

VICES that British travelers note, recorded with a shade less accuracy. The business sharpness of Yankees, verging on knavery, is mentioned alike by the Italian Grassi in 1819 and the Russian Tverskoy in 1895. Moreau in the East and Von Hubner in the Far West deal in similar terms with the American tendency toward violence and homicide. The emotionalism of religious revivals, the insecurity of marriage and the family, and the widespread taste for land speculation and stock gambling are described by a dozen writers. Giuseppe Giacosa, the Italian dramatist, dwells on our weakness for the colossal and our habit of putting the dollar mark on everything. He met a millionaire who showed him around his art gallery, murmuring, "Corot, \$10,000; Millet, \$15,000," and so on. The tyranny of public opinion is frequently exposed.

And of course the visitors list all our minor faults: the oldtime tobacco-spitting, the passion for ice water and meat dishes, the rowdy manners of toothpick-chewing, feet-on-table men, the use of cheap, inartistic goods and jerrybuilt houses, and the tastes for the sensational in oratory, newspapers, and movies.

Altogether, the book might be dismissed as entertaining but repetitive were it not for one novel and impressive element. Beginning with Miss Bremer and Ole Raeder, a series of Continental travelers took pains to visit communities of their countrymen and to describe their lot in America. The two writers mentioned found that the Scandinavians had done well. But other observers struck a savage note. Giacosa furnishes a harrowing description of Italian poverty in the New York slums. The Hungarian Count Vay de Vaga und Luskod, while not unappreciative of America's better side, gives a still more horrifying picture of the miserable toil of Slav and Hungarian workers in the Pittsburgh steel mills. Henri Hauser is caustic in his account of the "disordered tempo" of American life as seen by the immigrant, and Ernst Toller expatiates upon the misery which makes a high rate of crime understandable. In these selections Professor Handlin's book, which represents not only a happy idea but a great deal of hard work, makes a valuable contribution to the readily-available material on American life. It was well worth doing, and it has been done well.

Not so much can be said for Mr. Plenn's volume. It is a slender sheaf of selections from memoirs, travels, letters, and the like, reflecting different sides of American life from Ver-

(Continued on page 36)

Ideas & Studies.

Last week we were observing in this space that a Rip Van Winkle who had fallen asleep in the mid-Thirties when Nazi Germany was threatening the survival of all the things cherished by democrats would be puzzled if he awakened in the late Forties to find the menace being played by Soviet Russia. To understand how day-to-day developments fit into the long-term trends of Western civilization, Rip or any other bewildered citizen might well read a book like J. J. Saunders's "The Age of Revolution" (see page 21) or Stringfellow Barr's forthcoming "Pilgrimage of Western Man." Such books would also furnish a valuable background for the provocative discussion of freedom and Socialism offered by the British Labor Party leader Harold Laski in "Liberty in the Modern State," reviewed below.

Current Ills and One Remedy

LIBERTY IN THE MODERN STATE.
By Harold J. Laski. New York: The Viking Press. 175 pp. \$2.75.

By MARK DEWOLFE HOWE

THE re-publication of Professor Laski's brilliant essay on "Liberty in the Modern State" finds ample justification in two related considerations. One is in the immediate importance of such an eloquent reminder that at the core of the Socialist faith lies a passionate conviction that free minds must be the first objective of a decent society. The other is found, not in the message of the original essay itself, but in Professor Laski's introduction to the new edition. There he considers the question whether there is substantial basis for hope that the liberty of which he wrote in 1930 can be secured in the postwar world.

In giving an explicit answer to that question Professor Laski not only gives a vivid interpretation of the issues which confront the contemporary world but he adds perspective to certain aspects of his theory of liberty.

Although it was evident in 1930 that Professor Laski believed that freedom would be fruitful only in a society which provided equal economic security for all, his commitment to Socialism was less explicit in the essay itself than it has become in the present introduction. Now his assertion is unqualified that "private ownership of the means of production is no longer compatible with democratic institutions." He is persuaded, accordingly, that the promise of liberty which a capitalist society can offer its people must be illusory and that under present conditions neither freedom nor peace can be secured while capitalism continues. It will not be enough, however, for the nations of the world to reconstitute their economic systems. The survival and freshening of liberty requires, in addition, the abandonment of the fiction of national sovereignty which the nineteenth century sanctified as a principle.

In other recent writings Professor Laski has outlined the same prognosis and prescribed the same remedies. The new suggestiveness in the present volume is found in the relationship which the prediction and the remedy bear to his theory of liberty. Persuasive as the introduction is, many readers are likely to feel that the prescribed Socialist remedy needs a more explicit reconciliation with Professor Laski's principles of liberty than he has attempted to provide. Fundamental to his theory of liberty is the insistence that a nation's law (and therefore, I take it, a nation's



—Harris & Ewing.

Harold J. Laski: "Private ownership of the means of production is no longer compatible with democratic institutions."

policy) cannot demand of a people conduct which seems to them wrong or unwise.

