Snapshots of Modern Life

E. Haldeman-Julius

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HERE is a flavor of truth, mingled with a salutary humor, in the remark that if any one of us should trace his ancestry back far enough he would be likely to find, somewhere in the family line, the account of brisk and disreputable and perhaps picturesquely outlawish careers. This matter of ancestry, if one thinks of it in all its windings of ever-widening relationship, is not so simple; as Clarence Darrow has wittily and wisely brought home to us, our blood is a strange mixture; a strain of piracy as well as of yeomanry may be hidden in our cells and arteries. One remembers Mark Twain's very impish sketch of his "family tree" and the motley crew that he pretended to identify as his ancestors; they nearly all come to a bad end after bold, hard lives, one of them—"a solicitor on the highway" in ye old merry England—dying of a "broken neck."

One of our Babbitts, then, in one of our best and most decorous (and scandal-mongering) American towns, may be regarded as an insidious bundle of unknown potentialities and possibilities. Is the gentleman entirely what he pretends to be? Is he altogether, and in every part of him, what he generally, in the public eye, behaves as if he were? We see him walking up the street, with dignity as befits a substantial citizen (a man, as the home paper recently declared, "of whom Centerville is justly proud"), and yet with the easy and open manners of the hail-fellow-well-met. As a banker, with money to lend, he is popular (and as a banker, with money loaned, he is secretly not so well liked); he feels quite virtuous over his contribution that morning to the Methodist exchequer (although he despises the commercial compulsion that makes him yield to this combination of beggary and blackmail); he has just ordered a new Cadillac car (and there is nothing like a Cadillac to make your true Babbit expand with kingly feeling and think that God—a God with the psychology and values of a banker—has a specially favorable eye on him); he reflects with pride upon his membership in the Masonic lodge, his importance in the Chamber of Commerce, his solid friendly prestige with his Congressman, his respectable right Rotarianism, and his game of golf—and with such reflections, what note of doubt or disapproval can possibly creep into the well-comported and compartmented mind of our typical Babbit? Yet below all this, other things may lie concealed; they may never come to the surface; again, given a relaxation of conscious control, a slipping of discretion's and duty's mask and guard, a mood and mechanism of escape—hidden things in our Babbit, dating back to merrier, wilder ancestral times, may surge up and lead him into self-betrayal—or self-escape. Somewhere within him there may be a rum-drinking, swaggering pirate; there may be a hot-blooded, harum-scarum prodigal son of a past generation; there may be some anarchistic hero of a long-forgotten tale of derring-do. And,
on the other hand, he may be just any man, a creature of human impulses and contradictions, with a streak of the primitive in him, longing at times for freedom from responsibility and rectitude, with a predilection in his hormones, once, in a way, for the looseness of a good time.

The devil in him may break out, and for his own good: escape is indeed good, particularly if what one escapes from is dull and false and characterless: escape from Babbitt can only be applauded, whatever its form. Suppose—let us imagine—that on this very morning, as our Babbitt (whom we shall call Brown) walks down the street, treading on the air of self-satisfaction, he happens to meet Harris the jeweler (good fellow, Harris!) and the two pause for an exchange of cordial trivialities. Harris is also a Mason, a Rotarian, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, for business reasons, ostensibly a Presbyterian, with a good balance and credit at Brown’s bank, and a fisherman rather than a golfer. It may be that he is a fisherman because a drink straight out of the bottle on the river bank sometimes tastes better, and furnishes a more reckless and radiant kick, than two cocktails at the Country Club.

For Harris likes his drink, at times plentifully. (Good fellow—harms nobody but himself—goes a little too far though—gets into a scrape once in a while that doesn’t look so well, after all.) And see how fate, or heredity, or the mere humanity of the thing conspires. Brown, too, has a perverse periodical taste for liquor—the rum-drinking pirate in him occasionally demands the smacking breath of old times. (It is the best that the squelched and anachronistic pirate can do, piracy not being what it once was.) And has not Brown, just a half-hour ago, given his order for a new Cadillac?

Drink, with some men, is a matter of occasions: it works out very conveniently, for if one is feeling bad a drink or two will make one feel good, and if one is feeling very good a drink or two will make one feel much better: and certain things must be celebrated, among them being indubitably such an important thing as the purchase of that pride and prize of Babbitt, a new Cadillac. Although Brown does not fully realize it, his mood is ripe for lubricated conviviality—even for ribaldry—even for a touch of deviltry. The realization flashes upon him as he shakes hands with Harris, for he can immediately tell by the twinkle in the latter’s eye, not to mention the warm, heavy, and seductive odor of his breath, that he has been so fortunate as to have been able to violate the law not more than five minutes previously.

It would not be natural for Harris, feeling as he now does—and sensing too the mood of his friend and banker—to refrain from the offer of good fellowship. They are nearly opposite his jewelry store. Brown turns and walks a few steps back with him; and quickly, showing that they come from virile decisive ancestors, they are in a private room at the back of the store—a quart bottle stands on a small table—the men touch glasses, and each pours down a stiff man’s-sized “shot” of what is locally labeled “white lightning.” What a difference is at once felt. Both begin to feel stronger and brighter right away—and freer. Here is the beginning of an episode of release. Already, with a single drink, the heavy weight of good citizenship seems to be lightened. Two drinks, and Brown forgets that he is to make an address before the
Rotary Club that day on "Law Enforcement"—three drinks, and he is joking about it, and declaring that if he "gets up enough steam" he believes he can make "a damned good speech." Four drinks, and Harris frankly says that the Rotary Club is stupid and tiresome ("It's all right, you understand—good thing, got to have it—but hell—") and he does not hesitate to brand this and that respectable leading citizen as "damned hypocrites." And Brown slaps him on the back and owlishly winks, saying, "Rather see a good leg show any day, wouldn't you, old boy?"

They light cigarettes, and Harris in a spirit of perfect freedom refers to a scandal in Brown's own Methodist Church, involving the pompous, pious pastor, no less. Rev. Jones' servant girl, admittedly a pretty lass, has accused him of "ruining" her, as it is euphemistically and yet extravagantly termed. Publicly, Brown has taken the position that it is an "outrage" to defame in this wanton manner one who is so unimpeachable and important in the community. Privately, he laughs and assures Harris that there is no doubt that the charge is true; and he tells confidentially that one night, a year or so ago, as he was leaving a certain house by the back way as the husband came in unexpectedly at the front, he espied Brother Jones in a similar egress from the house next door. "You know, Jim," says he, "just between you and me, these preachers make me a little tired. They're just like the rest of us birds. They ain't blind to a pretty leg. And I'll bet you a dollar that old Jones would be tickled to have a 'shot' of this stuff right now." "Sure," agrees Harris, "but I'm kind of sorry for them in a way. They can't cut loose as easy as you and I can. What the hell's the use of livin' if you can't have a little fun now and then!"

One drink calls insistently for another. Several times the celebrated and always freshly appropriate remark is made that "It's a long time between drinks." Strangely, the better he feels with mounting intoxication, the more Brown waxes profane over the unpleasantness of his sober life as a banker, husband, leading citizen and church pillar. This banking business is a blamed nuisance—not nearly as exciting as a game of poker: one makes enemies and one's friends, seeking favors, are apt to be more troublesome than one's enemies. "Anyway," says Brown with a drunken laugh, "I don't give a damned lot of attention to it—not as much as folks think." (To himself, Harris says, "Oh, everybody's on to you, old top."). "Old Tom knows more about the business than I do. I can get drunk and let things slide, but old Tom'll keep school. The old geezer is just fool enough to be sober and hard workin'—bet he never took a drink of anything stronger than buttermilk in his life. By George, I'd like to get him drunk as a million dollars and take him home, and throw him in the door, and say, 'Here, old Missus Dill Pickle, is your husband.'" At Harris' super-solemn and pseudo-sober nod of agreement, he goes on: "Still, I'll bet Tom's old lady is just the kind that makes him toe the line—Tom's just weak enough to let her boss him. Sour old thing, she is. My wife's too wise to try any monkey business with me. Fact is she'd better thank her stars that I can get on a real good foot now and then—if I didn't, damned if I could live with the old hen—that's between you and me, of course."

Another drink, and Brown, rejoicing in the denunciation of his sober attitudes, exclaims: "This is a hell of a town, anyway! Dead, plumb
dead. A lot of old mossbacks, and a lot of smart-alecky young fools, and there you have it. I never did think, years ago, that I'd stay in this burg as long as I have; but you know how it is, one thing led on to another, makin' money and driftin' along, and here I am." "Yep," Harris chimes in, "all this town needs is an undertaker. And I'll say that after Henry Jackson buries the town, he oughta bury himself. He's nothing but a walking corpse; actually he's handled so many corpses that he looks like one himself; he's got embalming fluid instead of blood in his veins. Yes, and the hypocritical old Amen-shouter would steal a penny from a dead man's eyes."

At this point Brown remembers how Rev. Jones had practically held him up that morning in the name of the church—he remembers the pious hypocrite's itching snivity and the damned certainty with which he asked for his levy, not at all like a customer politely and respectfully asking for a loan. "What this town needs," he exclaims, "is fewer churches! Maybe religion's all right—though what does anybody know about it?—but this church business has got to be nothing better than a holdup. A holdup, that's what it is, and like as not the fifty I handed out this morning will go to Doc Briggs for an illegal operation. Haw! haw! One thing, they can't make me go to church—though I do go once in a while just for the looks of the thing. Last time I went that old fool of a Jones talked about Jesus turning water into wine, and he said it was symbolic. Symbolic hell! I suppose this corn whiskey is symbolic, too. Well, Jim, let's have a little symbol—just another little symbol—what do you say?"

After that, things looked brighter—and yet, on second thought, they were not so bright. For that drink was the last. There sat the empty bottle, eloquently empty. They cast at each other a mock-mournful glance. And although they were pretty satisfactorily and recklessly drunk, they all at once felt how impossible it would be for them to return so soon to their sober, respectable, unhappily commonplace selves. It was not to be thought of. What! said Brown, let the bank and the Rotary Club go to the devil. And, says Harris, maybe somebody will be fool enough to come in today and buy a wedding ring, not knowing what a rotten bad joke married life is, but if they do AI can take care of 'em. More liquor was the need of the hour. And Brown, who had been honorably selected by his brethren Rotarily yours for a talk on "Law Enforcement," cursed the town's night watch for having raided a joint across the tracks only ten days ago. "If it hadn't been for that sap," he exclaimed, "we could have another bottle in five minutes. He was just a manure hustler before he got to be night marshal, and now he is swelled up with authority worse than the President of the United States. Now with these new traffic laws (damfoolishness, that, trying to make Centerville act like a city when it ain't much more than a wide place in the road) he is just about to lose his mind trying to decide which is the worst crime, to run your car a fraction of an inch over the traffic line or to smell a cork out of a whiskey bottle." Still, the law was the law. There was only one recourse, and that was to drive out to a mining camp, five miles away, where Italian bootleggers (much to the gratification of one hundred percent, law-abiding Americans) managed almost steadily to violate the law.
Out in front was Harris' car, and Brown ("foremost in all our activities," said the Centerville paper), was not behindhand nor a piker in this critical eventuality. Hell, no, Jim wasn't too drunk to drive a car. To be sure, a little speed would be interesting and this was plainly an occasion for hurry. "My God!" said Brown. "Suppose they've got it all drunk up by the time we get there!" At that, Harris went up to sixty miles an hour, and he said, "The way the old car spins along, darned if I don't believe it wants a drink too." Great are good roads, the two agreed, as they flew over the concrete highway. "Aye, aye," said Harris, "and have you noticed that they've been accommodatin' and thoughtful enough to build good roads past all the bootleggers' joints?" "Aw, you simple-minded old Presbyterian," rejoined Brown, "the bootleggers is just smart enough to get on the good roads." "Well, what the hell do we care as long as we get a drink?"

A moment later they stopped in front of a green house, certainly no gilded den to outward appearance, and going around to the back they entered a kitchen in which were a few plain chairs, a table with an oilcloth cover, a stove and a cupboard. It had a soiled rather than a dirty look, but Brown and Harris, just plain men now with Rotary and respectability shuffled off, were not particular about their surroundings. All they wanted was a drink, and they said so with dirty words but friendly if flushed looks. The fat woman disappeared and miraculously reappeared in the same instant—and she knew men, for she brought out not only glasses but a full bottle of wicked-looking stuff.

The more they drank, the more Brown and Harris took a delight in cussing all things generally held to be good and true. They denounced the government, in most vile and treasonable language, at great length, pausing in their tirade not even for a breath but only for a drink. The government was a robber, and it not only robbed them of their money but of their liberty as well. The church was much the same, going around with its hat in one hand and a club in the other. "Cal" Coolidge was a big stiff, they both emphatically agreed, although one was normally a Republican and the other a Democrat. They said that voting was a joke, that the people didn't rule, and perhaps they didn't deserve to rule as they hadn't any too much sense. They mocked at the faith of democracy; they had some witty jibes for Christianity ("We pay the preacher to do our praying for us, but we do our own business with the devil," said Harris); they laughed at marriage as a gamble in which both players often lost, and they were so loyal to business that they reiterated how glad they were to be out in this booze kitchen, immorally and illegally free, rather than to be at the bank and the store.

They even got philosophic. The great vicarious financier, Mr. Brown, now really quite drunk and no longer exhibiting the slightest trace of dignity, sang:

The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain,
The bear went over the mountain,
To see what he could see.

Harris, swinging like a pendulum but less accurately from one side of his chair to the other, cried out: "What did he see? What did he see?" And Brown, full of the spirits of the occasion, again sang:
The other side of the mountain,
The other side of the mountain,
The other side of the mountain
Was all that he could see.

"Ain't that the truth!" shouted Harris, banging his fist on the table
and with perfect presence of mind grabbing for the bottle in case it
might be upset. "Life's just the same damned thing wherever you go.
Other side of the mountain—that's all you can see."

Brown hiccuped an affirmative, and then, jumping to his feet,
spread out his arms in an oratorical gesture and said "Gentlemen and
fellow citizens, what we got to do is to see that the law is enforced.
Law enforcement is the very millstone—I mean the very cornerstone—
of the county jail. We elect men, and we pay 'em damned well too, if
you ask me, to enforce the laws. And what do they do?" He paused
dramatically, looked with a stern questioning eye at Harris and at the
fat Italian female, grabbed the bottle and held it aloft, repeating: "What
do they do? Why, gentlemen, we break the laws so fast they can't
keep up with us. And then, by God, they have the nerve to ask for
relection. What is needed is that every man constitute himself a law-
breaker—I mean a law-enforcer. We should respect the laws. Yes, boys
—I mean fellow citizens—we may not be able to respect the damned
fools that make the laws, but we oughta respect the laws. Yes, we
oughta keep at a respectful distance from the laws. Don't get too
familiar with 'em. Ignorance of the law is only an excuse, but a poor
excuse is better than none. Take the prohibition law, gentlemen and
brothers and sisters—there's a law we certainly oughta respect. We
got to do our drinkin' on the quiet. Out of respect to the law, we've
got to drink out of sight of the law. If you want to drink, don't go to
the jail and do it, but go out to Tony's place—Tony respects the law,
by selling stuff that won't kill you. The law, gentlemen! The law—
No, damn it, I mean a drink!" And, raising the bottle with a wide
heroic flourish to his lips, Brown swallows what may roughly be
estimated as three drinks in one. Staggering across the room, Harris
jerks the bottle out of his hand, exclaiming: "Hell, you ain't goin' to
do all this law enforcin'. I'm a good citizen, and a good judge of bad
whiskey, myself."

By this time these two leading citizens of Centerville are as drunk
as any of their most rum-soaked forebears ever dared to be—they are
still, by a marvel, conscious and capable of walking albeit unevenly
(Harris explaining that he can drive a car when he is too drunk to walk)—
and, greatest blessing of all, both are perfectly free from all the re-
 sponsibilities and attitudes of citizens. They are free individuals, sur-
 veying the world with a cocky and skeptical and anarchistic eye. They
don't care whether school keeps, or home keeps, or church keeps, or
bank keeps, or store keeps. All they want is for the whiskey to keep,
and so they take a bottle away with them as they stagger out to the
car and drive off, regardless of the speed limit.

They will of course wake up in the morning with sore heads and
hearts (i. e., low vitality)—and probably with not a drink in the house
—and with the psychology of sober citizens again. (They have found
themselves, "in the cold gray dawn of the morning after," lying in an
overturned car in the ditch.) But the point is that they have escaped from Babbittry for a day, and have been wild and free and defiant and contemptuous of commonplace community values. There is something in each of them besides a Babbitt. It may be simply a human being, tugging at the leash of lifeless conformity, or it may be a sixteenth century pirate going as far as he can in a limited Kansas-Missouri-Iowa environment.

It is what is called immorality that, I believe, chiefly sets off one Babbitt from another. The kind of absolute, unrelieved Babbitt who has no immoralities through which he can escape into something resembling free common humanity, is the very worst of his breed. Obviously, drunkenness is the most complete form of escape. This releases and redirects the mind, unchains whatever impulses may be suppressed at bottom, touches off whatever least spark there may be of the spirit of individuality, better than anything else. Gambling has its uses in this respect, if one is a really deep-dyed gambler and not merely a polite card player but one degree removed from the drawing-room atmosphere of whist. The fellow who is keenly alive to the lure of “craps” and poker, and who will sit up all night in the back room over the garage, rolling or shuffling—such a fellow has a bit of devilish, rebellious humanity in him.

The adventurer in sex may, in some degree, be similarly helped to forget his citizenship and his conformity in the exercise of his humanity. Perhaps this is less often true—for the woman chaser or the adulterer in a small town frequently moves so very much on the sly that, although everything is known, he feels safe in upholding the moral law and keeping always his Babbitt face; he may even throw a stone of censure at his brother who is caught in the act, for I have observed that the ladies’ man is more hypocritical and less tolerant than the drunkard and the gambler; his immorality is more selfish and secretive and less grounded in a spirit of difference and defiance. He is all right unless he is found out—that is to say, publicly exposed—and to guard against this he is all the more careful to uphold the standards of Babbittry. But even so you will often find that, privately, he is a more human fellow than his neighbor who is faithful to his wife.

When we say that immorality is an escape from Babbittry, we are of course stating a truth that is as old as man. It is very simple. He who practices any form of so-called immorality is, consciously or unconsciously but still significantly, a rebel as far as he goes against the decreed patterns of social conduct. He asserts, in that way, his individuality against the social idea of righteousness. And again it is simple and anciently belonging to wisdom that the man who “sins,” he who departs from the beaten path of prescribed virtue, has a spirit of toleration, a certain understanding and sympathy with the erratic tangled ways of life, that is seldom if ever to be found in his strait-laced brother. Vice carries with it a feeling of rebellion—of escape—of toleration—and of humor akin to the good earthy stuff of Shakespeare and Rabelais. And vice does something more; it enables one to understand virtue far better than a virtuous man does.
MR. COOLIDGE RUNS AGAIN

(Autumn of 1926)

ALTHOUGH the time is not yet considered ripe for Mr. Coolidge, in his own proper political person, openly to announce his willingness to be a sacrifice for his country's good to the extent of another term in the White House, some casts of the line in that direction are to be observed thus early. What else are we to infer from all the great national display of the President's prowess as a fisherman? America loves a sportsman; and while we privately suspect the genuineness of the glum Coolidge in that role, still it is apparent that there may be votes as well as fish to be caught thereby. But this, after all, is nothing compared with the recent trip into the old home state, to the old home town, in which Coolidge appeared in his homeliest and most hokumish. Here was a return of the crudest old American style of bidding for the favor of the yokelry. When Cal slips into his old clothes and fixes the fence on the old homestead, who can doubt that his eye is upon the issue of 1928? Not altogether to the pride of American democracy, we remember that this has been one of the favorite methods by which a man yearning for the highest reward of statesmanship has signified his superior fitness to the one hundred and ten millions. His superior fitness? Nay, his reassuring and downright commonplaceness, his blue jeans democracy, his resemblance, assumed or real, to the average of his countrymen. With Coolidge the resemblance is real. He is as average as when he was an unknown local jobholder in Massachusetts. No village mayor or township constable or county representative is more average, more the plain American below suspicion of originality or brains. He is the unheroic hero of the Babbitts and yokels alike—so long as conditions run along smoothly.

Coolidge is a little man. No intelligent citizen has ever been in doubt of it. The politicians in Washington, even most of those who have been strictly faithful party and Coolidge men, have known it from the beginning. Early in Mr. Coolidge's emergence from the twilight sleep of the Vice-Presidency, we were informed by a Washington reporter more plain-spoken than his fellows that the Republican politicians had decided to throw aside Coolidge even as a candidate for Vice-President; not even in that simple and not very demanding role was he regarded as good enough. Then Harding died, and the politicians had to take their medicine and, comically, hasten to play up Coolidge as a great man. And even in that attempt, at first, they could do no better than poorly to idealize him as Silent Cal, a fellow who said nothing and went slow and took a long while to make up his mind and who could be depended upon as not brilliant but safe. Safe and silent—that was the best that could be done in the way of rigging up Coolidge for great honors. Gradually, however, the eminence and specious importance of the Presidency brought the flattery of Coolidge as a statesman and a thinker. And, while the country was still under the spell of the Silent Cal myth, Coolidge began to talk more and more, and his utterance of unimpeachable platitudes made him more solid with his countrymen.
The steady and undisturbed prosperity of the country as a whole has undoubtedly been the chief good fortune of Coolidge. Good crops overshadow the issue of farm relief; but if there is nevertheless some dissatisfaction with Coolidge among the farmers (most of whom will, anyway, vote the Republican ticket straight as they have always done), where else are we to look for it? The criticism of the liberals is no menace to him. Labor is employed and enjoying the thrill of spending its money. Big business was never more prosperous, never more satisfyingly rich in trade and dividends. There has been no great domestic issue to show up Coolidge and encompass his downfall. He has faced no real crisis. His littleness has kept him from initiating any issue that would severely try his leadership and endanger his prestige. Although he has been a weak President, there has been no occasion that absolutely demanded strength or skill; on a calm sea a poor sailor is lucky. The newspapers have been very partial to him, ignoring his weakness and his failures, and continually holding him up as a good, safe, trustworthy man to lead the country. It was the luck of Coolidge to be thrust by fate into the White House when, after a great war in which it had profited rather than suffered, the return to normalcy was complete and the country was tired of big issues. Even the agitators had little heart to agitate, and many of them had been made tame by the war. All Coolidge had to do was to make the usual gestures from time to time, play safe and slow, let business have its way and, when he made mistakes, simply forget about them in the cheerful assurance that they would not lead to disaster. There never was a more favorable time for a little man in the White House than during Coolidge's regime.

Yet the fact that Coolidge is a little man will prove to be a disadvantage in the long run. It will be an obstacle to another nomination. For the lesson of Coolidge's Presidency is too plain and something to be well marked by the small-fry politicians. If a man of his small caliber may be President, other little men may not unreasonably aspire to the same high place. The possibility of this honor has been widened to include men who would not perhaps have looked at it so boldly before. Every third-rate politician now regards himself as a likely candidate. No one feels himself necessarily barred. Nicholas Longworth can positively stick out his chest by the side of Coolidge. The nonentity around the corner sees the bright light of fame ready to burst upon him. Politics, if a game in which the stakes are as high as ever, is penny ante so far as skill in playing goes. The spirit of local politics may indeed now enter national politics. It may be simply a matter of passing the Presidency around. As the yokels believe in giving a county office to some man because he needs it, and as any man is regarded fit for such an office, so may the yokels look upon the Presidency and so the politicians undoubtedly have come to look at it. "Coolidge has had it long enough," the yokel may say. "Now let Brown have it. He needs it." And all the business interests, all that the secret powers of political fate, want is another Coolidge. They ought to be easily satisfied, for the country is full of equivalent men. A safe man, and some simple myth to throw around him, is the desideratum. And a change is advisable from time to time. The yokels must be entertained by at least the appearance of a new show. They may, they certainly will, grow tired of Coolidge.
They will want of course another Coolidge, but one with a new face and a new set of gestures. And the bars are down; anybody can enter the race; a long arm is not required to reach the prize. At present I believe that Coolidge is as solid with the country as ever; but I do not doubt that he is in danger from the politicians. Few politicians can be trusted to stand by Coolidge, for secretly they recognize that he is no bigger than they are. He is little and dull, and will he not grow stale? The hour draws near for a fresh nonentity to stand in the limelight.

BOOTLEGGERS AND BLUE SUNDAYS.

We are glad to observe any spirit of rebellion against attempts to destroy one's liberties. Yet it occurs to me sometimes that man does not show the highest choice in the degrees and directions of his rebelling. Although he rebels against the prohibition imposed upon his appetite for booze, he reacts much less strenuously to greater acts of tyranny. The opposition to conscription, the destruction of free speech and other tyrannies of the war was a mere whisper, a feeble and unconvincing gesture, as compared with the loud discontent and the active disobedience raised by Prohibition. Censorship of plays, moving pictures and books, certainly a most vital blow at the liberty of men, brings out a cry of protest from only a small minority: the average man is far more interested in being able to get a bottle of beer than in asserting his right to see a play that a committee of preachers thinks he should not see. The efforts of Bible fanatics to run the schools of the country and to strike at the very heart of educational freedom are ignored by many, not because they are in sympathy with the Fundamentalist cohorts, but because they place less value upon the right to learn about evolution than upon the right to get drunk.

But of course, you may object, we should not expect such a high-minded attitude from the masses. Intellectual freedom does not interest them and political rights do not so much excite them as the lesser and more obvious kinds of pleasure. Well, let us speak of a kind of tyranny that is readily and simply felt by the average man, that is a matter not necessarily of culture but of common pleasure, that actually annoys and hinders the average man: we refer to the blue laws that make Sunday a dull day in this land of Methobaptarianism. It does not require any fine intellectual attitude to perceive the outrage of these Sunday laws. They are a considerable and constant discomfort to millions of people. There is certainly no doubt that a majority of the people would like to spend their Sundays more freely, to have a greater choice of pleasures on that day, to be relieved from this Sunday oppression that makes the so-called day of rest a bore and too often a dragging thing of empty hours instead of a day for recreation, a day to be enjoyed according to one's own sweet and unconstrained and unrestrained pleasure.

Why is it that the people of a large American city will submit with scarcely a sign of protest to a law that denies them the right to see a baseball game on Sunday? Why will they tamely acquiesce in the attitude of the preachers that they shall not see a movie on Sunday? Why
will they stand for the prohibition of Sunday dances? They kick like
the devil when told they shall not drink beer; they will go to consider-
able trouble in order to drink a bottle of poor homebrew in an unattractive
joint; and there are plenty of bootleggers, realizing the demand for
homebrew and booze, who will take risks to supply this demand. But
why are there not more bootleggers who will undertake to supply the
demand for Sunday amusements? Why is not this latter demand, more
important by far than a demand for booze, strong enough to call forth
the bootlegging of Sunday recreation in defiance of the blue laws? They
ought to bootleg movies, bootleg ball games, bootleg dances, all kinds of
bootleg entertainments in cities oppressed by these ridiculous Sunday
laws. It is perhaps one of the most vital and beneficent national move-
ments that could be inaugurated. And yet, we see people rushing frantic-
ally around in search of a bottle of beer, while they allow a whole day
of liberty to be stolen from them once a week and say little or nothing
about it—or if they sometimes grumble a bit they go no farther but get
over the moping interval from Saturday night to Monday morning as
best they can.

I do not know quite how to explain this curious situation. It may
be said that people do not feel the effect of Sunday tyranny so greatly,
for if they cannot spend the day in one way they can spend it in another;
but we can also say that, if they cannot drink beer, they can drink
buttermilk. Is it that man is more strongly and irresponsibly desirous of
stimulation than of recreation? We cannot hold this to be true when we
observe how numerously the people flock to these recreations on week-
days, and on Sundays wherever such pleasures are not forbidden. As a
matter of fact, there are more people in any blue-law city who would
like to see a baseball game on Sunday than to get drunk on Sunday.
Yet the opportunity to get drunk is supplied them, while strangely there
is no comparable bootlegging of baseball games. It is customary to
account for many social phenomena by pointing to the automobile and
its influence: and, at a glance, this may seem a good explanation in the
present case—for obviously motoring is an easy and popular recreation
that can be enjoyed on Sunday as on a weekday. Yet this explanation
falls down when we pass by a ball park and see the many cars lined up,
showing that thousands prefer baseball to motoring. And we know, in
fact, that all these pleasures are increasingly attended and not less so
year after year.

It may be said that such pleasures are necessarily enjoyed in the
light of greater publicity than that which attends drinking. But the fact
is that such forms of recreation, for all their greater public nature, have
been bootlegged more than once. If they present more difficulty, the
more widespread interest in them should be able to find a way. In any
American city, if the people cared enough and the demand were anything
comparable to the demand for booze, these Sunday pastimes could be
bootlegged with not a little success; there would naturally be Sundays
of failure: the law would bring down its hand successfully now and
then, just as it does in the matter of booze; the results would, however,
be worth the effort; and a genuine movement of the people to disobey,
and encourage the disobedience of, blue laws would go far to weaken if
not destroy such laws—at least a divided victory would be possible, the
issue would not be so one-sided as it now is, and the spirit of liberty would find some satisfaction as it now does in surreptitious (or more or less open) drinking. Explain it how you will, the general submission to Sunday tyranny is a strange thing in the light of other instances of human disobedience; and, be it worked out by whatever method, a movement for the bootlegging of Sunday pleasures is a most important need of this republic.

We can picture in a general way what would happen. In the cities, every vacant lot would be the potential scene of baseball crime; by changing ground frequently, the business of enforcing the ecclesiastical Sabbath would be made more difficult, more uncertain; secret intelligence might indeed be circulated among the fans—bootleggers don’t advertise, yet doesn’t every thirsty fellow know where a drink can be had? Second stories on the back streets might be utilized for dancing purposes; and movie shows could be given in places not gaily lighted and advertised nor too conspicuous; a movie might be surrounded with the same secrecy as a lodge meeting—and in this and similar amusements, something might be learned from the experience of the Ku Klux Klan. In the countryside, of course, the haylofts and barns and back lots and pastures could be used to obvious excellent advantage. In fact, we are assured that more wicked things do go on in these haunts and hiding places. A movie in a hayloft would, I believe, be quite a moral step forward for the hayloft. And imagine it becoming familiar news that a group of citizens had been raided in a hayloft or in a back room in the city while criminally enjoying a moving picture; or that a detachment of plainclothes men, disguised as rooters for the home team, had suddenly arrested the ball players on a vacant lot and dispersed the crowd as if it were guilty of a revolutionary demonstration.

Bootlegging baseball games and movies would certainly add a great deal to the interest of life. It would increase our Sunday amusements in more ways than one. And I have a notion, too, that the spectacle would be so ridiculous—the wild picturesqueness of the raids and the very mild occasions for them so strongly in contrast—that the Sunday laws would not be long in breaking down.

CLARENCE DARRROW ON “CRIME WAVES”

SINCE the war, a subject of great agitation throughout the country has been that furnished by successive “crime waves” or one long-continued crime wave that has risen and fallen but that has, allegedly, never ceased to threaten; certainly, it has been viewed as threatening by those authorities who felt vicarious thrills of alarm on behalf of the whole people. This has been partly accounted for by the shocking influence of the war. The war disorganized many lives; it broke up old habits, introduced new dissatisfaction and desires, and shunted many individuals into strange paths; the example of force and violence was not thrown off as easily as a soldier’s uniform.

Yet sometimes we have felt that the picture was overdrawn. We have not been able to follow the reasoning of those who exclaimed that
society was in danger of being swamped by the worst tendencies of human nature, suddenly and rapidly brought to the surface and assuming the form of a vast inundating "wave." Granted that there has been an increase in certain kinds of crime, we have not believed that this is a peculiar and extraordinary age of crime. We know that there has always been an undesirable amount of crime; but has it grown so that it has produced an enormously unprecedented situation? And does an increase in crime, at one time and in one place, signify a revolution or strange, sinister upheaval in human nature? or do men remain essentially the same while conditions differ? Even at the height of "crime waves" it has been in the larger cities, for example, that crime has appeared. The smaller cities and towns and the countryside have furnished few of the flagrant headlines of crime. This would indicate that the crowded conditions of cities are more conducive to crime. And our next question is, has not this always been true of cities? and has the increase, after all, been so sudden and marked?

The charge of exaggeration, of a careless use of uncertain statistics, is made by Clarence Darrow in an article on "Crime and the Alarmists" in the October (1926) Harper's. Now an opinion of Clarence Darrow's on crime has a very good claim on our attention, as this is his special subject, and it is well known that he is a shrewd observer, with a healthy respect toward facts. Indeed, Darrow offers more than opinion; he goes to the figures themselves—the best of them—and shows how unrelably they have been used by the alarmists. He shows too how figures alone, without an understanding of the circumstances that have produced them, are misleading. Thus:

For example, the figures which are sometimes quoted with regard to the increase of the crime of rape are noteworthy illustrations of the care that must be taken in interpreting criminal statistics. Anyone reading the startling statement that in New York state 146 persons were convicted of rape in the decade between 1880 and 1889, while 1,297 were convicted of rape in the decade between 1910 and 1919 would be amazed if not horrified at the increase in the sexual passion and its manifestations in this period. Still, their condemnation of their fellows may be somewhat abated when they learn that in the decade showing the largest number of convictions for rape the age of consent had been raised from ten years of age to eighteen.

Again, we are reminded that another cause of crime has been, not a change in human nature, but the increased use of automobiles; and that in this as in other connections, much that is classified as crime is, while sufficiently culpable, due rather to carelessness than to deliberate, criminal intent. The increase in the number of laws also adds to crime. The Prohibition law has notoriously swollen the dockets of crime throughout the country.

The chief point made by Darrow is that statistics of crime are not used in the right way; or rather that the final and authoritative statistics are not used. He stresses the erroneous impression given by the figures of the Chicago Crime Commission, due to the fact that the Commission uses the Coroner's reports. When these cases have advanced a little farther, they appear in a different light and the figures of crime are significantly reduced. A number of cases are disposed of when the Grand Jury does not indict; some are dismissed by the prosecutor without trial; in others, there is a failure of conviction. The most reliable
figures we can have are those of completed cases; the most reliable, we say, not forgetting that there is a possibility the guilty may escape; but it is also true that the innocent may suffer. At any rate, the safest figures would seem to be those that cover the whole procedure of the law. From the Commission's own figures, says Darrow, it is apparent that there has been a "steady decrease" in burglaries and robberies in Chicago from 1909 to 1915. As for the crime of murder, he points out the considerable discrepancy between the Coroner's figures used by the Commission and the figures of final results. "Thus in the two years 1922 and 1923 the total number of 'murders' reported by the Chicago Crime Commission (Coroner's Jury) was 498. Whereas in the same two-year period the total number of indictments for murder by the Grand Jury was 357 and the total number of convictions for murder was 82."

One mistake that is often made is to regard all reported cases of crime as coming from "criminal instincts" and an accentuation of the criminal nature of man. The influence of social conditions, which produce crime where there is no natural criminal tendency, is apt to be overlooked. Darrow studies the list of reported "murders" for March, 1923. His view of what this list signifies is summed up as follows:

In this list of 29 possible defendants all of them were classed as "murderers" by the Coroner's Jury and the Chicago Crime Commission. And yet it is extremely unlikely that more than two of them (Cases 21 and 23) were really cases of out and out murder, and both of these were unresolved. Is this feeble list for March, 1923, the red-handed menace that is so luridly pictured as an army in mortal combat with organized society? Rather it is a fair sample of the results of poverty, hard luck, ignorance, mal-adjustment, and destiny that in some form comes to light in every great city filled with the flotsam and jetsam of humanity. It is a condition, and it needs careful study to find out what should be done and what can be done. It does not call for blind hatred and stern revenge.

The conclusion of Darrow is that, while crime may be somewhat greater or less at certain periods, there is no tremendous difference such as that which the alarmists declare. He takes note, however, of certain factors that tend to increase the chances of crime. The automobile is "a new lure that is hard to withstand," while "the automobile in crowded cities has added largely to the coroner's returns, and many accidents appear in the tables as murders, although the only element even of homicide is careless or reckless driving." The Volstead Act has increased crime. But most important of all, "Other things being equal, all new countries have a higher crime rate than old ones." The collision of different races and customs in a new country like America, and the fact that the poor of other lands have swarmed to this country with an eagerness for the better prizes of life and no longer so easily following the well-marked lines of their native environment, have a tendency to increase crime. "Our cities have always been settled by a mixture of the peoples of the world with varied feelings and emotions, and with the individual habits and customs of their native lands. In the main these have been the poor of Europe. They have come with new hopes and ambitions, moved by intense desires," The homogeneity of older countries is favorable to the more settled aspects of social order. Habit, says Darrow, deters from crime far more effectually and naturally than the severest punish-
It is not the terror of brutal punishment that holds the units of society in their place. It is customs and habits. It is long familiarity with the beaten paths. People think and act and live as they are wont. They stay in grooves. Any sudden change jolts them from their ways and sets them loose to find or make other paths. To believe that men are kept in a certain line by fear is a crude conception at variance with experience and psychology alike.

In a general way, Darrow’s attitude toward the problem of crime is familiar enough. He favors the scientific attitude as against the punitive; punishment, he believes, is an antiquated and blind way of dealing with crime. “Saving criminals is, in the last analysis, only saving children; and saving children means not only saving criminals, but their victims, too.” It is obvious that punishment does not save the victims of crime; at most, it is only a life for a life. Darrow flatly opposes the idea of a “criminal nature” in any man. “No child is born a criminal. He may be born weak or strong and, therefore, his power of resistance be more or less; but the course he takes is due to training, opportunity, and environment.” Evidently, the question of crime is only a part of the larger social question. Social conditions of stress and chance will inevitably produce a certain amount of crime. However, the only sane way to combat crime is to provide better opportunities for the young and create sound and regular habits in them. Many children, Darrow reminds us, are not by nature susceptible to a cultural or bookish education; these children should be saved by manual education; they should be taught to do something with their hands. “It is seldom that a mechanic enters on a life of crime. He forms habits that keep him safe.” The ordinary attitude toward crime, says Darrow, has its source in hate and ignorance. It is a continuing phase of the long, ignorant past of mankind. It is not far to seek for parallels in the superstitious record of the race. Quite in his best style, Darrow illustrates the prevalent notions of crime from circumstances of the past. More could not be said, in an equal number of words, than is told in the following striking review:

It has not been very long since men thought that the whole physical world was operated by miracles. The motion of the earth and sun, the procession of day and night, the seasons of the year, the waves and wind, the flood and drought, the seed time and the harvest—all were defined by no natural laws, but all were dependent upon the whim and caprice of some other worldly power. Even when some natural law or causation was believed to account for the phenomena of the physical world, the conduct of man was still supposed to lie outside this realm. Sickness and disease meant the possession of the individual by devils, and these could be driven out only by punishments and incantations. The ordinary treatment of disease was by magic and sorcery. For eighteen centuries, over most of Europe, medical men were punished often in the most terrible ways for seeking to find out the causes of disease and for attempting to treat illness by scientific methods. It was the greatest heresy to deny that illness was due to sin and that pestilence and plague came as a divine visitation of angry gods to afflicted communities. And yet, in spite of restrictive measures and stern persecutions, the doctors persisted, until now no one questions that disease and pestilence are due to natural causes which must and can be removed if the patients are to be cured and infection prevented.

