The Kansas City Star

BY

CHARLES H. HOGAN
The Kansas City Star
A Literary Cat-House that Parades its Benign, Pontifical Purity and Saintliness

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The Kansas Star

A Family of Si-Humour thru Generations of British, Continental, and Spanish

By

Charles H. Hogan

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THE CATHEDRAL OF CASTRATED JOURNALISM

An impressive hush prevails in the sanctuary as the soft-spoken priests move about their august tasks. The subalterns and deacons address each other with dignity—even the soprano voices in the women’s section of the choir are muted.

The acolytes at the shrine address the higher celebritants with proper terror. Pharisees and Publicans alike worm their cringing, obsequious ways across the vast chamber to beg mercy or an accolade from the high priests in the corner—and a pot-bellied ghost beams or glowers over this timorous, courtly method of publishing a newspaper!

The ghost is the specter of Col. William Rockhill Nelson. Although his immortal remains are safely enclosed in a gaudy Gothic sepulcher his haunting spirit strides up and down the city room of his powerful Kansas City Star. The specter casts a stern eye on news stories in the writing, and frowns on the sly way in which the printers manage to hide a jug or two in the joint. Above all, the ghost is praising or condemning the current handling of the technic which he developed to black jack advertisers.

The colonel’s ghost is haunting a newspaper which any rational person would say couldn’t possibly happen—but it did!

Almost daily the late colonel’s glorified country bladder labors mightily to bring forth—a robin! The robin, or it could be a cute little bunny rabbit, usually is pecking at his reflection in a window glass. Whatever he is up to, he is good for a column or so of slush, edition after edition, in the Star.

The paper also drools over toots who go to sleep in picture shows and cats that get caught in trees. And, at the moment, (May, 1946) this august house-organ for the Republican party is slobbering all over the newsprint shortage about the Democratic family of Harry S. Truman.

When Truman acceded to the presidency his mother automatically became “Mother Truman” in the Star. A tart, outspoken, dignified and thoroughly admirable lady in every respect, “Mother Truman” is depicted as a shy, fragile and lovable oldster, who must be handled with commiserating gloves lest she fall apart.

Sometimes Miss Margaret Truman becomes, with sweet simplicity, “Miss Margaret” to the Star. I know for a fact that the footsteps of this pleasant, amiable young lady are dogged relentlessly, not only by cloying secret service men but by gushing females from the distaff side of the staff.

“She’s just adorable,” one of the girls shrieked after meeting “Miss Margaret” for the first time. “Why! You wouldn’t believe it but it was just like meeting any other girl!”

These are the unconscious, rude intimacies of all hicktown bugs and are not to be condemned—except on the grounds of bad taste. But what is to be condemned is the fact that as a newspaper The Kansas City Star is not a newspaper!

It distorts, twists, burles or ignores news to suit its own political will. For, actually, the Star is a cold, grasping political boss.

The founder of the paper long ago departed to tell God how to run Heaven but his ghostly hand maintains the strangle-hold on the state of Kansas which it clutched half a century ago. The Star owns the present sanctified rulers of Kansas City, Mo., and has a fighting chance to take over the government of the state of Missouri in a couple of years. Thus, its editorial opinions are not confined to the editorial page,
where they belong. The paper's bias pervades the news columns, as the staff well knows. Consequently, political stories are colored, deleted, "played down" or chalked out the window.

In all fairness, the Star is not alone in this offense. Virtually all news columns today merely reflect the megrims of the publisher. The hired help know this sorry fact and, while often sneering privately at the paper's policy, guide their literary and editorial efforts accordingly. But the Star protests its benign and pontifical purity from this prevailing sin to the point where the masses either curse this literary cat-house or vomit—or both!

While this political bias is recognized and praised or condemned by its readers the Star rarely fails to befuddle its public by so-called "Star style." The style is a form of news coverage which reached its glorious fruition in the whimsies and vagaries of the late Alexander Woollcott, himself an old Star boy.

THE "STAR STYLE"—HOW IT KNOCKS THE FECES OUT OF WORKMANLIKE NEWSPAPERMAN

On spot news stories, such as coverage of train wrecks, and fires, and wars, "the style" doesn't apply. This is merely because the paper possesses some few rewrite men who knock off such stories swiftly, accurately and then forget them.

The blissful, leisurely "Star style" consists in backing into a story instead of writing it in lucid sentences. Because of its insistent prudish-ness, "Star style" is the darling of the precise pundits of high-school rhetoric and the revered pet of "journalism schools." For example, consider the toots lost in the picture show. This would be perfect "Star style" on such a world-shaking incident:

Well, it was a "ho-hum" sort of picture, anyway, and to the golden-haired girl and the be-freckled boy there seemed to be nothing better to do!

So, having eaten the last of the five-cent bag of popcorn which they had purchased at the beginning of the show, they cuddled up and quietly went to sleep.

The blasts of the guns as Roy Rogers pursued a gang of desperados across the screen did not interrupt the slumbers of the children.

But eventually the performance ended. The audience departed and it was then that Joseph Q. Blow, 57, of 4961 Blowhigh Drive, manager of the Gem theater, discovered that two of his little patrons had registered their opinion of the film by saying "ho-hum."

The little seven-year-old with the golden curls stirred irritably when Blow shook her gently.

"I'm still sleepy, mama," she murmured.

Her eight-year-old "boy friend," snoring slightly, did not even respond to the theater manager's repeated request to supply his name.

"Not knowing exactly what to do, I was on the point of taking the children to my own home when the officers arrived," Blow remarked.

The police had been summoned by Mrs. Erzella Gristwich, 20, of 1619 Morninglow street, mother of cuddlesome Joan, who said she had become "completely frantic" when her "sleepy" daughter did not return from the theater.

So little Joan, by then thoroughly awake, got a thrilling ride home in the police car, with her "boy friend," Harry Dingle, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry J. Dingle, sr., of 1621 Morninglow, happily working the siren of the vehicle.

That's the sort of thing that actually happens in the Star! Often
it dribbles on for columns and usually crowds a genuine news story out of the paper.

It should be mentioned that the austerity of "Star style" requires reporters to put grammar into the mouths of the subjects. For instance, in that imaginary episode, the theater manager might have said: "Well, here I was with these two kids and I didn't know what the hell I was gonna do with 'em but the cops come." He might have said that—but not in the Star.

"Not knowing exactly what to do, I was on the point," etc., would be his language in print, no matter what Blow might have groused.

**A PLUNGE INTO A BUBBLING FOUNTAIN OF BILGE**

The foregoing is a bit of imagery. In case it seems too ridiculous for any thinking person to believe, here is a glowing jewel from The Kansas City Star of April 23, 1946, which more than tops it!

**HOME HUNT ON A PICNIC**

**TWO GIRLS HAVE HOLIDAY ADVENTURE IN THE RAIN**

But Joann Trapp, 11, and Janet Pratt, 12, Get an Adult "No" After They Discover House for Family

When the landlord has told your parents they must leave within ninety days, even though there apparently is not a vacant house in Kansas City where your family can move, something just has to be done—especially, since your two big brothers are coming home from the army and navy in a few weeks.

Joanne Trapp, 11 years old, 1526 East Forty-ninth street terrace, was firm in belief as she walked yesterday morning with her friend, Janet Pratt, 12, of 918 Greenwood street, through the Intercounty district.

THEIRS A HOLIDAY OUTING

The two girls were carrying a luncheon basket. It was a wonderful day—the sun was shining, there were pretty rolling clouds in the sky and school was closed for a holiday. Everything was ideal for their picnic on a grassy slope in the thinly populated area between Kansas City and Independence.

"It's the old housing shortage," Janet explained. "I heard my folks talking about it. It's something new, because when I lived on Cedar and your folks lived on Holmes, I never heard anything about it."

"I know," Joanne said. "But we just got to find a house. What do you think will happen if we don't have any place for Ted and Bob to come home to? We just got to do something, Janet."

As they ate their lunch they discussed varied solutions.

"Did you talk to your landlord?" Janet asked.

"No, that wouldn't do any good. Dad said he wasn't to blame. He owned the house and just like us he's got to have a place to live," Joanne replied.

**QUERY ON A HOME-COMING**

"Do you know when Bob will get home from Manila?"

"Not exactly," Joanne answered, "but he's written that it will be sometime this summer. Ted will be back any week now. He's been in the navy more than two years."

By now the clouds had darkened and rain began falling.

"We'd better hurry," Janet said.

Heads down and both still carrying the basket, they ran down the road. The rainfall increased as they neared the 1000 block of Glenwood road, and they ran up the front steps of the 6-room, 2-story house at 1021 Glenwood.

"Whew!" Janet said, "But we're wet. I know the lady who lives here. She'll let us come in and get dry."


"The woman must have moved," Janet said. "I guess we'll have to go on home in the rain."

"But, Janet, it's empty. Nobody lives here. Maybe we can move here," Joanne cried excitedly.

**THEY INSPECT THE HOUSE**

The girls rushed to the front door, which they found was unlocked. They entered the house. It was like a dream—finding a home for the Trapps in a rainstorm.

They laughed and shouted as they raced from one room to another, upstairs and down, opening and closing windows.

They had returned to the first floor when two men, their faces solemn, quickly stepped through the front door.

The men were John Hiffner and James B. Scott, Jr., deputy sheriffs, who had been sent to the vacant house after neighbors had telephoned the alarm that vandals or prowlers were in the house.
Joanne explained that she had found a house for her family and Janet filled in the gaps in Joanne's story. After carefully listening to the girls' jumbled story, the deputies took them home and related the episode to the girls' parents.

THEY CHECK ON OWNER.

Janet's mother, Mrs. F. M. Pratt, told the girls that she and Janet's father had talked about the housing problem confronting Joanne's parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Trapp, and agreed with the girls that perhaps they had solved it.

She checked by telephone with neighbors and learned that Dr. William J. Lee, a dentist, who lives at 1513 Northern boulevard, Independence, owned the house and planned to sell it as soon as it was painted and the rooms papered.

The news that Dr. Lee intended to sell the house swept the smiles off the girls' faces and Joann bit her lower lip. She had told Janet that her father had said buying a house at this time was completely out of the question.

You see, everything in the "style" is there. The sedate, lofty grammar, the giggling fretting with innocuous details such as "their picnic on a grassy slope in the thinly populated area" and so on. Most delightful of all is the manner in which the bemused writer of this gem managed to project herself (or himself) into the very minds of the two girls who wandered into an empty house.

The Star is a sort of inky God—it sees all, knows all and marks the sparrows in their fall! Nuzzling in on the precise, philosophical conversations of two young girls is a cinch for it!

THE WOMAN'S PAGE—A NEW HIGH IN JOURNALISTIC OBSCENITY

The gurgling insipidity of such obviously fictitious trivia reaches a bubbling peak in that journalistic obscenity, "the woman's page." In the Star, the "page" is a buxom section and the glittering goo is laid on with a shovel.