Every generation [Professor Laski says] contains examples of men who, in the context of ultimate experience, deliberately decide that an anarchy in which they seek to maintain some principle is preferable to an order in which that principle must be surrendered. . . . They illustrate the inescapable proof that law must make its way to acceptance through the channel of consenting minds.

When he spoke thus of the anarchic man whose liberty must be protected, Professor Laski presumably had the rebel, not the conservative, in mind. Yet the entrepreneur and his satellites would seem neatly to fit the quoted generalization. Professor Laski believes that private enterprise has become so destructive that it can no longer be tolerated. He does not, however, make it clear whether he would reconcile the necessary act of suppression with his theory of liberty by denying that the freedom of businessmen has significance as a liberty, or by saying that that particular liberty is a luxury which society can no longer afford. If, as I assume, he would justify suppression of free enterprise on the latter ground, it seems to me that those who are still unconverted to a Socialist faith may fairly ask for a fuller development of the justification. As the argument now stands one cannot help wondering whether Professor Laski has in fact moved away from the extreme individualism of his earlier theory of liberty. The critical reader of this volume is likely to feel that the au-

thor has created for himself an almost insoluble dilemma: on the one hand, he values freedom so highly that he defends with force and eloquence the right of individuals and groups to reach mistaken conclusions and to misinterpret the scale of civilized values; on the other hand, he believes so ardently in the principles of Socialism that he considers that the destruction of capitalist institutions is necessary if civilization is to survive. I suggest that the difficulties of reconciling the two faiths are greater than Professor Laski in this volume admits them to be, and that his diagnosis of current ills and his prescription of remedies will continue to be somewhat ambiguous until he faces the problem of reconciliation more squarely than he has in any of his recent writings.

The difficulties which I emphasize are, to a large extent, inherent in the problem and inescapable by anyone who is concerned with the basic problems of liberty in the postwar world. Certainly any careful reader of Professor Laski's book will feel that his insights and arguments are more suggestive and persuasive than those which are available in any other contemporary work dealing with these issues. If he is not satisfied with all of Professor Laski's answers he will be greatly in his debt for having been compelled to consider the right questions.

Mark De Wolfe Howe, professor of law at Harvard University, edited the "Holmes-Pollock Letters," the correspondence of Mr. Justice Holmes and Sir Frederick Pollock.

Mother-Son Tragedy

OEDIPUS MYTH AND COMPLEX.

By Patrick Mullahy. New York: Hermitage Press. 560 pp. \$5.

By BERTRAM D. LEWIN, M.D.

THE contents of this book are not exactly covered by its title. It is not a monograph covering the Oedipus myth in its variants in different places and times; its latter part consists of the plays that make up Sophocles's Oedipus trilogy. Nor do the 337 pages that precede the trilogy limit themselves to the "complex." The author in this part of the book felt that this could not be accomplished without a nearly complete summary of Freud's psychoanalysis, along with extensive expositions of the theories of Alfred Adler, Carl G. Jung, Otto Rank, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Harry Stack Sullivan, and a very brief "criticism and appreciation" of each of these writers. Where the myth is given insufficient comparative treatment, at least in accord with the reviewer's expectation from the title, the complex is provided with what might possibly be more than necessary comparison, yet the line is hard to draw objectively.

Mr. Mullahy gives a clear synopsis of much of Freud's writings, going beyond the obvious discussion of the Oedipus complex in dream, neurosis, and sexual theory, to outline some of the larger Freudian concepts, such as the theory of instinct and character development. As a synopsis of the works chosen for such treatment, the account has eminent stylistic merits of clarity, conciseness, and for the most important parts, accuracy. Freud's strictly clinical papers, those on technique, and unfortunately his later important contributions on anxiety and defense are omitted from the synopsis. True, they are apparently remote from the Oedipus theme, yet in the larger psychoanalytic framework, it is essential to understand the relation of technique and theory. A realization that the dissident authors quoted do not all use Freud's technique helps explain some of the differences in theory.

The various ways in which the dissident authors formulate the facts included in the general idea of the Oedipus complex are outlined ably, and the general differences in their points of view are commented upon adequately except for the omission of the question of technique and practice.

It lies beyond this reviewer's capacities to criticize the scholarship or merits of the translation of Sophocles. It reads very easily.

Five Clear Eggs

By I. L. Salomon

FOUND: five clear eggs in a flycatcher's nest on the half-screened porch. I didn't know as I finished the job on my day of rest where the flycatcher was as I uttered, Oh!

And what to do with my work complete,
and a nest sheared off the high eave's edge?
(Alerted in her obscured retreat,
no bird dared approach the reachable ledge.)

So I left the door of the porch wide open,
left the nest and the threatened eggs alone,
left in pursuit of my perturbed hope in
the flycatcher's instinct to claim her own.

Unassured, I returned soon after the current
crisis forewarned me all wasn't well;
the eggs, white moons to their five ends, weren't
starred in a brooch of nest hair and shell;

for a ragged tooth's fragment, rough-broken in two,
by the woodchuck's hole at the side of the house
affirmed why the thrush-like flycatcher flew
around and around the dogwood boughs.