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The
Home Town Mind

The Home Town Mind

By

Duncan Aikman

New York

Minton, Balch & Company

1926

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DUNCAN AIKMAN

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Printed in the United States of America by
J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

PREFACE

No one's home town is the exclusive hero of this collection. During the past twenty years more than half a dozen communities from New England to Texas have sustained the burden of the author's residence and suffrages. I have drawn freely upon the civic temperamental symptoms of most of them.

Furthermore, one's friends have home towns and to an editorial desk comes the press of home towns one has not been privileged to know by personal visitation. Whatever has seemed to me to express the home town mind vividly, significantly or amusingly, I have ventured to include.

For the home town mind is not the peculiar individuality—if any—of Pittsburgh or Vicksburg. We are a sociable and highly imitative race, incessantly eager to conform to new conventions. We are bound to each other and to each other's modes of thought and conduct by the most incessant communications, the most tireless habits of organization with which the

race has yet been afflicted. Thus, despite a few rapidly declining sectional variations, the home town mind functions no longer in a healthy isolation, but with something closely resembling mob psychology.

If Atlanta succumbs to the Ku Klux paranoia or Rotarian delusions of civic grandeur in April, look for the same symptoms in Portland, Oregon, and Portland, Maine, by May fifteenth. The United States has small chance to produce such civic contrasts as philandering Venice and austerely esthetic Florence. If Venice, California, started a new school of philandering and Florence, Alabama, a new school of city hall murals, each would be stealing the other's stuff after the next international Lions' Club convention.

In such ways the home town mind provides comedy enough to keep its victims and its critics from taking it tragically. But while it amuses, it also dominates.

In numbers, in gregariousness, in like-mindedness, in organization, the people who think with the home town mind are more than a match for our decreasing rural population, concerned mainly with its own economic salvation, and for the small cosmopolitan population of our great

cities anxious only to be let alone in a dignified cultural autonomy. Furthermore, they are eager to re-mould mankind in their image with a whoop, and so have a motive for aggressive dominance which unsuccessfully resisting opponents lack.

So, whether it be prohibition, compulsory fundamentalism, compulsory political regularity, compulsory business mannerisms or intellectual interests, or compulsory sentimental history in the schools, whatever the home town mind sets before itself as the symbol of a conquest over non-conformity is pretty likely to be achieved. As a social force, the home town mind prescribes our conventions, as a political bloc it makes to-day most of our laws of individual restraint. Seemingly it does both with more and more of a determination to punish contradiction of its opinions and minor violations of its codes as blasphemies against the ultimate wisdom and the ultimate urbanity of American civilization.

So the home town mind requires observation —not to say the psychopathic kind. It requires this all the more since such observation as it received prior to the past decade has been mainly bestowed with the object of flattering its senti-

mental complacencies. But to-day the home town mind's foolishness deserves to be weighed against its wisdom, its hypocrisies against its sincerity, its bumptious intolerances against its reasonableness. For if the home town can decide it, the home town mind will be shortly the sole mind of the republic. Whether this must come or may yet be avoided, the 1920's seem a virtuous time to face the worst.

January 4, 1926

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The Home Town Mind

THE HOME TOWN MIND

I CAME back last summer to the Hoosier city where I was born. I had not been a permanent resident for twenty years, and in ten years had paid it only one twenty-four-hour visit.

For thirty miles along the railroad Chamber of Commerce signs proclaimed me welcome to this and that economic opportunity. But to senses Hoosier-born and Hoosier-reared a furious mid-western heat wave conveyed a welcome that seemed heartier and more intimate. In the sweating Pullman that afternoon the heat rolled in off the cornfields with a touch of oldtime courtesy—the salty manners, the vigorous expression, the fierce genuineness which the Chamber of Commerce allurements lacked.

"See here," it might have said if a heat wave could talk Hoosier, "I'm the kind of weather we raise out here, and that's all there is to it. I may be uncomfortable but I won't kill you and I figure you're the kind of a man to stand up to me and fight back. No hard feelings? Any-

way, I'm going to be myself, and you can do what you please about it."

But what had Hoosiers, with their old-fashioned, critical acerbities, to do with all this boosting nonsense?

I happened to know that the place for which I was headed was being plagued just then with various devils of economic misfortune. In the memorable summer of 1896, rude forefathers would not only have admitted this. They would have emptied a whole season's vials of antiseptic laughter upon the head of any amateur affirmative psychologist so infatuated as to put up signs denying it. Meanwhile they would have worked their hides off getting out votes for the gold standard and McKinley, or doing whatever seemed necessary to relieve their hardships.

But these Chamber of Commerce signs were to prove authentic symbols. I was to learn that the heat wave was almost the last old-fashioned Hoosier over the age of thirty left in Indiana.

II

Indiana is as full of slogans to-day as its summer logs are of chiggers. But the only slogan

that the home town takes to heart and sincerely strives to obey against its better nature is—"Hush!"

Oh, yes, they talk. The gift of expression dies hard in a people who once delighted in it, and the gift of humor dies harder still. But this is the way they talk:

I went one day to call on an old friend half a generation older than I, the memory of whose outspoken, tartly philosophical opinions of various subjects, from the neighbors' morals to international politics, I had relished since my earliest understanding of these things. If any man, I thought, can explain how so ludicrous an organization as the Ku Klux Klan has come to dominate a society so sensitive to the ludicrous as the Hoosiers once were, why, let him.

The palaver of renewed friendship over, I stated my curiosity. I was almost frightened for a moment, his expression seemed to accuse me of having introduced the unmentionable.

We were seated in his private office. He rose, still without replying, and shut the door. A strong hot wind rattled it in its casement, and he locked it. The room on one side fronted an L in a small office building. Thirty or forty feet

away were other open windows with men behind them at work in offices. My host closed the window on their side.

Not until he had achieved this hermetical secrecy did he talk. Then, except for his lowered tones, it was with the old-time freedom and horse sense, the old sardonic dash in criticism. But when it was over he appealed to me, "My God, you're not going to write anything about this, are you?

"Well, you don't have to live here, so I suppose it's all right. But you know the tricks of your business. Whatever you do, don't write anything that could possibly identify me. I've kept out of this thing for three years and I can't afford to get in it now. It won't mix with my business."

So I shall describe him as the magnate of the Hoosier diamond industry because there are no diamond mines in Indiana and he is no magnate. But while I do it I remember how the generation before him reviled and extolled the A. P. A. movement in informal street corner debates thirty years ago while it struggled for a feeble foothold in the state against the massed weight of the Hoosier sense of humor.

As I left I began to discover an even deeper poignancy in the contrast. I call the summer of 1896 memorable because my memories of the good things in the old Hoosier life begin there. It was, as even the tamest school histories will tell one, a period of violent differences of opinion. And how the Hoosiers, with their infinite delight in battles of wits and opinions, did make the most of it!

Main Street was not yet a mere sociological catchword. But for six months, between some incidental business transactions, it was an open forum for debating "free silver" and all the other impassioned issues between Democrats and Republicans, between radical minds and conservative, which "free silver" dragged in its train.

Our social codes never required then that controversial subjects should be denied admission, delicately or otherwise, merely because they were controversial. On the contrary, we recognized a stern, sometimes an almost painful, duty to express our opinions on every subject on which we happened to have any—and occasionally, I fear, on some others. Thus the evolutionist, the populist, the southern sympathizer (for the Civil War was still a fairly live issue), the prohibitionist,

the woman suffragist, the town socialist, and the town atheist, even that heretic of heretics for the summer of 1896—the Bryan Democrat—had their hearings and took them. In our highest reaches we could even debate Catholicism vs. Protestantism. Only sex we touched gingerly, if at all. Otherwise, we had infinite stomach for this sort of battle, and it was sometimes offered with bludgeons rather than rapiers. So we had our share of coolnesses and feuds, both temporary and lasting. But we spoke our minds and we had no reticences save those of decency and good breeding.

All this may have been rather horrible to the young man of seven summers whose patience was often tried with the incessant boom of authoritative voices above his head. But when his time came to ask questions he was never told that it was un-American and a fit cause for ostracism to hold certain opinions, or that, holding them, it was "bad business" to utter them.

In that time and place it was characteristically American to hold opinions and do battle for them, and business, at the appropriate stage in all such discussions, was supposed to be damned. But now my friend, whose mind and critical judg-

ments were certainly not inferior to his grandfather's, had shut the doors and windows on argument and pleaded, "Keep this dark!"

III

Again, I talked politics with the Hoosiers. For some days I was aware of something vaguely unusual in these conversations. Then one day an old friend explained it. "I don't think," he said, "that we talk politics so much out here as we used to. Can't always tell who's listening or who might take offense." . . . The light dawned. Once politics, when two or more Hoosiers were gathered together, obtruded themselves as naturally as the weather. Now it was I, the outsider, who was always dragging in politics; and it was subtly conveyed that this was rather daring of me.

When politics were talked, it was with the old, racy, professional spirit of the state which is always exhilaratingly "doubtful" and polls a larger percentage of its eligible vote than any other. There was a shrewd and ironic admiration, even in the enemy quarter, for the vote-

getting efficiency with which the Republican machine had annexed the Ku Klux Klan bloc to its organization, though at the price of transferring to a great extent that noble and complex mechanism to the Grand Dragon's office. The Hoosier mind is still keen enough to take a non-partisan delight in the subtleties by which the scandal of a Republican governor's conviction and imprisonment in Atlanta was redeemed under the Klan's official robe of super-Americanism and super-righteousness.

These born technicians appreciated with scientific but sportsmanlike detachment the "politics" behind the stringent Wright prohibition law which provides mandatory jail sentences for the mere possession of liquor, outlaws pre-Volstead purchases, and largely eliminates search warrants; and behind the barely defeated Simms bill which would have prohibited teachers from wearing religious garb in school rooms.

"If you're going in for Klan stuff," they counseled sagely, "you might as well go the limit and get a reputation out of it."

Yet in these political discussions there were differences. Even in Klan-ridden Indiana most of the people one meets intimately are not Klans-

men or sympathetic with them. "Even under their robes on parade," my "diamond magnate" friend had said, "you can tell the crowd the Klan draws from by their shoes."

But no amount of anti-Klan predilection, so far as I could see, had driven a single Hoosier Republican out of his party allegiance, although in the last campaign the Klan, however much played down by terrorized newspapers and stump speakers, was plainly the outstanding issue. Again I remembered the campaign of 1896 and certain notorious transfers of allegiance over the momentous issue of "free silver." The Hoosiers of those days admired mere "tactics" with perhaps even more fervor than the Hoosiers of 1925. But they voted their convictions.

These political discussions had, too, an air, if not of secrecy, at least of personal confidence. Opinions were given, it is true, frankly and with analytical keenness, and not infrequently with cutting edges of the old-time wit. But how many times were they introduced with such a discretionary apology as "I don't mind saying this among friends"?

Yet thirty years ago every Hoosier of standing fought his way to and from the sustaining

midday dinner through the raging free silver debate. I remember the case of one individual who on account of his views on this subject was threatened with the loss of a large business account. He met the threatener at his front gate and they had it out together for half an hour while two roasts seared and dried, and two leaders of our feminine social life looked dreadful wifely daggers from behind late-Victorian curtains.

There were no conversions, but on the other hand there was no boycott. Two Hoosiers had merely reaffirmed the ancient Hoosier doctrine that a man of substance was a political leader by obligation of his status: if not in the organization sense, at least in the sense of letting all the world know his opinions and feel their impact.

But the Indiana I found in 1925 seemed always timidly whispering, "Don't let anybody outside our own little circle know that I think anything."

A modern Hoosier of some local substance confessed to me proudly that he had just succeeded in inducing one of his right-hand men to withdraw from public participation in politics.

"That sort of thing's all right for a fellow who has an independent income," he said, "or for a fellow who wants to take a speculative chance on

making a living out of politics exclusively. But in a legitimate business it raises hell."

IV

In circles intimate enough for such confidences one can still measurably be an individual in Indiana. On rare occasions I even heard Rotarians and Chamber of Commerce directors twitted with a sharply critical geniality about their sublime faith in the mystical powers of "Organization"—and heard them reply in kind.

Knowing other sections of the country where this was virtually as impossible as friendly religious debate, I was cheered with the reflection that old-fashioned Hoosier open-mindedness and good breeding carry on in spite of obstacles. I know other places where the post-prandial theories obtain that Lincoln and Jesus were the first "boosters," and where, consequently, any attack on the principles or utility of any order of "boosters" becomes *ipso facto* treasonable and blasphemous. Indiana is at least near enough to the spirit of '96 to have avoided this pass. From her own, and among her own, she still en-

dures criticism and meets it with courtesy and some wit.

Nevertheless, the confidential air must always be present in these discussions or they do not occur. And the sense of a subtle compulsion toward conformity is rarely far away.

At lower levels, indeed, the subtlety vanishes. The compulsions are as blatant as anywhere else. Putting to one side the purely political motives of its "master minds," the Ku Klux Klan has successfully swept Indiana with the same violent urge to standardize American Protestantism and its prejudices which has operated elsewhere.

A young man, recently arrived in the home town from the East, encountered a typical instance of this in its cruder form when he first tried to rent a house. The house, the price, and the prospective tenant's credit standing were all satisfactory, and it seemed a mere question of leasing formalities. But the landlord required additional satisfaction.

"See here," he demanded, "before we sign anything, are you one hundred per cent?"

The Easterner requested an explanation.

"I mean," said the landlord, "are you an American Protestant?"

The Easterner was able to establish an early and, at least nominal, connection with the Congregationalists, and the lease was signed in due order—but not before the landlord had predicted that a few weeks of "seeing how things are going" in Indiana would lead any enterprising young man of Protestant parentage into active Klan membership; and not before the landlord had told what was evidently his favorite story, of how he had refused to renew the lease for a Catholic family although they had lived more than a year in the house and had been "good pay."

When I was told this—(and it was thoroughly substantiated and apparently not exceptional)—I thought of the jibes old Joe Hanson, the town's most popular grocer's clerk of thirty years ago—a "high up" Mason and member of heaven only knows how many secret orders connected with Protestantism—would have launched at any property owner who would turn out a good tenant because of religious differences, and of how Joe's social circle—the vanished counterpart of the "one hundred per cent" landlord's—would have laughed with him.

In groups of wider mental horizons and normal

small-city social sophistication the Klan is, for the most part, condescendingly smiled at. It may be given credit for allaying labor unrest by withdrawing large numbers of American-born, Protestant factory mechanics from any sense of solidarity with their fellow workmen of foreign birth and non-Protestant theology. Here and there the Klan must not be condescendingly smiled at, because some young lawyer or physician or rising young real estate man is present who is known to have joined it for frankly commercial reasons. But, on the whole, Indiana's reasonably civilized and cultivated society views the Klan (in confidence) with mildly contemptuous mirth. As an accessory to the political machine, as a device enabling fifth-rate pastors to express their strictly economic jealousy of a prospering Catholicism, and to whoop up a temporary interest in the waning Puritanism of the more fiercely evangelical sects, it does very well —likewise, as an emotional substitute for liquor among the classes too indigent or too unenterprising to defy the Wright law. But for the Klan's fierce fervors in imposing conformity Indiana's "upper crust" has no use. Here the spirit of fascism, so crudely expressed in those

regions of American life which lack Indiana's traditions of individualism and mental freedom, is at least suave. Only, one seldom escapes its suave pressures.

One day I talked for hours with a friend of my own generation which, to its sorrow, was born too late to grow up convincedly Victorian and too early to acquire with sufficient naturalness the technic of the flapper and her male satellites. My friend had solved his problem of adaptation by forcing himself—or so it seemed to me—to become, not merely a Victorian or a super-Victorian, but a veritable Bourbon.

In a rage with the outstanding faults of taste in the present era, he has come round to damning everything modern as an insult to decent taste. Futurism in art, realism in literature, evolutionism in religion, vocationalism in education, democracy in politics, individualism in morals—to him, they were all one and all anathema. He has become a fundamentalist in church politics, not at all through conversion or even through intellectual conviction, but simply because he sees social salvation nowhere else. With the exceptions of Anatole France and Balzac, he insists that no literature fit for a civilized man has

been produced since the Eighteenth Century. Denying a gentleman a drink and permitting a young girl to discover her life on her own hook are, to him, sins as black as the use of the term "complex" or the literary technic of Mr. Sinclair Lewis. On the constructive side he refuses to regard the nation as half way pointed toward safety until literal belief in the Bible is enforced upon every American child at the parent's knee, to be followed at the age of seven by the compulsory Latin book and at ten by the compulsory Greek book.

I having, for obscure reasons, sold out my soul almost as unreservedly to my juniors and betters, the argument took place after the heroic Indiana manner. That is to say, we exchanged views with exaggerated emphasis, insulted each other with sarcasms, innuendo, and frontal attacks, and parted after several hours in unusual amity.

Still, my friend's views so fascinated me by their horribleness that at parting I urged him to write them down and try to get them published. His answer suddenly made me feel the full force of the tides of conformity of the home town mind.

"I'd boil over," he said. "I have to keep this in too much."

"Why keep it in," I asked, "if you believe it?"

"Such things," was the reply, "simply aren't said out here nowadays. Worse than that, if you don't get my meaning, saying them is a thing that isn't done.

"Imagine starting a conversation like this with So-and-So and so on"—he listed almost the full circle of his intimates.

"If you're going to be a nut and go on living in this generation, you've got to keep it dark." And he proceeded to express an almost pathetic gratitude that now, actually after years, he could let loose, even on a scoffer like me. I thought of other Hoosiers, now either dead or senile, who, having such convictions, would have spent a lifetime doing public battle for them; and of their contemporary Hoosiers who, on each choice social occasion, would have egged them on.

More and more one felt the weight of those subtle compulsions. Here was a man silently but definitely excluded from the field of complete respectability because he did not like golf. Here was a couple mildly tainted because they preferred a good deal of their own society to constant

social activity. While the Ku Klux group imposes wilder and wilder legal restrictions on drinking, there seemed to be different social strata in which it could become palpably awkward not to defy these restrictions.

Thirty years ago the town atheist would have refused his children baptism with a gesture of purposeful grandiloquence. Afterwards he might have to debate theology at every porch call he made that summer. But, granting his convictions were incorrigible, his decision would have been universally respected. Yet in the summer of 1925 one listened while a group of hopeless agnostics, scandalized by the consistency of one of their number in putting his skepticism into practice, implored him to give his children the customary religious training. The sole burden of the argument was that religious instruction was customary; that it was "the right thing" to do.

There were too many such conversations regarding the irregular conduct and views of others —frequently absent others—for one to suppose for a minute that individuality is seriously on the wane in Indiana. But the trend of each conversation forced one, likewise, to the melancholy

conclusion that Hoosiers no longer cherish individuality with the oldtime zest.

The well-bred do not, it is true, assail it with the bludgeons, the police edicts, the luncheon-club oratorical billingsgate, the editorial denunciation, and the ecclesiastical holy sarcasms which any marked tendency toward human differentiation must cope with in the ex-cow towns and ex-mining camps of the West and, too often, alas, in the super-commerce-chambered civilization of New England. Among Hoosiers the home town mind is mild and reasonable. It recognizes that indulgence in a personality is one of its ancient vices, deep-rooted in both tradition and habit; curable, if at all, by kindness. So it lures the victims of unorthodox sentiments onward and upward mainly by bestowing favors upon conformity and by placing the victim's non-conformities on a plane with those regrettable personal weaknesses seldom to be mentioned in his presence.

But of all those startling piquancies of belief, of conduct, of expression in which the home town mind of old rejoiced, the home town mind of to-day seems half ashamed or half afraid. Emphatic human differences were once the main

things that made that mind's life interesting. The home town to-day will deprecate them out of existence if it can.

I heard as I was leaving these last seductive words of the home town mind regarding my own heresies:

"If you'll only think these things over long enough you'll come around to agreeing with us."

This was sincerely hospitable, and I recognized it as such not without gratitude. And it is also true that the home town mind thirty years ago might have said, "You poor fool, you don't know any better, and you never will."

But beneath the billingsgate, the old home town mind would have been glad you were yourself.

V

Still, there is no use calling the home town names about it. These changes will come with the passage of our generations: generations of varied originality, generations of rigid conventions; generations of faith, generations of skepticism; generations of urbanity, and generations of what might be called, with a strong modern

accent, "blurbanity." The shadows of the changes pass over all the home town minds wherever, in the world, mental motion happens; and then other changes come.

The Hoosier mind may have surrendered some twenty years back to the "bigger and better" complex, as fully as it could. It may have done its best to abide by the code ideas of the era: That positive opinions should be suppressed in the interests of business; that the individual should sink his identity in the organization or, worse, pattern himself upon the "key types" which organizations breed; that criticism should be "constructive" instead of for the fun of starting an argument; that the first rule of a gentleman and a self-salesman is to "boost, not knock."

But the surrender is incomplete and with numerous private reservations. The old Hoosier Adam whispers many a sane indiscretion between the lines of the solemn luncheon-club rituals. Not always but more often, I think, than in other states, he winks a subtle political comprehension at you even from behind the Klan mask. The home town mind may have suffered an eclipse under the shadow of the modern slogan banners,

but it has not suffered an attack of paralysis, or even a genuine transformation.

Already there are signs that the eclipse is passing. The flapper is abroad in Indiana as elsewhere and, as elsewhere, she carried her male admirers along with her in her fiery courses. The flapper fails to recognize the hush instincts of her elders, and upon her the suave compulsions of conformity are wasted.

And in Indiana, because she is Hoosier, the flapper is interesting. When she tells you how and why she was fired from half a dozen finishing schools, or what she thinks of the Ku Klux Klan and the Wright law, and what her ideas are of the relative merits of salesmanship manuals and the *American Mercury*, the whole world can sit up and listen and fight her back for all she cares.

She is still, of course, handicapped by youth. She tells what she knows and thinks without fear or favor, but she does not yet know enough for this to be final wisdom. All the same, her more seasoned specimens have now seven or eight years of extreme youth behind them, and it was from one of these that I heard the rising Indiana express itself in the tone of its grandfathers. It was in reference to the whispered complaint

of some "organization men" that one citizen of prominence had been too out-spoken in his unflattering opinion about the home town's present economic prospects.

"Why can't those damned old fossils," she propounded, "let somebody *do* and *be* and *say* what he wants?"

Call it the Mendelian law or an instinctive reaction to the organization "white terror," the flapper in Hoosierdom is her grandfather's granddaughter. Despite his natural timidity before the older business men, she is driving her young man to be his grandfather's grandson.

So, though its present enfeeblement cannot fail to amuse the critical observer who knew it ancestrally, the home town mind no longer seems fit to be despaired of. Out on the banks of the Wabash—than which there is no more significant focus of national thinking or expression—one sees, beneath the shadow, tokens that the Hoosier world's great age begins anew.

American Fascism

AMERICAN FASCISM

THIS nation embraces an increasing number of middle-sized cities, large enough to make metropolitan gestures and to entertain metropolitan pretensions, yet small enough to become infuriated over the same neighborhood matters which stirred the passions of the ancestral Four Corners settlement.

One such community, which I know rather intimately, has recently been through an extended emotional debauch over the question of beating children in the public schools.

The crisis evolved out of curiously inane circumstances. Upon a certain class had been laid the painful task of learning by heart and reciting an effusively tender lyric entitled "October's Bright Blue Weather." One may easily gauge the effect of such verses as

> Oh, sun and skies and flowers of June,
> Count all your boasts together!
> Love loveth best of all the year
> October's bright blue weather!

upon the sensitive natures of urchins fresh from Boy Scout camping expeditions and similarly robust summer adventures. One thirteen-year-old sought to take the measure of the whole public-school system upon this infliction.

Ordered to stay after school to perfect a recitation which broke down completely in the second stanza, he departed for home at the first bell tap. Next morning his excuse was that he had "forgotten." He was charged (perhaps not incorrectly) with lying and was haled before the principal for a whipping.

In this school whippings are not considered efficacious until the victim cries. The grade teacher exhausted her feminine strength and broke a stout stick. Still this victim did not cry until the principal took a hand with a piece of rubber hose and two hundred pounds of masculine muscle. Then he went home with one leg bleeding and both legs significantly covered with welts. Next day the principal was arrested, charged with assault and battery.

The scandal thus became public. A local newspaper attacked the proceedings, both in their poetic and disciplinary aspects, with somewhat caustic indignation; and kept it up after

the principal had been acquitted under an antiquated state law, framed by a backwoods legislature in an age of universal child-beating, which proclaimed that assault and battery could not be considered as committed upon a pupil so long as his bones were not broken and he was not struck above the waist. The city raged.

But rage was directed almost entirely against those who sought to expose and discourage beatings. The executive body of the Parent-Teachers Council—one of the metropolitan activities—refused to express any interest in the case. Plea that further discussion would give the town harmful publicity won favor; and underground assurances that strong-arm methods were necessary only in the schools of the foreign section, but would not be applied to the children in the exclusive residential districts, won the day. The discovery in the superintendent's guide book for teachers of a moth-eaten rule prohibiting whipping except in the last resort and with the approval of parents was held, it seemed, by the public at large to be an impertinence.

As an interested spectator to the controversy, I found this widespread public partiality for beating hard to understand. I remembered

almost twenty-five years ago in my own childhood a similar public agitation of the whipping question in a much similar city, when the responsible citizenry ruled against brutality once for all. I did not fully understand it until one night at the University Club old Herman Jackson, who became a local magnate by the underworld-lawyer route while the town was still westernly primitive, arose to proclaim the New Day.

Under much moral fervor and an argot suggestive of his intimacy with former clients, the sum and substance of the Jackson program was that the youngsters of his generation had been whipped and whipped hard by parents and preceptors, and that this was what had made them the men they were; that those of the present generation were worthless and flagrantly immoral because in their case the rod had been spared; that the way to restore authority to the home, the church, and the prohibition-enforcement squad, and to restrain future generations from voting for "that cock-eyed bolshevist traitor La Follette," was to restore whipping in the schools as a fine art.

Half a dozen leaders of enterprise in the town were in the group. Gravely, but without reser-

vations, they indorsed this curious utterance as a bit of oracular wisdom.

II

It seems fair to call this mood American Fascism. It is of course more than an informal National Association for the Harder Beating of School Children. That was simply a local manifestation of an impulse which varies in its manifestations as widely as local issues vary. I certainly do not mean that it is anything like so definite a political philosophy or plan of action as is Italian Fascism. Americans seem thus far to have been touched by nothing more dangerous than the fascist impulse. But—as certain broad and open national manifestations suggest, and even more as one learns from watching the play of the raw, unseasoned, predominantly emotional minds of small-town business and social leaders upon the questions that concern them—it appears to be an impulse shared by millions.

It has provoked no political or economic revolution as yet, and nothing of this sort seems imminent. The occasion for such drastic explosions remains wanting. Nevertheless it is an

impulse which, for the time being, seems to be changing the bases of opinion and conduct among leaders of policy in small American communities from liberalism to reaction, from reasonableness to intolerance, from inquiry to abhorrence of knowledge; from humanitarianism to something that is here and there uncomfortably like brutality.

It is the impulse to run away from facts, from the terrific complexities of reality, from drastically critical implications of modern experience and knowledge against the race's handling of its responsibilities—to flee from all this into the refuge of traditional, even long-disused solutions, and of ancient half-discarded fetishes of absolute authority.

It is the impulse which makes certain large and politically powerful religious groups demand that the Republic be saved by legally prohibiting the teaching of scientific discoveries about human origins in the public schools and universities. It is the impulse which drives the Lord's Day Alliance—horrified at signs of changes in the moral code to meet the realistic needs of human psychology—to urge the restoration of blue laws which would make it impossible for men,

women, and children to have any amusement on Sunday but church attendance, Bible study, and over-eating.

It is the impulse which explains the Ku Klux Klan, and the astonishing infatuation of persons—a little too sophisticated socially to risk their decorum under such strange oaths and disguises—with the doubtfully scientific myth of Nordic superiority. It explains the demand of the abysmally ignorant for Catholic disfranchisement on grounds that this will restore the fanciedly superior state of American civilization in the days before Roman Catholics became numerous: days, for instance, when workers could be imprisoned in pestilential jails for organizing to secure wage increases, and when congressmen were elected because they could summon more bullies or give away more whiskey at the polls than their opponents.

It explains the epidemic spread of Rotary and Kiwanis clubs and their increasingly sickly imitative organizations, with their ostentatious rituals of sentimental pledges and patriotism, their boisterous exhibitions of forced good-fellowship, their eternal prattle about—and goody-goody performance of—"service." As one

studies the quaintly Pharisaical official organs of these bodies one sees how vividly all these great minds are hag-ridden by a subconscious terror lest the American business man cease to be a slap-on-the-back playboy in his hours of relaxation, fond of dogs and crippled kiddies, and lest intellectualism and bolshevism enter in with doubts of Dr. Frank Crane.

It explains the "clean books" bill with its effort to restore more than Victorian proprieties to literature by a method which Victorian liberalism would have scorned. It explains the even more vicious "patriotic books" movement, which would purge school histories of all realistic analysis of the political issues and the public men of the nation's so-called heroic ages. It explains the denunciation of the late Senator La Follette as a dangerous revolutionary—"a cock-eyed bolshevik traitor," to quote old Herman again—because he advocated a constitutional amendment that was no doubt almost as unwise as three which are now in the Constitution.

One could go on with the list indefinitely, alternating between the alarming and the absurd for the reader's delectation. The social arbitress of Albuquerque, New Mexico, must have felt the

impulse when she commanded her nineteen-year-old daughter never again to approach the town's newspaper club because "real men don't drink tea in the afternoon." Even the progressive pastor of a large Southwestern city, condemned by half the town as a dangerous modernist, must have felt it when he told me that new moral dangers had crept into American life when married couples, out for an evening's motor ride, began the custom of exchanging wives in the seating arrangements.

