Maid with sleep oppress'd,
> Alights, and, grinning, sets upon her breast.



Self-portrait by Henry Fuseli



"The Nightmare"

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS, GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. BERT L. SMOKLER AND MRS. LAWRENCE A. FLEISCHMAN

THE ROAD TO UR

It wasn't fire or sword that
brought down
the most ancient of civilizations.
It was the silting
and salting of the fertile land
—man's first,
unheeded lesson in ecology

By FRANKLIN RUSSELL

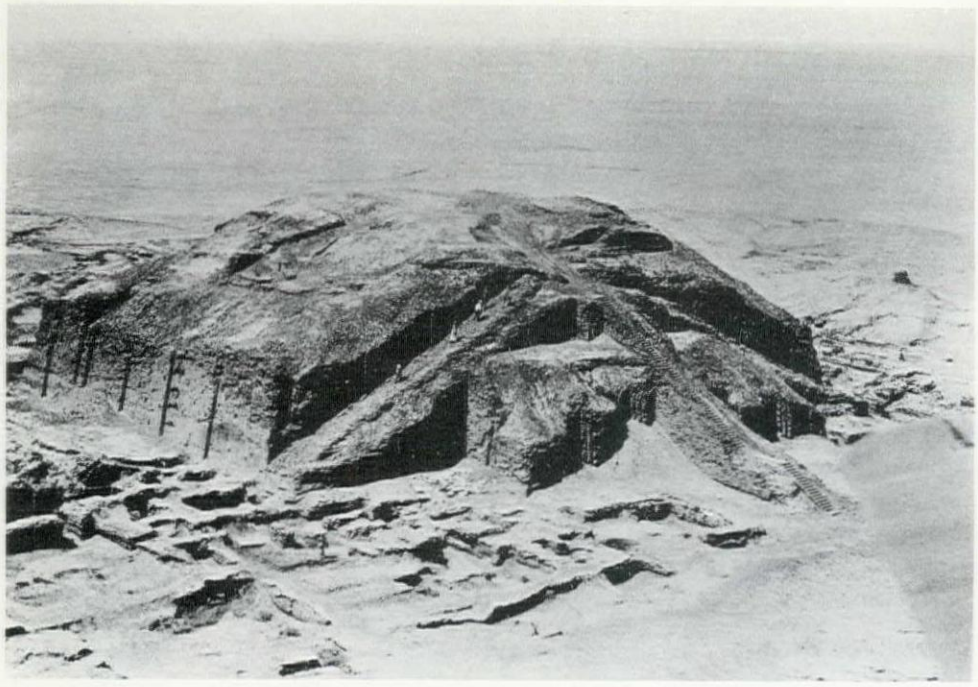


FRANK SCHERSCHEL

In a wasteland of marsh and sun-baked mud a few miles from the Euphrates lie the ruins and rubble of Ur, chief city of ancient Sumer. Five thousand years ago rich fields of wheat and barley made this landscape green.



SIR LEONARD WOOLLEY, *Ur Excavations*, VOL. 5; DRAWING OPPOSITE SAME



HOUSE FOR A GOD

The Ziggurat of the Moon God, a ste tower of brick surmounted by a temple, dominated the collective life of Ur, whic volved around the worship of the god o temple. At left is the ziggurat as it lo after Sir Leonard Woolley excavated the 1930's. Probably consisting at fir three platforms, the ziggurat was bui Ur-Nammu, a king of Ur who made hi ruler of all Sumer in 2125 B.C. *The stele ment opposite commemorates Ur-Nam act of piety: the top portion shows pouring a libation for a seated god; i lower portion he carries construction*

The sun spills across the Euphrates at dawn and hits the great ziggurat, a brick mountain rising from an ocean of dust. Approaching it from the east, I feel the sun's heat burning my back at the same instant that the ziggurat flames red in the sunlight. The moment is eerie, unearthly, and it confounds any attempt I might make to describe it.

This is the ziggurat of Ur-Nammu, one of the last of the Sumerian kings who ruled in southern Mesopotamia, now modern Iraq. Standing on top of the ziggurat, a kind of stepped tower, or pyramid, which was the distinctive Sumerian contribution to architecture, it is possible to look down on the ruins of Ur, a five-thousand-year-old city tumbled into a disorder of sun-dried bricks.

The place has always had a special fascination for me because here is compressed the essence of man as he refined the most sublime invention on earth, civilization itself. Here, where the sun at six thirty this morning is hot enough to scorch the skin on my forearms, the Sumerians transformed man's image of himself and started the whole machinery of urban civilization forward on its endlessly enigmatic journey.

Here, men first challenged nature with a boldness and success matched in human history only by the Americans some five millenniums later. Here was born the idea of creating a completely new geography in which man was indisputably the master of his environment, bending it to his will. Like our own, the Sumerians' need for material things was prodigious, and they made much more sophisticated use of techniques and tools invented several millenniums before.

Here, the wheel first rolled upon a gridwork of city streets and cuneiform writing was first inscribed on clay. The Sumerians were not merely master architects and superb hydraulic engineers, they were also the inventors of the military phalanx, the B–52 of its day, a devastating and seemingly omnipotent weapon. From out of their imaginations came deep-sea merchantmen, formalized schools, epic poetry, the arch, the city, traffic jams, pollution, and the world's first great crisis in ecology. It was here, not in Egypt, or Babylon, or Greece, or Rome, that men first codified rational laws to govern human behavior. They invented democracy, crude but recognizable, and the concept of empire, brutal and familiar.

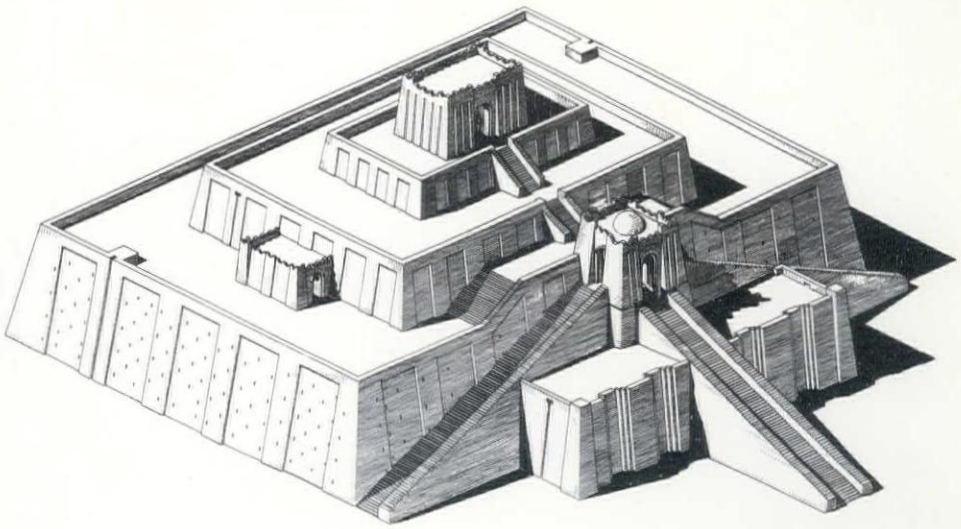
Now, all around me there is a silence you find only in deserts and high mountains. The sun bakes the skin and air shakes. The sky is clear and blue, dropping to a distant hor that shows the mounds of other cities. At the foot of Ur-Nam monument, my Bedouin guide po to cuneiform marks on a crum brick wall. "Ibrahim," he says. house here."

Perhaps Abraham *did* live thirty-seven hundred years ago, perhaps Ur *was* a bustling port ships moored not a hundred feet f where I stand. Perhaps this same *did* shine on the city's roofs and on majestic march of irrigation ca But this kind of imagining is easier library or a lecture hall, where dreadful reality of the place does intrude. The journey men made reach this place cannot be rend sensible merely by looking at it a expression of a civilization's rise fall. One must look to the earth it which supported man here, and t groaning, let him drop.

To reach Ur by a road that meaning for us today, it is necessar leave the ruined city and move n and east along an uncertain path ne fifty thousand years old. We are lowing the route of civilization bac its source. Instead of measuring m ments and chronicling the deeds



A stele honoring the ziggurat's builder



The ziggurat of Ur as it probably looked about 2000 B.C.

ırriors, princes, gods, and kings, it akes more sense to look for those iet events of natural history that ok place unnoticed by most histo-ıns: how the grass grew, how the ops flourished, how the water flowed d the silt settled.

The facts are unreliable, the dates du-ous, the order of events uncertain; ıt as I move eastward the landscape comes more stimulating than the atureless plains of the Euphrates and e Tigris. I move along the banks of e Diyala, a tributary of the Tigris. or more than five thousand years life-ving water has been taken from this ver for crops, first by the shadowy en of prehistory, then by Sumerians, abylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Par-ians, Mongols, Neo-Persians, Turks, d Arabs.

The river is a roadway leading to the agros Mountains, passing through attered fields of rice, barley, and neat, citrus orchards, and rows of te palms, then rising into treeless, lling hills of grass. Flocks of sheep d cattle and goats graze on all sides. earchus, Alexander's lieutenant, trav-ed here more than twenty-two hun-ed years ago, and it impressed him as place of "clear rivers and lakes, undant rain and forests full of wild imals."

The forests and wild animals are harder to find today, but the grasses are the same and so are the abounding wild grains and fruits. This is a natural landscape for the nomadic hunter, the shepherd, the grain-and-fruit gatherer, the simple farmer. The hills roll on for miles as the altitude increases toward its eventual peak of more than fourteen thousand feet in the still-distant Zagros Mountains. Deep, narrow valleys run into the Diyala, and defiles and precipices increase as the air chills with height. In these valleys, I know, early hunters found protection from winter weather, and it is not hard to visualize their environment.

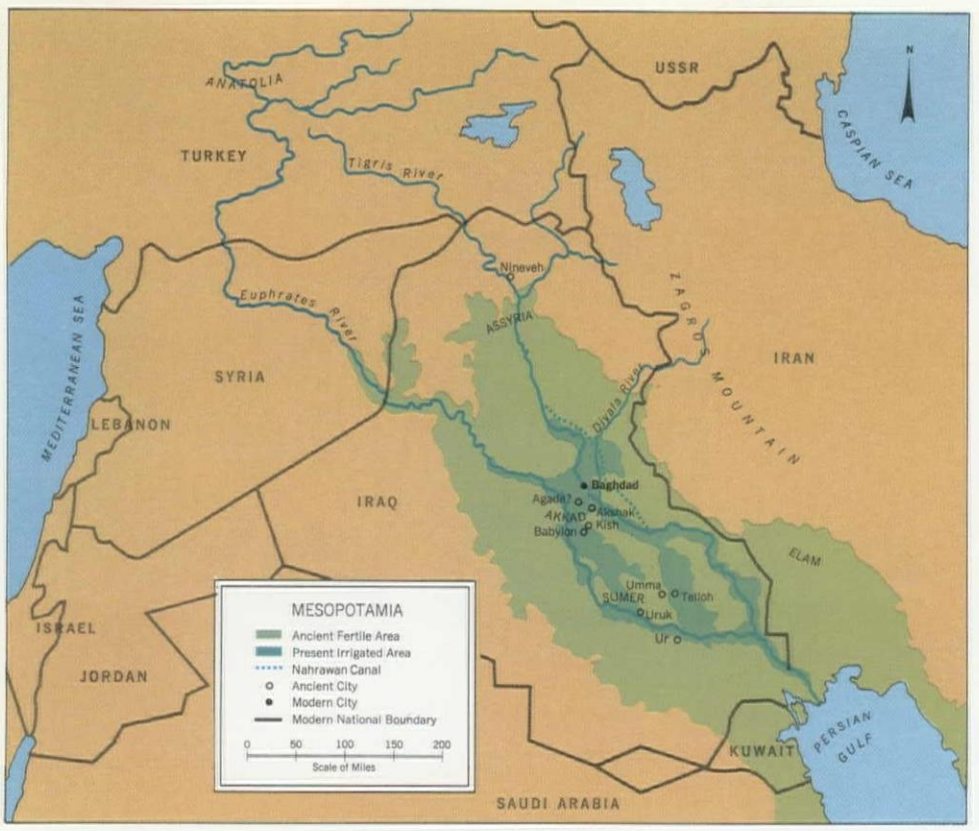
The ancient landscape is African in its sweep and scope, and its lions and leopards, cheetahs and hunting dogs, hyenas and jackals, make the resemblance more than superficial. But the true significance is that there are so many domesticable animals here—wild sheep, goats, pigs, asses—grazing among so many plants that yield edible grains—barley, wheat, oats. The steppes, foothills, uplands, and mountains are a kind of geographic tinderbox inviting the nomadic hunter to strike a spark.

From November to March the mountains gleam with snow and the steppe country provides good grazing. As the heat and drought of summer grow unbearable on the plains and begin to steal into the hills, the animals and hunters move higher, toward the cooler mountain country where the grazing remains good. It does not need a lifetime of living here to understand the principles of rotational grazing, or to guess at the benefits to be gained from taming the wild animals.

But needed first are men who can change themselves, and a leisurely thirty thousand years or so pass while they take their first hesitant steps toward the plains. They barter natural asphalt mined in the tar pits of the northeastern steppes with men who live in the mountains of Turkey and use the asphalt to fit handles to their flint tools and weapons. In return, the traders get obsidian, from which they fashion their own tools and weapons. Trading increases the flow of ideas among men and helps power the movement toward a domesticated man.

