

Author of "Jurgen" Defends Himself Against the Philistines

The Judging of Jurgen Great Tumblebug States His Case for the Court of Philistia

By James Branch Cabell

THEY of Poesiesse narrate that in the old days a court was held by the Philistines to decide whether or no King Jurgen should be relegated to limbo. And when the judges were prepared for judging, there came into the court a great tumblebug, rolling in front of him his loved and properly housed young ones.

This insect looked at Jurgen, and its pinners rose erect in horror. And the bug cried to the three Judges, "Now, by St. Anthony! this Jurgen must forthwith be relegated to limbo, for he is offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent."

"And how can that be?" says Jurgen. "You are offensive," the bug replied, "because you carry a sword, which I choose to say is not a sword. You are

ing one of those vile makers of literature; indeed, I frightened him so that he hid away the greater part of what he had made until he was dead and I could not get at him. That was a disgusting trick to play on me, I consider. Still, these are the only three detected makers of literature that have ever infested Philistia, thanks be to goodness and my vigilance, but for both of which we might have been more free from makers of literature than are the other countries."

"Nay, but these three," cried Jurgen, "are the glories of Philistia; and of all that Philistia has produced, it is these three alone, whom living we made least of, that to-day are honored wherever art is honored, and where nobody bothers one way or the other about Philistia!"

"What is art to me and my way of living?" replied the tumblebug, wearily. "I have no concern with art and letters and the other lewd idols of foreign nations. I have in charge the moral welfare of my young, whom I roll here before me, and trust, with St. Anthony's aid, to raise in time to be God-fearing tumblebugs like me. For the rest, I have never minded dead men being well spoken of; no, no, my lady, whatever I may do means nothing to you, and once you are really rotten you will find the tumblebug friendly enough. Meanwhile, I am paid to protest that living persons are offensive and lewd and lascivious and indecent, and one must live."

Jurgen now looked more attentively at this queer creature; and he saw that the tumblebug was malodorous certainly, but of bottom honest and well meaning; and that seemed to Jurgen the saddest thing he had found among the Philistines. For the tumblebug was sincere in his insane doings and all Philistia honored him sincerely, so that there was nowhere any hope for this people.

Therefore, King Jurgen addressed himself to submit, as his need was, to the strange customs of the Philistines. "Now do you judge me fairly," cried Jurgen to his Judges, "if there be any justice in this insane country. And if there be none, do you relegate me to limbo, or to any other place, so long as in that place this tumblebug is not omnipotent and sincere and insane."

And Jurgen waited.



JAMES BRANCH CABELL, author of "Jurgen," who defends himself against attacks of critics.

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An Epic of the War Trench Life Is Vividly Painted in Latzko's Novel

ANDREAS LATZKO and Henri Barbusse are the two men who have described the war in works of epic grandeur. Between the Hungarian and the Frenchman there are many points of spiritual and intellectual contact. Both have served in the trenches; both paint their terrible pictures of carnage and destruction from firsthand experience. Both pity and admire the brave men driven to death at the front; both abhor the slackers and war profiteers in the rear. Latzko and Barbusse have essentially the same reaction to the savagery, the bestiality, the unspesakable agonies, mental and physical, which they associate with the trenches. Both men yearn, desperately and hopelessly at times, but passionately and deeply always, for a new birth of the spirit of human brotherhood strong enough to exorcise the spirit of hatred and the lust of slaughter forever from the hearts of men.

The parallel between Latzko and Barbusse is carried out even in their forms of literary expression. "Men in War" and "Under Fire" are works fashioned out of the realistic stuff of war, unadorned by any attempt at fictional imagination on the part of the authors. Like Barbusse's "Light," Latzko's new novel, "The Judgment of Peace" (published by Boni & Liveright, New York), is a work in which the war theme overwhelmingly predominates. "The Judgment of Peace" bears to "Light" much the same relation that "Men in War" bore to "Under Fire." Of the two men's art Latzko's is unmistakably subtler and deeper. Barbusse is a physical realist. Latzko is a psychological realist. Barbusse stresses the external horrors of the world conflict: men in hospitals rotting with gangrene, corpses assailed by putrefaction, ghastly rows of skeletons hanging on barbed-wire entanglements. Latzko also depicts these horrors with realism made more poignant by intense pity and burning indignation. But to him the supreme outrage of war is not the crucifixion of the body, but the crucifixion of the soul. It is in his description of the psychical sufferings of his characters that he attains his greatest heights and depths of power and feeling.

