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eighteenth centuries, and reached dramatic expression in the French Revolution. Liberty, equality and fraternity here were believed to be much more important than meditation upon eternity, and to make some contribution to the ideal's realization in social systems was more virtuous than building chantries where prayers might be offered for the dead.

All that Professor Baillie says may be true, but I should prefer to go further back than the Renaissance. Why not begin with the Gospels? Jesus came to a religious people and an other-worldly generation. The literature was sacred literature; the problems were theological; even the recreations were largely connected with religion. Learned men argued over texts; others were absorbed in the complexities of ritual; and the most speculative vied with one another in describing the seven heavens and discussing problems of marriage in the eternal city whose streets were of gold and walls of jasper and gates of precious stones. A book of a later date reveals the thoughts of many generations and in it Heaven is described as "a great space shining with brilliant light and blooming with un fading flowers and full of spices and sweet-smelling plants, incorruptible and bearing a blessed fruit, and a perfume that spread far beyond the boundaries of the land."

Jesus came to that world, but He painted no elaborate picture of Heaven. He maintained considerable reserve upon the subject, and when He spoke it was in such a simple yet satisfying phrase as "My Father's house." To people who talked freely about hidden mysteries Jesus was hardly a religious person. He was lax in fasting, irregular in His views on the Sabbath, indifferent to most of the things that were considered important. He was a secular person, preferring feasts with publicans and sinners to debates with rabbis or prayers with priests.

What did concern Jesus? Anyone can find the answer by looking through the Sermon on the Mount. He begins with a description of the blessed life and the character of those who are to be the citizens of His Kingdom. He

proceeds, in dealing with the Law, to such practical matters as murder, adultery, divorce, perjury and retaliation. He goes on to subjects much discussed by priests and rabbis—almsgiving, prayer, fasting—but deals with them in an essentially human way. He speaks about the futility of anxiety and the evil of censorious judgements, and when He refers to the altar it is to say that if one is offering a gift and then remembers that there is a dispute with a brother one must first be reconciled to the brother and then offer the gift. There is nothing other-worldly about it: it is humanistic in the best sense of the word.

Yet no one calls Jesus a secularist for the wisdom is steeped in reverence and the humanism is set in an environment of eternity. In the language of modern philosophy, the realm of variable and perishable matter is related to the realm of eternal essence and from it draws its significance. Underlying all the teaching is faith in God, without which Jesus has nothing to say. For Him, as it has been said, "the human value is not the ultimate, but only the penultimate value; the last and highest value is God the Father."

Here is the true other-worldliness. The sphere of operations is in this world, but the foundation is in the spiritual realm. Without that foundation social service lacks stability and endurance, and religion degenerates into formalism. The essence of religion, according to Schleiermacher, is that we are conscious of ourselves as absolutely dependent; and history teaches that such a religious dependence issues in moral independence and initiative. Self-contained piety—anxiety about personal destiny and indifference to the generation's needs and political and economic remedies—is a perversion. Professor Malinowski declares that even in savage creeds religious faith establishes, fixes, and enhances all valuable mental attitudes, such as reverence for tradition, harmony with environment, courage and confidence in the struggle with difficulties and at the prospect of death. Much more might be said of the religion of Jesus.

WILD TREES IN BLOSSOM

By H. E. BATES

FOR four months, from March until the end of June, the wild flowering trees of this country are at their best. Unlike the trees of gardens, they seem to have no years of shyness, the uncertainties of cold and rain and sunshine never seem to affect them, and with one or two distinguished exceptions they flower only at that time, between first spring and midsummer. Yet while they flower they are immeasurably glorious. The best of them are the trees of poets; they are to the world of trees what the lily and the daffodil are to the world of flowers. The humblest of them are the treasure grounds of bees, the ivy in late summer as rich with bloom and honey-scent as the sloe is thick with scentless stars of snow in March. And all are common trees, hedgeside and wayside trees for the most part, with nothing exclusive or niggardly or exotic about them. They are in fact the friendliest and loveliest of trees.

