Things as They Are

Essays by Albert Jay Nock

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Edited by Isaac Waisberg

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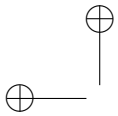
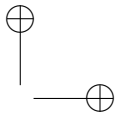

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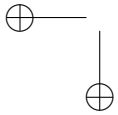
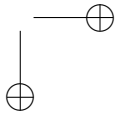

Editor's Note

Of the essays gathered here, the following have not appeared in any previous collection of Nock's essays: "Are All Men Human?" "What Are Elections For?" "Progress Toward Collectivism," "Democracy and Delusion," "The Amazing Liberal Mind," "Wanted: Honest Radicals," "What is Democracy?" "College is No Place to Get an Education," "The Triumph of the Gadget," and "On the Practice of Smoking in Church." The others have appeared either in one of the collections prepared by Nock himself or in *The State of the Union: Essays in Social Criticism* (ed. Charles H. Hamilton, 1991) or *The Disadvantages of Being Educated and Other Essays* (ed. Robert M. Thornton, 1996).

Isaac Waisberg

Contents

What We All Stand For

(Subtitle: "The Significance of the Behavior of a Community Toward Its Citizens Who Burned a Man Alive." Published in the *American Magazine*, February 1913. Cf. John Jay Chapman's "Coatesville" in *Memories and Milestones*.)

On Sunday evening, August 13, 1911, at the hour when churches dismiss their congregations, a human being named Zack Walker was taken by violence out of the hospital at Coatesville, Pennsylvania, where he lay chained to an iron bedstead, in the custody of the law, suffering from a shot-wound, apparently self-inflicted.

The bedstead was broken in half, and the man, still chained to the lower half, was dragged half a mile along the ground, thrown upon a pile of wood, drenched with oil, and burned alive.

Other human beings to the number of several hundred looked on in approval. When Walker with superhuman strength burst his bonds and tried to escape, they drove him back into the flames with pitchforks and fence-rails, and held him there until his body was burned to ashes.

Those who could get fragments of his charred bones took them off as souvenirs.

All this happened because the day before, the 12th, Walker had shot and killed a human being named Rice, a private policeman at the steel-mills. Rice was not shot in the discharge of his duty. He was off duty, and perhaps a quarter of a mile off his premises, his beat. He was on the outskirts of the horrible region called Murderers' Gulch, where the negro mill-hands live. Walker lived, if one calls it living, in a hovel there. Perhaps Walker killed Rice in self-defense. He claimed this, at any rate, in a confession which he made after being captured next day. Whether he told the truth or not will never be known. There were no witnesses.

However, he was burned alive. Why was it done? There was no fear of his cheating the law. Nowhere in the United States could a negro cheat the law for such an offense committed against a white man – unless, possibly, he were a very rich negro, and Zack Walker was miserably poor. The citizens of Coatesville had no fear for the "majesty of the law," whatever that is. It was perfectly safe. No one even thought of it.

Nor were they rose to frenzy by a crime committed against a leading citizen. Rice was far from being a popular idol. He was an obscure person, almost as obscure as Walker himself, not distinguished by anything that would make his life in any sense a public property. In mind and morals he seems to have been about the usual run of man one finds discharging the doubtful function of private policeman for the owners of an industrial plant.

Nor again – and this is worth particular notice – did the crime arise from race-hatred. There is no feverish

and sensitive traditional race-feeling in Coatesville which might have brought forth this lynching out of whole cloth, as it does occasionally in some parts of the South. Coatesville is a Northern town. What traditions it has are those of Quakerdom. There is the current accepted commonplace, of course, that the negro is an inferior race – but, dear me, that is everywhere! People have said to me, "Well, but might not this same thing have happened to a Hungarian or Slav laborer, under the same circumstances?" Certainly it might; but it was just a *little more* likely to happen to a negro. Just as when, for instance, a negro boy and a white boy start out under equivalent conditions to look for work in New York, Boston, Detroit, Minneapolis, or Seattle, the negro boy is a *little less* likely to land a job than the white boy. This *little more* and *little less* measure the limit of race-prejudice in Coatesville as elsewhere in the North.

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Finally, the lynching of Walker was not hatched out of deliberate and coldblooded wickedness. It had been premeditated, no doubt, but almost certainly not in the spirit that most of us would suspect. Telephone-messages went out of Coatesville the day before, bearing invitations to the lynching if the man were caught. Telegrams were sent to certain papers in New York and Philadelphia, asking how many words they would run in a lynching-story. But no archdevil with a cool and scheming brain sat up in his office plotting the thing out and apportioning the details around among his minor devilry. No one organized a set scheme of crime for

purposes of his own. The crime was without purpose and without fruit. It served no one, appeased no one, consoled no one. It accomplished nothing that process of law was not altogether certain to accomplish better.

If the lynching had been due to any of these causes, this magazine would not publish the story. This magazine is interested in *civilization*, – the humanizing of men in society, – and we publish this story because through it we are able to present a clear picture of a kind of community life that by many, in spite of repeated warnings, is still thought to have the elements of civilization in it. It neither has them nor can have them. Where life is lived and industry carried forward on the conditions that prevail in Coatesville, – and that means nearly all our industrial towns and cities, – civilization is wholly impossible. Wealth there may be, and luxury, and all the apparatus of civilization, but civilization itself cannot be had on those terms.

And as our first exhibit we call attention to the fact that the idea of lynching Walker sprang, one may say, out of mere idleness. The people of Coatesville burned Walker in a spirit hardly different from that you see in a crew of gutter-bred youngsters who torture a dog to death – from no deep ground of hatred of the dog or his kind, but more than anything because their ordinary life is lived on a plane where such acts are not seen to be wholly alien, unnatural, and frightful. It was a crime of callousness, of sheer indifference to human distress and pain.

Let us follow the outlines of the story. The whole press of the United States broke forth in a chorus of indignant execration. Governor Tener issued a proclamation.

Drinking-places in Coatesville were immediately closed by the authorities, fearing (what irony!) an outbreak of the negroes! The State constabulary was called out, and the quiet streets of Coatesville they patrolled on horseback, with dragoon revolvers at their hand. It was a ludicrous sight; for the negroes made no trouble, gave no intimation of making any, had not the faintest idea of making any. The original mob of whites, too, had melted away in a few moments. As soon as their horrible and savage sport was over, they dispersed at once and went about their business.

Half a dozen arrests were made within a week; all of them very obscure, poor people, some of them boys. Not one of the instigators was apprehended, nor one of the ringleaders.

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Under a very vigorous and sweeping charge from Judge Butler the grand jury found some true bills. Mr. Cunningham, the assistant attorney-general, came down from Harrisburg to assist the district-attorney, Mr. Gawthrop. Application was made for a change of venue, to have the trials take place in some other part of the State, before a non-local jury. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania refused the request. No reason was assigned.

The cases were promptly brought to trial at West Chester, the county seat of Chester County, where Coatesville is. The trial jury brought in a verdict of *not guilty* in each and every case, and the prosecution collapsed. The prisoners received an ovation from such of the Coatesville populace as went to West Chester to attend the trials,

and again on their return to Coatesville from the stay-at-homes who came to the station to meet them.

Pinkerton's detectives were put on the case to ferret out the ringleaders, but their work came to nothing. The State police looked into the matter also, but their principal operative, Mr. Cady, died under mysterious circumstances while still at work, and his evidence also mysteriously disappeared. It is supposed to have been sent to Harrisburg, but of this nothing is known.

Thus it was shown that in the year 1911, in Pennsylvania, in the heart of a Quaker settlement, there could be committed as atrocious, idle, and purposeless a crime as ever was committed in the world – a human being burned to death merely to make a hoodlum holiday – and its perpetrators escape scot-free.

When the prosecution failed and the State and local authorities withdrew their agents, the American Association for the Advancement of Colored People quietly entered the field. If the issue of civilization is finally enforced upon Coatesville and the State of Pennsylvania, the credit will belong to this noble society. I am glad of the opportunity to praise them. With inadequate means, lukewarm support, and with most avenues of publicity closed to them, these people have given themselves to the most unpopular cause in the world, yet one which is obviously fundamental to civilization – equality of opportunity for a great, unprivileged, overborne, unhappy section of our people. As long as *any* are victims of inequality, as long as *any* are exploited or dispossessed, there can be no civilization – and this means negro human beings as well as white.

The Association for the Advancement of Colored People employed William J. Burns to put his operatives into Coatesville. This took place in the summer of 1912. In September the chairman of the society, Mr. Oswald Garrison Villard, its attorney, Mr. Wherry, and the writer of this article, accompanied Mr. Burns to Harrisburg and laid the results of the investigation before Governor Tener.

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The Governor's attitude was all that could be desired. He was well-informed about the case, fair, candid, and interested. He said plainly that he regarded the Coatesville affair as "one of the failures of the administration." He discussed the most intimate aspects of the case, the reach of Chester County politics, the stress of influential friendships, and all the suspected reasons for the paralysis of statutory justice, in the frankest way. He listened to the advice of Mr. Burns, promised that the case should be reopened at once, and carried through to a summary end, "let the chips fall where they would." He expressed complete agreement with Mr. Burns as to the proper methods to pursue.

Now after these external facts of history, let me give a few inside facts of a plainer and simpler kind – if any could be simpler.

There has never been a time since the lynching of Zack Walker, nor is there now, when a good detective would have any trouble worth talking about in laying hands on the instigators and ringleaders of that crime, or in getting sound evidence against them. The local

police force in Coatesville could have had them within fifteen minutes – could have had them, in fact, before the crime was committed. They can get them now. Let alone a detective, a good lively newspaper man could go to Coatesville and get them inside of ten days. Everyone knows this: it is a matter of open and notorious fact. Governor Tener knows it; the State and county authorities know it.

There is no doubt about it. *But what good would it do?*

People are largely addicted to a number of curious delusions about statutory law, one of which is that it works by some kind of natural inherent force residing in itself. Really, it does nothing of the kind. Samuel M. Jones of Golden Rule fame, one of the wisest as well as best of men, said that law means anything the people will back up. It means precisely that. Also, anything the people will not back up is not law, however clearly it is laid down on the statute-books, and cannot be enforced. And here is the reason of the great "failure of justice," as the popular term goes, following the Coatesville lynching. Freely concede that the whole prosecuting force, from the Governor down, was in deadly earnest and did the very best they could – why not? The matter of their sincerity, important when taken by itself, becomes in the larger view almost immaterial. Whatever they did or however they did it, the indisputable fact is that in proposing to enforce the elemental statutory law against murder – murder unprovoked, inexcusable, and peculiarly and indescribably fiendish – they were proposing something that *the people would not and will not back up.*

Why, look at it! The first case tried was on a *confession*, – a confession of complicity, under the charge of Judge Butler to the grand jury, whereby he instructed them that every person abetting the act with his presence and assent was legally guilty of murder, – and the verdict of the trial jury was *not guilty.* Material witnesses left Coatesville with more money than they had ever seen in a lump sum in the whole course of their lives. No attempt was made to detain them before they left or reach them after they had gone. It is perfectly well known where they went and where they are now.