The boosters in a newly metropolized Texas cow-town must have been under the spell when they posted up a notice challenging anyone to critize the community on any of its street corners and see if he could do this without suffering personal damage. A curious domestic manifestation came under my notice in a Western city large enough to have a national publicity fund. A young college graduate of a locally elect family brought home a bride from a normally emancipated circle of "co-eds." Temporarily they lived with the groom's parents. The young husband was working hard on a case that required him to be at his office in the evenings for several weeks. He arranged for his wife to go to a dance under

the escort of a college friend. When the news came out the girl's mother-in-law declared she would no longer live in the house with "a woman who brought shame upon the family," and actually left town until the "scandal" should blow over. Quite naturally, the bridegroom resigned a position with good prospects and took his wife to a more congenial metropolis fifteen hundred miles away.

Ludicrous as it is, one can multiply such frictions by tens of thousands and find in them one explanation of how the small city's determination to regulate private conduct is driving the independently minded young people into the metropolises and widening the breach between the small cities and the large.

Almost always, too, the controlling impulse is definitely connected with beating somebody. "I don't ask any school teacher in the land to teach my boy religion, but, God help me, I'll see to it that they don't rob him of his religion either," is a stock line of the Reverend Bob Jones as he goes his way profitably evangelizing fundamentalism through the Southern metropolises. And he never fails to reap loud applause when he rams home his climax with a physical threat:

"If it's a man, I'll take off my coat, God help me, and whip him if he tries to make a skeptic out of my boy."

The Ku Klux Klan plied the whip so generously that its name has become a public scandal from New Zealand to Iceland. Rotarians and Kiwanians do not, it is true, use the birch on the unsympathetic. But let it be known in any American city below the half-million mark that a man who can be reached through his business or his social connections entertains publicly a rational and sardonically critical opinion of their boisterous smugness, and he will hear from them by way of quiet boycott and discreet ostracism. Other brands of fundamentalism would invoke at least the threat of beating by making their various forms of fetish worship legally compulsory. When a man stands on his individual rights and refuses to obey a law prohibiting Sunday golf, or the teaching of evolution, or frank accounts of Benjamin Franklin's amours, the State can hit him with a club.

And that is where our home-brewed fascism wishes to consign the citizen who presumes to bring rational intelligence, scientific knowledge, and critical judgment to the solution of those

complex common problems—from international politics to the training of public-school pupils in verse elocution—which rather dangerously concern us. Fascism wishes to put him where his first instinct will be—not to think his way out, not to expose the whimsical inconsistencies, the uproarious absurdities of controlling policies and conduct—but only to obey, knowing that open opposition to the herd mind's emotional conclusions may be punished with a blow.

III

Yet the fascist impulse is thoroughly precedented and easily understood. Consider how it mastered Ed Briscoe.

Ed is what is known as "a good mixer"—which often means that a man has a better than average gift for saying in loud and authoritative tones what the herd mind is thinking. He manages the several-million-dollar estate of his father-in-law, a President-Grant-era capitalist who, by working seventeen hours a day for fifty years without a vacation, died owning stock in almost everything profitable in town. Ed is a director and former president of almost every

big business, community improvement, and exclusive social organization in town, and usually the present president of at least two or three of them. At inaugurations and retirements he makes it a point to do his full vocal duty.

In 1912 Ed was thirty-eight and a Bull Moose progressive. The crowd of "dynamic"—that was the 1912 word!— young business executives with whom he herded were all for Roosevelt. Even when the Bull Moose lost the election Ed was happily confident that in four years or eight years "the cause" would triumph and the country pass into the possession of aggressive, virile young business men, somewhat sentimentally just to their employees and ardently pursuing human uplift by legislation.

From 1910 to 1914 Ed Briscoe found his world agreeably simple, which was soothing to a mind more adapted to action than to reflection. He never doubted for a moment that he understood it, or that it was good and getting better all the time, or that he understood just how it was getting better.

Then the War. First as a spectacle of action and then as a means of plunging himself into action beyond his wildest dreams, it fascinated

Ed and almost suspended his rather meager reflective faculties. He worked enormously in a score of fund-raising activities, but he still had time left to whip up the great American home town spy-hunt with the credulous gossip he circulated at his clubs and little dinner parties. He had plenty of time to urge that any man who failed to take his hat off to the flag at any time, anywhere, should have "his block knocked off." He spent days and nights getting information, in the banks of which he was a director, about the accounts of persons who, he thought, could be terrorized or boycotted into making larger Liberty Loan subscriptions. He went about preaching publicly the hanging of all pacifists and the suppression of all newspapers and magazines which criticized the war aims of the Allies or tried to discuss conditions in Russia without a denunciatory bias. More privately, he preached the idea that when it was over it would be a good thing to have the army come back to this country and put "traitorous, rapacious labor" in its place.

In those days anybody who politely asked him "why" he felt as he did about such questions was likely to be sneered at, to his face, as a pro-Ger-

man and to become the villain of the town's next spy myth.

But few asked questions. Mostly the town prized Ed Briscoe for a leader "with guts." He moved among a circle of intimates and satellites who suddenly felt unsure of their world, suddenly felt menaced in all they prized by the obscure terror from Russia which they never even attempted to understand. Their instincts and training disposed them to remedy things by action first, and to let the experts come along with their critical and realistic examinations afterward. So they fell in with Ed Briscoe in his desire—instinctive rather than conscious—to make by force a civilization which they thought they could understand and control. They remembered the Roosevelt strong-arm methods but they sincerely and literally forgot even the vague pseudo-liberalism for which these methods had been invoked.

Peace irked them more sorely than war. Labor was more arrogant than ever, and when labor grew a little less arrogant there was business depression connected with obscure, hence detested, roots in Europe. It was all one to the Ed Briscoes, alarmed because communism in Russia re-

fused to succumb in accordance with their mental images of its destruction and continued to threaten (as they thought) their physical comfort, their dominance in their communities. So if labor wore silk shirts and silk stockings to work, that showed its bolshevik spirit. If labor growled about wage reductions—while Ed Briscoe growled about dividend reductions—that showed its bolshevik spirit. It was pleasant to hear that they were settling these matters with clubs and castor oil in Italy. Ed began announcing in Chamber of Commerce meetings that "that fellow Mussolini has the Roosevelt touch."

Then there were "those wild young people" to deal with. "Those wild young people" also found their world hard to understand and, instead of trying to understand it, tried rather violently to make a world where they could find their bearings. The trouble with them was that they tried to establish bearings exactly the opposite of those which their elders were trying to establish.

Ed Briscoe was trying to get back to first principles—or what he thought were first principles. He gave one thousand dollars to bring a shouting fundamentalist evangelist to town, not because

he personally "fell for that stuff" but because he thought it "would put the fear of God where it was needed." He also told the local cyclops that he couldn't personally consider joining the Ku Klux Klan for business reasons, but to "go to it, you're doing a big patriotic work."

When I last saw him he was devoting his whole energy to Russia. He had just returned from the international convention of his luncheon club, full of a speech the editor of a commercial paper back East had made. Its general tenor was that out of Moscow there had spread all over America the network of a vast international conspiracy to destroy the family, religion, property, all government; that the labor unions and the "liberal intellectuals" of *The New Republic* stripe were in it just as much as our twenty-thousand-odd confessed "criminal syndicalists." Ed got out a copy of the magazine with the speech printed in it and, beaming, read me what he called its "challenging sentence": "You men of this great organization, and others like you, may be standing to-day—*now*—on the last firing line for fundamental American institutions."

Then he went on with that rapid-fire diction he reverts to when he feels his leadership hot upon

him: "That isn't all. I met some birds back there who are close to the department of justice. They say the revolution's going to be pulled in 1926. Then, by God, we can give 'em the bayonet where it'll do 'em good.

"Then, do you know what we ought to do next? . . . Well, I'll tell you. . . Get rid of all this democratic bunk and turn this government back into the aristocratic republic it started out to be, and has got to be unless we're going to end where Russia's ended."

I told him I didn't believe it. Ed pounded his desk three times and said, "By God, you'll see."

It was a phrase reminiscent of several Briscoe prophecies about Russian politics.

IV

I submit that the Briscoes are our full-budded fascists ready to break into action at the first favorable moment. Already their grosser forms have flowered a little in the Ku Klux Klan. Meanwhile, realistic observers of the American social impulses may as well recognize that the

economic and moral leadership in our small towns and cities—the dominant American leadership to-day—is losing interest in the solution of perplexities by critical analysis and reason. Though these perplexities—problems of the relations between capital and labor, of labor's human adjustment to mechanical civilization, of the more intimate and mutually dependent contacts between nations, and between men of different races, religions, and social habits within the same nation—are the most sternly challenging realities of modern life, this leadership yearns to drive perplexities back into the shadows with a club. It may never try it. But solutions are, for the time being, held up and some promising solutions are being undone.

However, as has been said, this situation is thoroughly precedented. A hundred and thirty years ago gentlemen in England were thrown out of traveling coaches by their fellow passengers for presuming to advocate parliamentary reform while the French Revolution, raging across the channel, supplied mental images of what popular rule, unchecked by rotten boroughs, must lead to. England enjoyed, after the leisurely national manner, an attack of fascism with plenty of beat-

ings and conservative mob violence for good measure, which lasted for forty years, from 1792 to 1832.

One might prolong such historical comparisons indefinitely. As a recent Phi Beta Kappa orator at Harvard declared, human progress seems to alternate almost rhythmically between acceptance of despotism and insistence upon liberalism. With their characteristic grasp of practical psychology, the Romans of the Republic gave this tendency a quasi-constitutional sanction by permitting resort to the dictatorship in times of public danger or confusion. Their acute realism comprehended that, every once in a while, a popular cry arises out of humanity discouraged and perplexed with the task of conducting its social institutions: "We can't do it. The dictator can."

Such a cry rises to-day out of a discouragement probably more neurotic, but out of a perplexity far more involved than that which Rome suffered while Hannibal's armies dominated Italy. The cry has swept into power "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in Moscow no less than it has swept Mussolini into power in Italy and Primo de Rivera in Spain. To-day it seems to be sweeping

the American herd-mind along a parallel if not similar path.

That the majority in this country may not yet be seeking a dictator after the Mussolini pattern —or as certain national industries have sought spectacular supreme regulators on the models of Mr. Hays and Judge Landis—by no means alters the prospects and symptoms of a dictatorship. The Main Street majority seems far more than coyly willing to play dictator itself. And it is being more and more successfully pressed by extreme forces in its own ranks toward making that dictatorship more tyrannous and more dangerous to the individual's freedom to stand apart from the herd if he so chooses.

Nor is there lacking the crisis for liberals merely because there is no present prospect of a fascist army marching on Washington to place the editor of *The American Standard* in the state department with dictatorial powers, while demoting President Coolidge to a vaguely decorative Victor Emmanuelship. It is quite possible that, in the next decade, liberalism and individual liberty must fight their sternest and most brilliant battle in American history—merely to reëstablish their right to exist. American fascism will

hardly prove less difficult to conquer because it is establishing itself by slow stages, precedent by precedent, locality by locality.

Certainly it will not be seriously checked so long as resistance to it is confined to the essays which the members of sophisticated circles in the metropolises write about it for the edification of one another. The American small town must somehow be brought back to the realization it once consciously cherished—that any tyranny which, short of positive crime, inhibits the individual's free and full expression of himself is a barrier to progress; and to that other realization which it cherished instinctively—that the retreat into absolutist regulation of conduct, speech, and opinion is as much a flight from civic responsibility as it is from the reality of human differences. The small town must be induced to renew the old American faith in individual liberty, or our peculiar national brand of fascism may quite possibly last long enough to destroy nearly all that has contributed to the intellectual vivacity and variety of American life.

The Uses of Sedition

THE USES OF SEDITION

THE Rev. Mr. Blazer's Bible class meets in a downtown moving picture theater, with a competent press agent in attendance, and goes in for public issues. Whether high school students pet or drink too much, whether God or physical geography caused the Santa Barbara earthquake, whether Gen. Lincoln Andrews has the right idea about drying up the country, whether the Ku Klux Klan program, the world court and Col. Mitchell's ideals of a bigger and better air service represent truly Christian aspirations—in such matters the Rev. Mr. Blazer is an expert in coming to quotable conclusions which could not be used against him in ecclesiastical politics.

In consequence, young Mr. Blazer rides high most Monday mornings in local press reports of Sunday's sermons. Occasionally he makes the front page, and at least once his philosophy of government ticked itself off to the extent of 100 words on the Associated Press wire. Meanwhile

his congregation grows in zeal and numbers, and still bigger congregations are beginning to tempt him with flattering offers.

All the same, the Rev. Mr. Blazer could not make good with his public forum.

The experiment was heralded with the utmost skill of the competent press agent. There was to be a six weeks' symposium on Law Enforcement. Each Sunday morning a prominent citizen was to have 20 minutes to present the class with his personal views on this space-winning topic. The class was to have the right to answer back if it cared to, and the Rev. Mr. Blazer the right to answer last. It was even conveyed without being explicitly stated that some of our more respectable sinners before the new lights of uplift were to have their innings.

To prove it, a sinner came first. His name adorns the directorate of a national organization interested in free speech and reasonably free conduct, but he belongs to no lodges and no luncheon clubs. During the war he disapproved publicly the imprisonment of Eugene V. Debs. Ever since, the soundest minds among our more liberal patrons of bootleggers have looked upon him as a subtle agitator against "law and order."

It was quite in keeping, then, that the sinner elected to entertain the Rev. Mr. Blazer's Bible class with a paper on "Deifying Legal Bunk." In substance, he declared that bad laws were no more deserving of respect than any other acts of human folly; that bad laws were never repealed by being obeyed and respected, but by being scorned, evaded, and more or less flagrantly disobeyed; that a slavish reverence for all laws because they happened to have been passed by groups of sardonic politicians in Washington playing with blocs for favors and personal advancement, would eventually break down all the moral and mental fiber essential to the American people's capacity for self-government; and that if we had to choose between cherishing the right of revolution as it was cherished by the political thinkers of the early republic, and atrophying our critical faculties by slavish reverence and submission to the law, whatever it was, we had better retain a hold on our revolutionary principles. We should be safer thus from despotism and bureaucracy in the central government and from politically mindless servility in ourselves. The sinner tied all this up to the 18th amendment and the Volstead act, and was done.

But not the Rev. Mr. Blazer. That evening he communicated to the press a statement of his profound regret that the constitution and the basic institutions of America had been defiled and outraged from his own pulpit. The class, hardly without coaching, passed resolutions that no more addresses were to be delivered to it unless the contents had been censored and approved in advance by the pastor. Not having turned out to be what ancient hymn books referred to as "singing in unison," the law enforcement symposium was declared off.

In effect, criticism and suspicion of the government were branded as impossible conduct for Christians.

II

Unfortunately, perhaps, for our political development, the attitude of the Rev. Mr. Blazer's class was neither original nor unusual. Both locally and nationally, it had plenty of precedents.

The war hardly began it, but it was during and immediately after the war that Commodore Decatur's relatively conservative slogan "My coun-

try right or wrong" made way for the new credo of super-patriotism—"My country can never be anything but 100 per cent right." While its vogue lasts, at least two of our bound-to-be dominant groups of opinion, the economic conservatives and the prohibitionists, are making the most of it.

From the former we have heard, since the first alarms out of Moscow, not only that all existing American institutions are entitled to adoration, but that everything savoring of opposition is "bolshevism." Teachers who voted the socialist ticket were ipso facto emissaries of Moscow—hence the Lusk law in New York. The Interchurch World Movement had marked itself as prey for the communists by issuing its famous Steel Strike Report—hence the Interchurch World Movement was steered for the rocks. Every strike was a bolshevist conspiracy, and every labor leader who protested, legally or by public utterance, against extraordinary extensions of the power of federal bench injunctions was seeking to rock the foundations of government.

If prohibitionists, liquor and otherwise, have been less alert for the discovery of "bolshevism,"

they have made up for it in their zeal for new definitions of "disloyalty and treason."

For example, my own city of piety and constitutional learning happens to be only 15 minutes away from the legal drinking facilities of Mexico. Hence, a pulpit competitor of the Rev. Mr. Blazer's recently informed his congregation that the American who goes to a foreign strand to do anything forbidden by the laws of his country is "a traitor to his flag." Time and again, other local pulpits have blazed with the denunciation that any attack on the 18th amendment is "disloyal," and any violation of the Volstead act is "treasonable." The newspaper exchanges which come to an editorial desk from various parts of the country furnish sufficient evidence that a penchant for such inexact denunciations is accepted among most prohibition propagandists as simply an evidence of good standing in the movement.

Indeed, the official record of the militant dry organizations proves it. The sale, consumption, or possession of alcoholic liquor, when attended with no disturbance of the public peace or violence to the neighbors, cannot by any sane standard of common sense or morals be rated as

more than a minor misdemeanor. In a free society crime is criminal only in proportion to the harm it does others. The legal distinctions between petty and grand larceny, between assault and battery and murder have roughly but sufficiently measured this anti-social factor for a good many generations. Obviously, the man who drinks a well-mixed cocktail to enhance his pleasure in his dinner and perhaps the pleasure of his company to others, has harmed others less than the gentleman who engages his neighbor in a fist-fight or steals a pound of potatoes from his grocer.

Nevertheless, the fervent dry organizations almost without exception are pressing for laws defining the possession or consumption of a good cocktail as a felony mandatorily punishable with a stiff jail sentence. In Indiana they already have got such a law with a few reservations.

When forced, as occasionally happens, to rationalize such demands, the prohibition cohorts are surprisingly frank about it. They do not try to prove that drinking a cocktail is in itself a crime of peculiar viciousness comparable to a minor burglary, for instance. They merely assert that a peccadillo should be punished as

severely as a minor burglary because it is an affront to the constitution of the United States and the enforcement cause demands it. In other words, they do not want a reasonable statute against temperate, or even intemperate, drinking, but a law making it a felony to commit a misdemeanor against the United States.

But it is not only violations which the drys seem to be aiming at. That they conceive these to be on a par with treason and rebellion may be judged from recent appeals from the government-worshiping factions for the use of the army and navy to enforce the Volstead act. But an equally extraordinary campaign has been under way ever since prohibition was adopted to stamp as "disloyalty" and unpatriotic conduct mere criticism of the 18th amendment, and all open efforts to secure the repeal or even the modification of the Volstead act.

The press clip sheets and oratory of such organizations as the Methodist Board of Temperance and Public Morals bristle with propaganda insinuating that all opponents of the prohibition regime are ipso facto enemies of the republic. When the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America made its now famous report analyzing

the unsatisfactory along with the beneficial results of prohibition, the author of the report was attacked by the director of the board as one who had deliberately set out to undermine the foundations of the government. And the climax of the effort to put criticism and political opposition in the docket for disloyalty came when the 1925 Anti-Saloon League convention resolved that the constitutional rights of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment to exist and oppose Volsteadism should be investigated.

Even so, the Anti-Saloon League is a relatively conservative and slow-moving body. The lead in this strange enterprise of protecting our choicest and most uncertain experiments in government with *lèse majesté* etiquette and statutes appears to come from the sensational clergymen and others of the professionally virtuous persuasion who must live by their wits.

Thus it becomes possible to introduce as the most advanced move for the deification of government the claim of the Christian minister who is president of the Law and Order League of Dallas, Texas. In a recent discussion of no less heinous a crime than poker-playing by reporters in the city hall press room, this constitu-

tional expert quoted the 13th chapter of Romans to prove that God approved the right of men to make laws for their governance. Then he proceeded to the declaration that when such laws are passed, they become God's laws, so that whoever disobeys them becomes a rebel against the authority of God Himself.

Thus is Christian political duty clarified. Whatever is, legislatively speaking, is not only right. Though it be but the tyrannical edict of the majority of a special aims bloc of exceptional log-rolling facilities, though it be unconstitutional, largely hypocritical, wholly vicious in its effect on political development, the law is as august as God Himself.

III

The Dallas gentleman was scarcely talking mere apocalyptic gibberish. He was merely attempting to define, with extreme zeal and pulpit emphasis, what most apostles of compulsory moral uplift are trying to make the nation's dominant attitude toward government. With a minority—possibly a majority—counting itself in millions, it already is the dominant attitude.

The prospect is scarcely cheering. Being dominant, the apostles of compulsory uplift could pass such laws as they pleased, restrained only by an apparently non-existent sense of moderation. Being pleased with the laws, the majority would find no cause for criticising, resisting, or protesting against them, and would be inclined to suppress criticism, protest, and resistance on the part of the ineffective minority.

We really should, then, see such wholly proper and desirable organizations as the Association Against The Prohibition Amendment outlawed as seditious. We really should see urbanely convivial gentlemen—and ladies—sent to jail for half a year for drinking cocktails, and others, perhaps, sent to jail for contempt of court when they presumed to criticize the cruelty and unusualness of such sentences. We really should see all attacks on the prohibition regime and all jests at its expense forbidden by new and fantastic extensions of the injunction process.

In time, no doubt, we might see all strikes defined as crimes against the government, and all strikes where violence happened to occur brought under the definition of treason—"levying war against the United States." The big business

magnates who, for the sake of more efficient workmen, managed to unite with the Wall-street-hating small town clergy to secure prohibition, would hardly be incapable of other advantageous deals when the time was ripe.

In time, too, we might see the federal government get its hands on the public school system for the purpose of stamping out evolutionary teachings in favor of the fundamentalist theocrats; realism in history in favor of Ku Klux Klan patriotism; critical economics in favor of the Gopher Prairie Chamber of Commerce.

We might see private education taken over by the state—as Oregon tried to do and as the more fervent crusaders for standardization frankly would like to see done on a national scale. Then the system would work even better. Each day at the same hour everywhere in the United States every American child could be drilled by a thoroughly inquisitioned and expurgated teaching force in the doctrine that American institutions were too sacred for criticism or destructive analysis.

Under such a regime, if the government happened to be run by an inner group of ecclesiastical politicians, working through espionage and

terrorist penalties, who would there be to expose the ring and its abuses of power effectively? Every law, every intellectual and social convention in the land, would prescribe as the first article of American patriotism the doctrine that the government can do no wrong. Objectors, indeed, might consider themselves fortunate if they were not, by the logical extension of the principles of the great politico-theological thinker of Dallas, placed in a double jeopardy for even their tamest critical outbursts—liable to punishment for sedition and blasphemy both.

This is no floor plan for a fantastic chamber of political horrors. Every bloc in the republic which has passed, or hopes to pass, a probably unenforceable law in restraint of personal liberty; which has employed, or hopes to employ, judicial proceedings destructive of the constitutional safeguards of freedom; is seeking to secure enforcements by making criticism of the follies of government and resistance to the misdeeds of government, socially, morally, and legally impossible. Government, unchecked by the sense of rights, individual or constitutional, is the object. An appreciable fraction of that object has already been attained.

IV

But full attainment may still be prevented. Even the progress so far made has not yet been fully crystallized in the thought or institutions of the nation, and so may be wholesomely destroyed.

The dominant groups, despite able and astute leadership which knows what it wants and that this must be obtained quickly, are forced to move slowly. The pace is not that of the leaders, but of the stupid, blunderingly reforming clodhoppers, the pompous small town merchants and deacons, the pedantic and visionary clergymen which make up the rank and file. Hence, though the denunciatory noises have been loud and persistent, the denunciations have not yet been registered in prohibitory statutes. The leaders fume and demand more and yet more extreme measures, but, except in infrequent local fields with or without the assistance of mob violence, the following has been too unenterprising to push its power as the technical majority in a democracy to the limit. Prohibition we have, but there are no laws on the book as yet which compel us to accept prohibition, or any of its real or pro-

jected enforcement terrors, with worshiping adoration.

Therefore jealous distrust of government and open opposition to government still have a chance. Thus the present minority's rising and irreverent suspicion of sacrosanct government and contemptuous resistance to aggrandized government, may be welcomed as the most wholesome political signs of our era. We are perhaps very near the case where these attitudes and these alone may save the liberties and the political vitality of the republic from being choked to death by new doctrine that whatever government does, is not only right but holy.

There is at least this much justification. In great crises of our political development, distrust of government and resistance to government have preserved liberty before.

V

The advocates of our new prohibitions and of uncritical reverence and obedience to the same, have the same arguments on their side that certain Americans from 1765 to 1776 had in sup-

porting the British parliament's pretension to legislate for unrepresented colonies. Opposition to the stamp act was an offense against hallowed British institutions, including the constitution. Resistance was a blow at the "law and order" of the British empire. The theology of Dallas, Texas, applied in that day also. More than once the rebellious faction of the colonists was informed from Tory pulpits that British law was of God and that resistance was a sin against the Creator.

Furthermore, these Tories had what prohibitionists lack—precedents. Parliament *had* legislated for the colonies in restricting their rights of industry and of foreign commerce and in prescribing political institutions for most of them.

It is true, as Professor McIlwain has shown, that the relations of England and Ireland afforded a certain basis for lawyer-like objections to parliament's exercise of taxation rights. But these complicated precedents were not used at all in the popular propaganda of the revolution, and there is little evidence that they seriously influenced the lawyers who were the revolution's intellectual leaders. These leaders simply invented a relatively new colonial doctrine, "No

Taxation Without Representation"—which to the conservative "law and order" worshipers of the day was equivalent to the "bolshevism" and "treason" of 20th century epithet—and started things moving.

Things moved, however, not so much because of a catchy and exact slogan, but because such matters as criticizing, opposing and even resisting the royal government were, by 1765, among the masses especially of the independent thinking colonists of New England, perfectly commonplace actions.

The vivid perspective which Professor James Truslow Adams gives of the political trends in 18th century America in "Revolutionary New England" shows that by the 1760's the population, exclusive of a few social climbers with ambitions looking toward the dinner tables of royal governors and court levees in London, were consumed with a wholesomely jealous distrust of the British authority wherever it threatened to conflict with their liberties. Colonial legislatures were in a constant quarrel with the royal governors over taxation rights and other prerogatives. The social antipathy toward all things English was, outside the circles of snobbery, just what

might have been expected of a highly cornfed community toward the ultra-modish.

Much more important, the Navigation acts, which virtually prohibited Colonial commerce except with the mother country and which of all British colonial laws were by far the most direct in their bearing upon individuals, were flagrantly and to everybody's knowledge evaded and resisted by hosts of smugglers acting in behalf of the most substantial—and sometimes most politically Tory—city merchants. British law, in the name of all its dignities, sanctities and patriotic deserts, and with sufficient precedent behind it so that its legalistic authority was seldom questioned, had sought to interfere with the colonial's individual freedom of action in commerce. Hence the American colonials treated it with the contempt which so many hundred thousand of their descendants visit to-day upon legalistically correct but otherwise unwelcome government interference with their freedom of social conduct.

In short, the colonists of the middle 18th century had an entirely proper attitude toward government—regarding it as a strictly human but in no way sacred institution, meriting respect

solely by its deeds. They were prepared to respect, and even, in proportion to their limited resources and experience, support it when it built proper public works, defended them from Indians and from French invasions. But when government invaded their private liberties for any purpose but the suppression of obvious crime, they were prepared to thwart and resist it. Government to the colonists wasn't God; it wasn't even an ark of the covenant. It was simply the public business, a definite part of which was the preservation of public and private liberties.

So when government made an issue of its sanctity and of its right to uncritical obedience, the colonists were quite ready to oppose it with a virtually brand new principle of colonial politics; and, when that principle was not accepted at the seats of authority, get themselves a new government. This they did. But they would never have acquired the new liberties or kept the old had they accepted the theory of Tory patriots both in England and in the colonies that British institutions are the best in the world for colonials, and can do no wrong.

Nevertheless a generation later, the fight

against the sacrosanct conception of government had to be won all over again. Before a rising wave of distrust and hostility toward their centralizing policies similar to the resentment which now besets some of our newer prohibitions, the Federalists of the Washington and Adams administrations sought to revive the doctrine that the state can do no wrong and is entitled to uncritical veneration and obedience. When they succeeded in legalizing this doctrine in the famous Sedition act of 1798, the answer came in the Virginia and Kentucky resolutions.

In proclaiming a virtual right of nullification, those resolutions had historic consequences. But the good that they wrought is legitimately to be put in the balance against the evil of which they are conventionally accused. The resolutions created a states' rights and "strict construction" party which not only broke at once the political power of the Federalists and ruined all their projects for the destruction of liberty in the interests of aristocratic oligarchy. The states' rights party, by consistently distrusting, suspecting and occasionally resisting the central authority, prevented for 60 years the enactment of any federal legislation seriously in restraint of per-

sonal liberty. No bloc of special aims, reformatory or otherwise, was ever able to make serious headway against the massed distrust, the distinctly unreverential might of the states' rights bloc. It may have preserved slavery. But for two generations it also preserved every noncriminal citizen's right to conduct his own affairs without assistance from government snoopers.

VI

The civil war crushed the states' rights party, and time rather speedily obliterated its emotional vestiges. Confederate oratory was practically extinct on the stump and in congress when the Roosevelt period opened. For a full generation the north openly gloated over the increased authority which the government secured by its victory and over the extensions of power which made the victory possible. Its little domestic problem of the 14th amendment settled to its satisfaction, the south, while admitting nothing, took the lesson no less to heart.

It was no use trying to lick the national government, ran the thought of the last quarter of

the 19th century. On the contrary, whether it was called on to crush a revolution, help a transcontinental railroad, catch a counterfeiter or punish a locally influential national bank peculator, the national government could always be relied upon to do a first class job.

Then came Roosevelt to dramatize its moral authority. Watching the federal ringmasters make citizens jump through the hoops became, in that memorable administration, not only a means of measuring the growing power of government, but the greatest show on earth. Seldom or never did it occur to the enthusiasts of the era that, while the citizen might be a "malefactor of great wealth," he was also a private individual; that what the government could do to one private individual, it would find a way to do to others.

