

able that children should not grow up in ignorance of the social system under which they live. The mistake lies in supposing that such teaching can be given satisfactorily by the State. The State is a capitalist institution, and its fundamental axioms of social and economic theory presuppose its permanent existence in its present form. Labour cannot accept these axioms, any more than Roman Catholics can accept the axioms of secularism. The same logic which compels Roman Catholics to build their own schools prevents us from turning to the capitalist State for the sort of education which will make our children effective creators and citizens of the New Order. But this is a large subject, to which we must return again. In the meantime, those who advocate education ought to answer two questions—What is education, and what is its aim? For education is not an end, but a means to an end. The nature of the means will depend on the nature of the end.

UNFIT.

They found you and brought you in
From the lee of a hedge;
Sour life did your parents bestow,
Your teeth set on edge.

For you were heir to no cot,
No kisses, no songs,
And the voice of your lullaby was
The sigh of your wrongs.

Boy, you were bound to go wrong;
Poor bastard of sin,
A waif from the loins of disease
To sorrow come in.

The nettles were mother and sire,
Till Charity came
To give you the cuff and the bread
That befitted your shame.

And now you have sinned in your turn,
You wretched ingrate—
As Law in his wig has remarked,
“A curse to the State.”

You'll die in a cell sure enough,
Who were born in a hedge;
Sour of the grapes to the end,
Your teeth still on edge.

M. E. F.

THE VALUE OF LITERATURE TO A YOUNG NATION. (An Address Delivered to the Free Religious Fellowship.)

II.

Do you know, fellow-Australians, that this our land is a prophecy in course of fulfilment—that all through the ages men dreamt of this land of ours, saw it in their visions, built the ideals of old lands around it, sent indeed in the old times great expeditions to locate it, put its imaginary contours on their strange maps, and enriched their old-world poetry with the aroma of its Advent? Yes, this is the Terra Australis that was the real Ultima Thule of Greek or Roman as he gazed beyond the Pillars of Hercules from the servitude that was round him to the freedom that was to be Terra Australis, the ophir that the mighty Solomon sent his fleets to, for the building of that great Temple which is yet a symbol to us of the Temple we shall build here in the Southern Seas, whose stones shall be free men and women, whose columns shall be free institutions, and whose ceiling shall be love to all men: Terra Australis, the real Hy-Brasil which Irish seer and bard saw, and liquid-eyed Connaught peasant youth and maid now see as they gaze on a clear day over the lapping ocean; Terra Australis of Roman geographer, of medieval saint, dreamer, and voyager; Terra Australis that drew Columbus to America and Vasco da Gama to the Indies; Terra Australis of Venetian merchant, Dutch navigator and Spanish de Quiros; that Terra Australis always was, and now it is, Australia, the land of the Young. For the Tir-nan-og of the Celtic fairy stories means “the Land of the Ever Young,” and exactly describes what this our Australia will be if we let our free, pure Australian ideas well up their limpid fountains through the sand and clay of exotic accretions! Yes, Australia has ever been, for whatever was of progress, whatever destroyed the evil of the old to make room for the good of the new, whatever made for hope, for mercy, for the renovation and triumph of man in all the civilisations, literatures, and religions of the Past—that was the Australia, the land of the Ever Young, the Terra Australis of that land and civilisation! And now, by the process of the suns, and in the fulness of time, that shadowy Terra Australis, which was the dream, the Republic, the Utopia of the old, has received a local habitation in our Antipodean seas, and a name—our beloved Australia.

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Whimsical as such an argument or rhapsody may seem to some of you—I assure you it is not entirely whimsical to me—it contains this grain of justification and applicability to our present subject, namely, that we are a hope of the modern world, we are a much-watched people, because we are such a hope, we are a prognostic of what the others may hope to be, and it is our bounden duty, for their sakes as well as our own, to see that their hope shall not be disappointed—nay, that its promise shall be even excelled. And what chance have we to carve out a great destiny for tired and despairing humanity in other lands by the example we give it here, unless we not only welcome ideas and ideals, and encourage them, but also stimulate their creators? “Mene! Mene!” are words so plainly written on the walls of every European and Asiatic civilisation that to follow blindly in their paths is plain Australian suicide! And how shall we avoid those

paths unless we encourage and develop our own Pathfinders? And who, again, are these Pathfinders but the men and women with literary and artistic instincts, who live in touch with new ideas and can bring them to earth whenever we need them?