The case of the police officer Howe failed even to come to trial. He was in charge of the prisoner Walker at the hospital, on guard with a loaded revolver. He made no resistance, fired not a shot – this, too, in face of the fact that only one man at a time could enter the room. Howe was not removed from the force – he was suspended for a few days, but no more. The chief of police, instead, *while under indictment for manslaughter*, stood for reappointment, and won. There is no need to say more – one can make a clear enough inference about the direction of public opinion from the items given.

But we are not commenting on this technical "failure of justice," for we are not interested in obtaining convictions or in seeing that the majesty of the law is vindicated – whatever that grandiose term amounts to. So far from believing that if you can only get enough people in jail or on the gallows, everybody will be moral and happy, we seem to see that murder, brutality, violence, and hatred mean about the same thing inside the law as outside, and have about the same effects when administered by law as when administered against the law. Our interest

lies in *reasons*, in *causes*. Surely, if any statutory law has a moral sanction, it is the elemental law against murder. Why do the people of Coatesville nullify it? What are the reasons for public opinion remaining at such an appallingly low level?

They are not far to seek. One may see them from the car-windows before one leaves the train at the Coatesville station. Coatesville is typically one of those industrial towns that William Cobbett called *Hell-holes*. It is a perfect miniature model of an American industrial city, so small that you can take it in at a glance, and so accurately drawn to scale that not an essential part is missing or a non-essential feature added. That is why it is such a superb model, the best I have ever seen, for social study. The smaller industrial towns of Massachusetts and Rhode Island I have observed to be much the same. There is great advantage in getting small accurate models of great subjects before one's eyes. Let the most ardent stand-pat protectionist, for instance, sit one forenoon through by the gates of some French town and watch a community trying to tax itself rich by the operation of the *octroi*, or import tax, as the old women bring in their chickens and butter and their handful of eggs. Let Mr. Taft himself do this, and I warrant he will go away a free-trader, because he can *see* the incidence of that tax upon the home consumer as no one can see it when levied at the ports of a great nation. So to see at a glance the whole cross-section of our industrial system, and to see how its works and ways bear upon civilization, one may find one's best model in Coatesville.

Civilization can only be had upon its own terms; and first of these is a diffused, material well-being. Next (if,

indeed, it is not rather a part or adjunct of the first) is the thing one observes with such delight in France and Italy – a homogeneous population. Now the distinguishing feature of our *Hell-holes*, our American industrial centers, is the entire absence of these. At Coatesville material well-being is strictly concentrated, and the three several strata of society stand as distinct as layers in a jelly cake. Coatesville has about twelve thousand population. The immense stratum of the exploited is composed of three thousand negroes and thirty-five hundred "foreigners," – in Coatesville the term is applied to human beings who come there from Hungary and the Slavic countries to work for $1.38 per day, and live most wretchedly. All these work in the two great iron and steel-plate mills – the Worth plant and the Lukens plant. Their wages, their conditions of work and living, preclude either happiness or decency. It is an interesting fact that while the Lukens mill has been here one hundred and twelve years, as late as 1900 there were only five "foreigners" in Coatesville. There are thirty-five hundred now. The "protected American workman" might note this coincidence if he likes, dating as it does from the palmy McKinley-Hanna days down through the uplifting administration of Mr. Roosevelt to the Payne-Aldrich-Taft comedy.

Above the stratum of the exploited is another, a smug, close-mouthed, unintelligent middle stratum that gets its living out of the town, by trading and in other ways. This class is characterized by an extreme apprehensiveness about anything that will "hurt business" or "hurt the town." Immediately after the lynching this class began to agonize over the prospect of publicity, just as the same

class in Pittsburgh became hysterical over "the good name of Pittsburgh" when the press began to air the scandal of councilmanic graft a couple of years ago. Why, it is almost laughable to see the distrust that members of this class show toward each other when the lynching is mentioned! It is a tabooed subject, a thing to be hushed up at all costs. Paraphrasing Sydney Smith's remark, this class (I hope no one will imagine me ignorant that there are honorable exceptions) would cheerfully bear any burden of infamy, however great, rather than any odium of publicity, however slight.

Above this is the stratum of the exploiting class. It is very small. I gladly put to its credit the one long mark that it is a resident class. The mill-owners do not, as in Lawrence, Massachusetts, for example, live off the scene of their exploitation. The steel-mills are family concerns, not in the trust, and the owners have made immense fortunes. The owners are Quakers. I am told that they will not manufacture armor for battle-ships nor sell their products for any purpose connected with war. But they pay their laborers less, on the average, than two dollars a day, and permit or promote for them conditions of living worse than one can find in the countries from which the "foreigners" have emigrated.

"*An upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized.*" There you have precisely the cross-section of Coatesville, as of Lawrence, Pittsburgh, Pawtucket, Providence, Fall River, all our myriad *Hell-holes* – nay, you have the cross-section of whole commonwealths, for from the standpoint of civilization what is Pennsylvania but a magnified Coatesville or Massachusetts but a projection of Fall River? There is no

diffused material well-being in either State. There is nothing like a homogeneous people in either State. So if we stop measuring the civilization of a community by its balances of trade, or the number of its newspapers, population, miles of railway, banks, finance companies, manufactured products, and the like, and measure it by the simple tests we have applied to Coatesville, we find that Pennsylvania is not a civilized community, that Massachusetts is not a civilized community.

This conclusion is accurate and sufficient. It modifies our conception of such horrible happenings as the Coatesville *auto da fé*. The lynching of Zack Walker was a frightful tragedy; but let us never forget that it was only a *registration*. It was as much a *registration* of the industrial progress of the United States as the consular reports, or the balance-sheet of an industrial corporation. We do not want to interfere with Governor Tener in his attempt to "uphold the majesty of the law" – we are merely not interested. Plenty of people there will be without us to enthuse over a few convictions, – if anybody is ever convicted, – and to imagine that society has somehow greatly redeemed and purified itself by a few hangings, a few imprisonments. But we cannot give our interest to so suspiciously short and easy a method with so great a problem. Hanging the murderers of Zack Walker seems to us like smashing the thermometer that has registered an unpleasant temperature. Smash the thermometer by all means, if one gets any comfort out of it; but the weather will be just as hot. Hang the lynchers of Zack Walker by all means, if one has any appetite for mere vengeance; but we wish to point out that nothing has been done for civilization as long as

we leave untouched an industrial system that keeps on producing *an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized.*

The lynching was a frightful crime, but it is over, it is past remedy. The warning remains – a warning to examine carefully the ground of our industrial life, the life which has made our immense fortunes and our immense poverty and misery, made our millionaires, made our obstinate inequalities, made our *Hell-holes*; and instead of giving us civilization, a homogeneous people, progressing toward a harmonious and general perfection, issues only in *an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, a lower class brutalized.*

Are All Men Human?

(Published in *Harper' Magazine*, January 1933. In the same issue of the magazine: "The Problem of Faith" by Aldous Huxley.)

In an essay called, "Why We Do Not Behave Like Human Beings," Mr. Ralph Adams Cram sets forth the thesis that the vast majority of us do not behave like human beings because we are not. The great nineteenth-century doctrine of progressive evolution, which makes *homo sapiens* the crowning glory of creation, is baseless; evolution does not work that way, but is catastrophic rather than progressive. *Homo sapiens* is a zoologist's classification, not a psychologist's. From the latter's standpoint, most members of *homo sapiens* are not human beings at all; the human being is an occasional product, whereof the mass of *homo sapiens* is merely the raw physical material. Psychically, this mass is not differentiated in any essential respect from certain classes in what we call "the lower orders" of creation, and it has not undergone any essential change since the Neolithic Period. Except for certain camouflages, and certain proficiencies acquired

chiefly in a mimetic way, it is precisely what it was ten thousand years ago. It is to-day, as it was then, merely the basic raw material out of which, by some process as yet undetermined, the occasional "human being" is formed as a species which is psychically distinct from that of his zoological fellows.

It may be said that while Mr. Cram is a great authority on architecture, he is not an authority on these matters, and is, therefore, not in a position to command overmuch serious attention to what he says about them. This might all be very well if he stood alone, but he does not stand alone; other writers have lately put out the same idea independently. If true, it is the most important news that has come before the world since the Middle Ages. Are we, or are we not, right in accepting the purely zoological classification of human beings? Are we, or are we not, right in assuming that every member of *homo sapiens* is a Man? This is the question that I think should engage the profound consideration of anthropologists and psychologists, for the answer to it seems to me to go to the root of our entire system of values, moral, political and social.

A few months ago I published anonymously some diffident speculations about the nature of man, and this brought me from Dr. S. D. McConnell his remarkable book called *Immortability.* Doctor McConnell is one of the ablest men in America, and has put in an uncommonly long lifetime on the study of his subject. He has apparently trued up his work by every available kind of special authority, and so far as I can see, it is thoroughly scientific in spirit as well as in form. At the outset he

lays down the exact fundamental thesis that Mr. Cram has laid down in his essay:

> "It has been generally taken for granted that 'Man' occupies a unique and solitary place at the head of the ranks of living creatures, with an impassable chasm between him and them. For the naturalist this is satisfactory, but for the psychologist it is wholly misleading. Psychic phenomena disregard it entirely. The classification is determined by physical data solely. The problem... has been hopelessly obscured by the traditional presumption that all those living creatures classed as Man on physical grounds are also Man on psychical grounds... The broad lines of demarkation which mark off species from species as to physical structure and function, do not at all coincide with the path by which mental evolution has climbed. The point... will be found, not at that which separates man from brute, but at that which separates one kind of man from the rest."

Again, in another place Dr. McConnell says:

> "There are psychic relations between man and animal, even more intimate and real than the physical connection of man with man. Measured by psychic standards, the interval between the lowest man and the highest man is a hundredfold greater than that between the lowest man and the brute."

Meanwhile, three thousand miles away, the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset writes a brilliant book called *The Revolt of the Masses*, which, to me at least, is quite unintelligible on any other assumption than that a portion of the human race is psychically a distinct species, answering only physically to the zoological classification of *homo sapiens*.

II

If the vast majority of what we call the human race are not human beings at all, then certainly a great many things that have always puzzled the moralist are fully accounted for; but they are accounted for in a way that must be far more disheartening to the moralist than his present way of accounting for them. Certain traits and instincts that we commonly speak of as belonging to "human nature" are put over into an entirely different category, but the worst of it is that when they are put there they look a great deal more formidable and discouraging than they did before. If they really belong to brute nature, not to human nature, and if the poor brute *homo sapiens* has made no appreciable headway against them in ten thousand years, what prospect is there that at the end of another ten thousand he will have done any better? None that I can see. The moralist's hope that he will somehow progressively evolve himself across the chasm that separates his species from the generality of mankind, seems to be without foundation. There seems little chance that he will ever graduate himself into a life that is properly human. Like most intelligent animals, he can be to some extent domesticated, to some extent instructed, and so long as nothing too strongly moves him to forget his training, he will behave in a conventional accord with it; but that is about the best he can ever be counted on to do. Again, like the bee or the ant or the beaver, he can organize a society very efficiently for certain purposes, but those purposes will never be human purposes, nor will this society ever become a human society.