Thirty-odd thousand years is long enough to change all previous agreements the men have made with their world. They tame the sheep, goats, and pigs. They develop and refine techniques of grazing. They breed selectively to improve their animals. They change the wild sheep's fur into wool

FRANCIS AND SHAW



Sumerian civilization arose in southern Mesopotamia before 3000 B.C. As the Sumerian soil was exhausted, the centers of power shifted northward toward the areas that were still fertile.

and transform the pig from a lean, fast runner into a slow, fat waddler. They harvest wild fruits and grains, barter them for meat or tool materials, and watch for mutations in the wild plants that will give them more and bigger seeds.

When these barley seeds develop, domesticated to produce six rows of seed instead of the two that the wild grain produces, they eventually reach the hot plains flanking the Diyala and are watered by bucket. The dusty earth reveals itself as incredibly fertile. From a single seed, the harvester gets a two-hundredfold increase.

But hill farmers, shepherds, nomads, and traders are scarcely the kind to build awesome monuments to gods in hellish deserts. It is easy to water a garden plot, another thing to irrigate a farm. The amount of land that can be irrigated is limited both by muscle and by ambition. Men settle along the Diyala and the Tigris, and along the Euphrates, where the riverbanks are low. They suffer in the heat of the plains while the other men roam or work in the cooler uplands.

Sometime after 6000 B.C. the plains-men consolidate themselves into larger, better organized communities, with some of their kind finding a haven at the southern end of the plains, in the hottest of all country, near and among the fever-ridden marshes of the Tigris-Euphrates delta. The fertility of the river-borne silt is phenomenal, and man intensifies his farming. He co-operates with scores, then hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of his fellows and begins to build irrigation systems with channels quite far from the water source and reservoirs to hold flood waters until they are released into the fields weeks later.

Little is known about these earliest farmers of the Tigris-Euphrates delta. At first they lack metal, and a system of writing, and most of the equipment necessary to build a great civilization. They find that their irrigation is no open-ended contract for success. The farther the water is moved from its source, the more difficult it becomes to maintain the dikes, ditches, and channels needed to carry it. There are proliferating problems of riparian rights, of land law and other social controls.

Added to these are the dangers of flo
ing, which can wreck everything,
attacks of marauding nomads, who
seize the harvest, and pestilence, w
can make maintenance of the sys
impossible.

The irrigation people hold a gol
key to the future of man, but it is h
to bring them truly to life, imposs
to measure their success. They leave
broken shards of their distinctive p
tery in the silty earth, along with
remains of thousands of sickles m
of sun-baked clay. But their po
grows continuously, and they hav
sense of the monumental long bef
they can speak to us in writing.
thousand of them can work toget
for five years to build a massive t
ple, yet they seem to find no spe
need for a king unless there is a
emergency or some other danger,
they govern themselves through co
cils of free men.

By 3500 B.C. the southern plains
dominated by the Sumerians, a sh
stocky, black-headed race of pec
whose origins are obscure ("We cc
from where the sun rises"). If they
not the product of the environm
they are immigrants who understa
how to increase its exploitation to
maximum. They grow wheat and bar
in equal proportions. They extend i
gation systems, survive crippling floo
and laboriously build civilization i
loosely connected comity of city-sta

The genius of Sumer is in its cit
but its powerhouse remains an ecol
ical one, that extraordinary link to
mutated grain, to the dormant fer
soil, to the road begun in the foot
country of the Zagros Mountains. T
farmer is the silent hero of the gr
civilization growing above him.
cultivates his fields with meticul
care, using mallets to break up its clo
leveling it as flat as a table, coaxi
bumper crops with three, four, or f
floodings of irrigation water.

As the centuries roll on, the farm
learns that fertility is diminished wh
land is cropped without fertilizer.
rests his fields and grazes them, b

n this does not restore the fertility npletely. He knows, however, that en the river floods, his irrigation als carry silt as well as water, and silt is spread across the depleted ds. "Behold," the farmer says, "the ndation has come and the land is tored."

As a former farmer myself, I can tch his work with admiration, and h some compassion. When he floods flat fields, evaporation begins immetely, causing the calcium and magium in the water to precipitate as ts. The soil contains particles of clay, n loose from mountain origins along h topsoil silt. These particles attract dium ions, causing them to break wn into even smaller particles. The mer understands that when he overods, he sours his fields. But he does t understand the grand process, conuing over hundreds of years, in ich the gradual erection of a near-impervious barrier prevents the soil m absorbing water, and so increases e rate of evaporation and the deposin of more salts. The road to Urammu's ziggurat, therefore, is a urney through the earth itself. The ifice of civilization, in these terms, is s subject to the king's will than it is the health of the earthworm.

By this time, I have moved out of the othills of the Zagros and am again ading south across the alluvial plains ward Ur. To reach this point of unrstanding, I have moved four huned miles in distance and some fortyree thousand years in time from the l country where the road to the zigrat begins.

Now, I pause at the site of Telloh, e of the cities in the ancient Sumern state of Lagash, about fifty miles rth of Ur. Here, it is possible to take closer look at the kind of urban mirle erected on this foundation of the il. Here, again, is the same deadliness landscape, seen now from the ruins the great temple of Ningirsu, the d of Telloh. Although his temple is w nothing more than a fifty-foot ound of rubble, it is a symbolic point from which to view the Sumerian state at its zenith. When the temple was built in the third millennium B.C., the people of Lagash had been farming their land for a thousand years. Their city of Telloh sprawls for more than two miles along the banks of a great waterway that is visible now as an empty declivity in the dust.

The idea of the state, founded on phenomenal soil fertility and abundant water supplies, is fought to a resolution in Lagash. It is a bastion against hill barbarians, an incubator of high culture, imperialism, and exploitation. It covers about eighteen hundred square miles and holds about two hundred and fifty thousand people. The soil is indeed fertile. Lagash has a population density equivalent to about five billion people in the United States.

Every changeless facet of civilized society is expressed here. The center city of Telloh covers about four square miles, and trudging through the dust and sand, I imagine its ancient appearance. Outside the walls there is a hodgepodge of tumble-down buildings, reed hovels, even burrows in the ground. "The poor are always with us," the Sumerians are fond of saying. Blind beggars importune on all sides as the city's walls loom up. Inside the gates, the city is chaotic, unplanned, cramped—a mixture of narrow streets and walkways hardly wide enough for a donkey. The houses are tiny and the press and noise of people is daunting.

It is the reality of the city that dominates the view of the Sumerian civilization. The eighteen hundred square miles of cropland do not figure in the history books. Instead, there appears a disciplined, structured society dominated by the god, the king, the priests, and the patricians. But it is an oddly appealing society. Slaves buy their freedom, fight court cases, marry. Children argue with teachers. Ombudsmen cut down on the clutter of trivial civil court cases.



This copper figurine shows an early chariot drawn by four onagers.

These people admire wealth, possessions, good food, yet their proverbs scorn this crass appreciation of the good life. Possessions, they say, are sparrows in flight with no place to land. Money guarantees nothing. Gold and food may give happiness, but a man with neither is more likely to have peace of mind. They are contemptuous of men who build like lords but then are forced to live like slaves. Abstinence, even poverty, they insist, can create contentment. They enjoin you to keep your mouth shut when in doubt. Don't cross your bridges until you come to them. Don't fantasize. Remember that love builds and hate destroys. And don't forget that a sweet word is everybody's friend.

The contradictions between the adages glorifying the simple life and the realities of abundant living are richly evident here. Through the narrow window of a one-story streetside house a wealthy family can be seen drinking from silver goblets shaped by an artist with an exquisite sense of line. A palace musician plays his lyre, an ornate, multistringed instrument as big as a cello and inlaid with carnelian and lapis lazuli. Regal-looking women walk through shaded courtyards wearing headdresses made of meticulously delicate beaten-gold leaves, their jewelry tinkling on their necks and wrists and ankles.

This is the surface veneer dominating the history. But already, by this time, there are warnings of ecological trouble. As a result of about a thousand years of irrigation, of millions of tons of water seeping down into the subterranean water table, the salt content of the underground waters has in-

creased steadily. Wells that had once sustained entire villages are now undrinkable. Occasionally, when irrigation is especially intensive, or when there are long rains and floods, the water table rises until it reaches the roots of the crops and kills them.

Yet the civilization flourishes. It thrives despite the fact that in the previous thousand years the wheat crop has gradually diminished to only about a sixth of its former abundance. Wheat is intolerant of saline soil, and barley, which is less intolerant, replaces it wherever possible. But by 2500 B.C. yields of many crops are declining. Drainage ditches become clogged with rotting vegetation and provide a shelter for breeding mosquitoes, which multiply in great numbers and spread malaria among the farmers, weakening them so that they are less able to maintain the ditches. The water tables rise ominously, salinity becomes stronger, and the supply of food dwindles even further. In the crowded cities, bacteria thrive on the mix of human debris.

The civilization can survive only if the land remains rich, or if its productivity can be increased, or if the territory under cultivation can be extended. A king of Lagash, Eannatum, finds himself caught between the twin priorities of trying to conserve his irrigation supplies, partially under the control of a northern city-state, Umma, and of fighting expansionist wars. He brings the city-state of Uruk, a near-western neighbor, under his rule. He marches south on Ur and conquers it. He moves east and subjugates the Elamites, a foothill people with pretensions to civilization.

But he needs more cultivated land, with his crop yields declining and his demands rising. He turns his mass of workers to the construction of a great canal. In the middle of this project, the Elamites come down from the hills and attack him. He drives them off and returns to canal work, but before long he must fight two northern city-states, Kish and Akshak, which combine to invade his country. He beats them off, too, only to be hit by the Elamites once more. He smashes them, but is then forced to turn and fight the northerners again. He wins this last battle, but he cannot now finish his canal before his death. His son Entemena completes it and links it up with the Tigris. Because his canal network now joins the Tigris and the Euphrates, he acquires the awesome ability to swell or diminish the flow of either river at will.

The productivity of the soil has provided wealth, but it is an ambiguous blessing to any people lucky enough to possess it. The people of Lagash find themselves forced to pay for both expensive wars and massive public-works programs. There are taxes on divorce, on trade, on production, on income, on death. The penalties for late payment of taxes become more savage, and this is only a step from the outright seizure of livestock, of produce, even of a man's personal belongings. At the same time, war, or its threat, provides an excuse for authoritarian controls, including the draft, travel restrictions, and the erosion of civil liberties.

This repression leads logically to



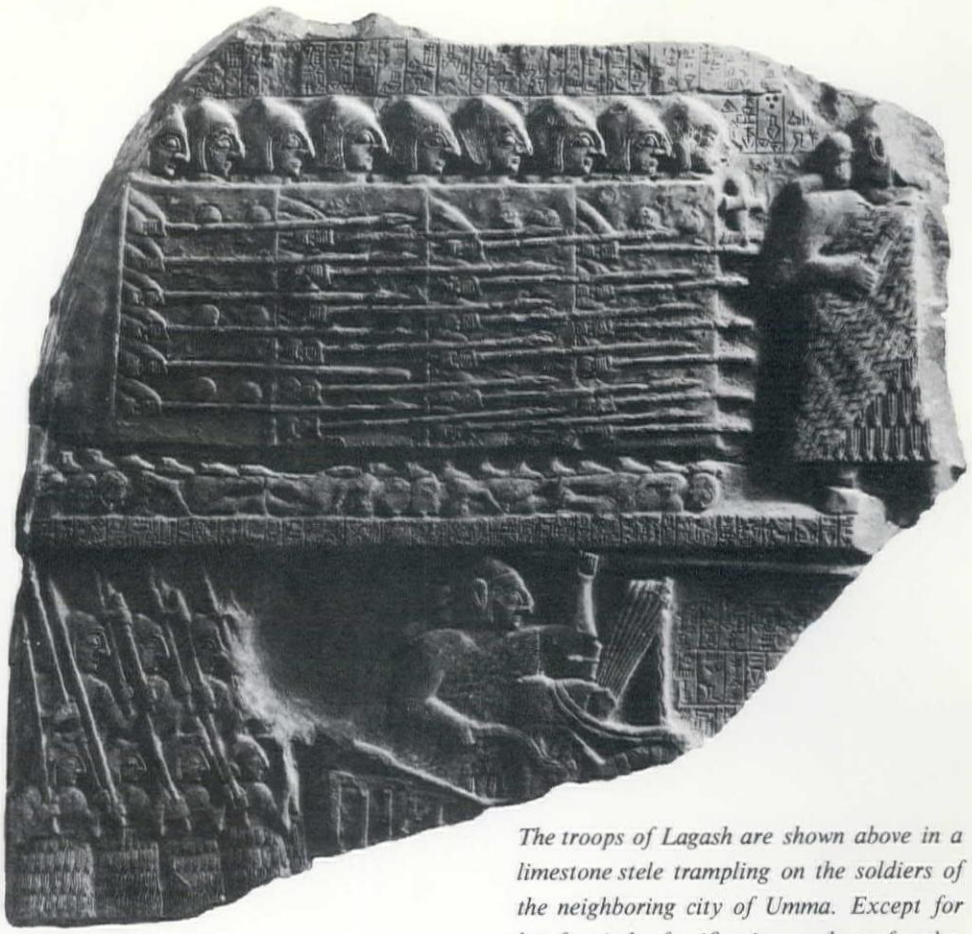
A stone statue of Gudea, governor of the state of Lagash, depicts him as a grave and prayerful man: the ideal Sumerian ruler.

corruption, to periods of reform corruption again, and thence to v seems a rational solution of the p lem: a coalition, an empire of states. A king of Uruk, Lugalzag subjugates all of Sumer. He says will bring peace. He will stop the less boundary disputes, the feuds irrigation rights. His chroniclers that all Sumer rejoices under his r

But Lugalzaggisi is merely an spiration to a man with a better i Sargon, a Semite, not only se united Sumer, but extends his em from the Persian Gulf to the Medi ranean, and his ships reach India Africa. He builds the most glitte city on earth, Agade, in the Akkad gion, and 5,400 other human be sit down to eat with him each day. beneath his feet the salt builds up the soil and there is a melancholy cline in crop yields.