Insanity, too, was for many centuries thought of as possession by devils, and the punishment of the afflicted individual was the favorite treatment for driving out the demon. Hundreds of thousands of unfortunate insane men and women have been put to the severest tortures even down to the most recent times. Sorcery, witchcraft, and magic were the only methods of treatment permitted and the physician was obliged to risk his liberty and life in treating insanity as a disease, and seeking to understand the causes back of the phenomenon.
It is the convinced belief of Darrow, after a lifetime of study and familiarity with crime, that crime must be considered in the same scientific spirit and must be approached with a view to similarly natural remedies as disease and insanity. Who can say that that is not a reasonable view? It is not that Darrow pretends to have any sudden and sweeping "cure-all" for crime; nor do those who make them their expert study claim to be able to rid the world of sickness or insanity. But the question is, if the same interest were devoted to treating crime and the conditions of crime as is given to punishment, would not the results be a great deal better? It has never been proved that punishment has diminished crime. If it were thus efficacious, it has been general enough and severe enough that it should by this time have made for itself a far more useful record. We know that crime has gone on, regardless of punishment. Men commit crimes through ignorance, passion, and social pressure. It is hardly possible to show that, given the conditions of crime, men are restrained by the thought of punishment. As men usually do, they act first and reflect afterwards. Life would be very different if men's actions were always logical and were always taken with a due regard for the consequences. One thing is certain: the Darrow attitude toward crime is a thoughtful attitude, while the same cannot be said generally of the attitude of those who believe in punishment. "The psychology of fighting crime is the same as the psychology of fighting wars," says Darrow; "the people must be made to hate before they will kill."

THE TAMING OF MENCKEN

On Weekdays H. L. Mencken may still be his old self, without one plea for popular indulgence; he may not, in his inner self, have changed in the slightest; but on Sundays, it has seemed to me for some time, Mencken dresses up in his "Sunday best" and really tries to make a respectable impression upon the gentle readers of American daily newspapers. I refer to the syndicated Sunday articles that appear under Mencken's name, and for the authenticity of whose authorship one has, at times, only the assurance of Mencken's well-known style. The writing hand is the hand of Mencken, but frequently the voice is a strange one—or do we catch echoes of Dr. Frank Crane, Bruce Barton and an anonymous Rotarian lecturer?

When Mencken about a year ago turned upon the critics (himself necessarily included though not mentioned) and ran down the critic's trade in galloping heedless style, I thought the article might have been written by almost any literate good American with impatience for what was to him the meaningless discussion of literature, of literary ideas and values. That article was in obvious and unsatisfactory contrast with what Mencken had in other days written, finely and soundly, about the significance and the high function of criticism. Later there appeared a piece by Mencken, in which readers of the Sunday papers were assured that current American literature is far and away the best in the world; and, so forgiving is the public mind, there is no doubt that many of Mencken's past sins were wiped out by that very patriotic note. Recently
Mencken made a friendly gesture toward the American Babbitts which, while not a complete fraternalization, was most amiable and complacent in its congratulation, upon the progress of the Babbitts. Again, we have Mencken metaphorically slapping on the back the American who has always been suspicious of poetry, and declaring that poetry is simply lies, that the fellow who praises his wife's biscuits is a poet, and that lies and illusions are necessary to life. All the while, it could be observed, Mencken was showing signs of respectability. He was wearing his "Sunday best." He was evidently making a bid (how consciously I would not care to assume) for a wider public: either that, or Mencken is in the doldrums of middle age and is looking longingly back at the bright blest isles of illusion from which he set out in his youth to sail so gaily.

Taken with previous signs, the recent rhapsody of Mencken on the beauties of the Bible left no doubt that something had happened to the man. Undoubtedly, that article supplied a text for many a Sunday sermon; only it was by no means an original text, for it was quite of a piece (again, we expect the Mencken style) with innumerable sermons that have been preached from time immemorial to the disparagement of all literature in comparison with the Bible. What! would not one naturally be surprised at Mencken, the once careful thinker and despiser of bunk, saying solemnly that it was the poetry of the Bible that had made Christianity popular and successful, and that the story of the "Christ child" had more poetry in it than all the poetry that was known in Greece and Rome!

These and other pulpy absurdities and sentimentalities, in that almost evangelical flight of rhetoric, I made the subject of recent comments, properly aghast, in my Weekly. And now Mencken has again broken out in a loose, careless, very ridiculous tirade that will make every reactionary American, who hates all radical ideas, welcome him with apoplectic enthusiasm as a brother. In this article ("The Believing Mind") Mencken says that all Socialists are believers in quackery; that ex-Socialists, former Single Taxers, and once active radicals have, one and all, gone into one or another field of bunk, quackery and freakishness; and, in short, Mencken, in his characteristic style, repeats in various phrases the old, the very old notion that all Socialists are freaks, that no Socialist can be a sane and intelligent man with a clear and logical mind.

The fault of exaggeration is indulged to the very limit in this latest article by Mencken. He allows no qualifications, no exceptions, no distinctions. He does not say that some Socialists—even that many Socialists—are freaks who run to quackish notions. And concerning two eminent figures of Socialism, upon whom he can fasten no charge of quackery, he uses a trick of rhetoric of which he should be thoroughly ashamed—a trick that is not at all clever nor amusing and that plainly is not honorable. He says: "Didn't Karl Marx himself carry a madstone and believe in astrology? If not, then it was strange, indeed. Didn't Debs believe that quinine would cure a cold? If not, then he was not a genuine Socialist." Does Mencken think it is a decent, fair, sensible method of argument to imply interrogatively that a man is guilty of some foolish belief (when Mencken knows better) and then to say that, if he doesn't believe thus and so, it is strange and he is not a genuine Socialist otherwise? This is damning a man for an opinion he never held, without
having the frankness to accuse him directly of such an opinion. There could be no worse example of the cheap argumentative trick of innuendo.

It is "natural" to Socialists, Mencken says, that they should believe in "some other quackery"—for he holds Socialism itself, without a qualifying word, to be nothing better than quackery. "Who," he adds, "has ever heard of a Socialist who did not also believe in some other quackery?" Mencken accuses only two Socialists outright and by name of belief in quackery: Upton Sinclair and young Oliver Baldwin, son of England's Prime Minister. Now Sinclair, a man of many virtues and abilities and also, admittedly, of a very puritanical and peculiar cast of mind, is like none other than himself. There could not be two Sinclairs in this world. He is pre-eminent in his abilities and his oddities. I admire him, and yet I will so far agree with Mencken as to say that I would scarcely be surprised at any notion Sinclair might advocate. But Sinclair is only one Socialist, and he is peculiarly and remarkably himself. As for Oliver Baldwin, whom Mencken reports as being a spiritualist, he is quite an unimportant young fellow and certainly cannot be pointed out as a representative Socialist. He is not worth mentioning one way or another. He is a small, unimpressive figure which Mencken carelessly drags in by the heels. Aside from these two, Mencken refers to the Socialists collectively as having flocked to the various schools of quackery, and in alleged explanation (not of particular Socialists, mind you, but of Socialists in general and without exception), he says: "The point is that everyone found some sort of satisfaction for the imperative need of his nature—everyone found something outlandish and preposterous to believe."

What is to be said of Mencken's logic? It is as intelligent as the logic of those patriots who cried out in 1917 that all Germans, every last one of them, were villains. It is no better than the logic of the man who meets three persons who share a certain belief, and who, without inquiring further, concludes that not only these three but all others having this belief in common are believers, without exception, in another particular idea—or, sweepingly, that they are all believers in silly ideas. The method of argument that Mencken uses has been turned to ridicule by Macaulay. In his essay on Lord Bacon, he says that all men use the inductive method of reasoning—"But one performs it foolishly or carelessly; the other performs it with patience, attention, sagacity, and judgment." He gives an example of careless argument which is exactly analogous to that of Mencken's in the present instance:

We have heard that an eminent judge of the last generation was in the habit of jocosely propounding after dinner a theory, that the cause of the prevalence of Jacobinism was the practice of bearing three names. He quoted on the one side Charles James Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, John Horne Tooke, John Philip Curran, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Theobald Wolfe Tone. These were instantiores convenientes. He then proceeded to cite instances absenteeae in proximo, William Pitt, John Scott, William Windham, Samuel Horsley, Henry Dundas, Edmund Burke. He might have gone on to give instances secundum magis et minus. The practice of giving children three names has been for some time a growing practice and Jacobinism has also been growing. The practice of giving children three names is more common in America than in England. In England we still have a King and House of Lords; but the Americans are republicans. The rejections are obvious. Burke and Theobald Wolfe Tone are both Irishmen; therefore the being an Irishman is not the cause of Jacobinism. Horsley and Horne Tooke are both
clergyman; therefore the being a clergyman is not the cause of Jacobinism. Fox and Windham were both educated at Oxford; therefore the being educated at Oxford is not the cause of Jacobinism. Pitt and Horne Tooke were both educated at Cambridge; therefore the being educated at Cambridge is not the cause of Jacobinism. In this way, our inductive philosopher arrives at what Bacon calls the Vintage, and pronounces that the having three names is the cause of Jacobinism.

Now this is plainly a very poor kind of reasoning—also a very familiar and popular kind of reasoning—taking a few examples hastily and at random and jumping to a general conclusion. It is Mencken's reasoning when he says, naming two and lumping the rest, that all Socialists are necessarily driven to believe in quackery. And what is the difference between this kind of reasoning and good reasoning? "The difference," says Macaulay, "evidently is not in the kind of instances, but in the number of instances. . . . If the learned author of the theory about Jacobinism had enlarged either of his tables a little, his system would have been destroyed. The names of Tom Paine and William Wyndham Grenville would have been sufficient to do the work." It is equally simple to knock out Mencken's view that Socialists and ex-Socialists, and men believing in unpopular social theories, have one and all flocked to quackery. One need only give a few instances of Socialists and ex-Socialists and radicals who do not fit into the freakish picture.

There is Clarence Darrow, for example, the noblest Roman of them all (with Debs by his side) an ex-Single Taxer and an ex-Socialist is Darrow, and a man who still has a strongly radical bent of social theory. Will Mencken say that Darrow has surrendered to quackery? Will he assert that it is a necessity of Darrow's nature to believe in bunk? The fact is that Darrow is one of the best debunkers who ever lived, a man with a singularly realistic mind—and perhaps Mencken's favorite Mercury author.

Some time ago there appeared in the American Mercury a splendid article about Roger Baldwin, the good genius back of the Civil Liberties Union. In that sketch Baldwin was shown to be a cultured, charming man—a thoroughly civilized man—a great and rare friend of liberty; he is a man of fine conscience and principle; not even Mencken will label him as a victim of quackery.

Dr. John R. Neal, celebrated in the Scopes case, is the only well-known radical in Tennessee (a Socialist or an ex-Socialist, if I mistake not, but at any rate a radical)—and Dr. Neal has received a great deal of praise from Mencken as a fighter for intellectual liberty and civilization against Fundamentalist quackery.

A few months ago Emma Goldman (a woman of undoubted culture and force of character and, rightly or wrongly but not quackishly, an anarchist in social thought) wrote for the American Mercury a very good article on Johann Most, the early American anarchist; and what form of quackery has led Emma Goldman astray?

Edgar Lee Masters is an enemy of bunk, a friend of truth and liberty, an artist of quite modern tone and consideration—and a well-known Mercury author; his debunking of Bryan in the Mercury was an excellent piece of work. Yet Masters is an ex-Socialist and Single Taxer, one of the radicals, whom Mencken sweepingly brands as all believers in quackery.
Bernard Shaw is one of the most intelligent men, one of the shrewdest thinkers, one of the most effective critics of bunk and fallacy, alive today; and Shaw is a Socialist of undiminished conviction and zeal. Because Mencken disagrees with Shaw’s Socialism, will he denounce Shaw as being a dupe of quackery?

Eugene V. Debs was America’s greatest Socialist: into what form of quackery had Debs been led? Certainly Debs was not unsettled in mind by any influence of quackery when he denounced the hypocrisy and outrage of the late war? We know that Mencken believed about the war as Debs did—except that Debs spoke out courageously and went to prison, while Mencken looked on in judicious silence. And indeed was not Mencken himself under suspicion of quackery when he wrote an article for the esteemed Atlantic Monthly in eulogy of Ludendorff, the German Ku-Kluxer, the man who represents everything that is hateful and reactionary in Germany, a man who is as little worthy of admiration from any intellectual standpoint as our own President Coolidge?

Carl Sandburg, one of Mencken’s admirations, was a Socialist, and very active in the movement; he is still a radical in temperament and viewpoint. Has Sandburg shown an irresistible impulse to fly into the arms of any quack? or is he one of the finest and most sensible writing men in the country today? and author of a splendid intelligent life of Abraham Lincoln, which Mencken has praised highly?

Sinclair Lewis is a Socialist. His novels, which Mencken as critic has lauded and whose criticism of American society Mencken has approved as true and important, are, to repeat ourselves, social criticism with a socialistic point of view. Surely Mencken would not be quite so ridiculous as to call Sinclair Lewis a believer in bunk and quackery—Lewis, who is nothing if not a debunker.

There are other Socialists, ex-Socialists and radicals upon whom no suspicion of bunk can be said to rest—men whom, even as the above, Mencken ignores and to mention whom is to break down his flagrantly reckless and ridiculous theory. There is Will Durant, an ex-Socialist, who is one of America’s best and clearest thinkers and the author of the best book on philosophy ever written in America. There is George Sterling, that fine gentleman and artist, beyond the reproach of quackery, a well-accepted Mercury author—and a Socialist. There is Edwin Markham, that grand old man, who recently had a long poem in the Mercury—a man equipped with that social conscience which Mencken despises as quackish because he has it not, a man formerly (and I think, still) socialistic if not a Socialist. Even Sinclair, at whom Mencken directly aims, is certainly a man of culture and intellectual force, and one who is apparently acceptable in the debunked list of Mercury authors—for did he not write for the Mercury that charming appreciation of the American composer, Edward MacDowell? And let me say that not even Sinclair, to my knowledge, has gone as far on the road back to Genesis as Mencken himself—Mencken, who says that, among other quackeries, Socialists have turned to Genesis. Could any man, not actually an evangelist nor a Fundamentalist, write more extravagantly, and foolishly ignore history and sound criticism and the facts of human nature as they bear upon the religious impulse?
I have named only a few prominent radicals who are not freaks, who are not associated with any quackery; these are enough to destroy Mencken’s case, which was exactly no case at all in the first place; and of course there are thousands of sane, intelligent men, with very good heads on their shoulders, who believe in Socialism or some radical social theory, and who are not the natural-born, inevitable fools that Mencken would make Socialists out to be. Nothing is sillier, nothing is more defiant of logic and good sense and the plain facts of human nature, than to take a whole nation or class or party of people and condemn them wholesale in this manner. At best, one can argue that the particular belief that they do share is a fallacy. And even to show that a theory is wrong is not to prove that it is freakish or idiotic, that it has no intellectual basis and support. Certainly, Mencken will not contend that human error is always and absolutely synonymous with weak-mindedness and ineptitude. The best minds may have mistaken opinions. There are not many, for that matter, who are thoroughly debunked: a man may have a good brain in many respects, and still yield to bunk in some sort; and there are, on the higher levels of opinion, differences in thought that are not, one side or the other, to be condemned by the term quackery. And there is a difference of intellectual caliber, in the mental tactics and quality, of men holding the same opinion. Socrates could hardly be called a quack because he believed in the immortality of the soul; but a Cheap John evangelist, howling the same doctrine, may be described as a quack with complete accuracy. Plato could not be denounced as a freak and a fool because his chart of an ideal republic is not accepted by any intelligent man today; men of minds far inferior to that of Plato have the advantage of a good deal of knowledge and progress that the centuries have brought down to us.

I am not minded here to discuss the rightness or wrongness of Socialism as a social program or an intellectual attitude; but at least Socialism is a respectable and well-reasoned theory; certainly there is much in its viewpoint that is not disputed by any intelligent man today—the economic view of history, for example, which Marx brought to its clearest and completest statement, and which Socialists were for long almost alone in urging, is now a generally accepted view, even by reactionaries. Socialism is a theory worthy of being seriously and decently discussed, and not a quackery to be dismissed as only the delusion of fools. Karl Marx was a dignified scholar of great intellectual ability (not, as Mencken with wretched taste implies, a fellow with “dirty finger-nails”) and every student of economic theory since his time owes something to the work of Marx.

It is simple enough to defend a prevailing system, to say that “whatever is, is right” and thus to flatter oneself that one is a practical man, a cautious thinker, and no dreamer of uncertain things. It is also true that in new and radical thinking, looking boldly into the future, and opposing the things that are, there is much opportunity for error; the radical is no more to be blamed if some of his ideas are unsound or doubtful than the scientist is to be condemned because some of his experiments are failures; time tests all our theories, and few men carry into middle life all of the enthusiasms of their youth with the same degree of conviction, fine though such enthusiasms were in their general mood and purport.
It is, by the way, a strange blunder—or a deliberate misstatement—for Mencken to assert that time has fully tested the Socialist theory, that Socialism has been tried and has failed. Just where has Socialism been tried and to what extent has it failed? It is true that in Russia, under control of the Communists, an ignorant and economically backward country could not be transformed into a Socialist country simply, neatly and all at once: the Communists soon gave up trying it, and are more slowly working toward their aims. It would have been fully as sensible for a British Tory after the Revolutionary War to say that the republican form of government had been tried in America and had failed: the truth is that the new America for a decade or so after the Revolution was far from being well organized, and as justified by successful achievements, as the Soviet Government in Russia. The republican form of government did not vindicate the high idealistic hopes of many of the political thinkers of that day; but it worked. Even so we may say that Socialism will not do all that its advocates think, but it does not therefore follow that it will not work—that it will, in an accurate sense of the word, fail.

On the other hand, capitalism—a system that undeniably works—has many kinds of failure to its discredit. The world is far from being well managed under the system: an immense amount of injustice, waste, confusion, strife and disaster can be ascribed to it. Will Mencken say that capitalism is an ideal, logical, altogether admirable system? I doubt if he will; the best defense he has ever made of it was a very personal one: namely, that he had an independent income and no interest in common with the workers. That was not an intellectual nor a noble defense, but it was an understandable one, and individually it was justifiable. Of course Mencken can very well say that capitalism is here and it is working and he does not suffer from it, however ponderously and erratically it may function; and he can refuse to bother himself with trying to think how our social institutions might be improved. But it comes with very poor grace from him to say that Socialists are freakish and naturally predisposed to quackery because they do advance a theory—not contemptible and not foolish, even though one holds it to be less than true—of a superior and more deliberate organization of society.

The truth is that Mencken is not able reasonably to discuss any political, economic or social program for the betterment of conditions. He is, in all the field of social legislation, practically a standpatter. He beholds as quackery any effort to solve such questions. He refers to "evangelists of farm relief" as if a program of economic justice to the farmers of the nation is no more than cheap quackery; he speaks of those who believe in "international peace," as if only the vertest dunce could entertain such a belief or such a hope—whereas, international peace is perhaps the greatest problem of the age and all civilized men believe in any step that will tend toward that desideratum, skeptical as they may be of merely quixotic proposals for realizing it; and Mencken likewise scornfully mentions those who believe in "the recall of judges," as if nothing could be more fatuous than the idea of a great popular control over judges whose impregnability invites irresponsibility, whose political debts invite partisanship and whose economic position too often invites a kind of subtle corruption—and I wonder, in this connection, if Mencken possibly shares the view of William Howard Taft regarding the sacred-
ness of judges and their decisions and the blasphemy of taking their names in vain. The long and short of it is that Mencken, when he enters the field of social thought, is not prepared by interest or sympathy to engage in a fair discussion. Here, it seems, all theories look alike to him, and all are covered by the felicitously broad term of quackery.

It has been, I think, fairly shown that not all Socialists believe in quackery, that the one does not follow from the other. As a last word, suppose we look at Mencken's reasoning from another angle. The majority of people who believe in the list of quackeries he gives are not Socialists; and believing in them can be found men from every party, rank and trade. Why not, then, according to Mencken's logic, say that because many Republicans are Fundamentalists, all those who belong to the Republican party are peculiarly susceptible to quackery? Why not say that, as we find many Democrats who believe in astrology and who consult the ouija board, that adherence to the Democratic party implies a native predilection for bunk of all kinds? Why not say that because some who believe in evolution believe also in Prohibition, therefore the two beliefs naturally go together? In other words, why go to very much trouble of careful observation and discriminating thought in order to form an opinion? Take the first couple of examples that you find, on one side or the other, and you have the materials of an opinion that can stand respectfully beside Mencken's opinion of the relation between Socialism and quackery.

SIMPLE-MINDED

OURS is a funny language, as is shown by our opposite uses of this phrase, "simple-minded." We use it in referring to the type of mind that is rather feeble, that can grasp only the a, b, c of thought and that is seen to wobble the minute it tries to follow an idea of hefty size. And, on the contrary, we speak of a man as having a simple mind, as being a simple thinker, when he thinks realistically in a very direct, energetic and visible fashion. Simplicity of thought is the mark of a good mind. That is to say, in thinking about life one should hold onto ideas that are tangible and tenable, ideas that are useful and can actually be made to mean something. One should not, in other words, pass by what is obviously true (obviously, of course, to the thoughtful perspicacious mind) in order to search out or conjure up some theory that is fantastically far-fetched, wild and untrustworthy. There is a difference between the kind of simple mind that thinks with difficulty or not at all, and the kind of simple mind that thinks simply, soundly and sincerely. To think simply is, after all, to think efficiently—to go about the business of thinking in a sensible, workmanlike manner—to have one's mental machine in good running order. And intellectual simplicity, in this view of it, is consistent with a great deal of intellectual subtlety. Wit and sharpness of mind are, in truth, at once very simple and very subtle. Clarence Darrow is an almost perfect example of a man whose mind works simply—that is to say, damned well—and yet who has infinite wit, grace, subtlety and charming address of thought.
THE REASONING ANIMAL

HERE is a little stanza by Aldous Huxley which occurs to my mind with considerable force every now and then. It seems to show that Mr. Huxley and I have something thoughtfully in common, and it would further indicate that Mr. Huxley would not be quite the man to be superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School in Girard. I recommend this bit of poetry, which is as much truth as it is poetry, to my Christian readers:

O sound of simian mirth!
Mind, issued from the monkey’s womb,
Is still umbilical to earth—
Earth its home and earth its tomb.

WHY MENCKEN DOESN’T FAST

ACCORDING to Upton Sinclair (but interpreting his words freely in my own style) the reason that H. L. Mencken does not go on a fast when his liver is out of order is that Mencken has simply not been intellectually curious enough to investigate the efficacy and the importance of fasting as an aid to a rundown system.

You will remember that in Mencken’s recent broadside against Socialists, in which he misused the name of Sinclair himself, a belief in the fasting cure was one of the things cited to prove the will-to-bunk of Socialists and of Sinclair particularly.

There was a great deal that was wrong with Mencken’s article. I have written at some length about it. Briefly, Mencken named two or three Socialists who are in favor of ideas that Mencken considers unsound (or, worse, as quackery) and from that he generalized most recklessly that all Socialists, or men who had ever been Socialists or social radicals of any sort, were therefore gullible in the extreme. Many of the things Mencken mentioned are quackeries in my opinion, and also many Socialists believe in them as do many men who are far from being Socialists. But what Sinclair seized upon was Mencken’s reference to the fasting cure as belonging in the bunk category.

There is some caniness in the way Sinclair often concentrates on a single point in an argument that has a number of points. If he selects what he regards as the other fellow’s weak point, who can blame him? At any rate, he avoids confusion both for himself and those whom he aims to convince. And now I shall let you read the letter that Sinclair wrote to Mencken:

Several indignant correspondents have sent me your column on the gullibility of Socialists, with myself as gull leader. My dear fellow, you are the most gullible man I know. You accept more capitalist nonsense and reject more new truth than anybody in the country, of prominence. It is quite true that there are foolish people who conclude that everything is right because it is new, but they are not a particle more foolish than the people who make it their principle of thought that something is wrong because it is new. You think that you are hard-boiled and scientific when you reject things that you know nothing about. But the fact is that you are following a custom as old as the human mob.
I am not going to try to argue about Socialism with you because it is too big a subject, and your beliefs about it are conditioned by your environment, which includes the vicious newspapers, like the Chicago Tribune, which publish your stuff. But let us take the case of fasting, which is comparatively simple. What do you really know about fasting? Did you ever take a fast? Did you ever take the trouble to talk with a single person who has taken a fast? Have you studied any of the researches made in some of our leading scientific laboratories, which have substantiated almost all the claims I ever made for fasting as a cure of disease? I will bet you never did any of these things. The idea of fasting to cure catarrh strikes you as funny, and therefore, you put yourself in the classification with my poor old father (long since deceased), who used to think that the idea of microbes as a cause of disease was the most comical thing in the whole world.

But what did I do about fasting? First, I took a number of fasts, twenty or thirty in the course of the past seventeen years. Second, I visited institutions where hundreds of people were fasting, and spent a couple of months watching their cases. Then I published magazine articles and books, which brought me literally thousands of letters from people who tried the experiment and reported the results. And now I have seen the research laboratories make tests of the most elaborate and precise character, demonstrating the assertions I made. Have you never heard anything about the researches of the Carnegie Institute as to the effects of fasting on diabetes? A year or two ago I found in the Journal of Metabolic Research an account of a most elaborate series of experiments carried on in the Hull Laboratories of the University of Chicago in which both dogs and human beings underwent thirty- and forty-day fasts with minute tests of all the bodily functions several times every day. The conclusion was that fasting increases the metabolic rate five or six percent. And inasmuch as decrease in the metabolic rate is a phenomenon of old age, it follows that the effect of fasting is rejuvenation. But would you stop to examine a journal of metabolic research before you jeered at a Socialist for knowing that he has improved his own health by fasting? No, my dear fellow, because if you took that much trouble you would be less entertaining to the newspaper reading mob.

I have printed this letter out of fairness to Sinclair and for the interest of my readers. I am going to take the part of caution and refrain from any controversy on the subject of fasting. I have no particular knowledge of it, no strong opinions about it, and no great interest in it.

I don't, personally, like the idea of fasting. Maybe my love of food inclines me to be unfriendly to the idea of going without food. And the fact that I am very healthy, and that my appetite always has a genuine edge to it, may keep me from being late at meals.

But the idea of fasting seems reasonable enough, if wisely carried out and not pushed to an extreme. It seems reasonable that when the human system is all out of order and tired out and in a knot one should not stuff it with food and keep it working as if it were a machine in good shape. Most men do a little fasting; every man has missed a meal occasionally, when he was not genuinely hungry nor in need of food, and felt the better for it. The idea that a man should eat religiously three meals a day, whether he is hungry or not, whether he needs the food or not, whether his system is in a receptive condition or not—that idea seems to me to have a liberal portion of bunk in it, and to denote simply a slavery to habit. To be sure, eating is just a habit, anyway—a delightful habit, yes.

But I said I wasn't going to argue about fasting. Really, it's an unpleasant subject. It is, however, the bounden duty of Mencken to experiment on himself with a week's fast, during which he shall not drink any liquor nor read a book nor write any heated articles, but simply lie in a relaxed condition and think quietly about the beauties of the Bible.
THE GREAT GAME OF LANGUAGE

ACADEMICALLY, the average representative of the younger generation—the average person of any age or generation—may not be strong on English and grammar and rhetoric; but in the free and ready intercourse of life, in the actual practice of every day when pedagogues do not intervene to spoil the fun, what contributes more zest than the game of language? Man certainly has a great interest in language, for he is always adding to it, changing it, playing with it, seeking for expressions that will convey more swiftly and picturesquely and gaily his meanings. While the professors are busy with their textbooks of rhetoric, slang continually rises up from nowhere and flies everywhere. The school never catches up with the street in the race of language. At best it can discriminately, and perhaps a bit gingerly, pick up this and that slang term from time to time and put it in the dictionary, where in the course of years it will hold up its head and forget that it was ever low-born slang.

Not all slang expressions are happily appropriate or attractive. Many of them rage almost exclusively among the younger set for awhile, and then they die with no one to mourn them. Others go farther and fare better. The word “flapper” was somehow expressive of the volatile, flapping young thing it was meant to describe; “cake eater” won its way immediately as a designation for the adolescent and precocious dandy; “high hat” is obvious in its application; “applesauce” was at once recognized as a peach of a term; “dumbbell” had as ready a victory as Sterne’s “hobbyhorse.” A recent expression that tickles my fancy is “apple polishers,” meaning the fellows in colleges who get by with little or no study, and manage to convey a bright scholarly impression by stepping up to ask a question or two after lectures. There is nothing that is less laborious and apparently more futile than “apple polishing.”

No doubt there is a wealth of slang, good and bad and indifferent, in circulation among the jazzy younger set that we elders (the word makes one feel gray-headed and rheumatic) never hear. Overhearing the language describing a night of it in that set, we should perhaps have only a vague notion of what had happened and by some expressions would be utterly mystified. As I really despise no kind of learning, it is with pleasure that I pass on to my readers a list, taken from the Kansas City Star, of some terms now in current use:

Making a run—Handing out a hot line; the come-on that a flapper puts out to catch a new parlor hound.

Run the ename—Necking, swinging a curve, petting, or back to that archaic term, “spooning.”

Tinkle—A date. An engagement with one’s boy friend.

Nicky Boy—A new term for a cake; evidently derived from the youthful custom of wearing “plus fours.”

Divan Bruiser—A boy who never gets any farther than the parlor sofa.

Gimme Girl—A gold digger; for a dinner date, orchestra tickets, and more food later is necessary to satisfy this type of flapper.
Witness—The third person of a twosome; dragged along because there is no other way.

Hello Hound—A man who tries to pick up girls on the street.

Alsoanna—A girl whose boy friend has found another sweetheart.

The Weeds—Anything that is quite all right—a term of approbation.

Frater—A Greek in the collegiate sense, the member of a fraternity.

Rush Out—The cold shoulder—term applied to the method used by misses of this age to discourage undesired attentions.

A Good Orange—A "good fellow" of either sex.

Big Sausage Seller from Salt Lake—One of the several variations of the "big butter and egg man from the West."

Chatter—The line—a flapper's conversation.

Huddle System—The necking method of acquiring boy friends.

Google-eyed—Describing the state of a young man in love. This is not new, but is still very popular.

Massage—A public dance.

In my opinion, this collection deserves a very poor rating. No doubt it shows a commendable interest in the language, but it is lacking in art or ingenuity to make the language yield us new images that are vivid, that are pertinent, and that are witty. These three qualities—vividness, pertinence and wit distinguish the best slang, the slang that really lives and has value not only in common speech but in literature.

Naturally, as a writing man I welcome new expressions; and I like to invent them myself on occasion. Yet I can find no use in composition or conversation for such a term as "the weeds" to express approval. You might call another a "weed" as a form of insult; to say that someone has a "weedy mind" would be a very good phrase, and I shall remember it; if one wished to be extra emphatic, one might describe another as "jimson weed." As for the terms, "a good orange," that is worth nothing because it is no improvement over the term from which it is directly derived: "a good egg." It is not as good a term, for the distinction of good and bad eggs is a more familiar one in ordinary life, and our disapproval of bad eggs is sharper to lend an edge (or an odor) to the term. A better term for "necking" than any given in the foregoing list is "the touch system." "Alsoanna" is plainly a term that has some meaning and there is a certain euphony about it, while it may be held to reflect an admirable quality of humorous resignation. The best term in the list is "the witness." It is not of course a new word, but a new use of a word; there is certainly a touch of wry and yet mischievous humor in it, and one sympathizes with the young couple forced to "take along the witness."

Not all slang is striking, just as not all profanity is picturesque and impressive. But it hurts nobody, and is justified by the new words that come out of it. It keeps the language alive.
"CULTURE" IN KANSAS

IN ASSOCIATED PRESS report, sent from Topeka, Kansas, makes much of the fact that the farmers are making use of the Kansas traveling library, which might lead a chronic pessimist like myself to begin to believe that our yokels are feeding something besides bunk and pap to what is commonly referred to as their brains. But, alas, the facts are depressing. They read, it seems; but what? Here are the favorite authors among the Kansas peasantry:

Zane Grey
James Oliver Curwood
Harold Bell Wright
Arthur B. Reeve
Margaret Hill McCarter
Gene Stratton-Porter
Mary Roberts Rinehart
Nina Wilcox Putnam.

Here is additional proof of how consistently the mob can be made to like the inherently meretricious. Without exception, rural Kansas takes to bad authors, albeit popular ones.


Given their choice among the great, of whom there are many, and the bad, of whom there are many more, the crowd gravitates inevitably to the bad, the idiotic, the vulgar, the crude, the sentimental, the bunk, the hokum and the sham. Here is a perfect example of mass stupidity and intellectual blindness. Not a single great author is a favorite among the thousands of men and women who live on Kansas farms.
THE Y. M. C. A. SELECTS GREAT MEN

Recent world-wide vote was taken of the Y. M. C. A. with the object of selecting the four greatest characters of history—the two greatest of the past and the two greatest of the present. There was striking contrast in the favorites. It is not surprising that Jesus Christ should have been chosen. He would naturally be picked at once, and without second thought, by those who claim above all things to be his followers. The next choice, however, is Napoleon, and this seems quite a leap from Jesus. According to the orthodox view of Jesus, and the undoubted historical view of Napoleon, one cannot imagine the two figures side by side. Certainly Napoleon would not have been a disciple, and Jesus would not have been a marshal in the grand army. Perhaps the remark of Jesus that he came not to bring peace but a sword may be construed as a sort of prophecy of the appearance of Napoleon, and as indicating more than a superficial sympathy between the two.

But it is in their choice of the living great that the Y. M. C. A. fellows make us stare most curiously. Who are the two greatest men now living? Benito Mussolini and Henry Ford! Yes, really, these two are declared by a tremendous vote of the Y. M. C. A. to stand pre-eminently and grandly above all others. Those young Christians are apparently unable to separate power, however it is gained or held, from greatness; a charlatan of the type of Mussolini, who maintains himself by assassination and back-alley intrigue, is a great man simply because he can, in the Fascist phrase, “make life more difficult” for anyone who dares to oppose him. It may be that the young Christians would welcome the crude and boastful tyrant as the leader of a new religious crusade. He could supply them with a spirit of intolerance that would make the early church fathers seem mild in comparison. It is possible that the “Y” fellows have been misled by Mussolini’s recently announced intention to restore the grandeur that was Rome into believing him a modern Caesar. But in truth he is only a boss politician with a well-armed gang at his command and a terrified populace, not under the spell of his intellect or character, but under his heel.

Regarding the selection of Henry Ford, we can say little that is not ludicrously and plainly implied in the mere mention of him as one of the two greatest of living men. The main consideration that occurs to us is that this honor bestowed upon Henry is unfair to some other worthies of equal greatness and a corresponding if not exactly equal celebrity. Mr. Ford is great, we assume, because he has been a mammoth producer of tin Lizzies. But why should not Mr. Wrigley be honored for bringing chewing gum to the multitude? Widely distributed as Ford cars are, chewing gum is still more in use. Mr. Gillette, of safety razor fame, has almost as good a right as Henry to be chosen as greater than, let us say, Luther Burbank or Thomas A. Edison. And what is more, the Y. M. C. A. boys overlooked a fine chance to call the world’s attention forcibly to the greatness of Billy Sunday.

We note, and absolutely without surprise, that this vote did not favor
the intellectual or artistic qualities of mankind. Thought is evidently not an essential, nor even a very significant mark, of greatness to these young Christians. Therein, we may add, they do not differ remarkably from the average verdict of the crowd. The world inclines toward the spectacular figure, or the man of action, or the man whose name is most often in the newspapers, or the man from whom it buys its automobiles. And the selection of Napoleon and Mussolini may well bring a dismaying reflection to the pacifists. The world, and especially youth, is still under the spell of admiration for the successful display of physical force. The brightness of military glory has not dimmed. The splendor and mightiness of war are still more potent to grip the imagination than are the terrors of war. In a world where the conditions that lead to war are not less evident than formerly, the psychology that favors war seems to be as much in evidence as at any time in the past.

INSULTING THE FAIR STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Patriotism and local pride are factors not lightly to be disregarded in these United States. For business reasons, I believe, rather than emotional ones (although the two are mixed) any criticism of a community or a state or the nation is a most false, unjust and villainous attack. The Americans are “boosters”; and all critics, all writers who describe or report conditions in any but terms of praise, are “knockers.” Being familiar with this trait of Americans, I am not surprised that a recent article in the Monthly, making a brief survey of the state of progress in Mississippi, has aroused the wrath of the natives in that corner of the pasture. What is the chivalry of Mississippi to rest silent under aspersions on that fair state? The editor of the Gulf Coast Guide, a publication supremely of the boosting type, speaks out manfully in this fashion:

Show me a man unwarped by hate, who will study Mississippi with an open mind, and see what she has accomplished in spite of the Civil War, Reconstruction, the hookworm, the boll weevil, the cattle tick and the Negro; what she has accomplished in spite of her maligners; show me a man willing to dwell for a time in Mississippi, long enough to catch the spirit of the New Mississippi, as young men have in these times pledged themselves to the building of the state; I think that man, if he has a heart, would write a sympathetic story of promise and achievement. I know he would.

But some doubt is thrown upon the accuracy of this loyal editor by his statement that Mississippi, among the states of the nation, “ranks first in Opportunities.” With all kindness toward Mississippi, we still must observe that this statement is certainly far wide of accomplished facts. Does the editor mean that Mississippi has not taken advantage of her opportunities and that therefore they remain, potentially, more numerous in that state for whoever wishes to seize them? I feel ashamed to suggest it.

It is far from my wish to deny that the climate of Mississippi is nice and breezy; that its citizens are good people; that the state has points in its favor and may amount to more in the future. It seems to
me, however, foolish and useless to deny that it ranks considerably down
in the list for industrial, cultural and metropolitan advantages. It has
no great cities, hardly even a considerable city. It is a fact, and not some
critic’s hateful lie, that the state is backward in industrial development.
Culturally, what does Mississippi signify? Who can tell? “As to oppor-
tunities,” writes the author of the Monthly article in question, “I cannot
see his point, when the state has lost population continuously since 1910,
for I believe that no man would leave a good place, if it has opportuni-
ties. It has no large cities, no manufactures of importance, and conse-
quently no market for ordinary farm crops.” Yet he finds it in his heart
and his conscience to acknowledge something good about a part of Missis-
sippi, which indicates that he is not a critic from any mean, malignant
motive, that his mild sociological sketch of the state was not drawn by a
man “warped by hate.” This is the good word for the state: “Of course,
there are exceptions, where property owners have enhanced the values of
their lands in the recent phenomenal increase of the coast section. The
coast section is, however, cosmopolitan and far less provincial than the
average Mississippi community, having a general distribution of nationali-
ties, religions and former outside residents. It believes in Sunday amuse-
ments and in violation of state laws operates very often on Sundays.”