Here, apparently, we have an explanation of the anomalies that our so-called human society has always presented, and also an indication of the way that a thoughtful person should regard them – assuming, of course, that the explanation is valid. During the late war, for example, I had the instructive experience of seeing numbers of people who were well placed in civil society, acting like maddened apes. If you described their conduct to a man of science, he could not possibly tell you whether it was the conduct of "man" or "beast." If these people were human beings, they presented a disturbing anomaly, no doubt, and the reflective person would take note of it accordingly. But if they were not human beings, their conduct was regular enough, and it would make an entirely different impression on a reflective person's sensibilities.

There is only an apparent anomaly, too, in the phenomenon of a "human" society motivated by ruthless acquisitiveness. Professor Sakolski's recent book, *The Great American Land Bubble*, is the first attempt, as far as I know, at a history of land-speculation in America, and is correspondingly valuable. For us who have been bred to the notion that "human nature" is perfectible, or even measurably improvable, it is rather dispiriting reading, for it shows two hundred years of supposedly human society motivated precisely like Carlyle's "Egyptian pitcher of tamed vipers, each struggling to get its head above the others," or as we ourselves have observed it in the days of the Florida land-boom or the "Coolidge market." But if our society is not, and never has been, preponderantly a human society, it has behaved quite as one would expect it to behave. It is characteristic of brute nature to take and keep all it can get, regardless

of the needs of others of its kind, and also to exploit or capitalize those needs for its own benefit, when possible. If, therefore, the mass-man is not a human being, but purely a brute, there is no anomaly in his doing so, and no one should be surprised or particularly grieved at his behavior; and right here one makes the interesting observation that hardly any one is surprised or grieved. Most of his fellow-beings instinctively accept his behavior as natural, and think nothing of it; and possibly this instinctive acceptance might be held to have some evidential value in this matter of determining the mass-man's psychical status.

In fact, I do not at the moment recall a single apparent anomaly in the collective behavior of man that this idea does not resolve. It accounts for the curious fact that a society will always take the short-time point of view on its own interests. Brutes do not look beyond the prospect of immediate benefit; it is this trait that enables trappers to victimize them. Similarly, a whole society will plunge headlong into a war or an election or any kind of mass-movement with no thought whatever of anything beyond an immediate interest, even though it may be clear that in the long run the movement will be ruinously unprofitable; and this trait enables the sagacity of demagogues to become effective. The mass-action of people is proverbially compared to the mass-action of sheep; and if in the main they are no more nearly human than sheep, the proverb merely transfers itself from the realm of allegory to the realm of fact.

If the human being is psychically a species distinct from *homo sapiens*, we should naturally expect the mass-man to be a great deal handier at a mechanical enterprise

than at a moral enterprise; and so, in fact, he is. There is nothing more remarkable about him than the immense disparity between his mechanical proficiency and his moral proficiency. The mechanical wonders of the radio, or of stagecraft, or of printing and electrotyping are almost insignificant by comparison with the moral wonder of the uses to which they are most commonly put. Henry George once remarked how strange it was that human beings were smart enough to build the Brooklyn Bridge, but not smart enough to keep a lot of condemned wire from going into it. But if the promoters of this enterprise and the society behind them were alike preponderantly non-human, there is nothing strange about it. Engineers, I believe, are much venerated just now, so perhaps one risks punishment for *lèse-majesté* in saying that proficiency in engineering is not a human characteristic. Actually, however, it is not, as anyone acquainted with the proficiency of the beaver or the brown rat will testify. A human being may be a good engineer, but that a good engineer is necessarily a human being is another question altogether. A non-human society may conceivably be glad to avail itself of a bridge, glad to use it for purposes that in general may be harmless and praiseworthy enough, but are essentially no more nearly human than a beaver's purposes, and be content to take the short-time point of view on the sort of material it is made of.

Again, if the race is preponderantly non-human, one would expect it to show a blank insensitiveness to moral considerations in all the more general problems affecting its collective life; and just so, we find, it does. It is notorious that the mass-man is very little interested in either the irrationality or the injustice of his social mal-

adjustments; what interests him is their inconvenience, their unfavorable effect upon his personal concerns. The reformer finds to his chagrin that an appeal to reason or the moral sense does not get him very far, and that his cause is likely to languish unless and until some pressing sense of inconvenience arises to back him up. It was so in the case of the slave trade, for instance; moral considerations apparently had very little to do with England's abolition of the slave-trade. They seem also quite as ineffectual in the case of the traffic in drugs. Probably the influence of disinterested humanitarianism on improving the conditions of labor and the conditions of the poor, has been much exaggerated. One cannot be quite sure that it has much to do with the enormous outlay of public funds for the relief of destitute persons in England, Germany, and the United States, at the present time; at least, one notices that heretofore where there has not been, as there is now, some good collateral reason for buying off discontent and turbulence, it has never been done in any large way.

In a non-human society, again, one would expect to find moral considerations especially uninfluential in politics, and one usually does find them so; under a republican form of government, like ours, or under a quasi-republican form, like England's, one invariably finds them so. John Bright said that the British Parliament had done some good things, but he had never known it to do one merely because it was a good thing. One must also remark with interest that in a republic every extension of the franchise has been accompanied by a deterioration in the character of politics and in the personnel of the public service; and this, too, is by hypothesis what one

would look for. When England extended its franchise in the last century, Mr. Mill asked pathetically how it was possible to produce great men in a country where the test of a great mind was agreement with the opinions of small minds; and one can easily paraphrase this saying to suit the terms of our hypothesis. Allowing everything in reason for other contributing causes, there is at least a striking coincidence in the fact that the American public service, all over the land, became fully twofold more irresponsible, unscrupulous, and scandalously wasteful almost at the moment when the electorate was practically doubled by the extension of the suffrage to women.

If the truly human being is an occasional product, standing in a distinct species, one would expect him to be relatively ineffectual in the non-human society that surrounds him; and this seems always to have been the case, and never more clearly so than now. The Antonines were much respected, much beloved. After Marcus Aurelius died, it seems that almost every Roman household had a bust of him in its possession. Yet with all this, and with all the power of autocracy behind their will, the moral force of the Antonines was relatively ineffectual in improving either the quality of the Roman mass-man or the direction of Roman public affairs. We see the same apparent anomaly everywhere. The mass-man may or may not give the human being's works and ways a tribute of conventional respect; whether he does so or not depends as a rule upon the human being's civil and social status. If Marcus Aurelius had been a private person, the mass-man would probably have disregarded him. In any case, however, the mass-man's practical choice is usually for some Barabbas; at the present time,

for instance, it is a stock complaint that moral, social, and intellectual mediocrity reign supreme. But if the mass-man is not human, his choice is not anomalous, but quite natural and regular, and the existing state of society is exactly what one would expect it to be.

So one might go on throughout the long list of apparent anomalies that our society exhibits. May I say once more that I am not making out a case either for or against the hypothesis that the mass-man is not human? I am only trying to show how important it is that we should get the anthropologists and psychologists to tell us whether he is or not. Is the Akka human; the Australian black-fellow; the South African bushman? The men and women who make up the overwhelming bulk of our society to-day – are they human, or are they not? That is the question to be answered. The men of science need not trouble themselves about the logic of their answer. Let them simply establish the premise and the logical consequences of the premise will take care of themselves.

III

After reading Mr. Cram and Doctor McConnell and Señor Ortega y Gasset, I said to myself, "Here is a fine kettle of fish. Is it possible that these people really see the drift of what they are saying?" For as a matter of fact, if their premise be true, then from the human point of view the whole organization of modern society, for over a century and a half, is a thundering blunder. On its political side, the eighteenth-century doctrine of republicanism, on which the Declaration of Independence and the Federal

Constitution are based, turns out to be utterly false and mischievous. This doctrine assumes that if the mass-men take control of politics, if sovereignty be lodged in "the people" and exercised directly by them, they will in time work out a true commonwealth, a political order established on principles of justice, as set forth in the Rights of Man. The ground of this assumption, obviously, is that the mass-man is human, and therefore capable of a degree of development competent for this purpose; and indeed, if this be true, the doctrine is probably sound enough, the only postulate being that of practically unlimited time.

At the time our republic was established, Alexander Hamilton was one of many who were strongly against this doctrine. He objected to the experiment of putting sovereignty in the hands of the mass-man, and he expressed himself about it in terms that are curiously anticipatory of the idea that we are discussing. "The people," he said, "are a great beast." Now, if the anthropologists should decide that Hamilton was right about this, if the mass-man be literally and actually not human, if he be essentially incapable of any such degree of development as our eighteenth-century political theory presupposes, then surely republicanism is about the worst system that could be devised, even for the mass-man himself; for, in practice, instead of promoting any such limited development as the mass-man, in common with the other more teachable and imitative forms of animal life, is capable of making, it seems bound to reflect the very lowest common denominator of the mass-man's intelligence and character, and its tendency must be continuously to depress that denominator ever farther.

Thus instead of improving and elevating the mass-man by means of political experience, republicanism serves merely to degrade him.

This appears to be what we see taking place. The candidate for political favor is sedulously careful to approach the mass-man on a plane of intelligence and character which is never above that of the mass-man's ordinary self. It is a commonplace of republican politics that he not only does so, but must do so. The issues and policies that he presents must be such only as are adjustable to a potential majority in a mass-electorate endowed with an unlimited franchise. Thus every republican campaign reminds one of nothing so much as the scene described by Plato, where a huge, sluggish, obscene monster is surrounded by people who are assiduously flattering it, pretending to understand its noises, and in every imaginable way courting its good-will. Hence, by a selective process almost automatic, the political organization of a republican society is bound to be in control of the mass-man who is gifted merely with a low type of sagacity somewhat in excess of his fellow-creatures; whereby he is able to exploit their lack of intelligence, their vagrant attention, their superficial spirit, their hot and cold fits, their superstitions, their tendency always to run to the short-time point of view – and worst of all, their occasional good impulses, their occasional good faith, their boundless credulity, their weak hopes and weaker fears.

All this is extremely bad for the mass-man. What it does in the long run is to snarl up his society in a terrific tangle, wherein he is utterly helpless. Not only the financial genius of Hamilton but also the transcendent philosophical genius of Hegel foresaw this consequence.