With the dominant section of public opinion in the Rooseveltiad it was sufficient to know that the federal government could handle any job it chose to tackle, and that to question the desirability of its tackling anything showed a mollycoddle's lack of confidence in American institutions and slighted the great Theodore's genius to boot. So we tackled the regulation of railroads,

the closer regulation and espionage of business. We tackled conservation and a score of more or less interesting and more or less interfering uplift efforts. And we took it all on with a whoop for government's worshipful efficiency and a warning to skeptics which sounded decidedly like "Get off the earth."

All of these efforts were virtuously intended. To a degree some of them were doubtless necessary. But the mood in which they were undertaken was unhappy especially in its historical consequence. For the "regulation psychology," as the press of the day was conscious enough to term it, became the vehicle which every reforming, interfering and liberty-destroying bloc in the land immediately mounted with the idea of riding into power.

They rode, and in power they are. Railroad regulation which leaves the railroads about as much autonomy in their individual policies as the 10-year-old daughter of old-fashioned parents has in her conduct. Financial espionage which, in the name of the income tax and of various regulatory and "fact finding" measures, throws the private accounts of every corporation and of nearly every individual in the land open to gov-

ernment scrutiny, coupled with an increasing measure of publicity as to what is discovered. Moral espionage which makes every hotel bedroom a subject of proper legal curiosity to a department of justice agent. Prohibition, whose zealots in the name of the sanctity of compulsory reformation, yearn for the destruction of all opposition by statute; for more spies and the destruction of the constitutional rights of those spied upon; and for the right to send their fellow citizens to jail for months for drinking claret lemonade.

Others are still riding with the hope of getting in power to-morrow. Which will it be? The tobacco prohibitionists? The Lord's Day Alliance with its program of compulsory Calvinistic Sabbaths for Calvinists and non-Calvinists alike? A farm bloc dictating through the state the terms on which we may buy and sell foodstuffs? An industrial magnate's bloc dictating the terms on which we may buy and sell our labor? A labor bloc dictating whether we may, or may not, enjoy the worth of our capital? A fundamentalist bloc defining how far science may search for truth or teach what it holds to be evidences of truth? A bloc of intellectual and social standardizers

trimming American youth to patterns of factory-made orthodoxy in the hoppers of a giant public school system, federally maintained, bureaucratically inspired and directed?

One does not pretend to guess. On the contrary, one even ventures to hope that the regulatory phase of our political experience is nearing the end of its course. The fiasco of prohibition enforcement has at least exploded the genial fallacy that the federal government can make a first class job of whatever it tackles. The sane contempt for this liberty-destroying measure and its ineffective results; the stern judgment which an increasing group of American opinion is passing upon both the ethics and the political significance of prohibition; the wholesale resistance to the prohibition statutes themselves manifest at every turn of one's social and business intercourse from coast to coast—may not these be signs that a free people's wholesome suspicion and impatience of excessive government are reviving in time to save us from the worst?

For we shall not get rid of excessive government by constitutional platitudes. Its enthusiasts can hire lawyers to argue all the vitality out of constitutional platitudes; or tempt poli-

ticians to write new constitutional platitudes in their favor such as we have acquired since the beginning of the century. The only way to check and eliminate excessive government is to prove to its enthusiasts that excessive government does not get results.

Will our rising mood of distrust and resistance accomplish this as the distrust and resistance of 1798 killed the Federalist oligarchy in the hour of its birth, or as the distrust and resistance of 1765 made British pretensions to excessive government impossible and our independence inevitable? Does the bootlegger—no doubt quite as moral and politically conscious a soul as the colonial smuggler—perform toward the new principle of "no government interference with orderly private conduct" the same service which that smuggler performed for "no taxation without representation?"

Again, the time has hardly come for final pronouncements. But perhaps the Rev. Mr. Blazer's class which goes in for public issues, but for public forums no longer, has the answer.

If it carries its appeal that the law is greater than its source and its human usefulness; that the law and the constitution are sacrosanct in re-

spect to criticism, suspicion, opposition and disobedience;—if the Rev. Mr. Blazer's class wins the verdict, we might as well deposit the mummified relics of American individual liberties in the first convenient sarcophagus, and hail the dictatorship of the cannier special aims blocs with shouts as of Rooseveltians hailing the latest New Day. For when the next New Day comes, if prohibition is any criterion, the only means of keeping a little corner of individual liberty for oneself by one's fireside, will be to stand well with one's masters.

Arsenals of Hatred

ARSENALS OF HATRED

THE drug-store of Henry Somers, in a middle-sized city of These States, is of the old-fashioned kind, restfully free from soda-fountain clatter and phonograph demonstrations, smelling mustily of antiseptic balsams and confused tinctures. Several generations of newspaper reporters have patronized it because of its mildly exotic and freshly kept tobaccos. In a general way, we always knew that Old Man Somers "had religion." The shop was shut on Sunday mornings and the proprietor always out of it on prayer-meeting nights. He had a mild local celebrity as the superintendent, going on twenty-five years, of the Sunday-school of the town's most up-and-coming evangelical church. Occasionally, when he was low in mind, he would cheer himself up by trying to save a cub reporter's soul. This, by an ancient ritual, always ended with the unregenerate young man appealing to his audience to say if Somers didn't treat his deaf prescription-clerk better than Yah-

weh treated His own children, and therefore wasn't he better than his God? The old man would look a little pleased at the compliment and dismiss the argument by shaking his established anathema at us from the end of a fat forefinger: "That's all right for you to say now, young man. But remember: the Bible's a bloody book! If you don't like it"—here he would grin amiably, for he liked to swear with holy sanctions—"you can go to hell!"

But we never thought of him as letting religion interfere with his disposition, and so it surprised me, on my last visit, to find him foaming theology at the mouth. It seemed that he had lost his Sunday-school. There had been an apparently voluntary resignation, a banquet, and the presentation of a loving-cup, but the old man had no illusions. "They kicked me out like an old dog," he groaned, "because they don't want those little children to have the true word of God. They want to give them all the lies the Devil put into the heads of those scientists about Evolution—all that hell poison. They're damning those little souls to hell, that's what they're doing." He went on in a snarling whisper, as though communicating secrets of the Black

Hand: "I pray God on my knees every night to damn them for it." He no longer kept my brand of tobacco, he explained, because the people who made it gave their money to some Modernist college. I left.

On the street I drew out a pillar of the old man's church on the scandal. He unfolded a tale of inner politics that would not have disgraced a Sixteenth Century college of cardinals. All the precedents by which Secretaries of State were released during the Wilson administration had been strictly observed.

II

Private comedies like this are seldom without public significance. Ten years ago old Somers was just as certainly a Fundamentalist as he is now. His church was Modernist by about the same majority. But nobody cared much. The Fundamentalist *bloc*, which Somers led, felt that if the majority wished to lose salvation by doubting the literal accuracy of Genesis that was its own business—that it would probably be reclaimed by grace anyhow. The Modernists were positive that the minority would eventually be

converted by reading Darwin, or Professor Lull, or Vernon Kellogg (which few of the Modernists themselves had done), and so were equally content to let matters drift amicably. It was a *status quo* not devoid of occasional clashes, but fully as satisfactory for practical purposes as the relations of a Republican and a communist in a horse trade.

But the Modernists, in the course of time, got tired of having it conveyed to the children each Sunday morning that their parents had sold out to the Devil and were justly damned, and the Fundamentalists got tired of having the seductions of Satan hissed in their faces from a pulpit they helped pay for by the Serpent disguised as an ordained pastor. Thus ill-feeling gradually rolled up, and the thing came to a head when Somers was asked to announce to the Sunday-school a course of lectures by a visiting authority on "Evolution and Jesus Reconciled." He refused flatly—and this breach of decorum made him the victim of the inevitable explosion. Since then the old *status quo* has been quite as dead as the *entente cordiale* has been since the late Ruhr invasion.

Now, how did this destruction of a workable

and fairly friendly relationship of long standing come about without either party's altering its opinions? Obviously, it must have come about through an increase in the emotional intensity with which the old opinions were held. That is to say, it came about because a typical American small-town church of better than average prestige was and is, like most other American churches to-day, in the throes of what must be called, for want of a better term, a religious revival. I do not mean a revival in the ordinary sense; I mean simply a sudden increase in religious interest and concern—an augmentation of the passion with which religious ideas are held.

I do not suggest that church membership in America is increasing. It is, perhaps, arguable historically that religious revivals, whether overt or occult, have always driven as many out of formal church membership as they have drawn in. Revivals are best expressed, not in statistics, but by the rise of emotional barometers—by the importance which religion gets in everyday life. The growth and vitality of the Ku Klux Klan, the recent division of a major political party over a religious quarrel, the vigorous determination of moral *blocs* to invent and enforce over new

and more rigorous prohibitions, the political aspects assumed by the campaign against (and to some extent for) evolution, the virtual disappearance of all possibility of friendly religious discussion among business and social acquaintances, the space given by newspapers not only to the spectacular aspects of the Fundamentalist-Modernist dispute but even to the relatively innocent and harmonious deliberations of the great annual conclaves of the evangelical bodies, the feverish joy taken by the unchurched in flaunting the holy faiths,—all these things are the marks of a revival in full swing. Whether out of a disgust with an actual world that has just dragged him through a senseless war and a social re-adjustment beyond his comprehension, or whether through the operation of some obscure cycle of oscillation between his material and his speculative natures, the average American of to-day is more wrought up about his other worldly welfare than he has been for fully sixty years.

What is the effect on the temper of American life? As one investigates the subject by the simple laboratory method of attending churches and observing the influence of theological pas-

sion upon the people in them it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the present revival, like most of its predecessors, is making the temper of American life bad. And if it goes on, it will make it worse.

III

Consider the psychological results of a typical Sunday morning rendezvous with the Holy Spirit. Henry Jones, president of the Jones Superior Hosiery Company, arrays himself in his newest business suit and, gathering a dutiful wife and a bored and reluctant son and daughter of adolescent years into the tonneau of his Cadillac, proceeds to the ten o'clock meeting of the Emmanuel Men's Bible Class. The estimable Jones, his offspring agree in whispers, would be in a pleasanter mood if he had had either a little less sleep or a little more. Jones himself has vaguely dallied with this thought; but as the engine stalls in the morning cool it reminds him that he has had a hard week. Didn't he buy all that cotton to mix with his famous Alsilk weave on Tuesday, only to see the price drop a cent a pound on Wednesday? And just when he was

all het up about that, didn't that damned—no, he mustn't swear to-day, even in his private meditations—didn't that confounded shop committee come in with that damned—no, blasted—overtime demand? And didn't he then blow up—and isn't he now likely to have a strike on his hands? He guesses that maybe he is a pretty rotten sort of a business man, after all. Taking too much time bulling around at that Rotary Club and playing away his time on the golf course. Going to quit it! Stick to business more in the future!

Or no! Something cold and clammy out of his dark Calvinistic inheritance comes up to smite him. Maybe God is punishing him for all those damns, and for drinking that bootleg hooch over at Bill Harmon's the other night. Or for that bridge game, that game of chance, at half a cent a point. Or for figuring, as he looked at the pictures in that "Outline of Science" book of Ted's, that that Adam and Eve story really must be the bunk. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord! Make bare Thy mighty arm!

In terror, he scarcely forms the old voodoo texts into words. But suppose he is really going bankrupt, a broken man? What happened to

David's enemies? A shadowy fear clutches him, and he steps on the gas.

Then there was that God-awful—no, awful—rumpus with his daughter Marjorie. Marjorie is 24 but she hasn't any sense. Think of her being in that Little Theatre play for Saturday night and not telling her mother until Friday that she had to speak those smutty lines about a baby coming, to that married fellow playing leading man! Of course, he settled that all right. Put his foot down and took Marjorie right out of it. Called up a few other decent fathers, too, and got them to take their daughters out. Smashed up *that* play, all right. That divorced chippy—"Judge not that ye be not judged?" To hell with that!—from New York, Mrs. Whatshername, had to call off her show at the last minute. Guess that would teach her a lesson about coming into a decent, God-fearing town and trying to give every young girl one of those rotten sex bugs. . . .

But God Almighty—no, goodness gracious—what a row! His own daughter calling him a damned old fool—yes, it was all right to quote it—and beating it out of the house on the night train to that cigarette-smoking Aunt Jane of

hers, swearing she'd never come back. That's what came of letting women who didn't have to, earn their own living. If it hadn't been for all that bunk, Marjorie wouldn't have had car fare. He'd have had the whip hand. And he'd have used it, too, you bet. . . . Even at that, there must be something the matter with him. If he was the right kind of a father, he wouldn't always be having these rumpuses. God—no, gosh—it was a rotten world. His breakfast was hurting him right here—right here under the steering wheel.

But here, too, was the church. Three minutes later, his wife and offspring dispatched to their respective departments, behold Jones entering his holy of holies, a moving pillar of substance, if not of fire. His expression, if grave and stern, is at least untroubled as forty male backs reverse themselves into faces to look at him. Probably thirty-five of the faces belong to the small fry, the neighborhood grocers and barber-shop proprietors, the lowly bookkeepers and technical men of the local corporations; but five or six are recognizable as those of business men of his own standing. Their presence gives to the Emmanuel Men's Class a city-wide notoriety.

"Big Business Men Are Bible Fans"—says the headline of the *News*' annual feature story.

Mr. Jones is a few minutes late, and from his equals there are two or three snickers suggesting the jocosity of equals; from the small fry a battery of timid, sickly smiles. The curly-headed pastor puts a fat hand to his mouth and grins theatrically toward his sleeve. "Yes, boys," he says, "I guess we really *can* have a class here to-day after all." The estimable Jones, torn between his dignity and this sudden joviality, sits down in some confusion. But the last lingering doubts of his excellence flee as the pastor explains that "for Brother Jones' benefit we are having a little set-to on the Fosdick case.

"You fellows have got the wrong idea," he goes on, "if you think that the Presbyterian General Assembly indorsed Fosdick. Read between the lines of that letter the Assembly committee sent him. You'll see that, under the forms of the utmost politeness, Fosdick is being asked to get out. I know the letter sounds the other way round. As if we asked him to stay. But the condition under which he is asked to stay is that he accepts the Presbyterian declaration of faith. This," and the curly-headed pastor

smiles like a cheerful diplomat, "is something Dr. Fosdick can't make the grade on without recanting the essential points in his preaching. Maybe he could accept the Unitarian declaration of faith. I don't know. But I do know he couldn't accept ours. So the sum and substance of the matter is just this: If Fosdick stays, he will become as good a Presbyterian as the rest of us. If he doesn't become a Presbyterian, he has received a polite notice that he has stayed out his welcome in Presbyterian pulpits. Now, what do you men think about it?"

The usual timid silence of virile community leaders in conclave.

"Come on now, Mr. Harvey," the curly-headed pastor rallies, "what do *you* think about it?"

"I think," says Mr. Harvey in the determined falsetto of the young man who teaches bookkeeping at the Y. M. C. A., "that it is a disgrace for the Presbyterian Church to have to go outside its own membership for any preacher anywhere, and that such a state of affairs ought to be ended at once."

"Well," says the curly-headed pastor rakishly, "we've got that far. Do you agree with that, Mr. Harmon?"

Jack Harmon clears his throat with the terrible gravity of a youth esteemed by his elders. He is famous for being, at 29, the town's shrewdest bank vice-president, the youngest director of the Chamber of Commerce and the youngest member of the Emmanuel official board."

"If you want my opinion," he proceeds sternly, "the note to Fosdick wasn't strong enough. The General Assembly has no call to be polite to a man like Fosdick. It need not have invited him to stay on in the most important Presbyterian church in New York on any conditions. The General Assembly should have demanded that Dr. Fosdick not only accept the Presbyterian declaration of faith, but specifically recant and apologize for all his preaching in a Presbyterian pulpit against the Presbyterian faith. And the question of his recognition as a Presbyterian minister should have been left in abeyance, as with any other man whose conduct has put him, practically if not technically, on probation.

"I'm not narrow-minded." Harmon says it so harshly that the class moves nervously as though suspected of accusing him. "I don't believe that the Presbyterian Church should examine too inquisitorially into the layman's inter-

pretation of the creed. But I do believe that our church can only keep on being the servant of God by being eternally vigilant in its requirement that all of its preachers be sound in doctrine."

The class murmurs conviction. Having found that attack is the technic of the leaders, several gentlemen arise to pursue it. It is conveyed that the distinguished Fosdick only preaches to get crowds anyway; that (with a sneer as though it were somehow his fault) an Episcopalian church in his neighborhood is reaching out for his overflow congregations; that "a man like that at least ought to have the intellectual honesty to join the Unitarians."

Then, last but not least, Mr. Jones arises to sum up. The pastor has had the happy thought of saying, "Well, we can't settle this without hearing from Jones." The class has turned its forty expectant glances upon him. The anguish of the early morning is gone. So the estimable Jones uses the same tone of authority that he employs in rebuking an office employee—though not a shop-worker, now that those union organizers are hanging around. After all, this Fosdick deserves it.

"Why should he join the Unitarians?" snaps Jones. "Would he bring them anything better than he has brought us? I decidedly doubt it. I tell you, men who talk like Fosdick does haven't any sincerity. All they have is their egotism. Take his egotism away, and Fosdick wouldn't draw enough of a crowd to fill a country meeting-house. He's smart, I grant you. He knows that by utilizing a Presbyterian pulpit to preach radicalism, he can get the crowds who feed his vanity. But he knows he wouldn't get such crowds if he stayed where he belonged. That's why I'm for sending him where he belongs now and without any politeness, whether he likes it or not."

There being no rebuttal, that ends the day's discussion of the living topic. Curiously enough, it was advertised in the *Sunday News* as, "Should a church member voluntarily leave his church when he finds himself in disagreement with its doctrines?"

The excellent 137th Psalm—"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps on the willows in the midst thereof"—is the lesson prescribed by the Sunday-School

Quarterly. The curly-headed pastor wastes no time over its tonal felicities, but dashes them off with a jerky haste that would become a town-council clerk reading an ordinance to license horse doctors. Without slackening speed, he discharges the battery of Quarterly "question suggestions" at the bewildered heads of the "big business men who are Bible fans." . . . When, from its context, would you say this psalm was written? . . . How many times was the temple built? , . . Who built the first temple? . . . How big was it? . . . Were there any hammers or axes used in its construction? . . . Why couldn't David build it? . . . Who built the second temple? . . . Third? . . . Will there ever be another temple built? . . . . And so on. The primary and intermediate classes across the hall in the Emmanuel basement have answered exactly the same questions with a certain degree of literal exactness. But the community leaders fumble and hang back so, that in order to get through his seminar in five minutes the pastor has to do most of the answering himself.

Then, their minds rested and contented from this mature and intellectual consideration of the

soul's problems, the gentlemen pass upstairs to the church. From a visiting pastor of somber visage and convincing gestures they learn that they have a Better Covenant with the Almighty, a Better Revelation, a Better Promise, a Better Security, a Better Sacrifice, a Better Resurrection, a Better Future, a Better Paradise, than any other social organization known to history—in short, "the Best Religion that ever was or ever will be." The final prayer tenderly entreats that "religious wanderers" be brought to taste the "same sweet springs of happiness, temporal and eternal."

IV

Now, what the excellent Jones and his fellow communicants have enjoyed in their devotions is strictly true to type.

While the Emmanuel pillars sit in judgment on the luckless Fosdick, the leading "liberal" Methodist congregation sits in judgment upon the new amusement provisions in the Book of Discipline. At first the congregation is pleasantly shocked. The pastor, with the gentle horseplay for which he is locally famous, teases

them about the old prohibitions against dancing, card-playing, theater-going, etc. He all but says you really can do those things now and still be saved. All you need to do is to be able "to take Jesus Christ with you into the dance-hall, into the bridge game, into the pool-room."

Suddenly he clutches his climax. "Would you want *me* to dance?" he asks sorrowfully, his voice as softly fluted as an Irish mortician's. "I saw a minister of God's gospel dance once. He was dancing in the Odd Fellows Hall, with a pretty girl, cheek to cheek." His tone sinks to the hoarse whisper in which blasting scandal must be conveyed in religious circles. "He's dead now! . . . A woman shot him in the presence of his wife . . . one moment before she shot herself. He had long ceased to be the spiritual adviser of his people. . . . Oh, my friends, where would we all be now if our Savior had danced and come to an end like that?"

Half a dozen blocks down the street, a Fundamentalist but thoroughly sedate congregation is listening to a discourse on the pleasing folk tale of Dives and Lazarus. "By the light of this parable," says the rev. pastor, "we see that men do not need to be criminals and human outlaws

to miss heaven and enter into a state of misery for all eternity. Dives was a gentleman, by the world's rating, but he lifted up his eyes in hell. Our light shows the folly of seeking any way of escape from an unhappy state save by the guidance of Moses and the prophets, who direct the whole human race to Jesus Christ."

In an imposing Presbyterian edifice, the Beatitudes are being ratified with especial emphasis on the coming exaltation of the meek and the poor in spirit. As the faithful group of humble shoe-salesmen and bookkeepers and their wives pass out toward the trolley-cars, they bestow dirty looks upon the parked flock of medium-grade motor cars belonging to their economic superiors. In one of the godlessly liberal congregations, the pastor refutes the charge that a recent peace resolution of his national church body is pacifist. In every war since its foundation, he shouts, his church has been as quick on the trigger as the next one.

An enormous Baptist congregation listens to an indignant apology for the church's failure to allay certain social evils. That isn't the church's business, except by the way, roars the official shepherd. Infidels who make these charges

have yet to learn that the church's "sole and central aim is redemptive—to bind man back to God."

In the Roman Catholic basilica an oratorical monsignor urges the congregation to thank God daily that they escaped the penalties and disgraces of being born Protestants. The Episcopal rector deplores the lack of interest among the elect in the salvation of others. "Whether you are butchers or bankers, you should preach the way to salvation to all men if you would truly follow our Lord." In a congregation trying to exist half Modernist and half Fundamentalist, the pastor puts faith and the search for reality in their respective places by this admirable jugglery: "Being divine, Jesus Christ must have known many things that He did not teach. He knew that the earth was round, that the heart was the organ of circulation, not the seat of the affections, that Joshua did not make the sun stand still for the very simple reason that the earth and not the sun was doing the moving, and many other things that His people did not know. Yet He was strangely silent on these matters. He allowed men to continue in ignorance while He gave all emphasis to the vital truths of the

Christian faith. The Christian minister may well profit by His example."

V

Now, what do they all get out of all this?

There can be little doubt that the overwhelming majority of church attendants on this, or any other Sunday, proceed to their devotions, like the estimable Jones, in a mood of self-discontent. Since the Sabbath is a day of inactivity and reflection, its urges are strongly toward inward examination and private self-judgment. And few individuals can review even their strictly business careers during their latest week without experiencing an annoying lack of complete self-satisfaction. They do too many foolish things and miss too many good chances. Here is the basis of a large part of the Sunday morning discontent. Cheered on by doctrines like that of original sin it may be carried to absurd and morbid lengths, but in the main it is valid and realistic. The only proper and valid escape from it is realistic, too. If Jones should sit down to figure out what was the matter with his judgment of the cotton market, and why he flew off the

handle in his labor troubles and with his daughter, there would be some chance for him both to regain his self-respect and to improve his adjustment to society.

But instead, he seeks the consolations of the church. They are unquestionably consoling. But instead of discharging his peevishness, based on a justifiable self-distrust, in a realistic attempt to eliminate its causes, he discharges it in the sneer that a New York preacher, totally unknown to him, is an insincere egotist, and in the conviction that he, Jones, possesses a better bargain with God than the unregenerate. In other words, he gets rid of his inferiority complex and attains a buoyantly satisfactory but realistically false adjustment to his universe by indulging himself in harsh disapproval of the private conduct and beliefs of others, and in working up a pride of opinion about things he cannot possibly understand. All this, of course, eases his focus of discomfort under the steering-wheel and supplies him with an appetite for Sunday dinner, but it hardly makes him a more amiable or charitable citizen.

Meanwhile, the members of nearly every other congregation in town have cheerfully submitted

to the same jazzing of their egos. One group of Methodists have lost their self-discontent in a happy decision that all the local fox-trotters, churched or unchurched, will end up in scandalous triangular tragedies. Another group in the same communion goes home inflated by the doctrine that knowledge of the true faith is morally superior to knowledge of reality. The Catholics retire with the church's usual assurance that Protestants are rebels against the sacred truths of God. The Lutherans smack their lips over the brutal romance of Lazarus and Dives, finding Dives personified in all whose conduct varies from theirs, or whose opinion on theological matters clashes with theirs. The Baptists gloat over the unsaved on their pastor's assurance that their faith, by the shed blood of the Lamb, binds God to them in the only sort of contract that is legally respectable. Economically and socially ineffective Presbyterians rejoice in the wrath to come upon their snappier betters. Episcopalians cheer up at the thought that they have the Lord's warrant for proffering moral advice to those they vaguely disapprove.

All of them together come away with the exhilarating sense of having personally ratified

opinions which cannot be controverted. In their secular lives, they are Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, business and professional people, clerks and hand workers, housewives and teachers, sane and sometimes even intelligent persons, or plain fools and morons. In their secular spheres of activity, they all know only too painfully the discomforts of being defeated in plans, arguments and alibis on rules of evidence which they themselves accept as valid. But the church removes the sting of all this by giving them, in a realm which it flatteringly asserts is the highest of all, a complete personal infallibility. Their religious opinions cannot be controverted. They are completely separated from the plane of concrete evidence. A religious opinion is so simply because its holder says it is so.

This is the core of the consolation that religion offers. Whatever one may read into the ethics and philosophy of the New Testament, the Christian church allures its average communicant by catching him in his moods of doubt and saying: "Here's something you can't possibly guess wrong about, because there isn't a single realistic test in the world that will prove it isn't

so"; by catching him in a depth of self-distrust and saying: "Here, brother, are a lot of lewd and uncovenanted persons you can disapprove of a whole lot more than you disapprove of yourself." The church wants power and popularity, and so, like Mr. Hearst or the late Harding, it gives the public what it wants. That happens to be a license to the ego to inflate itself in pride. The ego takes the appetizing dish, and, as we have seen, naïvely bloats—and gloats.

Now, when multitudes of egos, as in the world to-day, find this inflation difficult in the face of actual experience, they accept the church's bait with exceptional avidity. Hence we have religious revivals in periods of social uncertainty, just as individuals "get religion" when in sorrow or in jail. Hence, all revivals, overt or occult, past and present, have been distinguished by espionage and persecution, by boycotts, slander-spreading and back-biting, by mob violence and withering hatred.

VI

In eras of religious apathy and tranquillity, like the years before the World War, the church

does not spread such poisons. It is then sought, not as an immediate means of salvation or of orientation to disagreeable reality, but merely as a pleasant and restful place where an agreeable ritual may be graciously observed at convenient intervals. The members' main interests are elsewhere—on a plane of intelligent materialism where persuasion, coöperation and mutual respect are accepted as natural and necessary.

But a religious revival sweeps all this away. By fleeing from reality into the bumptious vanities of doctrinaire opinion, the churches muddy and make more perplexing reality itself. Considering, indeed, the frivolity and viciousness of the anti-social acts and attitudes which they inspire, I believe as good a case could be made out for legally prohibiting church services on Sunday during a revival wave as for closing moving-pictures on Sunday during a crime wave. Carefully prepared statistics, it is highly probable, would show that the Christian religion, as preached by zealots in their hours of authority, has inspired as many killings as have all the exploits of famous train robbers. Certainly, far more than the movies, the church licenses dull

and third-rate people to indulge their delusions of grandeur without pity and without remorse.

All this is now going on in the United States. Week in and week out, in hundreds of thousands of tabernacles, Christians are being taught to hate their fellow men. In some circles and some areas all other teaching has been abandoned. A great wave of hatred rolls over the country. It is high and its crest flashes spectacularly. Some day, perhaps, it will be discovered that it is dangerous.

Prairie Fire

PRAIRIE FIRE

THE summer of 1921 lay heavy upon the Cotton States, but the 7,000,000 incurably white and Democratic inhabitants thereof were taking it lightly. They had the best of reasons for doing so. They were, by God's providence, no longer running the national government—and the government being furnished them by the opposition was of the convenient sort which they did not have to trust and commend, but could easily understand.

The austere and intellectual Dr. Wilson, who had just spent six out of a possible eight years reminding them that there were such things as Powers, premiers and international alliances and places with such jaw-breaking names as Czecho-Slovakia, had departed with all his uncomfortable policies. Gone with him, too, was the oily intriguer, Tumulty, whose baleful Jesuitism was familiar, not only to every Cumberland Presbyterian and Southern Baptist pastor below the Potomac, but to every Southern politician who

had been beaten in the race for Federal office by some priest-anointed son of Tammany.

The time had come to canonize the martyr and forget his evil angel—both of which were easier and more comfortable feats than defending in detail the policies of either. Meanwhile, Noble Harding of the Mystic Shrine sat upon the throne of Millard Fillmore, at Washington, and the sole intellectual obligation of a faithful Democrat was to practice his best howls against the day when an alert octoroon would be appointed collector of customs in some South Atlantic fishing port.

Idyllic days, and yet shadowed by a sense of insecurity! Out of just such a pastoral calm had come the terrible annoyances of the Wilsoniad: the odious compulsion to think beyond county, State and even national lines, the menaces of Tumulty and the Pope, of foreign entanglements, of the hyphenated American, of the German spy in the Odd Fellows meeting, of the uppity nigger in khaki, of the Knights of Columbus giving away cigarettes and coffee free to the soldiers, and so diabolically discrediting the Protestant Fundamentalism embodied in the price-lists of the Y. M. C. A.

Such nightmares, having come once, might come again. Was it not, then, the proper hour for all native white, Protestant Americans cherishing the patriotic, social and theological ideas that they had been born with to unite for their perpetual defense against all revolutionists, papists, well-poisoners, infidels, adulterers and other villains, present or to come?

Besides, business was rotten, and it was high time the bosses who had adorned the Wilson régime in the Southern provinces were turned out.

It must have been the hour, for it brought forth its Man.