In Entemena's time, about 2400 B the fields were yielding 2,600 liters barley per hectare. But the power the soil is declining so rapidly that barian conquest, and the rise of Nammu and his creation of a c hundred-year renaissance, are a climactic. Ur-Nammu builds his m velous ziggurat, but now, in 2100 B his fields are yielding only 1,460 li of barley per hectare. By 1750 Sumer is finished. Babylon, exploit northern land, becomes pre-emine

It would be heartening to record t the Babylonians learn something fr Sumer, but they do not. Their po becomes prodigious. Herodotus is tonished by the hundredfold yields their vast farmlands and by the mensity of their public works, but salt moves in just the same, and the cline of the farmlands is a mamm disaster from 1300 to 900 B.C. locus of the civilization moves e farther north, to Assyria. Amazing the term of the good earth's fer ity is not over. From about 150 B the Parthians are at work along the yala again, and they create a prosp ous civilization that continues un the Persians until A.D. 600.



The troops of Lagash are shown above in a limestone stele trampling on the soldiers of the neighboring city of Umma. Except for brief periods of unification, such warfare between Mesopotamian city-states was endemic.

ı this period, the mighty Nahrawan
ıal is built, an artificial river nearly
hundred miles long, dug in a great
icircle to flank the course of the
ris, to cross the desert, to bridge
er rivers, until it finally rejoins the
ris one hundred miles south of
hdad. This fantastic engineering
ject contributes to the success of
Persian empire, but its life is even
rter than that of the salted southern
ds. In five hundred years of cultiva-
ı of the Diyala region, the deposit
irrigation silt raises the level of
mlands more than three feet, and
irrigation engineers find it harder
l harder to get the grade necessary
keep the water flowing.

By 1100 the water can only reach
ds through branch canals flanking
main canal, and gradually towns
l cities shrink and disappear. By
time the Abbasside caliphate is
aring its end, the silting of the sys-
n is a disaster. When a new Mongol
asion under Hulagu Khan, grand-
ı of Genghis, captures Baghdad in
58 and kills the last Abbasside caliph,
ıch of the great farmland of the
yala is again desert.

And this is the way the land is left silted, salted, desolate. In the south, average Iraqi gardener, working vegetable plot on the banks of the phrates, raises a meager yield, not e-twentieth of that of his Sumerian edecessors. The modern farmer till- a field near the ruins of Babylon ings forth a crop that would make erodotus laugh. The Diyala might ld again, but while ancient Persians uld build a two-hundred-mile-long nal, a similar effort would bankrupt ıq, a country depleted by more than e thousand years of exploitation.

But land *can* be desalinated, and the ood and Agriculture Organization the United Nations has brought ck into production some ancient, linated farmland in parts of Paki- an's Indus valley, home of another ng-dead civilization. FAO experts, orking for some years in the Meso-potamian plain, have found about 90 per cent of the arable land to be affected by salt or waterlogging. They have discovered the modern Iraqi farmers to be so far removed from the irrigation techniques of the past that they will have to be trained to work any reclaimed land. And reclamation is a tedious, expensive, and lengthy business of developing pilot areas, of leveling great sections of the plain, of perfecting drainage systems, and of continuing research. The work is under way, but the Iraqi farmer remains a miserable heir to the defeated land.

It is now late afternoon in the desert, and the mounds of old ruins cast squat, ugly shadows. There is just time for me to reach Ur before evening. Ur-Nammu's ziggurat looks even more unlikely, set in its empty landscape with a reddening sky behind it. At the top of the ziggurat again, I watch the sun dropping into the clean red line of the Arabian desert. A jackal appears out of a pool of shadow below.

Lugalzaggisi uttered a prayer when he saw his great empire knit together and working, and the words come to me now: "May the lands lie peacefully in the meadows; may all mankind thrive like plants and herbs; may the sheepfolds . . . increase; the good fortune which has been decreed for me, may it never alter; unto eternity may I be the foremost shepherd . . ."

The dream of eternity is itself eternal and does not change from generation to generation. It is seen most clearly among those who strive hardest for power, for perfection, for improvement. Ur-Nammu earns eternal fame with his mighty monument, but the landscape is reproachful. I leave the ziggurat; the sun disappears. Fine phantoms of dust scamper through the broken bricks of Ur.

As a student of man—and other species—in relation to nature, Franklin Russell has written for HORIZON *about birds on an island off Newfoundland (Summer, 1965) and about the pioneer ecologist George Perkins Marsh (Summer, 1968).*

ILLUSTRATIONS CONTINUED OVERLEAF



ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO; RIGHT: BRITISH MUSEUM—HIRMER

THE BURDEN OF THE GODS



The Sumerians stood in awe of their gods, whom they conceived as dwelling in the forces of nature—which might capriciously destroy men—as well as in man-made temples and figurines—where they might be cajoled into acting as humanity's protectors. The group of statues at left, found together in the ruins of a temple, are believed to represent a god and goddess (the tallest pair) in confrontation with human worshipers. The god of each city was looked upon as its owner, so that the Sumerian was a tenant as well as a servant of the divinity—"burdened with the toil of the gods that they may freely breathe." In return for human labor, the god was supposed to ward off malign events. Like the poorest fisherman, the city's king was regarded as a servant of the gods. The figurine pictured above shows the great ruler Ur-Nammu as a humble basket carrier.

A PRECARIOUS PROSPERITY



An offering of wheat

BRITISH MUSEUM; BELOW OPPOSITE: LOUVRE—TEL VIGNEAU; BELOW: ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The Sumerians clearly understood that their civilization rested on the fruits of the earth. In the inlay panel from Ur above (the blue stone is lapis lazuli) the pleasures of peaceful life—feasting, drinking, listening to music—are sustained by a procession of abundance: men bearing fish from the river, carrying bales of grain, tending woolly sheep, driving asses and oxen. Yet the Sumerians knew, too, that abundance was a gift the gods could snatch away. And in a sense that is what they did. By 2000 B.C. barley yields had become meager in Sumer, and wheat, once used on Sumerian seals as an indication of prosperity, as on the seal shown on the opposite page, had almost ceased to grow in the saline, worn-out soil.



A farmer astride his ox

IRAQ MUSEUM, COURTESY OF THAMES AND HUDSON



Golden helmet in the form of a wig

THE GOLD OF UR

In 1922 Woolley discovered at Ur one the Sumerians' most spectacular treasu troves. There, under a rubble heap, sixteen royal tombs, built at the base deep pits. In each pit were neat rows bodies; one held the remains of six eight women—court musicians with th instruments, among which was the bul head harp shown opposite. Probably women accompanied their ruler to the to and then took their own lives with pois The objects on this page—the golden h met, the onager, the goat peering from a g ed tree—all come from Ur, that great repo tory of early Sumerian wealth and artis By Ur-Nammu's day, the wasteful pract of human sacrifice had been abandon



An onager atop a harness ring

A goat in a gilded tree





BRITISH MUSEUM

The Flood

Where did all the water go? Was the ark big enough? For centuries learned men debated these questions—until Agassiz and Darwin pulled the plug

: central panels of Michelangelo's ing of the Sistine Chapel begin— ou will no doubt remember—with l separating the Light from the kness; they end—as you may per- s have forgotten—with a drunken man being put to bed. Yet it is te certain that Michelangelo in- ded no anticlimax. For the old man Noah, survivor of the Flood and ond father of mankind.

Ve are all, as the legend has it, sons Noah, as we are of Adam, and the is our lifeline, "a Ship," as Thomas net wrote in his *Sacred Theory of Earth* in 1684, "whose Cargo was less than a whole World; that ried the fortune and hopes of all terity, and if this had perish'd, the th, for any thing we know, had been hing but a Desert, a great ruine, a d heap of Rubbish, from the Deluge he Conflagration. But Death and l, the Grave, and Destruction have ir bounds."

Death and hell, the grave, and de- ıction have their bounds: this, for re than two millenniums, was the tral theological meaning of the od, for even the end of the world not annihilate all things, but will ald the Judgment. Mankind was saved physically in the person of Noah, as Christians believe it was later saved metaphysically in the person of Christ; "and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

The story of Noah is a rich one, fertile in symbolic motifs. The Fall gave symbolic significance to the tree and the serpent, to fig leaves and feminine wiles; the Flood, by contrast, gives us symbols of peace and reconciliation, the ark and the dove, the olive branch and the rainbow. Noah became not only the first drunken old sailor but also the first farmer, for the other half of the Noah story seems to contain a reference to the Neolithic revolution, the transition from an economy of flocks and herds and hunting to the cultivation of the soil. Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were taken as the ancestors, respectively, of the populations of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The story is therefore a composite one, but it is the ark and the Flood that every child remembers. And rightly so, for it is a story that has held a profound significance for mankind for longer, probably, than any other in the world's history. It expressed the anxieties of the most ancient literate people of whom we have any record, the Sumerians of the third millennium B.C., and it was still a matter of deep anxiety, though in a more indirect fashion, for erudite geologists in the reign of Queen Victoria. Compared with Noah and his wife, Adam himself is relatively modern, Oedipus a parvenu, and King Arthur practically the boy next door.

Just how ancient the story is was first appreciated a century ago, when, at a meeting of Biblical archaeologists in December, 1872, a young assistant at the British Museum named George Smith announced that among the Assyrian tablets being deciphered at the museum he had discovered an account of the Flood. He was referring to the epic of Gilgamesh, which is at least fifteen hundred years older than Homer, and which contains the story of Utnapishtim and his wife, who became the sole survivors of a universal deluge by building a boat. Stories of this kind are not uncommon in mythology, but in Gilgamesh the similarity to Noah is so striking that it can hardly be accidental. It seems likely, too, that it refers to some actual flooding of the valley of the Euphrates.

The archaeology of the region discloses signs of several inundations, any of which could have been the ultimate origin of Noah's flood. The British archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley, digging at Ur in 1929, made a notable discovery. Beneath the layers of successive civilizations, Woolley found between eight and eleven feet of mud, without any trace of human occupation, and then, beneath that, the ruins of human dwellings. He was convinced that he had discovered the historical reality behind the legend of the Flood.

If so, it was almost certainly the

the great Flood recedes, exposing the ies of the drowned, animals from the ark d for shore in a miniature from the Bed- l Book of Hours done in 1423. On dry land in, Noah is shown with his family tending pevines and getting drunk on the vintage.

By J. W. BURROW

original also of the ancient Greek story of a universal deluge, from which Deucalion, son of Prometheus, and his wife, Pyrrha, alone escaped by boat to repopulate the world. In Greek mythology Deucalion's flood separates the primeval golden age from the succeeding age of mortal men. The Biblical flood, too, though less emphatically, seems to mark a similar boundary. Before the Flood, giants walked the earth and men lived almost a thousand years; subsequently, things contract to more homely dimensions. Paradise itself was engulfed, and the site of it lost to memory, as Milton's archangel prophesied to Adam:

> Out of his place, pushed by the horned flood,
> With all his verdure spoiled, and trees adrift,
> Down the great river to the opening Gulf . . .
> The haunt of seals, and orcs, and sea-mews' clang.

Instead there is a guarantee of a natural world, neither paradisiacal nor chaotic, but ordered, regular, and endurable, a setting for the human condition, the daily round, the annual cycle: "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Adam, eating the apple, knew good and evil and condemned all his posterity to death and sorrow; Noah, cultivating the vine, merely discovered that strong drink makes you drunk.

Milton presented Noah as the archetype of God's elect, a stern Puritan elder, vainly calling a corrupt people to repentance. But there were other, less austere interpretations. Noah, carpenter and farmer, and the ark, a floating zoo with the naive ungainliness of a man's first boat, have long had for mankind a homely, domestic quality.



A cuneiform clay tablet inscribed around 650 B.C. *gives a Babylonian version of the Flood.*

One would, after all, scarcely be so reassured to find one's children playing Adam and Eve, or Abraham and Isaac. The story of the Flood recapitulates, in many respects, that of the Creation itself, but in a lower key and on a more human scale. It is the most reassuring of disaster legends.

In the Middle Ages this homeliness became the keynote of the Noah story, in folklore and in the numerous cycles of Biblical mystery plays performed in the medieval towns. Of the numerous traditions that came to cluster around the Biblical story, some were of Judaic origin, like the Oedipal one that makes Ham's uncovering of his father's nakedness a literal castration—what one nineteenth-century geologist primly referred to as "domestic disturbances in Noah's family, briefly mentioned in Holy Writ."