Hegel said, at the outset of republicanism, that it would culminate in an unexampled catastrophe; for, when all comes to all, republicanism puts upon the mass-man a burden of responsibility which he is not only unable to bear, but wholly incapable even of comprehending. This view has been inconclusively debated ever since the end of the seventeenth century, and its satisfactory conclusion on *a priori* grounds now seems as remote as it was then. In our own history we find John Adams on one side of the question, saying that the political struggles of the mass-man, left to his own devices, could end only in "a change of impostors." On the other side we are confronted by the great name of Mr. Jefferson, who believed that the mass-man was indefinitely improvable, that he was capable of learning by political experience, and of learning fast enough to enable him to hold his society together in some sort of working order while he was learning more.

Now, it strikes me that the only way to settle this question is by determining scientifically just what the mass-man is. If the mass-man be a human being, then Mr. Jefferson's faith in him is justifiable. He can learn indefinitely by political and social experimentation, and while his society may come a hard cropper every now and then, he can pull himself together and go on experimenting; one may always be hopeful about him, no matter how badly he be mired at any given time. But if he be psychically incapable of progress beyond, say, the level of an eight-year-old human child, he cannot learn anything worth knowing from his own history, he will keep on mismanaging things as he has always done, repeating the same old mistakes, and will end in catas-

trophe and chaos; and the remarkable technology which he commands will only hasten his final downfall.

So much is obvious on the political side of his collective life; and on the social side we see again that the quality of the mass-man's future depends wholly upon what manner of being he is. On the one premise, his society may go at extremely loose ends for some time, but one may always count on his ability to straighten it out, and set it going in a better direction, with something, at least, learned from its calamitous experience. On the other premise, one can look only for a progressive essential degradation; a progressive reliance upon technology alone, a progressive contentment with a purely technological civilization; and in a practically direct ratio with this, a progressive coarsening and enfeeblement of culture, and a progressive atrophy of such moral sense as the anthropoid possesses in common with the human being.

IV

The political and social reformer, the educator and the preacher should join in this demand which I am making upon the anthropologists and psychologists, for it appears that the worth of their enterprises is absolutely conditioned by the answer to the question I am raising. In the present state of our own national politics, for instance, the reformer must surely see that this question is very pressing. Our politics is actually and by intention the simon-pure, unalloyed politics of the mass-man. Well, then, if the mass-man be human and improvable,

the reformer's enterprise is justified. He may take heart of grace, and redouble his strength. If apparently he accomplishes nothing at the moment, he has at least the sustaining consciousness that he is on the side of the future. But if the mass-man be not human and not appreciably improvable, the reformer is wasting his life, and might far better employ himself otherwise, for not only is the present against him, but the future also.

So too with the preacher and the educator. It is a noble and delightful undertaking to evangelize and educate a mass-society, if this society be by nature capable of being evangelized and educated. But surely no one would deem himself acting with the simplest of ordinary common sense if he set out to evangelize or educate a society of anthropoids. Nay, if on this premise he should set out to find the occasional human being, to seine him out of his surroundings, and evangelize or educate him, his prospects would be as little hopeful, because he would have to proceed under the handicap of conditions set by anthropoids; for the management of education and the management of organized Christianity are alike mass-management.

Let us have it out once for all with the anthropologists and psychologists; let us insist that they stand and deliver, for this question is by far the most important of all that are now before the world.

‘A Little Conserva-tive’

(Published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1936. In the same issue of the magazine: “Imaginary Persons” by Stephen Leacock.)

I often think it’s comical
How Nature always does contrive
That every boy and every gal
That’s born into the world alive
Is either a little Liber-al
Or else a little Conserva-tive.

—W. S. Gilbert, Iolanthe

Gilbert’s lines recall Professor Huxley’s pungent observation on the disadvantages of going about the world unlabeled. Early in life, he says, he perceived that society regards an unlabeled person as a potential menace, somewhat as the police regard an unmuzzled dog. Therefore, not finding any existing label to suit him, he took thought and invented one. The main difference between himself and other people, as he saw it, was that they seemed to be quite sure of a number of things about which he not only was not sure, but also suspected that

he never could be sure. Their minds ran in the wake of the first-century Gnostic sects, while his did not. Hence the term *agnostic* suggested itself to him as descriptive of this difference, and he accordingly adopted it as a label.

The great weight of Huxley's authority forced the term into common currency, where ignorance promptly twisted it into a sense exactly contrary to its philology, and contrary to the original intention which Huxley gave it. To-day when a person says he is an agnostic, it is ten to one he means that he knows the thing at issue is not so. If he says, for instance, as one of my acquaintances did the other day, that he is a thoroughgoing agnostic concerning the existence of God and the persistence of consciousness after death, he means that he is sure there is no God and that consciousness does not persist. The term is so regularly used to imply a negative certainty that its value as a label, a distinguishing mark, is false and misleading. It is like the hotel labels which unscrupulous tourists in Paris buy by the dozen and stick on their luggage as evidence that they have visited places where they have never been, and put up at hotels which they have never seen.

Something like this appears to be the common destiny of labels. It brings to mind the fine saying of Homer which I have so often quoted, that "the range of words is wide; words may tend this way or that way." There are few more interesting pursuits than that of examining the common popular connotation of labels, and observing how regularly it runs the full course from sense to nonsense, or from infamy to respectability, and back again. For example, our voting population is divided

into two major groups, Republicans and Democrats; how many of them know anything about the history of their labels? How many could describe the differentiations that the significance of these labels indicates, or could attach any actual significance whatever to them, except in wholly irrelevant terms, usually in terms which in the last analysis turn out to mean habit, money, or jobs?

The Republicans went into the pangs of parturition at Cleveland last summer, and brought forth a sorry mouse. As one of my friends put it, about the only thing their platform did not do was to give the Democratic Administration a formal endorsement. As far as one can see, all their pledges amount to is a promise to do what the Democrats have been doing, but to do it better.

Similarly the new Russian constitution seems to show merely that Stalin thinks it is easier to run things the way Mark Hanna used to run them than the way they have been run in Russia hitherto. No doubt he is right about that; but meanwhile one wonders what the word *bolshevik* will mean to the average Russian fifty years from now, and how many voters in holy Russia will know the history of the word, or even know that it has a history.

Reflections like these make one quite doubtful about Huxley's position concerning the balance of advantage and disadvantage in the matter of labels. His misfortune was in his honesty; he invented a label that precisely described him, and he could hardly have fared worse if he had worn none, for on the one hand ignorance at once invested it with an alien meaning, while on the other hand prejudice converted it into a term of reproach. I have had a curious experience lately which has caused

me to ponder afresh upon these matters, and which I am now tempted to relate.

II

For more than a quarter of a century I have been known, in so far as I was known at all, as a radical. It came about in this way: I was always interested in the *rerum cognoscere causas*, liking to get down below the surface of things and examine their roots. This was purely a natural disposition, reflecting no credit whatever on me, for I was born with it. Any success I had in its indulgence brought me the happiness that Lucretius observed as attaching to such pursuits, and I indulged it only for that reason, never seeking, and indeed never getting, any other reward. Therefore when the time came for me to describe myself by some convenient label, I took one which marked the quality that I thought chiefly differentiated me from most of the people I saw around me. They habitually gave themselves a superficial account of things, which was all very well if it suited them to do so, but I preferred always to give myself a root-account of things, if I could get it. Therefore, by way of a general designation, it seemed appropriate to label myself a radical. Likewise, also, when occasion required that I should label myself with reference to particular social theories or doctrines, the same decent respect for accuracy led me to describe myself as an anarchist, an individualist, and a single-taxer.

On the positive side, my anarchism came mainly as a corollary to the estimate of human capacity for self-

improvement which I had picked up from Mr. Jefferson. His fundamental idea appeared to be that everyone answering to the zoological classification of *homo sapiens* is a human being, and therefore is indefinitely improvable. The essence of it is that *homo sapiens* in his natural state really wishes and means to be as decent towards his fellow-beings as he can, and under favorable conditions will progress in decency. He shares this trait with the rest of the animal world.

Indica tigris agit rabida cum tigride pacem
Perpetuam; sevis inter se convent ursis,

– so long, that is, as irritating interferences, such as hunger, lust, jealousy or trespass, are kept at a minimum. Man's moral superiority over the animal consists in an indefinitely cultivable capacity and will to deal with these interferences intelligently from the long-time point of view, and thus gradually immunize himself against their irritant influence.

Granting this premise, the anarchist position appeared logical to me, as it did to Prince Kropotkin and Bakunin. Putting it roughly, if all men are human, if all bipeds classifiable as *homo sapiens* are human beings, social harmony and a general progress in civilization will be far better brought about by methods of free agreement and voluntary association than by constraint, whether directly under force, or under the menace of force which is always implicit in obedience to law.

The negative argument for anarchism seemed quite as cogent as the positive argument. The whole institution of government, wherever found and in whatever form, appeared to me so vicious and depraving that I could

not even regard it with Paine as "at its best a necessary evil." The State stood, and had stood in history as far back as I could trace its existence, as little else but an instrument of economic exploitation, a mere mechanism, as Voltaire said, "for taking money out of one set of pockets and putting it into another." The activities of its administrators and beneficiaries appeared to me as they did to Voltaire, as no more or less than those of a professional-criminal class. As Nietzsche calls it, "the coldest of all cold monsters," the State's character was so completely evil, its conduct so invariably and deliberately flagitious, that I did not see how society could possibly be worse off without it than with it, let the alternative condition be what it might.

My individualism was a logical extension of the anarchist principle beyond its narrow application to one particular form or mode of constraint upon the individual. The thing that interested me, as it interested Emerson and Whitman, was a general philosophy of life which regards human personality as the greatest and most respect-worthy object in the world, and as a complete end-in-itself; a philosophy, therefore, which disallows its subversion or submergence, whether by force of law or by any other coercive force. I was convinced that human beings do better and are happier when they have the largest possible margin of existence to regulate and dispose of as they please; and hence I believed that society should so manage itself as to leave the individual a maximum of free choice and action, even at a considerable risk of results which from the short-time point of view would be pronounced dangerous. I suppose it may be seen how remote this is from the bogus affair

of dollars and cents which is touted under the name of individualism, and which, as I showed in last February's issue of this magazine, is not individualism in any sense.

The single tax impressed me as the most equitable and convenient way of paying the cost of such matters as can be done better collectively than individually. As a matter of natural right it seemed to me that as individually created values should belong to the individual, so socially created values should belong to society, and that the single tax was the best method of securing both the individual and society in the full enjoyment of their respective rights. To the best of my knowledge these two propositions have never been successfully controverted. There were other considerations, too, which made the single tax seem the best of all fiscal systems, but it is unnecessary to recount them here.

