

# LETTER TO ALEX COMFORT

By DANNIE ABSE

Alex, perhaps a colour of which neither of us had dreamt may appear in the test-tube with God knows what admonition. Ehrlich certainly was one who broke down the mental doors, yet only after his six hundred and sixth attempt.

Koch also, painfully and with true German thoroughness eliminated the impossible, and proved that too many of us are dying from the same disease. Yet was his green dream, like yours, fired to burn away an ancient distress.

Still I, myself, don't like Germans, but prefer the unkempt voyagers, who, like butterflies drunk with suns, can only totter crookedly in the dazed air to reach charmingly their destination, as if by accident.

That Greek one then is my hero, who watched the bath water rise above his navel and rushed out naked, 'I found it, I found it' into the street in all his shining, and forgot that others would only stare at his genitals. What laughter!

Or Newton, leaning in Woolsthorpe against the garden wall forgot his indigestion and all such trivialities, but gaped up at heaven in just surprise, and with true gravity, witnessed the vertical apple fall.

O what a marvellous observation! Who would have reckoned that such a pedestrian miracle could alter history, that henceforward everyone must fall, whatever their rank, at thirty-two feet per second, per second?

You too, I know, have waited for doors to fly open and played with your cold chemicals and written long letters to the Press; listened to the truth afraid and dug deep into the wriggling earth for a rainbow, with an honest spade.

But nothing rises. Neither spectres, nor oil, nor love. And the old professor must think you mad, Alex, as you rehearse poems in the laboratory like vows, and curse those clever scientists who dissect away the wings and the haggard heart from the dove.