The medieval treatment of these "disturbances," however, became broadly comic. It was not only Chaucer's carpenter, tricked by his wife's lover into building an ark in expectation of a second Flood while the lovers enjoyed themselves in his bed, who was a comic figure; the Noah plays themselves were often treated as comedy. Noah's wife is made a voluble shrew, and he himself is mocked by his family and neigh
for his unaccountable obsession
inland shipbuilding—a tradition
also appears in the Koran. Ano
common theme was the reluctanc
Noah's wife to enter the strange b

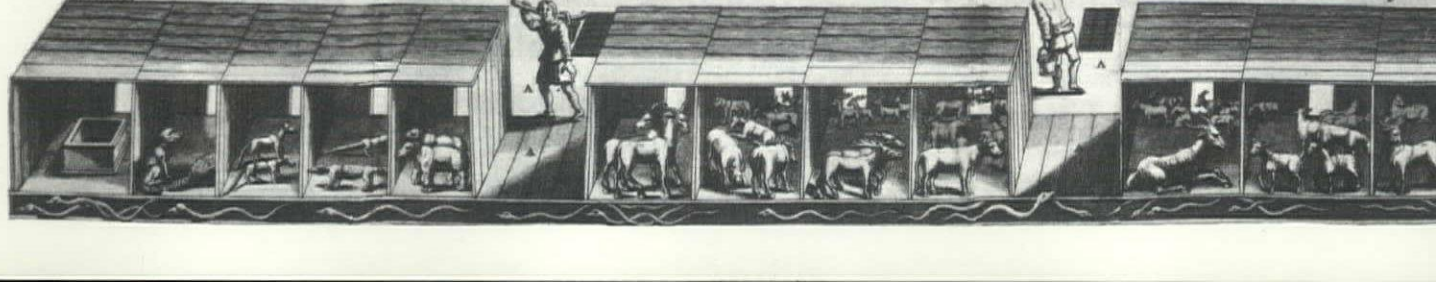
> In faith, I can not fynd
> Which is before, which is behynd.

In medieval folklore she appears
kind of second Eve, with a special
macy with Satan. In one story S
tries to sabotage the ark, gettin
mouse to gnaw a hole in it: in anot
he induces Noah's wife, before
Flood, to find out why Noah is bu
ing such a ship. Noah—character
cally—gets drunk and tells her, wh
upon Satan burns the ark and N
has to begin again.

The Reformation encouraged a
literalness and intensity in the stud
the Bible, and through the Puritan
phasis on original sin and the corr
ness of everything merely natura
stressed anew the sense that men
in a world in decline, blighted and
from the original design of divine
fection. "Even the Earth," w
Luther, "which is innocent in i
and committed no sin, is neverth
compelled to bear sin's curse."
Flood had destroyed Eden and de
scarred the face of the earth: "since
Flood mountains exist where fields
fruitful plains before flourished
For the whole face of Nature
changed by that mighty convulsi

We find Bishop Burnet in the
seventeenth century writing that
misshapen Earth we now inhabit, i
Form it was found in when the W
had retir'd, and the dry Land
peared." The present earth, accor
to him, is "the image or picture
great Ruine," "a World lying i

Arca Noe, AMSTERDAM, 1675; ABOVE: BRITISH MUSEUM



bish." This was a lamentable falling from the original arrangements: e face of the Earth before the Del- was smooth, regular and uniform, hout Mountains and without a Sea." :re was "not a wrinkle, scar or frac- in all its body"; its uniform soil ; "a light earth mix't with unctuous :es."

Paradise, it is clear, was not merely garden, but a seventeenth-century mal garden—a kind of global Ver- les "divided into Regions or Walks";- orrid zone "made a kind of gravel- k in the middle, so there was a en Walk on either hand of it, made the temperate Zones; and beyond se lay a Canal, which water'd the rden from either side."

This view of the antediluvian earth l of the catastrophic effects of the od came to have a considerable the- gical importance. The Flood played same part in relation to the ad- ted imperfections in the natural rld that Adam's disobedience played elation to the sorrows of the human dition: neither was directly charge- e to the original plan of the Crea- n, and the ways of God toward men re justified.

This justification became more, not s, important as Christians in the hteenth and early nineteenth cen- ies tended to ground their faith more and more upon the evidences of design and divine benevolence exhibited in the physical world. The concept of the universal Flood, and its justification by "the great wickedness of the antediluvians," meant that one could pursue such arguments without fear that they would be turned against one. In the optimistic eighteenth century, nature came more and more to be regarded as essentially benign, a worthy product of the almighty Clockmaker's workshop, yet no qualms needed to be felt at the discovery of imperfections; either they were not really so or their ultimate cause was men's sin, and their immediate one, insofar as they related to the physical condition of the earth, was the Flood.

Burnet's book remained highly influential for more than a century, and one finds echoes of it in Victorian times. In the formation of the globe, one critic wrote, "there is scarce a trace of that beautiful, tasteful and economical design which we have a right to expect from the admitted qualities of the great Author, and his avowed object in the structure and report of it when newly finished." Mountains, in particular, being both untidy and uneconomical, must be the result of the catastrophe of the Flood.

But theological arguments based on the Flood had also to be geologic arguments. One of the chief problems for geology, as it developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, became the occurrence, extent, and consequences of Noah's Flood. Because of the divine assurance that it would never recur, the Flood has not entwined itself with men's deepest hopes and fears, as have, for example, the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. Yet, by the early nineteenth century it did come to hold a key place in educated men's explanations of the nature of their world, to such an extent that the credibility of religion itself seemed to have become involved. As one writer put it, "the whole system of revealed religion is ultimately connected with the veracity of Moses." The Flood became the central geologic fact of theology.

There were reasons besides theological necessity for the importance of the Flood in geology. When men first began to consider possible physical explanations of the earth's crust systematically, there were many facts that pointed to a universal flood, or perhaps, as people in prescientific ages tended to believe, a primeval sea covering the earth. Much geologic activity, as we now know, has been caused by water, though not by a great deluge; hills and valleys, gravel deposits, ravines and water gaps torn through the mountains, all testify to the past action of water upon the earth.

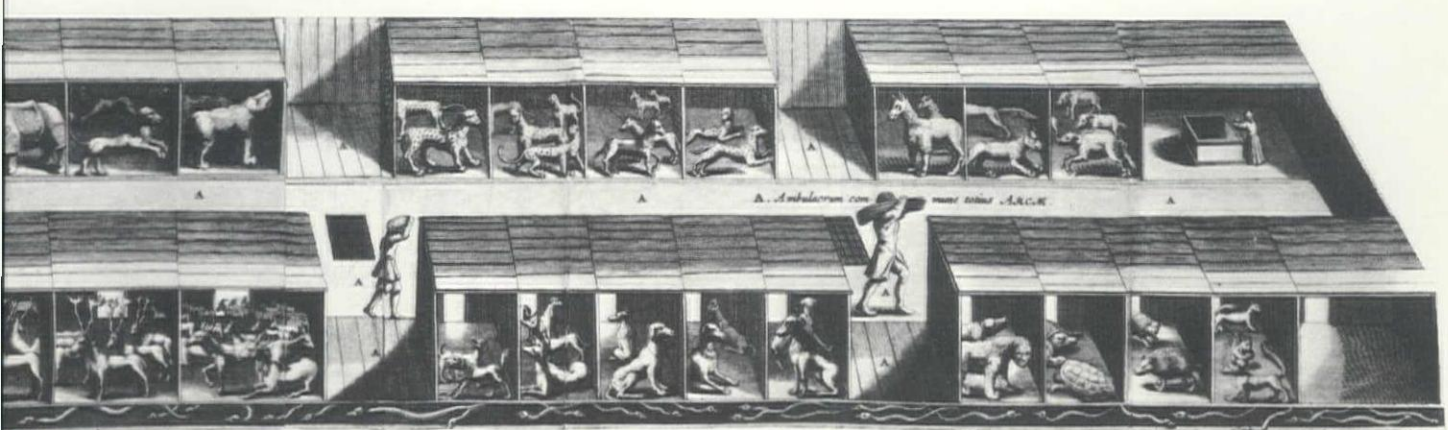
But what of the fossil remains of sea creatures that were found on mountains far from any coast? Ancient Greek geographers had recognized the organic and marine origin of such fossils, as had the medieval scientist Albertus Magnus. Leonardo da Vinci's universal curiosity had, predictably,



VATICAN — ANDERSON

Sinners vainly flee the Flood in a detail from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel panel.

iagram of the lowest deck of Noah's ark, ow, was published in 1675 by the Jesuit olar Athanasius Kircher. To prove that Biblical account of Noah was consistent h science and reason, Father Kircher nonstrated that the relatively few spe- of land animals then known could be sed in a rectangular, three-decked ark 450 long and suitably compartmentalized.

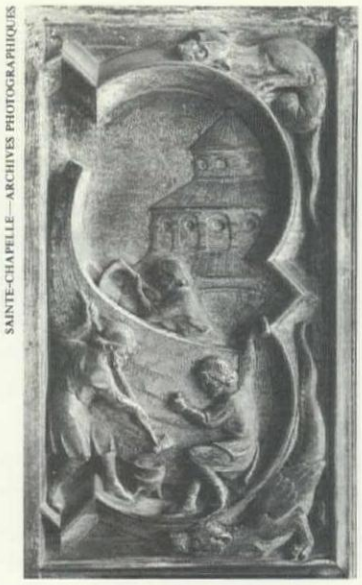


been aroused by them. Why, he asked, "do we find the bones of great fishes and oysters and corals and various other shells and sea-snails on the high summits of mountains?"

But such men were rare. Until the late seventeenth century the organic origin of fossils was not generally appreciated. They were thought of simply as "figured stones." How had they got their strange shapes? One theory held that God had created these replicas of his animal creations just as a demonstration of his creative powers. Another held that stones were sexual creatures and reproduced like plants, or even copulated and gave birth in pain and labor. Even as late as the mid-eighteenth century, Voltaire, in order to discredit inland marine fossils that seemed proof of the Biblical Flood, held that they were fishbones dropped by travelers, or by pilgrims and Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land.

But gradually the organic theory triumphed. Its high point as testimony for the Flood came, perhaps, in the early eighteenth century, when a Swiss professor, Johann Scheuzinger, announced the discovery of a genuine antediluvian human skeleton. Scheuzinger christened his skeleton *"Homo diluvii testis"*—man witness of the Flood—and referred to him as a "rare relic of the accursed race of the primitive world," adding piously, "Melancholy skeleton of an old sinner, convert the hearts of modern reprobates!" Unfortunately, the skeleton so addressed subsequently proved to be that of a giant salamander.

Nevertheless, the general recognition of the organic nature of fossils was an immense step forward, and it helped perhaps more than anything else to establish the Flood as a scientific hypothesis. True, there were qualifications that had to be made as time went by. Geology was undermining literal interpretations of the Biblical account of the Creation and extending the age of the earth far beyond the original estimate of six thousand years. Stratigraphy revealed that there must have



SAINTE-CHAPELLE—ARCHIVES PHOTOGRAPHIQUES

Building the ark: a medieval view

been not one but a number of successive inundations, or deluges, and men had to be content with regarding Noah's flood as simply the last of them. Nevertheless, by the early nineteenth century the actuality of the Flood, and its geologic importance, seemed virtually unchallengeable.

The notion of a universal flood had the authoritative backing of men like General Charles Gordon, the doomed hero of Khartoum, who spent part of his leave in the Holy Land searching for the landing place of the ark. Another of these darkly brooding Victorian men of action was Robert Fitzroy, an officer in the Royal Navy and governor of New Zealand, who is best known to us as the captain of Charles Darwin's ship the *Beagle*. There can have been few odder conjunctions than that of the young Darwin with Fitzroy, for on the voyage that led Darwin to the theory that was to shatter the literal, Biblical account of the Creation for good, Captain Fitzroy was feverishly debating with himself, and occasionally with Darwin, such matters as the exact dimensions of the ark, and attributing the extinction of the huge prehistoric mammals to their having been left out of it.

Among men of science, though the Flood was generally accepted, there remained awkward problems: Why were fossil shellfish found in their original beds? Where did all the water go? Was the ark big enough? The significance of

the first question had been recogr
by Leonardo da Vinci, and after
by the seventeenth-century natur
John Ray. As Leonardo pointed
"If the Deluge had carried sea s
three or four hundred miles from
sea, they would be thoroughly m
in heaps with many other things.
instead we find the oysters all toget
and also see the snails, the squid,
the other shellfish lying togethe
death as they lay in hordes while
ing." Leonardo and Ray were th
fore among the first to be right al
both questions relating to marine
sils: they were organic in origin,
they were not relics of the Flood

By the later seventeenth centu
had been realized that if the Fl
was to be used as a scientific hyp
esis, it had better be itself credibl
a physical occurrence. Yet the Fl
appeared to be a physical impossibi
Clearly, forty days' rain alone c
not have caused so vast a catastro
One of the most popular theories
that adopted by the astronomer
mund Halley, who said it was
nected with the passage of a co
(Comets were much in the public n
since the celebrated one of 1680, na
after Halley himself.) The most ing
ous and influential explanation, h
ever, was given by Burnet in his *Sa*
Theory of the Earth.