Probably I ought to add that I never entered on any crusade for these beliefs or sought to persuade anyone into accepting them. Education is as much a matter of time as of anything else, perhaps more, and I was well aware that anything like a general realization of this philosophy is a matter of very long time indeed. All experience of what Frederick the Great called "this damned human race" shows beyond peradventure that it is impossible to tell anyone anything unless in a very real sense he knows it already; and therefore a premature and pertinacious evangelism is at best the most fruitless of all human enterprises, and at worst the most vicious. Society never takes the right course until after it has painfully explored all the wrong ones, and it is vain to try to argue, cajole, or force society out of these set sequences of experimentation. Over and above the impassioned

outpourings of the propagandist for an untried way of salvation, however straight and clear that way may be, one can always hear old Frederick saying, "*Ach, mein lieber Sacher, er kennt nicht diese verdammie Rasse.*"

But while I have never engaged in any controversy or public discussion of these matters, or even in any private advocacy of them, I have spoken my mind about them so freely and so often that it would seem impossible for anyone to mistake my attitude towards them. Only last year, in fact, I published by far the most radical critique of public affairs that has as yet been brought out here. Hence I was mildly astonished to hear the other day that a person very much in the public eye, and one who would seem likely to know something of what I have been up to during all these years, had described me as "one of the most intelligent conservatives in the country."

It was a kind and complimentary thing to say, and I was pleased to hear it, but it struck me nevertheless as a rather vivid commentary on the value and the fate of labels. Twenty, or ten, or even three years ago, no one in his right mind would have dreamed of tagging me with that designation. Why then, at this particular juncture, should it occur to a presumably well-informed person to call me a conservative, when my whole philosophy of life is openly and notoriously the same that it has been for twenty-five years?* In itself the question is

*Mr. Ralph Adams Cram's theory is that the human being is a distinct species, and that the immense majority of *homo sapiens* is not human, but is merely the raw material out of which the occasional human being is produced. I have already discussed this theory in the *Atlantic* of April 1935, in an essay called "The Quest of the Missing Link." If this be true, the anarchist position

probably worth little discussion, but as leading into the larger question of what a conservative is, and what the qualities are that go to make him one, it is worth much more.

III

It seems that the reason for so amiably labeling me a conservative in this instance was that I am indisposed to the present Administration. This also appears to be one reason why Mr. Sokolsky labels himself a conservative, as he did in the very able and cogent paper which he published in the August issue of the *Atlantic*. But really, in my case this is no reason at all, for my objections to the Administration's behavior rest no more logically on the grounds of either conservatism or radicalism than on those of atheism or homeopathy. They rest on the grounds of common sense and, I regret to say, common honesty. I resent the works and ways of the Administration because in my opinion such of them as are not peculiarly and dangerously silly are peculiarly and dangerously dishonest, and most of them are both. No doubt a person who wears the conservative label may hold this opinion and speak his mind accordingly, but so may a radical, so may anyone; the expression of it does not place him in either category, or in any category

would give way to the position of Spencer, that government should exist, but should abstain from any positive interventions upon the individual, confining itself strictly to negative interventions. I find myself inclining more and more towards Mr. Cram's view, and shall probably embrace it, but not having as yet done so, I must still call myself an anarchist.

of the kind. They mark him merely as a person who is interested in having public affairs conducted wisely and honestly, and who resents their being conducted foolishly and dishonestly.

With regard to Mr. Sokolsky, I may not, and do not, presume to doubt him when he says he is a conservative. All I may say is that I cannot well see how his paper makes him out to be one. If, now, he had said *reactionary*, I should have no trouble whatever about getting his drift, for my understanding is that he is in favor of a reaction from one distinct line of general State principle and policy back to another which has been abandoned. This is an eminently respectable position, and *reactionary*, which precisely describes it, is a most respectable term; but I cannot make it appear that this position is dictated by conservatism, or that holding this position justifies a person in calling himself a conservative.

Philology is a considerable help in these matters, but in guiding ourselves by its aid we must make an important discrimination which is set by the presence or absence of a moral factor. It is a commonplace of a language's growth that the significance of certain terms, like certain interpretations of music, becomes deformed and coarsened by tradition. I once heard a performance of the *Messiah* in Brussels, and was amazed at finding it almost a new composition, so far away it was from the English traditional interpretation, which was the only one I knew. Similarly there is no doubt that terms like *grace, truth, faith*, held very different connotations for Christians of the first century and for those of the fourth and again for those of the sixteenth, while for those of the twentieth they seem voided of all significance that

is relevant to their philology, much as our formula, *my dear sir*, means only that a letter is begun, and *yours sincerely* means only that it is ended.

In instances like these there is no moral quality discernible in a term's passage from one meaning to another which has less philological relevancy, or to one which has none. There is no evidence of any interested management of its progress. In instances where this progress has been deliberately managed, however, the case is different. The term then becomes what Jeremy Bentham calls an impostor-term, because it has thus purposefully been converted into an instrument of deception, usually in the service of some base and knavish design.

It is notorious that a managed glossary is of the essence of politics, like a managed currency, and it is highly probable that the debasement of language necessary to successful political practice promotes far more varied and corrupting immoralities than any other infection proceeding from that prolific source. Thus terms like *conservative, progressive, radical, reactionary*, as they stand in the managed glossary of politics, are made to mean whatever the disreputable exigencies of the moment require them to mean. The term *radical*, for example, stands to account for anything from bomb-throwing to a demand for better wages. Again, we all remember Mr. Roosevelt's culpable debasement of the term *tory* to further an electioneering enterprise; and the manhandling of the term *liberal* into an avouchment for the most flagrantly illiberal measures of coercion, spoliation, and surveillance is surely well enough known.

The term *conservative*, which in the course of the campaign this Summer we have heard applied to a curious

medley made up of all sorts and conditions of men, suffers the same abuse. On the one hand, Mr. Smith is a conservative, and so is Mr. Raskob, Mr. Owen Young, the denizens of Wall Street, and the whole du Pont family; while, on the other hand, so is a majority of the Supreme Court, so is Mr. Newton Baker, Mr. Wolman, Mr. Lewis Douglas, and so, it seems, am I! What an extraordinary conjunction of names! On the day I wrote this I saw a headline which said that 53 per cent of the persons polled in a questionnaire or straw-vote conducted by some publication reported themselves as "conservative." I read further, and found that when all comes to all, this means that they are against the Administration, and that their difference with the Administration is over the distribution of money.

In the glossary of politics and journalism, the commonest, nay, the invariable connotation of "conservatism" is in terms of money; a "conservative policy" is one by which a larger flow of money can be turned towards one set of beneficiaries rather than towards another, while a "radical" or a "progressive" policy is one which tends more or less to divert that flow. According to this scale of speech, the policies of Mr. Hoover and Mr. Mellon, which turned a great flow of money towards a political pressure-group of stockjobbers, speculators, shavers, were eminently conservative; while those of Mr. Roosevelt and his associates, which largely divert that flow towards a rival pressure-group of job-holders, hangers-on, single-crop farmers, unemployed persons, bonus-seekers, hoboes, are eminently radical. The designation follows the dollar. Even Mr. Sokolsky, whose valiant stand against the Administration I so much admire and so

cordially approve, seems to associate his idea of conservatism rather over-closely with "prosperity"; that is to say, with money.

So one can imagine Mr. Justice McReynolds, for instance, surveying the rank and file of his fellow-conservatives with some dismay while he wonders, like the hero of French comedy, what he is doing in that particular galley. The thought suggests that it might be a good thing all around if we who are so indiscriminately labeled as conservatives should stand for a time on the windward side of ourselves while we examine this label and see whether or not we can properly take title to wear it. What is a conservative, and what is the quality, if any, that definitely marks him out as such?

IV

This question can best be got at by considering an incident in the career of an extraordinary personage, about whom history, unfortunately, has had all too little to say. In a lifetime of only thirty-three years, Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, managed to make himself a most conspicuous example of every virtue and every grace of mind and manner; and this was the more remarkable because in the whole period through which he lived – the period leading up to the Civil War – the public affairs of England were an open playground for envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. The date of his birth is uncertain; probably it was at some time in the year 1610; and he was killed in the battle of Newbury, September 20, 1643, while fighting on the royalist side.

Falkland had a seat in the Long Parliament, which was divided on the specious issue of presbyterianism against episcopacy in the Church of England. When a bill was brought in to deprive the bishops of their seats in the House of Lords, Falkland voted for it. He was all for puncturing the bishops' pretension to "divine right," and for putting a stop to the abuses which grew out of that pretension. The presbyterian party, however, emboldened by success, presently brought in another bill to abolish episcopacy, root and branch, and Falkland voted against it.

Hampden, in a bitter speech, promptly taunted him with inconsistency. In reply, Falkland said he could see nothing essentially wrong with an episcopal polity. "Mr. Speaker," he said, "I do not believe the bishops to be *jure divino*; nay, I believe them not to be *jure divino*; but neither do I believe them to be *injuriâ humanâ*." This polity had been in force a long time, it had worked fairly well, the people were used to it, the correction of its abuses was fully provided for in the first bill, so why "root up this ancient tree," when all it needed was a severe pruning of its wayward branches, which had already been done, and for which he had voted? He could not see that there was any inconsistency in his attitude. He then went on to lay down a great general principle in the ever-memorable formula, "Mr. Speaker, when it is not *necessary* to change, it is necessary *not* to change."

Here we get on track of what conservatism is. We must carefully observe the strength of Falkland's language. He does not say that when it is not necessary to change, it is expedient or advisable not to change; he

says it is *necessary* not to change. Very well, then, the differentiation of conservatism rests on the estimate of necessity in any given case. Thus conservatism is purely an *ad hoc* affair; its findings vary with conditions, and are good for this day and train only. Conservatism is not a body of opinion, it has no set platform or creed, and hence, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a hundred-per-cent conservative group or party – Mr. Justice McReynolds and Mr. Baker may stand at ease. Nor is conservatism an attitude of sentiment. Dickens's fine old unintelligent characters who "kept up the barrier, sir, against modern innovations" were not conservatives. They were sentimental obstructionists, probably also obscurantists, but not conservatives.

Nor yet is conservatism the antithesis of radicalism; the antithesis of *radical* is *superficial*. Falkland was a great radical; he was never for a moment caught by the superficial aspect of things. A person may be as radical as you please, and still may make an extremely conservative estimate of the force of necessity exhibited by a given set of conditions. A radical, for example, may think we should get on a great deal better if we had an entirely different system of government, and yet, at this time and under conditions now existing, he may take a strongly conservative view of the necessity for pitching out our system, neck and crop, and replacing it with another. He may think our fiscal system is iniquitous in theory and monstrous in practice, and be ever so sure he could propose a better one, but if on consideration of all the circumstances he finds that it is not *necessary* to change that system, he is capable of maintaining stoutly that it is necessary *not* to change it. The conservative is a

person who considers very closely every chance, even the longest, of "throwing out the baby with the bath-water," as the German proverb puts it, and who determines his conduct accordingly.

V

And so we see that the term *conservative* has little value as a label; in fact, one might say that its label-value varies inversely with one's right to wear it. Conservatism is a habit of mind which does not generalize beyond the facts of the case in point. It considers those facts carefully, makes sure that as far as possible it has them all in hand, and the course of action which the balance of fact *in that case* indicates as necessary will be the one it follows; and the course indicated as unnecessary it not only will not follow, but will oppose without compromise or concession.

