

We Review A Huxley Book

The book *Eyeless in Gaza* by Aldous Huxley is all about life. Rather, the bouquet of life; so little of the scent of the rose, and most of that a mere illusion or at most a sensation of just being young, and so much of musk and rue. A work of Huxley, the book is of course delightful throughout; and I think it will prove more pleasing to folk outside of England than to English folk at home. Huxley is the one English man of letters magnificently broader than England's shores in intellectual curiosity. Not all English admire the catholicity of knowledge that recognizes the fact that an Australian ranch has quite as much to do with the matter of British mutton as has a Shropshire meadow, and many of them are not prepared to accept it.

Huxley at any rate, can view Fifth Avenue from a bus—not condescendingly: Englishmen will be first in conceding that this is not a universal English trait.

Eyeless in Gaza is a what-not for thoughts. You are invited to hang it full of superfluous reflections of your own, incumbrances giving you perhaps a stuffy feeling: the Spring overcoat you are glad enough to wear downtown of a morning, that by noontide tortures you until you fairly fling it at the books in the hallway. By this time, worst of physical annoyances to hirsute man, your wrists are sweating under

the coat-cuffs and the perspiration runs down into your gloves. Huxley has recognized that a man may be garmented in too much thought, in the morning of his life when the slightest breeze of experience chills him through; and so he has made this book, and blazoned it with a sign, *Cloak Room*.

Gaza of old was a Philistine capital, which will signify a mart as well as a caravan station, that Israel often cursed but never conquered. It was far south, perhaps the shepherds never cared to march in force so far. But Milton says, as Huxley quotes, *Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves*. And why slaves? Why, to turn the mill. And our Gaza? Our existence. And the rulers of our Gaza? The fates, the gods forsooth: to a Christian, God in upper case. And what is in Gaza for us? Nothing but the mill, where we go by the sense of touch. And then our business in Gaza? That of slaves, blinded slaves of course, forever at the sweep—the sweep that turns the mills of the gods while they grind slowly yet exceedingly fine.

You see, the young Oxonians and their belkes, who are Huxley's characters together with celebrities who gravitate to their company naturally, essay most remarkable adventures. They will to do so much, are equipped for it too, yet in the end are condemned to do so little. In the beginning, ah yes: they will tolerate no gyves on their limbs, not much they won't; they will not be taken prisoner in combat, sold on the block at Gaza, and doomed to turn the mill.

But really, however much they will think otherwise, there is nothing else in store for them. And, not after such lofty effort, but after lesser effort equally poignant to us who are denied Oxford, the Museum and the Circle, neither is there ever anything else in store for all of us. There comes a day when we are at the end of our years, and fall at the sweep. Then we are thrown aside quickly, and the shackles cut free from our ancient limbs will soon serve for one of our children.

This, I say, is Huxley's thesis. To show how eyeless the human victim is, he jumbles the chapters chronologically. Well, all slaves at a mill-sweep were not shackled there at the same time: some were taken as boys, some as old men. Nor did all fail at the same time, by dying or going mad: such things go without saying, and make all the allusions clear. Mary in 1926 is still adorable, but in 1928—many intervening chapters later, naturally—she is a hag addicted to morphine. This is fourteen years after her daughter, Helen, has descended to promiscuity almost professionally: but God! with what reason! Then too, it is one of the very latest of the chapters in which Brian drops away: not defiant, still a man of utter faith capable of his daily stint in the *Guardian* at Manchester, but broken hearted and unable

physically to go another turn. Many times he has felt the lash, never once resented it. He shrugged as it lay on, bent harder to his task and went ahead. All right, his thought ran with the open wounds, perhaps he had been dogging it; if so, it had been mean of him, while he had not kept up his part he had been unfair to the others; . . . the lash! a reminder after all, however harsh—he would lean harder to the sweep and redeem himself.

From childhood almost, Joan and Brian had been sweethearts; circumstances, mostly Brian's forgetfulness of self in effort to help others, always postponed the wedding . . . at last Joan, mistaking Anthony's gesture of mere commiseration, struck Brian with the blow that she was breaking it off, that she and Anthony, Brian's warmest and most loyal friend, visiting him at the time, were in love. If this was so, why had Anthony not come out with it? How could he be there, under Brian's roof, sharing Brian's bread and making intellectual excursions with him, skulkingly hypocritical all the time during a spiritually rejuvenating visit?