Studying Mississippi with an open mind, in the viewpoint of the
patriotic editor, would seem to mean indulgence in some good old South-
ern oratory in behalf of the state. I suspect that the real animating influ-
ence of this editor was sufficiently confessed in his statement to the
Monthly writer who dwells in but is “disloyal” to the state: “I love this
state because I am a Mississippian.” And yet he does say: “Mississippi
is backward. We know that. But she is moving faster today than Kan-
sas is, and within a decade will no doubt lead that state in many things
as she now leads it in a few.” Well, if Mississippi is moving faster than
Kansas, that is some praise. I didn’t know that Kansas was moving.

AN ILLUSTRIOUS SON OF THE BREWERY TRADE

SHOCK is due that gentleman who wrote to the Christian
Science Monitor that, while many sons of ministers have suc-
cceeded in life to the extent of a note in Who’s Who, he searched
in vain for any account of “famous children of parents engaged
in the liquor business.” He did not look carefully enough, says J. V.
Nash (6033 Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois) who informs us of a
delightsome and humorous example contrary to the sweeping declaration
of the Monitor’s correspondent. He writes:

The gentleman evidently didn’t search through the biographical dictionary as
far as the letter N. If he had, he might have found out something about the
father of one of the most illustrious characters of the English-speaking religious
world in the nineteenth century, Cardinal Newman, the author of probably the most
widely known of all modern Christian hymns—“Lead, Kindly Light.”
I quote from Wilfrid Meynell’s “Cardinal Newman,” page 1:
“Cardinal Newman’s father first banked, and then brewed, failing at both . . .
the bank in Lombard Street broke during a financial crisis, and the brewery at
Alton had his almost slavish exertions—to no purpose. What comfort Mr. John
Newman then had, he had from his son, John Henry, who was able to give him the good news of his election to a fellowship at Oriel, in 1823."

Newman was practically all his life—he survived into his ninetieth year—a moderate drinker of wine (Meynell, p. 94). On one occasion his brother Francis—who was an avowed "Infidel"—tried to interest him in abating the evils of intemperance in Ireland and sent him a letter, asking for his support in a temperance campaign and enclosing some literature showing that Dublin was overrun with saloons. The Cardinal in a curt reply declined to interest himself in the matter, and slyly added that he really didn't know "whether there are too many saloons in Dublin—or too few." Francis Newman relates this incident in a volume of reminiscences.

How sad it is that the Monitor wiseacre is thus uncomfortably, even distressingly, placed between two dilemmas. He can hardly deny that Cardinal Newman is a great figure of Christianity; but, admitting it, he must set down at least this one example, and a very notable one, in behalf of the brewery trade. And how annoying it is that, as a Christian and a Prohibitionist, he must choose between a Christian drinker and friend of drink and an "infidel" who was an advocate of temperance. We see that both religion and the temperance movement, according to the old saying, make strange bedfellows.

Incidentally, this case shows how reckless it is to judge a man's opinions of all questions by a particular kind of belief that he holds. A Christian may have what is regarded as an unrighteously liberal view of personal conduct; while an "infidel" may be a strict moralist. The world cannot be neatly divided, so that we can say that on one side everybody has a certain common viewpoint on all subjects, while on the other side a similar unanimity prevails. Individual examples have a way of taking the wind out of our easy generalizations.

WHAT PRESIDENT COOLIDGE "THINKS"

As President of the United States, Calvin Coolidge must inevitably hold certain safe, commonplace opinions; the holding and expressing of such opinions is a part of his job; if there had ever been the slightest suspicion that he might entertain other opinions, he would never have come within reaching distance of the job. And so, when we read the long interview given to the world by Bruce Barton, heralded by the press as such a remarkable document, as such an unusual and intimate glimpse of the President's mind, we are prepared not to be startled by any strange viewpoint. We should indeed rub our eyes and stare in positive unbelief if anything which might truly be described as an idea, something apart from commonly received opinions, were discoverable in this interview. We are spared any such surprise, for throughout the interview we find Mr. Coolidge saying quite what he was expected to say, dully and dutifully, under the circumstances. By this I do not mean to imply that President Coolidge concealed his real opinions, and that, out of policy, he suppressed the workings of his mighty intellect. There is every reason to believe that the President revealed his mind as frankly as possible. I, for one, have
never had a doubt that his views were those of the average American. He is as commonplace as three meals a day. The Barton interview is remarkable, if at all, only as an exhibit of mediocrity.

So dull is the interview that it is not worth any extended consideration, but only a casual glance or two. Is it worth that? Only as a matter of slight and brief record. Certainly, it is not a unique or important revelation that President Coolidge believes in the family and the home. Again, when the President expresses the opinion that good women influence a man's life, are we to be struck by this as if it were an unexpected, original and profound opinion? Public men have always been willing to pay this sort of compliment to their wives and mothers, being sure that they will gain in common respect and lose nothing in credit thereby. It is simply an appropriate gesture. Likewise we are not astonished when the President in the well-known role of a good son, speaks well of his father. Nor is there any shock of the extraordinary in the President's opinion that America is a land of opportunity. The statement that George Washington is his ideal of a great and good man is not exceptional nor unbecoming in a President of the United States. A belief in the average man is also eminently proper, especially when one is such a perfect example of the average man as Mr. Coolidge. The thought that woman can reach her highest destiny by bearing and raising a family is, if it can be called a thought, not a striking one. The statement of the President that he likes to mend a broken fence and tinker around the old farm place is not exactly an odd and whimsical glimpse of character, but is rather politically good and fitting.

We have read somewhere that Mr. Coolidge has been a great reader at some time or other; but no overwhelming evidence of it appears in the Barton interview. His mother read Tennyson to him; he has read the poems of Scott, and Milton's Paradise Lost, and "studied" some of the plays of Shakespeare; he likes Whittier's Snow-Bound and Burns' The Cotter's Saturday Night, because they remind him of the old Vermont farm life; he thinks there is a "literary finish" in Lowell's poetry. He hasn't time to read much except books that relate to his duties and the problems of his office, nor has he much time for playgoing; concerning the latter, however, he drops the democratically reassuring opinion that he dislikes to sit in a box at the theater. He says that he doesn't ride horseback because it takes too long to change his clothes—which is a timely reminder that Mr. Coolidge is a conscientious public servant, economical of his time.

Finally, we are told that the President is, wonder of wonders, a good Christian man. He does not see how any man could hold an important office such as his without leaning on Divine Providence. Mr. Coolidge could scarcely be expected to intimate that he sometimes depends more upon his political advisers and party leaders than upon God. Another thing we came near forgetting: the President says that, while he believes in his party and in the party system, he regards himself as the President of all the people. As every President before him has made the same statement, we need not be afraid of underestimating its importance on this occasion.

What do we learn from this interview, which is said to be so remark-
able? We learn that Mr. Coolidge is a good American; that he is a good family man; that he is a Christian; that he is an average man.

The Barton interview is said to be an intimate view of the President’s personality and character. Yet, for all the personality in it, the interview might have emanated from an automaton. Had it been labeled _The Opinions of the Average Man_, no one would have had cause to suspect that behind it was a real and distinct individual.

### CHASING BANDITS IN MEXICO

NEWSPAPER comment plays up, as usual, the latest murder of an American citizen in Mexico; and, even more significantly as usual, the blame for the affair is laid at the door of the Mexican government. Whether or not the government used the best judgment, I shall not presume to say. This American had been captured by bandits, who demanded a ransom for his safe return; the government tried to apprehend the bandits, who, enraged, killed the man. This is represented by some American newspapers as a serious offense of Mexico, governmentally, against the United States. We are told that the Mexican government should have paid the ransom, and later tried to bring the criminals to justice.

Possibly this is true. But I cannot help wondering what the United States government would do under similar circumstances. Certainly, it is not the rule in this country to bargain thus with criminals. They are not officially recognized in that way. I can imagine an American official indignantly rejecting the notion of dealing with criminals, any more than he would deal with traitors.

Why then should our papers rail at Mexico for not following a course of action that is not followed by our government, federal or local? We have not, it is true, quite the same conditions of banditry here as in Mexico. Yet we have our criminal gangs. And the law pursues them instead of parleying with them.

The fact is that in most of our disagreements with Mexico, American opinion has made demands, sometimes officially and sometimes only popularly, that the United States government would not consider if made upon it by a foreign power. Would the United States allow interference by another government with social and economic legislation, as we have all along tried to interfere in Mexico? Would the United States feel called upon to resort to extraordinary government measures whenever a Mexican in this country suffers an outrage? The local authorities might try to punish the guilty, and that would be all. (Usually, I believe, Mexicans are not so loved by justice in this country. There is a difference. Mexicans in this country are usually poor. Americans in Mexico are usually rich.)

In the religious struggle in Mexico, a demand was made upon President Coolidge that he interfere—that he interfere in a purely national issue in another country! Think of the effrontery of it! And did Coolidge say plainly that he had no right to interfere, that it was unthinkable, that Mexico’s attitude toward religious institutions was
none of his or America's affair? No, he merely said that he would not interfere—not that he should not or could not.

There is very little justice or reason in American opinion about Mexican affairs. It may be that we have hated Mexico ever since we robbed her after the Mexican War. Oh, yes, we paid for the territory; but we took it first. There may be a certain distinction between robbing a man at the point of a gun, and forcing him to sell his property at the point of a gun. A distinction, yes—but a fine one only in the sense of being well-nigh invisible.

THE HAPPY FAMILY

ALL except one are happy—and he is not altogether unhappy, since he can get humor out of the situation. It is Frank Hart (279 Berlin St., Rochester, N. Y.) who brings his esoteric and exoteric (or his introverted and his extraverted) problems to the Weekly forum: that is to say, precisely, the problem of his own relatively lonely inside self and the very sociable family circle at the edge of which he sits in a quandary. (What kind of chair is that? It's not a chair; it's a state. What state? In this case, a state of mind.) To think or not to think—or, as he puts it, to drink or not to drink, but it amounts to much the same thing so far as he is concerned. Or should one mix drinking and thinking? Or drink in order not to think too peculiarly and unconventionally? Somewhere Bobby Burns says that he has been happy thinkin' and that he has also been happy drinkin'. The two, if reasonably indulged and combined with art, have been known to produce agreeable results, sometimes original results, and occasionally extraordinary results. But this is not settling Mr. Hart's problem for him—if it ever can be settled. And, whether it is settleable (my word, thank you ma'am), there is something to be got out of it in the shape of a delightful letter. Introducing Mr. Hart:

There's been a gang of rebellious thoughts hanging around in the back of my head for a couple of days—ever since the last family potlatch. I've tried to ignore them, but they are insistent in their demands for my attention; duty demands that I arrest them, lock them up in this paper and ship them off to the Haldeman-Julius booby-hatch for solitary confinement or immediate release; they're crazy, these thoughts.

The tribe I married into is a big one—in point of numbers. On festive occasions, when the clan gathers, we fill to overflowing the downstairs section of any house we visit. The first din and roar of babble having quieted down, the women folks find seats wherever they can; then follows a barrage of small talk about the most recent church picnic, the weather, the babies, the efficacy of "by-cabinet soda" (in civilized tongue, Bicarbonate of Soda) for the alleviation of Grandma's rheumatism. The men folks, in a knot by themselves, chatter about baseball, bowling, prize-fighting. Nowhere a serious thought; not even the germ of a thought; nor the faintest shadow of a workable idea.

I am repeatedly asked: Why so gloomy? So silent? So distant? The drinks are passed around. Ah! Somebody knows something, after all! In sheer desperation I grab the biggest and strongest alcoholic potion from the tray and drink to the health and longevity of the thoroughly practical member of our tribe whose dull mind conceived such a brilliant idea. I delight in the sight of him on his successive rounds and drink till I get in that blissful state of don't-give-a-damnness; not
drunk, mind you, but that state which Jack London so aptly termed as being “joyfully spifflicated.” Now, I’m ‘all set.’ All set to sink myself to the surrounding depths. I must do it—to conform; and because there are no intellectual heights to scale. I enter both camps of the small talk and hold my own. The consensus of general opinion is: “He’s a good scout, once you get him going.”

“Goin’”—i.e., spifflicated.

It’s all over. The tribe has dissolved. I am alone with that gang of rebellious thoughts. Conflict reigns. One section of the gang holds that the heart-depressing, brain-benumbing effect of alcoholic stimulants is physically and mentally injurious. Another, that the injuries are warranted because the stimulant loosens the shackles of physical and mental discipline and liberates my true self. I have to appeal to the third member of the gang of rebels for its verdict. It replies, after the manner of an ancient oracle, “You are right and you are wrong. I do not know. Small talk is the spice of their happy existence. Supposedly deep thought, the vinegar of your wretched existence. To drink, or not to drink, that is the question.”

The least that I can do is to invite my readers to compare notes with Mr. Hart regarding such problems of personal relations. Shall a man just muddle through? Or shall he have a policy? Shall he commune with his thoughts solitary-wise? or try to bring the conversation around to politics and such-like abstruse subjects? or plunge into the current of family talk to sink, swim, survive or perish, live or die, after the manner of John Quincy Adams (was it he)? Is there no compromise? Life, we remember, is full of compromises.

A suggestion occurs to me, for whose merit and efficacy I dare not vouch, but which I offer for what it may be worth. It is to straddle the boundary line, so to speak, and stand with one foot on his own territory and the other on the family’s territory. This is not a very mental metaphor, but what I mean is that he should try to bag two sets of ideas at once.

Taking the family’s subjects as he enumerates them, let us suppose that the subject of the church picnic is brought to the fore. All Mr. Hart has to do is to say that picnics are interesting things, and by the way, did the folks ever hear of the ancient pagan festivals? A word might be thrown in about the pagan origin of Christmas. Something might be said about the doings at Stonehenge when, thousands of years ago, the ancient Britons killed the fatted calf and sacrificed the young men and maidens.

Next comes the weather. Of course, it is obvious that here some discussion of meteorology and physical geography could be brought in very appropriately. Make it snappy, to be sure; put it in the form of a children’s story, if necessary. “Little Drop of Water looked up from the lonely ocean at Smiling Mister Sun, and Mister Sun smiled ever so hard, and Little Drop of Water scampered straight toward Mister Sun just as if she had known him all her life. . . .” That sort of thing, you know. Speaking of the weather, too, did you know that because it rained the night before the Battle of Waterloo (look this up first—I’m too lazy—I am sure that it rained but I am not sure) Napoleon was beaten? And under this head nothing could be more fitting than a graphic account of Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow—how the snow conquered the Grand Army. And do not forget to bring up the subject of Washington Crossing the Delaware. Best of all, however, will be to launch into a full and vivid description of the long hard winter of the Ice Age. Hard winters, I believe, are always good safe topics of talk.
The babies—bless their little hearts! You might lead off here with Samuel Butler's question: "Why, let me ask, should a hen lay an egg which egg can become a chicken in about three weeks and a full-grown hen in less than a twelve-month, while a clergyman and his wife lay no eggs, but give birth to a baby which will take three-and-twenty years before it can become another clergyman? Why should not chickens be born and clergymen be laid and hatched?" From here you might be able to get into biology or religion, either one. If one should astonish you by wanting to know who Samuel Butler was (or is) and what about him—well, that could, if fortune favored you, take the conversation into as many subjects as are to be found in the celebrated Note-Books. Anyway, it would be no trick at all to make the babies a stepping stone (hard on the poor things!) to a discussion of evolution. You can point out that the stages of life through which the embryo passes represent a good theoretical evidence for evolution.

Bicarbonate of soda—well, that does appear a trifle difficult. Could you get away with a chemical lecture at this point? At worst, you might invent a few anecdotes regarding the bicarb. You might invent a story about how Nero, when he was feeling very badly, so far forgot himself as to order a Christian to be thrown to the lions; and how, after taking some bicarb, he had a good night's rest and countermanded the order in the morning. A lesson in fortitude might be inculcated, too, and without stretching the truth. Get up a list of great men and women of history who have suffered from rheumatism, and show what they accomplished in spite of it. Make the point also that rheumatism is no respecter of persons. King David was rheumatic, and King Solomon, as he got older, couldn't skip around his populous harem as spryly as he had used to do.

Baseball, bowling, prize-fighting—all these three can be covered sweeping and simply by talking about the Olympic Games. You can get in some first-rate stuff here about how the old Greeks glorified the body, and what emphasis they placed upon physical beauty and fitness; and you might refer to the Roman ideal of "a sound mind in a sound body." Puritanism and censorship may be resulting subjects, and insensibly you can edge the talk into a discussion of sex life in Greece and Rome. This may be risky, and I leave it to Mr. Hart's judgment. A sort of Freudian theory may be got out of the subject of baseball. It may be suggested that as man is notoriously a captious, complaining fellow, always finding some fault with the earth and the conditions thereon; and as the earth is a sphere, and a baseball is also a sphere; therefore, when men knock and throw a baseball all over the lot, they are subconsciously and symbolically treating the earth in that manner. Obviously, pugilism is the finest subject in the world as an introductory to a discussion of the gladiatorial combats in the Roman amphitheater; and by no means omit to tell, with all the dramatic effect that in it lies, the story of Spartacus and the hopeless but high-spirited revolt he led. As for bowling, you can remind the folks that Mark Antony was quite bowled over by the seductive if not lovely Cleopatra.

As I look it over, all this seems to me not half bad as a solution of Mr. Hart's problem; and all men similarly situated can do likewise. Still, it is only a suggestion. Take it or leave it.
THE DISASTER IN FLORIDA

THERE is nothing more indecent than the way in which such disasters as that which struck the Florida coast the other day are immediately capitalized by Christians in behalf of their religion. At such a time, the purely human feelings are uppermost in the normal mind. The devastation of such a terrible storm is something to appall the mind, and strike the heart to its center, driving out all thoughts save pity, sympathy and succor for the sufferers. And up jump the Christians, with their miserable cant about the hand of God. They actually have the brazen wretched taste to bawl out that their God sent this hurricane to wreck a city, violently and suddenly destroy human beings, and reduce thousands to acute privation and distress—all as a warning to sinners to repent, to make an example of the victims for the conversion of the rest of us to the Resurrection and the Trinity, to show what their God can do when his wrath is worked up to the explosive point. While others are startled and oppressed by the fate of all these unfortunate, homeless people, the Christians disgustingly howl in our ears that many of the victims were undoubtedly sinners, who have been blown to hell in a single, unexpected, awful moment. From hundreds of pulpits in the land, sermons are preached, not in a spirit of downright humanity, but on the senseless no less than heartless text: "Prepare to meet thy God." The religious press will dwell smugly, cantingly, insultingly on the disaster. All this while cities are laid waste; the dead are unnumbered; fields are flooded, torn and devastated; thousands are homeless. I am in no mood, at this writing, to discuss this mad Christian logic of catastrophe. I content myself with branding it as indecent.

BREAD AND WATER

But among the grass roots and the gullies, the American sense of justice often exhibits itself in peculiar manifestations. The caprice or malice of a petty judge can make a mockery of the law and of the commonest human rights, and at the same time make himself ridiculous. Say that a wife charges her husband with treating her badly: very well, the judge—although it may be very doubtful that the case is of a nature that the law can recognize—will order the husband to clean the dishes and scrub the floor every day for two weeks. Again, let us say that a citizen is brought before the judge for some petty misdemeanor (and, as sometimes happens, for conduct that is not strictly illegal, but representing only some other citizen's opinion that the accused has not done as he "ought to") : the judge, with a great air of social importance as a vindicator and inculcator of morality, commands the man to attend church every Sunday for three months. No doubt my readers have been familiar with such freakish orders from the bench of democratic magistrates, to whom democracy means the
right of everyone to interfere with everyone's morals, opinions and conduct.

Sometimes there are oddities of unclassified jurisprudence that, while strange as are those mentioned, have also an element of downright malice and cruelty. Under the last named, more serious head undoubtedly comes the action of a Nebraska judge in punishing violators of the Prohibition law by placing them on a bread and water diet for thirty days. This judge does not consider it sufficient to order such fine and imprisonment as is set forth by the law. There is something malicious, something indecently vindictive, an attitude of specific and extra-legal prejudice in his determination that such offenders shall be additionally punished by this distressing and humiliating diet. It is not very accurate language to call it a diet. It really amounts to starvation. And it is worse than distressing: it is "cruel and unusual punishment," which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States—but what does this obscure Nebraska judge care about the Constitution? about anything, apparently, save his own constitutional prejudices?

Senator Reed of Missouri has denounced this bread and water travesty in terms that are not too strong. It is an outrage to the sense of justice, decency and fitness, as they would appear to any man who has a grain of toleration or reasonableness in his nature, or who believes in an honorable and not an exaggerated application of laws. It is obvious that prejudice, which is contemptible in a judge, dictates this unusual punishment. Murderers, burglars and other criminals are not put on a bread and water diet. This is reserved for offenders, certainly of a far less serious kind, against whom the judge acts from private and moral rather than legal considerations. There is more ill feeling regarding crimes so-called that have their rise in the moral passion of Americans to regulate and reform their neighbors than concerning crimes of the most perilous and fatal description.

So far as I have observed, there has been surprisingly little criticism of this outrage in Nebraska, for it cannot be called by any other name. The other day I saw a report that two men in the Department of Justice had decided to try the bread and water diet for themselves—for no better reason, on the face of it, than curiosity; it is held to be a sort of joke and novelty, nothing more. The guilty judge himself reported that he had tried the diet for three days, and was perhaps proud to see his name get in the papers in consequence.

The presumption seems to be that if it doesn't kill a man to live on bread and water for thirty days, then such a punishment is all right. As a matter of fact, men can stand a good deal of cruel and unusual punishment, a good deal of torture, without being killed thereby. But thus to add torture to punishment is an act of tyranny; it is inhuman; it is malicious; and, to say the least about it, it is ridiculous. It is a kind of action that does not belong properly to the real government of men; it arises from the prejudices and personal feelings of men who have power and who misuse it; it arises, I repeat, from that article in the American creed which says thou shalt make thy neighbor be as thyself.
"AWAY DOWN IN GEORGIA"

I AM never discouraged when some reader, either with kind or hostile intent, writes to tell me that I am wasting my labors; I know that the man who writes to me is a reader of my publications and they have had a marked effect upon him; and I am in touch also with other thousands of my readers, so that while the one man imagines that he is almost alone in such interests, I am constantly in friendly and heartening contact with those who are interested in my work. If anything, I might be expected to be too optimistic; but I do not fall into that error, for I know something about the ways of my fellow men and realize that not all of them are hungering and thirsting after ideas.

There is nothing that I question, and nothing that dismays me (deprecate it as I do) in the description of the commonplace Georgia mind which I am given in a letter from W. M. Harrison (410 W. Hill Ave., Valdosta, Ga.). It is too bad that there are no greater number in his state who share Mr. Harrison's predilection for good reading, or who have ideas that can measurably be identified as in some part their own. I do not agree with my friend that their number may not increase. Ideas cannot be hidden in any case, and when you scatter them abroad they are bound to be productive. Whether God or the Devil has arranged this, I do not know; but so it is. The remarks of Mr. Harrison concerning his fellow citizens are not any the less true and interesting. He describes them as follows:

Without questioning what your motives may be, I want to say that I admire your efforts very much, but at the same time feel that they are more or less wasted. I say wasted because people will not read. They will not read anything; the majority of Georgia people do not even read the newspapers; of course, if one of them happens to hear that there was a particular vicious murder or case of rape, then they will read the papers, but ordinarily they prefer to talk-talk-talk—talk, the kind of talk you read about in Babbit, only more so.

Your efforts are wasted because these people will not even read the Bible (which is considered the last word in everything). They all proclaim it to be the greatest of books, but they never read it, so their endorsement amounts to very little.

I have been hearing evolution discussed since the Tennessee "monkey business," and out of all the numbers I have heard express their august opinions, I have found one person who thoroughly understood it; and one who had a fairly intelligent idea of the theory. However, they all agree that there is nothing to the theory and prove that all educated men say that it is a false doctrine, by quoting W. J. Bryan and Billy Sunday! If you ask the average citizen who Voltaire or Spinoza was, he would probably guess that they were movie actors. They think Mendel's law has something to do with Prohibition; The Voyage of the Beagle or The Origin of Species is never heard of.

I could hardly be accused of being an educated or well-read person. But I am actually "looked down on" because I read your magazines—in fact, because I read anything. The other day a very good lady was visiting us and happened to see a copy of Babbit and the Mercury. Now, I know she had not the faintest idea what either was about, yet she said: "What do you want to read those (them) things for?" And it was a treat to hear the amount of sarcasm she put into the query. I inquired a little and found it was the first time she had ever heard of either. This is a fair sample of Georgia people. I mean in the smaller communi-
ties, though the larger places are not much better. A person who reads "books" is looked on as a kind of freak.

Long before I heard of you or H. L. M., and even before I got the chance to read Voltaire or Paine, I had begun to notice that Heaven was going to be the greatest convention of morons that was ever assembled.

Now to prove that Mr. Harrison's hopelessness is not absolutely well founded, let me say that he is the son of a Baptist preacher who is also a Ku Kluxer. If this doesn't show the possibility of progress, individual as well as social, then what is needed to prove it? Mr. Harrison is a linotype operator, and is therefore not among those workingmen whom Hendrik Van Loon accuses of being indifferent to culture. So you see here is really matter for congratulation; if the son of a Baptist minister has fallen among the moderns, possibly a Baptist minister here and there may be touched by the light; if one workingman reads and thinks, we may not unreasonably conclude that there are others; and if a workingman can find time for culture, those with more leisure and a better chance for an education will at least go so far as to read Babbitt and the American Mercury and the Haldeman-Julius Monthly—which is going very far indeed on the road to intellectual emancipation.

Suspicion falls upon books. The reader of the Monthly may be a marked man. Gossip may have much to say about the queeress of the fellow who expresses unconventional ideas for which his neighbors are not prepared. But take heart and fear not. The police will not enter a man's house and arrest him for possession of a book. Association with ideas is not criminal—at any rate, one is permitted indefinitely a number of ideas, within the law. You can even think aloud and still escape the sheriff. For a joke, some of you may find a sheriff who is by way of being a thinker. There have been stranger things.

Georgia is not partial to grand opera, nor friendly to evolution, nor enthusiastic about books. But no absolute decree of Nature separates Georgia from these interests. When Sherman marched from Atlanta to the sea, he did not entirely destroy the possibility of thought in that state. Away down in Georgia, the name of Voltaire is not a household word; but it has certainly been whispered about, for Mr. Harrison heard it and followed the lead; in an occasional corner, it is spoken; in some minds—few perhaps and far between—this name is associated with clearly understood ideas. If Georgia does not stand fully in the light, still there are riots in the darkness.

YELLOW JOURNALISM

YELLOW journalism is undoubtedly the dominating color in the American press. Although Hearst and the tabloids are the leaders, having more violent headlines and an atmosphere of more vulgar cheapness, it must be said that individually owned papers emulate Hearst to a degree almost as bad as the original, while the daily press generally has been led to affect more and more a tawdry and blatant sensationalism. Observing this fact with reference to Chicago, a writer in the Haldeman-Julius Monthly brings a protest from F. Bay (1 Erie St., Chicago, Ill.), who is of the opinion that the writer
has been unjust, although not saying that he has been inaccurate. Mr. Bay says the writer “jumps on the three decent papers of Chicago and condemns them for an effort to keep their circulations from being devoured by the unspeakable Hearst.” To him, the whole problem of journalism is rather simple. It is William Randolph Hearst who is the villain. He says he is not a newspaper man (which certainly does not disqualify him from having his opinions), but is a mechanic in the building trades who has been employed in many American cities and who is therefore more than ordinarily familiar with American newspapers. He writes:

My conclusion is that the whole trouble with the rotten newspaper is Hearst and Hearst alone. The decent papers are slowly dying out and those who wish to live have got to follow Hearst methods, to some extent at least. Before Hearst came into the field we had men in the newspaper profession like Charles A. Dana, Murat Halstead, James Gordon Bennett, Nelson of the Kansas City Star, Henry Watterson and about thirty others: men of character who recognized the responsibility of their positions as moulders of thought of the millions who have no other means of exercising their minds only through the newspapers.

Today these types are out. With a few exceptions, we have on the one hand a lot of apparently headless corporations running more or less decent, mostly colorless papers, and on the other hand the stinking Hearst. And I attribute this to the disrepute Hearst has brought upon the newspaper profession. So it rather got under my skin to have this young man from Washington, D. C., condemn the three decent papers of Chicago for their crime headlines without any mention of the competition of the miserable Hearst sheets. Hearst has perhaps a third of the newspaper readers of the country and gained them by applying the principle which every newspaper man knows but which few for the sake of decency followed—that is, if you want to increase circulation, just increase the filth and sensationalism. And this rule applies all the more in an industrial city like Chicago, where naturally the type of reader to whom the boxcar headlines and sensationalism appeal is found in greatest numbers.

What “the young man from Washington, D. C.”—Hugh Russell Fraser, a newspaper man, wrote was true regarding the sensationalism of the American press. It is true of Chicago, although the Hearst paper there, as everywhere, is the worst. However, the “decent” Chicago Tribune is back of the sensational Liberty, and the Tribune family has branched out in its journalistic activities with a tabloid shocker in New York City. Hearst did establish yellow journalism in this country on a firm basis and with a flourishing technique. Others followed, and whoever is to blame or whether anyone is to blame, such is the condition in the newspaper world today.

Yet Hearst was not the first to discover or to use the appeal of sensationalism. Dana, though an editor of far higher standards (Hearst, by the way, is not an editor but an owner), looked in that direction with his “human interest” policy on the New York Sun. Journalism has always been more or less sensational. Addison and Steele complained about the journalism of their day in their celebrated Spectator. The journalism of an earlier day in our country, while admittedly more vigorous and picturesque (“personal journalism” with a vengeance indeed), was also related in sensationalism to the journalism of today.

The truth is that the newspapers are unfortunately influenced by the same condition as the movies: they must appeal to as many readers as possible, and such a wide appeal cannot, for the most part, be a very
high or educational appeal. It is safe to say that two-thirds of what appears in the newspapers is of no interest to an intelligent reader. The newspapers are better off than the movies in one respect: they must and do give the important news; but along with it, they give much that is unimportant, much that is silly, much that is luridly sensational. It is still possible for a newspaper to maintain high standards. The Kansas City Star is such a newspaper; and there are others. But on the whole the rushing and sensational life of modern times is reflected in the press.

Certainly it is not true that the people “have no other means of exercising their minds only through the newspapers.” This is the poorest way to exercise one’s mind. Keep informed of the news of the world, to be sure; but for real enlightenment, real diversion of the mind, and real mental stimulation, read books and those periodicals that are published for the intelligent minority.

THE MOB—AN IMPRESSION

In a motion picture theater, I was intensely impressed by a scene that showed me the beastlike nature of the mob—the human mob. The scene was a news reel, a picture of Premier Mussolini, the tyrant dictator of Italy, speaking from a balcony to a vast, a tremendous crowd gathered to acclaim his escape from a bomb. In the history of Rome one can read many accounts of mobs: they are terrible to read about, but not so terrible as to see that immense visible outburst of crowd emotionalism which greeted the latest trampler on the populace. It looked as if all of Rome had gathered there—an enormous mass, hundreds of thousands or perhaps a million human heads who had all surrendered what little power of thinking they had to a craze of submission to one man—it was a suggestion of nightmare, of some Dantesque conjured horror.

One man—a short, stocky, bull-necked figure—a man of dark and threatening and treacherous visage, whom one could see distorting his thick lips in a bellowed message to the crowd. A single man on a very high balcony—little man that he is, how he towered over the mass below, or rather how vivified was the impression, not by his own stature, but by the height from which he, dictator and demagogue in one, surveyed and shouted at the million-headed monster he had released and for the moment ruled. One saw in that picture, as in a flash of heightened imagination, the masses that in the long tumultuous years of history have been led like beasts, so that they became as one beast, by a few fanatics or tyrants or powerful individuals.

The man and the mass: numbers and power: a single will and a will-less multitude. Masses who have been led to their own destruction by individuals: who have been led, not to wisdom and joy in life, but to slavery and persecution and hate, masses rushed headlong into the arms of terrorism—a terror wielded by one man, and he a pigmy, not a Titan. A brute of a man, depending upon brute force to control the hydra-headed beast of the mob, infinitely exceeding him in strength: a howling mountebank of a man, casting a spell of arrogant, passionate
speech and sinister threats over the mob that is articulate only in its million-throated cry.

The mob is a beast for whom not the gods but men must have contempt and fear. Contempt—a contempt that Il Duce and all tyrants certainly feel. The degradation of the mob could not have been more shamefully and deeply felt had the man spit upon that crowd which surged beneath him, or had he been suddenly magnified into a Brobdignagian and stepped over the railing of the balcony to walk over and physically trample upon the heads of the crowd. And the mob is a beast to be feared—its cry is always a menace—it is a menace to every man who has raised the mob: for the mob that cries out today with insane adulation will cry out tomorrow with insane execration: the man might safely spit upon it today, but on another day he will drown in the blood that it sheds.

The mob is man in the mass gone crazy, turned beast, not thinking but terribly feeling: the crowd is a small mob, the mob-beast not fully grown: the majority is the mob-beast temporarily tamed, well-trained, well-fed, that can, by growling, frighten, and that can, by its weight alone, smother and subdue.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEWS

SUPPOSE no journalist would deny that the gigantic storm in Florida was news of the first order of importance. It was news of world-wide interest, about the greatest calamity that has occurred in the world since the Japanese earthquake. I am not extensively informed about English journalistic principle and practice; but the English newspaper men certainly recognize news when they see it, and even if they are accustomed to something less than the American scale of display, they cannot be blind to relative news values. These remarks are occasioned by an interesting, not to say astonishing, note in the London National Athenaeum. This note is said to have been written by a “veteran journalist” of England. The note is as follows:

I cannot remember any great natural calamity of the past thirty years being treated by the London dailies in the manner deemed appropriate to the appalling Florida hurricane. The cables on Sunday were necessarily brief and contradictory, but by Monday night they were full and unmistakable. Tuesday’s papers make a very curious study. The Daily Chronicle printed the news of Florida on an inside sheet. The Daily Mail compared the bigness of the calamity to the bigness of the Dempsey-Tunney fight. The Morning Post was moved to compose a leader on the happy moderation of the English climate—“at its worst we would not change it.” Several important papers gave double-column prominence to the thunderstorms in the North of England, while giving a minor place to the desolation of Florida, one morning paper, honored for its hostility to sensationalism, displaying as a broad headline the dreadful words, “Train Held Up.” On this same day, again, Florida had vanished altogether from the new 24-page Evening Standard. I raise the question, without trying to suggest an answer, whether the wide and deep feeling against the United States now prevailing in England would be likely in any way whatever to influence a London editor’s estimate of news value in the presence of a terrible tragedy?
America is an object of intense hate in England, as in the land of another ally in the "fight for democracy," France. There is "wide and deep feeling" against this country because it is most unmanly in insisting that the war debts be paid; and while of course capitalism in England and France is based as in this country upon respect for property and obligations relating thereto, and while additionally of course Soviet Russia was denounced for dishonesty when it repudiated the heritage of debt from the Czar—still, England and France have resented America's attitude as a creditor, for didn't they spend the money to "make the world safe for democracy"? American competition, even more than the debt question, has hit the English sorely in their most sensitive place, that of their economic interests. There is an outcry against American plays, American moving pictures, American commodities of every kind.

And is it possible that the prejudice extends to news of American calamities? It seems incredible, but it is possible—the suggestion, as you see, comes from a "veteran journalist" of England. News of the Florida disaster, displayed as it should have been by all journalistic and even humane standards, would have created sympathy for America which was not in accordance with the program of prejudice and hate. In what other way can one explain a greater display of news of ordinary thunderstorms than of news of the Florida disaster? And how inexplicably inept it was to compare that great calamity with the Dempsey-Tunney prizefight! And to write a self-satisfied editorial, with truly provincial absurdity, upon the English weather, to say that "at its worst we would not change it"! I have not in a long while heard of such journalistic methods (arising from idiocy or insensate bitterness?) —and that, not in obscure rural papers, but in the leading newspapers of a great world capital.

TOPSY-TURVY TOWN

TOPSY-TURVY TOWN is Girard, in which I happen to live, or it is any town in the country. This town brags that it is a community of churches. This is one of its chief grounds for appealing to new citizens. And of course in this town one is often asked, What could you do in a town—would you want to live in a town—without churches? Now, Girard prides itself on being a civilized, modern community. It is smaller than New York City, but that is about all. Let us see, then, how Girard provides for the various needs of man.

First, there is what is called the "spiritual" need. But it is not so generalized as that: no, Girard considers it a duty to see that men's souls, which do not exist, are cared for; to see that they are saved, whatever that means, by sermon and prayer; to prepare them for another world and guide them to heaven—all of which is illusion—through the labor of preachers. I say "labor" very loosely. Girard has five regular, resident preachers, who are among the leading citizens of the town, who are well paid, who live in very good homes, drive cars, and officiate in imposing, expensive edifices dedicated to an unknown and
unreal God. It is even better taken care of spiritually. In addition, there is a Catholic church, and a priest of the county has that in his charge. There is a Negro church where the preaching is, I believe, strong and picturesque. There is a Christian Science church, in which folks who live very materially are reminded each week that matter is an illusion. But let us say there are five important preachers in the town. There have been two fine new church buildings erected in the past few years; a third is now going up; no doubt the others will follow. All this, which is very expensive and involves a great deal of time and effort, is devoted to the supposed needs of a non-existent soul.

Our bodies do exist; they are real; their needs cannot be denied. What provision does Girard make for the physical demands of life? In the first place, the town has five doctors; it has precisely as many physicians, and no more, to take care of the actual body as it has preachers to minister to the imaginary soul. The doctors, however, do not have establishments and institutions that will nearly compare with those back of the preachers. For another kind of physical protection—for the safety of the community—we have one day marshal and one night marshal; so that it can be said that we really have only one man to preserve order and look to our safety, while we have five men to perpetuate superstition in our midst. There is an even more ridiculous situation when we consider protection against fire. The town has not a single paid fireman. This vital side of local security is in the hands of a volunteer fire department—hands that are busy at other things. Is it not incredibly absurd? Not one man whose special duty it is to save us from very real fires on this earth; but five men to rescue us from the silly phantasmagorical flames of another world! The town has no theater, and no decent moving picture house. It has a Carnegie library, which is not as good a building as any of the three new churches. It has one local editor. It has no artists. It has social clubs, but no intellectual society. It has a few buildings that are better than the church buildings—and one of them is the county jail.