As a label, then, the word seems unserviceable. It covers so much that looks like mere capriciousness and inconsistency that one gets little positive good out of wearing it; and because of its elasticity it is so easily weaseled into an impostor-term or a term of reproach, or again into one of derision, as implying complete stagnation of mind, that it is likely to do one more harm than it is worth. Probably Huxley was wrong, for while it may be that society regards an unlabeled person with more or less uneasy suspicion, there is no doubt that it looks with active distrust upon the person who wears an equivocal and dubious label; and equally so whether one puts the label on oneself, as Huxley did, or whether it is

put on by interested persons for the purpose of creating a confusion which they can turn to their own profit.

This is true of all the terms that we have been considering, and therefore it would seem the sensible thing simply to cease using them and to cease paying attention to them when used by others. When we hear talk of men or policies as conservative, radical, progressive or what not, the term really tells us nothing, for ten to one it is used either ignorantly or with intent to deceive; and hence one can best clear and stabilize one's mind by letting it go unheeded. It is notoriously characteristic of a child's mentality to fix undue attention on the names of things, and in firmly declining to be caught and held by names one brings oneself somewhat nearer the stature of maturity.

By this, moreover, one puts oneself in the way of doing something to mature and moralize our civilization. Every now and then some prophet, like another Solomon Eagle, warns us that our civilization is at the point of collapse. We may regard these predictions as far-fetched, or we may say with Emerson, when an Adventist told him the world was coming to an end, that if so it were no great loss; or again, we may feel towards our civilization as Bishop Warburton felt towards the Church of England.* But however much or little we may think our civilization worth saving, and however we may interpret its prospects

*William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester, 1760–1779. He said, "The Church, like the Ark of Noah, is worth saving; not for the sake of the unclean beasts that almost filled it, and probably made most noise and clamour in it, but for the little corner of rationality that was as much distressed by the stink within as by the tempest without."

of impending dissolution, we may hardly hope that it can keep going indefinitely unless it breaks its bondage to its present political ideas and ideals.

We must observe, too, that it is held in this ignoble bondage largely, perhaps chiefly, by the power of words; that is to say, by the managed glossary of politics. Mr. Hoover and Mr. Mellon, for example, will be long in living down the scandalously misapplied term *conservative*, if indeed they ever do; and there is a vicious irony in the fact that Mr. Roosevelt and his associates will always be known as radicals or liberals, according as it is meant to hold them up either to blame or to praise.

The main business of a politician, as Edmund Burke said, is "still further to contract the narrowness of men's ideas, to confirm inveterate prejudices, to inflame vulgar passions, and to abet all sorts of popular absurdities"; and a managed glossary is the most powerful implement that he applies to this base enterprise. We hear a good deal about inflation at the moment, and inflation is indeed a formidable thing. Our people have no idea of what it means, and I, for one, distinctly do not care to be around when they find out what it means, for I have seen it in action elsewhere, and have seen enough. But dreadful as it is, a far worse form of inflation, the most destructive that politicians and journalists can devise, is inflation of the public mind by pumping it full of claptrap.

The words we have been discussing are standard terms in the politician's managed glossary. By recognizing them as such, and resolutely disregarding them, we should disarm the politician and journalist of much, perhaps most, of their power for evil, and thus give our civilization

the one service of which it especially stands in need. If we are looking for an example of wisdom, insight, and integrity in their application to public affairs, let us find it in Falkland. Instead of permitting our attention to be caught and held by recommendations of person, party, or policy as conservative, liberal, radical, progressive, let us rather employ it in rigorously determining what the actual needs of the situation are, and then permit it to come to rest upon the simple and sufficient formula: "Mr. Speaker, when it is not *necessary* to change, it is necessary *not* to change."

Officialism and Lawlessness

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One of our ablest lawyers, Mr. James Coolidge Carter, some years ago raised the question, What is Law? and called attention to its immense difficulty. Mr. Brand Whitlock, then mayor of Toledo, brought it up again about twenty years ago in a little monograph that never got half the attention it deserved, called, *The Administration of Law in Cities*. Both these eminent men gave the question up as unanswerable, and their discussion of the problems involved in it is one of our neglected classics. Perhaps the most useful thing that a publisher could do to-day, when the subject of law and lawlessness is so much in the public mind, would be to reprint Mr. Carter's lecture and Mr. Whitlock's essay together in a small volume and circulate it.

For when Mr. Hoover, Mr. Taft, Senator Capper, and others of our representative men undertake to reprove

us for lawbreaking, their complaints logically run back to this question. The average man's instinct knows that when Mr. Hoover talks about lawbreaking he really means statute-breaking. Anyone can tell offhand what a statute is. It is anything that certain elected persons have written down on a piece of paper, and another elected person has signed. But is a statute *per se* a law? I remember a statute passed in one of our Middle States, I believe, to the effect that two trains approaching an intersection must both come to a full stop, and neither may start again until the other has passed! Is that a law? The instinct of the average man promptly says it is not, and the judgment of instinct is borne out in the fact that no such statute is obeyed, can be obeyed, or has any power to get itself obeyed. But the moment this is acknowledged, the moment it is admitted that private judgment has any play whatever in the premises, that moment there is introduced the whole vast question, *What is law?*

Golden Rule Jones, Mr. Whitlock's predecessor as mayor of Toledo, probably did as well as anyone could with the baffling problem of defining law when he said that "law in the United States is anything that the people will back up." Emerson also observed to the same effect that "The law is only a memorandum." The Constitution is officially, as Mr. Justice Harlan was given so often to declaring it, "the fundamental law of the land." But are the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments actually law? Obviously they are not, and no one would be as much embarrassed by a serious appeal to them as those whose sworn duty it is to enforce them. From the Constitution down to the municipal ordinances of

one-horse towns, we have a mass of enactments, many of them practicable enough and some of them rather sensible, that somehow fail of being actual laws; they are not obeyed or enforced or even ever heard of, and they apparently have no power to rescue themselves from this extreme desuetude. Whichever way one looks at it, there seems a most important essential difference between a law and a statute; between a law and an ordinance; even between a law and a Constitutional provision.

II

Average human instinct, however, without being able to define this difference, is fully aware that it exists; and that is the reason why Mr. Hoover's recent admonitions fell so largely on deaf ears. Mr. Hoover implied that anything good, bad or indifferent, practicable or impracticable that a legislature enacts and that an executive signs is a law; whereas we all know that it may be, and very often is, nothing of the kind. Thomas Jefferson spoke straight from the average man's instinct when he said that the legislative enactments known as the Alien and Sedition Acts had no more effective force of law, and should have no more, "than if Congress had commanded us all to fall down and worship a golden image." We all know furthermore that this instinct, though we may not be able to make a satisfactory intellectual interpretation of it, is logically sound. Once admit Mr. Hoover's theory and, as Jefferson's comparison shows, one is led straight to the acme of absurdity. One need not veer off into any abstract questions concerning the rights of man and the

corresponding limitations which those rights put upon lawmaking bodies. It is enough to observe with Jefferson that carrying Mr. Hoover's idea of the nature of law by a short step towards its logical extreme shows it to be utterly preposterous.

Mr. Hoover's pronouncement also, I regret to say, causes him to raise other implications which, while not more culpable than the foregoing, are more directly offensive to large numbers of our citizenry. Those who assume with Mr. Hoover that a statute and a law are one and the same are prone, in their public utterances, to lump all "lawbreakers" together under a general and indiscriminate reprehension, and to regard them as beings who not only ought to be, but who in their hearts really are, ashamed of themselves. Nothing is farther from the truth; and this misapprehension shows how directly intellectual error may lead to a moral error of the first magnitude. If those who thus lecture us for our disregard of law would look into the question of what law is and what it is not, and would study the operation of fundamental human instinct on that question, they would save themselves from doing their fellow-citizens considerable injustice. In the exercise of private judgment against Mr. Hoover's theory of law, average human instinct is conscious not only of its own intellectual integrity but of its moral integrity as well; and no amount of expostulation or abuse – I can call it by no fairer word – will alter its consciousness.

The testimony of instinct comes out negatively, in the degree of respect paid to public servants according as their duties lie mainly with enactments that the common conscience of mankind does not support. Thus the police

of London, who are very little occupied with the mere *malum prohibitum*, are more highly respected than those of our cities. Before prohibition everyone thought well of our Coast Guard, but respect for that useful body has decreased notably in the last ten years. The feeling towards agents of the prohibition service amounts to repugnance. One is struck by the way most people take the news that a prohibition agent has been killed in action. They behave at best with indifference; often as if they thought he were well out of the way. Yet when a policeman dies trying to vindicate the law against homicide or burglary the same people admire his heroism.

Human nature can neither be preached nor bullied out of assent to this testimony of instinct, and self-respecting human nature resents the attempt to do either. I confess I cannot understand what has happened to the American people's sense of dignity, that they permit their public servants to address them in the tone that many of these latter have lately chosen to employ. It would seem to me most competent to remind our officials in no uncertain terms that in raising implications against all statute-breakers they are committing an intolerable impertinence. We are all statute-breakers, every man, woman, and child in the land; and the discrimination that we instinctively exercise towards enactments which do not command the common conscience of mankind, or concerning which the common conscience is neutral, is not attended by the slightest consciousness of wrongdoing. On the contrary we know that fundamental human instincts are sound and trustworthy, as Thomas Jefferson declared them to be, and that no one has the right to arraign our allegiance to them as immoral.

Does anyone actually presume to intimate that anywhere in the United States a man who walks two miles for pleasure on Sunday, or plays tennis, or buys a newspaper, or kisses his wife is acting from a defective moral sense? If not, just where in the category of prohibited things does the moral sense begin to show defect? One may always use oneself for purposes of illustration in cases where such service might be disagreeable, so I may say I am a statute-breaker and have been one all my life. I have bought cigarettes in Kansas – very bad ones – and in other States where their sale was forbidden. But for the fact that I am no drinker, I dare say I should be evading the inconvenience of prohibition. My path through life is strewn with the wreckage of enactments contemplating not only trivial matters like these but also some that are more serious. But I cannot recall an instance of this kind where my moral sense puts in any testimony against me or where the offense is one that I should hesitate about repeating. In all this I believe I stand with every man-jack of my fellow-citizens. Their offenses may not be the same as mine, but they are of the same order; they are offenses that concern some form of the mere *malum prohibitum*, about which the normal moral sense is silent. Moreover, if all the courts in the country, and all the executives from President to pound-master, should undertake to tell me that my moral sense is defective, their word would make no more impression on me than water on a duck's back; and in this, too, I believe I have every one of my fellow-citizens with me. It is conceivable that even a prohibitionist might be as sincerely impenitent about Sunday golf or ice cream, or failing to declare an extra box of cigars, or

about crowding the tax regulations a little as I should be about buying a drink if I wanted one. Somewhere or other we all depart from the strict letter of the law, and so far are we from any sense of crime or sin that in some instances, perhaps, we secretly glory in our shame, and would glory in it openly but for certain practical inconveniences that might ensue.