II

He came to the town I am concerned with from Atlanta. He had acquired the art of the rhetorician and he knew how to handle an expense account. At need he could address infant classes in the Sunday-schools or secret conclaves of puissant politicians, but he was at his best before the gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce. When his wiry fingers impressed his points with an affectionate tug at his victim's

forearm or shoulder, when his eye flashed concern for the plight of an imperilled republic, when his voice poured forth its tale of sinister dangers with the rapid-fire diction of a high-speed salesman turned evangelist—at such times he was powerful medicine to every go-getter along Main Street.

He made his first set for money. Who were the richest and most influential persons in the town—that is, the richest who were likely to be charmed by his programme? He passed up the department-store and chain-store proprietors for the obvious reason that they were Jews. He had his doubts about the bigger, and therefore cannier, bankers. And, the town being in Texas, there were no industrial magnates to entice with moving word-pictures of labor unions smashed on the rocks of theological controversy. So he picked at last upon the leading automobile dealers, for no other members of the local Anglo-Saxon nobility so feverishly cultivated the arts of aggressive salesmanship, or so tenderly nursed the commercial advantages of membership in fraternal orders, or so exclusively lived and prospered in the warm wind of boosting.

In private interviews he worked upon the

patriotic fears of these thoughtful aristocrats. They would agree with him that the German spy-hunt and the Bolshevik deportations had but barely begun to accomplish their purposes, that the hyphenate was not yet sufficiently humbled, that the Roman menace was by no means removed with Tumulty. They would agree that, because of the excessive privileges accorded them during the war, the niggers required a new and harsher discipline, and that it was a shame how, in a great progressive city like this one, founded by American blood and built by American treasure, half the best business was in the hands of alien Semites. Then he would quote them the Nordic equivalent for *noblesse oblige*—"Birds like you and me, old timer, gotta stick together an' see old Uncle Sam through this mess." And the rich patrician blood of the automobile vendors would boil with a noble fury.

Nevertheless, it was the reference to Hebrew efficiency which really led up to the main point in his argument.

"See here," he would say, a caressingly convincing finger on the victim's breastbone. "You join this here Klan, and you put all your great personal power and influence on the side of

American institutions against un-American institutions. But that ain't all. Listen: You also join a great body of loyal, red-blooded he-men like yourself whose first principle is to practice klannishness. That means that when every Protestant American in town is a Klansman, as he is going to be, every mother's son of them will buy their automobiles from you because you will be known as a charter member Klansman. And let me tell you, brother, your inside track ain't got no string to it. Remember, this Klan is absolutely secret. Not a living soul outside of it will ever know you belong. So your Catholic and Jewish customers, and your nigger customers, if you got any, ain't got a chance in the world to get sore at you and take their trade somewheres else. . . . Yes, I've got a membership application blank right in my pocket."

Within a week practically every automobile dealer of magnate pretensions had tumbled his way into the inner sanctuary over the writhing, but successfully persistent, bodies of his competitors.

This was a good start, and next week the visitor took advantage of it. He rounded up the service-station owners and the owners rounded

up their employees, all on the plea that there was no way like it to acquire merit with the big agencies. Also, on the same ground and with more important results, the sellers of automobile insurance were rounded up. This last achievement, by way of the complicated structure of the underwriting profession in small cities, led the go-getting Georgian into all sorts of new financial fastnesses. Automobile insurance, it appeared, was a side line of the life, fire and accident agencies, even of realtors. It was next door to the mortgage companies, and these were next door to the banks. One insurance, real-estate and mortgage outfit landed was an argument for dragging in all the others. The persuader from Atlanta presently had some of the minor bankers meeting under white robes in the borrowed warehouse of a convert, and soon even one or two of the supreme magnates promised to think it over. The lesser lawyers, physicians, dentists and veterinarians, hearing the glad tidings, followed gloriously in the wake of clients and patients.

Now the Georgia mullah launched his grand assault. He approached the politicians. That is, he was discriminating, and approached *some* of the politicians. Those who actually controlled

the city and the county he tactfully avoided. They were in power already, and naturally would not feel any overwhelming attraction to a new organization when those they belonged to already were sufficient to keep them in jobs. The Klan agent's technique was to tackle the new men who would be grateful. So he approached those who were either openly against the machine, or secretly displeased with the machine though nominally members of it, or mere tyros who wanted to horn in. He found a considerable number of all three classes. And after one sentence they were his. That sentence was: "How would you like to train with a secret political organization that's got a $16,000,000 war-chest?"

This, of course, was gross exaggeration. The total wealth of all the Klansmen then in robes probably did not reach half way to $16,000,000, and most of them were obviously men who would be very unlikely to sell their kine and their Cadillacs, their private stocks and their daughters' one-piece bathing suits to keep the Pope out of the White House. But $16,000,000 was good selling talk, and the political droppings from so vast a bar'l would be, from the local point of

view, enormous. Within a month the Klan's political organization was full grown.

The Georgian now sent his expense account and his bill for commissions on memberships and regalia orders to Atlanta, and left for other missionary fields. His work was done. But before he went, he performed one act which stamped him as a great soul capable of gratitude. Through family influence and fraternal ties, the town's leading Ford agent had been forced for several years to keep on his pay-roll an engaging young man who as a Ford salesman was a first-class Mystic Shrine potentate. The Ford agent was the Georgian's key convert. In return, the Georgian seduced the potentate off the motor industry's pay-roll upward into the local kleagleship.

III

Getting members was easy for the new Kleagle. Whispers spread abroad from the mysterious courts of Masonry and Odd-Fellowship soon identified some of the charter members and made the Klan socially respectable, even alluring. The satellites of the great men tumbled in, and brought their employees.

All the lean and moth-eaten pastors of the socially negligible churches hastened to the sanctuary, hot with jealousy of the local Roman Catholic bishop's good living. The ferocious shepherds of the larger emotional congregations were already there, suspecting that the new bond would mean bigger dividends in the contribution plate. Sundays and week days they whooped up the Klan among the hordes of 100% Christians. A thin but constant dribble came in of men with old grudges to settle: impersonal joy-killers who wanted their neighbors sent to the hoosegow because they kept good bootleggers, or let their women smoke; Fundamentalists who believed that every evolutionist started the day by spitting on the Bible; old-fashioned Southern gentlemen of the houn' dawg class who, having taken their women in adultery and being afraid to do anything about it, were encouraged to believe that vengeance could be had.

Unfortunate poker-players gloated to think that they might frame the winners of past contests before a Klan court and so win the final triumph. Deacon-souled men of forty and upward, jealous of the younger generation's petting parties, gloated with delight over the prospect of

checking the envied libidinousness. In short, every non-Catholic, non-Negro, non-Jewish swine in town, every man who had the instincts of a cheat, a spy, a coward and a cad, lusted after membership and got it if he had $10.

But membership alone would not do the business. The recruits had to have a definite cause and a definite enemy. So the Kleagle organized a spy service and a propaganda. The propaganda was to the effect that the city government was corrupt, partial to the foreign-born, and controlled directly from the Vatican. The major activities of the spy service were conducted by a small group of city cops who saw captaincies in store for them, and by confidential menials in various lowly political berths who saw corresponding promotions. In addition, every Klansman was invited to visit the Kleagle's office at any hour and reveal, under klannish secrecy, anything scandalous that he happened to know or suspect about anybody.

The Kleagle embellished these relatively literal reports when noting them down in the permanent record. He and his inner squad raised the ante once again when they launched each separate communique for whispered circulation.

Each faithful Klansman raised it still further when passing it along to brother Klansmen.

Thus, the fact that one of the anti-Klan candidates for the school board was no church member and a mild agnostic gave rise to the report that the whole board was composed of rabid atheists seeking office as a means of launching an anti-God propaganda in the kindergartens. When it was proved, in refutation of this, that one member was an Episcopal vestryman, the fact merely caused the board to be changed over night from atheists to Jesuit agents.

The city editor of an anti-Klan newspaper had a Catholic name, and as a matter of fact, had been excommunicated from Holy Church many years before for refusing to retract certain unorthodox matter in a college essay. Nevertheless, his connection with the staff proved that every Protestant on it had been discharged as a preliminary to the Klan struggle, and that the new members had been assembled from the ends of the earth by the personal choice of the papist bishop of the diocese. A public office-holder in the divorce courts furnished fuel for the romance that all the city officers were adulterers and wife-beaters. Such bankers as refused to join were ac-

cused at once of pandering to huge Vatican deposits and of being on the verge of insolvency. The fondness of a bachelor employee of the anti-Klan newspaper for night life was responsible for the news that every editor and reporter on it —with an average salary of perhaps $40 a week! —was keeping a woman. So far as I know the Klan's propaganda squad was not sufficiently learned in the history of public scandal to revive the old one about ritual murders. But most Klansmen came to the comfortable conclusion that it was a virtuous act to delay payment as long as possible on their bills at Jewish stores.

The Roman clergy soon had to take cognizance of the whispers being circulated about the scarlet sins of the confessional, and they were cautioned by the ordinary to avoid being seen in conversation with fair parishioners in public. This was especially onerous to one young priest who came out of a downtown store one morning to find one of the fairest of his flock seated in his Ford runabout and demanding to be taken home because she had sprained her ankle. He met the emergency like a gentleman and the bishop forgave him, though the peering eyes of the propaganda squad made the most of it.

So half the town had every day a new and juicy scandal about those it delighted to envy. Two thousand red-blooded, Nordic he-men, and their even more enthusiastic she-women, who had been taught all their lives that they were "as good as you are," but had thus far been unable to prove it, were suddenly enabled to establish the fact to their entire satisfaction. For as long as the Klan lasted, every inferiority complex in the community flopped itself belly upward, and, swollen with self-righteousness and an arrogant sense of separation from unbelievable (but nevertheless believed in) depravities, indulged itself in a savage and ecstatic gloat.

But it could not last!

IV

For a time, to be sure, the promises of the gifted gentleman from Atlanta were redeemed. The faithful, in their new hysteria, did practice klannishness. The business of the little shops of the Protestant Nordics picked up mildly, while the Jewish department-stores and chain-stores languished. The Klan pastors were cheered by

an improvement in zeal and gate receipts, and whooped with loud hosannas.

When the first political test came on, the opposition was still in doubt as to who belonged and who didn't, and the Klan won the school board hands down. The victory was celebrated by the solemn dismissal of half a dozen Roman Catholic teachers of long service and large personal popularity, and the Klan, in gorgeous ceremonial on the neighboring deserts, implored the blessing of God on the good beginning it had made in doing His work.

But in each of these momentous achievements there were the seeds of failure. Soon irresistible clearance sales tempted Angle and Saxon housewives away from the new racial solidarity back to their old stand at Jewish bargain counters. These sales barrages continued until the little 100% merchants were actually worse off than before—with higher pay-rolls to meet, beside, since many of them had discharged all their "foreign" help to make way for red-blooded but high-priced Nordics. In fact, the master-minds soon saw that some accommodation must be reached with Jewry or the Klan would go to pieces before its political aims were gained. So

the outstanding Jewish firms were confidentially informed that the Klan had no quarrel with them, and that, though it could not admit actual Jews to membership, it would readily admit their employees.

The hint was taken. Within a month advertisements of the department-stores and chain-stores were being flashed on the screen at the meetings of the faithful, and red-blooded Protestant department heads were regularly reporting the doings of the secret Konklaves to their Semite masters. This was fatal, for what any Jew knew about the Klan was soon imparted, by virtue of a still more ancient klannishness, to every other Jew, and eventually it even seeped down among the more alert of the non-Klan Gentiles. Also, numerous other local institutions borrowed the confidential agent system from the department-stores. Also, there gradually accumulated in the town groups of dismissed and disgruntled Klansmen, of naturally blabbing Klansmen, of humorous Klansmen, taking their oath-bound obligations lightly, who revealed names without even insisting on confidence. Simultaneously, it became the favorite outdoor sport of the alert-minded anti-Klan citizenry to gather about the

Odd Fellows' Hall on meeting nights and note down the license numbers of the cars parked there. All in all, by the time the first year was up, the inviolable secrecy of Klan membership became about as inviolable as the secret of a husband's fibbing in the face of an intelligent wife.

So when the Klan school board furnished the Roman Catholic populace with a motive for a boycott, the least of that populace's troubles was learning where to strike. It hit hard. Meanwhile, the Jews continued the war of bargain sales on general principles, in spite of the new considerations extended to them, and in the same hour hard times hit the town. After that, whatever his faith in his Kleagle, no Klansman was able to imagine that klannishness really paid.

But this was only the beginning. The police heads and the local judiciary refused to be sympathetic, and so the promises of necktie parties for the benefit of the aggrieved against the immoral could not be made good. Threatening letters still filled the mail carriers' pouches, but the Klan found it impossible to carry out the pleasant punitive expeditions which had made it glorious in Georgia and East Texas. There was

muttering on this score among the rank and file, and soon there followed a rapid falling off in interest. Even the plea of the leaders that it was necessary to win the county and city elections before the real clean up could be started did not entirely overcome these low spirits.

Finally, the great moral yearning which the Klan had stimulated had to satisfy itself lamely by building a tabernacle and bringing in an evangelist from outside for six weeks. This tabernacle took money from the building funds of the established basilicas, and the evangelist took the cream off the ecclesiastical gate receipts, so that thereafter it was hard for even the fieriest local pastors to be more than lukewarm. Some remained faithful to the crusade for a while longer, but the tender conscience of the majority soon agreed with the merchants that klannishness didn't pay. Under such handicaps the Klan drew only a 60-40 victory in the county elections.

The politicians now rubbed in the lesson that klannishness didn't pay by gently easing themselves out of membership, and the Civil Service Board promptly dismissed some cops who were known to be in the Kleagle's spy squad. Some

of them denied their Klan membership, and the board discovered that it had legal power to summon the Kleagle before it and make him spread his rolls on the public record. This was the final blow. The extinguished gendarmes' names were duly published, and that morning panic seized the Klan's *corps d'élite.* From the motor-car magnates, the insurance go-getters, the realtorian archdukes, the slap-on-the-back bankers, the high-powered selling dervishes, the dynamic contractors—from all this massed and gullible Babbittry, which less than eighteen months before had joined the Klan for the greater glory of Protestantism and Better Business, arose the whisper of the Terror: "My God, if they can print them cops' names, they might print ourn."

Within a week, practically every son of a peasant in the whole business aristocracy had visited the Kleagle's office and got his demit. The war-chest went with its owners.

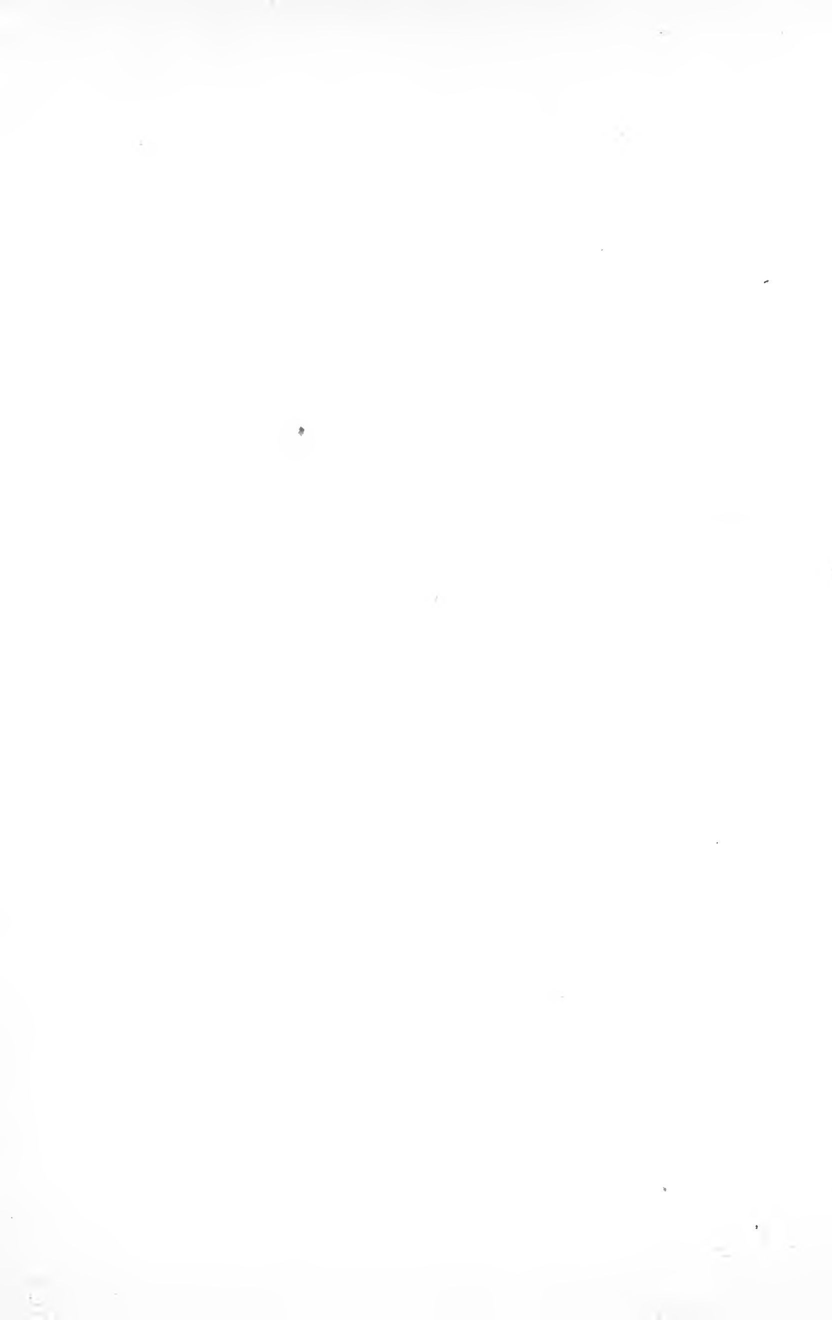
But give the Kleagle credit. He took it standing. With nothing but his lunatic fringe remaining, with candidates who were known only as frenzied Methodists or reformed bail-fixers, he went into the city election and staged a fight

that was a masterpiece. For two long months evangelically minded rabble-rousers, husky voiced, red in the gills and wet about the eyes, sang "Onward Christian Soldiers" at nightly rallies, and women of the small grocery class, white-faced with the fury of religious zeal, dashed about town licking up scandal about their betters, and spreading it back hotter than they received it. For two months it would have been unsafe for a newspaper reporter of the opposition to have showed up at a Baptist sewing circle. Stern men, forewarned by the Kleagle's press, armed to repel invasions of papally trained Negroes from Louisiana, bent on the destruction of white Protestant civilization. For two months the Catholic churches were passed with shudders by those who loved their terror as the saints loved their whip-lashes.

In short, a population of Anglo-Saxon morons, inbred for generations to repress all its joyous and bawdy instincts as the yeastings of Beelzebub, thoroughly enjoyed itself. They might have won the election, run the town a few years, and even mutilated a few bootleggers if their furies had been but moderated by the suave discretions of those local super-men and former

war-chest holders—the town's first Babbitts. But as it was, with all restraints removed, they went down to disaster. And that was the end of the Klan.

What Babbitt Won't Talk About



WHAT BABBITT WON'T TALK ABOUT

OLD Man Barton was born just too late to fight for the Confederacy, and is now past hard work. So he has come up from the rural county seat in the cotton lands where he was born and in a southern metropolis of hustling northern ways sits all day in the smart motor-service station kept by his middle-aged sons, sometimes vaguely and at leisure attending to the simpler wants of customers.

"Now that side-bar buggies have gone up the lane for eternity," Old Man Barton will tell you genially, "all I'm good for is talk."

Old Man Barton probably never had three years of formal schooling in his life. As a member of the industrial community, he may be, as the young helpers around the repair shop suspect, sunk in his dotage. Yet in the little space around his shaded seat in summer and his kerosene hand-warming stove in winter he keeps alive an ancient American practice from which the institutions of the republic once drew a wholesome

vitality, now, it seems, sadly declining: the habit of critically observing and racily discussing what goes on in the world.

"That feller Mitchell," he would say of the early fall's aircraft sensation, "talks almost as fierce as an orator for the old prohibitionist party. Well, when a feller lets the air get that hot around him, you can always take pretty big odds that he ain't *altogether* right. . . . All the same, I'm for him to this extent. You've got to burn them old-fashioned army and navy officers once in a while to make 'em move at all. An' this Mitchell, he sure burns 'em where it hurts."

From time to time, too, there have been memorable conversations concerning "that feller Coolidge." For instance after the presidential address on law enforcement last Memorial Day, Old Man Barton wanted to know what I thought of the chief executive as a "states' righter." I replied, with the wisdom gleaned from various urban editorial writers on the Democratic and liberal side, that the President seemed, for a New England Republican, to have stolen an almost illegal amount of ancient Democratic thunder.

"Oh, yes," said the old man with pleasant irony, "he's a regular states' rights fire-eater, that

feller Coolidge is. Why he actually believes that a state's got a right to choose between doing what Coolidge tells it to and being made to do it."

Again, I found him during the Dayton evolution trial "studying up" his Genesis for learned dissertations on inconsistencies in the accounts of creation. "Trouble with Bryan is," he said out of a clear sky one day, "he can always believe anything he wants to believe. Facts just don't interest him. He can even believe everything in Genesis all at once."

Indeed, in four years of close acquaintance, I have never yet found Old Man Barton at loss for an opinion on a consequential public issue, based on good critical faculties and well-digested general information, salted with wit and cogently delivered.

Yet among contemporaries, social and business acquaintances in the same city, I find nothing like it. Most of them are men—or women—of infinitely better educational advantages and of far more cosmopolitan social backgrounds than Old Man Barton. Here and there one of them talks well and convincingly of such public questions as directly affect his, or her, personal interests. But when events of a merely general

connection intrude themselves in a conversation, after a round of apathetic and vaguely polite comments they are dismissed with an air of general agreement that such matters are no more interesting to sane adults than high-school algebra. The gentlemen, and the ladies, would rather, as a desperate alternative, discuss card tricks, or even literature.

"These young people who have been through high school and college think they've been taught everything," Old Man Barton frames the indictment. "So they figure they don't need to learn nothing any more, nor even to think. Us old-timers knew we didn't know much to start with, and so we've spent our lives mostly trying to study things out."

II

I was skeptical, but, curiously enough, in a few days, came confirmation of a sort right in the Barton family. The old man's grandson is the pride of the flock. Two years out of a state university, where he was made a Bachelor of Arts in salesmanship, this youth rejoices in the distinction of being the town's youngest proprietor

of a motor-car agency. Immaculately groomed for a demonstration engagement, he dropped in one evening to show the family his Company's new 1926 model. The old man, as it happened, was deep in some shrewd observations on the war-debt question.

"Aw, what good will it do us if these frogs and wops do pay up?" the rising young Babbitt inquired disgustedly. "The grafters will get it all anyway. . . . Say, granddad," he went on amiably, "why don't you cut the bull and take up golf?"

From a large round eye a-light with the salesman's professional jocoseness, he tipped me a wink. It was plain that he regarded his grandfather's interest in public affairs as a shameful confession of extreme old age and rather bad form to boot; but, being a tactful youth, he preferred to pass it off as a mild aberration, grotesquely amusing.

It was during the same week, I believe, that John Henry, the grandson, essayed to complain of prohibition and enlightened us as to his firm conviction—he wanted to bet on it—that that sorrowful regime was ordained by a corrupt popular vote at the same election which yielded a

second term to President Wilson. When his grandfather mentioned President Wilson's veto of the Volstead act and called the constitutional amendment process to his attention, he objected that we were "getting beyond his depth." And John Henry was off to the movies, thus serving polite notice that the privilege of "studying about" public questions is reserved for Nestors only.

III

But once the Nestors were young, and American talk was different.

The country was new then, or relatively so. To-day's Nestors hardly knew Revolutionary veterans, but their fathers certainly did. The tradition was still strong in their early manhood that we had done a marvelous thing in wrenching ourselves free from European sovereignty and setting up a government on our own account. The mere existence of the republic was a perpetually exciting, almost a unique fact. From his first schoolroom onward—where that fact was dealt with rapturously by the schoolmistresses of the vaguest sort of constitutional learn-

ing—the future Nestor was encouraged to be self-conscious about his state as a citizen of this unique free republic.

So, whether he was plutocrat or day laborer, our shiny, brand-new, and supposedly original institutions, and the whirr of their machinery as they went round, were fatally attractive to the average citizen's curiosity and emotions. Not as a matter of duty, but simply as a matter of irresistible fascination, he devoted to them almost all the powers of observation, speculation, and argument that he had left over from his business and domestic life. He watched politics, he thought politics; and his newspapers rated only the most shattering disasters, the most gruesome murders, as on a par with the discussion of minor political issues. In fact, the possibility has to be faced that the Nestors, and their ancestors of three generations, overdid it.

At any rate, the old-time American inevitably talked politics. It made little difference whether the issue was local, national, or international in scope, he was ready for it. Except for his private affairs, it was what he was most interested in, and having his say on it was as instinctive as having his breakfast. He talked politics to his

friends because a full and subtle comprehension of individual political opinions, even when they sometimes clashed, was the surest bond of intimacy. He talked them with strangers because such talk was the easiest road to acquaintance without familiarities, and there was a subtly hospitable courtesy involved in introducing an inexhaustible and mutually interesting topic. He talked them at his enemies, because strokes could be dealt in political controversies whose fine points did not have to be explained to the onlookers.

So it went from the excitement over the Washington foreign policies down to the free silver campaign of 1896. Issues, were, it is true, tremendously vital, often direct in their bearings on the individual, relatively untechnical. One could have plausible and more or less convincing opinions about our proper relation to the Napoleonic wars, the United States bank question, the long contest over states' rights and slavery, the problems of finance and economic expansion which came with the generation after the Civil War, without being that offensive object in all informal neighborly discussions—the expert. But on the other hand, barring the complexities

of the federal reserve banking system, the issues we have to-day are hardly more obscure or less intimate and consequential. The average man can surely think his way through to logical and more or less original conclusions on the questions of government regulation of private conduct and private business initiative; of disproportionate taxation; of American participation in world affairs—if he cares to take the trouble. The difference is that the old-time American did care.

So he shouted and marched in processions, and argued not only for Jackson, Lincoln and Cleveland, but also for Hayes and Hancock, and for such amusingly uninspiring and uninspired statesmen as the presidents and presidential candidates of the '40's and '50's—surely no more seductive figures than the Coolidges and Davises of our day. So, as far back as the first decade of the constitution, he was sufficiently excited over issues to turn his theatrical entertainments, and occasionally his very religious gatherings, into demonstrations for and against the Federalist foreign policies, the alien and sedition acts, the Jeffersonian view of the rights of men. Down into a period remembered by middle-aged

men, he was so enthralled by the political wisdom and personal idiosyncrasies of mere governors, congressmen, and state legislators that he would gladly discuss them for hours with his neighbors, and held the communication of his wisdom on these matters to be his first hospitable duty to strangers. Foreign observers found us unnecessarily concerned about political trifles and often wrote superciliously about it.

IV

Yet this over-concern had its good points. Opinion may have been more biased in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth, but at least as a people we knew rather minutely what our governments, state and federal, were doing all the time, and we cared. We thought of the government as being intimately ourselves, and not an extraneous group of experts and political tricksters in Washington and of irresponsible, fate-imposed federal policemen in our own bailiwicks.

Our constant argumentation probably changed few opinions in our unregenerate neighbors, but

those neighbors were automatically forced to keep abreast of the information on their side in order to maintain it against us with an impressiveness satisfactory to their natural vanity. The information may have been partisan, but at least it was better than no information at all. Furthermore, we forced one another to a good deal more straight thinking on public affairs than probably came natural to us. The man who had the weak side of an argument may have stuck to it just to show that he could not be "influenced." But when the next issue came along he was more likely to choose, for his own safety at the country store conclave, the side on which was the greater wisdom.

Nor is it to be forgotten that a vast proportion of our political discussion was not controversial at all. It was simply the exchange of political information between friends who agreed. That was the best news of the day, its most interesting talk—better than gossip, more thrilling than sport—as important, even, as business. So it happened that men of only the slightest formal education, whatever their views, knew the great speeches of Calhoun and Webster and, later, those of Blaine and the Bryan of "free silver"

days, almost paragraph by paragraph. And as far back as the 1790's, despite illiteracy, despite hopelessly inferior newspapers and the almost total absence of "journals of opinion," they had a keener sense of foreign policy and international politics than all but one out of a thousand of our contemporaries seem to have of world affairs to-day. If information was often erroneous, it was because the sources of information were bad.

Interest, at least, drove Americans of the first century of the republic to absorb such information as they could get. To-day, with facilities for information unexcelled in history, one is confronted on every side with otherwise intelligent and agreeable people who have no information at all. And instead of interest, one is confronted with their blank apathy.

At the height of the 1924 presidential campaign, I overheard a rash elderly gentleman—not exactly a Nestor but obviously a voter before 1896—introduce politics into the general conversation of a Pullman smoking compartment on a train between Los Angeles and the East. Even I, who am scarcely venerable, can remember the time when to introduce politics in such a place was the surest known means of vitalizing the

conversation indefinitely. And the old-fashioned person began it carefully with a shrewd analytical reference to the merits of the Coolidge-Mellon tax reform proposals.

Vacationists and prosperous salesmen, the company were all business men with the sole journalistic exception of myself. The problem the elderly person suggested intimately concerned all of them.

But this was all that happened.

"Yeah, Coolidge is a good man," one of the salesmen admitted.

"Davis is a good man, too," said a vacationist.

A long silence. The conversation was plainly ready to die of malnutrition.

"Yeah, the country'll be safe no matter which is elected," another salesman yawned with finality. Then, with an air of contributing some extraordinary wisdom, "Coolidge and Davis are both conservative."