Joan's jibbering letter was a travesty of truth. She believed, getting at things through the touch of them, but only she was party to her faith. Yet it did for Brian. Days later they found his body in the woods, he had escaped the monster in his house. It fell to this monster, the brooding friend Anthony, to see to the burial, comfort the mother, lie inordinately to Joan by telling her he found a letter from her to Brian, unopened—he was returning it to her, not knowing what else to do, since evidently it had come to the house after Brian had gone away to the woods. Ill health was obviously Brian's difficulty. She was not to take it badly.

Then indeed did the Mill with slaves grind fine.

From Brian in 1914, Mark and Anthony in Mexico seeking surcease with Don Jorge and his rebellion in 1934. The discrepancy is twenty years, lively ones too, but you retain

the thread leading safely through the labyrinth by visualizing the blind slaves at the sweep: shackled there at different times, dying there at different times, chucked aside at different times—if not surreptitiously bartered to a Jew or a passing Arab scholar who practices black magic and vivisects carrion on pretext of discovering thereby, facts relating to the living flesh.

Beppo is the weakest of the Oxonian slaves, essaying the wisdom of selfishness but failing very early. Huxley uses him as a caricature of contemporary polite perversions; it notes an England somewhat at contrast with the England that punished Wilde. Booh! Booh! the preachers say of Beppo's weakness, in order to frighten children; and nearly all the world preaches. Beppo who so delights in Berlin in 1928, is incident, no more.

At the sweeps of a mill such as the Gazites had in Gaza, or such as those of the gods, the different slaves come boldly into the eye at intervals, pass, and you see their labor closely, go round whilst others pass, and reappear again. The subtlety of Huxley's management of





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New & Old Highways . . .

(Continued from page 9)

Mindanao and Sulu, it was agreed that the writers of this article should prepare two road construction programs:

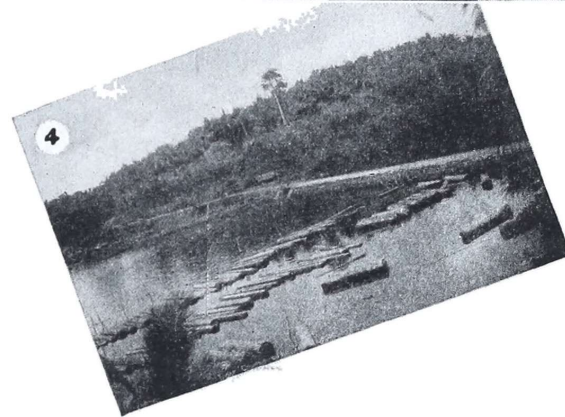
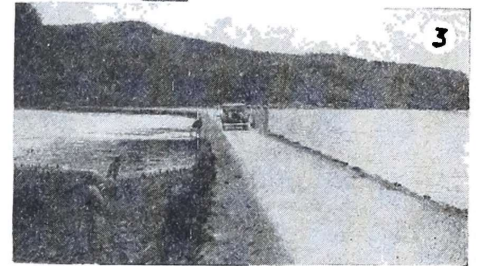
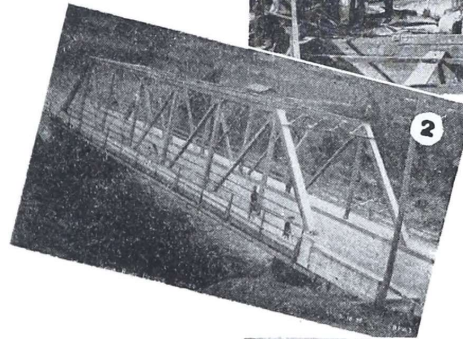
- (1) A two-year program to be financed from the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Funds, and
- (2) A five-year program to be financed from the excise tax money, or from funds to be appropriated by the National Assembly.

This program aims to complete all the interprovincial roads now under way in the northern provinces of Mindanao.