To the Star, respectable brides get married in two things—"settings" and heirlooms. For example: "The Rev. Maurice Coates read the service in a setting of white snapdragons, ferns and burning tapers." Or, "Dean Claude W. Sprouse read the service in a chancel setting of burning tapers, huckleberry foliage and ferns."

"Rare old heirloom Duchess lace adorned the gown and veil which was worn by Miss Antoinette Porter when she exchanged marriage vows with Mr. Jean M. Milar, a son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Milar, yesterday morning at St. Therese church." (The foregoing dips into Star-dusted ecstasy are from the edition of April 28, 1946.)

And in the same edition "the bride's only ornament was an heirloom pearl necklace." Still another vestal, it appears, was attended by a young lady who must have been a sight to see!

The way the official simpering section of this simpering newspaper put it, this young maid of honor "wore a petal suede gown in chartreuse shade with softly pleated skirt. The sleeves were brief and the neckline was round. She wore chartreuse feathers in her hair and her bouquet was of shrimp shaded geranium blossoms."

Imagine the feelings of the flirtatory groom and his best man when this vision came floating down the aisle, with green feathers sticking out of her hair and carrying what apparently was a bundle of shrimp for a bouquet. Why it must have been enough to sober the poor devils up!

Enraptured readers of the same edition were wafted into gossamer dreamland with the following tidbit: "The bride, who was given in marriage by her father, wore a madonna blue satin gown and a single strand of pearls which had been worn by her grandmother." The "madonna blue" number and grandma's pearls naturally graced a "setting of palms, Woodwardia ferns, Calla lilies and burning tapers."

"Madonna blue," it is to be presumed, is the same thing as the "seafoam blue satin" creations worn by the attendants at another of these solemn orgiastic preliminaries to the business of going to bed with a woman without worrying about the house—dick.
Negro brides do not get married at all as far as the Star is concerned. In fact, Negroes are not even news in this alleged newspaper unless they turn up as rapists, or hi-jackers or get themselves embroiled in typical, hilarious, "darky" domestic difficulties.

More than that, until Joe Lewis managed to wallop his way into the heavyweight championship of the world and subsequently win the acclaim of all Americans by his gentlemanly conduct, the paper had a ban on publication of any Negro's picture.

But getting back to the simpering section, consider such enraptured blather as—"the bride wore a suit frock of egg-shell crepe, accented with an inset yoke of egg-shell lace. The form-fitting bodice featured a row of self-colored buttons and flared into a soft peplum at the waist. Her accessories were of mink-mist brown (sic! God save us all in the hour of destruction!) and her bonnet of eggshell straw was trimmed with white roses and mink-mist veiling."

"Mink-mist brown," whatever that may be, is not to be confused with the "sandstone brown" which graced the form of still another of these novitiates at the altar of pure rather than profane love.

Of course, the "woman's page" in any paper is a journalistic hangover from the days when the dainty little conniving creatures were assumed, by their tobacco chomping betters, to be giggling idiots instead of thinking human beings. But while many metropolitan papers are presently attempting to whittle this muck section down to its proper size and to minimize the kittenish gushing, the hidebound literary relic of the late lusty colonel clings to such traditional quaint simperings.

Incidentally, the paper's society editor has one of the toughest jobs in the newspaper business. Because of the publication's uncontested position as chronicler of the printable doings of the local mighty, position in the society column means everything.

The editor has to make spot decisions on whether Mrs. L. Titmouse Sneeley's luncheon at the country club rates top billing over the musicale, given in a "setting" at the Atheneum, by Mrs. J. Whinnington Boom-bosom.

Whichever way she jumps in such crises, the editor catches shrill hell for her decision because the Star is the darling of the city's stuffed skirts just as it is the altars of the city's stuffed shirts.

**LORD ROBERTS—ALL-POWERFUL DEITY**

These skirts and shirts are the parties who burn joss sticks at the feet of the Star's managing editor, Roy A. Roberts. To such devotees Roberts is an all-powerful deity who must constantly be appeased and flattered. To a cynic, such constant grovelings at the Roberts shrine are hilarious; for the hefty Buddha they tremble before is not only a ruthless politician but a competent reporter and writer. I often suspect that as a reporter Roberts secretly jeers at the slugs crawling around his altar.

As a god, he is particularly successful in interviewing himself in his writings. This stupendous innovation in journalism is accomplished with ease and despatch. Roberts thinks up certain questions of great moment and then supplies the answers.

But as a politician Roberts wields a merciless whip and as the reigning poobah over the nominal rulers of a prairie metropolis he is genial but firm in his Godliness. Woe betide the social or business climber who manages to get himself on Roberts' "son-of-a-bitch" list in Kansas City, Mo., or any place in the state of Kansas or in some parts of Missouri.

The "son-of-a-bitch" list is a nebulous thing but it exists, and it creates terror in the hearts of those who tremble before the Star's might.

Roberts cracks his whip on the eager beavers in the rich realm which is disserved by his paper; few of the palpitating serfs dare to strike back.
Weevily politicians wend their cringing way to this deity and so great is his power that he has become a kind of reverse edition of the late Tom Pendergast. At the present time Roberts reigns supreme in Kansas City over a sort of bastard political machine which is neither Democrat nor Republican but which is a trifle more adroit in its skull-duggeries at the city hall than the Pendergast behemoth was in its dippy-doodle boodling. It goes without saying that Roberts, as front man for the Star, literally tells politicians in the state of Kansas when to spit.

In 1938, the esteemed Alf Landon did not even dare to release hand-outs of his ponderosities until “Mr. Roberts” had approved them. Among the newswriters, incidentally, it was generally believed that Roberts not only edited Landon’s profundities in that whirlwind sweep of Maine and Vermont but actually wrote the ones that seemed to make some sort of sense.

THE STAR’S PROSTITUTED NEWS COVERAGE

Now it is a truism that editors and publishers, like ditch-diggers and tycoons, have a right to their political opinions. It might even be granted that they have the right to whoop for these opinions on their own editorial pages. In my opinion such fulminations give the gentlemen an innocent pleasure and do little harm because most of the balderdash which passes for editorial comment today merely reflects and cuddles up to the superstitions of the paper’s readers.

But I contend it is a despicable perversion of the sacred “power of the press” to pervert the news report into a kind of political harlot who has for pimps a choice gang of political jackals.

Oh, the Star protests its innocence of this crime! It calls itself “independent” but any schoolboy within the scope of its tyranny mocks this pusillanimous hypocrisy.

The Star, as oracle for the Republican party and the golden gods of conservative big business, is about as independent as that beloved international house detective, Herbert Hoover. Having strangled the last of its enfeebled opposition several years ago it can do what it damn pleases with controversial news and consistently does exactly that.

A small example of its “independence” will suffice. In the recent city election in Kansas City the Star, on one day, managed to give 77 inches of space to hosannas for its political puppets and seven inches of space to the profundities of the Democratic organization Messiahs.

Such obscene antics might be tolerated in a frankly partisan publication of a political party, or a labor group, or a business group. But they become a menace to free thought and a free ballot when a monopolistic “independent” newspaper resorts to them in a political campaign.

By way of contrast, I covered several heated political campaigns while working on Amon G. Carter’s Fort Worth Star-Telegram. As everyone knows, Carter is a vigorous Democrat and the editorial policy of the eminent paper which he heads is Democratic. Texas Republicans, of course, are a picayune lot, squealing feebly in that vast Baptist wilderness.

But the Democratic party has feuding factions and political races range in tone all the way from billingsgate to mayhem. Carter, as recognized king of the west portion of the state, has his finger in many a political pie and astutely yields that finger.

But on political feuds and campaigns we were sternly instructed to give each candidate equal space and an equal, unbiased coverage of the contestants’ remarks.

Furthermore, the managing editor, James R. Record, far from slithering around pulling political puppet strings, so feared even a hint that his news columns were tainted that he rigorously abstained from attending the “speakings” and other political shindigs.

That, it seems apparent, is the way to publish a newspaper instead
of a piling handout for any gang of politicians, even though you might privately own their fawning, larcenous souls.

As a newspaper executive Roberts is a totally different character. He is fond and proud of his staff members and is given to throwing whining parties for them on such occasions as weddings and birthdays. He has protected many a besotted staff member from the ire of his betters. For years he fought stoutly to keep one such dipsomaniac on the payroll and when dismissal eventually became inevitable, he unostentatiously paid off debts of several thousand dollars for the poor devil.

When the Journal-Post finally succumbed to the talented smothering tactics of the Star and to the idiocies of its own management, Roberts made many long distance calls to fellow publishers seeking jobs for the opposition staff members.

Such genuinely charitable and considerate facets of this highly complex character merit the highest praise. But as the Vare of the prairies Roberts is not admirable.

Which seems to bring us to another manifestation of the Star dictatorship. The paper has a farm system that is flossier than the Yankees ever thought of, and maintains a glorious paternalistic clutch on the corn-shuckin’ section of the prairie press.

Two simple columns seem to do the trick as far as the country papers are concerned. Editorial witticisms of favored small town editors are carried in the ‘Missouri Notes’ and ‘Kansas Notes’ columns and these worthies become so many insufferable pouter pigeons in their communities every time they “make the Star.”

Knowing that the Star is infatuated with homely homilies and reverent tributes to everything from Mothers Day to the gustatory merits of leaving whipped cream off pumpkin pie, the whistle stop division of the Star’s farm system constantly strives and pants to cram the columns with such mawkish offerings before the shrine.

Other small town editors in the Star’s territory merely struggle about their business of publishing their papers, hopeless of ever attaining immortality in the columns, because at some time or another they have told the mighty mogul to go to hell and thereby incurred its everlasting Jovian wrath.

Those unfortunate damned souls know that their brilliances would be ignored by the Star, even if they had managed to engage the editorial services of that well-known writing team, Moses and God.

BILL WHITE—THE SAINTLY STAR’S PET DISCIPLE

Through the years this policy of bestowing paternal pats on the heads of the worthy and the wrathful lightning of the Deity on the damned has produced some strange phenomena, especially in the weird, holy soil of Kansas.

But no stranger manifestation of the Star’s godhood ever walked the golden streets to glory than that revered disciple of the Star school of divinity, William Allen White.

As a young man, White took his holy orders in the Star’s lofty cathedral and by zealous application before the Nelsonian altar eventually merited the approbation of the elders in the temple.

With the beams of the elders upon him, White journeyed forth into the intellectual wilderness which is Kansas, there to establish a branch church.

Year in and year out the zealous young missionary worked mightily in the vineyard and step by step wormed his way in the Star domain to a place at the foot of the throne itself.

They quoted him; they gave testimony before their sprawling congregation as to their missionary’s general fitness and intellectual worthiness.

In the Star, White became a “sage” and his worthy summing up of the appalling situation at one time prevailing in the Sunflower state
is dragged out from time to time and reprinted solemnly by the Star as a sort of second Sermon on the Mount.

"What's the Matter With Kansas" won White a priesthood in the Star theology. His generally blameless conduct and adherence to the rules of their theocracy carried him to glory. Since the "sage's" death he has already been beatified and almost any day now we may expect him to be canonized a full saint in the Star hierarchy.