Thus the company had paid its polite tribute to the Nestor's incomprehensible interest in these tiresome matters. The talk went back to comparisons of California hotels and golf courses, and the boosting spirit of its various towns. When I left, the Nestor himself was repeating the

"wise cracks" the driver of the sight-seeing bus in Los Angeles had made about San Francisco. His audience appeared delighted.

V

One can tour the country to-day from coast to coast, from border to border, and scarcely hear public affairs mentioned above this languid key. Within the past twelve months I have traveled from San Francisco to Vermont and back by way of the Mexican border and the Middle West, and have checked up on friends who have made similar journeys. The unanimous impression is that by common consent public affairs have been dropped as an eligible subject for conversation among the so-called "average Americans" in their casual contacts. "The public," if such an expression properly denotes those who work at jobs which do not directly require an attention to public issues, apparently cares little more about them than it does about the politics of medieval Poland.

In the country store, the hotel lobby, the club, the Pullman smoker, the neighborhood drug

shop, the friendly dinner party, one can start almost instantly, a fairly shrewd and lively conversation about batting averages, golf scores, Jack Dempsey, Andy Gump, the cleverness of magazine advertisements, the vicissitudes of home-brewing and buying bootleg, the naughtiness of women's dress, the morals of "movie" stars, the social significance of "flappers." Where the air is not too thick with rancor and suspicion, the fundamentalist controversy and the Ku Klux Klan may arouse a little tall talking in their strictly theological and social significances. But mention public affairs in any more direct political sense, and the normal group responds with apathetic platitudes or bored cynicism—and a quick change of subject.

People are through with American-Japanese relations when the thoughtful sentiment has been uttered that we white races are the superior races and may some day have to show yellow persons where they get off.

When I came east last summer after several years on the Mexican border, the only individual who asked me shrewd questions as to how "that fellow Calles" was straightening out the affairs of the southern republic was a retired small town

merchant who will be eighty-five on his next birthday. Others were through with the subject when I had replied to their inquiries that real Mexicans were seldom like the "movie" version and that there were few good motor roads in the republic.

Similarly, one's fellow citizens are through with the League of Nations and the whole vital subject of our relation to post-war European developments when the group's first inspired "wise-cracker" has declared, "Aw, we voted to forget all that." It is not quite, perhaps, as though the war, with its temporary forcing of our attention upon international events and foreign policies, never happened. It is more as if we were adolescent students who had barely passed—or perhaps failed—a difficult and disagreeable course in a temperamentally uncongenial subject, and were now unanimously resolved to ease our wearied minds by dismissing the whole confusing business from memory. Indeed, the more one observes this instinct of "for God's sake, get Europe off our chests" functioning, the more it appears to explain the defeat of American affiliation with the League of Nations and the Harding administration's absurdly immaculate, but

politically shrewd aloofness from that relatively harmless body. To-day, at any rate, the cogency of the constitutional arguments against league membership appears forgotten, but the "Aw, let's forget it" instinct continues to inspire the average American's sublime faith that the funding of the war debts is no more complicated a business, economically, than collecting a one hundred dollar bank loan with the legal rate of interest.

It is in this universal insistence upon simplifying issues, when they are allowed to break into the discussion at all, that one finds perhaps the most striking sign of our new political decrepitude.

The old-time American was interested in the complexities of issues. They were his means of entrapping his enemies and of impressing his friends with his learning. Whichever his side was, he could sound and counter all the subtle constitutional notes in the states' rights argument. He was at home among the syllogisms and the sophistries by which the cause of free silver was demonstrated and demolished. If this foreign debt question had arisen forty years ago, he would have been full of complicated economic

theories and statistics, showing the effect of vast international money transactions on export and import trade and the prosperity of the nation. Not all, but an impressively large and articulate mass of voters would have been equal to the mental effort of acquiring an intricate view of the subject in order to reach conclusions which satisfied their consciences as being based on logic and a knowledge of the facts. Some of them would be deceived by propaganda information, and their thinking take on an intense and unattractive bias. But at least they were not afraid of the hard labor of thought.

But to-day between his (or her) interests in Freudian smatterings, carburetor efficiency, correspondence courses in personal efficiency, new niblicks, world's series prospects, service-club engagements, and bootlegging intrigues, the voter must rest that precious mind. Hence, if public affairs are going to ripple his interest at all, they must expect to do it in simplified form.

What time, he'd like to know, has Al Johnson —rising young realtor with a big ad and sales campaign on for Boosterburg Heights, and chairman of the Shrine initiation committee, and runner-up for the Country Club championship,

and candidate for next year's Lions Club presidency, and trustee of the First Methodist church, and director of a new bank, the Y. M. C. A., and the municipal Boy Scouts' organization—to be digging into questions of foreign exchange and what the "frogs" and the "wops" can afford to pay us? Let the bankers and the exporters and importers figure it out, they've got a stake in it. Let Cal Coolidge and Secretary Mellon, and Senator Blatt and Congressman Logroll attend to it; they're paid to. Let the highbrows sniff around at it; maybe that's their idea of a pleasant evening.

But if you force Al Johnson to express an opinion, he'll tell the world these foreign debts are like loaning Eddie Billheimer five thousand dollars on a second mortgage and damn well seeing that he keeps up his payments. And that is that, as Al will witheringly inform you if you try to "confuse the issue" with world-trade statistics. He'd rather tell you about the wild women he met on a party when he was out at Hollywood last month anyway.

Similarly, when Colonel Mitchell diverted some popular attention from a local bathing-beauty contest to the state of American aviation,

I remember overhearing a few of the outstanding leaders on a certain Main Street dismiss the issue with declarations that Mitchell was an "ass" or that the war department must be run by "boobs." But of the possibility that there might be a vital and complicated question of national defense involved, of practical interest to every American, not a word. When the Dayton trial flourished, it was easy to hear personal denunciations of Messrs. Bryan and Darrow and their respective theologies. But, except for one stranger, an elderly relic of the past, who began an unsought but agreeable conversation with me in a bank lobby one day, there was hardly a sign that a typical and fairly well educated American population of fifty thousand appreciated the delicate issue of young Mr. Scopes' constitutional rights or cared to investigate them.

Going farther back into history, I recall a somewhat cynical patriot remarking with bored bitterness to two companions in a Pullman smoker that he had "seen where" the supreme court decision on the Oregon school law compelled all Catholics to send their children to the parochial schools. The other man answered, "Is that so? I didn't know that." In the same flat

tone he might have received information that the bees in Ecuador produced more honey per head than those of Peru.

Thus are the issues of the republic simplified out of all relations to reality. And sometimes they appear to be simplified out of existence altogether. During the significant struggle over the ratification of the child labor amendment, I never, on my particular Main Street, heard the question mentioned. Old Man Barton was having his winter lumbago!

VI

When the old man Bartons are all dead of their various ailments, will anybody but stigmatized "highbrows" ever discuss public affairs at all?

Surely no more ominous signs could be present than artificial efforts at resuscitation. When a man requires a pulmotor, his case is at least dangerous. When attention to public issues becomes a conscious "duty" to be performed only with the aid of organizations, "madame presidents," semi-monthly meetings and set programs with cinnamon toast afterward, the spontaneity

which once made political discussion the republic's eighth lively art may be recognized as already a long way departed. Yet as public questions—barring prohibition which becomes more and more a private question of where and for how much can I get it—command less and less instinctive attention, the "current events circles" multiply—chiefly among ladies of more or less maturity, it should be stated, for if the men and the flappers prefer private personalities to public events, they at least have the honesty to admit it.

At any rate, the "circles" have multiplied sufficiently to make life more complicated than nature intended for those who follow public affairs as a matter of professional obligation. There come to mind the confessions made to me by a newspaper editor and a professor of modern history.

Both were approached with duly winning courtesy by the well-informed ladies in delegation. Of the professor they wished some references regarding the proposed Franco-German security pact, since achieved in the Locarno treaties. The professor spent an honest working day in the university library and emerged

with a schedule of compact elementary reading on the Rhine frontier in military and diplomatic history since the Thirty Years War.

"Oh," said the delegation's spokesman in the second conference. "but I'm afraid you didn't understand what we're after at all. We just want a little something about this security business and world peace, and how much the women have done to help the cause—what is it they're trying to secure anyway?"

To the newspaper editor came the wife of a distinguished advertiser demanding what a middle-aged woman ought to know about the Tacna-Arica arbitration. The editor mastered that tangled subject as best he could between guiding a local political scandal story, and presented his references.

"It's awfully good of you, but I haven't time to go into all that," the lady thanked him. "You see, I just want to get up and give a simple little talk about Pershing's being sent down there to settle this thing, and how charming he is, and how the Argentinians (sic) and the Chileans will do anything he says, because good manners mean so much in South America. . . . Now can't you just tell me some little story about General

Pershing's manners, and I'll never bother you again."

Scholarly New England, and the alert-minded Middle West produced these two ladies, but from a Southern metropolis hailed the eager spinster who confessed to me: "Our Current Events Club is doing *so* much to broaden the women. Of course, we can't discuss controversial topics, so this quarter we're studying eastern European costumes, but we know almost as much about politics as you men do already."

I told her I was sure of it.

VII

For good or evil, this apathy and its absurdly artificial and ineffective counter-irritants are with us. How far do they indicate deterioration in the vital political fiber of the republic?

The prognosis is surely unfavorable, in so far as our languishing interest in public affairs and insistence upon kindergarten simplicity in their interpretation represent a tendency to let slogans and easy platitudes do duty for thought. In Old Man Barton's view, too many of us accept our

college degrees and certificates of vague formal educations as an excuse for going through life without "studying about" its political processes.

In so far as we have permitted our institutions to become tiresome to us through familiarity; in so far as we cynically pronounce ourselves unable to shake off political incompetence and corruption whether interested or not; in so far as we let ourselves become afflicted with what Bryce called the "fatalism of the multitude" and evade all inquiry into public issues with the philosophy of "What's the use, let George do it while you and I talk about movie plots," we are approaching the borderline of unfitness for self-government. In so far as we are trying to rest our lazy minds from the strain of trying to think internationally during the war, or are afraid that a too frank expression of our political views might now and then hurt us socially or in business, our grandparents ought to be ashamed of us, and, when they are still living, usually are.

Yet these unadmirable motives hardly explain altogether our evasion of the subjects that once most fascinated us. Partly the exaggerated nature of that fascination must explain it. Politics were for a century an obsession with us. Raging

and wrangling and whooping up unwarranted enthusiasms, we raised them, important as politics are, ridiculously above their due proportion. The nation, it is to be remembered, made a Homeric hero and colossal statesman out of Gen. William Henry Harrison. It found a commanding intellect in William McKinley. After such romantically imaginative achievements we might do worse for a generation than to silence the windy pomposities, the ill-informed sophistries of our constant political banter and argumentation, with the leer of high-powered cynicism.

Behind much of our apathy lurks a determination to put popinjay debaters and Main Street world statesmen in their places. There is no caustic for such persons like not finding an audience, and caustics are curative. Their worth is to be measured to-day in the apparently increasing number of Americans one meets who, though their reading may be sound and considerable, are slow and deferential about uttering political opinions in casual company because they are not sure of all the facts.

Nor are we necessarily subject to criminal charges for letting other interests temporarily crowd public issues out of the procession. For

the time being we may overdo the other interests. They have that fascinating newness for us to-day which the institutions of the republic once had when they were new. But a people which has a wide variety of sports and wholesome amusements to discuss, which has more books, more æsthetic and artistic interests than ever before, even if these be on the tawdry level of Mr. Harold Bell Wright and the more sensational movies; a people which has a constantly keener interest in the human individuality and its problems even if this is sometimes to be measured by the debasement of psychoanalysis in the lower form of popular magazines—such a people surely is better on the way to learn what its business on earth is than a people for whom political "rag-chewing" and doctrinaire constitutionalism were the sole conversational diversions besides "shop" and domestic gossip. Certainly such a people is not in the throes of intellectual decadence.

Nevertheless, a degree of political apathy we have now with us, perhaps greater than at any period in our history. If less than half our eligible voters were at the polls in 1920 and barely half at the election of 1924, the fact that noth-

ing in their daily human contacts had fired them to any political interest must be held primarily responsible. Of those who did go, how many, during these campaigns, of subtle and complex bearing upon the future of the republic, were ever forced to defend their views against shrewd and vigorous opposition, or encouraged to formulate them in any constructive fullness among friends? Probably but an insignificant fraction of those who in 1896 and 1856 met such tests with gallantry and virile delight, and to the improvement of their mental resources and the character of their citizenship.

The danger is, that our apathy of to-day may become a fixed habit. We can breed up generations of slackers of democracy as easily as the other kind—perhaps more easily. Something of the old instinctive sense of the vitality of our institutions and of the citizen's intimate and individual relation to them must return, or we are likely to do it.

Sell the Papers!

SELL THE PAPERS!

THE owner, the editor, and the editorial writer of a daily newspaper of modest regional consequence somewhere in America spent ten minutes one afternoon last winter discussing a subscriber's order for five hundred copies of a recent issue. There were not five hundred copies left. The subscriber's check was of no great consequence, but this newspaper's clientele was sufficiently small for five hundred extra sales to mean something in circulation statistics. The informal conference was vainly trying to imagine where these copies could be procured.

"What the heck does he want them for?" finally growled the managing editor in the annoyed tone of a man to whom the troubles of others have been brought unnecessarily.

The owner explained that a syndicated column of editorial opinion, carried daily in the principal position on the first page—the most widely distributed and best-known offering of its kind

in America—had published something which the subscriber wished to use as propaganda for his business.

The grave conferees scratched their heads and decided there was no possible way of getting together five hundred copies. The subscriber would have to be notified of this.

"Why not write him," spoke up the editorial writer with deliberate malice, "that we don't print Brisbane to get circulation but only because we believe every word of it?"

Did this take courage? Did lightning crackle on the horizon? Was the insolent young man instructed to stop at the cashier's window on the way out and draw his pay to date?

Not a bit of it! I happened to be the editorial writer. I knew my bosses' minds. What actually happened was that the two heads of the leading newspaper of a considerable-sized city and of a trade territory embracing three states snickered. Then the owner retorted, without rancor, "Gosh, but isn't he the sarcastic devil?"

But next day, when the universally famous column carried its customary sneer that Great Britain and Japan had deliberately hoodwinked

us into signing the naval disarmament treaties of 1922 and were now deliberately cheating in their execution, did I editorially denounce the insinuation? I did not. On first joining that staff I had my experience with editorials rejected because they sought to debate directly with Mr. Brisbane; and no editorial writer yearns to fill his space quota twice. Instead, I remembered my standard instructions that, while Brisbane editorial policies are not necessarily our policies, we never weaken the prestige of a great circulation-getter by taking direct issue with it.

Three or four days later I wrote an editorial, weakened in whatever effectiveness it may have had both by the time lapse and the "soft pedal," suggesting that evidences of British chicanery in the carrying out of the disarmament treaties was "hardly conclusive."

II

It may, or may not, make any difference what the newspaper readers of a middle-sized Western city and its surrounding circulation territory are encouraged to believe about the execution of the disarmament treaties. Time may prove Mr.

Brisbane right. Nations may be safe only when suspecting the worst of other nations and, on the strength of that suspicion, doing their best to maintain dominant military establishments. Our newspaper's more feebly maintained policy of trusting—short of damning evidence of bad faith—to the decent motives and pledge-keeping instincts of others (as gentlemen are still alleged to do in private life) may prove, with Mr. Brisbane's expert assistance, to be the hopelessly impracticable ideal of a civilization too hasty in calling itself Christian. Newspapermen, especially those who must bear the curiously argumentative labors of editorial writing, acquire early in their experience the knowledge that all genuine issues of importance have two or more sides.

The point, as this rather trivial incident reveals it, is that our newspaper is eagerly willing, with a cynical humor which quite appreciates what it is doing, to suppress its side in order to sell papers. The Brisbane column is a circulation getter. Therefore, our policies, our leadership (potential and actual), must be subordinated to Brisbane.

Here, in short, is a typical case of a newspaper

consciously and cynically selling its soul to the technic of commodity salesmanship.

If there is a serious degenerative tendency at work in American journalism, despite still increasing standards of technical efficiency, such incidents represent it. In order to get, in the easiest and quickest way, the mass circulation which is the basis of most advertising profit, American dailies (large and small) are withdrawing from the market all of the useful services they have to sell except one thing—papers!

They could sell leadership—wise or unwise, but at least honest. Instead, more and more they sell flattery of the prejudices and puerile vanities of the herd mind. They could sell information. Instead, more and more generally they sell printed sentimental spectacles on a par with the trashiest novelties of the "movies." They could sell a criticism of life in all its common phases more constant and practically effective than the criticism afforded by all the arts put together. Instead, they sell frothy praise for whatever emotional project happens to have caught the local fancy, or the report that the descendant of the old Knickerbocker family has married a negress.

They could sell a sense of proportion in all the vast realm of physical and emotional complexities that properly concern the citizens of a self-governing Republic. Instead, they sell for months on end the idea that the charges and counter-charges of marital infidelity between a New York banker and his wife are the most important events happening on earth. They could sell a sense of the separation between matters of private concern and matters of public business. Instead, they sell the impression that a sixteen-year-old San Francisco girl's morbid pathological condition is the personal business, not only of every San Francisco reporter on the assignment but of every newspaper reader from Bangor, Maine, to San Diego, California.

They sell papers—more than twelve million daily in our twelve largest cities alone! But one summer night I heard a managing editor of brilliant technical efficiency complain.

"What in hell can I get for a head the newsboys will cry when nothing's coming over the wire but this Dawes plan ratification?"

A local crime story arrived in due course, but for the time being he had been sincerely worried.

III

I like to look back to our files for the early 1890's. We served a community of barely ten thousand then with six or eight absurdly undersized pages, much overcrowded with liquor and patent-medicine advertisements and county printing. Technically we were a joke. Headline writers ran their sentences together in the subordinate lines, ignored the "street sales punch" in the news. They often called it a day when they had written "Washington Dispatches" or "Telegraphic News" above the principal first-page columns.

Taste and finesse were lacking on the writing side, and enlightenment in many of our views. We were interested in Texas politics but the most effective device, apparently, the editor could think of for opposing James Stephen Hogg's campaign for the gubernatorial nomination was to make the inevitable pun on his name. Our opinions on "free silver" were for the whole decade more provincial than sound. Our manners were insufferable. To our opponents, journalistic or political, we granted only the occasional admission of their low cunning in

crime and crookedness. We were crude, often wrong, and no doubt on occasion cruelly unjust. But two things stand out about us; we had a sense of proportion, at least, and we were not afraid.

Under those abominably written telegraph headlines we carried each day a highly compressed but intelligently plotted view of both national and foreign news. We might not have made such a splurge when a retiring governor of Kansas was arrested on bribery charges; but we gave a far better opportunity to know what the governors and the governments of other states were doing from week to week. When Wilhelm II discharged Bismarck we may have underplayed the event's sensational aspect. But our readers were told in a few succinct paragraphs just how this had happened and what it meant.

In our Washington news we were not fed one day on White House propaganda that the President will "press for" such and such a measure, and on Senate committee-room propaganda the next day that such and such a group of Senators will resist pressure. Instead, we were given a coherent account of what each public measure of

consequence was about, and a brief analytical discussion, when the event warranted it, of the struggle over its passage. I can get a far more satisfactory idea from our six and eight-page paper of what the Fifty-first Congress was up to than I can to-day from our twelve to forty-page paper of what the Sixty-eighth Congress is up to. Except for the fact that I was only a year old at that time, I could have written better informed political editorials in 1890.

In feature articles the improvement as we go backward is even more striking. The syndicated mail correspondence of such journalists as Walter Wellman and d'Edmond was published in our paper almost daily. Almost never did such series deal obviously and deliberately with individuals or institutions of no consequence. Although Wellman and his contemporaries often wrote interestingly of the private interests and activities of the great and near great, the information which they gave almost invariably brought readers a sense of more intimate personal acquaintance with genuine public characters.

Bright little stories of White House cats and dogs may have been less numerous, but we had a truly better chance to know what our Presi-

dents were like as persons. One came to know the Congressional leaders by more revealing traits than the fact that Senator A's wife bred canary birds or that Congressman Z's beautiful daughter was learning to write movie scenarios. Not that our paper maintained a mystifying silence on the love and cosmetic caprices of circus and theatrical stars—ancestors of the front-page raiders of Hollywood. But this response to petty curiosity was kept where it belonged—in little two and three-line paragraphs captioned "Jottings of Interest."

Biased as it sometimes was, our local reporting played up the projects and issues in which the community really had its stake—especially the controversial issues. The little spectacular insignificances which are the stock-in-trade of the modern newspaper as "human interest" stories were reduced to half a dozen lines in the "personal mention." Murders—and we had our share of them, since we were only a dozen years away from "wild west" conditions—were treated simply as exceptionally important police news. Even one or two done by or upon the first families, or possessing unusually spectacular features, were not displayed as having any more

importance than the regular meetings of the city council.

Yet this Sunday I turn to our mechanically neat and professionally sophisticated forty-four pages and find that yesterday the most important happening on earth was that a foreign resident shot a fellow alien, probably fatally, for alleged indecent advances to the former's ten-year-old daughter. I find that Jack Dempsey has married Miss Taylor; that Floyd Collins' body in its Kentucky cave is not yet reached; that a French jury has acquitted an actress who killed her lover to spare him his "death agony"; that a woman has presided over the Nebraska house of representatives for one day (though not a word of what she or the house did is published); and that gifts donated to a prophetess of a non-forthcoming end of the world by her followers will not be restored by the courts to the givers.

So much for page one! We are a stock-raising section, or at least were until hard times afflicted the cattle industry. Since then one of our chief ambitions has been to see the industry get financial relief and come back. The Secretary of the Treasury yesterday instructed a member of the Federal Farm Land Bank Board to

make an official investigation of the live-stock raisers' need for help and to make recommendations.

But to find this out I must turn to the third column of the second page. Even inside the paper it is considered of less importance than the claim of a "defense alienist" that a sixteen-year-old girl who shot her mother is insane.

How much better taste and sense of proportion would our newspaper have shown in displaying this in 1890, even though its headline had been simply "The Live Stock Industry." The difference marks with sufficient accuracy the change which has occurred in thirty-five years in the newspaper's conception of its function. In 1890 our paper sold information and leadership. This morning it exploited six spectacular but wholly insignificant sensations on the front page, and hid away the most significant story of the day on the second page. *To sell papers!*

The circulation manager, I happen to know, was delighted and that means something. There is nothing quite so reassuring to editorial executives to-day as to have the circulation manager's approval; and nothing, as I have observed, quite

so dangerous as to have an effective circulation manager's active disapproval.

IV

For these are changes in motive which not only affect newspapers as physical products. They affect also the men who make newspapers. One favorite refuge from the growing puerility and bad taste in the profession is a deep and uncompromising cynicism regarding the newspaper's social usefulness.

"Look here," a small city editor of exceptional competence put it to me recently, "if you and I were hired to feed the animals in the park zoo, we shouldn't kick, should we, because we couldn't give them the same kind of eating that we have on our own tables? We'd give 'em the garbage they liked, and take our pay on Saturday nights. Well, you and I aren't hired to make the world a better place to live in, or to fight and die for noble causes, or even to tell the truth about this particular Main Street. We're hired to feed human animals the kind of mental garbage they want. We don't have to eat it. I don't read our paper for instruction

or even for fun. I just read it for errors and to see if we're handing out regularly what the boobs like for breakfast."

Other newspapermen—and they grow more and more numerous among the editorial executives—find this explosively critical cynicism personally uncomfortable. For them the technical thrills of devising headlines and "make-up" plans which will most quickly seduce the greatest number of vacant minds into buying papers become the supreme absorption and the supreme professional reward. They do their work in the spirit of the Chicago "make-up man" and pioneer in the journalism of mob salesmanship, who would dash with a copy of each new edition into a neighboring saloon which employed a bartender of exceptionally low literacy. The editor would induce the bartender to read each story on the front page and then inquire if he understood it and if it interested him. Every story of which the bartender disapproved either went out of the paper in the next edition or on the inside pages where "the highbrows could hunt for it." This sort of facility to-day gives, in the average newspaper office, the first title to advancement in pay and responsibility.

Yet I believe that the majority of thoughtful newspapermen do the dreary work of catering to the lowest and most banal taste in their communities in the spirit of the small city editor just quoted. Either they take a perversely ironical pleasure in emphasizing the lurid inconsequence of their labors, or they loathe them with the peculiar hatred of men at once disillusioned in their jobs and bound to them by peculiar temperament and training useless to other industries. After nearly fifteen years of newspaper experience in all parts of the country and a fair acquaintance with the past of American journalism, I am tempted to the extreme statement that never were American newspapermen as a class so lacking in purpose or so contemptuous of their profession, morally and intellectually, as they are to-day when the technical efficiency of the press is at its height.

And this attitude tends to increase the very evils which are responsible for it. A profession that has no pride except in its technical adroitness, no sense of dignity except as regards its claim to be as irresponsible as possible, has no ethics, no courage, and no standards of taste.

I venture to charge that the lack of these

things is in greater or less degree apparent in every edition of every newspaper in America. I do not say this because newspapers print crime news. Crime is properly reported as the register of our social—perhaps of our physiological—imperfection. To a less extent the same is even true of certain types of personal scandal which may or may not reach the stage of court action. Where the press shows its lack of ethics and good taste is not in reporting but in *exploiting* crime and private scandal. Where it shows its lack of courage is when newspapers, whose owners and editors fully realize the evil, exploit crime and scandal with little, if any less, adroitness and salaciousness than newspapers which make a fetish of their efficiency in such performance.

A divorce case, for instance, develops in New York's so-called "high financial and social circles." It has only the faintest general social significance. But, from the first, such of this quality as it may have is utterly ignored or treated with addled shallowness. The only aspect seriously played up is its juiciness as private "society scandal."

The lower grade of newspaper readers enjoy

salacious gossip about those whom, socially speaking, they envy. Therefore, for months and even for years one particularly risqué and protracted divorce case has *carte blanche* to the first page of virtually every daily newspaper on the continent until the familiar names of the principals, corespondents, and accessories become household words. The "conservative" newspapers vie with the sensational ones in obtaining inside information, frequently erroneous, by all the means known to evidence-getting detectives and expert procurers of scandal, however unavailable they may be to gentlemen.

The result, after four years, is not a single rational new light on the divorce problem but simply a further sharpening of the public's appetite for salacious social scandal; a sharpening of reportorial ingenuity in procuring it; a stronger editorial predilection for the details of such news when available; a stronger subconscious impression on the public mind that the Stillman case ranks with the great public events and issues of the 1920's. And—more papers sold!

There is a similar if less protracted orgy when a sixteen-year-old California girl kills her mother.

There can be no objection to the simple, bald reporting of so unusual a crime and its peculiar circumstances. But, for as long as the public appetite can be coaxed with such tidbits, the press of the whole country (with a few honorable exceptions) offers every shred of testimony that can be legally printed as to morbid pathological conditions in the case.

The daily crop of headlines, the news dispatches, and above all the weekly crop of lurid "feature articles" carry, furthermore, the insinuation that such conditions are typical of the depravity of large groups of wild and jazz-mad young people. The pruriency of the lowest classes of newspaper readers is stimulated by so much feeding. The same lovely trait is fostered and encouraged by so much in those who have hitherto been relatively free from it. Consequently it is a fair gamble that the next story which commends itself to editorial judgment by its salacious background will receive an even more "daring" and more exquisitely detailed exploitation. The next movie scandal will be "juicier" than the Fatty Arbuckle case if ingenuity can make it so.

What kind of ingenuity?

Imagination can supply most of the details. But one can put it down among the self-evident facts that printable and unprintable information regarding a sixteen-year-old girl matricide's sexual experiences was not obtained by methods of which editorial gentlemen commonly approve either in their private or professional effusions.

For example, a Philadelphia reporter some years ago "scooped the country" by bribing his way into the Pullman compartment of the widow of the victim of a famous lynching—it was an "all-white" lynching—in the middle of the night while she was bringing home her husband's body for burial, and wrote a brilliant emotional story of her hysterical outcry when she discovered the nature of the intrusion. Such conduct may be defensible on the assumption that the press exists solely to sell papers, but hardly on any other grounds. Yet the misrepresentations, the browbeatings, faith-breakings and practical black-mailing operations to obtain stories which have no other purpose than to exploit somebody's misery, disgrace, or depravity for circulation purposes are familiar to every newspaperman of more than the most rudimentary experience. And although some of the prac-

tices tend to become conventionalized, the evil grows rather than shrinks. It is the easiest way to sell papers.

V

Fundamental to the growth of all this shoddiness and cheap chicanery is a lack of courage. I doubt if there is a newspaper in the country of conservative origins—barring the *Christian Science Monitor*, whose peculiar clientele affords a peculiar protection—which has not in the past twenty-five years abandoned a considerable share of its convictions and traditions of good taste and ethical performance in order to compete with the "yellows" for circulation. If this had represented an honest change of convictions regarding news policies one could respect it even while deploring it. But too often the defense for such transitions is expressed in the whimper, "Our competitors play up that sort of stuff, and where should we be if we didn't?"

In news policies this lack of courage can be detected, as a rule, only by the more subtle analytical processes. On the editorial pages it be-

comes a public scandal to any casual reader of fair intelligence. Pick up nine-tenths of the editorial pages of the leading provincial newspapers in America to-day, and the first thing in sight is the editorial writer's conscious effort to bootlick public sentiment instead of to inform and lead it. Leadership is evidently the last thing in the editorial mind. The complacencies, the prejudices, the "hush" inhibitions of the herd mind in its warmest raptures of self-esteem furnish the leadership. The newspaper merely follows.

Take the prohibition issue. Rightly or wrongly, I doubt if there is an industrial class in the community so opposed to the Volstead act's interference with personal liberty as newspapermen. By the peculiar individualism which leads men to attempt to become writing persons, as well as by the convivial customs immemorial in the profession, they are predestined to the opposition. Newspaper proprietors frequently absorb some of the virus from the editorial side, and without having taken a census I question if any other group of capitalists includes a larger proportion of private plaintiffs against Mr. Volstead.