The blackthorn opens the season and the honeysuckle, I think, ends it. And they stand distant not only in time but in all other respects too, in scent and shape and colour and effect, the blackthorn so very cold and snowy, the little star-shaped blossoms so pure and icy, the real pristine emblems of the breaking spring, and then the honeysuckle rich and sun-coloured, the flower-head a lovely and fantastic clustering of many flowers in one, a cornucopia of softest amber and cream and ruby, with

the scent of heaven. And if the blackthorn is one of the shortest and perhaps even the very shortest of all in its season of flowering, then the honeysuckle is certainly the longest. It begins in midsummer and goes on through haytime and harvest, renewing itself in warm autumns until that richness of wine and amber is lost among the colours of dying leaves about the empty corn fields. The Irish, I think it is, have a legend that the honeysuckle is the strongest of trees. They might with equal truth have had a legend that it was the tree that never rested. For the flowers have scarcely been replaced by the shining seeds of cherry-colour before the vine is breaking into new leaf again, so that often in midwinter the honeysuckle is the true evergreen of the woods, in brilliant and almost full leaf long before the black branches of the sloe have been threaded by the flower-beads of cream that are its first sign of life in March.

The blackthorn flowers on into April, reaching its glory as the cherry begins. By the end of the month the cherry outflowers it. There is something earthy about the blackthorn; it is a dwarfish tree, almost stunted, always near the earth. But the wild cherry flowers against sky, in white grace and magnificence, with true ethereal loveliness, visible from afar off. In orchards the cherry will grow to great extent, but not height. But in woods the wild cherry, hemmed in by oaks and

chestnuts and trees of equal growth, rarely grows to great extent, but very often to immense height. A wild cherry will grow to seventy feet, flowerless until the extreme tip lifts itself above the crowd of neighbouring trees, the thick white clustering of blossom floating above the wood like a cloud on the mountain of colouring branches, never still in an April wind. After the catkins, it is the first glory of the woods. It is equalled only by the hawthorn, the may, the first glory of the hedges. The may is erratic; of all the wild flowering trees it fluctuates most with the season. The cherry blooms infallibly in April, but the coming of the may is never certain. So that today, which is May Day as I write, it would be hard to find the traditional branch of it, though I have seen it in bloom in other and colder springs in the first weeks of April. But when it finally blossoms there is no uncertainty at all about it; its flowers are the risen cream of all the milkiness of Maytime. Its scent has the exotic heaviness of a summer in it, very like the pungent vanilla half-sweetness of meadowsweet. It is so like the blackthorn and yet so unlike it; the blackthorn, with its black naked twigs that have no suppleness or tenderness, bears flowers of frost, but the may branches are never cold or stiff or naked. The leaves of emerald are full blown and the flowers with their pin-hearts of claret spill and foam and cascade down the hedgesides with a summery richness that no other English tree, not even the elder, can equal, splashing the grass and the earth underneath them with cream that turns to pink as time goes on and the sun increases.

The crab comes with the may, and the elder after them. The crab stands apart. It is the sweetest of all trees, the pure cups of pink and white truly sweet, without the vanilla drowsiness of the rest, the upturned blossoms smooth and light and shining, like spring silk. And after it the elder, bringing back the odours of may and meadowsweet again, only half-sweet, falls again like the may in great cascades of even richer cream. How is it that this current of cream and white and pink goes on and on through the wild trees of England almost without break or variation? The chestnut and the crab and the wild rose and even the blackberry are white and pink. The dogwood and the elder and the lime are cream. The rest are white. And all are scented, either with that summery faintness of the may or with the absolutely pure sweetness of the crab and the chestnut and the rose. We have no wild exotic blossoming trees of scarlet or blue or purple. There is a sort of northern delicacy, almost fragility, about them all. The flames of the chestnut candelabra burn sweetly and quietly, many little flames of softest pink in the white cups of wax above the drooping clusters of seven leaves. The rose has no passion, only that immeasurable and matchless sweetness that fills the hot days of June and July as the heavenliness of the lime drenches the summer nights.

