

Einstein on Irrelevancies

By DON ARNALD

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HOW comfortable you make everything in the hotel! Every door, every window, is perfect; nothing is out of order. It is all so well planned and well organized. I never saw such rooms: such care for details; such hotel lobbies, with so many to serve you. Everything—everything is systematized, down to the bathrooms. You people in America are very practical. I like the way you light up the windows with the signs. I like the cheerful way you arrange the electricity up and down the streets."

So spoke Professor Albert Einstein, apostle of relativity, in the course of a talk about his experiences in New York.

"What was it that impressed you most when you arrived?" the interviewer asked.

"Ah! I see so many nationalities living together so well. America is a country of many different peoples at peace with one another. Then, too, I like the restaurants with the 'color' of the nations in the air. Each has its own atmosphere. It is like a zoological garden of nationalities, when you go from one to the other."

"Are you a bit disappointed not to find some beer in our dining rooms?"

"I cannot say alcohol is as bad as people think it is," replied the professor. "It may not be so good for men to spend all their wages on drinking. But it is more an economic question than a question of health. Some workmen must have liquor, it seems. We must not take everything away. Prohibition shows the strength of your democratic Government against private interests. In a corrupt State this could not be done."

"Do you consider it against personal liberty to take liquor away?"

"How could that be in America? You have a republic. You have no dictator who makes slaves of people. Nothing that is done by a democratic Government could be done against freedom. I think you will find it best for the economic welfare of the people in the end."

"How about tobacco?" was the next question. "Some people want to take that away, too."

Dr. Einstein drew back in surprise. "Oh, my, no! I never heard of it. So some one is starting this? Who is doing this?"

"Some temperance organization here in the United States."

The professor said: "If I do not wish to smoke, I say it is excellent to take my tobacco away. But I do wish to smoke, so I say I do not like you to do that."

"But they say it is not healthful."

"If you take our tobacco and everything else away, what have you left?" cried Professor Einstein. "It may be healthful to take away tobacco, but it is mighty lonesome." He thought a moment. "But this is economic, too," he said at last. "The men spend too much money on cigars, and their wives kick; therefore, they take it away. They say it costs too much money to smoke. I do not know! I have never heard of such a thing as taking away a man's smoking! I'll stick to my pipe. I do not care who will not smoke. I will! If you take everything away, life is not worth while!"

"And the blue laws—how about them?"

"Blue laws? Blue laws? I never heard of those blue laws in my life. What are you saying?" The professor fairly blazed with consternation.

"They want to pass laws to close up all places of amusement on Sunday," the interviewer explained. "All theatres, music shows, baseball and other places will be shut down, including everything for relaxation, even amusement parks and the movies."

"For Heaven's sake. More laws? I never heard of such a thing. Here's what I say: Men must have rest, yes? But what is the right rest? You cannot make a law to tell people how to do it. See—some people have rest when they lie down and go to sleep. Others have rest when they are wide awake and are stimulated. They must work or write or go to amusements to find rest. If you pass one law to show all people how to rest, that means you make everybody alike. But everybody is not alike. No, I do not care for these blue laws. They will do no good for the country or the people."

"Many workmen want to go to movies on Sunday because they have no time during the week days, so they find rest there," he continued. "And that is very good."

"What do you think of our movies and the theatres?"

"I've been so busy that I haven't had much time, but I have never in my life seen such theatres—everything for your taste, all sorts of plays, comedy, tragedy, romance, pageants. And the movies? I am enthusiastic about them—I mean for the presentation of living moving things. They will develop more and more. In general, the pictures shown now are not so artistic, but they will get better, very much better, all the time. The art is not high enough now, but soon you will have science through this art, as well

as you are now having art through this science. I see how the movies will be used in the future for science in bacteriology and technology. Perhaps not so soon for astronomy, because the motions of the heavenly bodies are too quick for measurement. But the movies must only be fitted well, and they can be used most adequately for instruction in all science! I think, all in all, the movies are only in their infancy. They are very beautiful, but they will get better, until the best plays can be shown. You deserve much credit for doing such fine pictures. I compliment you, and I hope for more artistic plays right along."

At this point his wife, a charming little gray-haired lady, slipped into the room and sat by her husband's side.

"Maybe I can help you," she said kindly. "I speak English, and I can interpret for him." The interviewer up to that point had been in German.

"Perhaps you can tell me something about the professor's life," I asked. Dr. Einstein laughed heartily.

"He does not want my life," said he. "That is of no use to him. Why should he care for that. He is asking what I think of New York. I tell him glorious! I tell him I see here the greatest city in the world, like Paris, like London, only better! I tell him here all people of all nationalities are melted together—and are happy. I tell him the stranger comes here and is full of joy because he goes to his people at once and feels at home."

"But your book on relativity translated into English, maybe he wants that," queried Mrs. Einstein.

"No; why that?" said the professor. "He doesn't come here for



relativity. He comes here to see me. I want to say something to the people, how I like the restaurants and the theatres and the movies and the hotels, and how I do not like the blue laws—and if they take away my tobacco—I do not know what I'll do, but I'll take America anyway, no matter what they do." At this the secretary arrived. He wanted to add a word on the professor's mission in America. He said:

"I suppose you know Professor Einstein is here to help the University of Palestine. Its foundation stone was laid by Dr. Weizmann in 1918, and since then the university site has been expanded. There is also a library with more than 3,000 volumes and rapidly growing. Plans have been worked out both for the complete university of the future and for a comparatively modest be-

ginning. The time has now come for us to make a foundation fund, part of which will go to the university. American people play a great part in world politics, showing that their aspirations are noble, and we have come from sick and suffering Europe with feelings of hope, convinced that our spiritual aims will command the full sympathy of the American Nation."

Dr. Einstein broke in: "We will receive their enthusiastic approval, we are sure, but the people know all this. This gentleman asks me other things, and I tell him what I think of New York."

He slapped me on the back and added: "You greet for me all the good people of America and you say, 'I feel at home here among people, many different people from all the nations in the world.'"