But when it comes to official editorial policies, in spite of the lamentations of the Anti-Saloon League, it is pretty well demonstrable that the press favors prohibition by at least as much of a majority as the country. Here and there, through random contacts, I know of a considerable number of newspapers which indorse prohibition with no more sincerity than the average politician or book-agent brings to the task of indorsing the looks of the baby. If such an experience is a criterion there must be scores of others in the same case. For every newspaper bought up in the bad old days by subsidized advertising from the "liquor interests" I estimate that there is at least one and a half to-day spinelessly acquiescing in prohibition, against the personal convictions of owner and editors, because of the "circulation interest." At any rate, half the pro-prohibition editors one meets in the West these days explain their attitude on no other grounds than that it is "good circulation policy."

Too often "good circulation policy" determines all policies. The overwhelming majority of American cities to-day are affected deeply by the absurd "don't knock, boost" complex—so

exquisitely and unreservedly expressed by the motto of the Denver Chamber of Commerce: "I will hear no evil of; speak no evil about Denver." In most such communities the proper critical functions of the local editorial writer are practically obliterated. A criticism, no matter how crying the evil—for instance, of the Denver police order that all white girls leave the employment of Greek restaurants and confectionery shops within twenty-four hours—is a "knock."

A "knock" is likely to be resented by someone who will show his or her resentment by stopping the paper. Subscription losses are circulation losses and mean that a year from now the advertising department may not be able to jerk its rates upward as far as had been anticipated. Therefore, praise everything in the local field. Flatter especially the pooled self-esteem, the provincial smugness and complacency represented in the "don't knock" slogan. Be sweet. Be as inoffensive as possible even in discussing national and international issues.

Above all, don't offend any organizations, however vicious, that have local strength. In Indiana, Georgia, and Texas in particular, the Ku Klux Klan has ridden into power largely on

these and similar pious injunctions from editors and proprietors who, whatever their sins, have not approved of the Klan privately. In Texas, as I happen to know, one can locate almost precisely the cities where the Klan still holds political control by counting the newspapers which have preferred undiminished circulation to opposing it.

Yet degeneration of policy often comes eventually even to those newspapers which struggle against it. I could point to one newspaper in a large Southern city which, after preserving its community almost single-handed from the Ku Klux Klan menace and after conducting a sincere and gallant fight against illiberalism in theological, social, and industrial relations—all at once, has unconditionally surrendered. Its last effort was made simultaneously against county grafting and deterioration of teaching standards in the public schools. The politicians, lay and educational, circulated propaganda that the convincing testimony produced in the news and editorial columns was a "knock" on the town and therefore was hurting it. By making it—especially among the city's several hundred school teachers—a point of "home town loyalty"

to cancel subscriptions, a temporary circulation loss of nearly two per cent was caused. The newspaper "quit cold." Its instructions to editorial writers now are to "knock" nothing locally but arson, murder, and burglary and to write on national affairs with such a balance as to please, so far as possible, all partisans.

One wonders, when one reads laments for the passing of vigorous personal journalism in America, if instructions like this did not do the lion's share of the killing. Where would Greeley, Bowles, Godkin, Watterson, and Halstead have been under perpetual instructions to "be sweet"?

VI

One could not, however, have spent fifteen years in the newspaper business without recognizing the strength of the newspaper's alibi and the ease with which the sins of the profession can be over-emphasized. Bunking the public by the dishonorable exploitation of false values is an art neither invented by nor confined to the press.

The difference is that the newspaper does its

bunking in the open daylight and in the most public place in the community—on its own front page each morning or evening where every intelligent citizen is forced to be aware of it. When the real-estate firm or manufacturer bunks a customer it is an infinitely more private and shady transaction. The newspaper's reputation for selling a shoddy product, deserved as it may be, is nevertheless thrown into unfairly high relief in comparison with the adulterating arts of those crafts of which the general public hears and sees little but the sanctimonious "ethical" resolutions indorsed at well press-agented national conventions.

Furthermore, the circulation urge is an instinct as vital to the newspaper's existence as appetite is to the human body. Except for a very few newspapers with a peculiar clientele and institutional character like the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Boston Transcript*, the press—under contemporary commercial conditions—simply cannot live and give the public any of its indispensable services unless it commands the patronage of a large bulk of the literate population in its community. Newspapers cannot be sold within range of the average man's

pocketbook without deriving a preponderant revenue from advertising. Advertising cannot be obtained unless the circulation guarantees the advertiser an access to the mass of the buying public.

Nor can practical business men—who, under the present requirements of the press for elaborate mechanical equipment, must invest hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars in order to own a newspaper—be expected blithely to risk such investments on ventures in editorial Galahadism. This might have been well enough in the good old days of local party organs which, though far from being Galahads, could afford to be courageous, rough-and-tumble fighters for definite convictions on an investment of a few thousand dollars. But it obviously has its limitations to-day, when it is as certain as sunrise that if one newspaper ignores a salacious scandal story from the motion-picture underworld, its competitor will capitalize it all the more in order to cut into the rival circulation.

Yet in finding an explanation for the evil we hardly find an excuse for wallowing in it, as seems to be more and more the policy of the press to-day. The essential need of modern

journalism is to find an effective check upon it —a visible glimmer of the way out.

Newspapers—and one can count scores of them in recent obituary records—which simply wrap the mantle of their virtuous conservatism about them and lie down to die, certainly do not help to make these necessary discoveries. The need seems to be for newspapers which will begin by making courage, intelligent criticism, good taste, and informative service the criterion of every news and editorial policy; and then, instead of exploiting journalistic shoddiness, will agressively exploit their valid journalistic usefulness. The present vicious circle can be smashed only when a few representative newspapers begin putting normally aggressive circulation campaigns into operation, based on the proposal that for every column which competitors give to the current lewd divorce case they will give a column on subjects worth an intelligent citizen's attention.

I recognize that this may be tooting the bugles to self-destroying heroism. Given the long and accustomed debasement of the community and its post-graduate education to appreciate only the worst features of contemporary journalism,

a newspaper following such advice may go grandly into bankruptcy. But at any rate the profession, which has consisted chiefly of imitators since Mr. Hearst became its inspired circulation-getter, needs a few courageous leaders who will put these possibilities to a test.

We might find that we could do more with them than reason permits us to believe. On the other hand, if the American mass intellect has sunk to such a level that it will interest itself in nothing but exploited sensations and salaciousness and will permit no expression of opinion that does not flatter the prejudices and complacencies of the temperamentally thoughtless and barely literate, it is time we learned this definitely. Even newspapermen have a moral right to know whether in the future their profession is to afford honorable employment for gentlemen of intellect and independent judgment.

Unless by some newspaper's courage and initiative in the next few years the slogan of American journalism can be changed from "Sell the papers" to "We sell self-respecting papers," the answer is likely to be disappointing.

The Statesman as Artist

THE STATESMAN AS ARTIST

THE late James M. Cox, of Ohio, once made a speech on Art. It was at the Minnesota State Fair, in a structure consecrated to the masterpieces of Twin City and Mankato Burne-Joneses. We press camp-followers heard it because it was only the third day out on the Hon. Mr. Cox's transcontinental jaunt as a presidential candidate, and we had yet to learn whether he was a treacherous barbarian who broke big news at sideshows, or a gentleman who let the boys play their poker out. Later we recognized him as a gentleman, so if he ever made another speech on Art we did not hear it or about it.

It could have been a worse speech. Nothing in it matched the hilarity of the Hon. Mr. Harding's historic reference to Shakespeare's play of "Charles the Twelfth." The general idea was that Art was a great thing and Beauty a great thing and that it was a third great thing how America appreciated both. The Hon. Mr.

Cox's precise phraseology has escaped me. But I am willing to stand or fall with the charge that he filched all his melody and cadence from oratorical motifs of the Civil War statue-dedicating epoch. In general, indeed, his speech suggested an adventurous but futile effort to recapture the oratorial splendors of that radiant fellow Ohioan and Cox klansman—him of the gilt statue, nicknamed Sunset.

True, it was over too quickly to have satisfied Sunset, who believed that an honest word-painter's day was sixteen hours. But Minnesota's art lovers and faithful Democrats were almost as touched by it as if it had gone the regulation Chautauqua length. Squeezing out through the clapping hands and shining eyes, I was alarmed to find myself wedged against a stout and far too middle-aged dowager in whom rectangular headgear and the mouth lines of chronic responsibility and tired feet marked the county seat club executive.

"My," she wheezed reverently to me, a total stranger, "don't he use cultured language!"

It was no place for debate, so I agreed. Still, I was unprepared to find the press table at luncheon solemnly admitting with the New York

World gentleman that "that Art speech was a little gem." If there is such a thing as pousse-café stone, maybe it was. The sole reason for mentioning it here is that its grateful reception symbolizes the influences that have inhibited dignified literary expression in American politics since the seventies. Wherever a gentleman arises who is capable of tuning obscene bombast and banality to a self-conscious lilt, there likewise arises, in these sad and uncritical days, an audience to call his language "cultured." Wherever a speech is called "cultured" or a debate is called "great," there sits down an orator convinced forever that the compliment is just and does credit to the critical facility of the audience. And wherever the two phenomena radiate their joint effulgence, there stands some representative of the press to hymn the marvel. We are lucky, in truth, if the Hon. Mr. Cox's speech on Art is not preserved in the national archives for all time—as a classic!

II

It was, of course, not vastly different before the seventies. If political oratory ever had a true Golden Age in the Republic, it was con-

cealed in executive sessions. Most poetry is bad; most fiction is bad; because, in the long run, it sells better that way. If we threw into the balance all of the poetry and fiction that gets written but does not get published, the proportion of blatancy to excellence would be outlandish. So with political rhetoric. In the long run, the slumgullion of the Wheelers and Ashursts, the Heflins and Yanceys pulls the most votes. The gentlemen who have sat most comfortably and securely in the White House have not sought to defile the sonorous obscurities of the official Presidentese with innovations suggesting decent taste. Furthermore, from the point of view of the literary connoisseur, political discussion labors under the disadvantage that practically all of it gets printed. Even the stump utterances of personages of the seventh rate are preserved in the files of faithful party newspapers, and since the coming of the linotype all the proceedings of Congress and many of the proceedings of the State legislatures have been preserved verbatim.

The overwhelming bulk of this oratory has, as literature, only a clownish shapelessness. The people whose fathers made that low ranter, Col.

Richard M. Johnson, heir apparent to President Van Buren and kept the pompously snorting Benton in the Senate for a full generation reward such garbage with their ecstasy and their votes. But not so, perhaps, always and invaribly. Out of the quadrillions of words which American politics blew loose from their moorings before 1865, a few thousand—perhaps a few ten thousands—arranged themselves in the form of self-respecting literature. They had charm, passion, seductive thought, beauty of choice and order, splendor of cadence, and even interest. There may never have been a time in the history of the nation when a presidential candidate could have risked an address on art which showed an understanding and a grace to match the subject. The Hon. Mr. Cox's minority in Minnesota unquestionably would have been lessened had he so spoken. White House excursions into literary criticisms were a source of weakness and distrust to the Roosevelt administration, and it took a well press-agented dinner to Texas Rangers to make up the losses. Jefferson, a shrewd and careful man, never mentioned his musical and architectural interests from the stump. Yet within the narrow field of strictly political dis-

cussion the American public has sometimes not only tolerated literary merit, but has even faintly encouraged it.

One hundred and thirty-six years ago it leaped upon that marvelous argumentative work, the *Federalist,* with an avidity now reserved for the writings of Messrs. Zane Grey and Harold Bell Wright. The true greatness of Webster as a satirist and special pleader was appreciated at least half as much as his capacity for gorgeous bombast. Calhoun's exquisite lucidity was a source of sophisticated delight to many useful supporters, and it could hardly have had less charm for his opponents, for they chivalrously compared it to the "wheedlings of Satan." Intellectual sword-play in the debates with Douglas —aided by Seward's old feuds—made Lincoln President. The Second Inaugural, without in any realistic sense increasing the charity or decreasing the malice in the national temper, brought new political strength to Lincoln by the sheer seduction of its lyrical sensuality.

A man of sound literary tastes, born in America between 1740 and 1840 and living to mental maturity, was practically certain of an experience of which his progeny have been for

60 years fatally deprived. He would catch on rare occasions, from once to perhaps a dozen times in his generation, a note in political discussion of true and even exquisite literary charm, and he would observe that, far from being disadvantaged in the eyes of a bored yokelry by so daring a venture, the politician who rose to it might even be strengthened by it. How come? —as book reviewers say in Texas. How did it happen that in a nation composed from the dawn of its independent life of avowed 100 per-centers, practical politicians were once able, if even only rarely, to employ literary grace as an instrument of success in practical politics? Factors must have been present then in American political psychology that are now departed. What were they? I think there were three:

(1) The emotional stress in our politics which, for various reasons, made an occasional rise to poetic utterance possible and even inevitable from 1765 to 1865.

(2) A perceptible tendency to aristocratic aloofness in political discussion from the close of the Articles of Confederation period down to the Civil War. This phenomenon was bound up with limited suffrage, Southern feudalism,

the hangover of the medieval predilection for gentlemen, and similar vices. It made it possible for a very few gifted statesmen of aristocratic traditions to stay in office most of their lives. It permitted them occasionally to address their best ideas to their intellectual equals.

(3) The flexibility of American political concepts from the first stirrings of Revolution in the Eighteenth Century to the smelting of constitutional theory into a dead and orthodox ritualism in the furnace of the Civil War. For a century not only the "best minds" but also the Western peasants, the New England burghers, and the plantation three-bottle men were kept in a state of stimulation and irritation by the clash of political opinions within shooting range of their vital interests.

III

In the face of our present calm acceptance of wholesale invasions of the Bill of Rights, the colonial outburst over the Stamp Act of 1765 has the look of an archaic fit of paranoia. But paranoia is a genuine emotional experience, and hence favorable to lyrical production. In the

Virginia House of Burgesses, the Stamp Act frenzy inspired a young backwoods county politician to a literary act quite as revolutionary as his hint that God would approve the assassination of George the Third. Patrick Henry revolted against the Eighteenth Century sentence. The same passions left those equally irritated patriots, Samuel and John Adams, stuttering their way through the balanced ornateness and feeble pomposities of Dr. Johnson—a spectacle as pitiable as that of innocent Prof. Longfellow responding to faint stirrings of the Whitman complex with the twittery jingles of "Hiawatha." But in Patrick Henry they set free short, staccato, barking sentences, vicious, bayonet-thrust cadences, which were as great a violation of the day's literary codes as a Greek quotation from the stump would be to-day in Idaho. In spite of some metaphorical confusion and hyperbole, such lyric fierceness and energy had hardly been touched off in English free verse since King James' scholars translated the Song of Deborah. Even in the more polished and conventional "give me liberty or give me death" oration, ten years later, Henry's lyric vigor lent itself freely to arrangement by cadences:

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided;
I know of no way of judging the future but by the past.
And judging by the past I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry. . . .
To justify those hopes with which gentlemen have solaced themselves and the House?
Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received?
Trust it not, Sir; it will prove a snare to your feet.
Suffer yourselves not to be betrayed with a kiss.
Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with these war-like preparations which cover our waters and darken our land.
Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation?
Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled that force must be called in to win back our love?
Let us not deceive ourselves, Sir.
These are the implements of war and subjugation;
The last arguments to which kings resort.

Henry no doubt was, as is frequently charged, a ranter. But all ranters—only to mention Kit Marlowe and Shelley—do not keep literary company with the Heflins and the Caraways. Henry left behind him the only lyrical tradition in American political literature that has borne fruit. When the departing Southerners in the Senate delivered, in 1861, their philippics of icy scorn for the North's self-righteous meddling in the

race problem, when Lincoln touched the heights of political *vers libre* in the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, they all went back to Henry. Not always to his peculiarly taut and high-pitched rhythms, perhaps, but certainly to the Henry tradition of energy, directness, simplicity and rapid cadence.

The Webster lyrical interlude, which formed the literary crest of the emotional storms blowing up from the nullification controversy and the earlier phases of the slavery debate, had no such intrinsic excellence and left no such wholesome tradition behind it. Webster never quite forsook the spread-eagle style which went with the beefsteak-for-breakfast phase of the national æsthetic growth. Like his still more florid rivals, Hayne and Clay, he simply made the best of the prevailing fashion. He reached his climax in the purple—very purple—passages of the Reply to Hayne:

> When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood. . . .

And so on. Webster's top form was first-class stage thunder. The echo of this thunder was Sunset Cox.

IV

The Reply to Hayne has its literary justification, not in its purple passages but in its satire. No doubt it is a hopeless undertaking to seek to salvage Webster's reputation as a wit from the handicaps of the beetling brow, the choking stock and the stiff hand in the breast with which his countrymen disfigure their image of him. Yet three quarters of the Reply are not devoted to the constitutional argument against nullification at all; they are devoted to destroying Hayne and his positions—his rampant fire-eating, his Shakespearian allusions, his allegations of New England's disloyalty, his Gascon threats to carry the war into the enemy's country—always with malicious and aristocratic wit:

> The militia of the State [South Carolina] will be called out to sustain the nullifying act. They will march, Sir, under a very gallant leader; for I believe the honorable member [Hayne] himself commands them. Arrived at the custom house, he will tell the

collector that he must collect no more duties under any of the tariff laws. . . . Here would ensue a pause; for they say that a certain stillness precedes the tempest. The trumpeter would hold his breath awhile, and before all this military array should fall on the custom-house, collector, clerks and all, it is very probable some of those composing it would request of their gallant commander-in-chief to be informed a little upon the point of law, for they have, doubtless, a just respect for his opinions as a lawyer, as well for his bravery as a soldier. They know that he has read Blackstone and the Constitution as well as Turenne and Vauban. . . .

What should be the nature of their offense, they would wish to learn, if they, by military force and array, resisted the execution in Carolina of a law of the United States, and it turned out after all that the law *was constitutional?* He would answer, of course, Treason. . . . How, then, they would ask, do you propose to defend us? We are not afraid of bullets, but treason has a way of taking people off that we do not relish. . . . "Look at my floating banner," he would reply; "see there the nullifying law. . . . South Carolina is a sovereign State. . . . These tariff laws," he would repeat, "are unconstitutional, palpably, deliberately, dangerously. "That may all be so, but if the tribunal should not happen to be of that opinion, shall we swing for it? We are ready to die for our country, but it is rather an awkward business, this dying without touching the ground!" After all that is a sort of hemp tax worse than any part of the tariff!

The Senate of 1830 did not, it appears, receive this with the guffaws and snickers which the present group of Kiwanians accorded last Winter to Senator Caraway's pretended misunderstanding of a reference to an article on "The Scientific Political Training of Calvin Coolidge"—he made it read "The Scientific Political *Trading* of Calvin Coolidge"—the only passage of wit in the Sixty-eighth Congress that has thus far been found worthy of nation-wide publicity. In their moments of good behavior, as when Webster was speaking, the Senators of 1830 were gentlemen. At least on their grand occasions, they preferred aristocratic wit to cornfield punning.

If showing off was the order of the day, they were more likely to do it in Latin than in the Arkansas dialect of Caraway. The vogue of the Latin quotation in that era was perhaps not evidence that all the ante-bellum statesmen eased the boredom of congressional boarding-houses with Juvenal and Seneca. Punching up a speech with a line from Cicero was deliberate and usually shameless ostentation. But that ostentation itself was at least aristocratic, and not cold and calculated lowbrow rusticity. So late as

1861 Senator Wigfall, of Texas, flung half a dozen Latin scraps into his discourse on secession, one of them nine words long! Suppose it got noised around Waxahachie to-morrow that a Texas Senator had publicly spoken nine words in the Papal language? The Fundamentalists would make ready the tar soup and the feather dressing at once, and prepare to deal with him as an unmasked secret agent of the Apocalyptic Harlot.

Even among those primordial farm bloccers, the honest eye-gougers and tobacco-chawers from the pioneer States, concessions were sometimes made to the aristocratic tradition. Andrew Jackson was the patron saint of roughnecks, yet on state occasions he cultivated Chesterfieldian manners, and the best literary styles available in contemporary politics—even when it involved having some one else write his messages and speeches. And the rabble loved it. When they failed to find their vernacular in the famous nullification proclamation of 1833, they did not denounce Andrew as a traitor; they took it joyfully as a sign that the old hero was as good a man as any Whig highbrow going. Thus, whether they were merely demagogues or secret

Federalists, the politicians of the ante-bellum period did not, at their best moments, fear to debate their involved and highly metaphysical issues on the plane of gentlemanly sophistication and with a gentleman's range of interests. If George F. Babbitt's great-grandfather wished to learn what it was all about, it was up to him to puzzle it out for himself. He could rise to "the high plane of debate" by his own arduous efforts —or he could stay put and enjoy the antics of the town idiot and the new Campbellite clericus. He could take it or leave it. . . . By that token, politicians spoke more often like rational beings than like medicine men. Also, there are curious historical symptoms suggesting that Babbitt's ancestor knew far better what it was all about than his great-grandson suspects to-day.

V

From the Stamp Act to Appomattox brains were necessary in American public life. The politics of that entire century ran in a wild and unharnessed current. To the revolting colonists, and to Southerners and Northerners alike during

the constitutional struggle, the advantages of controlling its final direction and power rights were worth heroic expedients. Brains were enlisted in politics because the stakes were so great that every available resource had to be mobilized. Without brains great causes went down—as States' Rights went down when Douglas could not answer Lincoln's question about slavery in the territories in the debate at Freeport, Ill. For 60 years of the constitutional struggle, while mind matched mind, Marshall against Jefferson, Calhoun against Webster, the balance of power was kept even. Brains paid, and the politicians who had them rarely needed to worry about prestige or dignity, and even more rarely about reelection.

All this gave to the political discussion of the time, at least in its loftier aspects, a high lucidity, a brilliant logic, a clear and at times beautiful subtlety. In the great speeches and state papers of the era of constitutional struggle arguments direct and indirect, honest and specious, flow into one another and intertwine in a series of graceful lines and nobly polished surfaces. Calhoun's summing up of the case for nullification has this perfection—almost to daintiness:

There is not one opposing interest throughout the whole [structure of the government] that is not counterpoised. Have the rulers a separate interest from the people? To check its abuse, the relation of representative and constituent is created between them through periodical elections, by which the fidelity of the representative to the constituent is secured. Have the States, as members of the Union, distinct political interests in reference to their magnitude? Their relative weight is carefully settled, and each has its appropriate agent, with a veto on each other, to protect its political consequence. May there be a conflict between the Constitution and the laws, whereby the right of citizens may be affected? A remedy may be found in the power of the courts to declare the law unconstitutional in such cases as may be brought before them. Are there, among the several States, separate and peculiar geographical interests? To meet this a particular organization is provided in the division of the sovereign powers between the State and general governments. Is there danger, growing out of this division, that the State legislatures may encroach on the powers of the general government? The authority of the Supreme Court is adequate to check such encroachments. May the general government, on the other hand, encroach on the rights reserved to the States respectively? To the States respectively—each in its sovereign capacity—is reserved the power, by its veto or right of interposition, to arrest the encroachment. And, finally, may this power be abused by a State, so as to interfere improperly with the powers delegated to the general

government? There is provided a power, even over the Constitution itself, vested in three-fourths of the States, which Congress has the authority to invoke, and it may terminate all controversies in reference to the subject by granting or withholding the right in contest.

Nearly all of the *Federalist* papers have this quite irresistible logical clarity. Webster's constitutional arguments have it. Even Clay, the shallowest of the great ante-bellum leaders, honeys his compromises and his crude opportunism with the same alluring enticement. And in the structure of great speeches as a whole, such as Webster's address of February 16, 1833, called "The Constitution Not a Compact Between Sovereign States," the exquisite finish of the special pleas is exalted into a massive harmony and serenity, architectural in scope and in effect. Through all the great debates of the first century runs a glamorous sense of artists at work with living materials.

But not realistic artists. No greater mistake can be made than to assume an organic relation between political literature and reality. Politics is concerned with justifying what it wants by what ought to be. Only as the last resort of

passion or of dulness does practical political oratory take its stand on the perilous ground of things-as-they-are. Intolerable exasperation may make, momentarily, a realist out of a Robert Toombs, shouting in the Senate:—"The Union, Sir, is dissolved. . . . You may call it secession, or you may call it revolution; but there is a big fact standing before you, ready to oppose you: That fact is, freemen with arms in their hands." But 160 years of political controversy in these States supply sufficient evidence that political discussion, as a whole, forms the most successful flight from reality achieved this side of faith cures and dementia præcox. At its best, one may look to it for lyrical exaltation, or for the seductive sequence of ideas which marks the construction of unforgettable romances. At its worst, one finds in it the hallucinatory drivel of Bob Ingersoll's "Plumed Knight" speech. Political literature is thus either poetry or romance—or a bastard parody of both.

VI

The bastard parody has reigned unmitigated since 1865. Lincoln's poignant—and strictly

unrealistic—lyrics of political aspiration formed a sort of lullaby which crooned into a doting slumber a nation that had just succumbed to hardening of the political arteries. Artillery and the commissariat—not the romantic constitutional imagination of Webster or Calhoun—settled the constitutional issue in the sixties. The Constitution emerged from the war unchallengeable, uncriticizable—a dead ritual. Politics sank into an obscene struggle for offices. Its stakes no longer called forth romantic argument. Brains were not required. With characteristic cunning, Main Street realized its sudden advantage and dismissed brains from the public service as rapidly as they came up for reëlection. The Blaines and the Voorheeses inherited the places of the Websters and the Calhouns. The deliverance of politics from urbanity had made a fair start before the Civil War with the election of evangelistic right-thinkers, after the Ben Wade pattern, in the anti-slavery Northwest. The process was now completed. The feudal impulse survived as a racial habit among the peasantry for a full generation after the adoption of manhood suffrage, but by 1900 it had vanished even from the South. The Tillmans

and Vardamans out-fire-alarmed the Forakers. John Sharp Williams, the last representative of the aristocratic tradition in the Senate, retired of his own volition because he found the surroundings intolerable.

In such an atmosphere, lyrical passion quickly became an absurd impossibility. Lyrical effort, of course, there was in reckless abundance. But whether it appeared in the splendiferous splurges of Sunset Cox, the hollow cadences of the Blaine memorial oration on Garfield, or the flutings of the Wilson idealism, the note was always hectic and decadent. For fifty years the lyrical instinct satisfied itself with whooping up old emotions, dead since Appomattox. The World War brought no cure. It produced hysteria, but no true rhetoric; balderdash, but no liberty. In sixty years not a politician has broken out of the ritual gibberish into authentic eloquence. Even Roosevelt, whose literary gifts, apart from practical politics, were certainly not contemptible, fed "my people" mainly on harmless platitudes whose soporific Presidentese was but occasionally modified by a quotable slogan. Only one genius arose whose cynical, malice-tipped wit satirized adequately the puerility of the era. But

Thomas Brackett Reed left politics in disgust—ostensibly because of a difference with his party over Spanish War issues, but fundamentally because the game was fatally uncongenial to a gentleman who was instinctively an artist.

VII

Will our political speech and writing ever recapture what once gave worth to its exalted moments—fresh melodiousness, aristocratic and charming thought, vital intensity of interest? The liver of the national political goose is inauspicious. In the past decade a foreign war of revolutionary character has been fought. Four amendments have been added to the Constitution, vitally altering the basic theory of our government. But not a single vanished excellence has been brought back to life. Each enterprise was rushed through on the wings of sentimental piffle—the last degeneracy of the lyrical mood—and of organized propaganda—the last degeneracy of logical seduction.

Santa Barbara Has a Fiesta

SANTA BARBARA HAS A FIESTA

UNDER God, in February, 1919, the Hon. Ole Hanson, Mayor of Seattle, saved the Republic from Bolshevism and the Federated Clubwomen of forty-eight States and the District of Columbia from nationalization. Thereafter, until the Coolidge troubadours composed the chanson of the Boston police strike in September of the same year, this great man was the folk-hero of terrified and commerce-chambered men from ocean to ocean.

A shrewd fellow, he did not fritter away his fame on doubtful vice-presidential booms, but cashed in on it in all available market-places. Between February and September nearly every sufficiently prosperous Y. M. C. A., Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis or Rotary club and lodge convention in the west country heard "the hero of the Seattle revolution" at so much a speech. When fame flattened the Hon. Mr. Hanson had a stake.

This stake, as became a retired folk-hero, he

invested in Southern California real estate. And so it happened that when I stepped off the train at Santa Barbara one evening in the summer of 1924, unnecessarily alarmed by grapevine rumors that the town was just then leading all America in the race for cultural improvement, I was pleasantly reassured by a sign opposite the station park announcing that Ole Hanson, realtor, sold lots. Within three minutes a proud taxi-driver had added the information that at the free public banquets which accompany the more sensational auctions Ole often makes a speech himself.

Then, suddenly, I understood that in spite of its cultural complex, Santa Barbara was safe for American folk-ways. The fact that its populace cherished Ole Hanson and the communal uplift together proved at once that the regional motto of Southern California, heard whenever two Keokukians meet in a cafeteria, was true for the New Day as well as for the old: "The world is a small place, after all."

II

A hundred years ago Santa Barbara was a frayed village of Mexican ranchers and fisher-

men, presided over, on a hill of properly impressive height, by a dignified mission church of the Franciscan brotherhood. The mission was in the business of teaching the neighboring Indians that the chief among the blessings of Christianity was the privilege of doing farm work for the fathers for sixteen hours a day. The village was mainly in the business of piling up sins for the fathers' professional attention. This commerce was reputed to reach its most vigorous stages just after the mildly bibulous and erotic Fiesta de la Primavera, held annually in April or May.