If the total estimated cost of P23,658,000.00 can be made available from the excise tax of P100,000,000.00, it will permit the complete construction, within five years, including maintenance, of approximately 3,000 kilometers of new second class roads which, together with the existing roads, will give Mindanao and Sulu such a complete highway system that will provide all the transportation and communication facilities necessary for the extensive and intensive development of the natural resources of this region. However, in the event that this total amount cannot all be given at one time, the program can be adjusted in the order of the relative importance of the projects, and construction work can accordingly be undertaken as funds are made available from time to time.

(Please turn to page 34)

1. Misamis-Tanyag road, Km. 47. Misamis Occidental.
2. Agus River bridge, Lanao.
3. Binuni Causeway, Km. 18. Mambayao-Sagay road, Oriental Misamis.
4. Tugar Causeway on Km. 46. Lanao.



Read

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his chapters carries out Milton's allusion in some detail, yet need not escape us; if it is a bit harsh, surely it is not mystifying.

Laboratorially specific as *Eyeless in Gaza* is, it is not depressing. It shows that man strives and nothing ever comes of his effort, but at the same time you are left inklings of hope that all this strife is worth while. This is not tossing a beggar a bun. For it is believable—truly, in our time as possibly never before, thanks perhaps to the emancipation of woman, that the cortices of our brains can be more deeply set with understanding, and that man, Oxonians and Upper Middle Classers eminently included, can evolve a formula of conduct that will make life tolerable, if not comprehensible.

Not another word on this, however. Huxley's book is rugged with reality and must not be smoothed out.

I know, I think, about the blinding of the slaves at Gaza—an allusion Milton must have had from the bible. At least I know that when they harness an ox to a sweep, they cap a blinder over his near eye to prevent his becoming dizzy, eventually dazed and finally mad. If the Philistines blinded Jewish slaves at the mill of Gaza, it had, beyond doubt, a simple

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economic purpose behind it. Why, as to that, since it probably postponed madness, we can see very readily that it was for the slaves' own good: the oracle at the temple of Dagon could justify it on grounds of enlightened piety, as we can well surmise it invariably did. An adversion on nothing at all, in particular—*Eyeless in Gaza at the Mill with slaves*, kismet!—recalling only that Huxley did not write without a purpose, and that Gaza may be nearer than we think.

Sampson once went to town in Gaza. He had been carousing and boasting as usual, and when he went to bed the Gazites watched where he lay and whom he chose for bed mate. In the morning, they swore vengefully among themselves, when his mighty strength should be dissipated by wanton indulgence, they would lie in wait for him and slay him. But Sampson terminated his pleasure in Gaza at midnight, no doubt because some woman whispered to him of his peril, and he rose and went his way to Hebron, whence he carried off with him the gates of Gaza including the bar thereof. But he left the Mill with slaves intact, Jehovah moved him not to destroy it.

When Sampson went again to Gaza, Delilah had shorn him of the source of his strength, "the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." Who would barber a slave? None in Gaza, so Sampson's seven locks grew out anew and returned him his gigantic strength—nor had the sweep softened his muscles; and he avenged the mayhem by pushing down the pillars of Dagon's temple and burying himself along with the Philistines in the ruins.

All the time Gaza could not be taken. Huxley's metaphysical Gaza is much grander of course, and infinitely more invincible. But it is right for man to besiege it, some time it may prove to be as pregnable as Jericho. In Huxley's closing chapter dated 1935, Anthony offends many citizens by the tone of his public addresses. He is mobbed. Mary is beyond mourning, so it really matters little: Helen has found someone else, whom she has already told Anthony she likes better.

—W. R.

George F. Luthringer

—Secretary to the joint preparatory committee on Philippine affairs.

"I wish to acknowledge with thanks the copies of the July and August numbers of the Chamber of Commerce Journal. The members of the Committee will find the various articles of great interest."

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LETTERS

John Grunder

—former Manila business man
now reachable at 3 Lewes Crescent
Brighton 7, Sussex, England.

"It gets my goat to see that day after day the Philippines become a greater and greater *unknown quantity* to the average Englishman. Here are a few facts:

"There is no office in London where one may obtain mining and investment information on the Islands.

