ON WAR BOOKS

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

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FEAR that the poet Campbell is largely forgotten, though many things about him may be and should be remembered. He wrote "Hohenlinden," a rattling good battle lyric, with a rhythm really like the rushing of horses. He testified to a better age of English liberal opinion, by writing the hackneyed lines about the destruction of Poland, and how freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell. I do not know whether anyone remembered it when the nation regained its rights; there was certainly no doubt that pedantry and hypocrisy shrieked when Kosciusko rose from the dead. I need not make a further parade of the very few facts I know about Campbell. He used to wake people up in the middle of the night with an idea for a poem, and demand tea; a questionable habit. But there is a story told about him which is now something of a parable. In other respects, I imagine he had the normal notions of his time and country, and was not insincere in his patriotic poems. It was therefore the more surprising to the company, when he rose to his feet at a dinner of English literary men, in the middle of the great war which included Hohenlinden and The Battle of the Baltic; and proposed the health of Napoleon Bonaparte. A storm of protests broke; but Campbell calmly waved them away. "I will admit," he said, "that the Emperor is a usurper; that he is the enemy of our country, and if you will of the whole human race. But, gentlemen, let us be just to our great enemy. Let us not forget that he shot a bookseller." Here again, of course, he spoke under the conventions of his time. Nowadays, meaning the same thing, he would have said a publisher.

Animated by some principles, I solemnly lift my hand and say in tones of moving sincerity and emotion, "Heil Hitler!" Hastily clothing myself in a field-grey uniform, a brown shirt, a steel helmet, and a ritual vestment covered with a pattern of swastikas, I proclaim deepest heart's devotion to the Leader. And, in case this causes any such momentary surprise as was stirred by the toast of Mr. Campbell, I hasten to explain the special cause of my feelings. Herr Hitler and his group have done many things of which I cannot approve. They murdered a number of people without trial during a sort of week-end trip. They murdered a man merely for being an influential Catholic; and, what is even worse, explained that they had murdered him by mistake. They beat and bully poor Jews in concentration camps; and, what is even worse, they do not beat or bully rich Jews who are at the head of big banking houses. They talk about preserving the purity of their blood. They commit every crime. But let us be just to our great enemies, or to all our enemies, great or small. Let us not forget that they did destroy, not a mere bookseller, but themselves. Let us not forget, in fairness to them, that they did make a bonfire which burned to ashes a very much boosted book called "All Quiet On The Western Front."
field, it is admirable that they should have nothing but publicity on the book-stall.

It is in a very different sense that a saner generation will cover up such things in shame. It will recognise all the horror involved in any case; but it will perhaps consider this sort of publicity the most horrible thing. The time will most certainly come when we shall be much more ashamed of the war-books than of the war. Never before has such a laborious effort been made to discredit even the desperate virtues, with which man can confront the tragic accidents of his history. Another war-book, of this pessimistic and paralysing intention, has been lately penned, though with very much less success; and I do not propose to advertise it here. It is enough to say that it was taken up and advertised by one of the big capitalist newspapers; because the horrors it described were carefully confined to the French army. It thus became useful to that great propaganda in our press, which is dedicated to the dignified and enlightened end of abusing all foreigners. Foreign armies have mutineers; foreign armies contain cowards; foreign armies have panics or false accusations of panic; foreign armies have court-martials; and, being foreign court-martials, they are frightfully unjust. This is that carefully selected and exquisitely balanced combination of pacifism and patriotism, which now blooms in our press, and which by either name would smell as sweet. For my part I vastly prefer either howling jingoism or wild fanatical peace-at-any-price. The merit, and even the original sincerity, of books of this sort may vary a great deal; but neither could have given them the sort of practical importance that they have had. In a great many cases, the work partakes of the character of hack-work. It exhibits the commonplace tragedy of all mass production; in its disproportion of responsibility. The important person in such a story is not the author but the publisher or the publicity man or the very uncritical critic. The only intellectual interest is in a new and abnormal motive; which is not so much a sense of tragedy, as a hatred of anybody being made the hero of a tragedy. Hagiographers might overrate the torments of martyrdom; but nobody before ever wanted to under-rate the martyrs . . . This is a literary number; and I had meant to talk about the literary quality of such works; but I find there is not enough of it to talk about.

**“FREE BANKING” By HENRY MEULEN**

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Of interest to all who wish to preserve liberty Contains also a criticism of the Douglas proposals. The “Bankers’ Magazine” states: “A time when ‘planning’ is universally popular and every nation is leading a life ordered by government of one sort or another, a plea for individualist policy is all the more brave when it is applied to banking which, even in Great Britain, has been brought within the turmoil of political arguments.”

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**Book Production and Typography**

**By Eric Gill**

We may assume that the business of book production derives from the fact that somebody had something to say which the scribe was persuaded to write out on the understanding that he would “get his money back” from the author or from buyers of books. There are still many people with something to say, but the business of book production has long since ceased to be so simple. The tables have been reversed; instead of the author employing the printer, it is the printer who employs the author. By printer, in this connection, I mean of course the publisher, newspaper owner, advertising agent, etc. In fact, book production does not now exist because people have things to say, but because book producers have machinery which must be fed. Other things come into it. For instance, the reading public before the time of compulsory education was very much smaller; to-day everybody reads books, everybody has the habit of reading, everybody must be supplied with something readable. People go to a Boots library and say to the Assistant: give me something to read; people get into the train in the morning saying to themselves: I must buy a paper. Reading is like smoking, a habit and a dope, and this habit is the main-stay of the man with the machines.

But all this business of reading comes down to us from pre-industrial and pre-compulsory education times and we are still dogged by typographic traditions belonging to the past. There is the same difficulty in all the different arts, in architecture, in clothes, even in amusements. And the difficulty of dealing with it is made greater by the fact that it is not clear to us whether we should attempt to perfect our industrial world on its own lines, or to destroy it and go on to a better way of living, or whether we should continue the 19th century practice of attempting to make machine-made things look like hand-made. Adherents of the different ways of thinking are all carrying on together. I myself, if I may say so, belong to two camps at once. I say that the present kind of world is a bad kind for human beings, but that if, for reasons outside my control, “machinery has come to stay” and all that, the sensible thing to do is to abandon the pre-industrial styles and develop the perfect machine-made thing. I say I am in two camps, because while advocating the perfecting of industrialism and even designing printing types and other things suitable for machine production, I elect to live in a manner outside industrialism and to produce tombsstones and sculptures of an almost Anglo-Saxon primitiveness. Thus I get the best of both worlds, or rather, the second best, for while I can beat the industrial designer at his own game, I do not really like his world, and though I work in my primitive Anglo-Saxon manner I cannot produce any sculptures as good as those of the time of King Alfred.