White's sagacity has often been questioned. But he was a satisfying votary before the altar and in the Star's book that was enough for them! They whooped him up as such and in return White bathed the feet of the priests and sanctification was on its way.

THE ORACLE OF THE JESUS-SHOUTERS

The churchly lingo which keeps bobbing up in this analysis is inevitable, even though lamentable, because we have under discussion a mouthpiece for mental mediocrity which goes in whole-heartedly for evangelism. And when you fall among evil companions, even in thought, it is inevitable that you will become tainted.

Our subject of analysis is the patron and the oracle of the holy two-fisted Jesus-shouters in the neighborhood. It is also the darling of these good brothers and its church page is both their goal and their source of inspiration.

The paper googles incessantly at the sainted sisterhood who sing in the more respectable church choirs of the town and, in a stately way even unbends a trifle before the impersonal majesty of the bishops of the Catholic and Episcopal churches. A demanding God in its own right, the Star seems to be willing to grant that those two gloriously independent dignitaries enjoy godly rights of their own and it bows before them.

Of course, the paper drools over the saintly shenanigans of all the local Messianic mouthpieces, but, as in the society section, some of them rate better space than others. With what is at least a stab at good taste, the hollering antics of the Holy Roller division of the Kingdom generally fail to achieve more than a haughty mention while the more dignified apologists for Holy Writ are good for columns.

While carrying on this homosexual bundling with the preachers, the paper consistently is beguiled into out and out censorious absurdities. With commendable sanctification of the spirit it refuses to carry liquor advertising and snuggles up to the good ladies of the W.C.T.U. with the earnest glee of a deacon at a choir practice.

This is a holy attitude, and only such ungodly wretches as myself, who long ago decided to go to hell anyway just to get away from the saved, would mock it.

What is tickling to the sardonic soul, however, is the fact that while the Star rigorously fights the "boozie interests" by refusing to accept their pernicious advertising propaganda, it joyously accepts such sickening and slyly obscene absurdities as the following lofty pronouncement of a sermon subject on which one of the more inspired prophets recently discoursed:

"Taking your ducks to a muddy pond, or men who make goo-goo eyes at other men's wives."

So help me, that appealing advertisement on the sacred church page of a sacred publication almost enticed me into dropping around to learn God's opinion on goo-goo eying and thereby becoming washed again in the blood of the Lamb.

By the way, and in a spirit of sheer charity, I digress to point out to the psalm-whooping but obviously unworldly editors of the journal that the "sly obscenity" lies in its implication that the Lord condemns mightily the callous business of "taking a wet deck" in the fornicate-boddlng line of sinning. Such an obvious relapse into the nasty talk of unregenerate boys on the school house grounds engaged in a "gang shag"
on a loose girl, is regrettable and it is to be hoped that it will not happen again.

Hilarious lapses into the editorial gutter are not peculiar to the Star. They occur on all papers but, because of its blatant religiosity, the late colonel's masterpiece literally falls into a dignified hysteria when they occur within its purified columns.

THE STAR'S RAPE OF MYRTLE

A few years ago such an unfortunate incident caused a city-wide guffaw and sent the Robertsonian blood pressure soaring to a new high. In its greasy, servile manner, the Star was engaged in letting down the bars entirely on the visit to its bailiwick of Britain's Lord Halifax and his "gracious lady."

In the course of that glorious visitation by nobility, the diplomat was escorted to the Kansas City Liberty Memorial, there to plant a wreath at the foot of that costly concrete Phallicism.

In its archaic, one-column top head the paper termed that reverent mission a "Tribute To The Dead."

In the deck, it elaborated as follows: "Myrtle is laid at the foot of the Liberty Memorial shaft in a simple, reverent ceremony."

As soon as the first edition hit the streets with that innocent ribaldry, Roberts and his fellows were plagued with hooting phone calls from their friends demanding Myrtle's telephone number.

It was a hell of a situation all the way around but with customary solemnity the lamentable error was corrected in later editions by "A wreath is PLACED at the foot of the shaft," etc.

THE STAR'S SNAKE-PHOBIA

Another whooping handicap to The Kansas City Star brand of journalism was the snake phobia which drove the staff into frenzies during the George Longan regime as Lord High Executioner. Because of Longan's personal phobia on the subject, the very word itself was banned and to all intents and purposes the crawling creatures had no scientific existence in a snake-ridden world. So the tremulous reporters were driven to such weasel worded narration as: "Gus Ginzo, seven-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. August Ginzo of 2727 Hickory, was admitted to the General Hospital today after having been bitten by a reptile which did not give its customary rattling warning of its intent to strike."

When Longan departed, trailing his phobias behind him, a vast sigh of relief went up from the reptile-ridden writers because snakes now are tolerated in the columns of the paper, but they are not welcomed. The snake situation at the Star during its existence even spawned legends. Some of the elders of the staff maintain, despite all factual knowledge, that the phobia dates away past Longan, back to the colonel himself, who, they asseverate, didn't like the snakes because he had 'em!

Others contend that it wasn't the colonel who was plagued by snakes but his daughter and her husband, who took over the helm when the colonel went to glory.

There is a dramatic bit of local folklore along this line which depicts a reporter being incontinentlly booted out of his job one hot summer day because the colonel spotted a tattooed "reptile" on the scribe's bare arm.

The reporter generally named as the victim in this episode assures me that as far as he is concerned the legend is false. This individual is a thoroughly conscientious and trustworthy news reporter and I believe him. But . . . .

Falling back on the old wheeze, "where there is smoke there is bound to be fire," it is my belief that somebody must have got canned in such an incident or the intriguing legend couldn't have been spawned.
It is a fact that some irreverent dog around the place once sent the unfortunate snake-ridden Mr. Longan into the screaming weezer-wams by planting a garter "reptile" in his desk drawer.

Until the Star managed to set up its own political proteges in control at the city hall, politicians around the town used to scoff that "the surest way for me to lose is to get that damn Star backing me. So, I'm going down and toss a snake in George Longan's kisser," and so on.

THE STAR'S CHASTE, VIRGINAL EDITORIAL PAGE

The editorial page is so completely banal that it merits only the slimmest discussion. When the editorial master-minds manage to tear themselves away from shimmering essays on autumn leaves or spring-time redbud burgeoning in the Ozark mountains, they sometimes cut loose with stern admonitions to the community on the devilish machinations of untrammeled unionism and the lurking deceit behind Liberalism in general.

Come the Sabbath, the page is enriched by the musings of another Star bigwig, Editor Henry Haskell, who apparently has phobias of his own. His placid, scholarly dissertations reveal that he is torn between two loves—the old school ties of Cambridge and Oxford, and the antiquities of Rome and Greece.

The paper is published by the "Kansas City Star Company" in which many but not all of the employes are permitted to own stock which is non-transferrable and must be tossed back into the jackpot at face value upon their banishment from the sacred groves.

The "company" reaps several million dollars yearly from the operation; the moral tone of the community is kept at a lofty level through its exhortations. In its kingdom, "the rich get richer, the poor get—" well, venomous about the paper.

But one attribute of greatness must be granted this orotund oracle of the forces of sweetness and light... The Kansas City Star is published on a high grade of paper and comes in damned handy when you want to wrap up a lunch.
KANSAS CITY---HICK TOWN
ON THE KAW

By CHARLES H. HOGAN

SMUT-SMELLERS TAKE OVER THE BORDELLOS

As the years pass, legends take root and flourish or fade into senility and die. But Kansas City, Mo., is the only legend that, to my knowledge, has managed to commit suicide.

For nearly 100 years the town sprawled in frank harlotry over the hills at the confluence of the Kaw and the Missouri rivers. From the days of the buffalo hunters, down through the time of the Jesse James gang and the cattle barons, Kansas City was cherished throughout the southwest as one place where a fellow could have himself a fling.

Stories of bars bedizened with crystal chandeliers and possessing floors paved with silver dollars were only a part of the legend of the raucous town. Men as far away as Santa Fe smacked their lips at each new tale of the flaming way of life to be found in Kansas City. Year after year they made tracks for the bright lights of the saloons and the red lights of such dens of iniquity as the Irish Village, a long-vanished refuge from virtue which specialized in complacent colleens.

Generations of pious deacons from the holy wastes of Kansas have slithered into the city, there to fall from grace without risking loss of their letters in the dwelling places of the Lord.

The prairie menfolk properly esteemed Kansas City as a place where anything could be expected to happen—and fondly believed that it did. Their grim, respectable wives feared and distrusted the place; particularly those wives who themselves had done a hitch in the Kansas City bordellos.

For all its evil ways, the town's chief charm lay in the tolerant, live-and-let-live attitude of most of its citizens. A fellow could go to one of its many fine churches "if he was a mind to." Or he could go down and "buy the house" for a night of lush sin at Mollie Mantell's, or Annie Chambers; or the Castle On The Nile.

Those mirrored temples of harlotry vanished long ago. But they were succeeded by others. The bawdy days and nights continued, with spasmodic temporary interruptions, until about six years ago. At that time the city got religion and the gaudy, roaring legend of Kansas City quietly went out and killed itself.

K. C.'S FINAL FLING BEFORE IT TURNED SAINTLY

The town's final fling before hitting the sawdust trail was a lulu! It was a great deal in the nature of a man's decision to throw one more rip-snorter before signing the pledge.
Poker and crap games outnumbered the chain drug stores and the filling stations. Housewives and school girls jammed the fleshy bingo parlors throughout the day and night. The bingo parlors, of course, were particularly vile dens because they enticed these otherwise God-fearing women into the paths of transgression. That is, these parlors were vile to the very depths of degradation unless they happened to be located in church basements throughout the town.

Under such Heavenly sanction bingo did not lead the women down the rocky road to hell, at all. The Almighty was "cut in on the game" and besides, to borrow an expression from another pastime of the devil, "Baby, (in the person of the pastor) needed shoes."

Owners of the innumerable bars and honky-tonks had "thrown away the keys" when they established their joints and the grog shops were crowded day and night.

On cloudy nights, the neon glare from the red light district on the outskirts of the business section tinged the overcast skies. The fallen women sat prettily in the front windows of rundown mansions of the area exhibiting their fleshly wares under spotlights. Nearly every joint in town boasted at least one uninhibited young lady who waggled her naked breasts and did her grinds practically in the laps of the patrons.

This citywide bawdiness was a powerful attraction for organizations bent on staging national conventions and they flocked in by the drunken thousands. The money rolled in from all directions to the constant blatting of jazz bands. Salesmen by the hundreds juggled their route sheets in order to "week-end" in the devil's workshop at the mouth of the Kaw river.

The old harlot among cities also attracted a parade of magazine and newspaper writers who found the wide-open city a place of both pleasure and profit. The mighty Pegler headed this parade and set up housekeeping in some plushy rooms in a plushy hotel. Thus he could observe the slime and corruption at his ease, from time to time making flittery sorties out into the wicked world in order to get more material. For the bulk of his diatribes, the literary carbuncle depended upon the legend itself. Kansas Citians, incidentally, still chuckle over the way Pegler and his fellow scribes thus were often gulled into describing evil spectacles that didn't exist and sins that hadn't happened—yet.