Such is the force of man's private judgment, and whenever a statute has been set up in opposition to it, the statute has always gone by the board. This sort of thing has been tried for hundreds of years, and never yet has it succeeded. Those who think it should succeed now in the case of prohibition have simply no idea of what it is that they antagonize.

III

Have our official monitors ever asked themselves where we should all be if we were not what they are pleased to call lawbreakers? What would become of the individual who is trying to live peaceably and decently under a bureaucracy if he were not a lawbreaker? He simply could not get on at all. The average man's instinct prompts him to a just sense of proportion in this matter; the trouble with our monitors is that they speak from the point of view of the doctrinaire or the job holder instead of that of the man in the street who has something to do that is worth doing and wants to get it done. One might say that a bureaucracy exists chiefly for the purpose of impeding a citizen in his legitimate pursuits; and more often than not, the only way of resisting or evading its ignorant and

routine-bound exactions is through "lawlessness." The citizen, therefore, takes that way whenever he can, and has the justification of a sound instinct in so doing.

Let me give an illustration or two to make this clear. This morning I undertook to mail the corrected proofs of a book to my publishers in New York, from the head post-office in a French border town. I proposed to send it by registered book-post at third-class rates, as I had every right to do. The clerk demurred, and called in the *controleur*, a sort of first mate of a French post-office, who glanced at the proofs, saw corrections made in handwriting, and said I should have to pay first-class rates, the difference being about a dollar and a quarter. He was an austere and fidgety person who would not listen to any appeal – no doubt he had never seen or heard of a proof-sheet in all his life; so I went back to my hotel, borrowed a copy of the postal regulations, returned to the post-office, looked up the head mogul, and fought the battle out with him to a successful issue. By this time the morning had gone.

Now, the point is that I needed that morning for something more important than a collision with the impenetrable stupidity of a bureaucracy. I needed it for urgent work that could not be delayed. Hence, if there had not been so many people around, I should have dealt with that *controleur* American fashion by quietly slipping him a few francs, and then gone away to resume my work in peace; nor would my conscience have been disturbed by that easy way of settling the matter. Yet I suppose that bribery is as serious a matter in French law as in ours. I could of course have yielded to the extortion and paid first-class postage, but that

did not suit me. With me it was a case of millions for baksheesh, but not one sou for bureaucracy. Besides, the whole question of resistance or submission to the incursions of any bureaucracy comes in here. If one does not oppose them somehow, they increase and multiply beyond endurance. If one opposes them personally, it is a ruinous waste of time and energy. It is, therefore, a sound instinct which tells the average man that to exist at all comfortably under a bureaucracy and get anything done, he must on occasions walk after the counsels of the ungodly and stand in the way of sinners.

I remember a story, which may be apocryphal, told of Godkin, the redoubtable editor of the New York *Evening Post* thirty years ago. On his way home one evening he was met at his door by a policeman with some sort of official notice that something was wrong with his frontage; either the snow was not cleared according to rule, or the ash-barrels were out of place – some small matter like that. Instead of fooling away a couple of days over red tape, or perhaps appearing in court to answer for violating an ordinance, Godkin cleared up the matter on the spot by making two crimes out of one; he gave the policeman ten dollars, promised it should not happen again, and told him to forget it. Godkin was then engaged in a great newspaper campaign against municipal corruption, so when the story got around, as it somehow did, there was a great laugh over it. Yet according to the average man's instinct, that was the only sensible way to settle the matter. Godkin saved himself a deal of time and trouble, and so was satisfied. The policeman was satisfied. The court was one trivial case short on its crowded docket. The public, in whose

interest the ordinance was framed, was satisfied because Godkin straightened up his ash-barrels. The only thing left unsatisfied was the interesting abstraction known as the majesty of the law. There seems no doubt that between Godkin and the policeman, the majesty of the law came off badly. But the average man usually cannot quite settle with himself just what the majesty of the law amounts to. And yet the average man, confirmed and inveterate statute-buster though he be, is law-abiding; he is well-meaning and decent, though from the tone adopted by our moral monitors one might not suspect it. Show him a law that is really a law, something that measurably reflects the common conscience of mankind, and he is quite likely to obey it.

But a bureaucracy will not meet the public half way. Officialism, as Herbert Spencer pointed out years ago, is interested chiefly in strengthening itself, digging itself farther and farther in, and multiplying its encroachments on the rights, liberties, and consciences of the individual citizen. Anything like taking the public into its confidence is obviously inconsistent with this, and cannot be done. Therefore, in their comment on our lawlessness our official servants do not define, do not explain, do not reason: they merely tell us.

The instinct which warns us against this tendency of officialism is wholly sound. It testifies that this tendency should be resisted. A bureaucracy should be put in its place and kept there. The individual, acting alone, cannot do this. All he can do is to ward off from himself the evil incidence of officialism as best and as often as he may; and the only way he can do this is through an occasional discriminating exercise of "lawlessness."

IV

So much for the individual. Now, how can society collectively best withstand progressive incursions of officialism and keep a bureaucracy in its place? We are told, rightly enough, that the first thing, the indispensable thing, is strict attention. Without this nothing can be done. When Thomas Jefferson was representing our Government in Paris, he wrote Edward Carrington that "if once the people become inattentive to the public affairs, you and I and Congress and Assemblies, judges and governors, shall all become wolves. It seems to be the law of our general nature, in spite of individual exceptions." We have a saying which has degenerated into a kind of cliché, but is none the less true, that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. The mass of our public is supposed to fail in this vigilance and to have become extremely "inattentive to the public affairs," except around election time when the general interest bears something of a sporting character, hardly to be called very serious. This count against our people is probably true, but I do not make a point of it. I mention this commonplace only to bring in a question to which it gives rise.

Mere vigilance is worth very little unless the way is open for immediate and appropriate action upon the delinquency that vigilance discovers. What, then, is the use of vigilance against the encroachments of officialism under a political system which by its fundamental organization makes such action impossible? Here again the average man's instinct which prompts him to abstain from any political interest, unless for purposes of profit, seems to me a sound one. The utmost that our federal

system permits is to sack a handful of job holders at the end of four years or seven years; under the system in other countries they can be turned out at any time and without notice. Some of our worst habitual offenders against the liberty and sovereignty of the people, indeed, are to all intents and purposes irremovable. They may be impeached, but as far back as Jefferson's time, impeachment, as he said, was "not even a scarecrow"; and we all know it is no more than that now. But turning a few job holders out at the end of a fixed term does nothing against bureaucracy and officialism or against their tendencies; these go on under the next regime of job holders just as they did under the last. Meanwhile, too, there is no competent mode of reprehension that society can collectively apply to a job holder for any insult to the people's dignity or any injury to their sovereignty. That is to say, there is none unless society, like the individual, has recourse to lawlessness.

Collective lawlessness interested Mr. Jefferson and gained his calm and rather naive approval. "I like a little rebellion now and then," he wrote one correspondent, and on the occasion of Shays's Rebellion he expressed his hope that the country would never go twenty years without one like it. Shays and his malcontents were not altogether wrong, he thought, but even if they were, the rebellion was probably a good thing on general principles. It showed that the people were alive to public concerns, and it also kept the ear of the job holder open to his master's voice. It is no disparagement to the Founding Fathers to say that being human, they were not omniscient in their foresight. Whatever their intentions may have been, they did actually construct a political system that

puts officialism beyond the reach of any remedial or punitive collective action except violence; and Jefferson was thoroughly aware of it.

While I am entirely of Jefferson's mind in this matter, I am not now counselling a rebellion on any particular issue, or even counselling rebellion at all. When the official hue and cry about "lawlessness" started, it led me to contemplate the cancer of officialism in our body politic, and to wonder what could be done about it, first by the individual, and second, by society collectively; and I cannot see but that in both cases "lawlessness" is the only thing that will check its inroads.

I do not intend to speak particularly about the general issues arising out of prohibition, but one special issue serves very well just here for purposes of illustration. I remember my indignation and sense of outrage twenty years ago, in the time of State option, when some officers of a prohibition State boarded a train and cut open the suit-case of an innocent through-passenger, to search it for liquor. It seemed to me then that officialism had reached its limit of affront to the integrity and dignity of the public. Federal agents now, however, seem embarked on the policy – under instructions, mind you, set forth by officialism – of first shooting the suspect out of hand and searching his property afterwards. In a newspaper to-day I see an estimate that these murders run to an average of one every three days.

Now, under these circumstances, what recourse has the community? These assassinations are an immediate concern of the community, and are acutely felt to be such, since no innocent person can know when and under what circumstances he or she will be a victim. The community

is as much concerned as it would be with any other mode of brigandage. But, in the premises, just what can it do?

The immediate agents can be indicted and tried; but, in the first place, this hardly suits the average sense of justice. These men are acting under orders and are responsible to their superiors. In the second place, officialism is all on their side, and the trial results in a formal vindication of officialism and not in actual justice. As for implicating their superiors in the issue, the thing is clearly impossible; the attempt would result only in a more spectacular vindication of officialism.

What then? Well, it is possible that the community thus outraged might spread the contagion of its dissent largely through the country. In that case it is again possible that at the end of a term of years we might retire a president to private life, and bounce out a camorra of senators, congressmen, and such. But this measure seems almost ludicrously inadequate and superficial when compared with the amount of effort and expense involved in bringing it about. When it is done, what has the country got? What has it ever got from this procedure? Besides, four years or seven years is a long time to wait for the popular will to become operative. Whether regarded as a measure of retributive justice or as a rebuke to officialism, this procedure seems alike incompetent, and I believe that the natural instinct of the people regards it with extreme dissatisfaction. Yet I know of no other that can be either conceived or applied within the limits of a strict legality.

V

Although an American citizen, I live much abroad among a people who have their own faults and shortcomings, like the rest of us, and some considerable virtues. One of their virtues is an amazingly quick, passionate, almost vindictive resentment and resistance against the incursions of officialism. Individually and collectively they know their rights and are most jealous of them; otherwise in all their private relations, they are the most tolerant people that I ever had the good fortune to be among. Both these traits seem largely to have been born in them, and the course of their national history has accidentally been such as to foster both of them very powerfully. For years I have watched the continuous come-out of these traits with a fascinated interest.

Officialism, in a word, is restricted to a degree inconceivable by an American; and it is restricted by the one thing I know of that can restrict it, which is fear. Not fear of losing a job, but fear of losing continuity of the spinal column. Every official from the highest to the lowest, carries on under just that wholesome apprehension. He knows what he may do and may not do; bureaucracy knows how far it may go, and what will happen if it goes farther; and any motion, even the slightest, towards overstepping the line brings out a prompt reminder. A friend of mine who had had large experience in municipal government in America, once told the mayor of the European city I live in that he ought to turn a certain crowded thoroughfare into a one-way street. The mayor threw up his hands and said, "If I did that there would be a revolution!" He was right. That street is a one-way

street now, but making it so was a matter of twelve years. The progress of a general traffic-control has been very slow and circumspect, almost block by block, with the people watching every move to decide whether it meant something really for their convenience or was a mere bureaucratic gesture. Whatever failings a critic might observe in this people's type of civilization, it has certainly realized all the advantages that come from never being "inattentive to the public affairs."

