

## Two Hours of Sunshine

By Rex Gunn

(Editor's note: The following oration, which took second prize at the Pacific forensic speech league contest held at Stockton, California, April 16 and 17, was presented by Rex Gunn.

Gunn's after-dinner speech, "Youth and the Liquor Problem or the Race for the Bar Room Door," was also awarded second prize.)

Sunshine spanning two consecutive hours in Oregon anytime between late September and early May, comes with all the brilliance of a renaissance.

It was such a morning I recall. Sunlight splashed each thing; it gave each sodden leaf—dropped and dead six months before—a sudden breathing quality.

It lit up the hills—they lost their sulky hue. It made the soil blush brown, a fertile loamy brown. It gleamed off the blades of a lawnmower—cutting through green, lush grass.

Yes, the season would again be warm and good, that day was the promise. It held more of peace than any treaty could.

But then—then the talk began: "Sending wheat to Europe! Did ya see it in the papers? We're sendin' wheat to Europe! We're gonna feed those beggars so's to keep 'em alive so they can send back atom bombs."

And more talk: "Walked out they did—every mother's son walked out—and now on top of steel an' wood an' streetcars, ya can't even call your friends to gripe about it. By God, they oughtta make 'em work; ten cents a day and food enough to keep 'em on the job."

And more: "War! War with Russia! Mark my words, we'll have it within six months."

And finally: "Yeah, got a knife right in the guts he did, but it was only a nigger. It's like I always said: let 'em kill each other off. It'll save us the trouble later on."

And the black talk dulled the unfamiliar brightness of the sun that day in Oregon—just as it does all over the United States—just as it does, I suspect, all over the world.

What does it mean? Where is the source—all the curses, all the dogmatic assertions, all the cocksure damnations of man by man.

Are we really black in soul? Are our tongues rooted in venom, our hearts in hate, our hands in blood? Is man, by nature, bad?

Let's look at the record.

There was a man named Kublai Khan—and there were men slain and disemboweled—there were women raped and babes impaled and cities burned and afterward came plagues, and hungry mouths, and scarred souls—yes, there was Kublai Khan.

And there was Charlemagne: a mighty king, more noted murderer; Juan de Tarquemada, pious brute, Spanish Inquisition trigger man; John, the English killer with a crown; Isabella—war for royal whimsy; Pharoah—sword hilts bathed in infant blood; Herod—he murdered the first born; Midas—greed; Beelzebub—cunning; Moloch—hate; Belial—hypocrisy; Judas—Iscaariot.

The list is long and growing.

Many men have followed these, many more may even now be drawn that way. We can't, with seeing eyes, look back and say the record lies.

The list is far too long and the evidence too damning.

The facts are there. Whether bad or not by nature, man has far outdone the beast in beastiality.

Man has literally fashioned scales of human flesh to weigh his scientific progress.

First, there was naked steel—means to till the earth, banish famine, forge machines—but naked steel was busy tasting blood.

Next came gunpowder: force to blast mountains, harness rivers, clear forests—but gunpowder was

busy pushing lead through human bodies.

The automobile, the tank, the airplane, the atom—they're all busy.

Busy right now resting—but we know what they're resting from, and fear what they're resting for.

Is man, by nature, bad?

The record is black, the facts are damning; but there are other facts and the record is incomplete.

There was a man named Abraham—and he was enough in soul for a nation's faith; Job—the name still stands for patience; Socrates—humble wisdom; Sevanoroli—strength enough to save, none to kill; Galileo—man first, science second, and he was a great scientist.

But we need not remain in the past. There are such names among us now. Louis Pasteur—his shots kill death; George Nobel—prizes for peace; Clara Barton—a miracle on a red cross; William Booth—the Salvation Army; Will Rogers—simple truth; Walt Whitman—poems for man; and Franklin D. Roosevelt—regardless of what may be said politically, his dimes march on.

These are famous names, but they do not stand alone. There are unnumbered little names behind each one—little men who carried out the big man's dream.

That list, too, is long. The evidence behind it is convincing. Man has risen above—himself to help man.

Why, then, with the prevalent good men have founded in the world—why is it we hear a bedlam of hate, spite, mistrust, and malice for every whisper of faith, reverence, and love.

Why this unwarranted abuse of man—this wholesale cynicism?

We ask and the cynic answers: knowledge.

Knowledge, he says, breeds doubt and doubt investigation, and when we investigate man—we get the cynic.

Does this explanation really suffice?

Does cynicism begin in knowledge?

No man had more thorough knowledge of human psychology than Jesus Christ. Can we call him a cynic?

No man has yet reflected more deeply on government than Socrates. And the very government about which he knew most, under which he was a citizen, condemned him to die. Yet, the only bitterness for Socrates was in the hemlock he drank. Why didn't he turn cynic?

No, the knowledge of the cynic is shallow—an adolescent, it fancies itself a sage. It mistakes a means for an end. It can know the body of man, but it can never know man.

For man is more than his body, even more than his intellect. He is more than I can say he is.

He is the great, driving force behind a consciousness that spans this earth and makes it but a factor of his life. He journeys throughout eternity, his body far behind, a resting place when he returns; a catapult which he will leave again.

And he is that because of one thing—he believes!

Call it faith, call it confidence, perspective—call it what you will—man believes. He knows a glory in his name.

Without that, he is a beast.

That faith extends to all things and it embraces all things including man.

And it is the lack of that quality which today fills this earth, this state, and (very probably) this building with abusive nonsense.