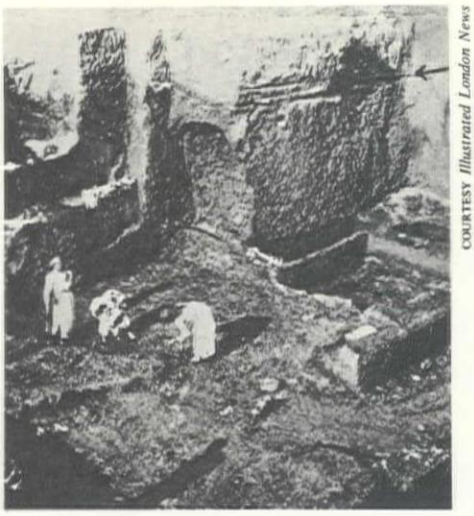
Burnet brooded on the hydraulic
the Flood like a plumber with a p
lem. What if the earth had been fla
"and so might the more easily be o
flow'd, and the Deluge perform'd
less water?" Staring into the face
Chaos, Burnet arrived at an ans
Chaos, being a fluid mass, when it
lidified would necessarily fall int
spherical shape, with the moisture
closed within it, like the yolk of an eg
"the Mundane Egg" as Burnet ca
it. The smoothness of Paradise
thus strictly in accordance with
principles known to seventeenth-
tury mechanics.

But Paradise was doomed from
inception. For the earth, exposed
the eternal summer of the paradisi

nate, would become dryer; cracks uld appear, and the waters within, wing warmer, would begin to va- ize and need more room. The ser- it, one feels, need not have both- d; the Garden of Eden was cracking he seams in any case. "So we see Vapours and Exhalations enclos'd hin the Earth, and agitated there, ve to break out, and often shake the und with their attempts to get se." (San Francisco resembles Para- e in more ways than one.) Then the astrophe: parts of the earth plunged o the abyss below, and the water in- e, driven out with immense force, se high above the land. When the eat maelstrom of water subsided, me of it would remain on the surface open sea, since the former cavity was w blocked in places by the fallen land. othing could be more satisfactorily riptural, Noachian, and scientific.

But could the ark have contained all e species of living things? And given at the fauna of various parts of the rld, especially the Americas, differed dely from those of the central land ass, how were they gathered together r the occasion, and then dispersed ain? As the Victorian geologist Hugh iller wrote in his *Testimony of the ocks* (1857): "The sloths and arma- loes,—little fitted by nature for long urneys—would have required to be ried across the Atlantic to the re- ons in which the remains of the meg- herium and the glyptodon lie en- mbed." Miller's solution was that e deluge was only partial, destroying rrupt mankind but not the entire rld's animal population.

Burnet, almost two hundred years rlier, did not have the problem of ssil ancestors to contend with, but had his own unorthodox answer: ere may have been a second ark, an -American one, full of sloths and madillos. Earlier in the seventeenth ntury Sir Walter Raleigh, passing the ary hours of his imprisonment in the wer of London by writing his *His- y of the World,* had produced an en more radical solution: the animals



COURTESY *Illustrated London News*

Evidence of a Mesopotamian deluge, indicated by a stratum of silt between layers of debris, was discovered at Kish in 1929.

of the New World had evolved, since the Flood, from those of the Old.

But as men's knowledge of the animal species grew, the difficulties continued to increase. Miller admitted that even on the most generous estimate of the "Noachian cubit," the ark would only have been about one-seventh the size of the great Crystal Palace of 1851. Raleigh, like the painstaking old sea captain that he was, had carefully estimated the provisions required for the voyage, and the amount of stowage needed, but he had assumed the existence of a mere eighty-nine species. Nineteenth-century zoology knew better. As Miller pointed out, there were, for example, not one but two species of elephant, *Elephas africana* and *Elephas indicus,* thus immediately doubling the elephant population of the ark—clearly a serious matter. There were six, or possibly seven, distinct species of rhinoceros, twenty-seven of sheep, and fifty-one of deer. From having been merely the guardian of a pair each of the larger animals, Noah was beginning to look more like a floating cattle baron in an impressive way of business.

But Miller, in the 1850's, with his hypothesis of a partial deluge sufficient to destroy humanity, which salvaged the theological but not the geologic significance of the Flood, was fighting a rearguard action. For, from the 1830's onward, an alternative explanation of the earth's crust had been gaining ground, which, relying on the results of ordinary deposition and erosion through countless millenniums, made the hypothesis of a universal and sudden catastrophe such as the Flood unnecessary. The final blow to the Flood as a geologic explanation was the realization in the 1840's, by the Swiss-American geologist Louis Agassiz, of the importance of the action not of great floods but of the ice sheets that had once covered the Northern Hemisphere—the slow advance and retreat of the great glaciers.

For a time, consternation was acute; seldom have men grounded their peace of mind so firmly on belief in a catastrophe. Until it was subsumed in the still larger Darwinian controversy, geology became one of the chief agents of the Victorian crisis of faith.

The agony has abated, of course, and few people now feel their spiritual lives imperiled by the rather local nature of an ancient Mesapotamian disaster. But it is the characteristic of a great myth to absorb the preoccupations of many ages. Recently, the distinguished anthropologist Edmund Leach has given an anthropological interpretation of the Noah story. What interests him is not primarily the Flood, but the Oedipal episode of the sin of Ham, according to Leach a literal act of homosexual incest, for which, by tradition, Ham was turned black and his posterity enslaved. The significance of Noah, it seems, thus lies not primarily in God's wrath and his covenant with man; not in antifeminist jokes about Noah's wife, nor as a paradigm of God's treatment of his elect. It is not an explanation of such geologic untidiness as mountains and potholes, nor the explanation of such paleontologic puzzles as marine fossils on high ground far from the sea. It is, rather, about those terrible twins of our own time, Sex and Race.

We should have guessed.

J. W. Burrow also contributed four essays to the Horizon Book of Makers of Modern Thought, *published this summer.*

The Young Lenin



By Leon Trotsky

A Doomed Author, A Wayward Manuscript

In 1933 Leon Trotsky was commissioned by the Doubleday publishing company to write a full-scale biography of Lenin, a task for which he was uniquely qualified. Trotsky had been Lenin's close ally and lieutenant in the Russian Revolution and, next to him, for some years the most important figure in the Bolshevik regime. The subsequent fates of the two revolutionary allies, however, could not have been more disparate. Lenin died in 1924. He became—and remains—the supreme, virtually deified hero of the Soviet Union. Trotsky, defeated by Stalin in a power struggle, vilified as a traitor, exiled in 1929, was literally written out of official Soviet history.

At the time of Trotsky's assassination in Mexico in 1940 by a Stalinist agent, his unfinished biography of Lenin had already disappeared and was presumed lost. In 1968, however, it resurfaced when the noted author Max Eastman (1883–1969) submitted his English translation of it to Doubleday & Company. The following account of young Lenin has been excerpted from Trotsky's long-lost and long-forgotten manuscript, to be published in July under the title *The Young Lenin.*

At the point where the narrative begins, Lenin's father, Ilya Nikolayevich Ulyanov, overcoming the savage handicap of humble birth, had become the superintendent of public schools in a district governed by the Volga River town of Simbirsk, "the most backward and provincial of all the Volga capitals," according to Trotsky. "Not a town but a graveyard," said the noted Russian author Goncharov, one of Simbirsk's two most illustrious natives. The other was Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, the future Lenin, who was born there in 1870.

Members of the inner circle and outsiders, even those who were become enemies, speak in nearly the ıe terms of the friendly and indus- us character of the Ulyanov family, he purity and honesty of their do- ıtic relations, of the cheerful mood he family dining room. The absence ıumiliating want or of flabby excess, continual vivid examples of duty l industry in the father, the active l tender vigilance of the mother, a nmon interest in literature and sic—all these conditions were very orable to the bringing up of healthy l firm-hearted children. . . .

n his personal make-up, his ways l manners, Ilya Nikolayevich was a cry from the stereotype of the cut- l-dried bureaucrat. He was a very rm human being—sociable, alert, h a good sense of humor. During endless journeys, when stopping the estate of some liberal *zemstvo* mber, he loved to open his heart conversations about the life of the *ernia* and especially its educational irs. . . .

n 1874 Ilya Nikolayevich was ap- nted superintendent of public ools. By now several inspectors re his subordinates. He was recog- ed as an important personage in the *bernia*. The order of Saint Vladimir l the rank of civil counselor brought the former townsman hereditary nobility. In the innumerable police questionnaires right up to 1917, his sons and daughters had to write down in the proper space their noble rank. But there was nothing aristocratic in the physical molds of either himself or the members of his family. Wide noses, high cheekbones, and stubby fingers revealed their plebeian origin. . . .

Maria Alexandrovna came from a more affluent and cultivated family than her husband. Her father, a physician and owner of an estate in Kazan *gubernia,* was married to a German woman who reared her children in German traditions. . . .

What little we know of the parents justifies the conclusion that the mother was of a higher spiritual quality than the father. From her issued those invisible rays that warm the heart of a child and give him a sense of warmth throughout his life. She did not caress her children impetuously and kiss them to death, but she also never pushed them away, never lit into them. From their first day she surrounded them with self-sacrificing love—without pampering but also without nagging. . . .

Were there not in this world such generous women, life itself would not deserve the name. Maria Alexandrovna found an active external expression for her precious powers only through her children. She lived to almost within a year of her son's historic victory.

Born and reared in a family that was not of the Russian Orthodox faith, Maria Alexandrovna, although wholly Russified, nevertheless possessed, in contrast to her husband, no firm church traditions—except indeed for the German Christmas tree—and was not distinguished in the least by religious observance. But Maria Alexandrovna never broke with religion entirely; in the most trying moments she resorted to it with all the hidden passion of her nature. Once, when the life of her four-year-old son hung by a thread, the mother, frantic with grief, whispered feverishly to her six-year-old daughter: "Pray for Sasha [Lenin's gifted older brother, Alexander]!" And she herself fell to her knees before the icon in despair. That time the danger passed. Seventeen years later—after how many alarms and labors and hopes!—through the bars of a Petersburg prison, the mother repeated to her daughter the same admonition: "Pray for Sasha!" But this time she spoke only of the saving of his soul, for the czar's noose had already strangled her beloved eldest son, the pride and hope of the family. . . .

[*On March 1, 1887, Alexander, an intense, idealistic young biology student at St. Petersburg University, joined four*

nily portrait of 1879 nine-year-old Vladimir Ulyanov—later Lenin—sits at right. His mother (with baby Maria) r are also seated, as is young Dimitri in the center. Standing (left to right) are Olga, Alexander, and Anna.

other students in an abortive attempt to assassinate Czar Alexander III. Alexander's deed, his execution, and the disgrace it brought to the Ulyanovs would mark the turning point in the placid, conventional life of the young Lenin-to-be.]

In the fourteen years from 1864 to 1878 the Ulyanovs had seven children. If you omit the fifth, Nikolai, who lived only a few days, the data we possess permits an instructive conclusion. The outstanding children in both character and ability—Alexander, Vladimir, and Olga—constitute the middle-age group, with Vladimir occupying the central place. The eldest daughter, Anna, and the two younger members of the family, although possessing many admirable qualities, hardly rose above the average level. At Vladimir's birth the father was thirty-nine and the mother thirty-five—the age of complete bloom of physical and spiritual forces. . . .

Volodya [diminutive of Vladimir] learned to walk late—almost at the same time as his little sister Olya [Olga], who was a year and a half younger. His first achievements in this activity were not altogether happy. He fell often and heavily and moreover on his head, so that the neighbors could always accurately calculate his orbit. "Probably his head was too heavy," writes his sister. With every fall Volodya would fill the entire house with his screaming. In those early years he seldom missed an opportunity to develop his vocal chords. "The passion for destruction," said Bakunin, who died in exile when the future Lenin was six years old, "is a creative passion." Volodya was an unqualified adherent of this formula. He destroyed his toys before ever beginning to play with them. Upon receiving from his nurse the gift of a sleigh with three horses made out of cardboard, he hid behind the door to escape annoying interference from adults and twisted the horses' legs until they came off.

His independent and passionate character expressed itself, it seems, very early. Adults were often compelled to



Elder brother Alexander Ulyanov

call this noisy and boisterous boy to order. "You mustn't yell so loud on a steamboat," said his mother as they sailed away for a summer in Kazan province. "But the steamboat is yelling loud himself," answered Volodya without lowering his voice. . . .

Sasha was inventive in games but restrained even in his favorites. Volodya was endlessly wanting to "catch up and overtake" everybody and did not mind using his elbows to this end. In many other respects Volodya differed even in early childhood from his elder brother. Sasha was patient and loved to collect things and do scrollwork with a saw, thus perfecting the attention and patience of the future biologist. Volodya had no use for painstaking pastimes. One time when Sasha was sorting theatrical handbills and carefully spreading them out on the floor, little Volodya jumped on the precious colored sheets, stamping, messing them up, and tearing some. Sasha could not comprehend such barbarism. . . .