Only two trees break the sequence of pink and cream and white, the gorse and the broom. And curiously they are the smallest and most brilliant of all. They are trees of flame, the broom flaming up in May with little passionate tongues of yellow, the gorse burning throughout the year from one end to another, flickering or flaming up with solitary or countless flames of blossom according to the season, never resting or going out, a tree of perpetual flowering fire and darkness.

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MARGINAL COMMENTS

By ROSE MACAULAY

WITH the arrival of our so-called summer, lovers of cold air and hard beds are, no doubt, laying their plans for agrosomnia, or sleeping in fields, ditches, haystacks and any other undomestic dormitories that they may chance on. But the wealthy are, since General Spears's Bill for amending the Vagrancy Act became law, not so secure in their *al fresco* slumbers as they were. Time was when cash was the passport to an undisturbed night in the ditch. In reply to the "Here, what's all this?" of the inquisitive officer of the law, one had but to produce from one's pockets visible means of subsistence, and the constable passed mollified on his way. True, the Act coupled with this financial test a test of eloquence, a stipulation that the sleeper out should also "give a good account of himself"; but it is said that this, if the cash was exhibited, was usually waived, and that the plutocrat, even though inarticulate, was left to his slumbers.

Not so now. Money will no longer avail him. He (or she) may be a very Croesus, a Vanderbilt, a film star, and wear it all on his (or her) person; rich and rare may be the gems she wears; her lap-dog may eat out of gold; she may feed pearls to her parrot and lie enwrapt in golden cloth; he may clink guelders and rustle bank notes before the constable's dazzled eyes, his head reposing on bags of rubies, opals, chalcydonies and grass-green emeralds; it will avail him nothing. "Very nice, Sir (or madam)" the unmoved, if dazzled, officer will comment, "but I must have your account of yourself. Money won't help you now. Your life story, Sir, if you please."

Out will come the official notebook and pencil, poised in waiting for the stream of eloquence that will entitle you to your simple repose. Woe to you now if you cannot speak with the tongues of men and angels; if you stammer, halt, blush, fall asleep. Woe to you if, awoken rudely in the night by the flash of a torch in your face, looking up to see a navy-blue form brooding over you, you cannot forthwith begin, "I was born of poor (or rich) but honest parents, who nurtured me in piety and the fear of God. I have always remembered their exhortations, and (until the recent speed-limitation of cars in built-up areas) have never been in trouble with the law. You find me sleeping in this ditch because I like ditches, because I am very brave and hardy, and love the greenwood gay, and despise the silken sheet." If such plausible words as these trip glibly from your half-awakened tongue, well. With a grunt, the Law will pass on its way.

But if you are tongue-tied, or flippant, or unconvincing, or if your autobiography does not chance to take the fancy of the officer (perhaps a hard and stolid man) he will hold you a rogue and vagabond within the meaning of the Act, unless you forthwith take up your bed and depart at his direction to "a reasonably accessible place of shelter." How many miles of walking our peregrinating country constabulary might think "reasonable" for a fatigued man or woman disturbed from slumber in the night, perhaps after a hard day, can but be guessed; but, however many, the unplausible of tongue will have to walk them, and seek admittance to the nearest casual ward, there to lie among hard-faced overseers and restless companions and insects, until morning brings, before they are allowed to depart, its allotted task. Refuse to seek this shelter and you are a rogue and vagabond, and may be kept at hard labour in a House of Correction for any time not exceeding three calendar months. Rich and poor are, in fact, now in the same case, which is as it should be, and the pass to the *al fresco* bed is not the pocket but the ready tongue. It is better, but not yet good enough.