THE STAR'S ANGELIC BATTLE FOR PURE WOMANHOOD

But, alas, this lush life couldn't go on forever. The "notorious Pendergast machine" (as the writers always put it) was kicked out of the city hall, the whores were scattered throughout the residential districts, and the gamblers were driven to plying their evil trade on a sly, up-the-alley-and-ask-for-Joe, basis.

The august Kansas City Star, noted locally for its purity, piety and politickin,' lavished drooling praise on the pure womanhood of the city. The aroused pure womanhood had taken their housewifely brooms in their hands and swept the scoundrels from the city hall, the Star said.

With stern coyness, these inspired ladies of the holy war even adopted tiny white brooms as lapel symbols of their adamant spiritual perfection. By innuendo in its news columns and editorials, the Star reminded lesser women of the village that if they refused to flaunt a like virginal symbol of righteousness on their coats they might as well adopt a tiny red lantern to show where they stood.

Thus the reformers took over the city government and the jobs thereof. Sweetness and light descended on the town and a white mantle of holiness has graced the skyscraper city hall ever since.

Various writers still manage to nibble crusts of a living out of this astounding, heaven-sent reformation. Some of them still nuzzle around these days, gathering material for critiques of abysmal dullness along such lines as "How a City Swept the Skeletons from the Closet."

But even as they grind out these pious tracts the literateurs are
keeping a wistful eye on the old hellion, just in case it should turn out that she is not truly saved but is merely snoring.

The cold truth of the matter is that Kansas City gives a soothing, outward impression of having reformed, chiefly by being the dullest damn town, large or small, this side of the nearest Mennonite colony. That is, the town is dead from the standpoint of the relatively unimportant sins such as gazing on, or partaking of, forbidden fruit.

In the category of major crime it is roaring with life. Rape and murder are rampant; to such an extent that the chief of police recently asked for nearly 400 additional policemen to cope with the untrammeled violence. Women forced to stay away from home after 9 o'clock at night usually try to find a cab rather than ride the busses. They don't care to risk being guzzled and ravished during their walk from the bus to their homes.

POPE ROBERTS' CITADEL OF GODLINESS

But outside of this little matter of rape and murder the town definitely is a holy spot and presents an inspiring picture of civic virtue to such outside observers as the writers who happen to blow in.

The custom among the eager writers, for instance, is to find a room and then gallop down to 18th and Grand, there to discuss the prevailing Godliness with such evangelists as Managing Editor Roy Roberts of the Star. They then set off on a tour of the wayside shrines.

They marvel at the towering city hall which, they seem to understand, is just one of many monuments to civic purity. Actually, it is a 29-story memorial to the boudoir days of the "notorious Pendergast machine." The city's magnificent municipal auditorium is another such memorial to ways that were dark and dubious.

Then the Chamber of Commerce department of the municipal tabernacle takes over. There, pious souls take time from their work in the vineyards to haul the visitors around, that they may witness for themselves the reformed spirit of the masses.

This is all sweet, and makes a pretty word picture—but it is not exactly accurate. The colors in the painting are buried under too many coats of varnish.

Under the same system of "observation" I could go to Chicago and knock off a dandy treatise on the place merely by parking myself in the La Salle street station and asking the nearest redcap how things seem to be going out at the stockyards.

The truth is that the masses, far from being reformed, constantly chafe and gripe under the uplifters' whip. After years of compulsory attendance at chapel, the peasantry still lends an ear to the siren song of the tempter. Throughout the town you can hear grumbling such as: "I don't think they ought to run wide open again but these guys have got it too damn tight."

Rigid enforcement of an idiotic state curfew law, for instance, is a constant source of irritation to the masses. Under threat of having their costly licenses lifted at the snap of a finger, tavern owners begin shagging customers out of their places even before the midnight closing hour on Saturday nights and the 1:30 a.m. deadline on week nights.

The bars are closed on Sunday but are permitted to reopen at midnight for an hour and a half. The liquor stores are closed and thus the reformers reap the glory and the bootleggers reap the harvest.

SUNDAY IN KANSAS CITY

So Sunday in Kansas City is a vast yawn of dry solemnity, a day set aside by the elders as a period of prayer and thirsting for the masses. Joe Blow and his wife, for example, can't legally have themselves a fling on Saturday nights because their party is whacked off at midnight.
Presumably they sit around their apartment over the weekend contemplating their sins; or they might spend an absolute whiz of a time improving their minds in the William Rockhill Nelson mausoleum of art. They might also play a brisk game of lotto, which could only make them nostalgic for the elaborate bingo parlors of their less restricted days of sin.

In the old, unregenerate days, the city officials and the police sensibly ignored this imbecilic curfew law, which was foisted on urbanites by the round-hair-cut members of the state legislature.

Kansas City’s ruling class, of course, ignores the curfew anyway. Joe Blow’s troubles in having a quiet schooner of legal brew touch the nobility lightly, if at all. The Sanhedrin who rule the town formulate their verdicts at two shrines—the Kansas City Country Club and the gloomy but holly-toly Kansas City Club.

There is no fol-de-rol about stopping the guzzling on the stroke of a curfew law in those temples! Nor do the gendarmes, zealous warriors of righteousness when they spot somebody betting a beer in a pinball game, dare to hi-jack the continuing crap game at the Kansas City Club.

Naturally, the lofty idealists who engineered this salutary regeneration have been shouting hallelujah’s and calling down the blessings of the Lord on the penitent city ever since revival night. The holy men chuckle their benediction over double scotches in their little snuggeries at the club.

For they are a practical group of politicians. They realize that the average voter is a fellow who votes on the general principle that he might as well pick up a husk from the trough. Great issues, such as balanced budgets at the city hall, have only a vague importance to the average voter. What he is primarily interested in is who can fix a traffic ticket, or keep him out of the sneezer.

Thus, for all the sanctimonious blather that the top evangelists whoop, the voters really kicked out the Pendergast machine and kicked in the “reform” machine for the cold-blooded reason that they thought the “old man’s” gang was going down for the count. At heart, they still were unwashed in the Blood of the Lamb.

The result today is that Kansas City probably is the largest hick town in the country. It is like a church deacon who oozes piety to the congregation and seethes inwardly with unholy designs on that blonde in the choir.

**UPLIFT IS ON THE BOOM**

Like all other whistle stops, the city is awash with women’s clubs, all panting for culture. Lecturers find a ready market for their antisepctic wares. The better people are frenzied with desire to be seen at the offerings of road companies of the fashionable shows.

Uplift is on the boom at present and it is being tossed in dribbles at the masses—or sometimes crammed down their throats. The stuffed shirts and stuffed skirts are in the saddle! The masses, of course, are baffled by this transformation.

Kansas City’s famous 12th street is a thoroughfare of uneasy boredom until the curfew hour. Then they roll up the sidewalks and the grass starts to grow again.

All the whooping and noise one hears on Sunday isn’t in Kansas City proper. The racket is made by the Sanhedrin, joyfully relaxing from their evangelistic labors at the country club which conveniently straddles the Missouri-Kansas line. And it goes without saying that those young ladies oozing into the downtown hotels are merely distributing tracts for the Epworth league.

These constitute furtive lapses from grace but they fail to constitute a legend. To all intents and purposes the old lusty legend itself is dead.

A halo casts its shadow over the village. The Browning society will meet for potluck dinner next Thursday at Sister Howard’s.

Kansas City, by cracky, has reformed!
NOTES AND COMMENTS

By E. Haldeman-Julius

WHERE ARE OUR STARS?

These times of ours so urgently need guidance that even editors who are usually content to give others the opportunity to speak are erupting in wisdom. An editorial in a monthly (Fortune) that despises such inexpensive papers as The Freeman, lately said that “the theme of magnanimity, sacrifice, and generosity which foreshadowed and developed all great religions has been verified by historian and teacher as the power that keeps mankind seeking a way out of the process of confusion.” He might have quoted that professor of history at an important university who in a recent broadcast told folk that in earlier ages, which he ought to know, men had not these confusions and big wars and little leaders because they had steady stars in the firmament of their faith to follow.

He might, in fact, have quoted more than one historian, to say nothing of scientific and literary men who talk history when it suits them, for this sort of appeasement. And it is all bunk. As far as the folk of the Middle Ages and their stars are concerned we will say no more. Their stars were thin imitations nailed to the ceiling by the clerical Santa Claus, and under them they played such antics as men had never played before. If they had had bombs and planes we should not be here today.

But the superb audacity of the claim is seen when you consider the reference to “all great religions.” A “great” religion is, we gather from text-books, one that counts its followers in tens of millions. Unitarianism and Congregationalism, for instance, are great religions only in the sense that they are small fragments of the general Christian body, the main sections of which they regard as on a lower moral and intellectual level. Great religions are like great nations. They must be big, strong, and rich. That is the clerical standard.

Applying it, clerical writers and professors say that the great religions are Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. Confucianism is not and never was a religion but an atheistic ethic. Buddhism was the same at first and according to all authorities issued from the atheistic school of the Sankhya philosophy; and it became a religion only by absorbing the crass superstitions of backward Asia. Judaism as a formal religion is based upon a mass of forgeries. The origin of Christianity is obscure but at least every sound sentiment in it was common in the pagan world. The origin of Zoroastrianism is still more obscure but as an organized religion it was formed by adopting childish superstitions. The origin of Islam was sordid, Taoism is, like Buddhism, a smothering of a simple philosophy with primitive superstitions. Shinto has not even a nucleus of decent myth, and Hinduism is just a collective name for a dozen absurd native religions.

The “historian or teacher” who endorses the popular belief that these “great religions” were born of or grew to maturity in idealism prostitutes his function. The sociologist who says that, whatever their origin, they gave the world in their time an idealist lead which we
give it no longer is just as bad. He dare not compare, in an exact scientific way, the level of social life formerly and today, or the value of character in countries or cities which are still mainly religious with its value in countries or cities which are mainly skeptical.

But these folk are equally preposterous when they say that at least men had stars to steer by in earlier ages and have none today. The majority of folk today have a higher standard of conduct than the majority ever had before; much higher than they had in the century (13th) which all Catholic writers choose as the finest in their record. In the Chronicle of Froissart, which is so much admired as a picture of chivalry, we are told how in 1326 one of the highest nobles in England, Despencer, was convicted of sodomy with the king, at the pressure of the queen (who was herself as vicious as she was viperish). In the public market place, with the queen, her ladies, and the townsfolk of all ages—and presumably the clergy—looking on he was taken to a high scaffold, "so that all the people might see," says the priest—chronicler, his pants lowered, and his testicles cut off and burned before his face. It was the legal punishment. Are our people as debased as that?