Sasha was organically and almost morbidly truthful. To trick people and to tell lies was as unthinkable to him as to mock and scold. In difficult situations he remained silent. In the healthy truthfulness of Voloyda there was an element of slyness. With the overflowing, expansive force of such a nature as his, it was impossible to get along without some defensive lies. One could not, for instance, enjoy an apple peel without picking it up on the sly when a vigilant mother had left the kitchen; one could not tear the legs off a paper horse without hiding behind the door. And could one think of confessing to an aunt, a rel stranger, that it was he, Volodya, had broken the carafe while run through the rooms during a visit t house? . . .

In 1878, when Volodya was years old, the Ulyanovs moved in house of their own. It was mad wood and modest, but it had an chard that became an object of and concern to the entire family. children were accurately informed a which bushes and trees were for t and which for the winter storage o their father's name day, and the observed a strict discipline of er ment. A little girl visitor once fully bit a piece out of an apple on the tree, and then ran away. A a century later Anna Yelizarova membered this catastrophe: "S hooliganism (!) was alien and inc prehensible to us." This judgment tonishing in its pedantry, sheds pa good light on the patriarchal v of that family, where discipline enforced in different ways, but great success, by both father mother. Thrift, orderliness, respect labor and its fruits, were learned e in life by the great destroyer of future. Though he himself would of course, have called an inno childish prank "hooliganism," he c to dislike slovenliness and extra gance among adults. . . .

At the age of nine and a half Volo entered the first class at high sch Now he wore a uniform "like Sash and was subject to the authority of same teachers, also uniformed, v double-headed eagles on their m buttons. But Volodya's personality lowed him to endure far more ea then Alexander the high-school regi with its hypocrisy and coercion. E classicism was no burden to him. future writer and public speaker e developed a taste for the ancient thors. Vladimir learned with extra dinary ease. This active and noisy b with his wide scope of emotions, also capable of truly astounding c centration. Sitting motionless beh



The future Lenin, aged seventeen

desk, he would seize and absorb ry explanation made by his teach-, so that a lesson assigned was for n a lesson learned. At home, he uld quickly finish the next day's signment. While the two older chil-en spread out their books on the big le in the dining room, Volodya uld begin his active life: noisemak-g, chattering, and teasing the younger ildren. The older sister and brother uld protest. The mother's authority uld not always be sufficient. Volodya uld turn up everywhere. Sometimes e father, if at home, would take s "jack-in-the-box" to his study to id out whether he really had finished s lessons. But Volodya would give all e answers without hesitation. The ther would then take his old note-oks and quiz him on the entire urse. Volodya was still invulnerable. tin words were firmly engraved in s memory. The father did not know nether to be happy or upset. The boy arned too fast, and would perhaps il to develop systematic work habits.

On returning home from school, Vo-dya would report to his parents the ents of the day—chiefly what sub-cts he was called up on and how he swered. Since his progress was rather onotonous, this report would take e form of a swift run past his father's fice and a shout: "5 in Greek, 5 in erman." On the next day, and the y after: "5 in Latin, 5 in algebra." he father and mother would exchange cret smiles of satisfaction. Ilya Niko-yevich did not like to praise his chil-en to their faces, and especially this lf-confident boy to whom every-ing came so easy. But their children's ccess introduced, of course, a joyful te into the family life. In the eve-ngs they would all gather happily und the big tea table. Ilya Niko-yevich never lost his taste for jokes nd school anecdotes. There was much ughter, and the ringleader of it all as often the superintendent of schools. You felt warm and cozy in that iendly family," related the teacher ashkadamova. "Keenest of all in conversation were Volodya and his second sister, Olya. How their happy voices and infectious laughter would ring out!" . . .

There was a chess set in the house, whittled by the father in Nizhni Novgorod, which had gradually become a family heirloom of sorts. The male members of the family, beginning with the father, were devoted to the abstract intricacies of this ancient game—a game in which superiority in certain (to be sure, not very high) intellectual qualities finds a most direct expression and satisfaction. The sons always responded joyfully to a challenge from the father to play a game of chess. But the balance of power increasingly shifted to the younger generation. Alexander got hold of a textbook on chess, and with his usual calm persistence plunged into the theory of the game. After a while Vladimir followed him. The brothers evidently progressed alarmingly, for one evening, as he was going upstairs, Vladimir ran into his father filching the textbook from the attic with the obvious aim of arming himself for future battles.

But as the proverb goes, an hour for fun, and time itself for work. Vladimir climbed the steps of his high-school curricula without pause and each year with prizes. Only in the seventh grade did he run into trouble with his French teacher, an ignorant and shifty individual who then became a target for his mockery. His recklessness was punished: the Frenchman managed to get the prize pupil marked down one grade in conduct for the semester. Ilya Nikolayevich was ruffled, and Vladimir solemnly promised to put an end to these risky experiments. The incident had no consequences. Behind this insolence toward a disrespected teacher the school authorities discovered no dangerous turn of mind. And they were not mistaken—for the time being. . . .

Vladimir became famous in the class as a "literary man." The verbal timidity of Alexander was completely alien to him. That sturdy and aggressive self-confidence that alarmed his father, and must on occasion have been distasteful to the elder brother, remained with Vladimir in creative writing as well. When he sat down to write a composition—never at the last moment, but in good time—he knew in advance that he would say all that was necessary and say it right. Picking out a hard pencil and sharpening it well, that the letters might lie fine and compact on the paper, he would first of all sketch out an outline, so as to make sure that all his ideas would be expressed in full. Around this outline he would then group references and quotations—not only from school texts, but from other books as well. With this preparatory work finished, the references numbered, and the introduction and conclusions mapped out, the composition very nearly wrote itself. It remained only to carefully write out a clean copy. His language and literature teacher, Kerensky,* who was also the school principal, greatly favored this sturdy redheaded composition writer, and would set up his writings as an example to the others . . .

The name of Marx meant nothing to this young man whose interests lay almost exclusively in belles-lettres. He gave himself up to literature with a passion. For whole days he drank in the novels of Turgenev, page by page, lying on his cot carried away into the realm of "superfluous people" and idealized maidens under the linden trees of aristocratic parks. Having read through to the end he would begin all over again. His thirst was insatiable. . . .

Although Vladimir fell ill occasionally during his school years, he was of

*Fyodor Kerensky, the father of Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970), the future prime minister of the democratic provisional government that was deposed as a result of Lenin's *coup d'état* of November 7, 1917

reasonably sturdy health and his body matured satisfactorily. With his abilities there could be no problem of an excessive expenditure of energy. He grew like a young oak, putting down deep roots and drinking in abundantly the air and moisture. What can one say but—"a happy childhood"?

The Ulyanov family had lived a happy life for almost twenty-three years and had been like other harmonious and fortunate families. In 1886 the first blow fell, the death of the father. . . . He had fallen sick in January, while preparing his annual report. Alexander was in Petersburg, wholly immersed in his zoology term paper. Vladimir, only a year and a half away from high-school graduation, must have been thinking already about the university. Anna was at home for the Christmas holidays. Neither the family nor the physician took Ilya Nikolayevich's illness seriously. He continued to work on his report. His daughter sat reading some papers to him until she noticed that her father was becoming delirious. The next morning, January 12, the sick man did not come to the table, but only to the dining-room door, looking in "as though he had come to say good-bye," remembered Maria Alexandrovna. At five o'clock the mother, in alarm, called Anna and Vladimir. Ilya Nikolayevich lay dying on the sofa that served him for a bed. The children saw their father shudder twice and become still forever. He was not yet fifty-five years old. . . .

Anna remained in Simbirsk for a while in order to be near her mother. It was at that time that the elder sister and Vladimir grew close to each other. There were winter walks and long conversations in which the brother revealed himself to Anna as a rebel and a nonconformist, the embodiment of protest—so far, however, only in relation to "the school authorities, high-school studies, and also to religion." During the summer vacation these moods had not yet existed.

The death of the father had suddenly destroyed the lulling flow of life in a family whose well-being had seemed sure to go on indefinitely. How can we avoid assuming that it was this blow that imparted a new critical direction to Vladimir's thoughts? . . .

Recovering comparatively soon after the death of his father, Vladimir felt himself the man in the family. His recent emancipation from religion must have suddenly elevated his self-esteem. As often happens with headstrong youths, the need for independence took a rough and tough form in him in that critical period—at the expense of others, and in particular, at the expense of his mother's authority. "Mockery was natural to Vladimir in general, and, at that transitional age, especially so." We can rely on these words the more surely since the elder sister, as she is portrayed in her own writing, would not easily have forgotten these mockeries. As for Alexander, he was painfully sensitive to gibes at the expense of others, and it would never occur to anyone to sneer at Alexander himself. He first came into contact with this in the summer spent with the fatherless family. Each brother was now tuned to a different key. The phase of childish worship, when Volodya wanted to do everything "like Sasha," had given way to a struggle for independence; the inevitable rejection of his elder brother had begun. His concentration, his attentiveness to other people, his fear of revealing his superiority, Vladimir offset with a noisy aggressiveness, sneering, gibes, and an organic desire to dominate. The summer passed in disharmony.

Let us listen to Anna Yelizarova. Volodya's abruptness and aggressiveness "became especially noticeable after the death of the father, whose presence had always had a restraining effect upon the boys." Vladimir began to "talk back to his mother, sometimes harshly, as he would never have dared while Father was with us." Perhaps this demonstrative impudence of Vladimir's was also, in a way, a retroactive protest against the father's authoritarianism. The mother subsequently remembered with emotion h
Sasha had sometimes interceded in
behalf during that last summer. Or
while playing chess, Vladimir ca
lessly waved away his mother's
minder about some task, and w
Maria Alexandrovna insisted v
some irritation, he answered witl
wisecrack. Then Alexander interver
"Either you will do immediately w
mama tells you or I won't play v
you any longer." The ultimatum
presented calmly but so firmly t
Vladimir immediately did as he
told. Anna herself, although she
annoyed at the "sneers, impertiner
and arrogance" of Volodya, nev
theless fell under his influence, or
any rate willingly kept up a cha
with him full of jokes, digs, and lau
ter. Alexander not only did not join
these conversations but found it d
cult to tolerate them. He had his o
moods, and Anna more than on
brought upon herself his reprov
looks. In the autumn, when they w
in St. Petersburg, she summoned
the courage to put a question to Sas
"How do you like our Volodya?"
sha answered: "Undoubtedly a very
ble person, but we don't get along."

Henceforth the family would ha
to live on the mother's pension, piec
out perhaps with some small savi
the father had left. They crowd
themselves a little and took in boarde
But the regimen of life remained
same. Maria Alexandrovna watch
over the younger children, and wait
for the oldest to graduate from the u
versity. They all worked hard. Vladir
delighted her with his successes b
alarmed her with his arrogance.
passed the year of mourning. Life w
beginning to move again in its ne
narrower channel, when a second bl
—a double blow at that—descend
on the family: both son and daugh
were involved in a trial for an attempt
assassination of the czar.

Anna was arrested on March 1
her brother's rooms in St. Petersbu
which she had entered while a sear
was in progress. Shrouded in dread



UPI

Triumphant Bolshevik, Lenin in 1919 stands between Stalin, at left, Russia's future dictator, and Trotsky, Stalin's future victim.

certainty, the girl was locked in prison in connection h a case in which she had d no part. This, then, is at Sasha was busy with! . . . A Petersburg relative of the yanovs wrote of the arrest Alexander and Anna to a mer teacher of the children cing her to prepare the ther. Narrowing his young brows, adimir stood silent a long time over Petersburg letter. This lightning oke revealed the figure of Alexander a new light. "But this is a serious ng," he said. "It may end badly for sha." He evidently had no doubt of na's innocence. The task of prepar- his mother fell to him. But, sensing gedy in his first words, she demanded letter and immediately made ready a journey.

There was still no railroad from Sim- sk; one had to travel by horse and gon to Syzran. For the sake of econ- ny and for safety on the journey, adimir sought a companion for his ther. But the news had already read through the town. Everyone rned away fearfully. No one would vel with the mother of a terrorist. adimir never forgot this lesson. The ys that followed were to mean much the forming of his character and direction. The youth became aus- e and silent, and frequently shut mself up in his room when he was t busy with the younger children left his charge. So *that* is what he was, is tireless chemist and dissector of rms, this silent brother so near and so unknown! When compelled to eak with Kashkadamova of the catas- phe, he kept repeating: "It means exander could not have acted other- se." The mother came back for a ort time to see the children and told em of her efforts and her hope of a sentence to hard labor for Sasha. n that case I would go with him," e said. "The older children are big ough and I will take the younger th me." Instead of a chair at a uni- rsity and scholarly glory, chains and stripes now became the chief object of the mother's hopes. . . .

On the eve of the execution, still hoping, she kept repeating to her son through the double grating: "Have courage!" On May 5, on her way to an interview with her daughter, she learned from a leaflet passed out in the street that Sasha was no more. . . .

Simbirsk was fragrant with all the flowers of its orchards when news came from the capital of the hanging of Alexander Ulyanov. The family of a full state counselor, until then respected on every side, became overnight the family of an executed state criminal. Friends and acquaintances, without exception, avoided the house on Moscow Street. Even the aged schoolteacher who had so often dropped in for a game of chess with Ilya Nikolayevich, no longer showed his face. . . .

Some years later the Social Democrat Lalayants questioned Lenin about the affair of March 1. Lenin answered: "Alexander's participation in a terrorist act was completely unexpected for all of us. Possibly my sister knew something—I knew nothing at all."