Although it is held together by a single thread of narrative, "The Judgment of Peace" is almost as episodic as the collection of stories included in "Men in War." And with what terrible vividness the author drives home the effects of war upon men of weak nerves and delicate minds! The poor little school teacher, accustomed to a placid, uneventful life, who breaks down and becomes a blubbing coward in the trenches; the gentle poet, who is sent back to the rear a raving maniac after he has seen the terrible sights of the battlefield; the great pianist, who commits suicide rather than return to the brutal tyranny of the typical German "unteroffizier"—all these figures stand out with clearcut and terrible vividness. It is doubtful if an American could have written such a book; its despair, its unhesitating defeatism, its utter lack of all national feeling or patriotic spirit could only be born out of years of weary fighting in an unjust cause. Latzko flames with passionate anger against the men whom he holds responsible for Europe's holocaust of slaughter. His feeling bursts out in the following characteristic passage:

"With superhuman force that great anger broke forth again in Gedsky, that raging, sobbing and yet imper-

'The Rainbow' and 'Jurgen' Cannan Says Posterity May Take Books Now Banned

By Gilbert Cannan
"It is the voice of the sluggard I heard him complain.
"You have waked me too soon,
You must call me again."

THE familiar jingle is the best possible diagnosis of the trouble in which those singular beings, D. H. Lawrence and James Branch Cabell, find themselves. Humanity's chief trouble is inertia, and those inconvenient persons who attempt to break it are frequently themselves broken. However, let us, above all, be good-tempered about it. If posterity wants "Jurgen" and "The Rainbow," posterity will print them. The present generation does not want them because they are in advance of current morality, and those whose idiosyncrasy it is to care for morals, to the exclusion of good sense and every other social consideration, demand their suppression.

In these matters there is no better text than that supplied by William Shakespeare in the line:
"Love is all truth; lust is all forged lies."

It may or may not be a good thing to suppress vice. Personally, as a libertarian, I incline to the view that every attempt to suppress only increases its frenzy, for, as they say, murder will out; but it is important that those who believe in attempting to suppress vice should learn to distinguish it from truth, otherwise they are apt to tamper not with the delusions of the human mind, but with its means of expression, than which it has no other means of development. Humanity wants to know the facts about itself and the need increases with its knowledge about the facts of everything else. Every new invention, every great social development imposes upon the writing artist a higher standard of integrity and urges him away from the charm and toward the necessity of his work. A modern novelist, living in a time of great stress and profound change, can no longer accept the convention which deprived the characters in a work of fiction of both passion and intelligence in order that novels might be read as easily and indolently as the newspaper, until at last novels came to be written as easily and indolently as they were read. Compared with such novels books like "Jurgen" and "The Rainbow" seem to be startling and violent. The men who wrote them have actually had the audacity to ignore the lassitude of the modern reader. They have discarded the superficial view of human relationships and have had the temerity to explore their intensity. Cabell upon their transcendence; but both are good artists and are reverent before the wonder and mystery of their material. Unfortunately, the indolent modern mind, in the sluggishness of its decadent Puritanism, sees none of the reverence and that is aware only of what seems to it the

honesty, but if they are so timid as all that there is no great loss.

The case of "The Rainbow" is of the two the more amusing, because if ever there was a morose, hard-boiled Cromwellian Puritan it is D. H. Lawrence, and for the Puritans to assail him is for them to show how little grasp they have of the logic of their own case. In "Jurgen," on the other hand, the Puritan may find his natural enemy, the aristocratic individual who does "not give a single damn," and then the Puritan is baffled, for no attack can impinge upon that individual's imperturbability.

The matter is serious and worth writing about at length, because modern society is hectic and confused for lack of the authority which only art can give it. Indeed, these periodic assaults upon books which are a few years ahead of their time are perverted expressions of the need of that authority which is withheld by, among other things, this pathetic confusion of pornography and literature. There should be a rallying of writers everywhere to make it plain to the public that literature cannot possibly be pornographic, and that there is no simple fact of human nature that cannot find expression in art. A dirty book is, God save us! a thing of nought. It must perish of its own dreariness. A work of art is a thing of vital necessity and society tampers with it at its peril.

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