This faith answers an emphatic "no" to our question: Is man, by nature, bad?

And it is not a blind no for it sees the blackness in a Daschau or a Buchenwald—it sees the hell in men's hearts—but it also sees ten million toil-blackened hands

## LITERARY PAGE

### Paging You

By Adele Hart

Perhaps you veterans will not like to read this column. Men returning from overseas have scoffed at many of the books which have been published about them. They say, "Why don't people stop thinking of us as a problem, a walking enigma which has to be studied and analyzed before one comes near it, a potential atom bomb, a bunch of "dead end" kids who will kick politics and domestic life around like a football. Why can't people think of us as normal human beings?"

One veteran said that while in an army hospital with a bad leg injury, he pushed himself down the hall in his wheelchair to the hospital movie every night, always hoping some nice nurse or helpful person would do it for him. People marched right by him with only a passing look of pity in their eye. One night a Grey Lady pushed him along, but first she said, "Soldier, according to the books we've all been reading, it is not right for me to do this. You will be resentful and that will be terrible for your morale." He sighed. "Lady," he said, "I wish you'd all quit reading books. I don't care about my morale, I just want to get to the hospital movie faster."

Any Point to Books?

Is there then, in view of the

reaching into ten million sweat-slick pocketbooks and producing two hundred million dollars for one, single purpose: to help men those hands have never known. That happened in this nation last year; the agency was the American Red Cross.

How can we measure faith like that; how can we measure what sways rational men to die for their friends; how can we measure what enables a mother to smile at the mystic pain in her womb; how can we measure what prompted Beethoven to write great music, he himself could never hear?

How can we measure what gave Abe Lincoln no rest until he freed the black man? For Abe was white.

We can't measure it—we can't even name it.

We only know it is a belief in yourself, your friend, and the omnipotence which hovers above your insight. We only know it is what we need very badly. We know it is what we must have if we are to survive our own inventions.

How can we get it?

There is a way and it is not by piety or ritual.

It is not by curses. It is not by undue emphasis on the beastiality, the stupidity which is ours.

It is by emphasis upon the strength, the courage, and the dream which is also ours. That dream: a free world of men who love mankind.

Badly as we need it, there are others who need it more. They are the men yet unborn. They will be here soon with open minds, clean hearts, straight bodies. They will follow where we lead them; they will look at what we show them; they will believe what we tell them.

Shall we tell them: you are man whose soul is black—whose tongue is forked. You were conceived of hate, you will live in blood, and you will die a beast.

Or shall we grant the black, affirm the rest, and tell them what we saw beyond, embracing both.

### The Wine

A gilt of sunlight on the floor,  
A laughing face shone in the door,  
An eager hand grasped praising mine,  
A bright flecked eye raised up to shine  
Its song of love, like red, red wine. . .

The sound of laughter filled the air,  
Like twinkling bells without a care,  
The rose outside then spied the groom,  
And tossed its fragrance in the room  
To dust away the demon gloom.

Shades of rain and dusk on the floor,  
Memory's face left through the door,  
A precious hand tore quick from mine,  
A tear flecked eye was not to shine . . .  
I took the cup and drank the wine.

—Jeanne Wiltshire.

average veteran's attitude, any point in these books? For us civilians, yes. If we get the right book and use the knowledge we gain from it with discretion, remembering that we are in contact with an individual, not a machine.

On the seven-day book shelf you will find "The Veteran Comes Back," by Willard Waller of Bardard college and Columbia university. It is one of the few discerning and realistic histories of the journey of the American soldier from foxhole to family. It shows why, strangely enough to us, the ex-soldier feels more of a hatred toward the whole "caste system" of the army than he does toward the enemy he fought.

It is surprising to learn, that after taking a type of Gallup Poll among chaplains, Waller found out that there has been no great conversion of atheist soldiers into religious ones in this war. Returning men do not care too much about sermons unless they come from the lips of men who know and understand thoroughly what they have been through and are ready to help them constructively. Said one chaplain after months of service on a famous ship, "I am very much attached to the human race having lost all hope in it."

Unstable Marriages

It is revealing to discover that from the history of the postwar period after World War I, more unstable marriages were made after the war than before it. What was the reason? Hysteria and the lapse of normal living during the

war made couples so anxious to get married after it was over that the vows were taken with even less thought than they were during the war. Waller shows us how this factor will come up in World War II post-war marriages.

We see, above all, through this book, the complete change the soldier has to make from being expendable for so many months or years to suddenly being an individual with family and government responsibilities and the necessity to make decisions which have all been made for him in the past. We see that we are all responsible for our veterans, sound or unsound, healthy or sick, from their years in the service. As Waller puts it, "they are our boys whom we delivered to Moloch; our finest and bravest, a whole generation of men-children. We must somehow find the way to win them back." In his book, he gives us some decent, logical ways.

It is a good study to read this book and then to compare it with "Johnny Comes Marching Home" by Dixon Wecter. Here's a tip, though. Don't tell your veteran, whether he's husband, brother, or sweetheart, what you're doing. It makes him feel like a specimen for a biology class.

### CLASSIFIED

LOST: Bracelet, silver hand-wrought. By Stewart Nye. Return to Dean of Men's Office.

FOR SALE: Used 6-tube Philco car radio, G. Aplin 1533 Agate.



GALS

TO

Secure & Display

That Golden Tan

We Have the  
—LATEST—  
In Summer  
PLAY - SUITS  
For You

Gordon's