But by fifty years ago American culture had begun definitely to predominate in Santa Barbara. The town was still small, but it now had a minority whose members faithfully obeyed the Methodist Book of Discipline as well as a majority which drank its liquor straight over irritable poker tables and encouraged young G. A. R. veterans to make political speeches. The Fiesta de la Primavera was rapidly degenerating into a riot of old-fashioned county fair proportions, with this difference: fewer sinners sought absolution afterward.

Within the next twenty years a still more sig-

nificant change occurred. Rich and respectable persons from east of the Rockies began to discover the town as a Summer and Winter retreat and a solution of the permanent retirement problem. Consequently, in the nineties of the last century the standard American château of the period, with thick plate-glass windows and cast-iron hunting-dogs towering over the shrubbery, sprang up in the middle of enormous green lawns in the outskirts. These new settlements brought Santa Barbara to the consciousness that it had a distinct culture. The rich and powerful newcomers leaped into command of that consciousness at once, and stigmatized the Fiesta de la Primavera as a low saturnalia of rough-necks. The bulk of the American proletariat was by this time lusting after the patronage of the exclusive, and so hastened to prove its agreement.

Thus the majority began to reform its folkways. Instead of the saloon and the gambling hell, lodges and professional associations of minor tradesmen became the chief foci of male entertainment. The mystic trappings of Shriners on parade and the military gaudiness of the Knights of Pythias came to be, in a sense, symbols of the town's regeneration, and were seen

on every hand. The ladies showed their interest by redoubling their devotions, by learning the new game of bridge whist, or by leaving the Baptists for the Episcopalians. The new respectability abjured the Fiesta de la Primavera as a bawdy enterprise, leaving it to die a slow death at the hands of the strictly unaspiring classes. Meanwhile, business was good, the town grew, the rich came faster, the cast-iron dogs multiplied, and Santa Barbara seemed on the point of becoming the Asbury Park of the Pacific Coast, only richer.

Then its cultural progress took a sharp turn in still another direction. Having attracted the modestly rich of the Nineteenth Century, the town now suddenly began to attract the immensely rich of the Twentieth Century. The round little foothills of the Santa Barbara Mountains, from the canyon back of the old mission to half a dozen miles downshore in the suburb of Montecito, suddenly bristled with estates and mansions. There are now the packer estates, the Omaha banking estates, the Chicago wheat pit estates, the agricultural machinery and oil estates, and so on. One peculiarly flamboyant estate, crowned by a palace of screaming salmon

pink on a little hill just at the crucial point on the bay's curve, represents a fortune won in gas.

It was, by the time this got under way, nearing 1910, and the expensive architects of California were all building in the Spanish-colonial style. The new fortunes hired them to work according to this fashion, and the result to-day is a landscape covered almost entirely with neo-Sevillian houses, though they are all inhabited exclusively by Nordics. Meanwhile, the ancient châteaux of the Norddeutscher-Lloyd era mostly went on sale and were pulled down, and by 1923 the census reported only one iron hunting-dog publicly on view in the entire settlement.

But the difference between the old immigration and the new was more than merely architectural. The families which sought Santa Barbara in the nineties had for the most part made their fortunes themselves. They were tired after the struggle and their main object in life was to stop everybody else's fun, so that they could be quiet: hence the extinction of the Fiesta de la Primavera. The new immigration, on the other hand, mainly represents second and third generations of affluence. It has not been overworked, and is not overworked now. In conse-

quence, it is energetic, aspiring and restless. It has a certain sophistication in its tastes. When it settled in its brand-new villas and among its Spanish-colonial antiques made in Italian factories, it looked down upon the miserable condition of the elder Santa Babareños, and felt pity for them.

Here were starved creatures moving stolidly through their Rotary and Kiwanis banalities, their Chamber of Commerce and Red Men rituals, their dull Baptist and Methodist orgies, just like the inhabitants of any other Main Street. Here on this gorgeous California coast, with oranges in the back yard for breakfast and carefree sunshine nearly always bursting through the fog in time for luncheon, were wasted and unlimited possibilities of a life of an almost Latin elegance and voluptuousness. Yet all these possibilities were being missed by inhabitants, who insisted upon conducting themselves precisely as if they lived in Iowa or Mississippi. The lady (and some gentleman) bountifuls living on the great estates had all tasted the thrills of having confetti thrown in their faces by the hookers of Nice. Therefore they set up the motto, "America doesn't play enough." And, being imbued,

withal, with the stern ideal of their forefathers that a good citizen's duty is to evangelize and improve somebody, they determined to do their duty by Santa Barbara.

They would teach the clerkly and respectably Nordic populace of the town that it had done wrong in espousing stupid lodges and luncheon clubs as an escape from the bad habits of the seventies. They would show it that there were better and more æsthetically improving outdoor and indoor sports than Rotary could offer. They would, in short, give Santa Barbara a Community Arts Association and restore the fiesta. And they did.

III

The Community Arts Association represents a continuous and laborious effort at cultural improvement, directed from above. Like the district-school of old, with its piece-speaking day, it has its grand occasion for showing off, which is the fiesta.

The Arts Association began a good deal as union churches do in small communities, and still suffers from similar internecine passions. For years there had been an amateur dramatic

club in Santa Barbara. The choir-singers, piano teachers and other musically gifted citizens joined in a loosely organized *Bund* for mutual improvement shortly after the war. Artists—meaning persons who paint or practice other lascivious handicrafts—began to straggle into Santa Barbara soon after the invasion of the rich, lured by the inevitable sad affinity between the desire of the wealthy to patronize and the need of the artist to make a living. Then, suddenly, as an antidote to the post war boredom, the inspiration came to the Montecito colony to merge the three movements in one and extend their blessings to the whole æsthetically starved populace.

With the help of ready cash, it was easily done. The neo-Sevillian architects were summoned, and back of the old manor house of the town's Spanish social leaders, the de la Guerra family, there sprang up, about paseos, plazas and patios, a group of white-stuccoed, tile-roofed studio apartments. The artists, the sellers of oriental art objects and Hungarian glasswares, the male and female weavers of inflammatory art fabrics, knowing the value of atmosphere, all moved in. Near-by, semi-ruinous edifices dating back to

the early American occupation were repaired to house an exotic book-shop and one of those expensive tobacconists who encourage you to invent your own mixture. Montecito thus acquired a shopping district fit to match Washington Square or middle Fifth Avenue. But physical atmosphere must have its social support, not to say its intellectual. What could the new Greenwich Village hope to become without charming shop talk? Also, the thriving art and musical schools under community patronage needed directors. These joint requirements were met by importing certain excellently equipped professors of art from a famous British university.

It is not their fault, for they know their business and strive conscientiously to perform it, but what the patrons of the Santa Barbara arts movement have most eagerly insisted on learning from them is a manner and an accent. The most apt place to observe these phenomena is in the book-shop, where the young ladies of the polo-playing set are learning literature by selling it, and where the atmosphere is intensively flavored with behavior out of English novels. In this place on a dull afternoon last August I saw the high British handshake exchanged by 100%

Americans, at least two of whose great-grandparents were German peasants, twelve times within the space of half an hour. Also, I overheard conversations like this:

"Have you had your bawth to-day?"

"Yes, and the wawtah was simply splendid."

"That so? Gee, I'm sorry I missed it. You know, my deah, I haven't had a chance at a bath once this week."

Sometimes it would be "quite all right," again it would be "sure." There was a question of hospitality. One young lady urged another one to "stawp the night with us," and in the second sentence following demanded, "Now, tell me why you can't stay all night." By these tokens one finds a new linguistic variation growing up right under the eyes of the Santa Barbara county kleagle—to wit, what some unsympathetic observers call California-British.

Often enough it is further complicated with what, for lack of a better term, may be called the "arty" lilt. This is a form of elocution which tends to make ordinary conversation sound a good deal like a reading of Edna St. Vincent Millay's verses by a high-school girl. It is especially prevalent at those functions where the

daughters of packing-house fortunes are enjoying their first social contact with the art world. There, for instance, tributes to the work of young students are no longer paid in the guttural patois of the working studios: "Yeah, that Jones kid did a good job with that Mex gurl's head." The "arty" lilt puts it thus:

> That wonderful, wonderful portrait!
> So young in every touch!
> So wild!
> So satisfying!
> So real!

One even hears so familiar a subject as California's scenery dealt with in the new dialect as follows:

> O, but you *must* see Carmel!
> You must come some noon this Summer
> When those bright little villas on that marvelous coast are like jewels in the gala sunlight.
> Then afterwards you can grow to love
> Those wild mysterious mists, that twine among the rugged rocky hills
> About our strange live-oak trees.

This is the speech of Davy Crockett and of Noble Harding of the Mystic Shrine twisted away

from its ancestral twang to harmonize with English muffins. This much, at least, the founders, aiders and abettors of the Community Arts Association have gained right off the bat.

IV

But what of the populace for whose improvement these exotic refinements are intended? A young man with an old face sits all day in the central office of the Arts Association pondering this question. The son of a minister, he has enjoyed since babyhood an insight into parish plots and jealousies. A former Y. M. C. A. secretary, he has known and practiced the art of reconciling the dreadful feuds of the evangelical sectarians. A former actor, he has seen artistic temperaments rage their worst. No better choice could have been made for a director, for he is charged with the duty of composing the disputes between those who wish to keep the Community Arts movements exquisite and uplifting and those who insist that it pay; between those who, in their various groupings, wish its music, its painting, its drama, its city planning or its civic improvement to predominate. Yet

even the director has his moments of hesitation. How to keep the movement exclusive enough in its attractions to satisfy those who pay its bills, and at the same time interest the lower orders who need to be rescued from their lamentable folk-ways?

It is easy enough to coax the talented offspring of humble families into the art and musical schools; even to provide means for their further education in eastern centers when they display sufficient aptitude. But how to seduce the boys of Rotary and Kiwanis clubs from their noontime gambols, the nobles of the mystic orders from their occult ceremonials, the Ladies of the Evil Eye from their labors for neighborhood moral uplift into the higher reaches of æsthetics?

The Art Association's answers to the challenge are the Little Theater and the revived fiesta. The former, by dint of reproducing the more smoothly embossed type of Broadway successes, with the aid of talent trained in college dramatic clubs, has at length achieved in the community the respectable and profitable condition of a moral obligation. Within twenty-four hours after my arrival in Santa Barbara, fully a

score of persons had told me that I "ought to" see "The Beggar on Horseback." My waitress and two casual acquaintances at my hotel told me the plot. During the ensuing week it was repeated by 100 people, but not more than one or two indicated whether the play was an agreeable entertainment or not. They simply told me that the home talent troupe had been offered so many thousands of dollars to come to San Francisco and that I "ought to go."

But in spite of this unanimous sense of æsthetic duty, there have been rubs with the populace. The State Street merchants took a peculiarly niggardly attitude toward allowing their dramatically gifted employees time off for rehearsals. "It seems impossible to make them realize," said a confidant of the management, "that a salesgirl or a clerk will do better work for being allowed to come down late after being up until 3 A. M. for a rehearsal." But these hard-boiled and go-getting he-men, though they knew through their wives that they "ought to go" to the performance, persisted in being unreasonable, and so one or two members of the cast had to change their jobs.

Nor were social barriers entirely disposed of.

Montecito and State Street may pull together in a theatrical troupe, but the later consequences are sometimes painful. Such professional associations, indeed, do not always ripen as the State Street parties to them desire. And the resultant heart-burning is not always so frankly expressed as it was by a certain temperamental Italian who found his descent from the heights of fame in a character part to his lowly station as porter a trifle disturbing: "I have made all these friends through my art, and now they know me no longer. I am a passionate man, and this hurts."

V

In the fiesta the effort of the Communal Arts Association to enlist the populace reaches its climax. Back of it is a subtle and diabolic plot. The fiesta is intended as a snare to lure the Santa Barbara burghers and rabble onward and upward toward that higher æsthetic life which has been prepared for them. The idea is that if they can be got to participate in a week's municipal carnival the holiday mood will so possess them that they will flock in droves to the more uplifting

fiesta week offerings of the dramatic and musical departments of the association, and even trickle a trifle more numerously than usual into the salons of the painters. It is further hoped that through the fiesta the pleasure taken in the arts, at first as the result of momentary excitement, may grow into a habit and at length into a permanent passion. Thus the leaders of the arts movement anticipate that, in five years or five centuries, according to their optimism, they will raise the Santa Barbara proletariat and boobery up to the level of æsthetic responsiveness represented by the Sicilian peasantry.

As a first expedient, the fiesta must be made "popular." Therefore, its management has been as far as possible turned over to the burghers of the town. One young man, it is true, who speaks California-British fluently and whose loss must be felt in the diplomatic service, is in charge as a director, and is entrusted with the task of keeping the various parades from degenerating into pageants of local advertisers and lodge brothers. But otherwise, on the theory that the people will best follow their natural chieftains, the Babbitts really run the show.

This has certain interesting consequences.

For example, State Street respectability has stepped on the yearning of the romantic æsthetes to have the new carnival named after the ancient and immoral Fiesta de la Primavera. That decadent orgy is not to be mentioned, even under the breath, by the sons and daughters of 100% American mothers. Besides, the new fiesta is to take place, not in the Spring, which is English for primavera, but in August. The ruling Americanism has also dictated that the Spanish language must be ruled out of most of the title. The burghers have named the show the Old Spanish Days Fiesta, and, doubtless to heighten the contrast between the old and the new, have adopted for advertising, official badge, and button purposes the slogan: "Booster Old Spanish Days." As an emblem, they permit the sale of toy roosters—perhaps in faint commemoration of the national game of the Spanish Californians—but with a limerick printed across the breast-bone, in which rooster is made to rhyme with booster. There is also flung upon the screen of the local moving pictures during carnival week a lyric by the Santa Barbara poet laureate, set to music for mass singing, and bearing in the refrain the sentiment:

Said Mr. Gallagher to Mr. Shean,
Santa Barbara's the best town we've ever seen.

And as evidence that the communal culture is not new, shop windows and the display advertising of many business houses carry the touching information that Elliott Rogers wrote "The Rosary" in Santa Barbara in 1882.

Popular interest must be won at all costs. And when I saw the fiesta, it was. Apparently every man, woman and child who owed any allegiance to Santa Barbara was in costume that August. Shoe salesmen and grocery clerks served you with a bit of scarlet braid on their trouser seams. Paunchy realtors and insurance solicitors full of mental mastery dashed about town in gaudy sashes. Deacons of the total immersion sects sported, at the least, a bit of crimson frill around their hat bands. High-school boys scurried by, their heads gorgeously bound in scarfs and bandanas. From Montecito the young men of the *jeunesse dorée* appeared in grandees' costumes complete enough for a masquerade ball. The very street-car conductors wore Spanish epaulettes and ear-rings and a look of grievance even more bitter than usual. Con-

tractors bossed their workmen in brilliant serapes. Guitars were seen in the streets. Women wore mantillas and an apparently official uniform in the way of a waist of yellow, black and scarlet, so universally that you could tell the outland females by their native American costumes. The Mexican population dug up its old finery and musical instruments and paraded the sidewalks with the timid air of people reasserting their importance after long abeyance.

There were parades—an infinite series of parades, so that whenever one got on a trolley-car to go somewhere, a traffic policeman, a stern and officious man, blasted one's hopes by telling the conductor that he would have to stop where he was for the next hour. There were pageants. The Elks' drum-corps led the largest of them. The members of Rotary and Kiwanis, with arms swinging as if in search of prospects, represented the Indians, the Franciscan friars, the forty-niners, the Fremont expedition, and so on. The Spanish population brought up the rear with old-fashioned floats and coaches and ingratiating smiles. At evening there was dancing in roped-off streets, to the music of the town band and an occasional Mexican stringed

orchestra. Here and there an occasional flapper threw a handful of confetti somewhat nervously.

That week's performance of "The Beggar on Horseback" became the thing everybody "ought to go to," and the box receipts were excellent. The story of the munificent offer to the players from San Francisco became a heroic legend. The recitals of the musical department of the Arts Association were better attended than ever before. Here and there a burgher's wife and daughter began to acquire a working facility in California-British, or daringly risked the 6 o'clock supper appetite in a 4:30 visit to the paseo or the book-shop tea-room.

The inner circles of the arts movement observed and were rejoiced. The first essay in the mass cultural improvement had been an overwhelming success. Ladies went about declaring that "we have brought the European carnival spirit to America at last." More secretly it was whispered—since this is treason in California—that the local Babbitts were being tactfully led by the nose to the discovery that for gala events there are more fetching costumes than fezzes.

VI

But was it so? After five days of observing the fiesta from the unbiased standpoint of one who was neither a contriver, nor a participant, nor an admirer of the American folk-ways in their unimproved condition, I was forced to doubt it. True, everybody dressed up and went on parade. But was that a triumph? Probably no people on earth are more eager to escape from reality via the fancy dress route than the Americanos. Tell the Rotarian that he can be an Indian in the town pageant, and he will be elated over it longer than over a present of a new golf club. The lodge mysteries draw adherents almost in proportion to the gaudiness of the regalia. Granted that he has his gang with him and does not have to dress up alone, the average American, when the occasion offers, cannot be restrained from indulging in costumes by anything less dangerous than a Federal injunction. His women also, if such a thing be possible, take to the sport even more readily and grimly.

The chief thing to be said about the Santa Barbara debauch is that the costumes were all

unsuited to Nordics. The eggy luster of the crimsons and dark yellows made them look sallow. The colors heightened the signs of weariness and tired feet which Americans always wear when their efforts at improving amusement keep them standing or walking about for more than a few minutes. Thus, by the second day most of the fiesta crowd had put on a look of definitely bilious listlessness. Long before the last night of the revels the adult faces one saw seemed unutterably and petulantly tired. They were precisely the faces which otherwise kindly men and women used to wear in my youth at the end of the Sunday-school picnic season—when they slapped the children all round and muttered, "Well, thank God, it's over for this year." The costumes agreed somewhat better with the Mexican complexions, but there was nevertheless an air of unfulfilment about the revels of the original Californians. Perhaps they were making some subconscious comparison between the "European carnival spirit" as ancestrally understood and its locally distilled reproduction. Or perhaps the fault lay in their subtle comprehension that there can be no such thing as a carnival without *aguadiente*.

The secret force behind all the listlessness may have been exposed in the boast of the partisans of the Community Arts movement that they "put the fiesta over." They did; and the populace for whose good its benefits were intended went through the motions of self-expanding gayety with all the well-drilled docility of an American herd which recognizes that something has been "put over" it. It was not theirs to question whether the colors of feudal Spain agreed with Nordic complexions. It was theirs but to wear them. No one asked whether "The Beggar on Horseback" was entertaining. One simply "ought to go." The whole community participated, but with about as much spontaneity as high-school graduates bring to their commencement exercises.

Will ground so boldly and laboriously seized on the pathway to the higher community culture be held? The signs, alas, are not encouraging. The week after the fiesta the Ku Klux Klan was preparing to conduct its biggest initiation ceremony in the history of Santa Barbara county. The leading local theater was announcing Doug's latest picture. Shriners and Kiwanians were eager for their natural revels. The closing Sat-

urday of the fiesta was the day Dr. Orlando Edgar Miller, "physician of the soul," picked to insert four pages of specially prepared advertising in the Santa Barbara *Daily News*, ballyhooing his series of lectures and classes on "Scientific Breathing," "Scientific Sex," "Scientific Prayer" ("Are your prayers answered? They should be!"), and "What Is Success and How It Is Attained." In a dominant position on the first page stood his touching lyrical tribute to Santa Barbara's improved æsthetic sensibility:

FOR MYSTICS

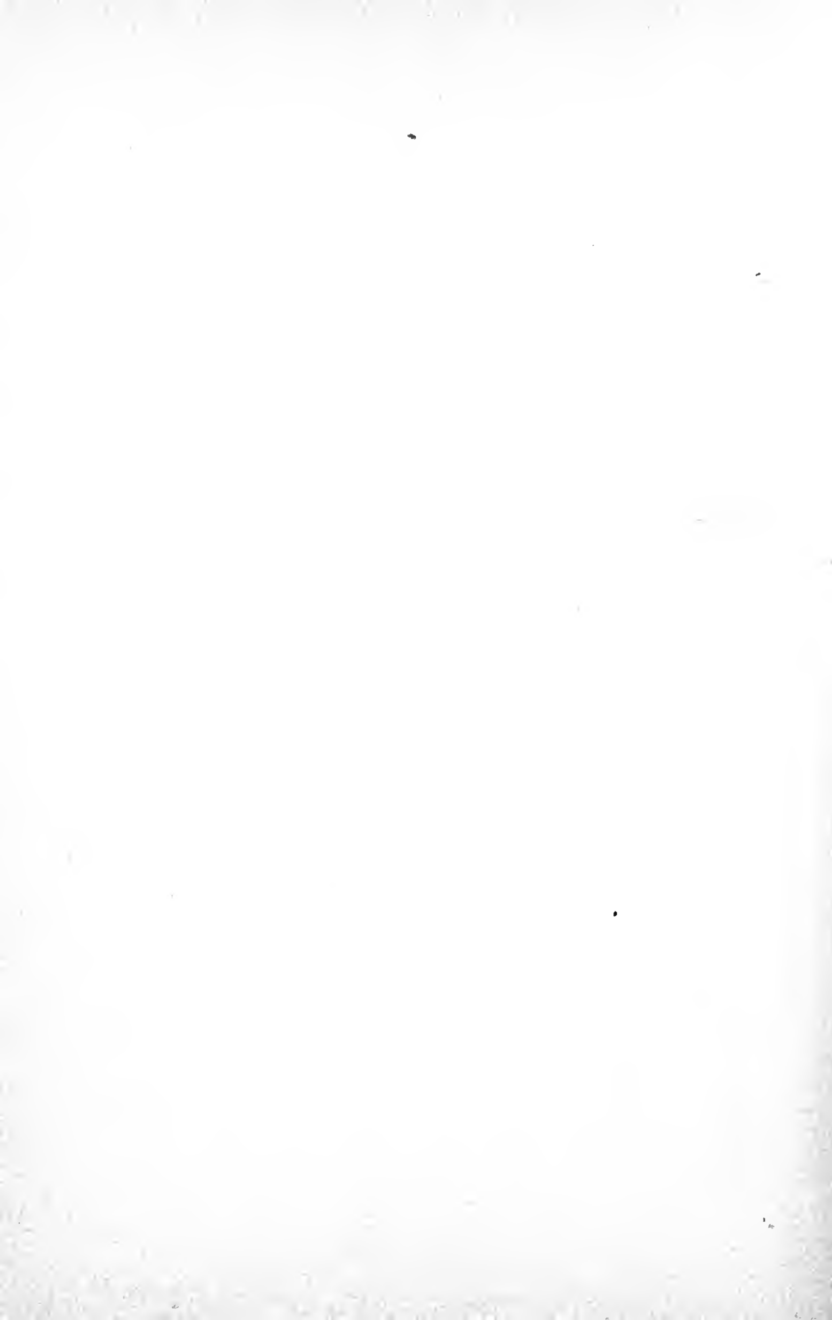
Dr. Orlando Edgar Miller
Stands at the door
Of the House Beautiful
Acting as Interpreter,
As truly as thoughts
Are things—words
Are mental medicine.
Here then is a rich

DEPOSITORY OF GOD'S THOUGHTS

Clothed in man's
Choicest words and
Suited to all sorts
And conditions of mind, body and soul.

As the last groups of fiesta revelers slunk homeward on Saturday night, I heard several ask when Ole Hanson was going to give his next banquet. . . . Is there anything to be done about folk-ways except leave them alone?

Hell Along the Border



HELL ALONG THE BORDER

THERE are three kinds of legends about the fringe of frowzy hamlets and small towns that have been placed by Providence, working through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, just across the southern border of the Federal Union. They are said (mainly by railroad folders and the local guide-books of the American metropolises opposite them) to possess a "piquant foreign atmosphere" and to wield a "quaint old-world spell." They are said to be unsafe for Americans visiting them who do not wear their oldest clothes, raise three-day beards and leave their jewelry behind. And they are said to offer Bacchanalian revels on such a lavish scale that only a millionaire's pocketbook can take care of the check.

Throughout the United States vast numbers of people believe in these droll sayings. In El Paso, where I am expiating the evil done in my youth, some stranger from the Corn Belt or the high Sierras drops into my office almost weekly

to ask my advice as to whether he (or she) should risk a visit to Ciudad Juarez at all. Even in the border cities themselves there are hordes of Angles and Saxons no better informed. They are the men and women who, for fear of being seen in more than one half of one per cent alcoholic surroundings by customers, clients, patients, pastors or rivals in local social-climbing, never cross the Rio Grande. Thus the life of the Mexican towns becomes as romantically remote to them as the life of the Falkland Islands. And thus they take on faith the declaration of the Rev. Dr. Bob Jones, a favorite evangelist of the Southern backwoods, that "I would rather shoot my son and throw his body in the river than have him spend an hour in the raging inferno of Juarez," or the equally gorgeous fantasies of visiting inebriates who, having lost $7 in a Mexican gambling den, raise it to a robbery of $7,000 on complaining to the police on the American side.

With such nonsense, piously repeated, they warn away visiting strangers from the dangers of a foreign strand only fifteen minutes distant by six-cent trolley. In El Paso visiting conventions are regularly scared out of holding their

banquets in Juarez by an alliance of such propagandists with the even more enthusiastically righteous El Paso hotel and restaurant keepers. Disappointed lodge brothers and members of commercial orders spread the evil tidings into the farthest fastnesses of the Republic. And so the legends grow.

But after according several years of loyal patronage to Mexico's sinks of crime, I now rise to protest. I have studiously observed the viciousness and even the mere faults of decorum in Juarez, largest of the corrupting foci, in season and out for at least twelve seasons. I have had my glimpses at the life of the equally ill-reputed Nogales, Mexicali and Tia Juana. I have been in confidential communication with habitual visitors to Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Piedras Negras and Agua Prieta. And I can find in all these towns no sins more gorgeous than those enjoyed by every Massachusetts lodge of Elks at its annual fish-fries prior to 1920.

The Mexican border towns, it is true, offer a certain show of moth-eaten adobe architecture, and have dark brown inhabitants who speak Spanish, and an occasional visitor from the interior flourishing a serape or the high-peaked

sombrero by which Mexicans may be recognized in the movies. Mexicali, in addition, provides a few turbanned Hindus and black-pajamaed Chinese. Tia Juana sometimes—and not always veraciously—supplies a Hollywood star indulging publicly in his or her bacchanals. But the only "quaint old-world spell" really worth noticing is exactly the same spell which was cast by the row of two- and three-story "store-construction" buildings on the west side of Court House Square in any bibulous middle western county seat on a Saturday afternoon 20 years ago. It is the spell of a noisy and confused babble mixed vaguely with drums and fiddles, and the whirr of swinging doors plied busily, and a rich alcoholic smell. The charm, the prosperity, the usefulness of the border resorts are all rooted in the fact that they are the only relatively accessible, reasonably inexpensive, all-year-round, snow-free life-saving stations for the arid population of inland United States: in short, cheap Bahamas to which minor Babbitts can come from Kansas by Ford.

II

The charm for the conveniently located sociologist is that the minor Babbitts keep on coming.

In Winter, the endless string of motor and train traffic seeking the snow-free routes to California strikes the border at El Paso and clings to it all the way to Tia Juana's near neighbor, San Diego. In general, this Winter visitation is mid-western or "sure enough western" in origin. The bar-room clamor at the Big Kid's Palace or Jimmie O'Brien's in Juarez, the feminine chatter from the immaculate tables at the Central or from behind the naughtily curtained booths at the Office or the Lobby, is shrill with the harsh, flat *a*'s and the insistent *r*'s of the Corn Belt. In Summer, when terror of the desert drives this migration over the northern routes, the same places are pleasant with the musical accents of the lower Old South, mixed with the whiney drawls of East Texas and Arkansas.

Either season the procession is made up, as to class, of much the same elements: small town bankers and grocers seeking retirement and mild dementia præcox in the suburbs of Los Angeles; dissatisfied young clerks and mechanics seeking "new openings" somewhere "on the coast," and their pert young flapper wives seeking new ideas in bungalows and bathing suits at Long Beach and La Jolla; occasional sportsmen on their way

to chase big game in Mexico; fairly well-to-do tourists, embracing all classes from church deacons to racing touts, seeing the country on long vacations; traveling salesmen and other special agents, often accompanied by their wives, and eager to enliven business with serious intervals of pleasure; floaters looking for jobs, locality of no consequence, that will not seriously inhibit their floating; semi-nomads in battered Fords bound from Nowhere to the same place. Either season, too, the outward-bound procession encounters another flood—the thinner but constant ebb of the disillusioned from California back to where they came from.

In any case, they are bound from and for localities infinitely more arid than the thirst-begetting desert. They have either sorrows to drown or pleasures to accelerate in a way that is relatively difficult and expensive, and sometimes socially inexpedient at home. Juarez, the first border resort encountered by probably seventy-five per cent of them, is the place where more convinced Prohibitionists, including those from States where their cause triumphed a generation ago, gloriously escape from the régime they have made, than are to be found anywhere else. Even

the trans-Atlantic liners, speeding north-eastward twelve miles off Sandy Hook, carry smaller passenger lists. Even on the Quebec border there is no spot where so many trails converge for rich and poor alike.

But they converge most of all, it must be admitted, for the less than entirely sophisticated. It is true that Juarez has entertained during the past three years an English lord, a French ace, a British novelist, a popular American poet and a national field agent of the W. C. T. U. But the ace proved to be one of the new race of Frenchmen, so bound by athletic training rules that he forswore even tea and coffee, the poet was a member of the Christian church and a former lecturer for the Anti-Saloon League, the novelist expressed his distaste for the beer because it was not heavy enough by British standards and would try nothing else, and the El Paso newspapers cryptically quoted the W. C. T. U. lady as saying that she had never enjoyed an experience so much as her trip to Juarez, but left it to the reader to determine what she meant by that.