Let's use our common sense. The very preachers and moralists who now talk about our general demoralization and the dimming of our stars were praising us to the skies two to six years ago. Never in history had there been so vast, so pure, a crusade to root out wickedness from the soil of this planet. Only three nations out of 50 were tainted and at an enormous price in blood and money we were going to lead them back to the paths of virtue.... Yes, there was a lot of bunk in that, but not so much as in the new chant of the moralists.

Modern man doesn't want stars. He wants his milestones on earth. We still have thieves and murderers, but not so many as there used to be. We have millions of selfish folk who forget that they are responsible citizens of their planet until a bomb falls upon their home, or a bomb is threatened, and then they want to know why wicked people have the power to do these things and whether our science has not outrun our conscience. That applies to most of our scientists and artists as well as the stenographer who never reads a book and the rich folk who think that the whole duty of man is to poison off the Reds. The race is sound enough. We have the principles, the power, and the guts. But we are rottenly informed and led by the press, the politicians, and the parsons.

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THE BOOKS WE OFFER YOU

There are lots of folk in America who, when you quote your authority, will say, "Pooh, Little Blue Books." or, "Bah, Haldeman-Julius publications." Then these Pooh-Bahs will pay $3 for a book that tells them the same thing. Many notes in these columns show you that. You pay $10 to learn that the ideas of Plato and Aristotle are of no more use to us than the ideas of Zoroaster or Mme. Blavatsky. The gem of a recent $7 book is that to get a better world "the prejudices and shibboleths of the 19th Century must be abandoned." If that is profound, Haldeman-Julius publications are deep. Another of this season's books leads up to this fine but to us familiar conclusion:

"The moment comes when a child must walk by himself. At this particular phase in our progress this text comes. Is mankind brave enough to live as if there were no God?"

We don't quarrel with this book, Emma Hawkridge's Wisdom Tree, a critical and refreshingly bold account of the history of religions. In fact we recommend it to folk who can't afford to pay less than $2—in this case $3.75—for a book, because it has to show a plump and handsomely gilt backside to visitors to the library. If they prefer to pay $5 for a book when we supply one for 5c it is their business. Some people pay enormous prices for old books. Others pay a lot for pretty bindings.
The majority find a different use for their money. We offer these folk the chance of a good library, and it is sounder stuff than will be found in half the books that are put on the market at fifty to sixty times the price.

* * *

THE REACTIONARY A.M.A. AND HEALTH INSURANCE

The American Medical Association announces that the new British medical scheme "will be considered by representatives of medical science everywhere as one of the most backward steps ever conceived for a civilized nation." Almost on the same day Dr. Stark Murray, a prominent British medical man, publicly stated that the British Medical Association admitted that of the 21,000 general practitioners in the country 17,900 were in favor of the new scheme, and that the opposition comes from the specialists who get fat fees from the rich. However that may be, the only bodies of medical men who seem to agree with the American are in countries that are generally regarded as enlightened. In any case, the American authorities make a mistake when they say that the new Bill makes a doctor "a civil servant." It is officially ruled that this is not so. The acrid discussion set up by this experiment in the nationalization of the medical and hospital service is useful. Few who have carefully considered the matter will question that, admirable as doctors are as a body, there are serious wrongs to be put right in the profession. As these things are mostly at the top, where the zeal for private enterprise is most glowing, folk generally say, let the rich get on with it. In Britain the demand for nationalization was more natural. The American authorities are good enough to speak highly of the British hospital system but the poor folk who have to get treatment as cheaply as they can would compile an unflattering record for many big hospitals, and patients "on the panel" (paying health insurance) are often badly treated by doctors. Several outsiders who have joined this discussion urge that what is most wanted is a national body of medical men whose first business it will be to keep the nation out of illness. The proposal sounds revolutionary but it is ancient. It was discussed ages ago in China. A tremendous lot can be done. We know a man of 79—not to put too fine a point on it we mean Joseph McCabe—who is so active that the police have twice stopped him in the street, suspecting that he was a wanted cat-burglar. In his boyhood and adolescence the betting was heavy that he would never reach the age of 40, but in the last 46 years he has had to "see a doctor" only four times. Enormous numbers of men and women dig their own graves yet with a comparatively small body of knowledge, which could easily and pleasantly be acquired, a high proportion—and we are not thinking only of workingmen—could be as useful as ever in their seventies.

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GETTING THE WORLD STRAIGHT

A statesman said recently in a speech on the malady of our age that "if our economic and social sciences had developed to the same stage as the natural sciences we should be living in a very different world." We will not quibble about the word "natural." A politician has no time for even elementary science. But he surely had a vague idea that it is 170 years since Adam Smith founded the science of what was then called political economy, or nearly half a century before Dalton rediscovered that there are such things as atoms or Watt realized the power of steam? Jefferson was wrestling with the problems of the science, as set out by Dupont de Nemours, at the time of the American Revolution, and by 1800 the science considered itself more advanced than physics. In the last hundred years large numbers of men have devoted ability of the highest order to it. And the same early pioneers of economic science may be said to have laid the bases of social science.
Adam Smith wrote learnedly on it, and Bentham and Comte were sociologists before the locomotive was born. Here again tremendous work has been done in the last 100 years. It is no use throwing the blame for our mess on any branch of science. The plain fact is that statesmen and industrialists drove or encouraged the inventive brains in the fields of physical and chemical science. They made money for the manufacturers and gave more power to the armament of the soldier and sailor. But the student of economic and social matters was told that his business was to analyze and praise the existing system not to poke his nose into visions of the future and see if he could invent something better. It is sheer nonsense to turn now upon the economist and sociologist and ask why he did not keep on suggesting improvements as the chemist and the physicist did. Huxley once caustically said that when the biologist or the geologist wanted to advance he found a barrier with the notice: "No Read. By Order, Moses." The politicians and bankers put up the barriers to economics and social study.

THE TIME FOR THINKING

The history books tell of a medieval king, Alfred of England, who set up the ideal for his people of eight hours work, eight hours play, and eight hours sleep. The idea is much too symmetrical for the Middle Ages, and in fact we know today that most of the good things told about King Alfred, and most of the other heroes of the Middle Ages, are just about as true as the story of George and the Dragon. You might say at least that it was a natural ideal for a feudal age, when scarcely anybody but a priest could read, and often he could not, and folk had such a good king to do their thinking for them. As a matter of history we know that the mass of the people in those days worked from sunup to sundown most of the year, and their play on their few holidays fairly resembled that of elephants. However, there are a great many folk, sacred and profane, in our time who would like the mass of the people to adopt this ideal. It leaves no time for reading and thinking, and they don't want the people to read and think. The editor of your daily or weekly paper, who usually finds it necessary to do what these people want, can say pretty well what he likes if his readers avoid this morbid practice of thinking. The preacher finds it much easier to compose a sermon, the politician a speech, for men and women who can't check what they say. Get, if you can, a list of this season's publications. You will find that, apart from fiction, which is the opiate of literature, ninetenths of those books were written for less than one-tenth of the nation. And then essayists and moralists talk about our loss of a sense of moral and spiritual values as a disease that explains the evil condition of our age. Bunk. It is because the mass of folk do not read the right sort of stuff and give an hour now and again to thinking about it. To say that the intellectual development of our time has outrun our social development is rot. For nine-tenths of us the intellectual development has not gone far enough. That's what is wrong.

DO WE NEED IDEALS?

Large numbers of good people in every advanced country today are terribly flustered about the world's supply of ideals when the churches no longer supply them. The fussy people outside the churches, who blame us today because we are not constructive and do not impress "the sense of values" on our readers might be reminded that their idea is far from original. Ever since the Reformation, when it became clear to many that the dogmas of the Middle Ages were doomed, there have been attempts to provide alternative sources of inspiration. Unitarianism, Congregationalism, Universalism, Thelanism, Theosophy, etc., all proceeded on the theory that of course the Ideas of the big religions
were absurd so we provide a clear alternative. They all either failed or remained small and select bodies. From the time of the French Revolution, when there was a still wider feeling that all religion was doomed, atheistic forms of idealism—Positivism, Rational Religion, Ethical Culture, Humanism, etc.—have set out to meet what they declared to be the demand of the race for religion without the least taint of theology. They found and find that the race wants nothing of the sort. As to their prediction that if the race does not accept something of the kind it will perish, we might remind them that that is precisely what the prophets have been saying ever since the time of Emerson and Comte, yet decade by decade the churches continued to decay and the average character continued to improve. These people have one thing in common with the preachers of the old creeds. They seem to have a distaste for facts. The broad fact of social history, which can be established by statistics and other unimpeachable evidence, is that from about 1860 to at least 1914, the general level of character steadily rose and the whole body of “inspirational” organizations steadily decayed; and that from 1920 onward the churches gained in power, and somehow life blundered into tragic errors. We don’t need what they call ideals, especially as they are bound up with antiquated ideas of sex-morals. A man wants plain rules of conduct—and he knows them.

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JOLIET WARDEN STRIKES COWARDLY BLOW AT CULTURE

Joseph E. Ragen, Warden, Illinois State Penitentiary (Joliet branch), wrote me, on January 29, 1946, as follows:

We are returning the recent order of Warner, No. 16702. You will appreciate that certain censorship restrictions are necessary in an institution of this kind.

My reply:

The following Little Blue Books, ordered by one of your inmates, have been returned because of your censorship:

1050. X-Ray, Violet Ray, and Other Rays (With Their Use in Modern Medicine.)
784. Association Tests Used in Psycho-Analysis.
377. The Psychology of Joy and Sorrow (What Behaviorists and Others Learned About Our Nature.)
65. Golden Sayings (Meditations) of Marcus Aurelius.
1766. The Body Machine and How It Works.
1555. Can We Change Human Nature?
761. Food and Diet in Relation to Life and Death.
491. Psychology for Beginners.
1744. A Short Treatise on Abnormal Psychology.

It is obvious from the above list of titles that your prisoner is an intelligent, alert-minded reader of good, sound, scientific, educational literature, and yet you have taken it on yourself to deprive this unfortunate victim of such reading matter as will improve his mind, broaden his interests, and give him a better understanding of human behavior and psychology. This is typical of all censors—their passion for putting obstacles in the way of those who enjoy the best reading matter available.

The State has taken Warner’s body and put it in your charge, but society at no time authorized you to tyrannize over Warner’s mind. That mind is still supposed to belong to Warner, not to Warden Ragen. You have no right to put violent hands on Prisoner
Warner's mind. Warner's conscience is still supposed to be his own, even if his body is locked up in a State institution. But you, like all censors, have no respect for people's cultural and intellectual rights. With the brutality of a Nazi, you strike down this helpless man when he reaches for books that are intended to liberate his mind and lead him in the direction of truth-seeking and progressive thought.