Yes, this is Topsy-Turvy Town. Life here is arranged in just the opposite way from what it rationally ought to be. There is more money spent to support illusions than to make life safe, well, intelligent and comfortable. Spooks are better dealt with than realities—or a greater, more costly and more elaborate pretense is made of dealing with spooks. Yet Girard calls itself a civilized town. It calls itself a modern town. Would I like to live in a town without churches? Surely. And, to say the least, I would prefer to live in a town that pays more attention to the real needs of life than it does to the hypothetical and indeed humbuggish needs of the soul which is not. But where is there such a town in this broad land? Girard is the typical American town. It is Topsy-Turvy Town everywhere. In the largest cities, I daresay the ratio is about the same.

We have only one life, and how inadequately we manage it! If all the attention that has been given to the foolish dream of "the next life" had been given to this life, which is real and which must be lived for better or worse and which can be lived better, how far ahead the world would be!

Topsy-Turvy Town! Close your eyes—your mind—and make life's journey. Stand on your heads, and let the rest of the world go by.
AN APPRECIATION OF AUTUMN

He obvious things can be said about autumn; and obvious things are important to the extent that there is deep and genuine feeling in their recognition and in a periodically renewed sense of their beauty and meaning. It is one of the happiest arrangements of life that one can endlessly be thrilled by the most simple and familiar experiences; one suddenly feels that it is so good to be alive—and the feeling is as strong, as tremendously glad, as imperious and buoyant in the blood as if it came to one for the very first time; one gazes far across the prairie landscape—so beautiful at the beginning and the close of day—and one is reminded of the immensity of life, not in its terrifying aspect, but as a grand, quiet and large reassurance; bringing with it peace and freedom; that landscape cannot be monotonous, for at its edge, beyond the miles of field, is the horizon which leads to the other side of the world; the name of monotony cannot belong to that variety of colors—the bright green of the still full-living grass; the several shades of paler green, marking the slow decline of the dying vegetation; the patches of black soil, the yellow and brown of the fading corn, a tree whose leaves in the mild sunlight shine most strangely as separate jewels, the darker solider green of the line of trees that encircles the horizon, the sky of pure blue and white.

The effect of this landscape is certainly not one of ambition or industry; one feels that one could sit perfectly passive and watch, not the hurrying generations, but the fanciful indifferent spirit of life go by forever. Perhaps it is not well for one to look for long at such a prairie landscape in the autumn: one is in danger of forgetting the values that men place upon life, the price tags and the billboards and the traffic signs of the busy self-important world—the value of success, the value of blustering egotism and prejudice, the value of the conventional and official and popular roads along which men travel, not so thoughtful of direction as they are observant of the size of the crowd. When one is under the influence of such a view and mood, one is not a rebel, one is simply alone; and to be alone is the greatest act of passive rebellion against society; for one does not proclaim and struggle—one merely sets up a separate government—it is no sooner thought than done.

Alone; and, in a moment, one realizes that one is not alone; this solitude is contemporary in its nature. One’s intimacy with the past is most vivid in the early days of autumn. Then comes the keenest reminiscences of one’s own past life; then one feels the puissant and poignant emotions of days that are gone; one breathes the exhilarating atmosphere of youth, which seems more wonderful in the remembrance; one always goes back in the first autumnal mood to the time of one’s intellectual and emotional awakening, enjoying fresh contact with the real beginning of one’s life. Is there melancholy in the contact as well as a subtle reaffirmation of personality? Then it is the melancholy of deep appreciation, of intense emotion—intense far beneath a placid surface—a melancholy that arises from the realization that all things pass away, and that this too shall pass away; and that the past, the long past, the
past of mankind is more ripely to be cherished in the mind because it exists no more elsewhere.

Never is one's imagination so instinct with living pictures of the past as when one first feels the authentic atmosphere of autumn. It is true—in the spring one is full of insistent new vitality, hope and plans for the future, in the summer one lives a good deal out of doors and in the present, in the autumn one turns with affection to the past—the past, mellow and rich brown like the autumn, reflective like the autumn, full of "deep autumnal tones." It is not so much the past of historical events—they are too active, too loud and harsh for this mood that has so delightfully enfolded us; the spell is that of the past of literature, the past that is real and yet imaginary, the past that is most human of all and that with its broad and leisurely sweep associates itself so rightly with the season.

Falstaff in his inn; Pendennis taking coach for London; Tom Jones galloping through the countryside; Goldsmith's village before it is deserted, when it is still the home of simple delights and traditions; the journey of the most Pickwickian of the Pickwick Club—those jolly, naive, pompous gentlemen; quaint pictures of a London that is no more, and that we can only see as the ghost of Charles Lamb personally conducts us; pictures of a landscape, of roads and fields and houses, of picturesque faces and manners and costumes, that have indeed the genuine charm of the past, for they are of the past, they were even then of the past—they were the product of unhurried, unchanging generations—they had not changed, they breathed the very spirit, still bluff and friendly and idiosyncratic, of the land. Such are the scenes that one most intimately feels, when autumn comes unawares with the tones and shadows of the past, if one has been imbued by years of reading with the spirit of the old English landscape and life through old English literature. There are other scenes, from other countries; French villages out of Balzac; German moonlight and maidens, from Heine; the vast and somber landscape of Russia, seen through the eyes of Turgenev or Tolstoy. But closer than all are the scenes and figures that fill the splendid realistic canvas of old English literature.

The reason for this association of autumn with the past is, I think, very simple. There is nothing mystical about it. One can be poetical about it, which is to say one can feel it deeply, but it leads to no occult theory. No, it is only that in the autumn one returns more to indoor pleasures, the joys of reading, the habit of reflection, the living with oneself. And so, in the most direct way imaginable, one is led again into the past—not that one has ever really left it, but it is appreciated with a yearly recurrent access of new vividness; its wonder and at the same time its dear familiarity seem always to be discovered, and to steal upon one with strange and original wonder, each year when Nature prepares with cool slow grace and dignity for her winter's sleep. The winter's sleep; and sleep means dreams; and dreams bring the past. Winter is the season of compromise, when one lives both in the present and the past: the day for the present, the evening for the past.

The most obvious thing about autumn, from which all the rest proceeds, is that the milder weather bids one return more to inside living, and thus to inner living; and so books, and the past, and all that moves
to imagination rather than to action, have old inviolable place in our life. As when one meets an old friend who has been long absent, so do we embrace with sincere arder and yearning the past when autumn for a moment stills the fever of living and subdues the tone while it infinitely expands the scope of our thoughts—our mental pictures, our pictures of the old, the charming and the lost—the lost, which we refuse to lose.

A CAROLINA PARTY

LYNCHING party, as such affairs are sometimes lightly called, occurred the other day in a North Carolina town. It was more prominent than such parties usually are, owing to the fact that three victims—two men and one woman, colored and therefore helpless—were offered up simultaneously in sacrifice to the spirit of race prejudice. We have often heard in the past the excuse that this summary disposal of Negro victims in the South was simply to make sure of "justice." Why delay with a guilty Negro, and bother with the technical and troublesome forms of law in cases of crime to which color is alleged to aid outrage? This was never considered a very good excuse by anybody living outside the zone of immediate passion. Nobody could believe that justice in the South would ever fail to punish a Negro; its more likely failure would be in protecting him. And it is not very flattering to the temper of the white mobs to say that hatred and vengeance cannot wait for the law decently to take its course.

In this latest case, even the old familiar plea cannot be made use of. There had been such doubt of the Negroes' guilt that a second trial had been ordered for them; and on the occasion of this new trial, the case against the Negroes was so obviously and extremely weak that the judge instructed the jury to return a verdict of not guilty. So here were three innocent Negroes whom the law had duly exonerated. In South Carolina, such a procedure could even more than usually be held to have established their absolute innocence: for no Southern court would be suspected of undue favoritism toward colored defendants. Yet these Negroes, guiltless but helpless under the "protection" of the white man's boasted law, were killed to make a mob holiday.

Will this incident cause Southern pride to increase? Does it prove the statement of those Southerners who insist that the South treats the Negroes justly or of their fellows who declare that the only way to control the Negroes is to set an example of lawlessness?

QUEEN MARIE

We are a democratic nation. And in the most democratic spirit imaginable the country is all excited—press, people, public officials—about the trip to this country of Queen Marie of Rumania. The Associated Press and special correspondents have poured out their columns of flowing and fatuous description. Even from Paris, long stories were cabled to America of the Queen's prepara-
tions for her voyage. The most important news, apparently, was that the dear illustrious lady had got a permanent wave. This furnished several hours' talk for the women of the country, and will be repeatedly referred to for some time in the future. Great things do not die out of mind for a long while. What the Queen eats and where, what she wears and every step she takes, will be detailed through all our mighty avenues of information, editorials will be written, interviews will be printed, and undoubtedly the Queen's opinions will be sought—democratic America would eagerly love to know, and to be influenced by, the views of such a royal personage. As a matter of diplomatic tact and courtesy, she will not be likely to comment on political questions, although it will be proper for her to praise the government; and it will be grateful as well, for did not the government furnish her an elegant suite for her trip across the Atlantic? We read that the Mayors of American cities that will be visited by the Queen are all a-tremble at the prospect of entertaining so extraordinary a personage, and are fearfully anxious to avoid a "fox pass," as it is commonly called. Queen Marie drank only tea and lime juice on her ocean trip. She is a beautiful woman, and, being beautiful, the Queen can do no wrong, or can do wrong only attractively.

THE COURSE OF CIVILIZATION

NOTE a very good thing written in 1780 by John Adams, second President of the United States, to his wife: "I must study politics and war, that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history and naval architecture, navigation and commerce and agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry and porcelain." Put another way, this means that man—a country—a civilization first wants liberty: liberty as regards foreign powers, if not the democratic ideal of liberty. Having liberty, the right to develop, room to expand, what follows next is the evolution of material things, comfort, power and wealth—in a word, progress in the simplest sense. Then with this foundation of progress laid, comes leisure—the enjoyment of art—the cultivation of the finer aspects of living.

Liberty—progress—leisure: all three are important, and they do, in the order named, indicate a familiar line of development; of course they cannot be confined in point of time, in the sense that one ends where the other begins; the more we progress, the more carefully must we guard our liberty in the complex life that arises; we do not become indifferent to material progress when we begin to show a more cultivated interest in art and literature and thought.

We can see, however, that this country followed the tendency of John Adams' brief outline. America had first to win the right to develop freely; liberty to build up this country, explore and settle its thousands of miles, make a new world of industry which would represent the farthest mechanical advance of the human race. Then for several generations the conquest of material things occupied the interest
and energy of the country. It was a new country, and an enormous field to conquer, so that for long this material development overwhelmed all else. Now America is experiencing an artistic renaissance. We have wealth and leisure. We can reap the best fruits of our hard-won progress, and give finer meanings to our liberty.

Yet it is not so simple. The frenzy of material progress—or of the mere pursuit and piling up of material things—clashes ignorantly with the spirit of artistic leisure. And this mechanical age likewise endangers our liberty; it tends toward standardization in thought and habits, as well as standardization in the things we use; new tyrannies—the pressure of mass conformity and the unwise passion of regulation—arise to threaten us, and sometimes they seem worse than the old tyrannies.

The possible price of progress is not, as some lament, in the loss of simplicity, but in the forgetfulness of the true essence of individualism. There is irony in the fact that the beginning of our greatest leisure for interest in the arts of life finds art exhibiting a strong note of rebellion and full of necessary demands of wider liberty for the spirit of man. We come from liberty through progress back to the question of progress as something intellectual no less than material.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS

AST your bread upon the waters, we are told, and it will return to you. If I had all the bread that has been sent trustfully on the proverbial voyage but that has not returned to the original sender according to the adage (which would encourage generous deeds with a doubtful motive), I should be able to establish the world’s greatest bread trust. The return theory is, however, true of criticism. It is a familiar form of defense for the object of criticism simply to reply, without originality but with odd satisfaction, by saying back at the critic what the critic has first said. It is like the small boy style of argument: “You’re a such-and-such.” “You’re another.” “You’re a double such-and-such.” “You’re double double such-and-such.” And so on and so on. You describe an idea as bunk—and give your reasons, analyze it, show its ridiculous aspects. Back comes the reply, “You are the one who is talking bunk.” You attack intolerance, insisting that all ideas should be heard, all subjects fearlessly discussed, all knowledge disseminated. Simply you are told that you are the intolerant one. You advocate free thought, and you are informed that you do not really believe in free thought, and that you will admit no opinions to be free excepting your own.

Now when the critic has been explaining at considerable length why he has a certain attitude, what is he to do when told that he has an opposite attitude? Mere recrimination and endless counter-charges in this manner seem pointless. It is necessary to see a sign of an idea that one may take hold. The argumentative reverse motion that I have described is used by K. Kingston (607 S. 5th Ave., Mount Vernon, N. Y.) and, if that were all, Mr. Kingston’s letter would not justify notice. But Mr. Kingston goes a little further and, after returning to me the compliments aforesaid, expresses certain more definite opinions.
I cannot say that there is novelty in these opinions; indeed, every point raised by Mr. Kingston has been discussed by me clearly and repeatedly; but as one must explain oneself many times more than once, so it is my mood to print Mr. Kingston’s letter and review it seriously. The letter, then, follows:

I have been reading the current number of your lovely, self-satisfied and charmingly illogical Monthly. You fellows have been, parrot-wise, murmuring “Bunk” so long at every opinion contrary to your own, that you have almost won the palm as the supreme masters of “Bunk.”

Part of the “Free Thought” movement, which refuses to recognize as thought, let alone free thinking, any thinking which varies from its own anti-religious dogmas, you are guilty of practically every offense against intelligence which you find so odious in others. When Mencken finds the Bible to have literary charm, he is almost a subject for observation, but when you see fit to glorify Molière or some other forgotten author of dead dramas or comedies, lo the Oracle speaks!

The first sign of intelligence is a capacity for humility. Of course, Christianity teaches that, so it must be undesirable, though I have reason to believe that you have no personal acquaintance with it.

Why don’t you “shake out of it” and get back to some really honest job? The preachers may be dishonest, as you so graciously imply, but there has been a long succession of people across the centuries who firmly maintain that life has been made easier and brighter for them by the ideas which these preachers proclaimed. And I am not disposed to call them liars just because their experience is at variance with your somewhat profitable iconoclasm. You and your ilk have scarcely added one hope or reduced one fear in human souls since the first free-thinker silenced his neighbor’s arguments with a stone hammer.

You know that to me your “free-thinkers”—and I was once one of your breed myself—occupy the saddest position in the long history of thought. If the vital thing in life is Correct Opinion, you have no assurance (save self-assurance) that you possess this vital thing. You put a childish faith in Science, which is only a method of investigation and most of whose discoveries are hypotheses, which must later be abandoned. If Religion is “bunk,” Science has been a long record of exploded “bunks.” The Christian may be dead wrong but, then again, you may—in spite of your pretensions at residing “where Wisdom dwelleth.” And if you are right and the Christians are wrong, what difference will it make to any of you one hundred years hence? The worms will find as much joy of your carcass as of mine, and your fame (if you can pardon my lack of reverence for one so wise and so great) will be as completely forgotten as is that of the devout stone mason who chipped the first stone fragment from the pyramid of Cheops.

Certainly you have too much intelligence and acquaintance with history to flatter yourself that your ideals will endure or the ideas to which you attach so much importance. There have been “free thinkers” as long as there have been religionists. An army, colossal and magnificent, has driven its spears at Christianity and she was never so strong, so rich, so well-entrenched, so far-flung in her dominions as she is today. Ingersoll is as dead and as forgotten (save by your “battalion of death”) as any other political hack, who kept himself between elections by gibes at religion intermingled with touching and florid descriptions about “the stars gleaming in the meadows”—and a lot of other “bunk.”

But if, as many of us strongly suspect, Truth (meaning Correct Opinion) is more mythical and hopeless than any of man’s dreams, and Happiness is the only thing worth bothering with, the laugh is on you. Because there are only a few “free thinkers” who can attain unto bliss by a fond meditation on their own wisdom and smartness. Most people need something more enduring than that, even with an occasional cocktail thrown in. Christianity, with all its faults and follies, has contributed hope and comfort and poise and perspective to millions of battered spirits. What have you to offer but the parrot cry of “Bunk”?

And the hope of Immortality! If we all end with the worms, who is the worse off, I with my hope or you with your silvery laughter at an almost universal human folly? If there is anything later and it should be even as the Fundamentalists predict, you will certainly have one “hell of a time.” And all for the fun of laughter at a lot of people who couldn’t hope to possess your brilliancy of intellect.
but who have, doubtless, even with pick and shovel, paid their board bill to the world.

Mr. Kingston's would-be sarcastic personal flings at me are the most obvious of the obvious and certainly have no bearing on any idea at issue; but they can be neatly turned against him. He speaks of "you who are so wise and great"—that is to say, I believe that I have a good healthy use of my reasoning faculty, and employ it in thinking for myself about life, and have a convinced confidence in the conclusions of my thinking; I write certain opinions, therefore I have presumably thought about them and presumably I believe them to be true; and, of course, this is a peculiar trait of mine. It is intimated that I should get "an honest job" and "pay my board bill to the world." Although the business of writing and publishing is, I believe, an old and respectable employment, I will say that when the preachers quit their pulpits and turn to labor with pick and shovel, I shall consider following their example. The suggestion is made that I oppose religion merely for the sake of having the fun of laughter at "an almost universal folly of mankind." Does a form of folly become wise when it is "almost universal"? Is folly so rare, and so confined to a few, that the universality of a belief proves its wisdom? And, again, would it be right for me to say that the preachers have advocated religion for the pleasure of damning mankind?

Mr. Kingston says that I make a fetish of "correct opinions"—but is it not the religionists and the conformists who emphasize what they presume to call "correct" opinions, established beliefs, "right thinking"? If Mr. Kingston means that I am for opinions intelligently arrived at and that will bear intelligent analysis, opinions that have some actual reasonable relation to life and that have a sound basis in experience, then I admit the charge. Who has said more often than I that absolute Truth is an illusion? To be sure, this means that Mr. Kingston's Christian "Truth" is an illusion. And my agnosticism, my skepticism, is the more careful attitude of thought, staying within the limits of human experience, asking proof and ranging beliefs alongside of facts to see how they compare.

But Mr. Kingston protests that the sole object of belief is happiness. No argument is more often used in behalf of religion—it is the last position of religious defense—that it makes people happy. This is not a very intelligent viewpoint, nor one that assumes a very high ground, nor one that shows much mental strength or courage. Unfortunately for this argument, it is too well known that religion, while it has made many individuals happy (dope is well known to induce a happy state, while many people are happy only when they can escape from reality), has produced an immense amount of misery in the world. It has terrified many; it has caused many to hate their fellows; it has made bloodshed and strife that have not been rare, that are not of obscure record, but that are all too notorious in the history of mankind; if religion has made people happy, it has also made them cruel and crazy.

Strange to say—or it may seem strange to Mr. Kingston—freedom of thought has made people happy. A skeptic does not necessarily despair because he does not believe in immortality of the soul or God or heaven and hell. Mr. Kingston seems to think that most people must have a religious belief in order to be happy. The truth, I think,
is that these people simply have not the strength and clearness of mind to rid themselves comfortably of false ideas. Then the mass impulse toward conformity is so very great that many need, not religion, but the approval of their fellows in order to be happy. Children are not unhappy, or not for long, when they learn there is no Santa Claus. Were it not for the influence of tradition and accepted opinions, mature people would not be unhappy when they realize the hollowness of the idea of a God. This is proved by the fact that as the world has advanced and as thought has become freer—as, from the sheer weight of indifference and attention to other concerns, religious ideas have become less important—disbelief is readier and easier than it ever was in the past. There is no question that there are more skeptics today than ever before. People are not so hesitant and afraid of "losing" their religion as they were in the old days of superstition and terrorism.

What has made the world happier, a better place to live in, a place of fuller opportunities and more abundant living, has been that very Science at which Mr. Kingston casts such a queer glance. The proof and justification of science are plentifully and tremendously evident in all the world about us. Science rescued man from the night of superstition. Now, the individual may be superstitious but he perf orces lives in the daylight and by the power of the world of science. Science, says Mr. Kingston, is simply a "method of investigation." Better so than a method of dogma, such as religion. But science is more than investigation; by investigation—of an infinite patience and honesty that shames the easy dogmatic assumptions of religionists—science has developed a considerable body of facts, processes, and material relations. How much more do we know of the world and of the operations of Nature today than was known in the Middle Ages—that ideal time of the total triumph of Christian superstition! It is true that science came by investigation. It did not come from messy nonsense about the soul. Yes, the record of science is one of "exploded bunk"—but the bunk was exploded by science. Science has kept on progressively with its careful and extensive experiments, with its growing discovery and coordination of facts. The record of science is splendidly one of progress. What is the record of religion to compare with it?

It is rather amusing to observe one who is a defendant of religion, which is notoriously based on dogma, in which dogma reaches its full flower, speaking of my "anti-religious dogmas." What is dogma? It is a notion that claims authority as its supreme and sufficient support, scorning reason and evidence. The Church says a thing is true, therefore it is true, and one is not to reason about it for oneself. It is so written in the Bible, therefore so it is, and none of the facts of life and no process of reasoning can be accepted as superior to the word of the holy book. I base my opinions upon reason; they are conclusions drawn from life; they are what experience and thought have taught me, and are not derived from any authority of Church or Bible or creed, nor are they offered as the ex cathedra last word of any party. As a matter of simple definition, Mr. Kingston should know that individual and free opinion of this kind is not dogma. Opinion, however wrong and however firm, is not dogma so long as it is willing to rest its appeal frankly and entirely upon evidence and reason. A man is a dogmatist when he
appeals to some authority—such as Bible or Church—to support his opinion, which by that token has not a sure support in reason.

And here let me set Mr. Kingston right on the question of free thought. The term is used to mean that mode of thinking which, as I have said above, is not subservient to any tradition or dogma or authority. The free thinker is he who holds the mind to be supreme and independent of all prescribed formulas and so-called sacred attitudes of thought. A man, on the other hand, who takes the Bible as a peculiar divine authority may be an honest thinker, and he may think as he does freely in the sense that no one forces him to think that way, but he is not a free thinker in the sense that his opinions are reached independently of authority; he is not a free thinker, because he bases his ideas upon something outside of, and which he regards as higher than, his own reasoning powers and his own observation of life. As for freedom of thought, by that we imply also the right of every man to think as he pleases; in that kind of freedom I believe of course and utterly, and I trust that Mr. Kingston believes in it. Even if, as he suggests, I may have one “hell of a time” when I die, I trust that Mr. Kingston will concede my right to think myself into hell. Although he thinks that religion is such a happyifying influence, I can say that to me freedom of thought is so great a boon that I should willingly go to hell for it.

I might remark parenthetically that millions of people, who have not been free thinkers, have died in the terrified belief that they were going to hell simply because they had not answered to the requirements of Christian creeds. This is one way in which religion has made millions happy. It has accomplished more in this way than in the other, for I believe that most of the human race has fallen short of the evangelical and dogmatic standard of piety that would gain them admittance to heaven. The comfort that religion has been to mankind throughout history! The joy and reassurance that have abounded as the result of the innumerable sermons descriptive of hellfire and the punishment of sinners! The gladness with which so many people have been frightened into a belief in religion! Oh, yes, the fear of hell, no less than the hope of heaven, has been a pre-eminently joyous aspect of Christianity.

Yes, religion has made people happy, and it has also inspired them to lofty ethics. For example, it has told them, as Mr. Kingston now tells me, to take a gambler’s chance on the belief in immortality and the rest of it. Believe it whether it is true or false, and then you have a chance to win and you can’t lose! Isn’t that an argument worthy of a God ruling over the universe? It is such an old, shallow and unworthy argument that I am surprised when Mr. Kingston advances it as if it were a new and wonderful viewpoint.

Mr. Kingston says I don’t believe in humility because Christianity advocates it. It is true that I believe in self-assertion; I believe in that pride which makes for achievement; I believe in force of character; I believe in strength, courage, intelligence. The kind of humility that believes in the prostration of worship or the timid and awestruck surrender of the mind to dogma is a silly and contemptible humility. It is found at its highest in zealots, whose humility is really a kind of inverted, intense pride. As a rule, humility is either hypocrisy or weakness. For the rest,
one can recognize one's limitations—one can honor superior intelligence and achievement—one can admit that wisdom is in other men and complete knowledge not in any man, without the attitude of humility. Humility reduces man. What is wanted is to elevate man, free him from his chains, and send him on farther flights.

I note that Mr. Kingston thinks I am far from being a humble person, because I took issue with that excellent critic and writer and editor, H. L. Mencken, regarding the literary beauties of the Bible. Mr. Kingston is misleading in his reference to this question. I did not say that there is no literary beauty whatever in the Bible. What I contended was that Mencken had surrendered his critical faculty and exaggerated this view of the Bible. I think too much uncritical adulation has been devoted to the Bible as literature. Certainly there are beautiful passages in it, some lovely and some dramatic stories, some stirring examples of the poetical. It is on the whole a dull book. It is full of rubbish. It is absurd to say that it outranks all of literature.

As for Molière, whom Mr. Kingston calls "a forgotten author of dead dramas and comedies," I do not blush when reminded that I have written in praise of him; for in praising him, I have praised one who is ranked with Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Cervantes, as one of the great writers of mankind. But, better yet, read Molière and I am sorry if you cannot see why I enjoy and admire that master of high ironic comedy.

And now, Mr. Kingston, adieu. I will not say, "God be with us till we meet again." But I will say that, while the worms will have me eventually, I will not meanwhile adopt Christian humility and admit that I am a worm.

PURITANISM AND BEAUTY

WHEN is hair beautiful? Or where? This is the question raised by Alice Tisdale (Minneapolis, Minn.), in her effort to prove to herself first of all, that she is not a puritan. I made a break, it appears, in my writings—innocently. I assure you, which is to say I didn't think it was wrong and don't think so now—by writing down as plainly as you please a reference to the hair under women's arms. Some persons think this was vulgar, some think it was in poor taste, and now Miss Tisdale, who will not admit herself to be a puritan, says that she is opposed to it on esthetic grounds—it is not beautiful, says she. But read her letter:

I for one am not, not, not puritanical—far from it; but I'm not crazy about discussing "hair under the arms," either. I tried to analyze my objection and decided that it's because I like beauty and glamor. You say, "Why isn't hair under the arms just as polite as hair on the head?" Well, because the latter suggests an adornment, beauty, something that may give pleasure when it's beheld.

The under-the-arm stuff is ugly, and there's never a bit of glamor to it. It is hideous, unnecessary (as far as I know) and only reminds us that we're animals. Why, you know yourself how disgusting is mere raw sex. But give it a little glamor, that is, ignore the hideousness and dress the thought in lace and velvet darkness—well, you see?

I didn't mind your calling the ladies "Persian cats." I thought it was a good
name for them. And I liked your writing of the "trifles," like the shirt buttons,* etc. By the way, did you ever read Xavier de Maistre's *Nocturnal Journey Round My Room?* It's old and hard to get hold of, but it's one of the best things I ever read.

Miss Tisdale, you have certainly fooled yourself to the top of your bent. You have rationalized your attitude on this hair question, and sought very hard to evade the issue, but while you are meant for better things the fact still remains that you still hug to yourself the "velvet darkness" of puritanism. You are this far ahead of the puritans, that you don't object to the velvet, but you want the darkness. Why isn't hair under the arm beautiful? It has the same significance as hair on the head—a sexual significance and alluring. It is even more alluring in this sense, for there is a suggestion of something hidden, and you know, my dear puritan, that it is the hidden things which are most exciting.

Now I say that a bare underarm is not as pretty to look at as an underarm decorated with natural hair. You say hair thus located is ugly. Just what quality of ugliness does it have? Is it ugliness of color? or of line? or of form? Or is the ugliness simply and only in the mind of the beholder? You will have to make out a better case, Miss Tisdale, before you convince me that you are not puritan at heart.

As for the beauty and glamor of sex, long may it wave. Long may it be adorned with poetry and art and the subtle charms of personal association.

What do you mean by "mere raw sex"? Do you mean sex unashamed? Sex naked? Sex confronting itself candidly and joying in itself? I suspect—I am almost sure—that is what you have in mind. These things are thought to be ugly because you have been taught to look at them that way. It is the old shame of sex still getting in its deadly work. You seem to feel that there is something inherently vile about sex, and that it must be covered, whispered about, and generally dodged and draped and denied in order to be tolerable. There is no part of the human body that is hideous or disgusting or bad—if it is a clean, healthy, well-formed body.

A dirty body is not pleasant to look at nor attractive. It is not immoral, but it is in deplorable taste.

A deformed body is repellent to the eye, not on the score of morality, but on the score of beauty.

There are very few people who have got entirely away from the old, old notion that certain parts of the body are bad and the mention of them is vulgar and ugly. This attitude creeps around slyly in the minds of the best of folks, just as it apparently does in the mind of Miss Tisdale.

Think again, my dear puritan reader. Search your soul. Study this question of hair. Be more definite still, and decide exactly what is ugly about hair under the arm. And then—if it is ugly, which you have yet to show—please tell me why it shouldn't, even so, be mentioned in writing?

You say that you like beautiful things—beauty and glamor. Is your reading, then, absolutely confined to this kind of appeal? Do you never

*A discussion in The Fun I Get Out of Life (Big Blue Book No. B-8).*
read bitter things, harsh things, tragic things, grotesque things, ugly things, vigorous but not lovely things, dirty but inspired and masterly stuff like Rabelais, unpleasant things, cruel things—in a word, do you not have a range of reading among things that are true and real, even though not beautiful? I am sorry for you if this is so, because you have missed a great deal of interesting and important writing. Why, my dear Miss Tisdale, one who reads nothing but beautiful things can know scarcely anything of life; for you will agree, will you not, that life is not all beauty, not all roses and song, nor yet all cakes and ale?

You need more experience, that’s what you need, miss, indeed you do. Instead of brightening the corner where you are, look into more of the dark corners, shadowy corners, strangely lighted corners, oddly colored corners, strongly agitated corners of life. The more you look, the more curious you will be, and the more you will learn. Don’t make faces at sex. And don’t make faces at life. Take the bad with the good, the bitter with the sweet, the dark with the light, and praise all the gods that ever were, if they were, from whom all the things that ever were have, if they have, flowed. Whereupon the congregation is dismissed.

DEMOCRACY AND MANNERS

DEMOCRATIC country, in which everybody has a vote, displays a kind of general friendly manner that is amusing. Do the insincere but not the less hearty, man-to-man greetings which are customary in Main Street and even larger centers imply genuine good fellowship? Speaking from experience, I should say they do not. Men speak to others whom they dislike, and often hate. They are unnecessarily cordial to those with whom they have nothing in common, for whom in their hearts I believe they are prompted to scarcely nod—but this man or that man, any man in fact, may vote for them if they are friendly to him.

It pays to be on the safe side. Never antagonize another if you can help it, is a good political rule for anyone who is in office, who is trying to get into office, or who may possibly at some future time want an office; and a goodly number of Americans, almost one might say the majority, belong in one of these three categories. It is easy for some of them, who are naturally of the hand-shaking type. But I think of one man who is really a sullen, ill-natured fellow and who used to be happy, I am sure, in letting his real self break out; but poor fellow, for the past dozen years he has been unsuccessfully seeking a certain office, and consequently he has had to suppress his true disposition; he has worked hard in this respect, I am sure—spiritually sweated in secret—and will he finally be rewarded? It is uncertain and therefore, the prize ever dangling before his eyes, he is still, against the grain, hail fellow well met.

Similarly, another gent who hates me and my whole philosophy of life—who would really under other circumstances like to lead a mob against me—always makes it a point to wave at me from a block away; and to inquire with interest, from time to time, about my welfare; and to show that a vote would be appreciated sometime for something or a good word in his behalf for some position, politically disposable, that he covets. Everywhere you will observe these manners that are peculiar
to a democracy. They break out in a very rash of friendliness and good
nature in campaign time; then, it is well known that for some months
Americans enjoy a greater degree of personal freedom than at any other
season, for no officer wants to molest them, every officer is simply bub-
bling over with Christian desire to be kind and lenient and forgiving
toward them, everybody in office or wanting to be in office is disposed
to overlook everybody else's conduct as far as possible in the hope of as
many votes as possible.

And the many Americans in small or large politics, all the way down
or up the scale, even go further; they broadly follow the principle that.
even if you don't vote for them, you won't oppose them very strongly if
they show what good fellows they can be; how an office-seeker expands,
how he appreciates your bonhomie and broad-mindedness, when you tell
him that you can't vote for him but you will not say anything against
him—actually, you would almost be led to think that he has a better
opinion of you than he has of his active supporters!

Outside of political considerations, this friendly manner is induced
by the American atmosphere or illusion of equal and democratic oppor-
tunity, of free trade and employment, of favors to be given or received.
A superficial appearance of cordiality is yours from everyone who thinks
you may possibly, some day, speak a good word for him in securing a
job; and if one has jobs to give, how can he be without many friends?
American life is a strange tangle of little personal influences that react
upon manners where there is any sort of contact. There is a tacit mutual
understanding (often indeed frankly expressed) that one man may assist
another—as employer, as voter, as well-wisher, as customer. Even the
very popcorn peddlers are polite—they cannot afford to risk offending
any man who may buy a nickel's worth of popcorn. Scratch my back
and I will scratch yours—this principle is. I believe, the great secret of
that American good fellowship which is so much talked of.

THE PRINCE OF WALES, EXTRAVERT

MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS, the 21-year-old Mexican caricaturist,
whom I had the pleasure of meeting several times in New York
recently, has collected his cartoons into a handsome volume,
brought out by that most excellent publisher, Alfred A. Knopf,
under the title The Prince of Wales and Other Americans.

I do not intend to write a criticism of Covarrubias' work—I am not
competent for such literary excursions, though I can rid myself of the
trite observation that "I like it." It is of the title that I wish to speak,
for the job of titling books always interests me. I find that a title is a
very important commercial asset or liability, a lesson I learned from
issuing more than a thousand Little Blue Books.

At one time I did not take the matter of a title very seriously, an
indifference which cost me many a shiny dime. The matter of titles is
particularly important, in my personal experience, owing to the fact
that I never exploit individual titles, lumping them all into a long list and
leaving the matter of selection to the prospective purchaser. That is why
I learned to appreciate a good title. It must tell the story; it must move
the imagination; it must let the reader know what is in the book without having to read a descriptive paragraph under the title.

Other publishers have plenty of elbow room, so they do not have to give much thought to a title. Several inches of small type under the title will give one an idea of what to expect, which is all very nice, but here it is different—the title must tell all—and if it doesn't tell all, the sales are usually meager. That is why I smile when I read that title *The Prince of Wales and Other Americans*. It was clever; it brought out the viewpoint that the Prince of Wales is an American—in spirit, at least—what the Jungians, *via* James Oppenheim, call an Extravert, one at home in his environment, a person who believes in action, pep, and Service. There is a lot of the extravert about the Prince of Wales—very American, you know. Yes, indeed, the Knopf people must have figured out that title for the young artist—he is a good cartoonist, but unable to get off such a line. There is only one fault that I can find with this title—classifying the Prince as an American is brilliant journalism, after a fashion, but it happens that the Prince of Wales is an Englishman.

A LETTER FROM A 19-YEAR-OLD BOY

I have a long letter from Samuel A. Herman, of Chicago, who is young in years—only nineteen—but who has something to say that deserves a serious hearing, though I cannot print the communication in full, much as I should like to. Herman is an intelligent expression of this age of doubt and unbelief. When our young people get to thinking like Herman, we may expect an intellectual revolution. It would be both unfair and absurd to dismiss Herman with the remark that he is young. Young he is, but that makes his mind all the more interesting. It is good to know what is going on in the minds of our youngsters. Not all of them are swallowing the garbage doled out by *True Confessions*, *True Story Magazine*, the *American Magazine* and the other journalistic slop-jars.

Herman is, first of all, an atheist. He classifies the Old and New Testaments as myths, along with Old Mother Hubbard and the Adventures of Baron Munchausen, "only the latter are, by far, more interesting." Herman has studied Ingersoll, Paine, Voltaire, Humboldt and the other heretics, and he tells me he accepts their conclusions.

"I realize that there are some who do not go quite so far as I in this regard," he writes; "they call themselves Agnostics." Herman is sure they believe as he does, only it is much easier to say: "Religion is a myth, yes. But as to a God who exists somewhere outside of the Universe, why, we do not know anything about him. He may so exist or not. We do not know." To this, Herman replies that we do *know*. Let me quote his own words: "Scientists know the Universe is run in obedience to the laws of nature and that there is no room for any God or supernatural being who moves things about in defiance of the laws of nature. Now as to the question that there may be a God, who, though helpless to interfere, still exists, somewhere, somehow, my reply is that such a God is no god and means nothing, as he is too helpless."
HARVARD AND YALE

I HAVE said it before; let me say it once more. Harvard University is one of my admirations. It is the freest institution in America. Alongside Harvard, such institutions as Yale and Princeton stand as high-schools in a small Kansas county. Harvard understands the meaning of Freethought. It is not a propaganda factory for the churches. If anything, it makes infidels.

Here comes a copy of the Harvard Crimson, which contains a breezy and tonic letter, signed "L. B.," who spent a year in Harvard and a year in Yale and who tells about both, praising Harvard's tolerance and pointing out the religious and moral pish-posh that Elis have to endure.

In his candid comparison of Yale and Harvard from the viewpoint of an undergraduate, L. B. scores the "paternalism, intellectual blather and moral fight talks of Yale" and at the same time praises her for the "unqualified excellence" of her faculty and the interest aroused in their courses.

If I were to describe Yale as paternalistic it would give a new rigidity of meaning to that word, a new suggestion of omnipresent surveillance, supervision and interference, writes L. B. Nothing however inconsequential is too trivial to be noted, classified and considered in the record of an individual.

Not only is his scholastic record worked out with painstaking reference to the most minute details, but a student's degree actually depends upon such impertinent matters as staying within a parsimonious allowance of class and chapel cuts, his chapel attendance, the company he keeps, his tastes in recreation and his chastity.

Yale does not limit itself to rating a student according to his scholastic excellence or the lack of it. According to L. B., the poor undergraduates must also be exposed "to an endless series of extra-curricular lectures on business success, patriotism and social policy by doodles imported for the occasion in accordance with various trust funds and bequests. At the opening of his freshman year he is harangued in the interests of the honor system and infant damnation. He is subjected practically every other Sunday to a moral fight talk."

While it is granted by L. B. that Yale gives the student excellent instruction, he has to take liberal doses "of moral and religious piffle, pish-posh and sassafras served up by an imposing army of forensically inclined stuffed shirts." What makes Yale a great educational institution, says L. B., is its faculty of scholars and critics "who stand second to none in their field." He adds:

Intellectually, Yale is a wide-awake community. The average undergraduate has a very real interest in his courses, at least in those he has been allowed to select for himself, and is well read in and opinionated on questions of the moment.