"As from the first of July the new and faster Air Mail Service to India, Malaya, Siam, China and Japan was inaugurated and the postal rates reduced about 40%, *except that to the Philippines which was increased 35%*.

"Of the 12,000 cigar stores in Greater London only 15 carry two brands of the very cheapest Manila cigars and these at millionaire prices of a shilling and sixpence per cigar.

"Recently at a public auction very valuable historical books and documents on the Philippines were sold for a song, a great loss to the Philippine National Library and Museum.

"I was talking to a Filipino gentleman, whom I believe was once in charge of a Bureau of Commerce and Industry office in America, and he expressed the view that such an office here in London would be of great benefit to the Islands. Please excuse my writing you on these matters, I do so only because they will be of interest to your *Journal* and should be brought to the notice of the proper Philippine government officials—your worthy *Journal* with all its ramifications being the most appropriate means of doing so." (The data in this letter were immediately forwarded to Secretary Vargas at Malacañan, but Mr. Grunder's address is also given here should any reader wish to contact him personally: he seems to be in a mood to assist, at least to some extent, in enabling the Islands to reach the London market with sundry manufactures. We have always felt that a vast trade in Philippine cigars could be established throughout the world by a form of cooperative among local manufacturers enabling them all to be represented in one field by one salesman or agency, and quite without regard to the brand of cigars thus sold, to share the profits. This might require a special export agency with brands of its own. At any rate, an expense unwarranted by one manufactory can easily be undertaken by a group, and under one formula or another the problem ought to yield to solution.—Ed.)

G. H. Fairchild

—Philippine Sugar Association
Regina Bldg., Manila

"I did not know that it was your intention to publish my letter on the Chinese sugar situation in the American Chamber of Commerce *Journal*. However, the story is as follows:

"Upon a number of occasions the suggestion has been made locally, presumably in all seriousness, that a substantial portion of the Philippine sugar crop might be marketed in China after the American free market is lost, by inducing the Chinese to use sugar in their tea. I recall seeing in China some years ago cylinders of stone said to be 5,000 years old, upon which there were inscriptions descriptive of the high state of civilization in which tea drinking became an esthetic ceremony. There were many other evidences on the cylinders of the high state of civilization China had reached when our race was still roaming about the Teutoburger forests. There was no mention at that time of the use of sugar in tea by the Chinese. In fact, quite the contrary, the drinking of tea was then and it is still today in Japan and presumably in China a subject of esthetic art. I have never heard of Chinese taking sugar in tea, and I doubt whether they could be induced to change the habit of 5,000 years without considerable force being employed in the process.

"On the assumption that there are 500 million Chinese in China and the consumption of tea averages a cup per capita per day and that a teaspoonful of sugar will be required for each cup of tea, 500 million teaspoonful of sugar per day will amount to a total annual consumption of sugar in China of 2,851,562 short tons.

"On the assumption that at least two of General MacArthur's highly trained Philippine soldiers would be required to hold each Chinaman while a third soldier forced him to drink sweetened tea, I leave it to your statisticians to calculate the length of time it would take to introduce the use of sugar in tea to the extent it is employed in England and elsewhere.

"Another factor, of course, must be considered should independence be granted in three years we would be forced to sell our sugar in the world market at a price which has averaged for some years about 1 cent a pound. The expense and effort to teach the Chinese to use sugar in their tea would be lost, as there would be no sugar left in the Philippines to export to the world's market.

"The 'sweet reasonableness' of sugar seems to have created a bitter problem for the Philippines. Not only has it created 'sugar barons' who apparently lost their profits through the activities of 'gold diggers', but the destruction of the sugar industry will leave the Government with no immediate or prospective substance. The powers that be are on record as having been against the establishment of a free trade market in the United States, so we cannot blame the Filipinos for the unfortunate consequences of the destruction of the baronial sugar estates.

"This, in brief, is the outline of a story I promised to give you as to the prospects of selling 1,000,000 tons of sugar in China for the purpose of destroying through the use of sugar the aroma of the tea so dear to the Chinese".