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Do not imagine, however, that in asking you to encourage the growth of Australian artists I am advocating the growth of an Australian art dealing exclusively with things Australian. So far from that, I contend that, while literature dealing with things purely Australian has its modest and worthy niche in our local temple, true Australian literature must be world-literature, to justify itself it must grapple with world-problems with Australian grappling-irons, it must see world-issues through Australian eyes, it must test the alloys of the world's chemistry with Australian acids and Australian touchstones, and cut the Gordian knot of the whole world with Australian swords. But it dare not, if it shall be the plant that shall heal the world of its woe, demand Australian soil absolute for its garden, Australian bush absolute for its shelter, or Australian underground springs absolute for its thirst. For it, too, is of world-ancestry, is a legatee, equally with English or French or Italian literature, of all that Father Shakespeare, Father Molière, or Father Dante hoarded in their treasuries, and we should be unworthy of the talents if we let them rust unused in the ground. We must banish the word "colonial" from our literary history as we are doing from our political history, and for equally good reasons. Our literature is not a colonial dependency of any land; even of the great land that gave our fathers birth: it is a literature in its own right, daring and able to rear its head with its brother-literatures of the whole world—their younger brother perhaps, but never their serf or flunkey. Such is the spirit in which we must approach this question, and any literature that demands as its right less than such an equality is, to me at any rate, a negligible literature.

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While I have touched on only one aspect of the value of literature to a young nation, namely, its power of giving the new ideas absolutely necessary for the healthy growth of that nation, it is obvious that literature is also valuable to such a nation in many other ways. Let us glance at some of them:—

1. Man does not live by bread alone. It is true that, besides bread, we have also religion in Australia—bread for the body and bread for the soul. But man is not only a physical being who needs bread for the body, and a spiritual being who needs religion, he is also a mental being who needs art and science and literature. They are the bread of the mind, and he who starves the mind of the individual or nation ultimately starves either the body or the soul, or both. Indeed, man's dominance over the other living beings of the earth depends so absolutely on his mental superiority that starvation of the human mind amounts to a crime against humanity. And let us not be under any illusion that we prevent mental starvation by our State School education and the practice of reading daily papers and the drifting flotsam of the English or local snappy press. Ordinary education merely shows us how to use our minds: the ordinary press, apart from its utilitarian supply of somewhat adulterated news, purports to give us intellectual food,

but it needs little insight to see how much of that food is so in nutritious as to produce actual starvation accompanied by the sense of repletion. To satisfy the mind's hunger, we must seek for ourselves, and we must find. If we are content to be of the Past alone, we can get good food in the classics that come from over the seas: but if we would be of the Present and Future, if we would be true Australians, we must also seek our food in the art and literature of our own country. The artist and the man of letters, indeed, are the mental flour-mills of a new nation: they prepare for us the staff of our mental life.

2. Besides being a mental being, man is also a refinable being. Apart from religion, which, I fear, is not taken very seriously by vast multitudes of Australians, Art and Literature are, next to the companionship of good women, the greatest of all refining influences. While they give pleasure, they are perhaps the only pleasure-givers which are not also pain-givers. They elevate us while they gladden, and we need not only all the elevating influences, but all the gladdening influences we can get.

3. Literature has one great and valuable power in a democracy such as ours, which is peculiarly open to the dangers of mob-passions, mob-panics, mob-excesses, and mob-follies. In modern times especially, where the power of public opinion frames laws, directs governments, and even forms taste, and where that public opinion is too largely dependent on the honesty, disinterestedness and intelligence of powerful daily newspapers privately controlled, the dangers of the mob are especially apt to arise. A vigorous, unscrupulous series of articles on almost any matter of popular interest can turn a nation into a helplessly hypnotised mob, capable of any injustice, reaction, folly, or crime. Against this danger the only safeguards are (1) a free but necessarily limited platform, and (2) a widespread habit of exercising independent private judgment in all things, which habit can be best nourished by a constant and unprejudiced criticism of current independent literature. In this respect, literature and its study and encouragement are of the utmost practical value to a free community, in that it is an anti-toxin against mob-microbes, an antidote against mob-making poisons, and a guarantee against the uncontrolled operation of the gravest anti-democratic forces latent in modern democracies.

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In conclusion, I ask all those who feel that there is a case for the encouragement of literature in Australia to do all they can by precept and example to fan the very feeble cinders of enthusiasm for literature into something like the flame that already burns for art and music. I would ask you to try to turn some of the superfluous energy now given needlessly to various forms of sport and pastime into channels where it is not only needed, but would be of great national benefit—namely, into literary channels. For it is a reproach, and even a danger to our country, that literature, which, more than anything else save religion, goes to make the soul of a country, is actually in disgrace in Australia, is actually the meanest Cinderella of all our mental and emotional princesses, and that it is so in a land which, as the seat of a new nation, needs a vigilant, virile, beautiful, courageous, and spiritual literature perhaps more than any land in the world.

BERNARD O'DOWD.