It is almost in spite of, instead of because of, the college authorities that being a Yale undergraduate is highly desirable. The tendency of the present administration is to neglect the college and lavish its wealth and attention on various pet projects such as schools of wet nursing and cinema photography. But the undergraduate body continues to get what it wants in many ways.

On the other hand, L. B. lauds the Harvard tolerance toward the undergraduate's morals and religion and sees in her state of mind "a
rather patrician lack of concern over other people's affairs." From the undergraduate's point of view, the Harvard administration may be said to be practically the opposite from that at Yale. The student is allowed every possible freedom in his choice of individual courses, and the intelligent distribution of his interests. Yale's academic paternalism is unknown at Harvard. The student at Harvard is permitted to develop himself along civilized standards, without having to be tethered to a stereotyped schedule. Harvard is not run like a railroad. One does not have to chase around in accordance with some sort of a divinely selected timetable. In addition, the undergraduate's outside life is not scrutinized. What he does in the environs of Boston does not bother the administration, so long as he manages to keep out of the hoosegow "with his name all over the morning extras in 160-point bold type."

Harvard considers its students as men, not children. It grants them intelligence enough to know how to take care of themselves. Harvard is not concerned over the student's morals, religion, tastes or opinions on the League of Nations. "He is judged solely by his academic record," says L. B., "and his degree depends upon his ability to fulfill certain scholastic requirements. All of which is as it should be."

Harvard students are not herded into chapel. The administration does not feel obliged to save its students' souls from Hell and Rationalism. The undergraduates, according to L. B., do not give two hoots for organized religion. Hardly a score of students attend chapel. Yale students would do the same, if the administration were to allow them freedom in so personal a matter.

Harvard is indifferent, and justly so. "It represents a rather patrician lack of concern for other people's affairs," is L. B.'s pointed way of putting it.

It is good to get this graphic contrast. L. B. has made a good case for Harvard, one of my admiration. Personally, I have never had the benefits of such a civilized educational institution. But if I can have anything to say about Henry's education, I shall most certainly bundle him off to Harvard, where he will be free to develop himself, and should he want to guzzle a stein of bootleg beer, it won't be anyone's business but Henry's, which is as it should be.

THE ALMOST PERFECT INDIVIDUALIST

BELIEVE it was the well-known tendency of people to join something, to wave a banner, and to march in a parade, figuratively speaking, that prompted Benjamin De Casseres, in dislike of that tendency, to write his highly diverting and entrancing article, "The Babbitts of Radicalism," for the Holdeman-Julius Monthly. Undoubtedly the individualist is not the man to have sympathy with the din and outcry of "causes" and "movements" and systems of belief. He is not a party man. He may have an idea that is similarly held by a number of others, without having the inclination to form "sides" and to whoop it up loudly and loyally for that idea. Benjamin De Casseres admits that he is not a perfect individualist, for he
loves Platonic ideas. Yet he is sufficiently marked in his individualism
to draw a spirited protest from N. T. Huff (Harlan, Kentucky). Far
from being a conformist, Mr. Huff fails to see why a similarity of ideas
and a willingness to unite for the advancement of those ideas should
identify one as a Babbitt. His letter follows:

I didn't like Benjamin De Casseres's brain-circus of word-jugglery in the
November 1926 issue of your Monthly, "The Babbitts of Radicalism." With
a shout and bang he hurls his big words about, and they burst like firecrackers.
It makes my head swim. The only relief is that De Casseres confesses some Babbittry
himself. He is fascinated by the Platonic Ideas! Well, to be sure, as you say,
that's good; and it evidently won't do to be fascinated by ideas. Most people, I
notice, are suspicious of ideas, and that's the reason: they don't want to be Babbitts.

Oh, Wisdom! Nor will it do to take SIDES in an argument, thought, movement or belief; on your own side only! and if it happens that two agree, it won't
do to use the vile word "side" in describing the agreement, at least not in such
manner as to indicate an alliance, for the word has a bad taste in the mouth of the
individualist; he doesn't want it to be thought that he would SIDE with anyone,
or that anyone COULD side with him! Anyway, to take sides would seem to
indicate a spirit to do something, whereas the great individualist can well get along
without your help, thank you, and he's not interested in anyone except himself, so,
how simple it is— that an alliance to do something is Babbittry! "Come over to my
side"—the telltale gesture of Babbittry. "Thank you, if anything needs to be done.
I'll do it myself!"—the powerful gesture of the man who knows a Babbitt when he
sees one . . . probably?

How the histrionic word slingers stretch and stretch the simplest word, until,
like a rubber band, it embraces everything except the writer and Shakespeare!
With what glibness they classify, label and loudly proclaim this and that to be
true regarding mental attitudes unlike their own, saying "Babbitt, Babbitt,"
with no thought, seemingly, that Mr. Babbitt himself gladly does likewise, always
applauding such methods as the grandest, yet never placing anything except the
most noble and happy construction upon the wisdom and insight of his own. Oh,
Babbittry!

They segregate themselves away from the oppressiously labeled and stick up
a new shingle, "ME and Shakespeare," and thereafter disdain not only to profess
anything in common with humanity, but ridicule the idea of the people having
anything in common among themselves. And after this public profession of wisdom
they refuse to lower themselves to any attitude suggestive of help, and, what's
more, they invent terms of derision for the poor Mutt who knows no better than
to add his strength to any movement designed to better his workaday world.

Now, now, Mr. Huff, don't blame culture. These easy blamings,
labelings and fixings of responsibility are indeed misleading. It is the
beauty of culture that it produces many kinds of fruit, good and interesting
for all their difference (perhaps because of it). In his remarkable
declaration of individualism, De Casseres gave us a useful reminder of the
narrowing and stereotyping tendency of movements. Men do tend
to come together with a set of beliefs on one question, and exaggerate
that to the obscuration of many other ideas and interests that are important.
A few slogans and a neat formula of argument do seduce men in
movements from free methods of thinking. It is true that organizations
develop the patriotic and flag-waving spirit. And a man is "unchurched"
if he happens to veer a little as an individual from the straight (and often
narrow) course of the party's belief and program.

Yet organizations are necessary in a world where certain purposes
can be achieved only by common effort. It is right and natural that men
should band together to promote their interests or to advance ideas which they regard as valuable for humanity. A man who is interested in ideas, not simply curiously but purposefully, and who belongs to a radical movement, is not by that token a Babbitt—although a psychology and phraseology smacking of Babbittry is often found in such movements, in all movements, one might almost say. Ideas that have to fight for their life, that arouse a mighty opposition from old influences and habits of thought, naturally develop movements whether or not they assume the form of definite organizations.

We can see the value of movements more clearly if we look at some past movements, whose contribution to the intelligent progress of mankind is not in dispute. Look back, for example, at the Encyclopedic movement in France, in the eighteenth century; when such men as Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Grimm worked strenuously side by side, in what was a common and clearly aimed movement, to destroy the grip of intolerance and dogma. Consider the great battle of ideas in the nineteenth century, the fight over evolution and the movement finally to establish science in the modern world.

Ideas, if they sufficiently involve wide interests and prejudices, will give rise to movements. A movement that has intelligence back of it, and which has freedom and progress for its aim, is a good movement even though it is not perfectly wise and right. A movement that is reactionary, and that tries to hold back progress and upholds the tyranny of old ideas and institutions, is a bad movement.

Even so, there are men so individualistic that they refuse definitely to align themselves with any movements, although they may sympathize with a number of movements and lend their influence to various laudable causes. These individualists serve a very good purpose as critics, as stirrers of minds that sometimes settle down too complacently in a rut of doctrine or program, and as continual faithful bearers of the message that the highest aim of progress is to develop strong, intelligent, free individuals.

A SURGEON AND THE SOUL

A SURGEON who believes in the soul must, one thinks, rest his belief on nothing stronger and surer than faith. One so intimately familiar with the structure and composition of human beings knows that the soul is not a definite organ, that can be scientifically placed and classified and analyzed in its functions. Thus when Dr. William J. Mayo, the celebrated surgeon, declares that he believes in a soul, we recognize his "I believe" as proceeding by an act of faith out of the indefinitely extensive uncertainty of "I do not know."

In the interview recording this opinion of Dr. Mayo's, the contrast between his knowledge of the body and his lack of knowledge of the soul is stated—only, strangely enough, to be denied. We are informed that Dr. Mayo "knows more about man's material makeup than perhaps any other living person," and then, "The keen blade of his scalp may never
have disclosed the soul as a tangible part of the mystery called man, but he knows it is there."

Here are two uses of the word "knows," manifestly not the same. Plainly, the surgeon cannot know the soul as he knows the heart and the brain. "Knows" means a great deal, and it does not mean belief nor conviction nor a feeling that a thing is true.

It is admitted that the "keen blade of his scalpel has never disclosed the soul"—how and where, then, has he discovered it? The best he can say is, "I have seen a minister come to the bedside of my patient and do for that patient what I could not do, though I had done everything in my professional power." Is this proof of a soul? Or is it proof of something that needs no proof? namely, that if a sick person can be made to believe that a God will take care of him, he will be put in a better frame of mind for getting well. This may be effective with a believer, but it would fail with the skeptic—yet skeptics recover from serious illness, not through the influence of religion, but through the will to live. Every physician knows that a patient with a strong desire to live has a better chance of recovery than one who despairs of or is indifferent to life. Physicians often lie to their patients with good results. When a preacher performs a similar office, is the weight of truth any greater?

Evidently Dr. Mayo's idea—a most illogical one—is that the fact of the brain, which is subject to emotional influence (good or bad), proves the soul. But ask him about the brain and, in his character of anatomist, he will tell you much, clearly and unhesitatingly and positively. Ask him about the soul and, in his character of believer, he can only express his belief—not his knowledge—in a sentimental and unreasonable way. Obviously, he cannot tell you about the soul as he can tell you about the brain. His "knowledge" of the soul is, strangely, of a kind that is indefinite, irrational and, indeed, incomunicable.

Describing a mental flip-flop, Dr. Mayo talks in a different strain about so-called "psychic phenomena." He says: "Ninety-five percent of our knowledge comes through the eye. In a darkened room, the faker has but five percent of our intelligence to combat. If men like Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle fail to smell out the fraud—well, when a man goes into dark places, deprived of his chief means of obtaining information, the scientist is as likely to be led astray as anyone else." One who believes in a soul and in immortality—I say it candidly—might as well believe in spiritualism. As a matter of faith rather than proof, one is as easily and reasonably believed as the other. Spiritualism being a more unpopular and peculiar belief than general belief in the soul, Dr. Mayo has no wish to believe it; therefore, he does not use toward it the attitude of faith, but the attitude of a man demanding evidence. Yet if he rejects spiritualism because there is no evidence for it, he would logically be forced to reject belief in the soul for the very same reason. The explanation seems to be that in considering spiritualism, Dr. Mayo uses ninety-five percent of his intelligence, while in considering the soul he uses only five percent.
THE COUNTRY IS SAVED

As the United States of America is not surrounded by a Chinese wall, good patriots tremble constantly for the safety of the Republic. No wonder officials in Washington are always glad to lose their jobs, for the duty of safeguarding and sustaining the Republic is an onerous one. Indeed these officials hardly dare to sleep lest, like a thief in the night, some enemy (or even an unfriendly critic) may steal into the country and with a breath destroy our American institutions. But however hard it is, the officials do their best to uphold the tottering structure that has been maintained at such great expense, as a Senate committee has recently shown in its investigation of campaign funds.

The latest example of governmental vigilance is seen in the peremptory refusal of the State Department to let Mme. Alexandra Kollantay pass through the United States on her way to serve as Russian Soviet ambassador, or ambassadress, to Mexico. Secretary of State Kellogg, who has in previous instances declared it his mission to stand guard personally in the heroic manner of Horatius at the bridge, acted promptly in protecting American soil from even the passing footsteps of Mme Kollantay. He is not fooled by the circumstance that this Bolshevik lady would simply pass through the country; he realizes that all the lady need do is set foot on American soil, give the Soviet secret sign, and the country will rise as one man (or as one man and one woman) to overthrow the Republic and acclaim Mme. Kollantay as dictator or dictatoress. Anyway, a few days and a few remarks would be sufficient for Mme. Kollantay to put over a revolution.

Consider the fact that Mme. Kollantay comes straight from Russia, and that she would bring the news that a revolution has occurred in that country. This information in itself would be a menace, and then the lady might say, as it were casually, "Workers of the world, unite," whereupon some workman, overbearing this line for the first time, would be instantly converted to Bolshevism; he would convert another, and so on, until in a short time there would actually be a number of Communists in the country.

A year ago Secretary Kellogg saved the country—kept the seed of Communism from being planted here—by excluding from the country a Bolshevik member of the British Parliament. No doubt that fellow hoped to establish at least a small nucleus of a Communist party in the Republic, but he was prevented by the foresight and patriotic decision of the Secretary of State. Then there was the Countess Karolyvi—not a Bolshevik, to be sure, but rather a foe of Bolshevism; but she was known to believe in democracy at the very least, and a countess who believes in democracy—well, she is a suspicious if not a dangerous character.

It is true that Mme. Kollantay is the most sinister person who has tried to get into the country and, by possibly letting drop a mention of Bolshevism which is so innocently unsuspected by our citizens, bring about an instantaneous upheaval simultaneously in all American cities of
twenty thousand or more inhabitants. In keeping her out, Secretary Kellogg deserves as grateful remembrance as his countrymen have bestowed upon Paul Revere.

But the strain of keeping such foreigners out of the country and more, in keeping out all foreign ideas that would not look well in a Republican party platform—is very great; and we are uneasy when we wonder if the next Secretary of State will be as careful.

In a world that contains dangerous people and ideas, both with a disposition to travel, we just go along from day to day, thankful each morning that the Republic is still right side up.

WE MODERNS

IT IS great to live in an age that offers such striking evidences of progress. Again I was struck by a powerful realization of the advanced times in which we live when in the city election in Kansas City, Missouri, airplanes flew low from one end of the city to the other, with signs on behalf of the various candidates. This was a spectacular method of political advertising, which was only made possible by our progress far beyond the crude ways of the early years of the Republic. But a second thought was bound to occur, as second thoughts annoyingly do. For all the modern methods by which political propaganda is brought to the public attention, that propaganda itself has scarcely changed its character. If airplanes are used, still they display the same old slogans and catch-words that have been serviceable for years in herding the sovereign masses to the voting booths.

A candidate need only announce that if elected he will serve the public, and that profound, far-reaching and incontestable statement will work like magic. Of course all the candidates say as much, so it is a question of believe it or not, or shut your eyes and take your choice. A rule that seems to have as much charm about it as ever is to turn the “ins” out and put the “outs” in. “Turn Out the City Hall Gang” (and, of course, put another city hall gang in its place) is a slogan that, strangely, seems to wear a bright original attractiveness. “Honesty and Economy” has lost none of its effectiveness as a declaration of great political significance; and the public, with a monotonous and yet periodically enthusiastic trust, continues to elect the candidate of “Honesty and Economy” and then, two or four years later, having grown wiser of course, the voters make a change by electing another candidate who intones the same irresistible promise.

Promise is the thing in politics, and performance nothing; a promise is good for one or two terms, then a promise from the other side is hailed with delight and shouts of victory; it is always promise, however, and performance never, that decides the issue. The fact that those who are in office have failed to perform what they promise is not so important as the fact that those who are out of office come forward with such glowing promises. The point is that promises, like other things, have their day; even the best promise will not last forever and keep its
rosy youthful color; it gets wrinkles of weariness and cynicism about the eyes, and a new promise, fresh and wholesome, is required.

The sum of American political wisdom consists in exchanging Republican promises for Democratic promises, and vice versa. In the recent elections, the Democrats won victories throughout the country, and for no earthly reason save that the Republican promises are slightly shopworn by now, while the Democratic promises, having been brushed up a bit since 1920, have an appearance that is almost as good as new. In anything more politically profound than promises, the Democrats have had nothing to offer the voters; they have even made virtually the same kind of promises; but to jump back and forth between the Republicans and the Democrats is the great American political game, and without regard to issues or ideas, it was time for some jumps toward the side of the Democrats.

"CITY FOLKS"

THE thrill that the ordinary person gets from a mere passing and meaningless glimpse of a celebrity—no matter whom, no matter in what connection—reminds me of a very amusing story—"City Folks," by Thyra Samter Winslow. It is about a young couple from Missouri, living in a modest way, on a clerk's salary, in a Harlem flat in New York City. One morning their breakfast is interrupted by the arrival of a letter from the young husband's mother in the little Missouri town; the father owns a hardware store, but he is getting old, and the letter proposes that the son return and take charge of the business. Finishing their breakfast, the Missourians born and bred but with eight years' New York training entertain each other with visions of a pretty bungalow, a green expanse of lawn, friendly neighbors, a position of some importance in the old home town. Yes, life is dreary in New York City—few friends—once a week a dinner downtown and the theater—costs all they make to live—an hour's ride in the subway twice a day is no joke. They separate for the day with rosy thoughts of a new and attractive life.

In the evening, when the husband has returned from work and the wife has returned from an afternoon's shopping (not, however, buying) downtown, there is an atmosphere of constraint very different from the enthusiasm of the morning. Their dinner is a dull affair, attempts at conversation being somehow unsuccessful. At length the husband, in a rather embarrassed but eager rush of speech, confides to the wife that as he came out of a Child's restaurant that noon hour he passed William G. McAdoo on the street. He turned and had a good look at him—yes, it really was McAdoo. And then the wife, in a pretty flutter, tells how, while standing at a counter in Lord and Taylor's, she looked up and there, just a few feet from her, stood Billie Burke. There was no mistake. Billie Burke it was, herself, looking just as she did in the pictures.

Well, they both agreed that it was unthinkable to go back to that little Missouri town where "there was no life." They wanted "life." They realized all at once what they would be leaving. Embracing each other, they exclaimed together, "Why, we're city folks!"
UPTON SINCLAIR AND QUEEN MARIE

The Democratic Queen Marie, expressing her democracy profoundly by waving a hand to the crowd, is not democratic enough to arouse any enthusiasm for her in Upton Sinclair. He sees behind the gorgeous foreground of the Queen's immediate circle the wretched tyranny upon which her ignobly royal and ineptly social distinction is based. Not in any case would one expect a man like Sinclair to join in the indecent scramble to snatch celebrity and publicity from the slightest association with this unimportant queen of a little Graustark kingdom that would hardly make a good-sized Texas county; and certainly it would be ridiculous to imagine him rushing all the way across the continent for the privilege of making his genuflexions before Her Majesty. And so when, strangely enough, Sinclair and Mrs. Sinclair were invited through the North American Newspaper Alliance to attend a reception to Queen Marie in the Hotel Plaza, New York City, the following telegram of "regret" was sent:

We have your telegram inviting us to meet the queen of Roumania, and appreciate the democratic spirit of Her Majesty in wishing to meet American Socialists. Unfortunately we are three thousand miles away. We haven't the fare to come to New York, and it appears that Her Majesty hasn't the fare to come to California. Also Upton Sinclair has to make on that date his campaign speech as candidate for Governor of California. Assure Her Majesty, however, that we shall be with her in spirit and shall tell our Pasadena audience what we think of her government, the most infamous and blood-soaked in Europe. In due course we expect to learn that Her Majesty has come to borrow American dollars to be used in enabling Roumanian peasant slaves to slaughter Russian workers groping towards freedom. Did you really think we would aid such a cause? Or were you careless in compiling your list of celebrities?

After all, the curiosity of the great American masses is not such a tribute to Marie as it may superficially appear. Tom Thumb was a celebrated figure in his day.

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY SECONDS

Only want to look at the paper a minute," is a remark heard at the breakfast table, when a man swallows his coffee and gnaws at his toast, his eyes but not his whole mind making a hurried survey of the morning paper, for he is thinking whether he will be late to work. The minute may be prolonged. Call it eighty seconds, and you will have beaten Jules Verne's day. This is only mental travel, to be sure, one's thoughts or momentary surface impressions traveling over reports under far, foreign datelines. Yet it is rather wonderful to think that one can know what is going on in the world, whether it affects one or not, whether one can affect it or not, and whether or not it is of any great importance.

There are a lot of unimportant things that one gathers in a glance over the paper, with just the slightest bit of curiosity. King Ferdinand
of Rumania (that's Queen Marie's husband) is expected to die any day—he is certainly beyond making any large plans for the future. And that news doesn't move the reader, except that, if he is that kind, he may say to the wife that Queen Marie didn't behave very properly in leaving her husband in such a condition; yet, for all he knows of the domestic secrets of royalty, it may have prolonged the husband's life. Nor is it deeply affecting to read that the Emperor of Japan is also on the point of proving the old saying that kings must lie down with common folks in the democratic state of death.

This is a reflection on democracy which has never been very potent in political significance. To speak of death as being democratic or just or kind may be poetry or it may be piffle, depending upon who says it and how, but looking at it practically such remarks seem foolish. If they are offered, as they frequently are, to quiet people into the patient stupid acceptance of injustice in life, then they belong in the worst classification of bunk. That death comes equally to all is nothing to rhapsodize about, when we remember that few go voluntarily to death. And so long as there is inequality in life; there cannot be equality in death: for one man dies after a happy and successful life, while another dies at the end of a life that has been but a miserable struggle....

But we are forgetting the news of the world—we are leaving the world indeed when we talk of death. The leading item of news in today's paper is the acquittal of Doheny and Fall. Doheny got the oil, and Fall got the $100,000, and the government got a war scare, which many suspect was even less valid than war scares generally are. There is no doubt that the Harding administration treated certain private interests very liberally, to say the least. But Daugherty got a hung jury, and now Fall goes free, which seems to indicate that in the union of politicians and millionaires there is strength. There was a scandalous raid on government property (theoretically, the people's property), but were not Doheny and Fall friends? When one man helps another to grab rich oil reserves, and the second man sends the first man a hundred thousand dollars in a black satchel, that's friendship, isn't it? Business is business and politics is (or are) politics; and if business controls politics, that is no reason why the Republican party should be injured in its chances for 1928. The election is only two years away, and if water has been poured on the troubled oil, why stir it up again?

There is more truth than bunk in Senator Norris' remark, "You can't convict a hundred million dollars." Apparently you can't convict even a hundred thousand dollars. Money can do no wrong—to the one that has it, and the one that helps him get it. Senator Heflin made a stirring campaign speech on the acquittal (the most important campaign speeches are made in Congress) and it was he who struck the bunk keynote. He said that the agents of corruption "have invaded the jury box, the poor man's hope and salvation." This is simply a new way of dishing up the old hash about "equality before the law." But the extent to which a jury is a man's hope is determined by the money he can spend for good lawyers, and complaisant witnesses, and technical and impressive briefs, and all the law's delays.

Somebody is always ready to criticize, and it is worthy of note that two men—namely, Doheny and Fall—were satisfied with the decision....
Italy doesn’t have to use such expensive legal methods as a democracy like ours, for Mussolini decides a question and everybody—that is everybody who is anybody—agrees. Those who disagree, regret it. It is said in Mussolini’s favor that he is making Italy work. If you want to see a lot of men who are kept more or less regularly employed, visit a penitentiary. What’s the use of working if you can’t enjoy a little freedom when the day’s toil is ended? Of course, tyrants make people work. That is, everybody is made to work but the good friends of the tyrant. The agents of Mussolini, however, have hunted many Italians to death and into exile, not because they were idle, but because they were too active in opposing the Fascist dictatorship.

Now Mussolini makes a bid for world friendship by giving out an interview on the subject of Italy’s good intentions internationally. He has no desire nor design for war. He believes in the balance of power in Europe, and especially in Italy, where the balance is in his own favor. He wants to be friends with all of Europe, and with his own party, but not with the rest of Italy. A forceful figure, say many who admire the man on horseback. It is nothing remarkable to see a forceful tyrant. There have been many forceful tyrants, persecutors and bigots. Those who are trampled may be pardoned if they have less admiration for the ruthless equestrian who rides them down.

Most people think of Japan as a firmly ruled, solid, quiescent empire which is not bothered with the problems of new thought and radicalism and subversive ideas that challenge the old order. Democracy in Japan is nothing to brag about, and toleration there is a good deal behind time in the count of progress, but nevertheless the spirit of free thought and inquiry is working in that country. There is quite a lively and widespread movement among the young students, who are attracted by Western notions of liberalism and rationalism. They display an eagerness to assimilate all sorts of ideas which the emperor and his councillors and the upholders of sacred Japanese traditions would not approve. Although the police break up their meetings, and they are followed everywhere by spies, and it is considered quite disgraceful and even more seriously suspect to entertain these new ideas, this influence of modernism persists in the ancient yellow empire. When young fellows are so filled with intellectual curiosity, it is hard to stop them.

Simply put it on the ground of curiosity. That is the greatest force in the world. It beats all what chances people will take, how many obstacles they will gaily overlap, in order to find out something. They are just itching to learn. A submissive people is an incurious people. So long as people don’t suspect anything different from what they have been taught or what their fathers and forefathers believed, all is peaceful and stupid; and so long as people don’t care about ideas, there will be no general movement of thought to disturb the existing order. But once let the people become inquisitive—let them begin to wonder what is behind that closed door—let them begin to stop, look, listen and talk, and then watch the barriers go down.

Curiosity is the simple—oh, very simple—trouble in Japan. A great wave of curiosity has struck the country. There is heard that great revolutionary cry, “I want to know.” No other revolutionary slogan, no
motto of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, no cry of Down with the Aristocrats can equal in importance and sound, far-reaching menace the simple cry, "I want to know."...

A "DEFINITION" OF SPIRIT

SPIRIT can be defined, says D. Diephuis (1215 Sunset Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri), who adds that Joseph McCabe was not fair when in his book on The Myth of Immortality (Little Blue Book No. 1059), he declared that he had failed to get from anyone a really coherent definition of spirit. Whether a definition is coherent depends, of course, upon whether it is genuinely a definition. One can imagine a coherent expression of opinion or of a theory which is not, after all, defining in its nature. This is what Mr. Diephuis offers—a statement that is clearly written without being clear and satisfactory as a definition.

He repeats the old Swedenborgian theory that the material world is simply the counterpart, external form or outer covering of the spiritual world; that the former is merely a dead appearance, while the latter is a living reality. It is an odd theory, and yet one sees how obviously it would be hit upon by a man seeking to define spirit to himself, it being only necessary to duplicate your material world as spirit instead of matter. Or as there is outside and inside, so there is matter and spirit. It is like a game of pinochle, all the cards being doubled, one of each kind being unseen yet the real card—if you get the meaning, which you probably do without seeing much meaning in it. For example, as Mr. Diephuis informs us:

Man as a spiritual being is a complete man, the highest organized form known. He has spiritual eyes, ears, hands, feet, heart, lungs and all organs as in the material world. This is the real living man, the material form in which he dwells for a time is dead as such, and only lives from the spiritual prototype within. It is somewhat like a gloved hand. Looked at from the outside and by the inexperienced eye, the glove seems to live and move. But we know it does not; withdraw the hand from the glove and we see the glove is, and always was, lifeless. So the human body is per se dead, and as soon as the spirit withdraws—as at the termination of life in the material world—the body at once is seen to be dead—and although at first no organic change takes place, it very soon decays and returns to the elements from which it was taken, never to be used again by the spirit who left it. That spirit continues to live without interruption, and enters consciously upon its higher existence. It now lives consciously in the spiritual world. And, by the way, I only say "it" for brevity, because the human being does not become sexless when it steps out of its "house of clay." Sex is primarily not a material thing.

That spiritual world is in very many respects similar to the material world, with the one great exception that it is made up of spiritual forms, spiritual earths, mountains, plants, rivers, seas, fields, cities, etc. That world is not somewhere far off in space, it is here, no one has to travel anywhere to enter it. Just like a blind man, who is made to see through an operation, enters into a world of light without as much as getting up from the operation table, so man enters into the spiritual world without moving. In fact, he was in that world all the time, but for reasons which have nothing to do with the present argument, his spiritual faculties were closed or nearly so, they were covered, veiled, obscured.

This is, in very rough outline, the conception of spirit I have read with deep interest, and which I offer as at least coherent.
This idea of one substance under various aspects, according to its distance from the source, is, I believe, not wholly rejected by even materialists. We can see a faint picture of it in water vapor which, by diminishing heat, becomes water and by continued withdrawal of heat becomes ice. The tendency of chemists and other scientists to look upon all matter as the same substance, differing only in the arrangement of atoms and these again differing only as to their arrangement of electrons, etc., seems to be a step in that direction.

Coherent? Yes, but to what end? In "defining" spirit, as he seems to think he somehow does, Mr. Diephuis violates all meaning and actual sense. Note, for instance, how he uses illustrations from reality to give point to his unreal form of words. What have vapor and water and ice to do with "spiritual eyes, ears, hands, feet, lungs"? The fact that material things, acted upon by material conditions, change their material forms bears no relation, that a reasonable man can see, to this talk of immaterial replicas and spirit forms. Such alleged definitions of spirit, forced to rely upon real words and images, cannot be made without a constant contradiction in terms.

There is, says Mr. Diephuis, an original indefinable substance, which is not, however, a substance. "This substance," we are told, "in its source, or at its fountain head, is not detectable by any of our bodily senses, it cannot be seen, heard, felt, smelled or tasted. It radiates from a center, and, as it extends throughout the universe, it changes in aspect until it finally becomes Matter. It loses its vigor, life or whatever you want to call it and becomes, so to speak, dead. At that stage it can be recognized by the bodily senses."

Can a man write in this way as if he were reporting facts? Mr. Diephuis refers to this something which is nothing, which is a substance yet not a substance, which is beyond perception and definition by the only senses we have, and he calmly tells us that it "radiates from a center" and also that it "extends throughout the universe" and finally that it "changes in aspect."

When things are dead, only then can we perceive them. Life—real life—is hidden from our gaze. When a man is dead, we discover that what we thought was he never really lived. And, to enforce the argument, it is suggested that one might mistake a glove for a real living hand.

But we must protest that the difference between gloves and hands is pretty well known; one can compare them, become familiar with their differences, and see that both are real—but who can compare the "spiritual hand" with the material hand? Mr. Diephuis has not defined spirit. He has only affirmed that there is spirit, but he has not told us what spirit is. He has said that there is a "spiritual hand" like the physical hand in the glove, only not like it—not quite—and he neglects to explain to us what it is quite like.

Mr. Diephuis, with all his detail ("spiritual eyes, ears, hands, feet, heart, lungs"), has given us no more in the way of definition than if he had lumped it, saying that there is a spiritual world and a material world, or that, simply, there is spirit and matter. He has not really gone a step beyond anyone who has ever talked about spirit without letting us know what he was talking about. What is spirit? This is still too be defined, after Mr. Diephuis has shown us that he can indeed write in a coherent style about something (nothing) which he is powerless to define.
"GOD’S CATTLE," OR, THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

I HAVE read many statements of a sentimental nature, saying in what manner men may be true Christians although they fall short of orthodoxy. Sometimes it is said that if one simply loves God and one’s fellow men, that is sufficient for salvation. Again, we are told that to be imbued with the spirit of Jesus will make one a Christian at heart and to all intents and purposes, even though one does not believe the Bible whole nor go to church regularly. And then there is the fellow who says, "If you just do right in this world, you will get along all right in the next world"—which is a good enough statement, except that the required performance is vague and the implied promise is very airy.

Now I read, most amusing of all, a definition of a simple kind of what is called "practical Christianity"—a pretty little piece called "God’s Cattle," written by one of those queer overwrought animal lovers whose chief business in life is to worry about the happiness, fate and ultimate destiny of dogs, cats, guinea pigs, cattle and other lower forms of life. If you want to be a true Christian, here is one way you can fulfill that ideal so vague and confused:

Away back in the book of Genesis I find that "God made the cattle"; a little farther on, "He remembered the cattle"; a little farther on, "He caused grass to grow for the cattle," and a little farther on, "The cattle on a thousand hills"; and it seems to me that if the cattle that died on the plains last winter—starved and frozen—were God’s cattle, somebody will be held accountable; and it seems to me that when we are trying to secure kinder treatment for God’s cattle, we are in His service—in a different form and degree—but as truly in His service as the minister who preaches the gospel, or the man or woman who goes missionary to the heathen. And I think that on the day of final account, when we shall stand before the bar of Infinite Justice, the Almighty will not forget the men who took care of his cattle, or the women who took care of His cattle.

The first question one asks is, Why doesn’t God take care of his own cattle? Why does he let them freeze and starve? Why does he make cattle so desirable, and possibly indispensable, as food for man so that man just naturally can’t help killing cattle and eating them? Why is the whole of life—throughout God’s animal creation, so to speak—a destructive, parasitic procedure whereby every form of life preys on some other form of life?

And what is to be said of God’s responsibility in forcing man through a struggle of evolution in which he could only survive by killing many animals and taming others to his own needs? Man, developing a better brain and better weapons, succeeded in establishing his supremacy on this planet. It is perhaps better, after all, that it is a human world and not a dog world or a cattle world. From the human point of view, it is better, certainly. And with it all, God has not made such a brilliant, benevolent job of looking after the welfare of his humans, so why should we expect him to be so thoughtful of his cattle?
THE EMPTY MEETIN' HOUSE AT THE CROSSROADS

MY CHRISTIAN readers may have reassured themselves with the reflection that, if the city people are running after false gods and losing interest in the church, still the good old country folks are keeping the path well beaten to the meetin' house at the crossroads. But alas! this is not true. There might have been some ground for thinking that, out of sheer boredom and with nothing else to do, farmers and their families would congregate regularly to hear some preacher exercise his lungs and work up an appetite for an old-fashioned ample country dinner.

The assumption of a life empty enough to fill the church is wrong in the country as in the city. The decline of religion in the more populous, civilized centers is due to the fact that the people have something more interesting to do than attend church; and this applies in like manner to the countryside. Automobiles, paved roads, radios have struck the inevitable blow of progress at religion and the church. A Congregational preacher of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, discusses in the Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman the subsistence of the old biblical fervor in a field where formerly it was at boiling point. Religion in the small towns and the country has been more entertaining than useful. This preacher, Dr. Frank M. Sheldon, says candidly:

The character of the religion in many of these churches is the militant kind. When unable to find another church with which to fight, they sometimes have a family row, which is even more exciting. A church in one town has divided into three because of the rows engaged in. In another church quarrel, people became so bitter that knives were drawn. When there are fighting factions within a church, the favorite hymn of each is, "The Fight Is On, O Christian Soldiers."

The type of religion has often been narrow, harsh, dogmatic, divisive, and of the "sky pilot" kind. The primary effort is to get people to heaven hereafter, with very little effort to build heaven into the local town or countryside. Religion hasn't had to do with good farming, wholesome recreation, happy social life, better education, better community life, co-operative living, and with helpful neighborliness. The Lord's prayer has been changed so it reads, "Thy will be done when we get to heaven, instead of here on earth." Thus we have often been content with hell on earth if we only get to heaven when we die.

Ministers are poorly paid. The term of service, in many cases, is short. There isn't time really to know the people and their problems, much less attempt a serious solution of these problems. Surveys as to actual conditions and needs are conspicuously absent. The minister often comes with a cut-and-dried program to impose upon the community.

The rural church hasn't made itself indispensable to the everyday life of the people; it hasn't dealt with their everyday problems. It has been too other-worldly to seize its opportunity. Thus, country people have increasingly gotten on without a church which has come to have so little practical value in daily life.

One can understand how dull country life must have been a few years ago, had it not been for such highly stimulating church battles; for the loud pulpit voices of preachers denouncing sin—and tickling the yokels' imaginations with descriptions of wild, fast, colorful sin in the big city; for the singing of the grand old, bloody, picturesque Christian hymns; for the revivals during which people were thrown into paroxysms
of conversion and everybody talked more than usual about the neighbors’ sins.

To be sure, a brand of religion “narrow, harsh, dogmatic, divisive” would peculiarly fill the needs of a life altogether too quiet and peaceful. A mild, polite religion—a soothing kind of bunk that merely deadens the mind to ideas—would not serve so well as the drama of dogma and damnation. And naturally—always this is true—as their interests broadened, as their life quickened in motion and took on aspects of variety, the country people lost a good deal of their zest for the old-time religion.

It never could have had a more important place in their life. “It has been too other-worldly,” says Dr. Sheldon, “to seize its opportunity.” But it never had any opportunity, for religion has nothing real or useful to offer; it has no function save that of turning men away from reality: “other-worldly,” indeed, is a term that is true of religion, of the church, everywhere. Even where religion has the least dogma, where it has most closely trimmed its sails to modern breezes, it is still “other-worldly.”

What practical significance can religion have in life? It does not teach men how to build; how to enjoy this world better; how to think better; it teaches them nothing of downright, tangible value. What has religion to offer people who are busy and prosperous and interested in life, who are materially well-situated and mentally supplied with real substance of thought and amusement for their minds to work on (instead of the empty stuff of religion), whose time is practically engaged with actual pursuits, diversions and reflections? No, all that religion can do is take men’s thoughts away from this world, a function which is most effective with those who find this world the least interesting, and in surroundings where the world’s work, play, knowledge and thought are the most dull and backward.

In the country, we know that better farming; a more developed social life, automobiles, paved roads, radios, all have come without the slightest aid from the church. And the cities also have been built, have flourished, have hummed with real activities—all outside of and independent of the church. The whole of this great modern civilization has been built absolutely by non-religious effort, as a secular enterprise, a progress of science and industry and culture; all this has been real work done by real men in a real world. And the church, a temple dedicated to unreality, has had no share in it. The church has built nothing; it has improved nothing; it has taught nothing.

Far from having had a useful part in making the modern world, the church has stood as an obstacle in the way; it has opposed progress and freedom; this civilization it has denounced as “worldly” and “materialistic.” Yet the church is worldly in a sense: it wants the world, which has so many more and better things claiming its attention, to support this useless institution.

They have not supported it well in small towns and the country districts, says Dr. Sheldon. “Ministers are poorly paid.” Even so, have they not been well paid—have they not been overpaid—in relation to their usefulness? Simply as showmen, they have been lucky to have drawn such good crowds for what is after all a poor, crude, ugly, silly show, a good deal less interesting than an Indian war dance.
HAS QUEEN MARIE LOST FAITH?

One doesn't expect consistency in people, but one cannot help noticing their inconsistency. When Queen Marie left the United States, she remarked that the outstanding impression she had was that of the lack of spirituality in this country: we had lost in the gigantic scene of material desires, achievement and organization of life, that sweetly simple spiritual sense which, in a poorer country like Rumania, is still strong and pure. And now it is reported that Queen Marie plans the building of a modern city, on the American plan, in Rumania: a city with electric lights, subways, elevators, perfect plumbing, and all the materialistic accessories of modern life: in a word, she is planning to imitate the things in American life that have, so we are told, destroyed our spirituality.

