
. . AN OPEN LETTER . .

Alas, Poor Yorick!

There are people who have no opinions, people who have some opinions, and people who have opinions on everything.

Of course we can enjoy hugely the multiple opinions on a world of things which certain characters like George Bernard Shaw are wont to expound with the slightest provocation on topics ranging from Indian independence to Lady Astor's newest horse. Usually we accept these people as curious anomalies of the human race—intellectual morons if you will. Often we concur temporarily with their sophistry, taking pleasure in riding along on the intellectual wave of iconoclasm and stumping our friends with the half-truths which are set forth in a seemingly innocuous and facetious way to provide polite causerie at social gatherings.

We're not condemning such people. In fact, we rather enjoy seeing them make fools of themselves, and even submit to a good measure of the kidding ourselves, especially over here in the good old U.S.A., where our traditional sense of tolerance causes us to bend over backwards at times in order to allow anyone with a half-formulated opinion to express himself at will.

But as so often happens, these court jesters take themselves all too seriously at times, and with little regard for facts, figures, and tender sensitivities, suddenly loose a vituperative bombshell, and then are taken aback when they get a return volley of sarcasm.

Every thinking person should have opinions and every thinking person should have prejudices. These are necessary for real democratic government, government which should be directed by thinking people capable of formulating rational opinion which then becomes the decisive factor in directing both domestic and foreign policy. But more often than not these prejudices and opinions are not based on inductive reasoning, but founded on pre-formed misconceptions which have little if any relation to the facts.

There has been many a jester who became famed for his ready parodies on long-standing apothegms. But they are long forgotten. The emperor of all jesters the world has known, however, we cannot so easily disregard—Adolph Hitler. It is he who has elevated the half-truth to the supreme position it occupies today. It is he who sits laughing at a world which once smiled amusedly at his wild jestures and maniacal utterings, fed him prize tid-bits from the head table, patted him sympathetically when he whined—until he threw off his fool's cap, upset the banquet table, and seized the crown! It was only then that the world learned that not every jester was a fool! For he had found the vital key which meant power for himself and his cronies. It lay in the hidden words: "Most people believe what they read."

And so we have come to realize that even a jest can be vicious and destructive, even more than an out-and-out lie. We have learned that half-truths are taken up by the popular mind and are exaggerated to enormous degrees, and that their use even in a facetious way is seldom permissible.

Alas, poor Yorick! To think that an honored profession should be so villified!

—Louis Rosen.