I am holding Warner's 15 books on my desk and stand ready to ship them to him when you send me word that he may have these books—works that clearly show an advanced and probing intellect. If you fail to send me word that Warner may have the books he ordered and paid for, then they shall remain on my desk—a mute, but eloquent, monument to man's inhumanity to man, to man's stupidity, to man's hatred of true and lofty culture. You are in a position to use brute force to chain Prisoner Warner's brain. So long as these books stand piled on my desk it will be clear that you are doing just that—fencing in a man's mind when there is abundant evidence that he is striving heroically to learn the truths of science, philosophy, poetry, and related subjects. And so long as these books are kept from Mr. Warner's reach so long will I continue to put extra energy into the glorious crusade to circulate mind-liberating literature to the stricken, voiceless victims of official tyranny, oppression, censorship, obscurantism, superstition and cruel, blind, senseless persecution.

I have given my entire adult life to the fight to make available only the best works in all fields of learning and culture. I have achieved at least a small part of my goal. But now and then I must stop to cross lances with obscurantists who would destroy the sweetest flowers of knowledge and culture. I fight such reactionary elements with a song in my heart, because I know their efforts are doomed to failure. You can try to gag the lips of those who are striving for freedom, but you can't win more than petty, sporadic skirmishes. The real march for mass education goes forward. But now and then we leave wounded comrades behind—casualties like Prisoner Warner. We can't stop you from knocking Warner down and jumping on him. But we can brand you for what you are—a crass, ignorant, brutal pawn of mediocrity.

Of course, if Prisoner Warner had ordered literature that festered in the Dark Ages, the books would have been delivered to him, with the chaplain's blessings. If he had asked for a Bible, it would have been handed him on a platter with hints that his fine gesture would surely put him in line for a parole. If he had ordered pulp comics, Hearst outpourings, and the Fascist poison of the McCormick-Patterson Axis, they would have reached him without a halt. If he had ordered the hate-breeding sermons of Father Coughlin or the Rev. Gerald L. K. Smith, they would have gone to his cell quickly. But Prisoner Warner didn't order such trash. He paid for fine books—the kind of works that free the mind of rubbish—and his reward is a kick in the teeth. That's why I say you are akin to the Nazi book-burners. You are the offspring of the Inquisition. You are an enemy of civilization. You stand condemned by your own words and deeds. In addition, you are a coward and a cad. I have nothing but contempt for your kind. You should return to the dungeons and sewers and join your kind, the human sewer-rats that have always striven to torture the free spirit of man and turn his mind into a diseased and crippled mass of fears and superstitions. Progress is measured by the distance we are able to march from your vile kind.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Editor, Little Blue Books
JOLIET WARDEN'S BRUTAL ACT DRAWS HOT PROTESTS

My open letter to Joseph Ragen, Warden, Illinois State Prison, Joliet, Ill., which was printed on the front page of the May, 1945, issue of The Freeman, has provoked much comment. Many protests were sent to him by readers who were outraged by his cruel censorship which deprived inmate Warner No. 16,702 of the right to receive 15 Little Blue Books he had ordered. G. Vincent Runyon, Hondo, Calif., has sent me a copy of his letter to Warden Ragen, which is so good that I want Freeman readers to see it. Mr. Runyon's letter:

Dear Warden Joseph Ragen:

I am writing in regard to your censorship restrictions which denied certain books of a cultural and educational nature to reach inmate Warner. This man Warner is a stranger to me, but being interested in human welfare, and education, and justice even to the lowliest criminal (?), I am tempted to take time out and write in his behalf, and future men like him, who while in confinement seek to better themselves intellectually. Too many folks in and out of prison are too lazy to read and would rather idle their time away either by sleeping or shooting off their mouths. I know nothing of Warner, but apparently here is a man who is making the best of his boredom by seeking enlightenment on subjects which interest him and should interest other men in similar circumstances.

Having read hundreds of the low-priced books of Haldeman-Julius, I can say that no publishing house in America publishes better literature. Do not judge Haldeman-Julius' books by the price, for his books are written by the best writers of all time, and in this I do not exaggerate. Though a college man myself, his books have been an education to me in that they cover such a broad field. I cannot waste my time with unauthoritative writers, so you see what I think of his literature. In these busy times one can find time to read small books between the innings of life's game and I suppose that is what the Haldeman-Julius books are designed for.

I am aware that this man Haldeman-Julius also publishes books by such rascals as Voltaire, Luther Burbank, Robert Ingersoll, Bertrand Russell, the poet Shelley, the great lawyer Clarence Darrow, and a famous ex-priest and college professor, Joseph McCabe, all of whom in their writings voice opposition to religion on intellectual grounds. But it must be remembered these are all great men and have a right to be heard. Being a Freethinker myself, naturally I think men of their stripe are accurate. Believe it or not, I am a former New York clergyman who, it so happens, dared to read on the other side of the question, and as a result I believe I am a better man for having been freed from the shackles of religious superstition. I am one who now believes that behavior can be better taught by secular means. I believe that the church, though sincere, is so antiquated in its pedagogical methods that it falls miserably in improving human behavior. (It reaches so few people). I further believe the day is ripe for education to step in with the scientific knowledge at its disposal to undertake this heretofore sacred function of the church, before it is too late.

Sir, I respectfully recommend that you get acquainted with this subject which must be so important to you. I know you must be sincere so I merely suggest that you reconsider your action regarding this man Warner. Incidentally, the books he selected were purely educational.

G. VINCENT RUNYON
You have quoted Lenin's opinion of Stalin, in one of your volumes of "Questions and Answers," but nowhere do you quote Lenin's opinion of Trotsky. True, as you say, Trotskyites make full use of Lenin's description of Stalin as a man who shouldn't be trusted with high authority in the Soviet Union because of his boorishness, rudeness, craving for power by any means available, etc. But you should round out the picture and let the Trotskyites know what Lenin thought of their leader.

I don't intend to get caught between the Stalinites and Trotskyites, for that's a good way to get one's block knocked off, but I believe my reader's request is reasonable, and as I have the material at hand, I'll use it. My authority is Frederick L. Schuman, professor of political science and of government at Williams College, and author of "Soviet Politics at Home and Abroad," and other books. Prof. Schuman quotes Lenin as having said of Trotsky, before the October Revolution:

"Poser . . . phrase-maker . . . the plague of our time . . . Trotsky today plagiarizes the ideology of one faction, tomorrow of another, and then declares himself above all the factions. . . . It is impossible to discuss principles with Trotsky, for he has no definite conceptions. . . . He is to be unmasked as a diplomat of the basest metal. . . . He comes and goes between the liberals and the Marxists, with shreds of sonorous phrases stolen from the Right and the Left. . . . What a swine! Left phrases and a bloc with the Right against the aim of the Left! He ought to be exposed . . . ."

For years I've been noticing something on the screen that puzzles me. It's the white dots that flash every so often in the upper right hand corner of the screen. What do they mean?

Those dots are meant to warn the projection booth operators that it's time to switch from one projector to the other.

My beautiful, 20-year-old daughter can sing and her ambition is to become a Metropolitan Opera Company star. Is ability enough? Will she have to be able to pull strings?

While I think the Metropolitan never had lower artistic standards than it has today, I don't believe anything but ability will get this reader's daughter into that institution. It takes work, sweat, tell.

A rich lover will get her nowhere. I grant the Met's honesty, but I question its esthetic standards. Today's performances can't be compared with those of Caruso, Scotti, Sembrich, Challapin, Eames, Mahler, and the other giants of the old Metropolitan. If my reader's daughter is serious about her career, she'll have to find a good voice culturist, and that's going to be a job, for here she'll find herself up against a major racket. The chances are she'll pick the wrong coach, and her voice will be ruined. She'll pay $25 per lesson to some musical quack who'll do his best to eradicate whatever natural talent she may have and turn her voice box into a juke box. There aren't more than a half dozen good voice teachers in all New York. The trick's to find one. The chances are she'll fall for some pompous, bearded racketeer who'll soak her and leave her out on an artistic limb.

How many words does the average person speak in a year?
About 12,000,000.

Is there any known operation, such as cutting a sympathetic nerve, that could stop a person from blushing? I am rapidly developing a neurosis over this and I feel that if this could be made physically impossible my mental outlook would improve immeasurably.

There is no surgical treatment for blushing. This reader will have to meet the situation as a personal problem. He'll have to resort to psychology. It's been done. I used to blush on every occasion, until I decided it was all damned foolishness and gradually asserted myself with sufficient force to meet the trouble and beat it. Now I'd give a box of good cigars for just one big, round, full blush. My reader will have to fight this out with himself. If he feels this is too much for him, he should consult a psycho-analyst or psychiatrist. As he lives in Los Angeles, he should ask the professor of psychology at the University of Southern California to recommend an expert in this field.

How much money do we Americans pay to landlords?

During 1944, according to the Department of Commerce, we paid $12,800,000,000, a record. Of this,
the Federal Government paid $300,000,000 which is included in the following: $5,500,000,000 by city home renters; $2,400,000,000 by farm renters; $4,500,000,000 by commercial renters.

Do you think Russia will be able to make atomic bombs?
People who know how to make (and drink) straight vodka shouldn't have any trouble with atomic energy.

William McCarthy, author of the book, "Bible, Church and God," wrote me recently that the second edition of his work (which now carries the imprint, and therefore the endorsement, of the Truth-Seeker Company) doesn't contain any expressions of anti-Semitism. Readers will recall that I rejected an advertisement for the book because I didn't want The Freeman to be used for the purpose of race-baiting. I received the new edition and McCarthy's assurance that all anti-Semitic passages had been eliminated in the most friendly spirit and remarked that if it's true that the book now devotes itself to Freethought propaganda I would be happy to run his advertising. On May 15, 1946, I received a check for $80 from McCarthy and copy for an advertisement. The check has been returned and the ad is not being run because I find the book, after careful examination, reeks with anti-Semitism. This so-called revised edition is an insult to an innocent and helpless racial minority and a disgrace to Freethought and Rationalism. McCarthy's assertion that the book no longer contains anti-Semitic expressions is false. The new edition is no better than the previous one. For example, on page 182 there appears the expression:

"Were they to be robbed, the men murdered and the women sacrificed to Jewish lust?"

On page 193 there appears the expression:

"Get all you can and keep it in the family—Hebrew doctrine."

On page 237, McCarthy writes as follows about the Jews:

"They had no conscientious scruples as to morality, so long as it did not relate to their own women. The chastity of all other women could by them be violated without scruple or compunction."

On page 465, McCarthy writes:

"Should man be constant and honest, or like God's people, thieves, murderers and cut-throats. . ."

The book is definitely and thoroughly anti-Semitic.

George S. Schuyler, Negro journalist: "The natives of Liberia are of a fine type, physically and morally, save where they have been corrupted by the misguided missionaries. This missionary business, indeed, appears to be just another racket with the gentlemen and ladies of the Lord living easy lives and commanding swarms of bare-foot black boys to wait upon them and carry their hammocks. People who could not earn $30 a week in the States live at the mission stations in Liberia like little kings."

Bertrand Russell, English philosopher, and author of many Halderman-Julius publications: "I am myself a dissenter from all known religions and I hope that every kind of religious belief will die out. . . "Religion encourages stupidity, and an insufficient sense of reality. . . "Throughout history, increase of civilization has been correlated with decrease of religiosity. . . "The fundamental defect of Christian ethics consists in the fact that it labels certain classes of acts 'sins' and others 'virtues' on grounds that have nothing to do with their social consequences."