Her last judgment, we may agree, is better than her first. It is better to be comfortable in the light, smoothness and order of civilization than to be spiritual in a medieval environment; it is far better to be engaged in dealing with the real things of life than in chasing spooks and shadows and dwelling upon empty spiritual illusions that are a paltry compensation for a poor, uncultivated, oppressed life. There can be no criticism of Marie's choice of modernism: but does it not involve a loss of faith, a reversal of her former attitude when she praised the spiritual life?

It is true that the development of an interesting, rich, material life is the result of thinking more about this life and less about an imaginary other life; and that, while it is the result of more earthly interests, it also adds to the skeptical, materialistic tendency. The ideal age of faith—the age of spiritual things—is indeed a poverty-stricken, dark age: an age in which the known world is less satisfactory, and the terrors of the unknown are stronger. An age of machinery is unfavorable to religion, for the increase in knowledge deprives religion more and more of the superstitious force upon which it depends, spooky claims being less effective in an electrically lighted world; and the safer, more comfortable, more entertaining nature of life diminishes preoccupation with unrealities.

In building a modern American style city in Rumania, Queen Marie will be bringing a most irreligious influence to her people. But as they lose their old-fashioned religion and gain in modernism, they will find that they are better off in this world, whatever may be their portion in the next world. Faith may suffer, but the facts of life will receive a greater, a more profitable and a more pleasurable attention.

THE REASONABLENESS OF MR. COOLIDGE

President Coolidge's message to Congress was reasonable. This is not to say that it was a perfectly truthful message. Its fine words about prosperity and the wonderful condition of the country admit of many exceptions, but Mr. Coolidge was thinking of the rule (Republican rule, or the rule of Mr. Coolidge)
rather than the exceptions. His message was the kind that a man in normal command of his reason, with the reasonable object of supporting his own interests, and with the reasonable tendency to make out the best possible case for himself, would naturally write.

What, for example, could be more reasonable than Mr. Coolidge's request, advice or exhortation to "maintain present policies"? We understand just what he means. The point is that, in the President's opinion, his own party should be maintained in office; and this in turn, until further information is available, would seem to mean that President Coolidge should be maintained in office. Considering his position, and a viewpoint favorable to himself, what could Mr. Coolidge more reasonably say?

Suppose that he had written the opposite; had pointed out that there is a good deal of unemployment and poverty in the country; that his own or his party's policies have neither produced the country's prosperity nor relieved its poverty; that his administration has accomplished nothing, and that he has nothing better definitely to offer for the future; that no doubt his political opponents, the Democrats, could run the country more wisely, or that—to be more truthful and not say too much—they wouldn't do any worse.

Obviously, a message in that strain would have been regarded everywhere, by friend and foe, as a startling proof that the President had lost his mind. From both Republicans and Democrats the cry would go forth that the Republic would not be safe for twenty-four hours in the hands of a man so plainly unequal to the simplest ways of reasoning.

As it is, while the President may not be brilliant, there is no suspicion of his simple sanity. He is still conscious and with a normally working sense of personal identity. Also Republican and Democrat commentators on the President's message show that they are reasonable. It is a strong and true message, say the Republicans; it is a weak and false message, say the Democrats. A different opinion from either side would have been unreasonable.

THE CRAFTSMEN OF SCIENCE

E. OFTEN behold the strange phenomenon of a man with scientific pretensions upholding fallacies and dogmas whose worthlessness can be detected by even the simplest kind of good reasoning. Men with academic degrees (and we remember that Bryan had such degrees) and who are specially trained in some branch of scientific work come forward with opinions that are unscientific, irrational, unintelligent. This anomaly has struck most of us, and it particularly interests Floyd H. Lee (110 Pine Street, Wyandotte, Michigan), who writes:

I have long had a feeling of bewilderment about the attitude of a rather large number of men I have known myself of supposedly scientific attainments. It has struck me that many men of scientific training in this country are purely utilitarian with what scientific education they happened to be equipped and are using this equipment much in the same manner that a carpenter uses his tools, without any philosophic consideration whatever of religion or questions related to religion. Therefore, whenever some hidebound churchman pins one of our chemists, doctors
or engineers down with the question of whether or not he believes in God and immortality, the poor boob is really in no condition mentally to debate the point, and, like any ordinary navvy is easily intimidated into declaring his belief in most anything.

Men like these may be called the craftsmen of science. They are technically fitted to carry on certain scientific investigations or operations, in a limited field, and they do this in a workmanlike manner according to the rules laid down, generally in obedience to laws and methods discovered by far abler men. Outside of his particular field such a man—chemist, doctor or engineer—may be a very poor thinker. He not only is without ability to coordinate and interpret facts, but he does not even abide by the same principle of careful investigation, of consideration for facts first of all, which he employs in his professional or scientific work.

Now the most eminent and able work in science will not, when it comes to many of the problems of life, make of a man a great or even a good thinker. Scientists give us facts, and philosophers give us ideas. A combination of scientist and philosopher, like Huxley, is ideal. But there are many men who are skilled in the investigation and the arrangement of facts, who yet are not capable of free, rational and wit-illuminated thinking about life in general.

The specializing tendency is also an obstacle to broad intellectualty. One may be a first-rate chemist and have the most commonplace wrong ideas about political questions or literature or religion or human relations. A man can be greatly learned in anatomy and medicine and yet regard Coolidge as a great wise leader, and believe that remarriage after divorce is immoral, and think that we should have strict censorship of books and plays. A man can be a top-notch mathematician and yet believe in the Trinity and the resurrection of Jesus and that atheists will go to Hell.

It must be kept in mind, too, that many men whom we call scientists are really nothing more than appliers and adapters of scientific knowledge that has been searched out and brought together by other men. They are only trained workers—workers indeed with a high degree of skill, workers who have spent years in learning their professions—but, after all, they are not thinkers and are not culturally equipped for broad, rational, civilized views of life. Immensely important as science is, as much as we should respect facts and use them as a basis for all our thinking, it is still true that unless a general culture, an intelligent point of view and a capacity for thought, wit and realism are added, the specialist or the craftsman of science will not show to very good advantage in discussion aside from his specialty.

A man may indeed be engaged in some scientific calling and not be as good a thinker as a carpenter with a free, alert and generally busy mind. A garage mechanic is a scientist in his way—or a scientific craftsman—but that does not signify that his opinion about immortality deserves to be considered any more seriously than the opinion of the real estate salesman who drives a car but doesn’t know much about its mechanism nor how to repair it.

A perfect illustration of the theme of Mr. Lee’s letter was supplied a year or so ago, when a leading religious journal ran a series of articles
on the Bible, written by an eminent surgeon and professor, a man of the highest academic importance in the theory and practice of his profession. This man is more than a scientific craftsman; he is truly a scientist in his field. But in writing about the Bible, he cast aside all the principles and methods of science; he proved to be as unscientific as a Billy Sunday and as fatuous and gullible a thinker as the late W. J. Bryan; he upheld the Fundamentalist belief in the Bible from cover to cover, insisted that every word in the Bible is literally true, and declared that he accepted all the miracles as records of things which actually happened. What a prize for this religious paper! It advertised in the most flamboyant and pompous style that it had secured proof, authorization and the seal of approval for the whole bag of religious absurdities and lies from one of America's leading scientists. In fact, the articles might as well have been written by the most ignorant backwoods preacher, for all the intelligence and force of real thought that they possessed.

This emphasizes one of the most remarkable errors to which men commonly are prone, which is that they consider the source rather than the real nature and substance of ideas. A man with a scientific degree and calling utters an opinion, and some men give it more weight than it deserves of itself. A statement by President Collidge has a fictitious appearance of authority that comes from the office and does not belong to the idea, which is pretty certain to be the sorriest kind of platitude. When a prominent banker or preacher or millionaire or society leader or movie actress or railroad official speaks, he has a curious and respectful audience, much impressed by ideas that often are fit only to be expounded in a shoe shining parlor.

Ideas should be considered impersonally. They are good or poor ideas, regardless of who gives expression to them. No amount of alleged authority, no force of law nor prestige of eminence, no thunder from heaven can make an unsound, illogical idea a degree more sound and logical. Good thinking is no respecter of persons or traditions or dogmas or sentimental pleas. It is a respecter of facts, and of an intelligent interpretation of facts, and of the line of realism which is drawn at the point where facts end and speculations begin. The thinker will not go beyond the facts, nor will he go contrary to them; but he will know how to use them.

And no man, who pretends to think at all (there are some people who do not want to think and who cannot), should depend upon the thinking of anybody else. He should always think for himself. This does not mean that every man can be or need be an original thinker. He will necessarily refer to the thoughts of others; but he should make discriminating use of them, never accepting them on a mere say-so, but rejecting here and accepting there as his reason approves.

It is better not to think about a question at all, to pass it by entirely and leave it among the indifferent things, than to fill one's mind with bunk about it. In truth, all of us can say that there are fields of inquiry which we scarcely touch; in which we are not very interested or feel that we can make little headway; regarding which we freely and unblushingly confess our lack of knowledge and have only mild and tentative opinions
if any. Such ideas as we have, we want to be sound ones. We do not wish to fill our minds with a lot of worthless, excess baggage.

And now that I have discoursed with truth and sobriety on the importance of good, careful thinking, let us drop all work for a moment and think about the weather. We can at least be sure of our opinions on that subject!

A SHOCK TO COMPLACENCY

Who is not familiar with the type of person who thinks that everything is beautifully arranged in our world, in our social system and in our government and who is shocked by any slightest suggestion to the contrary? Such persons are always excitedly writhed with the critics of no matter what feature or idea of life, criticism being the chief of sins in their eyes.

One of these fellows, whose whole life is apparently based upon a complacent acceptance of Dr. Pangloss' fatuous philosophy that all's for the best, is Major-General Amos A. Fries, chief of the Army Chemical Warfare Service and commander of the American Legion for the District of Columbia. At any rate, that is the picture of the gentleman that we draw from press reports concerning his efforts to have discharged a Washington (D.C.) high school teacher, who so far forgot his status as a sovereign, independent, American citizen as to write a definition of Socialism for the Forum.

It was a challenging piece, small but a sort of bombshell, that this teacher wrote. It certainly blew up the patriot's temper and, if it did not shatter, it rocked his complacency. The offending definition, one of a number written in a contest, is as follows:

Socialism is a big question mark. It asks why, with all the wonderful productive machinery and improved methods of organization, the workers are still slaves. It asks why civilization is so cruel and ugly. It asks why little children still toil in the factories. It asks why those who create do not enjoy the advantages of what is created, why those who build automobiles walk, those who build Pullman ride in box cars, those who build palaces live in hovels. It asks: Is not the industrial civilization we have created a Frankenstein that has made itself our master?

Being a patriot, General Fries realized at once that he must leap to the defense of American institutions. Also, he must defend American principles. As the principle of free citizenship and therefore free opinion is recognized as one of the foremost of these American principles, the patriotic General hurried to its rescue by demanding that the school teacher be discharged from his job. He waved the flag and the imposing name of the American Legion, following the tactics of that well-known tribe which damns as unpatriotic the expression of any radical idea.

One can hardly pick up a newspaper without reading the demand of some public-spirited, patriotic, perfectly right-thinking citizen that something should be done to another citizen, presumably equal in rights, who has advocated an idea; perhaps the guilty fellow has condemned the Prohibition law, wherefore he is accused of trying to undermine the government and the Constitution; or he has opposed the injection of religion
into the schools, and is denounced as an enemy of society; or, as in the case of this Washington school teacher, he has been so bold as to criticize economic conditions which, so far as one may know, he had taken no solemn oath to defend.

Radicalism is the great bugaboo of American life. Sometimes it is called “extremism,” and yet the General appears as the only extremist in this episode. And he appears so ridiculously extreme, for after all that has been said and written about Socialism, and considering that the socialistic point of view is not quite a secret, that very brief paragraph in the Forum seems very innocent indeed and nothing to be furious or frightened about. Does the General think that the teacher is likely to start a revolution in the very shadow of the capitol? Or is he simply exasperated at the notion that any man, differing so radically from him, should enjoy a position which he, by his influence, might have taken away?

Anyway, the teacher still has his job, and I hope that he keeps it, and that the General loses a good deal of sleep over it.

“STAND AND DELIVER”

There is no private, propaganda, business organization that has such sheer unmitigated nerve—such an insulting arrogance in demanding aid, comfort and support—as the Church. Its attitude, in much of its popular literature, is that of “stand and deliver.” Curses in the old-fashioned Catholic style are not pronounced in the Protestant world, but the same spirit and intent is seen in certain “appeals” for money, in which the opinion is forcibly expressed that if one does not contribute to the Church one is a damned bad character. (The word “damned” is, be it understood, a good religious word: and those who write the kind of “appeals” to which I refer feel the word “damned” profanely and mean it theologically about those who won’t throw a dollar in the drum.)

When individuals or organizations go asking for money, it is usually considered that a polite request is apt to be more effective and, at any rate, appears with better grace. Not so the Church. It “appeals” for money in one breath and lets you know, in the next breath, what a mean contemptible sort of fellow you are if you don’t come across. It starts out by making the boldest claims for its importance, its service to mankind (and even to you and me), its absolute supreme necessity in the social scheme; then it declares that anyone with the least sense and honesty must admit these claims; and finally it insists that any man with a bit of decency in his makeup, who wants to retain his self-respect, and who is not prepared to be thoroughly ashamed of himself so that he will want to run away and hide his face, will pay the Church in proof of his manhood.

It is a sort of moral blackmail. Give to the Church, or the Church will give you hell. Pay up, or you are hereby branded in advance as a creature of the basest ingratitude, who wants the Church to serve him for nothing.
This kind of “appeal,” which seeks to force its way quite in the “Christian spirit” by a sort of moral intimidation and insult, is very clearly exemplified in a leaflet, which consists of an article reprinted from Church Business. A reader sends me a copy of this leaflet, without any hint that he has been driven by it into a voluntary exile full of shame and self-loathing. I infer that he holds his head as high as ever and looks the whole world in the face as straight as the Village Blacksmith ever did, for he owes not any man of God nor any Church. And naturally he does not feel more inclined to part with his money in favor of something he doesn’t believe in, when he has been told with a swaggering air that he is all kinds of a mean citizen if he refuses the demand. Under the heading, “Do You Admit?” the following is hurled as a high and mighty challenge at the readers:

Do you admit that the Christian Church has been an influence for good in the world?
Do you admit that the Christian influence has been opposed to the aggression of evil; that the Church, even as the Police and the Penitentiary, has served as a potent restraint upon the evil impulses and propensities of mankind?
Do you admit that Society would be worse, rather than better off, but for the unselfish ministrations of the Church?
Do you admit that business and government are conducted on a higher and juster plane by reason of the Church’s influence; that men and women are more ambitious to excel in virtue, to live purer and nobler lives than they would live were there no Church to give comfort and inspiration?
Do you admit that your rights are respected more in a land of Christian churches than they would be in a land without them?
Do you admit that your own and your loved ones’ lives and persons and property and liberties are held the more secure and inviolate because of the influence of the Christian Church?
Do you admit that it is the duty of Society and of the individuals who constitute it to nourish and support the institutions that conserve and promote man’s social well-being?
Do you admit that persistently to accept benefits is to put oneself under obligation to the benefactor?
Do you admit that persistently to accept all and to give as little as may be in return, is selfish and ignoble?
Do you admit that selfishness is distinctively anti-Christian in spirit?
Do you admit that wilfully to repudiate one’s obligations is unworthily selfish; even dishonest?
Do you admit that ingratitude is base?

But don’t stop at this point and try to answer these questions according to your own reason and conscience. You have not morally that privilege, and if you answer any of these questions in the negative, such an attitude will not save you. “Of course you admit it”—the questions, each and every one, are immediately answered for you by this Christian leaflet. Sit still, and do not attempt to deny or argue, while you are told that “directly or indirectly the Church protects you, promotes your interests, secures your rights, stands between you and injustice and violence and knavery as admitted social politics; and that it strengthens and deepens the spiritual life of all who seek its inspiration.”

It is only regarding the last point that your right is admitted to plead that you are not a party to the conduct; and even so, if you offer in excuse the fact that you do not seek the “inspiration” of the Church, and are therefore not indebted on that score, you will perhaps be told in a stern tone of voice that it is your own fault. There stands the Church;
it is your Church, serving you, all you sinners and skeptics: and if you refuse in your blindness or obstinacy to use it, that doesn’t wipe out your debt to it.

The issue is put before you clearly and without a mincing of words: Be a supporter of the Church, or be an ingrate. Help pay the preacher’s salary, or consider yourself guilty of “base ingratitude.” This “appeal” tells you—and its meaning is most arrogantly plain and insistent—“that ingratitude is base, and that willfully to repudiate one’s obligations is unworthily selfish, even dishonest.”

What! Will you stand up, dead to all decency, and assert that the long record of Christian intolerance, the propaganda of lies by the Church, the influence of the Church for obscurantism, the threats by which the Church has terrified people, the sinister forces of authority and superstition by which the Church has kept people in ignorance—will you dare to say that this record of the Church is big enough and black enough to have made it more an influence for evil than for good in the world? You may rear your evidence mountain-high, and you may cite the malign activity of the Church in every age of history, but that will not make it any better for you, still are you a base ingrate.

If you are perfectly willing to have the Church placed on a moral level with the police and the penitentiary, but if you point out that “the evil impulses and propensities of mankind” have never yielded perceptibly to the pretended influence of the Church—if you observe that human behavior is not improved, safeguarded or rightly directed by the maintenance of a lot of foolish ceremonies and superstitious beliefs—and if you argue, further, that certain of the worst of “the evil impulses and propensities of mankind” (namely, intolerance and credulity, producing bitter strife and the fear if not hatred of honest thought) have been cultivated by the Church—if you believe and declare this, you are not only ungrateful, but you are contumaciously ungrateful, dishonest and willful in repudiating what is dogmatically true and what is decidedly, dogmatically due from you to the Church.

And do not—oh, never dare—laugh at the statement that “selfishness is distinctively anti-Christian in spirit.” True, this is a question, but there is only one answer you are supposed to give. Well, do not make the mistake of giving the correct answer—do not make unkindly true remarks about the selfishness of Christians, which at the very least they exhibit in common with other people—or you will know or should know what mean things fitly describe your character.

Indeed, my friends, your obligation is even more extremely and uncompromisingly defined than in the questions you have already seen. Thus, “Are you, as the Lord hath prospered you in health, in energy, in ability, in intelligence and means, honoring your debt to the Church for all it has done and is doing for you—” So if you have “health, energy, ability, intelligence and means” you are guilty of ingratitude and of beating a just debt if you do not promptly go this minute and hand the preachers some of your hard-earned money.

There are other things you ought to do: encourage the preachers, attend church services, help to extend the Church’s influence, discourage “ungenerous and disparaging criticism,” which is to say, any criticism that does not admit in the first place that the Church is right. All these
things you are in duty bound to remember and to perform, but first and last the matter of paying is chiefly important. "If you are honest with yourself"—so it is put up to you, squarely, right between the eyes—"if your self-respect, in which you properly take such pride, is not to be a pitiable self-deception; if you are not to stand self-condemned by your own admissions, you will do, actually do these things—and scorn to find excuses for your failure to do them."

And mark this, for it is the crux of the matter: "The Church does not ask gifts of you. It does ask that you honor your obligation, that you pay your admitted debt for service rendered."

Stand and deliver! And don't ask for your money back if you are not satisfied.

ARE KNICKERBOCKERS IMMORAL?

HAVING got beyond surprise at anything the puritanical mind may reveal in its idiotic obsession with sex, it seems quite natural to me that a school teacher in Jeffersonville, Indiana, should refuse to let a nine-year-old girl come to school wearing knickerbockers and that the local school board should uphold the teacher, decreeing, as it is reported in the press, that "a small girl wearing knickerbockers commits an act of immorality." It is only natural, I make haste to explain, in minds of a very stupid and low order. It is natural only to those who are so very pure that they suspect every sight, sound and suggestion of having an evil tendency. It is natural only to the kind of mind that is so filled with prurient thoughts of sex, and that has been cultivated in such a whispering shameful atmosphere of puritanism, that it has lost all sense of proportion and is incapable of a simple, sane, commonly clear view of life.

There was a cartoon once drawn by Art Young which is hardly an exaggeration of this type of mind. In satire of the Comstockian and similar movements for superperfect and preternatural "purity," Young drew a picture of a policeman dragging a woman by the hair into the presence of a judge. The charge was simple and short: "Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!" Such a charge could not be more ridiculous than to accuse a nine-year-old girl of immorality for wearing knickerbockers.

Those Indiana puritans who have made a silly issue out of the manner of dressing of a mere child consider themselves, no doubt, as standing for the last word in morality; yet the worst rake would see and think no evil where these holier-than-thou-art yokels were so indecently quick to imagine it, or rather, let us say, to see the reflection of what was in their own minds.

It may seem strange that the puritans, who are so worried about immorality in appearance or thought, are themselves most active, and amazingly resourceful and fanciful, in suggesting it; they are more responsible than anyone else for an indecent, unnatural and absurd dwelling on the thought of sex; let the puritans disappear or keep quiet, and the world would make a great jump ahead in morality. Not that I am
so concerned about morality—unless it be the morality of those who chatter so much about morality and who fear that a little girl in knickers might corrupt an Indiana town, in which of course the yokelry, true to its well-known high-mindedness, has never a thought of sex.

PARADES

THERE are different kinds of parades. In The Big Parade, for instance—that tremendous and truthful war picture—there is shown the parade of those who thronged hysterically behind the bands and the flags in celebration of America’s declaration of war against Germany. Many of those first paraders succeeded in restraining their enthusiasm so that they were not included in the later big parade of the American soldiers in France, marching to the front with tense ominous faces. Then there was the terrifying parade, the actual advance upon the hidden death-dealing guns of the enemy. There was the parade of the ambulances carrying the wounded, the torn and mutilated, and the dying from the front. There was the parade of the French women, children and old men from their ravaged villages. Finally there was the parade of the cripples back home; but that parade has never really been organized as it should be—every year a great parade of the maimed, the halt and the blind, to remind the people of the horrors of war, of all that war inevitably means, being the false glory and the shouting. Perhaps the most sinister of all parades are those which now are so frequent and familiar, and which occur at least once a year on Armistice Day, when the World War veterans in all their pride and hilarity celebrate the old tradition—not, alas, killed by the latest and greatest of the catastrophes—of the glory and adventure and the noble aims of war.

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF JUDGE GARY

UNSUSPECTED by the country at large, Judge Elbert H. Gary has been leading a double life. He is well known as the head of the United States Steel Corporation, a captain of industry and a high authority on economics—that is, from the point of view of wealth and power. At the same time Judge Gary has, in a manner of speaking, been something else. Says an item in the Pathfinder: “He still runs a farm of 110 acres on Long Island, raising fine crops of grain, hay and general garden produce. He also raises eggs and chickens and makes all his own butter and cheese. He is especially proud of his herd of pure-bred Guernseys.” We would give anything for a picture of Judge Gary in the act of hoeing potatoes, pitching hay, milking or churning. Considering the great ability of the Judge, he is perhaps the best butter maker on Long Island, and we may imagine folks coming a long way to get some of the Judge’s famous butter, made by his own hands. (The term “hands” is used anatomically, and maybe inaccurately.) Being a farmer and so close to the soil, Judge Gary is a
man of practical views. He says that the farmer can only succeed by “hard work and economy.” It is hard work and economy that makes the Judge’s farm pay; and so perfectly reduced to a system is his rule of hard work and economy that, in this manner, he could cultivate 110,000 acres as easily as not. One might almost describe Judge Gary as a typical farmer, for we read that he “gets up every morning at 6 o’clock, reads three newspapers and then goes to his office, where he attends to the general business of the greatest steel corporation in the world.”

IN PRAISE OF THE BEAUTIFUL

ET me begin, humbly enough, by stating the obvious: The beautiful things in this world appeal to refined sensibilities—and to the discriminating intellect no less. You would think this would be obvious to anyone with good eyesight and a mind in which every spring of thought, bright and lubricated, works beautifully, smoothly in the right place. Yet, surprisingly, I have received some objections to this view of the desirability of beauty, and objections, too, on a score that I least expected—on the score of my promise to make the Haldeman-Julius Quarterly a beautiful magazine. Certain readers who have promptly and intelligently subscribed for the Quarterly have told me that I have laid too much stress upon the beauty of this magazine, which, by the bye, is to be devoted to the encouragement of all intelligent and civilized and beautiful things in American life. But we have a ready defense of beauty—and by whom? By a woman! Not strange, but utterly fitting! It is M. Inez McCurdy (808 Commonwealth Bldg., Pittsburgh, Pa.)—a Quarterly subscriber—who writes:

Because I note your reference to readers who protest that too much fuss is going on over the BEAUTY of the new magazine, I am sending in the plainest way I can an expression of my appreciation of your intention to make the Quarterly a thing good to look at.

The emotions are important enough to receive the consideration you accord them, and not all of your readers are unaroused by the sight of beautiful things. Fine skies, perfect roses, gorgeous draperies, graceful movements, handsome workmanship, curves, colors, figures—everything beautiful in the world—give us all you can of them all!...

I am thanking you for believing that we have not all seeded to intellect entirely, but have some aesthetic buds too.

Miss McCurdy (she may be Mrs.) says some other nice things about me that, on second thought, I will quote. Her praise is beautiful, so let us have more beauty. She says my “sense of fitness and taste” are to be seen in the Monthly, and, while she is rather nervously in fear that the Quarterly cannot be so good for three little dollars, still she is full of confidence because I “give more than promised at every turn.” That is beautiful, because it is true.

“Beauty is truth, truth is beauty,” says Keats. They do not conflict. They splendidly and profusely agree. Beauty is truthful because it makes a valid, sound, enriching appeal to our senses—and finely stimulates our thinking. Truth is beautiful because it is so harmonious, once you see things in their true relation. Thought itself is a beautiful thing,
with a sort of beauty like architecture, or the beauty of dancing motion, or the beauty of the perfect physical motions of wrestlers and boxers.

But I shall be fair to the few critics of my estheticism, and say that I believe that they do not object to beauty itself. They are perhaps a little afraid that in attending to the beauty of the *Quarterly*, I shall tend to neglect making it full, thoughtful and interesting. Never fear, good friends. The content of a thing always takes first place with me. Not by any chance will the beautiful appearance of the *Quarterly* detract from the vital, interesting nature of its contents. And, after all, the greater part of this job of making the *Quarterly* beautiful has to be done only once, and then it's done. And, thanks to old Pan, it's already done. A beautiful format and arrangement has already been thoroughly worked out. And what goes into the *Quarterly* will constantly be my job to think about. In the *Quarterly* we shall have beauty and truth—a combination of esthetic and intellectual delights. Anyone who is not satisfied with that is "fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils."

NEGRO "SERVANTS," EDUCATE YOURSELVES—FOR WHAT?

PASSING editorial judgment on a letter for Marcet that comes to my desk, I decide that it requires only a slight comment that I can give as easily as I can carry the letter to her. This letter is from Wm. J. Walton (Lubbock, Tex.) and, as the address would indicate, it reflects very typically the Southern viewpoint. Mr. Walton is courteous enough, even though he informs Marcet that, as she has demeaned herself to associate with Negroes, she would not be considered fit to associate with decent white people in the Southland. I can assure our friend that Marcet's associations are full and rich and varied and quite to her satisfaction. But let me get at once to the point that interests me in Mr. Walton's letter. He writes:

Education is doing much for the Negro and is destined to be his salvation. All well-informed people of both races neither look for nor desire "social equality" that our Northern friends wish—for us! We do, of course, feel superior to the Negro in many ways. And, so long as natural kindness helps us "to treat the Negro as a loyal, faithful servant should be treated, we feel that we are doing well. You do not invite your servants to help you entertain your guests—that is, not on terms of equality. Neither do we.

Think of the smug unconscious humor of it! Education will help the Negro. Help him to be what? To be a "loyal, faithful servant"! People who would keep the Negro in an inferior place are always saying that education is the true way for him to become superior. The contradiction is manifest, and there is even a suggestion, shall we say, of a flavor of hypocrisy about it. Of course, the Negro wants education, and he is getting it, and he is using it as anyone naturally does use education—to emancipate himself from the stupid, cruel restrictions that have held him down, to raise himself to the free, self-respecting status of a MAN, where his education will mean something and build a significant life for him.

Mr. Walton's reference to servants at once begs the issue and points
the moral. One may recognize servants as servants without lumping together a whole race as nothing better than servants. We do not regard all white people as servants, simply on account of their color. Why then should we persist in setting down all colored people as servants? And why indeed should servants, white or colored, not be looked upon as human beings instead of a different breed of animals? And, again, a servant who could intelligently help entertain guests would do so as an equal. How else?

Mr. Walton says the Southern viewpoint is shared by "educated Negroes down here who are really acquainted with the situation." I assume that any Negro who does not share that viewpoint is regarded by Mr. Walton as either not educated or not "really acquainted with the situation." It is not remarkable that many Negroes living in the South are affected by the dominant viewpoint of that white man's country which is chiefly inhabited by colored people. The tide of discontent is rising, however.

I almost overlooked one remark of Mr. Walton's. He speaks of Marce's report of the Sweet case in Detroit as "meddling." It is "meddling" to report fairly a case involving human rights and life. And a case, too, the Negro side of which received all too little fair and sympathetic attention from the press of the country. If one who exposes justice is a "meddler," what term should we apply to the lawless mob element that perpetrated the injustice?

ANOTHER MODERN MIRACLE

A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD girl evangelist, with the euphonious name of Uldine Mabel Utley, has been giving the eastern papers something to talk about. Bertram L. Preston (12 Rhodes Ave., Collingdale, Pa.), who sends me a clipping about little Uldine, wonders whether such items "show the editors to be craven of superstition or else superb humorists." Well, undoubtedly they do see the joke; but what they are after, first and last, is a story that will tickle the curiosity if not the credulity of the yokels along the hedgerows and the boobs along the avenues. Little Uldine serves all the better as news in that her name is linked with two notorious national characters—the thundering Rev. John Stratton of New York City and the thrilling Aimee Semple McPherson of Los Angeles.

Rev. Stratton says, privately and for publication, that little Uldine has "the power of healing" and proves it, so to speak, by saying further that the gal prayed Mrs. Stratton's pleurisy up the chimney and far away.

Far more interesting than this only mildly amusing assertion is the account of the miracle, no less, that led little Uldine to conversion at the hands of the sainted Aimee. The story, which little Uldine is said to have related "in a tone of awe"—well, I guess, naturally—is as follows:

She had a wicked design to enter the movies. She was then nine years of age. She was to rehearse in an amateur play at a certain hall, and she went with her grandfather to this dark rendezvous of iniquity. And then, as she tells it—
There were men and women going in and out of that door all the time, but neither grandpa nor I could open it for me to go in and rehearse. We tried with all our strength, but evidently the Lord had locked the door against me.

Grandpa and I stood and looked at each other in great understanding of this miracle, gratified that He should care about my future. Grandpa took me right over to the Tabernacle, where Mrs. McPherson, the evangelist, who recently disappeared and just came back, was preaching. I sat at the back, and even though I was only nine, I knew that my life had been all wrong before. I ran down the long aisle—it seemed three blocks long—and flung myself down with the others.

Although she was only nine years of age, little Uldine remarkably realized that her life "had been all wrong before." What depths of sin she had been guilty of at this age, she fails, perhaps out of modesty, to tell; and maybe she was only generally and by default among the damned. It was timely and clever of the Lord to stop her right on the threshold of the final irrevocable plunge into hell. He might have gone about it in another way, but that way seems as good as any, and why be too captious and fussy about methods? The end, as we have been told, justifies the means.

It doesn't seem to me that little Uldine and her grandpa were very clever, at any rate; if they had been, they could have watched for the exact moment when another (in whom we suppose the Lord was not especially interested) opened the door, and then they could have quickly squeezed in.

We are, of course, on treacherous ground when discussing such things. For all we know, the door may not actually have opened to let in the others; they may just have faded in. The others, indeed, may have been an illusion the more intensely to impress little Uldine and grandpa. Naturally, God knows the value of contrast. And why not make a long story short and suggest that there may not have been any door? Doors are not needed for miracles, even as miracles make nothing of doors. This miracle tale is just as good with or without the door. "Tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'twill serve" for the pop-eyed boobery.

ONE DAY

Did you ever reflect how in a single day a man can touch life at many, at most of the common, points? They are the familiar things which we take for granted. We are so used to them, we so frequently run into them between the succeeding sunrises and sunsets of our life. In a day, we can experience the delights, the denials and the doubts of love; and wake up to the next day with perhaps a slightly different viewpoint of love, but still not understand it. We can hate in a day; get out an old hate and look at it, and fondle it, and cultivate a few brand-new animosities. We are bothered or diverted, in a day, with the same old trifles that go to make up the sum of all our days; and between sums we can do a lot of reflecting about the greater problems of life, stimulatingly and whimsically but to little purpose. We can feel a lot of old-acquaintance pains, and a number of agreeable thrills—all in a day. We are brought face to face, daily, in a variety of relations with
our fellows—social, business, political, mental, not to say the intimately personal relations of those who live close together. We work, scheme, fight, plan, change our minds, learn to know ourselves better and to doubt ourselves more, all in a day. In short, every day is a sort of life in miniature.

WE ARE CROWDED

NOW comes Prof. Edward A. Ross, the well known sociologist, with the cheerful reminder that this is an increasingly crowded world we live in, and that the especial and terrifying fecundity of the yellow race in the Far East is a menace that the western world would do well to mark. In a century or two, unless we take measures of thoughtful and thorough exclusion, we shall find ourselves overrun by the surplus human production of the Orient. We shall simply be pushed off our own front porches, out into the back yards and eventually into the alleys. We may have to live in trees. The underground world, imagined by H. G. Wells in The Time Machine, may actually be realized in the not very remote future.

Now the Chinese may be better fitted to carry on the great destiny of the world and the human race than are we. Such may be the scheme—in optimistic language, “the one increasing purpose”—of whatever gods there be at the back of this funny, foolish, tragic riddle of life. It seems such a riddle indeed, a thing of staggering purposelessness and blindness, when one reflects upon such a prediction as that by Professor Ross. For if the human race is doomed to such dire straits by the very law of Nature that leads it persistently to propagate, what is the optimist or the teleological cheer leader, bawling of some grand far-off purpose, to answer in the face of such a possibility? What is the certainty of the triumph and the supreme eventual justification of life, when men are going to be put in such a hell of a dilemma, a disastrous jam, by the sheer stupidity of numbers? It is bad enough to think that human beings, even with enough room to live in properly, are not able to get along intelligently with each other. What will happen when even the thinker cannot avoid a murderous impulse toward the crowd that is continually stepping on his toes?

I haven’t a really cheerful or encouraging thought in my head about this situation. Assuming that Professor Ross is correct, what can conceivably be done about it? Is it thinkable that such trivial contrivances as immigration laws can prevent such a tide of humanity from sweeping over us? We would eventually have to fight the yellow brethren and solve the problem by killing each other off in sufficient numbers to allow the rest to draw a full breath. And here we may see an error in Professor Ross’s gloomy prophecy: great wars and pestilences, individual murder and suicide and self-indulgence too ruinous will, as in the past, undoubtedly do a lot of exterminating. This, to be sure, is but exchanging one gloomy prophecy, one pointless view of life, for another. There is no hope in it for a lofty, perfect optimism.
TRICKS OF "THE RADIO MIND"

A SO-CALLED healer in Terre Haute, Indiana (who, apparently, we may fairly call a faith-healer), combines two kinds of quackery: chiropractic and telepathy. As a chiropractor, he is commonplace enough; what interests me is his employment of what he calls "the Radio Mind" to which, he would have us believe, he owes his unique and esoteric success. The general idea seems to be very simple. This fellow (Mr. B. F. Stackhouse) is the possessor of such a powerful mind (he tells us) that he can impress his own thoughts at will upon prospective patients. A man who walks into Stackhouse's office is like the fly that walks into the spider's parlor—he is caught and can't help himself. For this doc fixes him with his glittering eye, turns on his mental engine to its full horse power, and forces this thought constructively, as it were, upon the mind of his victim: I am going to try chiropractic.

That is the first wallop which Stackhouse gives to the subconscious mind of his caller. Then as the victim is leaving, not quite ready yet to submit himself to his inevitable fate, the doc concentrates on him again most eloquently as follows: Dr. Stackhouse sure knows his business. This thought, if put across by means of hard thinking, will just about make the patient a helpless subject; and it will not be amiss to add forcibly with the whole current of telepathic emphasis turned on: Dr. Stackhouse will certainly cure me.

But, mind you, this doc is a thorough business man. It would be strange if, having such a wonderful power as he claims to have, he didn't use it obviously to his full financial advantage. That is to say, obviously, if the doc can by telepathy demonstrate a caller into a mentally controlled and helpless patient, why, he can no less easily force him into a certain length of treatment with certain payments. The doc would not be foolish enough to let a man off with one treatment when he could make him take more. We are informed that he uses a card system, with six-dollar and thirty-dollar cards. Now do you think he is going to let a man, once fairly in his power, wriggle out of it with a six-dollar card? Well, you don't know Stackhouse. What's the "Radio Mind" for, anyway? He shoots this idea at the victim: Well, it is less expensive to use the thirty-dollar card. He boasts that this shot almost half the time hits the vital spot and brings down his man. "I did it," he says, "to the extent that forty-five percent of all my patients used thirty-dollar cards."

In this style, we are asked to believe, Stackhouse has brought a considerable number of the people of Terre Haute into his power. His mind is loaded with all kinds of thoughts, for every purpose that may arise in his business. He will get folks going or coming. He will get them awake or asleep. He will get them personally or in the mass. Quite the most interesting revelation of Stackhouse's marvelous powers of bunkery and quackery is the way that he casts his thought spell over a whole district of the city at once. He described this remarkable method as follows: "Upon retiring at night thoroughly relax, then concentrate upon a certain section of the city and visualize, fixing the mental picture
firmly in your mind and hold this thought upon that section for a few moments: Dr. Stackhouse, the chiropractor, will cure my disease. Then shift to another section, dividing the town in four sections." This of course beats any kind of advertising and it would be hard to call it absolutely a violation of professional ethics.

We may suppose, indeed, that a good deal depends upon the size of the town. In a small town like Girard, I should assume that a chiropractor (having, let us say, "the Radio Mind" in equal force and control with Stackhouse) could think the whole community into his power at one shot; and, on the other hand, in a city as large as Chicago, he would probably have to take many more than four shots and he might even have to hire an assistant thinker.

Great is the power of thought; and it is strange that the really great thinkers of mankind, men who are eminent for their mental powers, have never used such methods, but have left them to the small fry, the unheard-of thinkers like Stackhouse. Curiously enough, the greatest thinkers have used the influence of thought in quite a different way, and, no less curiously, they have impressed not the weakest but the strongest minds.