Lenin's grief for his brother must have been colored with bitterness at the thought that Alexander had concealed from him his deepest and most important thoughts, and with remorse over his own lack of attentiveness toward his brother and his arrogant assertions of his own independence. His childish worship of Sasha must have returned now with tenfold strength, sharpened by feelings of guilt and a consciousness of the impossibility of making amends. The teacher who handed him the fateful letter from St. Petersburg says: "Before me sat no longer the carefree cheerful boy but a grown man buried in thought . . ."

Vladimir went through his final high-school experiences with his teeth clenched. There exists a photograph, evidently made for the high-school diploma. On the still unformed but strongly concentrated features with the arrogantly pushed out lower lip lay the shadow of grief and of a first deep hatred. Two deaths stood at the beginning of the new period of Vladimir's life. The death of his father, convincing in its physiological naturalness, impelled him to a critical attitude toward the church and the religious myth. The execution of his brother awakened bitter hostility toward the hangmen. The future revolutionary had been planted in the personality of the youth and in the social conditions that formed him. But an initial impulse was needed. And this was provided by the unexpected death of his brother. The first political thoughts of Vladimir must inevitably have arisen out of a twofold need: to avenge Sasha and to refute by action Sasha's distrust. . . . But calls to battle were nowhere to be heard. Vladimir knew not how to approach the task of revenge.

• • •

[*Anna was released from prison a few days after Alexander was hanged. A few weeks later Vladimir was graduated from the Simbirsk high school with honors as its best student. With Kerensky testifying to his respectable and reliable ways, Vladimir entered the Kazan university with the intention of studying law. Bearing the now infamous name of Ulyanov and watched by the czarist police, he was expelled from the university that December for taking part in a student demonstration. After that Lenin studied law—and the writings of Karl Marx—on his own; he passed the examination in 1891, and even practiced law in St. Petersburg for a time. By 1895, however, Lenin's commitment to revolutionary politics had eclipsed his last residual concern for a respectable career.*]

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mer. For the moment, the cheering men of Flers drowned the rising volume of criticism and persuaded the public that encores were needed. Not for nothing were thousands of families receiving their packets of last effects, which sometimes included shreds of a bloody uniform suitable for burying in the back garden. Possibly the bereaved at home would not have been heartened had they known that the "cheering army" behind the tank (how relentlessly the press applied its magnifying glass to the event) was only a batch of German prisoners being formed up.

The lengthening casualty lists of the Somme seemed to touch everyone. At the beginning of September the Liberal Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, went to see the battlefield for himself. He inspected the "caterpillars," drank rather too much of Haig's old brandy (Haig thought), and urged the commander in chief not to dissipate the surprise in local attacks. One lovely hot day near Fricourt, Asquith met his eldest son, Raymond, who was waiting on horseback at a crossroads. Raymond, though overaged for a subaltern at thirty-eight, was yet the model of the New Army volunteer: aloofly handsome, a family man, and a barrister, whose sharp wit and general gifts marked him for greater things. The Prime Minister found his son looking "so radiantly strong and confident that I came away from France with an easier mind."

Raymond Asquith was mortally wounded leading the first wave of the September 15 attack. "One might have known that nothing so brilliant and precious could escape," his brother's wife, Lady Cynthia Asquith, wrote in her diary. "Now I feel I have really relinquished all hope and expect no one to survive. . . . all our intellect is being chucked away in the trenches." The Prime Minister was inconsolable. "Whatever pride I had in the past," he wrote on September 20, "and whatever hope I had for the far future—by much the largest part of both was invested in him. Now all that is gone. It will take me a few days more to get back my bearings." As Asquith's biographer Roy Jenkins notes, it took him much longer than that. He grew uncommunicative, skipped Cabinet meetings, and only by an effort of will did he get through a Parliamentary speech in mid-October. Meanwhile, Lloyd George had initiated his behind-the-scenes campaign against Asquith. The old man was clearly no longer up to a struggle for power, and the events on the Somme did not strengthen his position. In December, after nine years as Prime Minister, he resigned. Lloyd George formed a new government.

Raymond Asquith died in a field hospital during the night of September 15, and it may have been that the final earthly sound he heard was the tattoo of rain overhead. As squalls swept the darkened battlefield, Haig's last bid for a breakout subsided into the mud like a derelict tank (how many of them there were now). But the Somme, and the Somme rains, continued. They fought, says the Official History, "up to the waist in slime," and had to pull each other out as they advanced. Thiepval and Schwaben Redoubt fell, and the British took over ground still covered by the dead of July 1. Intelligence reports had convinced Haig that the enemy was ready to give way, if only suitable pressure could be maintained—and, in fact, not until the end of the war would the Germans on the Western Front again experience such a dangerous manpower crisis. The mud became their ally, as it became the chief enemy of the British. Roads dissolved into deep slime, food and ammunition had to be dragged forward on sledges improvised from sheets of corrugated iron, and horses and mules sank to their bellies and had to be shot. The "dry places" that ration parties used as stepping stones often proved to be corpses—as Edmund Blunden remembered, "Those bemired carcasses . . . have not yet ceased to serve 'the great adventure.'"

Let us follow a battalion on its way to the line one night toward the end of October. The last road has disappea into the quagmire, and the men tru in single file along a duckboard tr that extends across the plain tow the quivering glow of Very lights explosions illuminating the fr Water-filled shell holes crowd the la scape, their myriad surfaces captur cold fragments of moonlight. At ev hand the earth seems to spew up re of the autumn's events, like a giga indigestion of history: a pile of rub where a village stood, shredded stur of trees, and bodies, unburied boc everywhere, their useless gear hea around them. A shell plops in the m someone goes down, but the line me edges around him; this is no place linger. Then the duckboards end, the battalion passes over a brief ric miraculously still covered with gr At the bottom of the hill a man sho that he is up to his knees in mud. T have arrived.

The trench, little more than a has thrown-up dike, is empty: whoe they were supposed to relieve has g already. James Lockhead Jack, a Sc tish colonel commanding a West Yo shire battalion, noted in his diary en of October 24 that his men had carr out a relief in "persistent rain, d mud, shell fire and bullets." There few more quietly harrowing accou of the sullen winding-down of Somme than his, with its record of exhaustion that was overtaking b sides.

October 25: The weather has become wo . . . One patrol . . . captured 16 prison who say they would have surrendered lier but their sergeant—evidently a h hearted man—would not allow it.

We have lost today 3 officers and 41 ot ranks . . . nearly all from shellfire.

October 26: . . . There are no dugouts in forward area. . . . Officers and men have cover from the fearful weather except t waterproof sheets rigged up in the trenc to form roofs. . . . The battalion casual today number 30, chiefly to carrying par and to support companies. I am quite with wondering how to obviate furt losses . . .

Their hardships did not end
h their relief on the eighth
/; Jack and his men had to
rch back five miles at night.
was a Regular Army officer
o had seen the worst the
r could offer, including the
ughter of July 1, and he was
t disposed to open emotion.
t when he visited with his
n the next day, he admitted
at "I can scarcely keep suf-
iently composed to say a few
rds to the gaunt, exhausted,
tient lads."



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Bogged down: Mud engulfs horses pulling an ammunition limber.

But the duckboards could lead to an
en more surreal conclusion. On Sep-
mber 15 Haig's troops had captured
Sars, a single street of brick astride
e Roman road. Beyond the village,
e road dips into a broad depression
d then starts gradually over the final
dge before Bapaume, now only three
iles away. The more that chimera
ntalized, the more elusive it seemed
grow; in the next two months Haig
anaged to nudge his reluctant line
nother four or five hundred yards
wn the forward slope.

This "new valley of humiliation,"
Charles Carrington described it, was
minated by a man-made monstros-
y, an ancient burial mound that the
cals called the Butte de Warlencourt.
What Gallic chieftain slain by Caesar
the land of the Ambiani lay beneath
is tumulus we cared not," he wrote.
/hen the British had first caught sight
the Butte in September, it was still
een, but by now all vegetation had
en blown away, and it rose out of the
ud, a gleaming, pock-marked dome
chalk perhaps sixty feet high. The
rror of the machine guns that fired
wn from the slopes was probably
naginary, but it was an inhibiting ter-
r nevertheless. "That ghastly hill,
ver free from the smoke of bursting
ells, became fabulous," Carrington
rote. "It shone white in the night and
emed to leer at you like an ogre in a
iry tale. It loomed up unexpectedly,
ering into trenches where you thought
urself safe: it haunted your dreams."

He spent a total of fifteen days and nights under the Butte, an experience that left him "a nervous wreck," though he never glimpsed a German soldier.

How odd, how appropriate, that the British advance should spend itself before this death's-head, a place already haunted in its benign aspect. Its capture possessed them, out of all proportion to its real worth: the Germans probably used the Butte for observation only. Like men bent on snatching the prize from the top of a glass mountain, the British refused to give up.

Three understrength battalions of the Durham Light Infantry made the last serious attempt in a morning downpour on Sunday, November 5. Nothing seemed to go right. There was a moment in the day-long battle, though, when men of the mired battalions looked up and saw the solitary figure of a British soldier on the summit of the Butte. He paused, as if awaiting some sunlit signal of apotheosis, and then passed down out of sight. One battalion clung to the Butte until nightfall, but reinforcements, if any were available, never arrived, and around midnight the Durhams withdrew to their original lines. In a contest between somnambulists, who dreams about winning?

In the mid-1960's when an elderly Charles Carrington motored past, he was astonished to find "what an ordinary inconspicuous little mound" the Butte was. Fifty years had done their work. Certainly I had expected something more dramatic than a tree-covered hummock at the crest of a low plateau—and yet, as I found when I visited it, the place had not lost its power to haunt.

The day itself was unsettling, the chilly July sky empty one minute and splattered with rain clouds the next. The climb through a wheat field to the Butte was deceptively steep and, even on firm ground, more tiring than it had any right to be—that fact alone told a good deal about the nature of the fighting here. Blundering about, I felt oddly menaced, as if at any moment I would set my foot too heavily on a buried shell and be blown up. That King George V himself had gone up the side of the Butte in 1917 hardly mattered: it *was* a creepy place.

A rough path emerged, though, and I followed it, skirting someone's recent excavation—a salvaged brass shell head, as I learned, can bring a franc or two, and a helmet is a treasure. Finally, just below the top, I had to grab a sapling and pull myself up. Except for a covering of briar and clumps of brown grass that made for treacherous footing, the summit of the Butte was bare, permanently tonsured by fire, I suppose. Over in one corner, by the edge of the trees, stood the only indication that something might once have happened—a weather-beaten wooden cross rising from a concrete pedestal. I returned by the route I had come. This time, at the bottom, I took a different way out. As I ducked under a branch, I saw in the grass by my foot a rusted hand grenade.

How do you disentangle the meaning of this place from fifty years' growth of hawthorn? I walked out into the fields, expecting not an answer but a better look. The Butte de Warlencourt really was an ordinary, inconspicuous little mound. On October 7, 1916, this part of the line was held by the German 16th Bavarian

Reserve Regiment. That was the day the British made their first serious attempt to reach the Butte, and the Bavarians stopped them at places with names like snag trench, the nose, and the pimple. It must have been somewhere out here that a shell fragment hit one of the Bavarian dispatch runners in the left thigh. His name was Adolf Hitler.

You can almost chart the progress of the war in its casual exclamations. Sir Edward Grey's remark in August, 1914, about the lamps going out all over Europe had become, by November, 1916, the last words spoken by H. H. Munro (Saki): "Put that bloody cigarette out." None would ever be lit again in his lifetime. Lance Sergeant Munro of the Royal Fusiliers, the fashionable author of O. Henryish tales who had chosen to bury himself in the ranks, was shot moments later in a crater near Beaumont Hamel. He was perhaps the most notable literary casualty of the Great War in his own time.

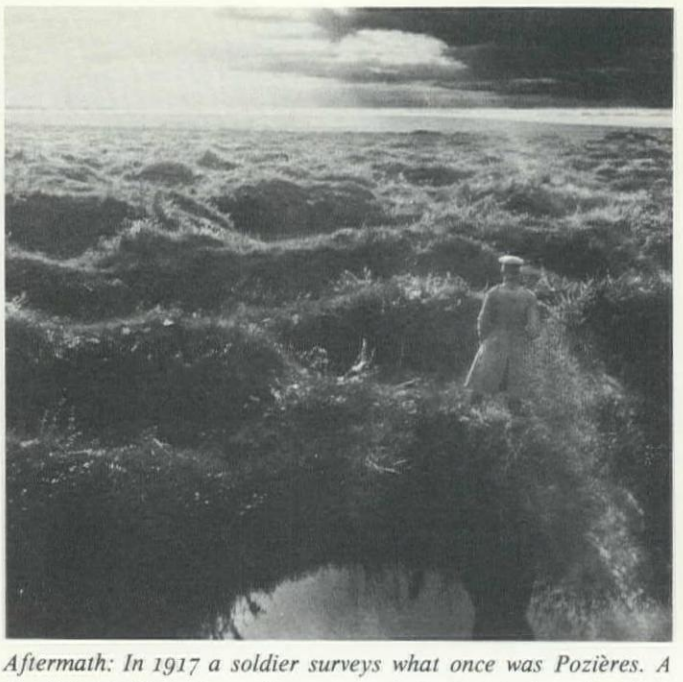
Munro's battalion took part in the last official action of the Somme campaign, an offensive set piece along the Ancre front between November 13 and 18 that caught the Germans off guard: given the condition of the terrain and the time of year, further attacks had seemed inconceivable. They obviously had not reckoned on the tenacity of the enemy high command. Though the British managed to advance the line as much as two miles, they still fell short of the objectives of July 1 in this sector. The battle of the Somme, which had begun in the pleasant sunshine of one morning, ended in the snow and darkness of another, with the indistinct figures of the infantry groping their way forward yet one more time over the white ground.

