

VI - 73 C - 17. Smedley, Agnes "Lin Yutang Scolds and Warns", book review
of Between Tears and Laughter by Dr. Lin Yutang.
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The Progressive's Bookshelf

Lin Yutang Scolds And Warns

BETWEEN TEARS AND LAUGHTER, by Dr. Lin Yutang. The John Day Company. \$2.50.

Reviewed by
Agnes Smedley

THE ROLE of the liberal, believes Dr. Lin Yutang, the Chinese scholar, is to be "a gadfly that stings the buttocks of the wise and mighty bull which is the State." As a convinced liberal and democrat, he sets out to sting the Anglo-American imitators of Hitler, diplomats, experts, and professors who try to subject common men by concocting imposing arrays of statistics and "facts" to prove this and that. In conclusion, he tries to smash the theory of "determinism," or "mechanical fatalism" which afflicts the western world, and replace it with ethical principles such as may be found in the teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, Lao-tze, and Mencius. He throws in Confucius here and there.

As a gadfly, Dr. Lin has achieved success. The first proof came from a reviewer on the *New York Times* who let out a cry of wild fury as soon as he had read the book, then proceeded to say that Dr. Lin dares criticize us though he had made a "fortune" from his books in this country. Such a viewpoint would do credit to a money-changer.

Americans who want this to be the last war, who believe in the Four Freedoms—and a few additional things also—will welcome Dr. Lin's warnings and criticisms, though they may find some of his viewpoints unsympathetic. Despite weak sections, on the whole the book is packed with strong and nourishing intellectual food. Its chief value is its simplicity, clarity, and humor, enabling the busiest farmer or worker to read it easily and with profit. Also: a rippling stream of humor, satire, and whimsy, runs through the pages. While reading such serious chapters as "The Future of Asia," for instance, one repeatedly runs into a rivulet of satire such as this:

"Fear, I am told, is one of the greatest driving powers of mankind. Ladies are afraid of mice, diplomats are afraid of birdies, and I am afraid of diplomats."

In a conversation between a hypothetical diplomat and his elderly lady secretary, we suddenly find ourselves out on a broad stream of withering satire. Dr. Lin strives in such manner to strip the halo from the brows of diplomats who operate in the dark like bedbugs; and who keep all the facts from the people and then tell us that we should surrender our judgments to "experts" who alone "have all the facts."

The best parts of this book deal with the problems of Asia during and after the war. Few Americans realize the deep distrust with which every Asiatic man and woman regards the British. Dr. Lin warns us that the present Anglo-American leaders—the British in particular—plan to restore the French, British, and Dutch Empires in Asia, and try to keep China so weak that it can be easily exploited after the war.

Dr. Lin takes up the fight for the freedom of India, for the return of Hong Kong to China, and for the right of subjected peoples to national and racial equality. If the post-world war is to be policed by an international police force, he says, quite rightly, that this should be done only by peoples that have no record of aggression against others. This would automatically rule out not only the Germans, Italians, and Japanese, but also the British, French, and the Dutch. The

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Ghilchik in the London Daily Sketch

Eskimos, Javanese, Swiss, the Chinese, and the Americans, he thinks, would make very smart world policemen.

I personally would eliminate the Chinese and Americans for I don't like the present secret police in China, and I think Americans have a tendency to regard themselves as the world's natural saviors. That leaves us with Eskimos, Javanese, and Swiss. I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to have some Icelanders and Norwegians. The Swiss ought to be ruled out as policemen lest they revert to type and start building hotels everywhere.

I can't agree with all Dr. Lin's ideas. To me, Confucianism is unadulterated feudalism which has blocked China's progress for thousands of years, and has had to be fought by every Chinese reformer. Also, Dr. Lin says that every thinking person today must choose between Chiang Kai-shek or Winston Churchill. And some of us would not know just what use to make of Dr. Lin's God, who bobs up throughout the book. Neither do we want to give up our water or plumbing systems but hope, instead, to see them extended to the homes of the simplest Chinese farmer. Also, despite Dr. Lin, freedom from want, fear, sickness and disease, are not merely mechanical materialist goals, but basic human rights to all born on this spinning ball of mud.