A SLAVE OF TRIFLES

OT all of man's boasted progress, his intelligence and ingenuity, have been able to free him from slavery to trifles. Think of what petty trouble a man has to struggle through each and every morning of the world just to get down to the breakfast table! He has to put on his clothes; and he can't array himself with one graceful economical gesture; he must make a dozen different motions to accomplish the intricate feat. He then must wash his face and hands, and probably, in spite of long experience, get soap in his eyes. He combs his hair, and is perhaps bothered with his hair falling out, or is reminded uncomfortably that it is time he should go to the barber's again. The task of shaving follows—which includes sharpening his razor, lathering his face, and about six different positions to which he must successively adjust his razor, and the application of a soothing lotion at the end; and, after all this, he must clean his razor and put it away. Next he brushes his teeth, for when he smiles or swears or tells a smutty story he wants his teeth to present a decent appearance. At last he goes to breakfast, and while he may have a very good appetite, it is not unlikely if all this nervous excitement and effort interfere with his digestion.

BROADWAY IMITATES MAIN STREET

T HAS always been supposed, and in truth we have generally observed, that the small towns are prone to follow the styies and customs that appear in the cities. They do this in their own good time and within limits of their size and wealth, not being able to splurge so grandly, nor to emulate the new Manhattan architecture or the new Chicago crime wave; but still, notwithstanding the scornful ejacula-
tions of the old fogies regarding things "citified," we find the latest styles in clothing, traffic signals, jokes, songs and dances flashing in the countryside. A story, pointing this tendency, is told by Theodore Dreiser in *A Hoosier Holiday*. At a town meeting in a small Indiana village, the question was debated as to whether the village should have electric lights and paved streets. One speaker decided the issue brilliantly by saying, "Do we want to be like New York and Chicago, or don't we? That's all there is to it." The improvements won. The village placed itself right alongside Chicago in this matter.

But now Main Street can chuckle with pride entirely in its own right; not the pride of imitating, but the pride of being imitated. At last Broadway has taken over, temporarily at least and no doubt unwittingly, an old honored Main Street and country school district custom. And Broadway hasn't shown the alacrity that Main Street has shown: Broadway has been twenty years, or more, getting around to this very old fashion. I refer to the practice, which suddenly sprang forth a few months ago in New York and Chicago, of having the audiences in vaudeville and movie houses sing en masse. The words of a popular song flashed on the screen, the virtuoso at the pipe organ plays the tune, and "Everybody joins in the singing." Another small town party phrase may be added: "A good time is had by all." Just like home folks, with naive enthusiasm and earnestness, and with hearty vocal discordance, the city audience bawls out the refrain that "I'll be loving you, always," or, "Remember the day."

Yes, it's very familiar, very homey, as we say. Shut your eyes, and you can imagine you are in the little red schoolhouse or the town opera house, at a camp-meetin' or a political rally in the county seat. Years ago this crowd singing was in evidence throughout the countryside. Its origin seems to have been rural-religious. Various uses, social and political and educational, have been made of it. It is a very democratic custom, based upon the very democratic idea that one person can sing as well as another—that the voice of the people lifted in common song is, if not the voice of God, then the voice of his angelic choir.

The joke of this is not entirely on Broadway. For Main Street, I expect, will soon be following its old custom, indirectly returned to it and revealed in a slightly new guise. Soon the movie audiences in small towns will be singing lustily, quite in "citified" fashion, and even as it has always been so it shall be.

**A NEW NATIONAL ANTHEM?**

Here is one little question that has been discussed recently, on which we are in doubt as to what should be our opinion. This is the question of whether America should have a new national anthem, more original and possibly more artistic, in the place of the "Star-spangled Banner." It seems that someone, whose patriotism is of doubtful character, has pointed out that the air of this great national song is a plagiarism—and that, if my memory has not played me an impish trick, the original air was that of a rollicking drinking song. Some good Americans have resented this statement that Fran-
cis Scott Key used a skeleton key when he opened the floodgates of patriotic music; these Americans say the "Star-spangled Banner" was good enough for General Grant and it's good enough for them. Others of our fellow countrymen say that, while the anthem should be treated with proper respect during its life and that it should be buried if at all with the most elaborately decent honors, still it may be well enough to look around for a superior air. An original song, both in melody and words, is in fact viewed with favor—and, to show something of the advancement of American taste in this matter, there are even some good words for the suggestion that the new song should be a pretty good example of the musical art.

Freely we admit that we have not followed this discussion very carefully, and presume to no authority on the technical side of the subject. But we ask ourselves whether a better national anthem would have a deleterious and dangerous effect upon the nation's life. Would it intensify the narrow patriotism that is such an evil and dark menace to modern life? Would a lofty, strikingly original, skilfully and subtly composed anthem lead the people more readily into the next war? Would the playing of it be more efficacious in inspiring the mob spirit to attack those who might express very unpopular ideas on social and political questions? It may be replied that any old song is good enough for the purpose of patriotism, as witness that ribald chant, "You're in the Army Now," which was so popular in the American army camps in 1917-18. On the other hand, suppose a national anthem should be conceived which would be artistically so far ahead of the musical appreciation of the masses that it would move them as little as a very profound and sustained symphony. Possibly in that case the evils of patriotic excitement would be mitigated. We do not know. We pass this problem on to our readers for their cogitation. Meanwhile, as we hear the distant strains of the "Star-spangled Banner" we can drink our home-brew patriotically and reflect that if the song is discarded the "wets" can take it over and lead the country toward a real bottle of beer.

DO THE WORKERS SEEK CULTURE?

His question has been thrown at the thoughtful, in his usual provocative polemical style, by Hendrik Willem Van Loon in the Forum. It seems that Van Loon has wearied of the attempt to bring the wisdom and high thinking and fine taste of the ages to the great unconscious masses; his liberalism is disappointed because he sees the world still full of intolerance and ignorance; he has painfully reached the conclusion that a regard for and appreciation of those intellectual and artistic values which are signified by the term "culture" is beyond the desire, certainly, if it is not beyond the capacity, of the average man. But no, Van Loon doesn't put it quite in that way; he is more particular and exclusive in his view, holding that it is among the laboring classes that culture goes a-begging instead of being begged for.

It is here that Van Loon makes a serious mistake and one that might easily have been avoided. He charges a class with intellectual intolerance and limitations that are found, in the way of human nature,
among all classes. He draws his lines too sharply. Are the workers as a whole more dead to culture than the professional classes? the merchant classes? the Babbitts? Are captains of industry, as contrasted with the workers, generally men of culture? Do the idle rich uphold the standards of culture? Or is it true that, considering men simply as human beings rather than as members of classes, the genuine seekers after culture are in the minority? Is not the last named view the just one?

It is an old error to fasten a general human trait upon a particular group, class, nation or race. The average man, wherever you find him, is not a very good thinker; nor a man of very fine imagination; nor a man of subtle, keen and intense appreciation of the beauties and arts of life. Nor, perhaps, is there a yearning for these great things very markedly among the average—whether they be owners of carpet sweeper factories, salesmen of carpet sweepers, or makers of carpet sweepers.

But what do we mean by culture? It is not synonymous with education, as we customarily see the effects of the latter. We all know men who have gone through a university, and who can be said to have certain knowledge and familiarity with certain things that are denied to a mechanic. But this education is often superficial and does not make any real, significant change in character, intellect or attitude toward life. There are many such “educated” men who are poor thinkers, who are full to the ears with prejudices and pasty notions, whose interests are narrow and commonplace, whose idea of art is not much above the funny paper nor of literature much above the popular novel, who have very little imagination or taste. Now, on the other hand, we know there are many workingmen who have not gone the academic route, but who have found their way to the ideas and the books and who have actually better minds than their fellows of greater apparent opportunity. It does not affect the argument to say that the first man would have known less had he not gone to the university, while the second man would have better developed himself with the advantages of university education. The point is that to be cultured does not necessarily mean to have gone through the forms of university education.

Nor does culture mean what is implied by the term “accomplishments,” and which used to be thought all that was necessary to the polite education of woman. Nor does it mean skill in a profession. One may be a very good doctor or a very able lawyer, without being cultured; outside of his profession, such a man may be—and is more often than not—intellectually and culturally blank. So we cannot say that the leading lawyer in a community is more cultured than the mechanic in the garage; on all questions and in all interests outside their special functions, their minds may work very much in the same way. It is a mistake to think that because a man belongs to a profession that demands what is regarded as a higher order of ability (whether truly regarded so is a question) and occupies a higher position in society, he is therefore more cultured than the workingman.

Study in itself I do not regard as a process of culture. For example, Frederick Paul Keppel replies to Van Loon in the Forum and one of the things he emphasizes is the growth of night schools in our cities. Certainly, most of the patrons of these night schools are the sons and daughters of workingmen. This situation is a welcome one, but does it
belong to our argument of culture? I think not. These night students, as also the students of correspondence courses, and the students in settlement schools, are actuated not by a seeking after culture but by a desire to get better jobs and to rise in life: the motive is economic, not cultural. I do not object to the motive: ambition, the desire for a better place in life is a good thing; but I merely point out the graduate of a night school is not, by that token, more cultured (that is to say, a better thinker, a wider or more discriminating reader, a person of broader interests and riper, keener appreciations) than the graduate of a university. When Mr. Keppel says, “The successful settlement is one which offers not things in general, but very definite opportunity, professionally and not amateurishly,” he is not making any point with regard to culture. For culture, in a sense, is general and is amateurish: it is sought not to increase one’s earning but one’s learning. It is more to the point when Mr. Keppel speaks of such an institution as The People’s Institute in New York City, which gives lecture courses on psychology and history and literature—on subjects, in short, that are not definitely intended to fit men for trades or professions but to widen their knowledge and make them better thinkers. The Rand School in New York City is a similar institution, while it is the distinctive and brilliant role of Will Durant to bring philosophy and literature to the workers. Again, let me use an illustration closer home and point out that millions of workers in the United States have bought, and continue to buy in large quantities, the Little Blue Books: I personally know that workingmen are interested in philosophy, history, literature, rationalism—that they are interested in ideas. Are all workingmen interested in ideas? I would put it in a different way: I would say that not all men and women are interested in ideas.

One more word about the difference between self-betterment and culture in its broad sense. A sentence of Mr. Keppel’s expresses it very well. He says: “I myself recall one Italian immigrant family, which in a single generation produced a doctor, a lawyer, an engineer, and two professors, and, what is more to the purpose, produced five cultured (and liberal) American citizens.” As you see, Mr. Keppel himself is aware of the distinction. The first half of his statement, while it indicates a very good tendency, is not germane to the question of culture; the second half of his statement does refer to culture. Fortunately, these men are cultured and liberal in addition to being doctor, lawyer, engineer and professors; obviously, however, they might be skilled in these professions without being cultured or liberal.

The fact is that Van Loon and Keppel evidently speak of culture in different meanings. Van Loon is pessimistic about the increase in genuine learning and thinking: Keppel is optimistic about the increase in ambition and the desire for education, more in the practical than in the cultural sense. From Mr. Keppel’s viewpoint, the favorable report is undoubtedly true. The enrollment in high schools and colleges is greater than ever before; the desire for education in some form and for some purpose is greater; the urge of ambition is more general and pronounced. And no one can truthfully say that the workers have not their considerable part in this tendency. The situation as to culture in Van Loon’s use of the term is also, I think, better rather than worse. It is naturally less
striking than the former tendency. There are fewer people who are eager to understand life than who are eager to get ahead in life. Yet there is a growing enlightenment in America, a wider audience for intelligent things. There are many workers in this audience. To work with one's hands is not to be entirely indifferent to the activities of one's mind.

There is a perceptible note of "What's the use?" in Van Loon's article which is rather surprising in one who is presumably worldly-wise. What did Van Loon ever think was the use? Did he ever imagine a great popular uprising in behalf of culture, suddenly and in the course of a few years or even a few generations? Van Loon himself has been a rather busy propagandist for clear and liberal and modern thinking. But did he always realize that his words would fall on many deaf ears? The point is not that all will become thinkers, but that many can be induced to think more clearly and read more widely. If there are many who are receptive to the influences of culture, then we can with good heart and purpose continue to spread those influences. If some yokel in Tennessee, for example, has never heard of and could not be hired to read Van Loon's Tolerance, some workingman in Chicago will read the book much to his interest and enlightenment. If a speaker has a full house, he is satisfied, although most of the city stays away from the hall. I believe that Van Loon and myself and the others who are trying to spread light if not sweetness have a full house, so to speak—an audience sufficiently large and sufficiently interested to make our labors worth while. And besides, think of the fun of it. Van Loon can't fool me. Shooting ideas over the country is great sport to him. Here is the fact we cannot escape. We have certain ideas and we just naturally have to fire them at the crowd. It's not in reason that we should always miss. Cries of varying tone signalize our hits.

THREE VIEWS OF MORALS

THE words applied to people and things are generally misleading because we seldom can be sure just what is meant by them. If you know a man well enough, you may have a fair understanding of his speech insofar as you are familiar with the viewpoint that dictates his use of terms; as a rule, when a man speaks of "morality," for example, our thoughts respond in the light of our own ethical standards; and we are apt to misunderstand another who, using similar terms, has opposite or different standards.

There is confusion without end in our discussions of ethics. "Good" and "bad" are terms that have been most variously, strangely and even arbitrarily employed by men. The statement that someone is a good man is likely to be quite meaningless, unless one is aware of the eulogist's idea of goodness, or is told of the particular conduct that has been called good. For there are kinds of goodness, degrees of goodness, times and circumstances of goodness. The same is of course true of what is branded as bad. Before we can accept someone's word that this fellow is bad, we must know what are the things in life and character that seem bad to the accuser. Immorality is a charge which we cannot take seri-
ously until we know something about the background, the temperament, the imagination, the type of mind that has led to the framing of the charge. We have been frequently astonished by hearing a man denounced as immoral who has been listed in our books of admiration and in whom we have failed to observe or suspect any conduct that we should identify as immoral or bad. Praise often mystifies us; what is praiseworthy in the fellow? what, even conceding that he is harmless, is definitely good and admirable?

The natural uncertainty, due to the use of similar terms with different ideas, is increased by the ease and readiness with which men deal out both praise and blame. Superlatives come easily and without much thought. The average man is not very scrupulous, he does not carefully weigh discriminations of meaning, either in telling how good his friend is or how bad his enemy is. Another may simply displease him by contrary opinions, and will be therefore given a hard name; while one who agrees with his politics or his religion may, for no better reason, be spoken of as a man of judgment and virtue.

We shall always have to be careful of our terms, and look behind the other fellow’s terms to what really prompts them; but perhaps we can, in the field of morality or ethics, for instance, do something to clarify issues and guard against confusion. It will not be amiss to suggest certain essentially unlike attitudes which go to the making of our moral decisions. We shall have a glimpse of why men disagree.

We may consider the question of ethics from at least three points of view, all of which are well represented among men and which are significant in our everyday opinions and relations. What is most commonly implied by the terms “good” and “bad”? I think no one will deny that the terms are most often used with reference to personal, physical habits. The moral judgment depends upon whether the man does or does not smoke, drink, swear, gamble, philander or keep late hours. It is said that So-and-So is a “bad” man; and this usually means that So-and-So drinks (even under Prohibition) and perhaps drinks, as his critics think, a little too much; perhaps he enjoys sitting in a game of poker, losing not only his cash (or winning, which may be considered still more wicked) but losing also the sleep which God intended him to have; he may show a facility in impressive oaths when his toes are unmannishly or accidentally encroached upon; he may love not conventionally but where he listeth. Now the point is, not that these things may not be “bad” in a certain sense and under certain conditions, but that no such distinctions are made.

There are a surprising number of people—a very great number of people indeed—who regard such habits as “bad” no matter to what extent they are indulged, in what manner they are indulged, or how their indulgence affects others. It is often the case that a man permits himself a moderate acquaintance with one or all of these habits—yet, with many of his neighbors, moderation does not measurably diminish the sin. He may indulge such habits, not moderately, but in a quite discreet, ably managed and tolerable manner—yet he is as “bad” as if he were the veriest bungler, nuisance and legitimate object of notorious scandal. He may be so freely placed in the world and so well capable of such conduct that his actions injure no other person—but he is adjudged “bad” for no conceivable reason save that he does things that his critic does not think he
should do, or does not himself wish to do, or it may be does not himself dare to do.

Strangely enough, there is one distinction often made in favor of the man who does such “bad” things and who admittedly believes they are bad. It seems that, by agreeing with the judgment of his technically moral critics, he purchases some qualification of the criticism: he knows better, it is said, and he is better than his actions—is, in short, “a good man gone wrong.” On the other hand, very much worse is the man who has no consciousness of wrongdoing; who honestly feels that he has a right to live his own life and is indifferent to moral censure; who, let us say, innocently follows the kind of life that others call “bad.” Within reason (for motives do not make morals) we may hold that the latter is the more to be admired of the two; we may hold that the first man’s sense of sin hurts him more than the so-called “sin”; we may credit conscience, and a natural feeling of free moral agency, with some justifying force, so that the man who is conscientiously and self-respectingly “bad” is all the better for that attitude. The contrary view may strike us as an ethical paradox, strange indeed, yet it is valid with a large number and enters into their moral separation of the sheep and the goats.

Some men have a stronger tendency than others to associate pleasure seeking and the free enjoyment of sensations with badness. But it is assuredly not an absolute or universal truth that morality is a matter of such physical habits. There are many intelligent persons who regard such habits generally in the light of peccadilloes, or as misfortunes in extreme cases, or perhaps only as showing a poor taste in the enjoyment of life. They do not think of using the terms “good” and “bad” in such a connection. They cannot see that such habits are bad in themselves, but always are careful to distinguish where they are simply personal in their bearing, their manner and degree and their coexistence with other traits, all the circumstances which make one individual and one case different from another. Such things are never “bad” to them when they are done in moderation and when they do not actually, badly or unjustly injure others.

A second kind of moral judgment is that which hinges upon the question of belief. This must seem to men of intelligence more curious and irrational than any other possible standard of ethics. It is for the most part a peculiarly religious standard, yet one that is widely held even to this day. One need not go far to meet with someone who holds men to be “good” or “bad” according to whether they do or do not believe in a God; or that Christ died to save us; or that the Bible is divinely inspired. This kind of critic may tell you that the “good” men are those who attend church, while the “bad” men will infallibly be found elsewhere on Sundays. This is the most dogmatic and perverse attitude of ethics; for one who does not conform to it, however much of genuine good may be said with plain truth about him, is still denied recognition in the company of the believably good and righteous. On the other hand, one who is a believer and a churchgoer will often be praised as a “good” man, although he is well known to have hard, narrow, mean or despicable qualities of character. A good deal of Christian preaching, we know, places the emphasis upon mere belief; or, if not quite so obtuse, it places the first and fundamental emphasis upon it; and nearly always it with-
holds favorable judgment and a recommendation to God's kind of attention from one who has fine character without specific belief in God, Jesus, the Bible and immortality. This view of ethics has occupied a very important role in the history of mankind; it is no longer believed in by any intelligent man or woman; yet it is true that this foolish separation of belief and action is still a determining factor in the ethical judgments of many people.

There is a third view of ethics, which governs the use of the terms "good" and "bad"—although these terms, let me say, have been so cheapened and confused by misuse that they are charily used by intelligent people. This last named and best view—the sane, intelligent, and truly human view—regards character, in a genuine and active sense, as more important than habits or beliefs. I am well aware that character reflects itself in habits, broadly speaking, and is moulded by or reflected by beliefs; but not in the sense nor from the viewpoint that we have been considering. This is to say that there are qualities of character that are to be esteemed quite apart from the question whether one believes in God and is religious or whether one smokes, drinks, swears, gambles and is a lover of the ladies. Is a man kind? generous? amiable? Then he is a "good" man. Does he show a nice consideration for others? That is good. Has he a sense of honor? a sense of justice? No matter, then, whether he had too much liquor in him last evening; nor will we admit that he is a "bad" man because he is a blasphemer and makes jokes about the hoary fallacy of God. The man who has the quality of sympathy will, to point an instance, win our moral judgment from this point of view as against the man who is piously familiar with his Bible and strict in church attendance, yet is without the finer sensibilities that enable us better to live with each other. When we call a man civilized, we imply infinitely more in his behalf than the term "good" as used by the narrower moralists. We observe that a good deal of what is branded as sin can be indulged comfortably in consistency with sound and valuable traits of character; the character weighs more with us than the sin; and we feel that the man of sound character, whatever his tastes in pleasure and his ways of enjoying life, though he may depart ever so widely from what is literally and unimaginatively held to be virtue, will not go far wrong.

Virtue—what do you mean by it? Virtue of physical habits? virtue of dogmatic, specific belief? or virtue of character? Men praise virtue, and then turn to their separate viewpoints and, amid much misunderstanding, judge one another as vicious and bad.

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN AS DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

I T IS not a new role for Nathan. For years he has been the subtlest advocate, the most suave and charming and altogether persuasive, that the devil has had in this land of Methodist sourness and blight. He has a satanic resourcefulness of style and a nimbleness of logic and unlimited range of simile and metaphor that must have driven his moral readers to despair, to see such a very formidable and damnably sure equipment used in behalf of the world,
the flesh and the devil. If he has any moral readers, which I doubt. Such folk are not attracted to a man like Nathan. A few lines, and they would instantly realize where they were and rush from the contaminating influence. Perhaps by some instinct they would feel at a considerable distance the devilish quality of the man and stay away from him. No, I suspect that Nathan has gathered about him an audience of his own, and that, due to his persistence in saying what he liked, he has attracted a goodly number of readers who want nothing better than for him to say what he likes.

In the arts, in ideas, in the conduct of life Nathan has been most unregenerate in urging the freedom and grace of a hedonistic philosophy. It is as a hedonist that Nathan is most broadly, and to all brethren of the pewholding type most badly, the advocate of the devil’s very own counsel to short-lived mortals. He tells them to make the most of life. This too shall pass away—so he constantly reminds them, and such is the implication in all his views of the human scene. Take toward life the attitude of frank and highly personal enjoyment—such is the gospel according to Nathan. He will have nothing to do with duties. Ideals, principles and all that—in the heavy style with which they are usually affected—are for the most part dull and meaningless to him, except when he can have a literary holiday showing up their pompous absurdity or their naive indifference to the facts of life. The simple rule, the outstanding motto in the devil’s book, “Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow you die,” is very heartily believed in by Nathan. He is one of the finest authorities on the pleasures of this world, on all the pleasures, including especially the civilized and cultivated pleasures that are under the particular suspicion of the censorious: and, of course, pleasure has always been suspected of the pious; it formerly, and until quite latterly, was a leading belief of religion that to be “worldly” was a sort of blanket sin that covered untold other sins: Fundamentalists still believe so, and about the religious and moralistic character generally there is yet a lingering air of solemn disapproval in the face of too much merriment. And Nathan is pre-eminently the kind of merry fellow whom the “unco guid” regard with the most bilious eye. He is intellectually merry. He makes a sport of thinking, which is the jolliest and surest protection I know against the all-pervading influence of bunk.

Appropriately, I am in the very word justified in calling Nathan a devil’s advocate by the title of his latest book, *The House of Satan*. That house is the theater. It has not been so many years since it was indeed branded by the holy church as the very headquarters of Satan on this earth. And there has always been some offense in it for the pure in heart. If the theater did nothing else than inspire Nathan to his running fire of criticism on the arts and on life, it would be sufficiently marked as of the devil. But it more directly serves its master. In one of the most interesting essays in this book, Nathan elaborates the point that good plays are always violating good taste and corrupting manners and undermining morals; that is to say, the drama is strong on challenging the ideas and the mores of the time and community. It offends, if in nothing else, in plain speaking and straight thinking.

Who is so unmannersly, for example, as Shaw? Who so impolitely iconoclastic? The irrepressible Bernard Shaw flouts nearly all that is
held dear to the heart of the godly, the patriotic, the conventional, the upholders of the current virtues. Our own Eugene O'Neill, while not full of such dangerous ideas as Shaw, treats morals and human relations even more scandalously. He boldly presents the theme of miscegenation in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. In *Desire Under the Elms* he draws aside the curtains of domestic life with a thoroughness and a candor that rattles the very gallstones of the puritans. Shakespeare, as we all know, is chock-full of corruption in the sense of emotionally and intellectually subverting stuff. It is said that he holds the mirror up to human nature, but what is seen in that mirror, a good deal of it, is not spoken of in polite society. It does not provide topics of conversation for Christian homes. Molière would be called a bounder by any mob, for does he not, in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, make mock of snobbery and the bourgeois antics? And, while this is the story of a climber, is there not a laugh in the sleeve at the accomplishments which snobs adore? And in *Tartuffe*, is there not a study of hypocrisy that a hypocritical world might be expected to have a sneaking distaste for? As for Congreve, Wycherly and the dramatists under the dissipated King Charles II, genteel critics have never yet recovered from the scandal of that most loose-lived season of sparkling but devilish drama.

Yes, the drama corrupts, and Nathan, in his ideas, which range far more widely than the stage, is a corruptor in somewhat the sense that Socrates was a corrupter, and all men who have held traffic with ideas. One of the shocking performances of Nathan in *The House of Satan* is to write a most engaging and dammably plausible essay on the theme that the drama and the arts generally are not uplifting. He reminds us that artists on the whole have been a hedonistic set, heedless of the moral law; and, with his customary facility and felicity of illustration, he presents a list of works of art that are immorally enticing in their strong delineations of human nature as she is and in their quality of arousing certain grand but perilous emotions.

He makes out a good case, although it is not wholly true, I think. Art does ennable. It does arouse splendid and true emotions. It does, according to the formula of Aristotle, purge us emotionally with pity and laughter. It does not of course make us moral; but we do not think that people should be made moral in the accepted sense. It is true that many works of art—Rabelais, to take an example from literature, with which I am more familiar—cannot be described as uplifting in the terms of the school of sweetness-and-light. And Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* is not what one would venture to call uplifting. Art, indeed, if it is to have much relation to life, cannot be strictly moral and virtuous; and he who has experience of the arts will, like him who lives fully and has experience of life, meet with many things that would not look well in a Sunday-school. But rather than be moral in the Methodist meaning, rather than be ascetics and anchorites, we would live. We would live variously and intensely. We would know passion and ecstasy and the strength of desire and the urge of fearless thought and the thrill of avid experience, and what a poet called "all delicate delights." There is this that is true in Nathan's attitude, that we should go to the arts to enjoy and not to perfect ourselves. The self-improving, or the uplifting if yott will, is more in the nature of a by-product.
It would perhaps not be human if I were to agree with every word in a book of several hundred pages. (I did virtually that, however, with Nathan's earlier book, *The Autobiography of an Attitude*.) For example, I do not find myself convinced to any great degree by the essay in which Nathan seeks to prove that intelligence has no place in the theater. It is very well to say that a heavy display of logic, and philosophical dissertation, and earnest argumentative propaganda for a cause have no place in the theater. It is true that, first and last, a good play is the play that is emotionally appealing. It is also true that much great art is "mad with its own beauty." But the beauty of madness is not the only kind of beauty, and there is more to art than beauty alone. Intelligence is important in the theater as elsewhere. We know that Nathan is scornful of a stupid play. He is constantly showing, in his criticisms, how unintelligent and therefore unconvincing certain plays are.

To be sure, when we say that a play is intelligent, we do not necessarily mean that it is so because it communicates to us certain ideas. We mean that its situations are intelligently brought about, that its treatment of character is intelligent and true, that it reflects an intelligent view of life. Nathan tries to get around this by saying that the playwright must use his intelligence before he enters the theater—while he is writing or conceiving his play—but that he must drop that intelligence when he steps upon the stage. This is rather by way of being a paradox, and one that will not quite go down. If the playwright uses intelligence at any time, obviously it will appear in the theater. Else what use would it be and where would it show? Even so, Nathan's remarks under this head do well in knocking the theory that plays should point a moral and preach a sermon and prove some thesis in a logical way. The play's the thing, after all.

In this great patriotic, constructive journal of American life, it is also incumbent on me to correct Nathan's description of the physical or architectural condition of the theater in the United States. It is truly amazing to read Nathan's statement that there is hardly a decent theater building outside of New York City and Chicago. A few months of traveling in this broad land would remedy some neglects in our friend's observation. Anyone who has been in American cities, anywhere, of let us say a hundred thousand population and upward, knows very well that every such city has a theater of the most modern and comfortable and well-appointed style. To say that the theaters of America are ramshackle, dirty, unkempt affairs, in which one cannot even sit with comfort and cleanliness, is simply to say that one knows more about New York City and Europe than about the United States. Even in a town of twenty thousand, twenty minutes' ride from Girard, I can show Nathan a really attractive theater. Nathan should know better than this, for elsewhere (in *The Autobiography of an Attitude*) he has written of the superiority of America in the way of material comforts and conveniences and improvements and all the outward appurtenances of civilization.

The reason that good plays are not more popular in the country at large is not that the theaters are barns, but merely that the people do not enjoy and are not interested in first-rate plays. They go to the House of Satan, but not in the mood and not with the viewpoint of the devil's advocate.
At any rate, if one cannot see good plays very often so far away from New York City, one can do something as enjoyable or more so—one can read _The House of Satan_. It is Nathan giving an extraordinary show in fine style.

IMMENSE AMERICA AND A PROPHECY BY THOREAU

NE thing that impresses the first visitor to America, and that occasionally is realized in a rare vivid light by natives of the country, is the immensity of this land which stretches from sea to sea. From one coast to the other, one rides, for days and for thousands of miles, and still one is in the same country. Out of your train window you see the endless fields glide by, the miles and miles, the cities and cities, state after state. Cross the mighty Mississippi, and you are not even halfway across this wonderful land—wonderful, indeed, seen as a physical geographical spectacle, and as a spectacle, too, of the diversity of human effort and achievement. Mountains you will see, rivers, broad and long, immense valleys, great structures of industry, everything on a tremendous scale.

Now behold the treachery of generalizations—the betraying lure of intuitive ideas—the manner in which the wish makes itself father to the thought. Almost a century ago there lived a solitary, unique philosopher by the name of Thoreau—Henry David Thoreau, in full. He was, as contrasted with the average, an extraordinarily clear thinker. He did have, of course, some enthusiasms that were not obedient to sound realistic thought—that were rather inflated by an excess of emotional wishing. It is certainly to his credit that he wished and thought that he saw an America which did not, and still does not, exist. He was worthy of it. America was not. Greatness is to him who thinks greatly.

In some passage of Thoreau’s—I forget which one—he deduces a splendid intellectual breadth and sweep and altitude, a daring of thought and spirit, from the vast topography of the land. (On second thought, I believe this passage is to be found in Thoreau’s essay “On Walking.” Little Blue Book readers can check my memory.) He says that surely, in such a splendid scene, the human mind must expand as nowhere else. The mountains must inspire man to lofty thoughts. The broad beautiful valleys must give a sweep of catholicity and toleration and poetry to his mind. The long rivers must lead him out into endless flows of reflection and spiritual seeking. In short, a country that is so sublimely immense in a physical way must produce sublimity in intellect, in art, in social policy, in all attitudes toward life.

It is a very pleasant theory. One who lives shut out from life may entertain it, and enjoy the grand thrill of it. But what are the facts? what a cruel word! Facts! How they crush and smash the lovely theoretical works of man! In all these years, we have failed to see the fruition, the appearance, the least sign of development of this sentimental view of the usually clear-thinking Thoreau. It is only lately that gleams of light have broken through the general dullness of America. And
whence have come these gleams of light? Why, from the cities, mostly, from the very places where this natural grandeur is hidden and superseded by artificial sights and customs. And when we have read human documents from “the great open spaces,” we have found in them a spectacle of the stupidity and meaninglessness of human life; and we have seen the prairie as more monotonous than magnificent. The Scopes trial took place in Dayton, Tennessee, a community of bigots and ignoramuses set in one of the most beautiful stretches of scenery in the world.

On the other hand, where does Kiwanis flourish? In Denver, within sight of the grand mountains. Where is life judged in terms of money and materials? In St. Louis, on the banks of the inspiring Mississippi. Where do prejudice and narrow thought work their havoc? In the fair far-reaching valleys—say the Mississippi valley—of our boundless land.

Even as Thoreau, so was Whitman more poetic than prophetic when he sang in lofty strain of “these States.” He imagined a perfect, free, high-minded democracy which did not exist in his day, and which we can hardly say is overwhelmingly visible in our day. He sent out what he called his “barbaric yawp” of a comradeship and a philosophy that still are to be sought for, not in America, but in Utopia. In a word, Whitman sang of an America of Whitmans.

The truth is that great thought depends upon the man. Given the right mind, all other things surely inspire and contribute to its operations. But what is a tremendous scene to a stupid dead mind? As Whistler said in his “Ten o’Clock,” artists appear—and that is all. They may appear in the mountains, or in the desert, or in the valley. They have begun to appear in America—the artists and the thinkers. We see a cultural future now before us. We cannot, however, bless the physical scene for this consummation. Conditions have conspired, no doubt. The right men, too, have been born. Anyway, America, not from any inspiration of its scenery, is looking into its own mind.

FROM KING GEORGE TO COOLIDGE

Who loves King George the Third? As our own Bert Williams used to sing, “Nobody.” This Republic was founded on a defiance of and a departure from monarchy. We would have, not kings, but presidents.

And what has been our attitude, increasing with the years? We have, more and more, evolved a feeling of worship toward the presidents of the Republic. They are sacrosanct. They are scarcely capable of doing wrong (save around election time, when they have a divided personality, and appear as both President and partisan candidate). In the late war, the most popular slogan was, “Stand behind the President.” We have come to a form of veneration and slavish regard that is hardly to be distinguished from the subject’s servility toward his monarch. Indeed, the present King George, in England, receives no such adulation as is almost daily heaped upon the head of President Coolidge.
The most striking proof of this magic of the Presidency is observed in the hollow, meretricious greatness that has been thrown, as a mantle and similarly extraneous, upon the shoulders of Coolidge. Here is a commonplace man, without the slightest real thought or vision, with no better than the most ordinary ability, having the mentality of a country lawyer—a man with whom (fatally to an idea of his greatness) most Americans agree—and yet, this super-mediocrity, if I may use such a term, this apotheosis of insignificance, is worshiped, almost as a great and wise and verily statesmanlike man. It is really an insult to the Jeffersons and the Lincolns, the Websters and the Clays, of American history to bestow any special appreciation upon a man of the caliber of Coolidge. But, curiously, we lavish the same praise upon a Coolidge that we do upon a Jefferson. It seems that all an ordinary man has to do is to take up his residence in the White House, and he immediately shines forth to the nation as a very demigod. The aura of the office hides the man.

We require a new revolution—a revolution, this time, in thought. We should see men, and issues, and ideas as they really are, with none of the specious claims of pride or place. Viewed without any consideration of that divinity which doth bedeck a President, Mr. Coolidge is a very commonplace man who at least—give him credit for that—knows enough to come in out of the rain. And a Jefferson need not be placed in the White House for us to see him in his truly great stature.

ON LOCAL PRIDE

OME months ago a great paper, which the will of its creator directed to be disposed of and the proceeds put into an art gallery, was sold to the men who had run it since the founder's death. It is a great paper—there is no doubt of that—a great paper from every technical and professional point of view; even a great paper, quite often, in its superiority to the general journalistic point of view. What impressed me, in the many congratulations on the sale of this paper, was the unanimity with which the note of local pride was sounded. It was such a fine thing, ran the general refrain, that the paper had been kept in the same, the local hands. What a catastrophe it would have been had the paper got into "foreign," hands—that is to say, into the hands of some man from Tennessee or New York. What would such a man have done with the paper? Very likely, almost certainly, he would have run it as it had been run for so many years. He would not have started any revolutionary policy.

And in a general view of this city, what do we find is the identity and complexion of its leading citizens? We see men from Illinois running the Missouri iron foundries; we see men from Minnesota running the Missouri lumber yards; we see men from Michigan running the Missouri automobile factories. In a word, we see men from outside the
state applying their brains and energy to the general life of the city. As a matter of fact, what do I see in this same paper, but an editorial which boasts of the great number and importance of outside concerns that have located in this same city?

In this city, too, a minister recently preached a sermon in eulogy of the Christian character of the community; and privately one is assured by the immoral (who put it publicly to the proof) that this is one of the most "wide open" cities in the country.

Anything and everything will serve to arouse local pride. People have been known to show considerable pride in a scandal or tragedy that assumed nation-wide notoriety and drew all eyes to their city.

THE COST OF POLITICS

The cost of politics is increasing in the Republic. It has grown as rapidly as, and in an equal degree with, the cost of government. After an election, whether primary or final, and whether national, state or congressional, the first demand seems to be for an investigation. And hardly have the ballots been counted, when an investigating committee in the Senate is on the job and we are again reminded that money makes the votes go round. Do it first, and investigate it afterwards. It takes one-half the world to investigate what the other half does.

It is hard to see how the boast of political virtue in America, and the faith in the pristine purity of democracy, can stand in the light of the "frenzied finance" of politics. One way or another, to get an office one must buy it—and pay tremendously for it. If it is not always or altogether a question of the outright purchase of votes, money is used in other ways of influence that are not much more dignified or honorable. Oratory used to be a great instrument in American politics. It is no longer so important as a big campaign fund, which can obscure almost any issue, however vital. Napoleon said that God is on the side of the heaviest battalions, and it might also be said that God seems to be on the side of the fullest electoral purse. And of course the high market quotations on votes show how valuable is the American "sovereign" in his personal political capacity. He may flatter himself. He may swell with the pride of democracy.

It is well to be fair, however, and not fall into the usual error of thinking that the corruption of American politics (whether by direct bribery and vote-buying or by the undue coercive influence of huge funds) is the work only of politicians who are denounced as evil by virtuous citizens. Those virtuous citizens are themselves party to a greater political menace. This is the commercialization of crusading morality, which, with an enormous treasury at its command, enters politics to enforce measures of tyranny upon the people. These organizations for the promotion of virtue and the suppression of vice—which means the imposing upon the country of the will of a group of narrow-
minded individuals—are willing and able to go to any lengths, spend any amount, to indulge their sadistic yearning, their malicious desire to make everybody step to their tune. The Anti-Saloon League is the principal and pattern of them all. They flourish nationally and locally. They represent influence in American politics that is sinister and all on the side of intolerance and oppression, all aimed to break down the last defenses of freedom. The politician who spends a great deal of money to get an office, and even to serve financial and economic interests that will be sufficiently well served anyway (and always have been in our country), is not to be feared today as much as these pseudo-moral organizations that spend money in politics with the object of robbing the people of their liberties.

We deplore corruption. We deplore the lack of decency and honor in American political life. But, even so, we confess that we can stand a good deal of mere corruption if we can only have our freedom.