Russian proverbs: "Seek the brave in prison, and the stupid among the clergy. . . "The mouth of a wolf and the eyes of the priest are never satisfied. . . "Beware of a bull when you are in front of him, of a donkey when you are behind, and of a monk wherever you are." . . "You are born, baptized, married and buried, but for all you must pay the priest." . . "When the priest visits you, do not be overjoyed; he will soon begin to beg."

Marquis of Queensberry, English sportsman: "I particularly request that no Christian mummeries or tomfooleries be performed at my grave, but that I be buried as an Agnostic."
Edward O. A. Robin, French scientist: "Communicate with the spirits of the dead! To do that it is necessary that they exist, and we have no reason whatever to suppose that our life is prolonged in another form beyond the grave. Let us put aside these dreams."

Dr. Patsy O'Bang: "Priscilla Prissy-Pratt has the quaint habit, when on trips, of sending picture postcards to a long list of names and writing 'Personal' under the name of each addressee."

A story from Hollywood tells of 32 actresses who appeared in one scene of a musical wearing gold-mesh nose that cost $1,400 a pair.

Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519), artist, inventor, philosopher: "Take no miracles on trust; always look for causes."

Pierre Vergniaud (1759-1793), French statesman: "Reason thinks; religion dreams."

Voltaire: "The individual who persecutes a man, his brother, because he is not of the same opinion, is a monster." "Christianity must be divine since it has lasted 1,700 years despite the fact that it is so full of villainy and nonsense." "The first divine was the first rogue who met the first fool."

Isaac Goldberg, author of numerous Little Blue Books: "A priest who asks alms for God's sake, asks for two."

Wu Ting Fang, Chinese statesman: "The account of the creation of the world and the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden seem to me funny."

W. Biran Wolfe, American psychologist: "Freud found sex an outcast in the outhouse, and he left it in the living room an honored guest."

Oscar Wilde (1856-1900), poet and playwright, author of many Little Blue Books: "The bad popes loved beauty almost as passionately, nay, with as much passion as the good popes hated thought."

Oscar Wilde: "A bishop keeps on saying at the age of 80 what he was told to say when he was a boy of 18, and as a natural consequence he always looks absolutely delightful."

H. G. Wells, historian, novelist, essayist, journalist, and author of numerous Little Blue Books: "So long as you suffer any man to call himself your shepherd sooner or later you will find a crook around your ankle." "The most evil thing in the world today is the Roman Catholic Church."

Robert C. Benchley: "Bernard Shaw once said: 'No one of good sense can accept any creed today without reservation.' When Mark Twain read this sentence from Shaw, he said: 'Certainly not, the reservation is that he is a damned fool to accept it at all."

Mark Twain (1835-1910), humorist, philosopher, and author of numerous Little Blue Books: "Christianity does not convert the Hindu, because our Bible miracles are not so large as theirs." "Why was the human race created? Or, at least, why wasn't something creditable created in its place? God had His opportunity. He could have made a reputation." "Missionary—that least excusable of all human trades." "When you know a man's religious complexion, you know what sort of religious books he reads when he wants some more light, and what sort of books he avoids, lest by accident he get more light than he wants."

William Temple (1628-1699), English statesman: "Religion is for the mob."

William Shakespeare: "In religion, what damned error but some noble brow will bless it and approve it with a text, striving to hide its grossness with fair argument?"

Politicians usually increase in mental and moral stature after death. The late Earl Lloyd George, the eminent Liberal statesman for so many decades, is an exception. The friend of the workers left $650,000, and his eldest son is asking the courts to annul his will on the ground of mental incapacity. They
may next find out that at one period before he began to compose Welsh hymns he could write love letters.

Cynicism is the bastard fruit of a union of optimism and pessimism. Don't confuse it with irony.

The 50 nations had hardly met in London when the Speaker of the Syrian Parliament, who seems to have heard a rumor that UNO was going to put the world in order, drew their attention to the fact that there are foreign troops in his country. The congress was embarrassed. The Persian envoy next tried his hand, and as in this case the foreign troops were Russians, there were stirrings of moral indignation. The Russians then politely asked the Congress to consider what the British troops were doing in Java and Greece. Was the British Foreign Minister embarrassed? No. He never is.

The Australians keep well to the front. At Melbourne a corporation has started business on the fly-your-own-plane line. It costs only $40 an hour. Fortunately, Australia has a vast amount of empty space in its sky, having almost the thinnest population per square mile in the world.

A professor from Uruguay after a recent visit to the U.S.A. said that he was informed that before the atom-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima 60 Chicago scientists petitioned the President to prevent the services from dropping the bomb on a populated area. Scientific men in America have the most honorable record of protest of any civilized country in regard to the atom-bomb.

Attached in an advisory capacity to the South African delegation to London was a Zulu chief. They took him one day to see the life-size model of a German concentration camp which some enterprising entertainer has set up on a vacant plot in London. “Thank God I am a savage,” he said after making the tour. What he is preparing to say to the missionaries at home is not known.

Many people regard progress as a sort of arsenic. In small doses, heavily diluted, it is good for national anaemia. But in larger doses it is deadly.

An Argentinian archbishop sent out a pastoral message on the national administration to be read in all his churches. The press reported that one priest added the comment, after reading it from his pulpit: “If any of you feel that this is a pronouncement in favor of dictatorship you must just keep your mouths shut because Jesus Christ himself was a great Dictator.” An American Catholic paper quoting this regretted the “ambiguity” of the priest’s deliverance.

The book-columns in the papers look much alive and full of promise. There are scores of books out or coming out on the world’s little maladies and how to put them right. What one wonders is where all these wise folk were from 1930 to 1940 when the world was rolling down the wrong alley.

One of these learned statisticians has pointed out a remarkable contrast between London and New York. “London’s birthrate,” he says, “steadily increased during the war but New York’s has fallen since 1943.” One of our moralists has been considering this phenomenon of the increased birth rate and found that it was due to a betterment of economic conditions. Were they so much better in London than New York? A less virtuous person suggests that the contrast may have something to do with the fact that New York lost some hundreds of thousands of vigorous males during 1944 and 1945 and London had a visitation of hundreds of thousands of American and other soldiers. We do not like these low suggestions. The statistician adds that London’s death rate in the same period rose much higher than that of New York, but even a statistician remembers that there were bombs on London.

Queen Calote, of Tonga, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of her kingdom by giving free pardons to prisoners. They numbered five. We gather that the
world crime-wave has not broken upon the shores of this Pacific Island. Some say they are not smart enough to be criminal. We remember a naval officer, whose ship called at Tonga, saying that as he talked to a brother officer they noticed two islanders scratching in the sand with a stick. "Let's see what the guys are up to," one proposed. The natives were working out a problem of the Second Book of Euclid. Of course, that may be common on the sands of Coney Island.

Machine and tractor stations of the U.S.S.R. worked 49,727,500 acres more last year than in the previous year. With so much time on their hands they might have spared a few men and machines to help the starving Greeks. But we still have to guard Greece against this taint of Bolshevism.

"The fact that the Church does not condemn Franco does not mean," says one of our consecrated radio philosophers, "that it approves his regime." Neutrality is a grand thing but we always understood that a moralist was never neutral to savagery and greed. The reverend gentleman's explanation makes the mud thicker. Franco is preventing the Communists from Sovietizing Spain he says. We wonder if there are enough Communists left in Spain to build a shack much less to raise 30,000,-000 wretched folk to the level of Russia. And must you refrain from censoring an injustice if it serves a political purpose?"

The literary journals announce that they have discovered that the best-sellers in the book-market last year are those whose authors employed sales-managers.

Mr. Truman is reported to have whispered to Byrnes as they left Potsdam: "No more of this personal-contact business for me." International conferences seem to agree beautifully on platitudes, fairly agree on principles (after due preparation), and never agree on facts. They would find a hint in ancient Russian history. The decisions of the village Mir were all ways unanimous: They dropped obstinate dissentients in the nearest river.

Medical writers announce that the soil or dirt in your little back yard, if you have one, is rich—and the dirtier the better—in a new discovery that beats penicillin. They will soon be buying the dirt of our finger-nails (if any). And some folk want us to knock science on the head just when it is getting into its stride.

"What is the Catholic Attitude?" is the title of an article by a Jesuit. Wondering whether we had made some mistake about that attitude we plunged into the article. It appears that the Catholic attitude is "the collective conviction of the members of the Christian Church in all things that relate to human living." That sounds democratic enough, but the writer goes on: "It cannot be individual or elastic." So it is the old rubber-stamp after all.

Passenger jumps on the step of a double-decker bus in London. "Any room up above, miss?" he asks. "Don't know," she drawsl, "I haven't been up there since Christmas."

Elman J. Cruze, University of Tennessee: "I would like to extend to you my praise for publishing knowledge in such a convenient form."

Japan is not to have so much of its own way in Asia in future in spite of General MacArthur's large charity. A deputation of Hindus, doubtless disguised as missionaries, has gone to Nippon to study its manufacture of fertilizers, rayon, newsprint, textiles, glass, porcelain, and steel rolling. They are to be started in India. In compensation the Japs are feverishly developing their older industries. European correspondents are sending curious messages. One, not anonymous, cables:

"Many American service-men who a few months ago were lavishing attention and money on girls in Britain are now over here joining with Japanese women in the most disgraceful mass-fraternization in history."

Military police direct the traffic and Jap ex-soldiers do a tremen-
dous black-market business controlling the houses and directing customers, at a high fee, to disengaged ladies. There was a column of that sort of stuff in the London News of the World, which has a 4,000,000 circulation.

One of the offices at Washington received an application from a medical man on December 11. On December 28 it sent back its application, saying severely that the date was rubber-stamped and this was not permitted. The date on the official reply was rubber-stamped.

A distressing picture of Greece comes from a thoroughly reliable correspondent. There is "a wave of economic distress, otherwise a general strike would be a certainty." Prices rose as much as 300 percent in January and got "completely out of control." No one trusts the money, and as soon as a man gets his wage he rushes to buy goods, but his drachmas may be worthless tomorrow and the storekeeper won't sell. It appears that, as we should expect of the industrious Greek people, ample food, olives, and (for trade) tobacco were grown but lack of transport immobilizes them. In other words, an incompetent and selfish political clique paralyzes the miserable country. If the protection of this clique was left to the British we must remember that America has been throughout in agreement with Britain. All for the purpose of keeping out Russia and keeping the door open for a royal family.

A shudder recently passed through the American Jewish world. It reeks under the news that the chief, certainly the most cultivated, representative of the House of Rothschild in Britain, Baron Nathaniel Mayer Victor, has joined the Socialist Party and genially explained in a press-interview that he thinks hereditary wealth unjust.

