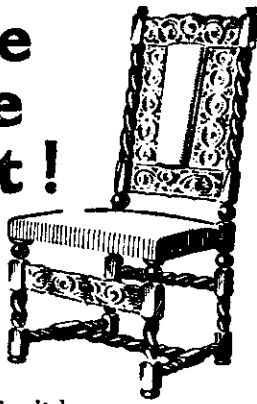


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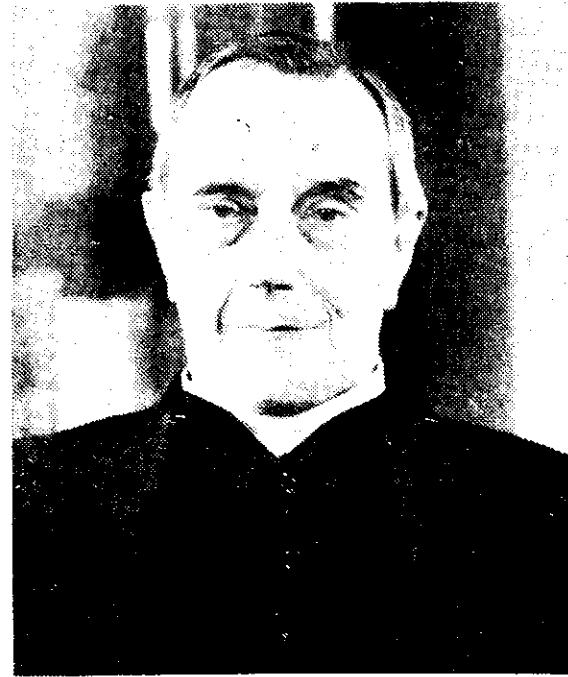
Change Without Decay

THE END OF AN AGE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By William Ralph Inge, formerly Dean of St. Paul's, Putnam

All may be well; but, if God sort it so, 'Tis more than we deserve.

YES, it may cause some surprise that the venerable and learned Dr. Inge is now mingling cautious optimism for the future with his caustic strictures on the contemporary world. The essay which gives its name to the volume consists of an acutely penetrating summary of the views of 11 modern philosophical or religious writers, of diverse nationalities, all of whom more or less pessimistically take it for granted that we are witnessing or have witnessed the last stages of the Graeco-Roman and Renaissance civilisation; of these writers he finds himself in cordial agreement with one only, the Dutch medievalist Huizinga, who indeed paints a gloomy picture of the diseased condition of our times, but thinks that the diseases may work themselves out if "the Churches succeed in purifying the hearts of their members." No doubt a great many of us will agree. The remaining essays, political, philosophical, and religious, are all closely related, and influenced by the same line of thought.

The note of hopefulness, to which Dr. Inge has not hitherto accustomed his readers, is to be found in obiter dicta throughout the volume, such as "The promotion of a non-economic standard of values is in every way desirable. The prospects here are not at all discouraging," or "Christopher Dawson is too pessimistic"; or "Berdiayeff is too uncompromising in his judgments" (O Dr. Inge!); so that the reader begins to look for other possible signs of change in Dr. Inge's outlook. It is said of Florence Nightingale that in old age she developed a new character and



DEAN INGE

Some light amid the encircling gloom

became docile and gently submissive, presumably as a result of some endocrine redistribution. How far has the change gone in Dr. Inge? For change there is, noticeable enough to one who remembers his uncompromising evangelicalism in the days of the Kensitite agitation and the Newman statue controversy; in the days when he was a brilliant young don imported from Cambridge to Hertford, who organised and presided over serious breakfasts for sober-minded undergrads united in disapproval of Pusey House. In those days he eschewed qualifications in speech and writing:

O weak may might could would;
How feeble ye for evil or for good!

Nowadays may-bes and perhaps are not infrequent, and his attitude towards individual Roman Catholic writers shows a benevolent appreciation. But in spite of mellowing and touches of imprecision, nearly all of the old Dean is left for us to enjoy. His philosophic acumen, his wide range of reading, his amazing memory—he was born in 1860—for apt references and illustrative quotation; the assured certainty of his religious conviction, broad-mindedly indifferent to all but essentials; the assured certainty, by no means broad-minded, of his political creed; above all his wit. Quotation here is very difficult because, as is the case with Heine, the wit of his apothegms is interwoven with the context. One example of his powers of riposte may be given. A public lecture; a heckler: "We must go with the flowing tide" (of socialism)—"Any dead dog can do that, and any live dog can lick his master's boots."

In his political outlook Sir William—to call him for once by a title he seems rarely to use, one from a list of honours almost as long as the list of his publications—Sir William is in complete agreement with Hayek. (It's a curiosity of English law that a knight apparently may lawfully drop the "Sir"

while a baronet may not.) His utterances are fiercely trenchant: "A vast bureaucracy strangles the vitality of the nation. An all-pervasive tyranny . . ." or: ". . . a democratic despotism which will destroy human liberty and spiritual

initiative as effectually as Communist or Nazi terrorism." One turns with some relief to see him open his arms wide to welcome any form of sincere religious belief. "We include in religion the disinterested search for the true and the devout homage to the beautiful" (art pleased, shade of Auguste Comte?) or: "It may be that in the future religious experience, as opposed to external authority, will be the 'impregnable rock of faith' . . . there will be an end to the insolent arrogance of exclusive ecclesiasticism." And he attaches no particular importance to church attendance.

In this remarkable collection there are a few cases of unfortunate wording, or worse. Thus on p. 94 "mathematics ignores time." Or: "The

Tasmanians, savages of a very low type"—a queer statement from one who lays such stress on non-economic values. The records of the first contact of Tasmanians with Europeans give a different impression. Even more surprising: "I suppose St. Paul had not read Plato" (p. 69); even if this was meant to refer to some particular work of Plato's and not to all of him, it seems a gratuitously unnecessary supposition. Our greatest living Neo-Platonist undoubtedly knows that Plato was the author most widely read by cultured men in such cities as Tarsus. And on p. 196 he, who has much Latin though perhaps more Greek, nevertheless misderives and so misuses the word "comity." But a book to be warmly recommended to readers who appreciate the forcible expression of the result of thought and learning applied to the circumstances of to-day.

—G.W.Z.

SOLDIERS THREE

THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-45. A Strategic and Tactical History. By Major-General J. F. C. Fuller. Eyre and Spottiswoode, London.

ITALY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR. By Marshal Pietro Badoglio. Translated by Muriel Currey. Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press.

SEVEN ASSIGNMENTS. By Brigadier Dudley Clarke. Jonathon Cape, London.

THE war of 1939-45 was, says General Fuller, a "cad's" war. A brawl of unrivalled inhumanity, it was fought with "Mongoloid destructiveness," without recognition (except by Russia) of its political ends. Warfare is an art, he contends; its object is not slaughter and devastation but to persuade the enemy to change his mind.

The chief cad is undoubtedly Mr. Churchill. He is responsible for the obliteration of German cities and the destruction of the balance of power in Europe by strategic bombing; he is responsible (with Mr. Roosevelt) for the Allied policy of unconditional surrender; he is responsible (with Mr.