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in the world, one can warp a child's outlook for life while another could lead him in the right direction with the material provided by the average radio and film programmes and second-rate literature.

The modern Santa Claus in the hands of intelligent civilised beings can be a symbol of the triumph of reason and loving kindness over the fears and superstitious propitiations of the dark past. The glamour of Santa Claus to the child is that he has gifts showered upon him from an unknown hand without any guilty feeling that there has been a sacrifice on the part of the giver. If at no other time, at Christmas he escapes into the reality of a safe, reasonable and kindly civilisation.

But believers in a peace enforced by the atomic bomb would, like our primitive ancestors, who felt obliged to offer up human sacrifices for the Santa Claus



"... Unfortunate in his brand of Santa Claus?"

gifts of air, sunshine, rain, and flowers, sacrifice all the wisdom, the light, and the truth to which it has taken mankind centuries to attain.

I am afraid these worshippers of power would lead us to make as big a mess of things as the ants and the bees who on a "strict basis of reality free from escapism" have founded a perfect state from which they cannot escape.

—A DUNEDIN MOTHER.

"What Did He Mean?"

MAJOR-GENERAL BROCK CHISHOLM certainly packs a punch: and I suppose we must commend anyone who attempts to tell us how we can adjust our thinking to the Atomic Age and how mankind can make the colossal effort of imagination and will necessary to bring about a social and political adjustment to it. This is a deadly serious subject and many people still find their minds numbed by the whole thing. But it is difficult for us to judge what General Chisholm really had to say about it, for his address has been high-lighted and telescoped in turning it into a news item. What did he mean by teaching children to believe in Santa Claus? Did he mean it literally? Probably not, or only incidentally. Read the news item again. He probably meant giving children any kind of wishful and unreal picture of the world and what it is like, and here he had an arguable enough case.

Taken literally the matter of Santa Claus is simple enough. Make-believe is spontaneous in childhood. Children

know it is make-believe and love it just the same. It is of course possible to harm children by shaking their confidence in their parents' honesty if they are deliberately deceived about Christmas presents, but parents nowadays, if they bring the commercialised Father Christmas into their homes at all, do it as part of a shared game of make-believe. That is not how escapists are made.

On another point, about the salaries of professors, the Major-General was dead right.

—PROF. I. L. G. SUTHERLAND
(Canterbury University College).

"Let Them Be Children"

I RELISH the downrightness of Major-General Brock Chisholm's statement, but I emphatically disagree with it. The cardinal axiom in rearing and educating children is, to my mind, to let them be children—in other words, to let them do and think and feel and eat as befits the immature growth stage they are passing through.

If this is done a child will still receive as a result of home, neighbourhood, and school associations an ample ration of realism. Indeed, where life is rough and ready as in congested areas he may receive too much. The "Dead End Kids" suffered from just such an overdose of realism.

In addition to such everyday realism a child needs free play for his imagination and his feelings, for in the paradoxical world we all have to contend against the idealism of thought and sentiment thus fostered is just as essential as the power to grasp facts.

Major-General Brock Chisholm seems to me to wish to revert to the sort of matter-of-factness which Dickens detested and attacked in *Hard Times*. That admittedly propagandist story showed pretty convincingly that Mr. Gradgrind's regimen of facts and nothing but facts for the young minds he controlled was their ruination.

The free play of feeling and fancy just because it is both free and playful, is as essential to children as fun and make-believe are to puppies, or tails to tadpoles. It is part of their way of life. If as children they are lucky enough to disport their imaginations they may later on become those most enviable people, grown-ups who are still able on occasion to play.

I see things the opposite way from General Chisholm. Instead of trying to turn children into miniature adults, aghast at perils and problems they are too puny to cope with, I would have adults on-the-make turn their undoubted "making abilities" in the direction of making a world fit for children to play in. Santa Claus would not be out of place in such a world, and later on his power to revive freshness and warmth of feeling at least once a year would be a contribution to human fraternity, not an international debit.

After all, why should the atomic bomb be such a grim thing? Is it not partly because in our fact-grubbing we have lost touch with the emotions and imaginings that, by poeticising life, can alone give it its true value—a value we from time to time strive pathetically to recover by recourse to the various forms of alcohol.

—F. L. COMBS
(Well-known Educationist).

Pity I'm not an oratrix

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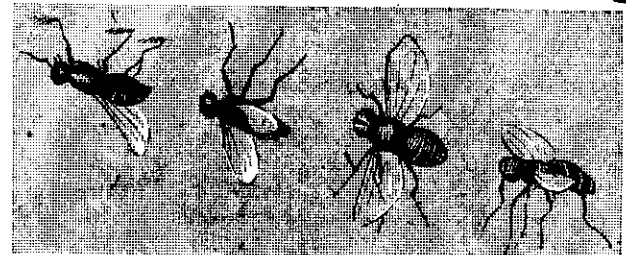


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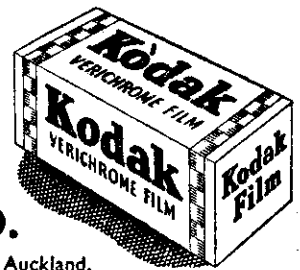
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