It is a fine spectacle to see the lions and the lambs, the big powers and the little nations of the international world, meeting on a footing of equality—well, on some sort of common footing—in the new type of world-gathering. As a distinguished journalist remarks, it gives a golden opportunity to the representatives of the weakest nations, chiefly those of South and Central America. Newspapermen in London describe how they noticed Polish agents arguing in dark corners with these Latin-American delegates to get them to persuade Uno to put the Polish landlords back in their comforts. This used to be said of Rumanian and Bulgarian delegates, but everybody knows how they have deteriorated under Russian influence and are no longer bribeable.

The British minister Aneurin Bevan was vigorously applauded the other day when, addressing a meeting of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (massesurs, etc.) he trusted the day would soon come when women would be better represented in the medical services. In that particular branch of medical service in Britain there are already 14 women members to one man.

That baby for every cradle and job for every man ideal seems to be dragging. In the Anglo-American News an ex-major advertises for a job and says "accept any reasonable offer."

An Italian has written a vigorous reply to the suspicions of many evil-minded folk, including ourselves, that the Vatican had something to do with the war. Cianfarra's book, The War and the Vatican, has appeared in translation. An admiring review in a religious paper says that the author is "a shrewd judge of character and a slick journalist." He needed to be.

"Realism," said Oscar Wilde, "is the rage of Caliban at seeing his own face in the glass." But you know these epigrammatists. There is no need to look in the glass just now to get up a bit of a rage.

Amongst the Japanese victims of the Nagasaki bomb were 10,000 native Christians. God rains alike on the just and the unjust. It need not deter anybody from becoming a Christian.

A Jesuit has made a spirited defense of Franco. He put Spain
“happily on the road to prosperity.”
Length of the road not stated. He
“built up a national movement
composed of all the parties—Mon-
archists, Carlists, and the Catholic
Action Party.” Apparently he li-
quidated such parties as Socialism,
Radicalism, Liberals, etc., which 10
years ago numbered the majority of
the Spanish people. He has “given
complete freedom to the Catholic
Church.” . . . But perhaps it is
enough to say that the Jesuit’s
name is Father Bosh. Why not have
shortened his address to: “Franco
has given us priests everything we
wanted and to hell with everybody
else.”

The Russians have promptly pub-
lished an English translation of the
verbatim report of the trial of Poles
(Trial of Polish Diversionists) in
the Supreme Court in June, 1945. If
you have any doubt about the Rus-
sian charge that they worked in the
rear of the Russian armies in Pol-
land, the Baltic States, and the
Ukraine, at least don’t say that
Russia drew an iron curtain round
the court-room. But it won’t make
any difference to the robust anti-
Russian. He is still talking about
the “bogus trails” of 1936 and 1937,
though a translated verbatim re-
port has been available ever since
that date.

Medical men who have had to
combat an epidemic in the Sudan
and have just published their re-
port gives us one more instance of
clerical devotion. “Our special
thanks,” they say, “are due to the
witch-doctors of the Danakil tribe
who abandoned their usually lucra-
tive profession to become our
stretcher bearers.” But in Africa
even witch-doctoring is not what it
was while stretcher-bearing is not
badly paid.

A reader comments on some of
the notes in these columns that we
seem to credit the press with more
influence on the people than it has.
Repeatedly a city or state has voted
differently from what the majority
of its papers directed. This does not
conflict with the main principle of
social psychology, that what a man
calls his mind is built by his en-
vironment, of which the press is a
dominant factor. It just happens
that in the case of politics there are
other powerful factors in the en-
vironment. For millions the church
has a political voice. For millions of
others the trade union, the club,
and so on. A man may take a paper
because, as McCormick said of his
rag, it has the best comic strips. But
let the papers agree with the po-
itical factors—in misrepresenting
Russia, for instance—and watch the
result.

Wife of GI: “I’m making a dozen
lemon pies for my husband, who’s
coming home on furlough. Those
pies are going to be the second
thing he’s going to ask for.”

Mae West: “I’m really the old-
 fashioned type of woman. I still
love to lol at a spinning wheel. It
pays me well. Last night I won
$100 on the red.”

Customer: “Please send me a book
I have been wanting to read for a
long time but never got the chance.
It is by a foreign writer named Vic-
tor Hugo and the story’s title is
‘Lame as a Rabble.’”

Doctor, to blonde: “Miss, I’d say
you are suffering from acute indis-
cretion and that it will come to a
head in about nine months.”

A man had a siege of hard luck.
His daughter snuggled too close to
the school teacher, a man. His horse
broke a leg. His dog died. His wife
ran off with a peddler. He com-
plained bitterly of his hard lot, and
eventually met the parson. The
reverend suggested the remedy.
Pray. That was what he needed.
That would fix him up. He decided
to take the medicine. He began
in doors, but soon felt, for some un-
explained reason, he should go to
the back yard. With face upturned
and hands uplifted, he took his
troubles to the Lord. Still unlucky,
a bird scaring overhead used him
as a target and scored a bullseye
on the supplicant’s eye. Swabbing
off the goo, he said: “There, God,
you see how it is? For other people,
they sing.”

Someone asked Mark Twain
whether he believed in taking ex-
ercise. “The only exercise I take,”
he said, "is walking at the funeral of friends of mine who believed in exercise." Men differ in needs as well as tastes. But Mark died at the age of 74, and Bernard Shaw, who believes strongly in exercise, is still much alive at 89.

Of Aldous Huxley's latest book a puritan reviewer says that "its popular success is a symptom of widespread weariness and disillusionment with the ways of the world." Isn't it possible that the attractiveness of Aldous Huxley's style had more to do with the sale of his book? To the present we have heard of only one of his disciples retiring from the wicked world. Pessimists who are smart writers have always been good sellers, from the days of Job onwards. People like what the cook calls "piquant sauce."

The latest idea in the field of education is that we ought to make it compulsory from the age of 6 to 60. Fancy these dear old things of 59 flitting on the campus, and so on, being rounded up by the cops for playing hockey. Certainly one of the ideas we have to get rid of if we want a better-behaved race, a real self-governing democracy, is the idea that for nine-tenths of the community education should be completed at 16, if not 14. But Russia has shown that there is no need for compulsion of the adolescent and adult.

In Britain there are 48,000 applications for divorce by ex-service men on the books, and there are still a million men to demobilize. It will take the courts two or three years to get through, it is calculated. In a concrete case of which the particulars are known to us there are no children and both man and girl want divorce. She has even made a false confession of adultery to get it. It might be useful to knock together the heads of a few lawyers, politicians, and theologians who talk about the sanctity of the marriage-tie.

Big Jim Farley was as busy in Europe as Churchill was in America. He saw the Pope and the Italian royal family (or what is left of it). He saw Attlee and Bevin, Churchill and Eden, the chief statesmen and royal personages of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and so on. He was not selling Coca-Cola. Is it possible that Catholics are grooming him for the next election? Which reminds us of the late lamented Al Smith of blessed memory. The life of the saint has already appeared, Al Smith—American. A few quite interesting facts about him have been carefully omitted: how he came to publish (though he did not write) the un-Catholic manifesto for his election-campaign, how he came to quarrel with the priests and what they said about him, and so on. He has, it seems, joined the Immortals of American history.

French scientists have made thorough experiments on the relative nutritional value of butter and margarine fortified with vitamins. They report "a substantially equivalent nutritional value."

Senator Pepper lived up to his spicy name when he said: "If the British want Russian troops out of Persia, let them get their own troops out of Iran, Palestine, and Transjordan." He might even have added China, India, Indonesia, Egypt, Greece, North Africa, and a few other odds and ends of geography. American troops also are nicely distributed. All this, of course, is in the interest of peace; and never before in history was the planet so disturbed within 12 months of the ending of a great war to end war.

A probe by the military authorities amongst American soldiers in Europe found that of those who had never visited Germany only 34 percent were favorably disposed to the Germans, amongst those who had spent at least a month in Germany the proportion was 54 percent and amongst those who spent two months or more in the country it rose to 59 percent, which gives rise to many reflections. One is that the Germans might do well to replace all their foreign agents by Fraulein. Another is just a faint doubt whether we are wise to trust generals to reconstruct a stricken country because they were so successful in striking it.
We are told that the telephone will soon be installed in the automobiles and other vehicles on the run. Some wonder why it was not done long ago. But it requires quite an elaborate series of stations along the roads.

Even able scientists sometimes drop into these little pitfalls. Some time ago Julian Huxley suggested that the best use we could make of America's atom bombs was to drop them on the Arctic and Antarctic sheets and abolish the great deserts of ice. We do not mean that it was a pitfall to take seriously the President's assurance that America was not keeping the atom bombs for any selfish national purpose. But years ago the proper experts—Huxley is a biologist, of course—calculated by how much the level of the ocean was raised when the ice-sheet of the Ice Age melted. It is estimated that melting the Polar sheets would raise the level of all the oceans by 100 feet; which would mean the disappearance of Boston, New York, and all cities at or about sea-level.

The Scots, who are really as generous and bright-minded a race as any other, often themselves make up ridiculously, funny stories about their meanness. A group of them in Glasgow were discussing over a glass or two which was the meanest Scot they had ever met. The palm went to the story of one who stole the camphor from—well, you know those little places to which gentlemen go and ladies do not. This is beaten by a story that is going round just now. An American Scot heard his children speculating, as children do for the guidance of their elders, what presents Santa Claus was likely to bring them. On Christmas Eve he went to the back of his house and fired a shot and then came in to tell the children that Santa Claus had shot himself so there could be no presents.

Another king to be demobbed or dejobbed in Europe. The Bulgarians have decided that they can contrive to get along without the wisdom of their costly monarch. It is rumored that Washington is going to build a home for European ex-kings on the banks of the Potomac.

No journalist has yet invented an iron curtain for Spain, yet it is far more mysterious than Russia. The Madrid Catholic paper *Ya* has a bitter complaint about "the ignominious spectacle of so many professional beggars" on the streets of Madrid, while millions are being spent on luxuries. The government spent, on undisclosed purposes, 1,917,000,000 pesetas beyond the revenue in 1945.

Some papers call the American authorities who are smashing up machinery in Germany, "The New Luddites." They do not always explain the full irony of it. The Luddites were the ignorant workers of more than a century ago who, when cotton-machinery was invented, stormed the mills and broke up the machines.

All sorts of excuses are made by the authorities for the appalling famine in India. They made no reply when they were asked whether they had taken into account the fact that in 1946 the population would be 40,000,000 higher than in 1938, and this could have been foreseen. The result is also a poser for the anti-birth-control people. If we apply ordinary science and humanity to the death rate in India and China, the uncontrolled birth rate would be portentous.

Many are surprised at the knowledge of foreign geography and ethnography occasionally evinced in Congress. Recently, when the recognition of Transjordan was proposed, a group of Congressmen opposed it and defended the claims of Saudi Arabia. American oil-capital is chiefly invested in Saudi Arabia.

"Prisoner," said the judge, "I am told that you broke into this house three times last month. What have you to say?" "Well, you see, your honor, there's an acute shortage of houses."

In one of the hunger-zones in India the guests at a marriage were given the price of two dinners each instead of a wedding breakfast.