The lord did his best to conform to the fictional traditions of his caste, but on his attempt-

ing to pick up a handsome young woman sitting alone at a table at the now extinct lobster palace of the Oasis, he was publicly and ferociously slapped. On investigation it was learned that the young woman hailed from Wichita, and was keeping a date with a Kiwanian of that city who was incidentally her husband. Sophisticates, though rare on the border at best, have almost a reputation for being disappointing.

III

Instead of coming to Juarez to learn their latest ways—as one once sought the drinking rooms of the Brevoort or Lafayette—it is far more entertaining to spend a loose evening making the rounds in search of stern, red-blooded men who have not yet mastered the art of conversing with bartenders. In the Fall or early Winter, when the migrants from Kansas are most numerous, one can frequently find them in swarms. They can be identified by several infallible signs: the roving and embarrassed eye they cast upon the fixtures of the establishment. especially the nude masterpieces and the array of esoteric bottles. By their blushes and the

peculiarly stammering "hod-doos" with which they return the grand servitor's equalitarian salutation, "Good evening, gentlemen, what will it be?" And beyond possibility of doubt, by the long minutes of timid-toned debate by which the order is decided.

Nowhere else in the world is it so easy to show what Kansas' generation of Prohibition has done to the American he-man's innate *savoir faire*. If the onlooker suffers with the inferiority complexes of others, the effects may be acutely painful when an especially attentive bartender follows up the sale with the harassing inquisition, "Are your drinks O. K. gentlemen?" I have personally seen prosperous and up-and-coming men, who at home would not be embarrassed by being called upon to read a lodge ritual or to lead in prayer for the dying, blink their eyes and clear their throats for a full minute before they could produce a half-hearted, "Yeh, I guess so."

I remember a representative of the type, slightly more voluble than the average, whom the bartender in a dull hour had enticed into confidences. He had, he explained, followed literally the advice received from fellow passengers

on the Golden State Limited about wearing his oldest clothes and letting his beard grow two days. Now, obviously in perfect sobriety, he demanded to know as man to man if he had not done the right thing. He must know on account of the wife. The lady, though curious, had not yet ventured off American soil. But he had been around a little without seeing anything untoward, and now he wondered if it would not be safe to bring her across in suitable raiment just once.

Patiently and tactfully, Charlie—who had learned patience and tact at the shrine of Mr. Ramos in New Orleans—explained that a man who kept his wits was in no more danger in Juarez than in Brooklyn and that even a man who lost his was not in much more. Perhaps it was done too tactfully. Anyway, the man from Lawrence committed the unpardonable indiscretion of doubting a bartender's word. "How do I know you're giving me the right steer, friend?" he asked, putting into his eyes all the cunning of a suspicious life.

"Whaddyu take me for?" Charlie snorted so fiercely that even the Kansan knew himself snubbed. And sensitive onlookers turned away,

suffering as only serious breaches of male decorum can make strong men suffer.

The next day I saw the man from Lawrence timidly consuming luncheon at the Central Café. He was still in his patched suit and his beard was well along in its third day. But his companion was a comely woman of middle age dressed in the height of Main Street fashion.

A classic example of unfamiliarity with the atmosphere of "sin and degradation" was afforded by the elderly gentleman with whom I fell in one fine March afternoon while going from place to place searching for a disconnected friend. The old man was following the same route. After we had opened the swinging doors of two or three establishments, only to glance around for a moment and pass out, he accosted me. "I see you're just lookin' 'em over, too, brother. My, it's an awful place, ain't it?"

We traveled along together and he unfolded more or less of his life story. He had never touched liquor or tobacco in sixty-five years, and owned a printing establishment in an Iowa county seat. They had had local option there since '95—"and enforced it, too, thank God!" Still, he thought it was a man's duty to see what life was

like, no matter how bad it was. He had been born, in fact, with a passion for the higher sight-seeing. In 1881 he was a printer's apprentice in a newspaper shop in Cleveland, and the boss kept him at work in the basement while President Garfield's funeral passed by the very door.

"That made me so mad," he said, "that I made up my mind I'd never miss another sight when I could help it as long as I lived. And so I'm here."

We went our ways together, he glowering nervously at sin and I contemplating it inquiringly for a familiar face. Finally we located my friend, and the two of us invited the ancient to join us in something soft. But muttering that he would look it over once because he ought to, but he wouldn't drop a nickel in the devil's treasury if his life depended on it, he left us forever.

IV

Inevitably the women folk who follow in the wake of such indiscretion are more indiscreet still. Nor is the fact that a male escort knows his way about a sure indication that all that is "not done" will remain undone in even the most

respectable of feminine coveys. Once, at dinner in the most splendid of the Juarez cabaret palaces, nine people, three dour and taciturn men of obvious small-town substance, and six daughters and wives of varying ages, were placed at a large table next ours. The conversation soon informed us that they were two motor parties from the same town in Mississippi. The men said little and looked despairing and frightened. The ladies, even before the order was taken, burst into such remarks as "What would you take to have the folks back home see us here?" and "Lemme say it. What would you take to have the Reverend Jones see us here?"

At length a simple dinner was served, accompanied by one small beer apiece—and they serve the small beers very small in all border resorts. Immediately the two elderly ladies proclaimed themselves feeling hilarious, and when, at the second and final round of the wassail, the shriller of the two developed hiccoughs, the party became such a riot of giggles as would have disgraced a group of 1907 schoolgirls enjoying the first edition of "Three Weeks."

Even the professional cabaret entertainers paused in the night's work to smile indulgently.

But the whole salon roared its appreciation when, as the nine filed out, one of those fortunate general silences permitted all the world to overhear the eldest daughter ask: "Poppa, do you mean to say that meal cost eleven dollars?"

Poppa merely nodded; and, with two other bowed and graying male heads hanging shamefully beside his, passed into the cool darkness.

It was in another of those terrific silences that we learned how the new institution of the cover charge is viewed from the Gopher Prairie angle. They were a party of three couples, middle aged and visibly constrained, sitting with uncomfortable erectness while the gentlemen solemnly emptied three small beer glasses—people whose air of acute wonderment attracted attention even before the check was presented. Then a feminine voice, angry and dominant, broke upon the stillness: "Waiter, do you mean to say you have the *nerve* to charge $1.80 for those three *miserabul* drinks?"

An unintelligible patter of soft Mexican-English evidently explained that three cover charges were fifty cents "the couple," and the beer ten per. The head waiter was called to confirm the news. Waving him aside, the lady rose grandly.

"Arthur," she boomed awfully, "we are going back to El Paso and you are *not* to bring us here again."

But the saddest sight of many nights in Juarez was the family party at the Big Kid's Palace. The Big Kid himself is enormously tall, enormously fat fore and aft, with a face and head like a cherub's seven times enlarged. Wearing a battered cap several sizes too small for him, he gives his Palace quite a tone. Also he affects the fourth-rate prize-fighters of the border athletic clubs, and his jazz hall is their favorite place to meet their somewhat hard-boiled shebas. For a seasoning to local color one finds, too, a generous representation of young El Paso married couples of substance, and another of emancipated flappers and their escorts, come to see the bouncer work. Despite wild jazz, and customers and waiters who look still wilder, the Big Kid is particular about rough stuff. The place never goes for more than thirty consecutive seconds beyond the limit.

Here on a hectic July evening, an iron-gray, life-scarred gentleman of fifty-odd had brought what appeared to be his aged mother and two maiden sisters. From the general atmosphere of

spectacles and restraint, "the girls" might have been the Latin and geometry teachers from the high-school at Malden, Mass. The gentleman drank frequently and with a lowering visage small glasses of something neat. His aged mother seemed to adjust herself comfortably over a tall, cool schooner. But the maiden ladies sat in aloof and ox-eyed contemplation consuming nothing for more than an hour.

Then, suddenly, the orchestra struck into the most fiendish jazz motif of the entire evening and one nudged the other and they got up. Slowly they took positions, as only some town dancing master in 1895 New England could have taught them. Their stiff and wiry bodies the prescribed six inches apart, out among the flea-hopping pugs and hoydens, jellybeans and flappers, they vainly but unfalteringly sought to wrestle from that furious tempo the innocent rhythms of a two-step.

I looked at the brother's face. His eyes never blinked, his mouth did not even draw down in disgust. But I thought I had never seen an expression so romantically sad. Yet, fortified with more small glasses, he endured it time and again in the next hour—a good son and brother and an entertainer without peer.

V

But it would be a libel both upon one's fellow countrymen and upon the atmosphere of the border towns to imply that the whole American race, in the bitter experience of the past few years, has forgotten all the rules of etiquette as they apply to alcoholic indulgence. The fact is that sophistication is far more often overdone than underdone. Years ago, when Mr. Babbitt and his friends could drop into Jake's place and perhaps a dozen places exactly like it during an evening or a busy cocktail hour, the fashion was to do it with a certain nonchalance. The bartender would be saluted as casually as any barber. His comments on the weather, business conditions and the news of sport would be accepted with the grunts of friendly but plainly unmoved familiars. Each little group of companions would seek its table or form in a standing knot at the bar, as became serious men enjoying a serious pleasure. To make one's self noisily and spectacularly at home, one at least waited for the poisons to work.

But in Juarez or Tia Juana one often sees a brand new and perfectly sober customer rush

upon the bartender with loud cries, wring both his hands and begin exchanging stories before the first drink is poured. Enforced abstinence from such entertainment has in five short years driven many Americans into a vociferous air of familiarity, which is the high sign of unfamiliarity. Even ladies who show by their orders and their expertness in consumption that they are familiar with all the vinous and cereal products, often name their drinks to the waiter with little squeals of delight. Perhaps it is for such reasons that the bartenders and waiters of Juarez seem to bear the most patiently cynical faces I have ever seen on men.

Yet the enthusiasm is mainly flash-in-the-pan. The excitement of the first two rounds over, Main Street tends to relax, even when there are more rounds, into its accustomed conversational grooves. Once from an indiscreetly secretive booth in the Office, I heard a foursome conversation degenerate from the heights of daring repartée concerning a home town scandal about two young married couples, into the usual bi-sexual grouping, all within 15 minutes by the watch. Before the next half hour had passed them out through the door, the ladies had entertained each

other with the repetition of one moving-picture plot each, a discussion of the relative values of several kinds of hairpins and barrettes, and a polite dispute as to whether a lapidary meant any jeweler or merely an expert carver of precious stones. The men had canvassed the 1924 wheat crop prospects in the Northwest and argued somewhat heatedly the merits of the late Senator La Follette. In fact, booth eaves-dropping is nearly always disappointing, because sooner or later one reflects that one can get as good on a street-car for six cents.

On another occasion, in a fiendish group at a dinner party in one of the gilded palaces, two women participants smoked what was obviously the first cigarettes in their combined eighty years. But the moment their choking spasms were over, they began a low-toned and evidently confidential debate as to whether their pastor in the United Presbyterian church in a Tennessee town was feeble enough to be superannuated. Even those "situation" parties which intrigue the inquisitive diner-out often fail one. Once I saw a man and woman sit over a wine bottle for an hour with their eyes glued on each other. But when I approached them to join friends at the next table,

it developed that she was telling him the exciting story of how somebody was jockeying her husband out of some patent rights on washing machinery.

One of the most thrilling and outwardly flirtatious two-somes I ever witnessed was between a rosy old capitalist of sixty-odd, just back from the oil fields at Tampico, and an imperially voluptuous false blonde for whom he bought all that the house offered in the way of food and drink, from cocktails through champagne to some special kind of cordial. Then suddenly and disappointingly he called for his chauffeur to take her back to El Paso. As they shook hands in parting, she scraped the last rouge off our illusions in two sentences: "Gee, but John'll be glad I ran into you. Now when you come to Chicago next Summer, you've just *got* to stay with us out in Evanston or John'll be mad."

VI

So it goes. The more one frequents the Mexican border resorts, the more one is brought to realize that the great American gift in depravity is for playing devilish rather than being it. Even

in the wildly denounced gambling hells of Juarez, which are open or shut for months at a time according to the fluctuations of obscure arrangements with the Mexican officials, the frantic playing of nickels and dimes on mechanical devices is what takes one's breath away. Tia Juana draws on the wealth of southern California and is sometimes more thrilling, but more often not so. For, due to the regions and populations from which the border resorts mainly draw their customers, the business of being devilish is mainly on the small-town, high-school alumnus scale. This is abundantly shown by the fact that out of four or five rococo lobster palaces that have attempted to do business in Juarez during the past three years, only one survives. A real one, pre-Prohibition, metropolitan style, has never been tried.

The truth seems to be that the tourist from the American inland, whether he comes by Ford or Cadillac, by day coach or Pullman, is looking for thrills at a low price. So the establishments which are content to do most of their business in those bar-room simples, beer, gin and whiskey, and which cut down about fifty per cent on the normal chile allowance in their Mexican

viands, are the only ones that can pay the exorbitant Mexican license rates and still prosper. The real thrill, obviously and always sought in a border debauch, is to carry the memory of from two to nine drinks back to some town like Coon Rapids or Memphis, and to be able to say at the next gathering of cronies or lodge brothers: "Lemme tell you, li'l old Juarez is some town to raise hell (feminine equivalent: raise the roof) in. And, boy, we sure raised it!"

By such trivial vauntings do men make themselves feel better than their betters, and rid themselves for the time being of the persecutions of the inferiority complex.

Gentlemen All

GENTLEMEN ALL

THE Old-Timer and I walked through the gambling hall of the Latin-American Club in Juarez, Mexico. It is a wide, high-ceilinged, bare room, with plenty of space between the playing tables. Sun and wind came in through the open doors and windows off a thousand miles of desert. It was anything but crowded. There could hardly have been 200 people to its half acre. Yet the place smelled of women.

Or, to be precise, of the cosmetics, perfumery, sachets, hair restorers, deodorants, dress dyes, lip and face paint of second and third class ladies. Around each roulette and crap table and chuck-a-luck outfit were clusters of slightly too dashing finery. Women hung over the saturnine poker and faro groups in awed fascination, as before inscrutable mysteries. They whispered hoarse and not strictly grammatical comments to each other, like the wives of United Brethren elders rebuking their offspring in church. Or

they passed on to the mechanical devices to play their nickels and dimes—and occasional thrilling quarters and halves—with the gestures, intonations and speech forms which the female dependents of honest brakemen and floor-walkers employ when abandoning themselves to the dance. The proceedings faintly recalled the annual picnic of the Pythian sisters to their lords and masters—after the second keg of home-brew has been tapped.

Men were present, too. Anemic and inferior persons trying to adjust themselves to wickedness by looking hard. Rubicund dealers and flabby wheel manipulators weakly jocose on the pattern of low-grade drummers. Sickly old men beckoning you to ill-patronized tables with leers borrowed from vanished red-light districts. A sprinkling of sporting Mexicans looking like the lesser fry of the East Side gangsters; another of Babbitts trying to look desperate, or like genial, philosophic observers; yet another of beady-eyed cowmen and miners looking bored. The men were all trying to disguise their second-rateness. The women flaunted theirs.

The Old-Timer turned a square white head and a hard blue eye upon me and snorted

"Hell!" So we went over to the bar and for the hundredth time tried to figure out what has become of the old-time Western gambler and why.

II

I think the Old-Timer has the right idea about it: the virtues of this ancient and departed folk-hero of the open spaces were simply not born to blush unseen. Driven into official invisibility by the laws of a Republic whose ideal is one everlasting Father-and-Son Week, these virtues have either disappeared altogether, or put on the puerile face we see in Ciudad Juarez.

The foundation stone of the old-time gambler's psychology was gusto. What the winner of the Saturday night roodles down at Ed's shack experiences twice a year as the lurid apex of sin, the professional of the old school experienced habitually. He thrilled over his skill, of course, but far more he thrilled over the patronage he fancied himself receiving from Lady Luck. He became a gambler because he was a consistent winner. So always and of right he shaped his appearance and conduct to reflect his

constant and grandiloquent ecstasy in himself and his venerable art.

Hence the old-time professional dressed, shot, swore, played, drank, ate, looked—no doubt slept—harder than other men. He had his adventures more openly. He took his code of debts and honor more seriously. He flung away his cash more recklessly upon charity, debauchery and display. He was more ostentatiously sentimental in his reverence for "decent ladies." In New Mexico and Arizona, in territorial days, he took a solemn and decently exposed pride in the fact that the taxes on his concessions were the more lucrative source of the public school funds. He flourished in the hairy 70's and 80's, so his beard and mustachios were of the fiercest. He came and went trailing his gusto in life as he found it. He did not cheat.

But you can't trail clouds of gusto in secret. With the railroad's coming, the old West filled up with gangsters, crooks, sharpers, phony dealers, loaded wheel and dice experts, gold brickers from the Eastern underworld, and they looked on the great open—wide open—spaces as offering them a God-sent opportunity. Beginning with the late 80's and running through

the next ten or fifteen years, they broke the old-time gambler with unfair competition, discredited him with their shameless fleecing. Meanwhile the old West was filling up, too, with irreclaimable tenderfeet. These, in their good time, put all gamblers, both new style and old style, under the ban, and made the old as secretive and furtive as the new.

So, after Colorado and California got pure in the 90's, and New Mexico and Arizona and Southwestern Texas in the first decade of the Twentieth Century—after this, if an old-timer went around trailing clouds of gusto, the Baptist minister instantly spotted him. Next, the deacons in delegation told the town marshal that if he didn't shut up Stud Horse Charlie's place now and for good, the forward-looking citizens of the community would put in a new administration.

The marshal knew it might be so, and so word went out to Stud Horse Charlie that if he didn't have sense enough to lay low and quit blowing around he'd be bounced out of town. The Stud Horse Charlies of half a thousand Western bailiwicks between Spokane and El Paso learned their lesson. They could continue

to operate only on terms of cowering discretion—only by becoming something different from what they were.

So they disappeared. They died. Or they went into other businesses, more or less suited to their peculiar talents and reputations. Or they went broke and sponged off old friends. Or they became like the new generation of gamblers—the feeble and furtive kind, teasing nickels out of Rebekah lodge hellions in Juarez. And they changed their psychological tune from gusto to disgust.

Man and boy, the Paralyzed Kid has been gambling in and around El Paso for forty years. The old, bold, bad, honest generation marveled at his swift dealing with a withered hand. The slinking dealers in the sporadic joints of the evangelical border towns of the new century worked beside him, but avoided him as a snob who made them uncomfortable. Then, last Spring, the Paralyzed Kid cleaned up a fair-sized pot—and next day he took it up to Las Cruces, New Mexico, and bought a little cigar store. When friends asked him why he was quitting the old business, he said what the Old-Timer said to me: "Hell!"

III

What has become of the others?

On the whole, the story makes a pleasant chapter for those who delight in the sight of gusto and agree with Casanova that gulling fools is a service to Yah-weh. As one takes their census from the recollections of their contemporaries one is cheered by the scantiness of the minority which has sunk into colorless, unexciting occupations, where patience and perseverance rather than craft and luck bring the rewards. Two experts in adaptation come especially to mind—Lucky Dick Dennison and a gentleman who, because of his present professional connections, prefers to be nameless. Lucky Dick had come and gone from the tables of El Paso's famous shrines, the Gem and the Wigwam, the Astor House and the Cactus, the Bacchus and Conant and Hart's, before the nameless one appeared on the scene, but they were contemporaries in the spirit. When the old-timers' position began to weaken, Lucky Dick turned evangelist. He went back to the small town circuit in Indiana and Illinois, where exorcising devils pays even better than manipulat-

ing keno decks, and there died in comfort and the sweet stench of sanctity.

The other still lives. In fact, if he holds the right thought with sufficient tension he may live forever. In one of the Eddyite congregations of a Southwestern city he is Truth's prize conquest over Error. He is exhibited as the only gambler who has ever been cured by Christian Science of even the faintest desire to gamble more. When the young bad men of the new West seek to reclaim themselves by denying the existence of matter, the healers send them around to this Eddyite of the sporting past. He alone knows how to shuffle effectually the metaphysical cards so that the house never fails to win.

The more intellectual callings, indeed, seem to have had an irresistible fascination for the swashbuckling sons of Lady Luck. There was a mayor of El Paso once whose very nickname suggested poker. Once he drew a gun on an El Paso editor for referring to his alleged professional past on Mississippi steamboats. But the West was already decadent—it was in the early 90's—and the gun failed to go off. This personage took up politics when gambling began

to retreat into the shadows. In that science he rose to the high dignity of doorkeeper to the Texas house of representatives. His subsequent mayoralty, hardly a comedown, fell in a period when El Paso was just rounding into a lasting state of grace. When he died the newspapers no more thought of referring to his old nickname than ministers preaching on February 12 think of quoting from Lincoln's repertoire of moral anecdotes.

In the same category of strategists of fate was W. A. Moorehouse, "King of the Gamblers." The Old-Timer says he owned a stake in most of the El Paso halls in the great days. A cool, self-possessed, saving personage, he sold out at the right time, and lived long in Denver, a realtor and a magnate. Up in Albuquerque, Dago Joe at last accounts still ministered to the public taste for doubtful validities by serving it motion pictures in several theaters. Dago Joe evidently was of the newer breed of gamblers. He got his start by playing the violin in one of the celebrated halls of the 90's. While he played, he staked his partner with the dimes and half dollars contributed by the local music lovers, and as he wandered about the tables his variations of

tune and tempo told his partner what was in their hands.

But the prince of the craft was Colorado Charlie. He wore his blond hair down over his shoulders. His watch chain, coat and shirt sparkled with nuggets. As righteousness approached by waves and recessions, he was not above street-faking. His wife, Minnie, was a distinct asset in both arts. So far as I can learn, she was the only woman who ever worked as a professional dealer in the Southwest. The Old-Timer further assures me that she was "the cutest little trick you ever saw, not four and a half feet high, and always dressed in the height of the Parisian fashion"—plainly some one to stop and look at. Her fame lingers in El Paso even after 30 years.

When the last blow fell, Colorado Charlie and Minnie set off on a patent-medicine selling expedition through Mexico. They were gone for years. When Mexico was worked out, they drifted through Central America. Charley finally died of some tropical fever in Guatemala. But they had made enough for Minnie to enjoy an easy old age in Los Angeles.

One hopes it was made exciting by continu-

ous dressing "in the height of the Parisian fashion."

IV

There were some, of course, who bucked fate and stayed in the business. It was not usually a healthy proceeding. The Black Stallion, Steel Face George Gregory and Segundo, all old-time dealers of parts, drifted back and forth with the ebb and flow of semi-concealed gambling until they were lost to human ken. Red Hart, a beefy ex-stage driver, after the failure of the illustrious Conant and Hart hall in El Paso, seems to have become contaminated with the new professionalism. In his great days Hart had had a famous fight with a cheater in Colorado. The crook tried to knife him. Hart grabbed the blade of the knife, and by superior wrist power, deflected it from his own vitals into the heart of the other man, who still held the haft. Hart lost a fingertip in the fray. But what is a finger tip against a lifelong fame? Later, however, Hart became suspected of doubtful financial transactions in Juarez and disappeared — presumably into Mexico.

His partner, Conant, stuck, and came to a violent end. After a quarrel over cheating charges, some one finished him with a double-barreled shotgun in Arkansas. Conant, a violent person, no doubt rather enjoyed it. In his wealthy years, he built the first electric light plant in El Paso—an exclusive source of supply for the Conant and Hart studio. He imported the Cincinnati Female Symphony Orchestra of twelve pieces and kept the musical ladies on the job in the saloon attached to his gambling hall for several years. He would buy $500 watches, get bored in a few days by their ticking, and throw them out the window to watch the Mexican boys scramble for pieces on the sidewalk. He would smash up new and gaudy buggies at the principal business corners. A gentleman plainly made for an ostentatiously gory end! He had, tradition says, begun life as an oil promoter.

Most who stuck to gambling traveled far in search of better fields. The Cherokee Kid was a wanderer of the sporting wastelands for nearly 30 years before he settled down as a tobacco capitalist and a writer—or inspirer—of *American Magazine* articles on Why I Am a Better

Man Since I Quit. Luke Short, who had been an adept at two-gun work when even Kansas was wild and woolly and who made it dark for numerous Eastern con men with that same weapon when they first penetrated Tombstone, Arizona—Luke ended his days traveling aimlessly on a gasoline truck in the rural districts.

Harry Jones packed off in the middle 90's for the South African diamond fields, and left El Paso destitute of highbrow gamblers. For Jones was not only the son of a clergyman—a definite sign of intellectuality on the frontier in those days—but also an Annapolis graduate. He had the chance percentages in all the games worked out in elaborate mathematical formulæ which gave him, no doubt justly, a reputation for vast erudition. He was the master of secret and involved systems of play, which the old-timers, professional and amateur alike, tried to penetrate with bated breath. When his enormously long and competent fingers worked, as no other man's could, over the check rack, audiences have been known to applaud him as if he were a baseball pitcher or bull fighter.

Jones had a joint in Johannesburg, and then took in the Boer War—no doubt with a first lien

on Tommy Atkins' pay envelope. He drifted back to El Paso when the century was some five years old. But the new righteousness made life dull for his artist's soul, and he soon disappeared again on an exploring expedition into Central Africa. The Old-Timer thinks he must have won a jungle, with kingship and harem attachments, and stayed on. In the Southwest he is still remembered as a sharply distinct individual because he read books.

Another military personage, old Ben Moore, had been with Quantrell's guerillas. Ben was white-bearded and broke when gambling collapsed on the border. But from time to time friends and relatives staked him and he tried his hand with the new gamesters across the Rio Grande. It never seemed to do him much good. He was broke most of the time for 20 years. Only a little more than a year ago he collected a trifling legacy and went down to Mexico prospecting for gold. Coming back in the old-fashioned way, afoot—evidently the legacy had gone the old-fashioned way, too—he was drowned in the Rio Grande. After all, he was only 80, and why shouldn't he try to swim a river only a little in flood?

V

But the farthest and fastest and luckiest travelers were the Bradley boys. Perhaps nobody else knows it, but old-timers in El Paso cherish a solemn pride in the fact that their town, under the patronage of Lady Luck, became the financial fairy godmother of the most lusciously extravagant, the socially most exclusive gambling house in These States.

The Bradley boys were the founders of the Beach Club in Palm Beach, where one has to be worth obvious money even to get in. They got their start in El Paso in its great days. The Southwest first knew Ed Bradley when he ran away from the straitened opportunities of Fundamentalist Kentucky and washed dishes in a restaurant in Las Vegas, New Mexico. But he was already gambling on the side. In a year or two he gambled his way through the New Mexico centers down to El Paso. He had saved. He and McLean bought the Wigwam, and Ed brought on his brother John as a junior partner.

Shortly the life of El Paso took on a new and exhilarating elegance. The Bradleys brought to the management of their establishment the man-

ners of Kentucky's ante-bellum gentry. They also, as they prospered, bought $20 shirts, made by the dozen in New York; silk fancy waistcoats, Prince Albert coats, silk hats, and other accessories ordered from Bond Street. They introduced the frontier to the art of dressing for dinner. Even the new electric light plant and the Cincinnati Female Symphony Orchestra at Conant and Hart's withered a trifle before such brilliance.

The climax came when the Bradleys imported a pack of fifteen pedigreed hounds—at $500 a hound, say the old-timers—a stable of hunters, and a set of hunt club costumes, designed after the latest British models, and began chasing the luckless jack-rabbits and coyotes of the Texas deserts up the slopes of Mount Franklin. Every morning El Pasoans awoke to the pack's wild music and the noble winding of horns. There were old-timers who learned what "yoicks" meant and that the proper address to a well-bred dog is "To heel!"

The Bradleys were artists. They realized that climax cannot be built on climax indefinitely, least of all on a frontier. The hunt was their last innovation. When the jack-rabbits got

thoroughly suspicious, they sold the Wigwam at an immense profit. It was enough to set up Ed as a junior partner of the instructive Mr. Canfield and John in the brokerage business. The way to Palm Beach—and to such amusing extravagances as backing the Dr. Cook polar expedition—stood broadly and smilingly open.

VI

I wonder, though, if Si Ryan did not have the right idea of how to dispose of an old-time gambler. Si died when his Astor House was making money—when he could put $25,000 of the day's winnings in a sack and toss it behind the bar at night and know it was safe—when bank presidents and railroad magnates sought his company for the social éclat it brought them among their fellows, and Mexican caballero generals of the Diaz régime paid him ceremonious visits and delighted to line up at his bar and drink champagne with him in hospital quarts—when he was king of the dance hall frolics—over all the fathers and grandfathers of vestrymen, Kiwanians and Rotarians-to-be—when his silk hat, diamonds and watch chains

made the St. Patrick's Day parades occasions of splendor almost matching the forays of the Bradley hunt—when the taking up of a relief collection for El Paso's annual flood victims was made into a pageant by the sight of Si, high enthroned on the top of an old clothes pile, looming mountainously above the biggest dray in town—when at his growl, "Be good, boys, the Eastern gurrls are comin'," the Astor House bar and gaming room became, with much sweeping off of sombreros and clearing of throats, as solemn and pure of speech as a church, and the last noisy drunk was thrust into and locked in the "For Men Only" compartment, just as the head of the procession of Whitcomb tourists from Boston or Nashville sidled somewhat nervously, with flourishing bustles and sheep's haunch sleeves, through the open door—when the town was as proud of him as it was of its new mansions, because, just before the Corbett-Sullivan affray in its neighborhood, visitors had mistaken him for the great John L., and indeed John L. had complimented him openly on the resemblance—when he was famous for an appetite which caused all the boarding houses and table d'hôte places to charge him double rates

—when he was sure of a funeral put on with all the state and ceremony the Church of Rome affords, with the Mexican population for miles around trailing emotionally in the rear—when he could leave enough to enable his old-maid sister to move out of her South Boston tenement into magnificence.

Si Ryan trailed all the clouds of all the gustos with him. Perhaps that is why they are no more to be found along Main streets of the Southwest.