

A BONNY FIGHTER

' I MANAGED to elude my protectors,' writes Mr. Arnold Lunn, 'and slipped out with a friend into the square, where the Communists were organizing a demonstration.' Mr. Lunn is speaking of the preliminaries to a Glasgow meeting of the Friends of Nationalist Spain, and he goes on: ' We joined the demonstration . . . "There's no pep about this show," said my friend; " let's wake them up . . . Now then, boys, step on it. Down with Lunn, the baby-killer."'

' Down with Lunn,' I shouted.

' Down with Lunn,' the crowd repeated. . . ' Eluding the police, I reached the platform just in time to see the champions of democracy surging through the door. Thanks to their co-operation the meeting was an outstanding success.'

Mr. Lunn is a bonny fighter. The Church in England is happy in the possession of a number of Catholic laymen who are brilliantly equipped intellectually to fight the cause of the Church and are often less trammelled than the clergy in doing so. Mr. Lunn, a convert of some seven years' standing, is peculiarly qualified to rank in the Church Militant. Of outstanding originality and intellectual capacity, and with a real taste for profitable argument and discussion, he has made a name for himself in more than one walk of life, in the world of ski-ing, of journalism, of international travel. His accession to the Faith was based on hard thinking and argument, and his considerable classical scholarship found in the Church the true inheritor of the Roman order and the reasoning intelligence of Greece. His Creed is refreshingly straightforward. ' I came to bring, not peace, but a sword.' Christ preached a hard Gospel; Catholicism is not easy to practise; those that preach it, therefore, are not popular. If the Church is not disliked, it is not doing its job. As a

ruthless and accomplished foe of the Church's enemies, Mr. Lunn takes care to see that they dislike him.

This Autobiography* does not lend itself to synopsis. It is not conspicuously well-arranged, and the points which the author wishes to make are not always sufficiently emphasised. 'I knew exactly what I wanted to say before I began to say it . . .,' is his own lament, at the end of one enchanting chapter, and Mr. Lunn must rest assured that we shall want to hear much more of his life which he can properly give us. *Come What May* is a series of brilliant cross-sections over a lively and industrious career, and the chapter headings range from Nazi Olympics to Notre-Dame (Indiana), from Why Men Climb to Science and Atheism. Apart from the chapters on ski-ing, and the autobiographical sketches, a single serious theme can be detected running through the whole—a contrast between the cultural backgrounds of Greek Athletics, of Catholic Chivalry, and of Nazism. The Greek is the pure human being, the rational animal *par excellence*. To the Greek reasonableness Christianity added the divine element of Grace. 'To the Hebrew the soul was the supreme reality; to the Greek the body.' The contrast is between the statues of the Greeks and the statues of the Christians.

Pheidias and Praxiteles reproduced with faultless accuracy every external detail of the body; Donatello and Michelangelo achieved a biography in stone.' What Nazism has done is to deprive man, not only of the divine inheritance of the Christian, but also of the rational inheritance of the Greeks. Metaphysics has gone the way of theology. When a Nazi jurist proclaims that the criterion of International Law is that whatever benefits the German Folk is right; when the physical constitution of the blood is made the supreme goal of human development; when the lie, used deliberately and as widely as

* *Come What May*. By Arnold Lunn. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 12s. 6d. net.)

possible, is the overt foundation of a polity; a denial of human standards has been achieved which the Greeks, devoted to the body though they were, would have recognised as making political life impossible, that life which is proper to the rational animals, and which depends upon the courteous recognition of objective, rational truth.

Mr. Lunn recognizes in the Greeks, however, the same problems that confront democracy to-day. Athens, like England, for many years refused to recognize the enemy at the gate. The long-maintained attitude of the mass of English politicians that war could be avoided by a League of Nations, by Disarmament, and by other panaceas was the result of muddled thinking, if not of cowardice. The situation is crystallized by Mr. Lunn in the epigram of Mr. Belloc:

‘Pale Ebenezer thought it wrong to fight,
But Roaring Bill, who killed him, thought it right.’

‘Pale Ebenezer,’ says Mr. Lunn, ‘enriched his propaganda with dramatic and moving descriptions of men dying in agony in No Man’s Land, an argument which is valid against waging war for any but the most irreproachable of causes, but which is essentially un-Christian if exploited to justify passive resistance to lawless aggression.’ Athens had to face the same problem as England to-day, when she faced Philip of Macedon and was defeated by him. The amiable life of Athens, dependent on the amiable Athenian temper, was put to the risk of battle. Athens lost; England may well win; but, whatever the result, the quotation from Demosthenes is apposite: ‘Even if the future had been revealed to all men, even then Athens could only have acted as she did if she remembered her ancestors or valued her good name in the ages to come.’ England has remembered her ancestors and her God, and fights on; we should have come perilously near to the materialism of the Nazis if we had refused to risk the pleasant land and life of England in order to avoid this appalling conflict.

The same feeling appears in Mr. Lunn's attitude towards ski-ing. To go up a mountain in the funicular, get out and then run down it at top speed, only to repeat the process, is a kind of parable of the Anglo-American social scene of the last twenty years. You try to have the fun of the descent without the labour of the climb. But that is not the way to true satisfaction, even in the natural order. 'There is a subtle pleasure,' he says, 'in the rhythm of a long-continued ascent The experienced climber achieves a balanced movement in which ease and comfort are not sacrificed to speed, and which leaves the mind free to enjoy the beauty of slowly widening horizons.' It is after such steady labours that one enjoys best the empyrean delight of descending virgin tracts of powdery snow. And there we must leave this admirable book, with the author, his journey happily by no means completed, looking back upon a track cut clean, swift and straight over untrodden snows. So, too, he speaks of his ski-ing companion in the noblest chapter of the book: 'Fritz was a few seconds late in starting. I watched him as he came over the skyline, and saw him sway as his ski struck the wind-touched powder. He fought for and regained control; he thrust out his leading ski to meet the shock of the outrun, swept past me, and swung round with such speed that he faced the slope which he had descended. Fritz looked back at the line of beauty which he had created in the snow. And he saw that it was good. And, like the morning stars at the dawn of creation, he shouted for joy.'

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