ADMIRATIONS, TRUE AND FALSE

The honest and intelligent critic is frequently taken to task by Americans of a very patriotic stripe for casting scorn (or for not casting long glances of admiration) at the literary idols of American history. The critic who will not enter into rhapsodic appreciation of a fourth-rate rhymester and Sunday-school teacher like Longfellow, or a pale imitative sketchist like Washington Irving, or the whole company of pedagogical gas-lights of literature—such a critic is accused of being un-American, a base truckler to foreign gods, a deliberate perverse contemner of his own, his native land. A curse be upon him, as upon all traitors.

There are two ways of replying to this attitude. One is to point out that artistic appreciations have nothing whatever to do with nationality. Beauty, thought, art, greatness claim the whole world, and all countries, as their own. The recognition of truth is not conditioned upon whether the proclaimer of the truth is an American, or a Frenchman, or a Chinaman. The thrill one gets from a beautiful thing—a picture, a poem or a personality—does not come to one in one's character as an American, but in one's character as a human being of fine sensibilities. We enjoy a thing, or we understand a thing, if we are capable of it—and that is very simply that. We do not ask, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" We judge anything that comes out of Nazareth, as good or as bad, for what it is.

This freedom of beauty and thought from all such narrow distinctions, of course, and soundly, dismisses the whole question of patriotism in criticism. One can, however, take the question seriously and discuss it with a very sharp effectiveness by, first a denial, and then a few contrasting exhibits. One can deny that, as a critic, one does not appreciate worth in American letters. One can accuse the patriotic fellow of having the poor taste to admire the wrong things in American literature. He
wants us to prove our patriotism by admiring fourth-rate Americans. We say that he reveals his lower standards by failing to admire, instead, first-rate Americans. It is our turn to ask why America, generally speaking, has neglected the genius of Poe and of Whitman—both of whom in their day were unappreciated and indeed despised by their countrymen, and whose fame had its origin abroad. We can ask why it is that Thoreau, that brave philosophic rebel and fine personality and withal first-rate writer, is so little admired and read in our country to this day. It is possible for us to demand (and we could assume a patriotically indignant air did we not scorn the cheapness of such a pose) why a literary artist like Stephen Crane was treated as a bum and blackguard by the America of his own day and is scarcely a name, save here and there, to the America of our day. Again, we see the figure of Ambrose Bierce—that mordant wit and realist, a man of genuine literary and intellectual quality—and we realize that there are very few, besides us, who see even the faintest outlines of that figure. Yet Bierce was an American. These were Americans all. Where is the patriot who, in such an injured tone, cries out that we must appreciate American literature? Where is this patriot when, for unexpected example, we speak of Thomas Paine? It is common to speak of Paine, whether favorably or otherwise, as the exponent of certain ideas. But he was also a powerful and engaging writer, a man resourceful in illustrations and images, deft and clear and strong in argumentation. His writings greatly influenced American history, and they continue to influence the thought of many Americans who inevitably, in every generation, come upon The Age of Reason and are stimulated by this lively exercise of reason.

The truth is that this patriotic critic of the critic is just a little disingenuous—or he is deluded into mistaking the source and nature of his animus. He says he is objecting to us because we do not admire the literature of our country. But really, he feels aggravated with us because we do not like the kind of literature that he likes. Our appreciations do not follow a difference of nationality, but a difference of taste. The difference between him and us is not that between a patriotic American and one who is unpatriotic, but the difference between a Poe and a Longfellow, between a Thoreau and a Lowell.

We are ready to appreciate things American, American achievements, American life. But we have, purely as a personal matter, some rights. One right is that we shall be allowed to appreciate the good, and correctly place the bad things that we find in the American story and scene.

SOBER BETWEEN DRUNKS

ONE of the leaders in the late war and a prominent pacifist met not long ago. They talked of that period of madness which will never be forgotten, which will always be vividly and painfully remembered, by those who lived through it. The war leader (who had been known as a pacifist before the war) declared that his pacifism was genuine, that he would not again be aligned with the mili-
tarists, and that he would prove himself in the next war. It was a promise easily made, as this man will be dead by the time of the next war. But the pacifist replied to him most strikingly. "It is not unusual for a drunkard to swear off between drunks."

If he is that kind of a drunkard—America seems to be that kind, militarily speaking. When the late war was raging, and the military spirit and the machinery of war overwhelmed all else, the friends of peace made prediction dismally of the rise of a new and powerful militarism in America. As a result of America's war drunk, it was thought, the country would acquire a steady taste for militarism. Men had visions of an armed camp and the unceasing rattle of the saber throughout the land.

But America became sober. Not at once. There was a hangover. The spirit of wartime passion did not subside immediately. Something of the spirit does indeed still linger. The cry of patriotism, for example, can be more effectively raised on occasion against unpopular opinions than it could have been before the war. Yet, on the whole, we can now see that America is not a nation of easily formed militaristic habit. As to war, it appears to have the psychology of the periodical drunkard. We have no great standing army. Military issues have little interest for the people. Today America is working and playing very much as it did between its war drunks of 1898 and 1917.

Here, perhaps, we have partly an explanation. America has too much work to do. This country is too industrial, too immensely and prosperously busy—and, on the other hand, it is too much of a vast playground—to let the drunkenness of militarism interfere, as a regular thing, with its efficiency and pleasure. Even the summer training camps are regarded largely as a sport and a vacation. And so, too, with the activities of the Boy Scouts. In such a matter as that of the abortive Defense Day, the American people showed their indifference decisively. It was a failure.

To be sure, America has the good fortune to be an immense united nation, covering half a continent, and with no menacing national neighbors. It is not, like Europe, divided into a dozen or more nations, eyeing one another with drunken belligerence even between sprees of slaughter. Its isolation, its breathing space, enables America to be fairly sober between war drunks. We see in Europe today the spectacle of militarism, staggering crazily and dangerously in its old habitual way; alarms and threats of war, and preparations for war, continue to agitate Europe. America, fortunately, is free from that.

We are not foolishly optimistic. We do not think that America has been converted, intelligently, to peace. The war taught no lesson that will be useful—that will be applied—in the future. It is true that many of those who went through the horror and shame and outrage of the war will not soon forget it. They, however, will not be the ones to fight the next war. They will be old men then; and they will either shake their heads over the eternal recurrence of the same human folly—or, themselves feeling safe, they will urge on the young to the glory of mass suicide and mass murder. Even today I observe in conversation that young men—intelligent young men—who were mere boys in 1917-18
simply do not realize the terrible issues of the late war. When I talk about war, with an intensity and conviction as of a very recent memory, I find that I make little impression. The young men do not feel it. And not feeling it, they will easily fall victims to the next war.

Wars come about every generation. They start, ostensibly, over some incident comparatively trivial. Any pretext is sufficient—the same kind of thing that happens today and is passed over, will, happening thirty years from now, be used to set the world mad. For then there will be new millions of young men ready for the madness and the slaughter. And underneath will be the real issues of power and greed.

The mood of youth as to fighting is well expressed by an American daily paper, a proponent of "preparation." Sarcastically, it observes that the pacifists have been guilty of a tactical error in opposing the summer military camps on the ground that they encourage the war spirit and are a preparation for war. Nothing, says this paper, could have made the summer camps more popular. Youth is interested in anything that has to do with fighting—with action and adventure. Had the pacifists been able to convince the young men that the summer camps were a preparation for peace, the young men could not have been dragged into such dull business. It is true that so long as there are interests gigantically to promote war and start the mad drums booming, youth will be stampeded by its very heat of blood. It is the rare youth—the rare individual of any age—who can intellectually measure up to a comprehension of William James's "moral equivalent" for war.

THE PLEA OF A NATIVE SON

O BE sure, there is a patriotic son of West Virginia who will not suffer to pass unchallenged the aspersions cast upon that State by one of my readers (H. O. Alderson). We would naturally expect that there was something to be said on the other side. But we might expect, however poor our opinion of West Virginia, a stronger defense than that made by Rush D. Holt (Weston, West Virginia)—and Mr. Holt is the Professor of West Virginia History at Salem College in that State.

Mr. Holt rejects the hyperbolical statement that every county in the state has a college; it hasn't so many, he says; but he does not refer to the quality of the colleges the State does have. He declares that the State has more than ninety-five percent native-born population: that it has "the least mortgaged farms per capita than any other State"; and that the State "has decreased child labor conditions at least fifty percent in ten years."

As West Virginia is certainly not a farming state, I do not think the statistics about her farms are very important; and neither is the State noted for industries that invite to child labor. It would be just as
significant to point out that West Virginia suffers less from chinch bugs than Kansas or less from mosquitoes than Louisiana and that the race question is less acute than in Alabama.

Mr. Rush quotes George Washington to the effect that he could make a great fight in the hills of West Virginia; and we might add that John Brown thought the same. To the general he adds a poet, quoting Edwin Markham as having said, "I have made only one trip into West Virginia, but I hope I will be able to come for another visit." Ah! there we have the proof, the acute and all-sufficient proof, of West Virginia's greatness. If it can be shown that anybody would like "to come for another visit," what more can be said about the State? Again, we are reminded that Abraham Lincoln paid a compliment to the bravery of West Virginia mountaineers in the Civil War. But no one would deny that West Virginia has brave men; no doubt the State also has fair women.

Mr. Rush brings on what he evidently cherishes as his most powerful and splendid defense when he calls the roll of great men for whom West Virginia has the credit. As many of those great men are unknown to us, we simply must take Mr. Rush's word as a historian that they are West Virginia heroes. The following is his list of geniuses, giants and celebrities who have hailed from his hills:

Alderson states that West Virginia has not produced one great man. Look into the past and present for such personages as Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson, the greatest field general that ever lived; John W. Davis, famous ambassador and presidential candidate; Superintendent Van Horn, superintendent of transportation of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad (yet he says the state has not produced one railroad man); Granville Davisson Post and Margaret Prescott Montague, led by none in the fiction field of the present-day magazine readers; Alexander Campbell, famous educator and orator of the olden days; John Roscoe Turner, dean of Washington Square College of New York University and chairman of the economic board of the United States Tariff Commission; Michael J. Owens, famous manufacturer; John J. Cornwall, chief counsel of Baltimore and Ohio railroad; scores of governors of other states; Bishops Edwin and Matthew Simpson Hughes of the Methodist Episcopal Church; and other leaders, as Hines, Patrick, Baker and Payne.

Mr. Rush might have thrown in a few mayors and mine managers to make a round number. Aside from the old warrior, "Stonewall" Jackson, who has been a long time dead, and the somewhat eminent Mr. Davis, who is not very much alive, this list of West Virginia's great is so far from dazzling that I wonder if Mr. Rush can have done justice to his State. Counsel for Baltimore and Ohio, unnamed governors and "other leaders" of whom we never heard quite fail to arouse our enthusiasm; and we scarcely feel that we are in the presence of the great. We note also that the celebrity of Melville Davisson Post is uncertain in his native state, since this professor of history calls him "Granville."

But let us be good-natured. I am not interested in making out West Virginia to be a bad state. I only marvel at the poor eulogy of the State that comes from a professor of the history of that State, whom we might suppose could overwhelm us with its native glories. I am generous enough to believe that more can be said for West Virginia than Mr. Rush has been able to say; but if West Virginia cannot boast of her culture and her great men, let her rest her pride upon the good things she can honestly claim.
I must not forget one amusing statement that is made by Mr. Rush. Mr. Alderson mentioned certain great names of whom, he alleged, the average West Virginian is ignorant. And Mr. Rush replies: "It is not important to know who Herodotus, Gibbon and others 'were, when they lived or where' but what did they do." What a delightful contradiction! Imagine anyone knowing what Herodotus and Gibbon did but not knowing who they were!

**A SIDE-LIGHT ON THE HIGHLY MORAL-CLERGY**

HERE is a type of publication in America, of which I have written before and with which everyone assuredly is familiar, that is saturated with sex, steeped in sex, and that depends for its whole phenomenal success upon the shivery, ticklish, palpitating thrill of sex. Such gaudy magazines, full of pictures of passionate beauties in passionate, delicate and dangerous situations—full of such startling comments and captions in big type as, "She was only a girl from the country, and he was a city man, did he love her or was he playing with her?"—full of tales of gals who were ruined, or partly ruined, or nearly ruined—go forth under disingenuous titles as *True Romances, True Confessions, True Stories*, etc., to the very limit of concupiscent sensationalism striking directly at the susceptible glands of a million readers.

There is nothing more trashy and contemptible in the field of American publishing; nothing that is more obviously aimed to set readers all a-flutter with a cheap, low interest in sex; nothing that is more distorting, and more dishonest, in its pictures of sex life. The natural effect of such publications is not simply to fill the minds of readers with visions, thoughts and longings of sex to the exclusion of practically every other interest—to fill readers with a febrile and exaggerated sex-consciousness—but they give their readers a false, silly, melodramatic idea of sex. The maligned leg shows are innocent in comparison with this girl-who-went-wrong, adventures-of-an-unhappy-wife, the-villian-still-pursued-her type of titillating tale.

These "true" tales are sloppy. They are sickening. They are as elevating and enlightening as a dash of ditchwater on the mind. They have a furtive air of the forbidden about them, the suggestion of things done on dark nights, the hint of something thrillingly immoral going on just behind a closed door—all the dishonest, over-wrought, exciting suggestions of sex. Their great success is obviously due to nothing higher than the curiosity of readers to know what a man and a woman do, or try to do, when they get alone together. They have essentially no higher appeal than that of a peep-show.

Yet, by the simplest and most transparent device, these magazines cover their appeal to pruriency with a meretricious moral purpose. They claim to be striking fine manly blows at immorality, to be holding up the ideal of sexual purity, and to be warning the young against the dangers and the pitfalls of sex.
And what is the great self-advertising and self-justifying feature of these magazines? Nothing less than bold displays of letters of earnest congratulation from prominent clergymen of the country, saying how uplifting is this business of shivering the glands and wringing the moist emotions of sticky-minded readers. The purveyors of this True Confession stuff can and do point with a flourish to the approval of the preachers, the guardians of morals, the evangelists of the pure and sinless life. The preachers endorse as highly moral these tales of how a girl was led to the very edge or the very bedside of ruin and then escaped; or how a girl lost her virtue and then wished she had it back; or how a wife discovered after a month's passionate honeymoon that her hubby was running around with the girl who ran the cigar counter in the hotel; or how a sweet little miss from Sleepy Hollow was dragged down, down, down into the pit of vice in the big wicked city.

And when the readers are through with these stories, what do they know of sex, realistically and truthfully and sensibly? Nothing more than they knew before. They are all worked up with suggestions, sensations, with false and vague but intensely exciting pictures of the snappily colored adventures of sex; their curiosity about sex is played upon to the limit and it is not lifted to any higher plane; and worse, their minds are confirmed in a silly, sex-splattered view of life, their imaginations are sickled o'er with the crimson cast of scandal and seduction, and their taste is most wretchedly degraded. And we have the ministers of the country—many of them, whose names and endorsements are significantly displayed in these magazines—saying pompous, oily words of approval in behalf of this rotten type of "literature."

These same preachers are quick to bawl out in condemnation of a serious novel or a serious artistic drama that deals with sex honestly and intelligently. They are foremost in all puritanical works. They are hot and panting on the trail—the tantalizing trail—of sin, of vice, of crimes carnal. And—stupendous joke, revealing the truly decayed state of the puritanical mind—they recommend magazines that are simply wholesalers of the prurient thrills that come from sin and vice. This shows the highly moral caliber of the ministry Christian—or, worse still, it shows and utterly damn their contemptible, weak-minded taste. "Im-moral!" they cry at a fine true play like Rain. "Obscene!" they shout at a powerful drama like Desire Under the Elms. But the tale of how Mabel, the pretty stenographer, flirted with the head salesman, and how he almost over-persuaded her in a taxicab, and how after a supper with wine she came to herself in a strange room—some such variation upon the juicy theme of seduction or near-ruination or love all in a tangle of emotional lingerie—is hailed unctuously by the clergy as "a great moral lesson."

It is of course fitting that preachers should be drawn to this kind of stuff. They themselves make bids to the prurient with their harrowing denunciations and descriptions of sin and vice, unholy in their attractiveness. They deal in a similar kind of fleshy and flashy and flush-faced nonsense. And indeed could not preachers tell True Stories of their own?—if not on themselves, then such a tale, to use an example from George Jean Nathan, as one "in which a choir soprano tells what the sexton tried to do to her after buying her two frosted vanillas...."
A SAD PICTURE OF MEXICO CITY

In an article by a Catholic on the Mexican situation, taken from an Italian paper, I am amused (perhaps because I have a cold and unsympathetic heart) by the closing paragraph. The paragraph is as follows:

“At eight o’clock one evening the Mexican capital seemed more banal than ever, more worldly and indifferent, and utterly absorbed in its own affairs. I was thoroughly tired of hearing constant praise of the Aztecs, tired of the moral emptiness that engulfed me. So I jumped into a taxicab and told the driver to take me to the house of Monsignor Crespi. The Palace of the Apostolic Delegation seemed deserted. I rang several times, and no one came to the door. Just as I was about to leave, the shadow of an Indian servant appeared at the grating. He opened the door and muttered something that I did not understand. I walked into the vestibule. It was empty except for a statue of the Savior with His arms drooping listlessly by his side. I hesitated a minute, and then heard a distant voice bidding me come upstairs. There I found myself unexpectedly in front of a brilliantly lighted altar, and Monsignor kneeling before it worshipping alone.”

Ah! what a sad, affecting and yet holy picture! At least we are supposed to feel it in that way. Why, it is hinted that even “the Savior”—even his lifeless statue—is emotionally overcome by the state of affairs so that he is seen “with His arms drooping listlessly by his side.” My own attitude is that of the well-known question, what is wrong with this picture? There is something wrong with it. The writer is mistaken in the cause of his depression. It is certainly a good thing for Mexico City to be worldly, and “utterly absorbed in its own affairs.” What is gloomy and unreal is the statue of “the Savior”—and the picture of Monsignor kneeling before the altar. We are asked to regard Mexico City’s worldliness, that is to say its realism, as a bad thing—even a terrible thing—and for consoling contrast, for the suggestion of what is really fine, we are introduced to this superstitious scene of a priest on his knees. More worldliness, we say—that is what Mexico needs. The vision of a more civilized future is better than the symbols of a faith that clings to the dark past.

ED HOWE AND SHORT SKIRTS

Ed Howe asks why the women do not decide, finally and for all, how short they want their skirts to be: and then show the courage and the easy manner of their decision. He complains humorously that women boldly don skirts that hit them above the knees, and then timidly pull at their skirts in company as if they were ashamed and would really wish them longer. I gather that Ed Howe is willing to let the women have their dresses as short as they please, only he is embarrassed at what he regards as their indecision.

This is a mistake. The ladies do not in the least regret the lessening
length of their skirts. They want them short, and perhaps shorter than they are. They want the men to see their legs. The men want to see them. And the more they see them, the less they think about them, and the more natural and unassuming everything becomes. But women have been trained a long while in a false modesty. They have been taught that they should be ashamed of their charms, and they have obligingly pretended to be. Now when of late they have more and more thrown off old restraints, it is not to be expected that all traces of the old demeanor should at once disappear.

That pulling at the skirts, of which Ed Howe makes note, does not mean that the females are embarrassed, or that they are ashamed, or that they resent the glances of the males. They are simply—partly unconsciously and partly hypocritically—repeating the gestures of a modesty that they no longer have; that perhaps they never, down in their hearts, really did have. The slight apparent depreciation of the new style is merely the last futile concession to the old style. The readiness with which women rallied to the style of short skirts showed, not that they were slaves of fashion, but that they were proud of their legs.

THE HAVE THE MONEY

ORD comes from Washington that a program of somewhat enlarged scope, to make the country more dry if not entirely dry, is under way. The program appears to be somewhat impressive, when one first reads it. Extra forces will watch the coastline and the Canadian border, to keep out the foreign booze: to prevent good liquor, one might meanly say, from coming in to compete with the home-made bad liquor. Special squads will operate to guard against the diversion of industrial alcohol, a practice which it seems, with all the money and vigilance that has already been expended in this virtuous cause, has been going on at a sinful rate. Detectives, passing as plain men, will be a little more numerously on the job of uncovering the law betrayals by local officials of state, county and city.

As I say, this sounds like a formidable and dead-earnest program. But to my skeptical eye the gist of the matter is revealed in one line. That line contains the information that there is an appropriation of $29,000,000 for the enforcement of Prohibition. They have the money in Washington to spend, and they are going to spend it. They will create more jobs. They will increase the army of Prohibition sleuths that the country already is forced to support. Aside from this phase of it, I do not see much significance in this report of a greater enforcement of Prohibition. No doubt Mr. Andrews and his aides are sincere. Of course—certainly—but they have that twenty-nine million and the fact that they will spend it does not, in strict logic, mean that they will remarkably affect the consumption of liquor in these States.

There used to be great talk about the liquor interests. One of its chief evils in the eyes of agitators, as I remember, was that a great deal of money was made out of the sale of liquor and the immoral business was encouraged for the sake of profit. But what about the Prohibition interests? Would not there be a sudden death of attractive, profitable government jobs if Prohibition were made a completely effective reality?
INERTIA OF IDEALISM

My sympathy goes out to the organizations that promote worthy causes, in behalf of this ideal, or to remedy that injustice. They have a hard time of it, for this reason—even when they can get the members, it is difficult to get them to work. The psychology of it seems to be that a man will sign a card or a sheet of paper, declaring that he believed in a certain list of principles, and then he will sit back with a proud, satisfied air. He immediately begins to see himself as superior to other men. He feels that he has actually accomplished something. The mere act of signing his name appears to him as a great blow struck for the right.

Principles—here is the trouble with these organizations. Their followers can never get beyond the principles. They enlist, but they do not march. Their sense of heroism, idealism and superiority is pleased enough when they have merely identified themselves with an unpopular but worthy cause.

These organizations are probably misled, too, by underestimating the propensity of Americans to join something, join anything, join nearly everything that will break the monotony and flatter their egotism. And there is a certain type to whom a set of principles is alluring, irresistible, potent to attract if not to set in action. The membership, as a whole, of an organization does not signify. Every organization has a working membership—and a signing membership.

Personally, I am inclined to think that the country needs just one more organization. This organization would appeal only to the few. It would have no set of principles. Members would only be required to sign a statement to the effect that they did not then belong to and would not in future join a single organization of any kind. The no-joiners would not be popular. But they would be a relief from the joiners.

THE BOTTOM OF THE POT

Art is long,” we have heard, “and time is fleeting.” As time seems to increase in fleetness, and men are in an ever greater hurry about doing things, they have less leisure or capability for any quiet, deep, thoughtful concern with art. And even the kind of “literature” that men have commonly been in the habit of reading, which appears to throw the least conceivable burden on the intellect, is now regarded as too long by a good deal more than half. “Art,” as it exists for the morons, must be reduced to the last word of brevity. Typical of the time was the announcement not long ago that a certain popular novelist would write a novel that could be told in a few minutes over the radio. Whether this masterpiece for morons was ever written and delivered to a waiting world, I do not know. It probably would have read somewhat as follows: “Jack loved Jill. Jill loved Jack. Jack thought Jill didn’t love him. Jill thought Jack didn’t love her. Then they discovered that they loved each other. Then they were married.” Or: “William Jones was found dead in his bed. Sam Sleuth, the celebrated detective,
was called. He decided that Jones had not committed suicide; and that he had not died of heart failure; but that somebody had killed him. He suspected first one and then another, and questioned a lot of people; finally he discovered that Jones had been shot by his cook, who had had a secret love affair with his eldest son ten years before." Even this may be injecting a little too much circumstance and atmosphere into this modern style of radio tale for the great, busy, brain-weary masses. It would doubtless be still more boiled down, as for instance: "Love. Doubt. Marriage." Or: "Murder. Investigation. Discovery." What matter about character and narrative? They are boring in the last degree. They are too long—and time, for the thoughtlessly active, is in full flight.

"Snappy stories," to use the term generally, are the rage of the day. Boiling down has been carried to such an extreme of facile, slapdash technique that the pot-boilers have gone down to the very bottom of the pot. What is at the bottom of the pot is well seen in the latest device of popular magazine fiction, introduced by the Red Book. This is a kind of abbreviated illustrated serial, which consists of several almost full two-page pictures, with a few lines of reading matter under the pictures. A few installments of this sort of thing, and you have a "story" indeed that "he who runs may read."

Such a story, now placed in all its brilliant time-and-thought-saving brevity before the Red Book readers, is thus entitled: "That Jocelyn Girl. By Samuel Merwin. Realized in Pictures by James Montgomery Flagg." That phrase, "realized in pictures," is a good one and expresses well the idea back of this one-two-three "art." It is too much to ask, in the old-fashioned way, that the reader shall realize the story for himself. The reader shouldn't have any mental work to do at all, should be spared as far as possible even the plain labor of attention, should scarcely have to read at all. This story leads off with a page of pictures, showing the leading "characters," with their names. We turn the page, and are confronted by a picture, taking up nearly two whole pages, and showing a girl and two men seated at a table, "wrapped in a brown study." Underneath, in a few snappy sentences, we are told that a young girl has been raised with little knowledge of her father, and when her aunt dies she wonders where her father is. She finds a paper which reveals him as owner of a circus, and further informs her that by a short train ride she can see that circus the very next day. On the next two pages we have a drawing of a circus scene; and again a few lines beneath the large picture, to inform us that the girl has gone to the circus, met on the way a young fellow she had seen before with her father, been confused by the strange and noisy spectacle of the circus, and announced to the circus clown that she has come to find her father. Another circus scene is spread across the next two pages, and in the snappy "cut lines" underneath we read that the girl has a chatty visit with the clown, then sees her father walking through the crowd, starts forward and is held back by the young man aforesaid—and is an observer of a moment's work of pocket-picking by her father. And then, "Continued in our next." A few more installments of this stuff, and you have a "complete story" in less time than it takes to read a letter from home.

I have my own theory (which is just a bright little theory and no
more) of the origin of this kind of "Instant Postum" fiction for the morons. Of course the influence of the movies and the tabloid newspapers may be seen. But what probably happened was this: Some clever young fellow on the Red Book staff, after long uninspiring familiarity with the style of synopsis ("what has gone before") that precedes every installment of a serial, suddenly had an inspiration—a brand new idea. Why not cut out the story and just print the synopsis? Why ask the readers to wade through a long story, at some wear and tear of brain tissue, when they could read quickly a bright, snappy synopsis? What a saving to the writer, the editor and the reader! What a happy thought all around! So that is what has been done. It is not, strictly speaking, an invention—but a surgical operation—the mere cutting out of the story. The new fiction is simply the synopsis—the thin outline of a plot—with pictures to match.

No doubt the thing will be popular. It seems indeed, for the half-witted crowd, a very beneficent idea. It does away entirely with effort of the imagination. The reader does not have to bother with even the most rudimentary ideas of character. Even the plot, superficially the most entertaining thing in fiction, is cut down to the barest limits. There is just enough writing to indicate what the pictures are about. This will widen the audience for fiction. The merest child can read it, for nine-tenths of the reader's effort consists only in looking at the pictures.

THE CONCEIT OF THE AGE

It is a good, wholesome thing to return to a consideration, now and again, of the writings of the past—the long past, and not simply the immediate past—and realize that we are not the first age to produce thinkers, wise observers of life and penetrating students of human character. There is a style of boasting in every age, the burden of which is that in this age Progress has suddenly taken on a capital-letter significance and "ideas and ideals" undreamt of in the past of humanity have been discovered by a superior breed of man. Hazlitt, speaking of his own age, has described perfectly this attitude which is to be observed more or less in every age. He says, in his Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth:

We think, in this age of reason and consummation of philosophy, because we knew nothing twenty or thirty years ago, and began to think then, for the first time in our lives, that the rest of mankind were in the same predicament, and never knew anything till we did; that the world had grown old in sloth and ignorance, had dreamt out its long minority of five thousand years in a dozing state, and that it first began to wake out of sleep, to rouse itself, and looked about it, startled by the light of our unexpected discoveries, and the noise we made about them. Strange error of our infatuated self-love! Because the clothes we remember to have seen worn when we were children are now out of fashion, and our grandmothers were then old women, we conceive, with magnanimous continuity of reasoning, that it must have been much worse three hundred years before and that grace, youth, and beauty are things of modern date—as if Nature had ever been old, or the sun had first shone on our folly and presumption.

This attitude is held by those who have imaginations limited by the span of their own lives and memories. Their minds cannot expand, their
vision is entirely too feeble to leap to the perception of past and remote times. They cannot imagine anything as concerning them that has not happened directly to them: they do not have the vividest sense in the world of what happened to them a few years back, so how can they feel any quick living interest in events, ideas, personalities of several hundred years ago? They have no thoughtful view of what is going on before their eyes—they rush along with very little reflection or intellectual curiosity—and it follows naturally that the eighteenth century, or the age of Shakespeare, or Athens in its golden age can mean nothing to them.

I find that this boast of progress, and of superiority in civilization and understanding of life, comes mostly from those who are the least given to thought, who in reality have such few and simple ideas that it is scarcely worth while to notice them, and whose ideals are merely gestures of conformity to current prejudices and the parrot-like repetition of copy-book morality. You will not be apt to find a man of real intelligence, of sound culture, thus bellowing about his age being "foremost in the files of time." The truly modern, who are in truth in close sympathetic relation with the best of their age, realize that evidences of the modern spirit can be found all along the highways of the past. They know that a revival of thought and art in any age draws liberally upon the spirit of certain past times: that every renaissance is at heart a rediscovery of truth and beauty—not a new discovery of something that has gone utterly unsuspected before.

The true modern is at home in the Athens that held art and philosophy in lofty esteem, and he has much more in common with Plato than with the platitudinous politician who represents him in Congress and boasts that America is the greatest nation the sun ever shone upon; he is at home with Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and prefers Jonson's "learned sock" or Shakespeare's "woodnotes wild" to the pomposities of a Chautauqua wiseacre or the twitterings of a newspaper rhymer; he is at home with those daring thinkers, those fighters for ideas, those "soldiers in the liberation war of humanity," Voltaire and Diderot and the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century—and his mind beats in modern sympathy with them.

The man of true culture knows that men appreciated the joy of life centuries ago; that they believed in truth and beauty then; that they saw the importance of freedom of thought; that they had wit and taste, and skepticism, and originality—in short, that the feeling and thinking faculties of man have ripened and borne fruit in art and philosophy many times under the timeless sun.

And are we generally blessed with certain advantages, certain easy offerings of definite accumulated knowledge, that were not had by wise men of the long past? And are we to say that we are therefore, individually, the intellectual superiors of a Socrates or a Bacon or a Voltaire? Was Plato unaware of the radio and steam and electricity? Are we familiar with some ideas that were not expressed, fully and precisely, and in their modern form, by thinkers in another age? On this point Hazlitt has a sensible word to say:

Grant that we improve, in some respects, in a uniformly progressive ratio, and build, Babel-high on the foundation of other men's knowledge, as in matters of science and speculative inquiry, where by going often over the same general ground,
certain general conclusions have been arrived at, and in the number of persons reasoning on a given subject, truth has at last been hit upon, and long-established error exploded; yet this does not apply to cases of individual power and knowledge, to a million of things beside, in which we are still to seek as much as ever, and in which we can only hope to find, by going to the fountain head of thought and experience.

That is to say, while a teacher in high school is privy to some facts and discoveries (handed to him on a platter) that were unknown to Shakespeare, it does not follow that he has a greater power of thought, a finer truth of insight and observation, than Shakespeare. The objects of thought and beauty have ever been present to the mind of man; and that mind has been busy a good deal longer than the few years which have witnessed the glory of our own generation. It is our good fortune that we have much to draw upon, to build upon. We are lucky, and this may make us lazy, and quite too proud. As an English poet, Thomas Beddoes, has expressed our "superiority," it is chiefly this:

How glorious to live! Even in one thought
The wisdom of past times to fit together,
And from the luminous minds of many men
Catch a reflected truth; as, in one eye,
Light, from unnumbered worlds and farthest planets
Of the star-crowded universe, is gathered
Into one ray.

OPPORTUNITY FOR YOKELS

A

READER OF MINE, Henry Nelson, credits me with being a "bright young man" who, from the very multiplicity of my written opinions, am confused into error. It would not become me to say that I am incapable of mistakes; but in the present instance I plead not guilty. Mr. Nelson misunderstood what I wrote recently about yokels and their lowly function in the cosmic scheme—if they may be referred to in any such large way. Quite grievously, this reader accuses me of trying to put in a word for a caste system in our glorious Republic, where opportunity is equal in theory and depends upon a number of things in practice. He writes:

We have no castes in this country. A boy who appears to be a yokel may, if he have the opportunity, develop into a very superior man and, if he is to be shut off from all advantages of education and of bettering his condition, a wrong is done to him and the world is cheated out of the useful man that he might have been. Give everybody a chance and there will still be enough of the incapable to do the world's drudgery.

A yokel is defined as "a country bumpkin." Lincoln was a yokel. Garfield was a yokel. Franklin, as a boy, walking the streets of Philadelphia, eating a hunk of bread as he walked, would have been a yokel. The number of such examples is almost beyond belief. So don't talk any more about a yokel class, and about keeping them in ignorance so that they may do the world's disagreeable tasks. There is no such class.

Oh, yes, there is such a class; it is plainly to be observed, and its influence, as an unintelligent but stubborn mass, is felt in this land which divides its respect between mere bigness and the commonplace. This does not mean, however, that one who is born among the yokelry may not
have a spark of something in him that is higher than yokelry. Lincoln was more than a yokel, and so was Garfield (a far inferior man), and so was Benjamin Franklin. The awkwardness of youth, and the lack of polish and sophistication, do not make a yokel. There is a kind of strong force of character, which may be rough, but which will make its way in the world. All success to them, say I. I am the last man to be accused of wishing to keep culture from anyone who is receptive, seeking, capable. Are not the Little Blue Books designed to open the doors of culture to those who cannot afford a high price of admission?

Yet this does not alter the circumstance that there are many who would remain, to the end of the world, quite blind to such an opportunity. The genuine yokel is incapable of culture. The world is full of this kind of people, to whom wisdom and beauty will ever remain dead things, as if they were not. But in this country the yokel, without ever advancing a step beyond the status of a yokel, is given an exaggerated idea of his importance. It is assumed that, if he can barely make his mark on a ballot, he has the implicit and God-given wisdom to decide all questions under the sun, even what more intelligently seeking persons shall be permitted to study in the schools.

The peasantry of Europe does not presume to speak with authority on questions of which it is ignorant: it has no illusions of democracy to shed a false light upon its ignorance. The peasantry of America does so presume, when it should simply be following its natural course and not trying to overrule the world of science and beat down the head of culture.

Let those acquire culture to whom culture appeals, and the more they are the better. They will not be yokels, however.

"TOM" AND "BOB"

We consider that one of the cheap, contemptible methods of the most holy hacks of God, in trying to get the best of opponents whom it cannot meet intellectually, is that of mentioning their names, always, with derisive abbreviations. Skeptics and anti-Christians are simply a ragamuffin crew of "Tom, Dick and Harry" to the clergy—as, for example, "Tom" Paine and "Bob" Ingersoll. This style of ecclesiastical derogation is well and briefly discussed by R. B. Wills (606 Hughes Ave., Culver City, Calif.). Mr. Wills writes:

Why is the justly great Paine set down with an abbreviated "Tom" in contrast to George Washington, John Hancock, et al.? . . . As one of the Church's most treasured items of hokum is solemn dignity, it treats its enemies quite naturally on the theory that to make said enemies appear in an undignified light is to riddle half or more of their influence. "Tom," you see, in contrast to the formal "Thomas," actually appears "common," ordinary—thus, you have a "common, ordinary man" of shallow, spurious thoughts, a low ignorant fellow. Why was Colonel Ingersoll, in being abused by the harried clergy, called "Bob" Ingersoll? Why, to give him the air of a barber-shop philosopher, a back-alley ballyhooer; in other words, to discountenance him and show how utterly unfit he was to dare consider himself equal to debate with God's solemn prophets.

It is indeed a fixed idea of the Church that no man can be regarded as a serious thinker, worthy of respect, who is a real downright fighter
against the shams of religion. And we even find critics who ought to know better, and who are not dogmatic churchmen, discussing such men as Paine and Ingersoll—and even Voltaire, the greatest of them all—as if there were something rather vulgar about them; as if, while they did admittedly say and do a number of good things, they were lacking in manners—that is, as it is more usually put, lacking in reverence; there is a certain breed of critic who holds a polite and unoffending and carefully bunk-friendly style to be the highest claim of a writer to dignified appreciation. Thus we have a man of the caliber of Carl Van Doren, a free-minded and thoughtful critic, calling Thomas Paine the "Ragged Philosopher." And why? Because he is read by high and low, because he expressed his views so forcibly that they live today, not as scholastic or historic documents, but as living arguments.

Yet, with all the Church's attempt to cast opprobrium upon the names of Paine and Ingersoll, how much better those names are known than those of the mediocre churchmen who opposed them and who are now forgotten. The works of Paine and Ingersoll are a permanent part of our literature, and go on having a considerable influence, while the sermons and anathemas of their contemporaries are in the dust of oblivion, or known only as ludicrous curiosities. The time spirit, as it is said, was with these "infidels." They made themselves significant, on the side of liberty and honest thought. Their opponents, for all their little uproar, were insignificant beyond their brief blustering day.

Mr. Wills asks why Thomas Jefferson, a freethinker of much the same beliefs as Paine, has not been treated with a similar contumely and called "Tom" Jefferson. He answers his own question:

The reasons are several and inter-related; but I'd suggest, because, one, he was President; two, he wasn't, like Paine, an aggressive, impassioned opponent of the Church. The office of President cloaks even a Coolidge with some dignity; anyhow Jefferson was inherently a gentleman of dignity, cool and sane. Paine left open avenues for attack by being hot and often scurrilous in his onslaughts on general stupidity as well as the Church. Had Paine had Voltaire's sense of humor and hurled a laugh with every barb, the Church could never have made "Tom" stick, and he'd be even more of a pain to the Church than he is. But few people could survive kicks and cuffs and dungeons, as Paine did, and have any sense left, let alone sense of humor.

This is, in some points, a wrong view. Paine was a man of equal dignity with Jefferson. And the latter was capable of as heated argument in politics as Paine was in religion. It is not fair to say that Paine was "scurrilous." He was a hard-hitting foe of sham, that was all. It is true that Paine did not have the sense of humor Voltaire had, but he did have humor, and he had the striking faculty of putting a sham in the most ridiculous light. As for Paine's influence, it seems to me that it has been pretty large. What single book has knocked religion out of more heads than has The Age of Reason?

It is true that had Thomas Paine been the third President of the United States, he could not have been so freely condemned by the clergy. And Jefferson did escape the holy howlers by letting his heresies be more a matter of private conscience, and not getting into any open and deliberate fight with the Church. Naturally, the Church hates most those who fight it hardest.
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Jan 1923 L he: 300 titles in The Pocket Series.
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July 1923 L he: Pocket Series 135¢ volume - (to go back 97 a dime at midnight June 30, 1923)

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