Do we judge the Somme by this final image? Almost any conclusion about it invites challenge or contradiction. Let us forget the debate over casualties immediately: you can prove anything you want according to what set of statistics you choose. If the Allies did not achieve their breakthrough, did stalemate constitute defeat? Which do we weigh more heavily: the slaughter of the first day and the missed opportunities of the 140 following, or the increasing desperation of the defenders? If the process of attrition hardly provided a stirring advertisement for itself, did its dim benefits nevertheless vindicate the principle? Who did win in the end? Or rather, who could least afford what he lost?

On that score, the decision must go to the Allies, narrowly and on points. Their losses, in a strictly military sense, were not irreplaceable; those of the enemy were. The old, highly trained core of the German infantry disappeared on the Somme. The battle was, as a Captain von Hentig wrote, "the muddy grave of the German field army, and of the faith in the infallibility of the German leaders, dug by British industry and its shells." His verdict is echoed again and again. The Germans had lost the most important battle of all, the one they contemptuously referred to as the material battle. "The German Supreme Command, which entered the war with enormous superiority had fallen behinc the application of destru forces, and was compelle throw division after div without protection ag them into the cauldron o battle of annihilation." In try prevailed where men c only endure—that is the le of the Somme, as it is o conventional modern wars

Back in September, the Hindenburg–Ludenc partnership had taken over German Supreme Comm they had ordered the buil of a vast and sophistic trench system far to the rea the Somme battlefield. It only thought of as a precautior measure at the time, but by midwint the worst in twenty years—the pros of retirement could no longer be put The Germans retreated to their positions, which the British called Hindenburg Line, leaving a deser their wake. Ironically, the Allied fantry and cavalry had become so customed to the French stalemate, were so bewildered by their first t of open warfare, that they let the emy slip clean away. You can ei take the German retreat as a m of brilliance—by shortening his l Ludendorff conserved thirteen or fc teen divisions—or as an admissior defeat. It was a little of both. As British advanced, at last taking pos sion of the Butte of Warlencourt the burned-out shell of Bapaume, t noticed a sign erected on the town of a nearby village: "Don't be ang only wonder!"

What better epitaph for the Som —or, indeed, for any buried traur "I felt that this war had made the p seem very peculiar," Siegfried Sass reflected, convalescing in an Oxf hospital that summer. "People were the same as they used to be, or els had changed. Was it that I had exp enced something that they could share or imagine?" He watched a man with a neatly trimmed be



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

Aftermath: In 1917 a soldier surveys what once was Pozières. A derelict British tank can be seen in the background at the right.

ushing his son very slowly across
: lawn in a long wheeled bed." Paus-
g in the shade, the father read him
ıig's latest dispatch. The boy said
thing. He had lost a leg on July 1.
As I write, I can't help thinking of
lifferent summer scene. It is a photo-
aph made about 1910, give or take
couple of years, and it shows a group
young men and women picnicking
mewhere in the English countryside.
ıe whole tableau has the look of a
ınk-holiday outing. The women wear
e kind of flowered picture hats that
e reserved for such occasions; the
en, clerks and apprentices probably,
ıd scarcely more than boys, pose
ound the white cloth in exaggerated
titudes of relaxation. One stretches
ıt in the tall grass, his eyes closed and
cigar clenched between his teeth, his
ad resting on the knees of a girl who
trying to suppress a giggle. Another
ung man turns away in a diffidently
ıiling blur, as intrigued by the girls
by the camera. Ties are loosened. A
aret bottle stands empty. Nailed to a
ıe of trees receding behing them is a
ngle strand of barbed wire. Did these
me men, I wonder, rush together to
in one of the Pals battalions in 1914?
id some of them plod forward at 7:30
M. on July 1, a day very like this? Did
pass by their graves?

"So ends the golden age," mourned
e official historian of the 9th Yorks
d Lancs, a New Army battalion that
st 423 men that day. The phrase may
hyperbole, but the sense of having
perienced a trauma of historical pro-
rtions is real enough. For England,
e phenomenon we think of as the
neteenth century may be Anchored
fe on those gusty ridges, Gone but
ot Forgotten. "From this frightful
rfeit dates the decline of the West,"
other historian would write forty-
d years later. He is the twentieth
ntury speaking, and whether you
ree with him or not is really beside
e point. Perhaps we all did lose a lit-
at the Somme—perhaps that is why
e image of an Edwardian picnic
ntinues to haunt me. I understand
better now what Fitzgerald's character Dick Diver meant when he said, in *Tender is the Night,* that battles like the Somme were "invented by Lewis Carroll and Jules Verne and whoever wrote Undine, and country deacons bowling and marraines in Marseilles and girls seduced in the back lanes of Würtemberg and Westphalia. Why, this was a love battle—there was a century of middle-class love spent here. This was the last love battle."

He was standing in a bit of neat restored trench—still preserved as a monument—where the Newfoundland battalion lost 684 out of some 800 men on July 1. "In front of him beneath a dingy sky was Beaumont Hamel, to his left the tragic hill of Thiepval." It was characteristic that Fitzgerald, whose sense of history was impeccable, still managed to get his directions reversed.

There was a time between the wars when busloads of people would stop at the Somme; almost no one does any more. A few regulars show up, like the old soldier who makes a point of standing, at 7:30 A.M. sharp on July 1, on the exact spot where he went over the top. One small bit of trench, the same one that Dick Diver visited, remains as a tourist attraction. You may wander through the original bays and traverses, pick up the rim of a helmet or a harmless bit of shell, and glance down the hill to the German trenches two hundred yards away. The iron wire holders with their twin loops still rise from the grass, but the wire itself was removed a few years ago: too many sheep were getting caught in it.

As many as ten bodies a year are still uncovered, and like archaeologists, the Commonwealth War Graves people sift the earth around the bones in the hopes of finding a regimental badge with a serial number. By 1971 they had accounted for 1,002 of the 73,077 names on the Thiepval monument.

Wandering one morning over those old battlefields, I met the supervisor of the Heilly Station Military Cemetery. Heilly, a pretty village on the Ancre, a tributary of the Somme, was ten miles behind the front in 1916, but two years later, when the Germans drove the Allies back forty miles in little more than a week, their advance stalled just over the hill from the cemetery. As we talked, a black steam locomotive appeared, belching thick clouds of white smoke as it chuffed its way along the line of poplars that hid the Ancre River from view. It stopped at the Heilly station, a yellow stucco building with a red tile roof that could have come straight out of a Magritte painting. The supervisor remarked that in 1916 a hospital had occupied the field by the station.

Robert Graves was brought there after he had been hit by fragments of a German shell. Graves's colonel saw him lying unconscious in a corner of a dressing station and was told that he wouldn't survive the night. The colonel went back to write a letter of condolence to the boy's mother. But the next morning, clearing away the dead, medical orderlies found him still alive and put his shattered body on an ambulance for Heilly. "Close to the station," Graves remembered, "stood the hospital tents with the red cross prominently painted on the roofs, to discourage air-bombing. Fine July weather made the tents insufferably hot. I was semi-conscious now, and aware of my lung-wound owing to a shortness of breath. It amused me to watch the little bubbles of blood, like scarlet soap-bubbles, which my breath made in escaping through the opening of my wound . . ."

I once spent a summer in the Majorcan village where Graves still lives, its most conspicuous citizen. He used to sit on the beach in the afternoons surrounded, not unwillingly, by admirers, a flamboyant old man in a floppy hat. At some point he would always climb the rocks and dive into the sea. How do you reconcile that sight with an empty field by a railroad station—a station where nobody gets off and nobody gets on, in a world made safe for the democracy of the dead?

Hwang it all—which Wong are you?

HORIZON submits the names of our political leaders to the acid test of the Chinese ideograph

There are relatively few Chinese family names (not more than a hundred of them), and these family, or clan, names, written first and then followed by a given name, are used by all the seven or eight hundred million Chinese in the world. In the classical writings of China, the Chinese people are often referred to as the "Old Hundred Names."

When one of these names is written in English, it can be spelled in a variety of ways, such as Wu or Woo; Soong or Sung; Li or Lee; Chan or Chen; Mao or Mow; Wang, Wong, or Hwang; and the fascinating vowelless name of Ng or Eng. The same problem also exists in Chinese, and to resolve this dilemma of two names that sound the same but can be written differently, one asks, "How do you write (your) honorable (or precious) name?" In other words, "Which Wong are you—'The King' or 'Yellow'?" or "Are you the Lee of 'Beneficial' or of 'Plum Tree'?" The individual questioned thereupon writes out his family name or sketches it rapidly in his palm with a forefinger. Since there are only one hundred Chinese family names, the answer is immediately understood.

Whenever barbarians invaded or visited China in past centuries, the Chinese family names obviously did not apply to them. A phonetic rendition had to be made up, comprised of Chinese syllables (each syllable generally means something) that would sound vaguely like the foreign name, and if possible, be evocative and dignified. This is happening again now, when interest in America (called Mei-Kuo, literally "Beautiful Land,") has caused a new crop of names to be printed in the Chinese press.

President Nixon's name is written with the ideographs Ni-Ko-Sen, which translated means "Mud Overcomes Forest." Dr. Henry Kissinger's name, Chi-Hsin-Chia, breaks down to "Lucky Laborious (at) Home." If Governor Reagan were to visit China, his name might be written Lei-Ken, with ideographs meaning "Thunder Root" or "Root of the Thunder," while a usually more thunderous member of his political party, Vice-President Agnew, would find that his last name, An-Ku-Niu, has the surprising meaning of "Peaceful Personality Knot."

Among opposition leaders, Senator Edmund Muskie's name, Mai-Ssu-Ki, translated as "Wheat Clever Basic," has a certain appeal to confidence and plenty, while Eugene McCarthy's, Ma-Ka-Hsi, or "Horse Cardboard Tin," makes a somewhat confusing picture. Senator Edward Kennedy's name, by an unusual coincidence, comes out Ken-Na-Ti, "Sweet Take World," a not so cryptic message to, or from, female and youthful voters.

Senator George McGovern, written Ma-Ko-Yuen, translates, appropriately, to "Wheat High Cloud"; Governor George Wallace, Hwa-Lai-Tsu, becomes "Flowery



Arriving Scholar," doubtless a reference to his stand at the schoolroom door; and Hubert H. Humphrey, Han-Fu-Li, means "Korea Prosperous Benefit." Vietnam prosperity was apparently never in the cards.

The usual characters chosen to express Governor Nelson Rockefeller's name, Lo-Ke-Fei-Le, mean "River Conquers Activity Prosperity," although a twist of a syllabic character would make it come out as "River Conquered Activity Chokes," perhaps a plea for a Hudson River expressway. Mayor John V. Lindsay's name, written Lin-Hsi, means "Forest West," but if a critic wished to slightly change the characters in this name to Lin-Tsei, it would approximate the same sound but would mean "Forest Robber" or "Bandit of the Woods," an allusion either to the municipal seizure of Central Park woodlands or to the current lack of security therein.

The slight modification of a chara while preserving its sound, has long b a medium of official Chinese insults. Th especially easy in a language where a si syllable can have more than forty diffe meanings, depending on how it is writ Recently, a Communist Party secret Li Hsueh-feng, found his name changed f "Snowy Mountaintop" to the equivaler "Bloody Weirdo." Similarly, Fu Ch'i pi, an ex-commander of the Peking rison, found his name subtly altered f "Magnificent Precious Stone" to "Co of Miserable Worm."

Frequently, while conserving the f ily name, given names are changed prove a point. The word "Mao" can m "cat," "feather," "hair," "counterfe "risk," or "cap." But in the name M Tse-tung, it means "hair" or "feather." his youth, however, Mao changed his g name to Tse-tung, "Benefactor of East." The "Chiang" of General Chi Kai-shek's name is written as "gene with the sign for grass on top—to de nate it as a family name, not to imply grass is growing on the general.

A famous though somewhat grisly took its place in ancient Chinese hist at the time of the emperor-dictator C Shih Huang-ti. This emperor, long i mous in Chinese annals because, in a c man cultural revolution, he attempted destroy all books and records written fore his reign so that history would s with him, was also the unifier of China the builder of the Great Wall. As Great Wall was being built, the numbe deaths among the construction levies creased to the point where a popular say or prophecy was circulated that the G Wall would never be finished unless thousand men were buried within it.

According to history, the resourc emperor found a man whose name cha ter, Wan, meant "Ten Thousand" and terred him forthwith in what the Chi call "The Ten Thousand Mile Long Wa thereby fulfilling at one stroke the proph and the ultimate success of his public wo project, and establishing as well the imp tance of what one's name means in Chin

By CHARLES F. BERLITZ