Consequently the outrages committed by officialism in America against the dignity and liberties of the public could no more take place here than they could take place in heaven. Supposing the impossible, let us suppose that a woman was shot here under circumstances like those of the prohibitionist raid on a private domicile in Illinois a few months ago. What would happen is that the political equivalents of Mr. Mellon and Mr. Lowman would be immediately eliminated. The people would waste no time on the actual raiders; their sound political instinct would lead them straight to the persons responsible. But nothing like this is ever necessary, because the people watch their job holders like cats and are always ready with some practical application of the principle *obsta principiis* in small matters as well as great. Nothing seems too small and trivial for them to resent, and on occasion the concern of the individual instantly becomes the concern of the community.

Some months ago, for instance, the Communists had been annoying the Socialists by organizing a series of petty strikes; and the mayor of the city that I live in put out a proclamation one morning prohibiting all public meetings and street-processions. The Socialists are

politically very strong here, and the Mayor evidently had counted on this to enable him to "get by" with this proclamation so manifestly aimed at the weak Communist faction. But the prohibition lasted just four days. On the morning of the fifth day there was another proclamation posted on the dead-walls, saying it was all off. Meanwhile there seemed to be as many parades and assemblages as usual, with the police maintaining a benevolent neutrality. Undoubtedly what happened was that about the second day, people of every political stripe began to drop into the Mayor's office to tell him that while he was all right as far as he went, they were noticing that the boys seemed to be getting sort of restless, and they were afraid the future looked a little dark for him unless he brisked up and did something.

Some time ago I watched a street fête in the poorest quarter of town until long after midnight, when two men started at fisticuffs in the middle of a side street. A couple of policemen happened along, and for some reason one of them tried to interfere. The men stopped fighting just long enough to set on the policeman, sent him spinning on his head ten feet away, and then at once resumed business. They were quite within their rights, and they knew it. They were not blocking traffic, for there was none; not disturbing anyone, for they were not noisy; not discommoding or injuring anyone, for what few people were around were on the sidewalk. These men were very poor and shabby; in America they would have had no chance at all. They would have been clubbed half to death and then probably "run in" on a charge of resisting an officer; and the bystanders would have let it go at that. Here, however, the incident ended when

the policeman got up, brushed himself off, and rejoined his companion, who meanwhile had not stirred. If he had made an issue of it, he would have had to take on the whole population of the district, because, as I say, by every rule of reason and sense, he was "in wrong." If on the other hand he had been in any way justified by reason and sense, the populace would have been just as strongly on his side, as I have often seen it happen.

So it is not only in municipal or local affairs, but in national affairs; this spirit predominates everywhere. About two years ago there was a great demonstration in a northeastern province of the country; thousands of people marched all day, with brass bands, and speech-making of a most inflammatory type. The manifestation was headed by two canons of the cathedral and six university professors. They marched under a foreign flag, advocating the annexation of the province by a neighboring country. Well, by modern American standards, this was sedition of the most flagrant type, but nothing happened. The military were not called out, the ringleaders were not railroaded to Atlanta or maimed on the spot by the police; nothing at all was done about it. After all, if those people felt that way, they had every right to speak up about it. If they could get enough people in the province to feel the same way, and the neighboring country was content they had every right to obtain annexation. The right of secession is inalienable. "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary, etc." – how many times we have heard those noble words! But over here they really believe it and are ready to back up their belief, not only with their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, but with the leg of a

chair or whatever first comes handy. In this instance the demonstrators could not make enough people feel their way to carry the issue; but they had absolute and unlimited freedom to try, and so they were satisfied.

VI

The general doctrine that I am describing may be disparaged as terrorism; indeed, it may be very fairly called terrorism, provided one very important condition be kept in mind. It is as true, I believe, as ever Thomas Jefferson thought it was, that the only way the incursions of officialism can be withstood is by keeping the officials in a state of constant fear – not fear for their jobs, but for their skins. I say, *constant* fear, not intermittent or occasional fear. If this be done, as it is in the country where I live, there are never any terroristic consequences, for things simply never get that far. The people among whom I live keep themselves continually framed up to hang somebody, no matter whom, from the head of the general government to the policeman on the beat. Officialism is constantly aware of this, and consequently no one is ever hanged. I never witnessed or heard of a single incident where a few well-chosen words did not immediately and satisfactorily produce results. The officials know the disposition of the people, know it is not to be trifled with, and never trifle with it. Only where the disposition of a people is either complaisant or "inattentive," or both, can officialism make any headway against their liberties.

After all, the thing stands to reason as well as to such experience as is furnished by the country where I live. Suppose Mr. Whalen knew to an absolute certainty that within twenty-four hours after his police had confiscated private medical records the citizenry would descend upon his office, would that peculiarly odious and outrageous raid on Mrs. Sanger's clinic have taken place? Never. Would a single prohibitionist assassination ever take place if Mr. Mellon and Mr. Lowman knew to a certainty that the day when it happened would be their official last? Never. Matters would never come within a thousand miles of such a thing. I am not contemplating occasional and sporadic outbursts of mob-rage caused by some exceptionally flagrant *démarche* of a bureaucracy. Officialism has no fear of those, for it can deal with them. I am speaking of a steady, considered and highly sensitive spirit of repression, which by coming out with promptness and force against the feeblest beginnings of officialism's attempts against the public's welfare and dignity, never needs be called on to resist any of its more daring and flagitious enterprises.

I see no conclusion but that Jeffersonian "lawlessness" affords communal rights and dignity, as well as the rights and dignity of the individual, their only recourse against officialism. Jefferson seems to have thought so, and I see no way whereby one can think otherwise. Moreover, for the community as well as the individual, the determination and delimitation of "lawlessness" runs straight back to the fundamental question, *What is law?*

Americans, searching for available recourse in what seems to me a most trying and humiliating situation, might well broach this fundamental question and demand

a plain and thorough discussion of it; and demand especially that it be discussed by those who now so lightly undertake to reprehend them for their lawlessness.

What Are Elections For?

(Published in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, January 1933.)

So many years have elapsed since I last witnessed a national campaign that I had forgotten a great deal about their routine, and on that account I was rather interested in going over some of the old experiences afresh. Living in a remote rural district all last summer, I was not close to any political centre and saw nothing of any stirring situations, and had to depend on newspapers for knowledge of what was going on. For this reason, probably – though other reasons may have had something to do with it – my mind soon got off the merits of the candidates and their issues. In view of the country's situation, the sum total of the issues, as the papers presented them, was not impressive, and the sum total of the candidates did not look promising. Reports of the conventions brought to mind the medieval saying, "The devil began to shear a hog, and exclaimed, 'Great cry and little wool!' " I wondered whether the results

were worth the fuss, and above all, whether they were worth the price; and thus by easy stages I got around to wondering why, exactly, we have elections. What is an election for?

It is no easy question to answer – let the reader try it. The conventional and handsome thing to say is that an election is to register the will of the people; but this will hardly do, because in practice the scope set for the exercise of the people's will is so extremely small. I do not recall any national election at which the will of the people was exercised in any really significant way, or had the chance to be so exercised, either in respect of candidates or of issues. I can not make out that the will of the people had much influence upon the conduct of the two conventions at Chicago, or upon the selection of Mr. Hoover and Mr. Roosevelt as candidates. On the contrary, all this procedure seemed to me singularly well cut and dried. Perhaps it must always be so; perhaps our system gives the closest approximation to the will of the people that can be had. Still, it is not close enough to exclude doubt, or even to exclude suspicion.

Another reason, not so creditable, for having elections, appears in the fact that there is money in politics, that practical politics is a gainful occupation. As the foregoing may be called the conventional or popular reason, so this may be called the politician's reason. In this view, an election is to decide whether one set of people or another should draw salaries, enjoy perquisites and prestige, distribute patronage, and put themselves in the way of getting graft. But one hesitates about accepting the idea that this is all there is to an election, though the sight of what actually goes on might make

one think so. One feels that politics, at least in theory, should have some sort of bearing on the general welfare, and that elections exist for other purposes than those to which professional politicians, jobholders, jobseekers, and grafters put them.

Thus finding the conventional view and the politician's view alike unsatisfactory, I thought I would take the matter higher up and see whether statesmen had anything to say about it. I was curious to find out, if I could, whether it had ever occurred to any statesman to ask himself the plain question, What do we have elections for? and if so, how he answered it. Having decided to go higher up, I thought I might as well go as high as I could to begin with and work downward if necessary, so I went at once to the greatest of all British statesmen.

Edmund Burke earned this title because he was never content to rest on the surface of any public question. Regardless of consequences, he always struck straight through to "the reason of the thing," *das Ding an sich*, saw it clearly, never lost sight of it for a moment, and by his power of exposition enabled other people to see it. Just this, too, we may remark in passing, was what made Mr. Jefferson the greatest of all American statesmen. Burke was a notoriously unsuccessful politician; he had as little influence on the actual direction of development in England – the more is the pity! – as Mr. Jefferson had in America. But in their clear vision of how the course of affairs ought to go, and why it ought to go that way, both men were among the high elect of statesmanship, and we have not seen another like them in either country since.

So it struck me that if my question had occurred to any statesman it would have occurred to Burke; and, sure enough, I found it had. His answer to it, moreover, was so extraordinary, so utterly unlike what we would expect any one to say, that I venture to italicize it. In a letter to the Duke of Richmond, Burke observes that his political associates are all very keen on matters of routine, keen on pushing measures, keen on winning elections, but not at all keen "on that which is the end and object of all elections, namely: *the disposing our people to a better sense of their condition.*"

II

This, then, according to the highest authority, is the statesman's idea of what an election is for. It is by no means the conventional idea, and very far indeed from the politician's idea. Burke again, on another occasion, shows clearly by implication what the politician's idea is. It is the main business of the jobholder, he says, "still further to contract the narrowness of men's ideas, to confirm inveterate prejudices, to inflame vulgar passions, and to abet all sorts of popular absurdities." Naturally so, because this is the kind of thing that tends to keep him in his job. *A fortiori*, this must also be the main business of the jobseeker, because it is the kind of thing that moves people to oust the jobholder and give the job to him. Therefore in the politician's view, an election is a trial of expertness in the use of these means, expertness in the handling of formulas, catchwords, chicane; and

disposing the people to a better sense of their condition is the very last thing he wants done.

But the last campaign was largely occupied with our economic condition, so we may at least be said to have a better sense of that. One can not be quite sure. For my own part, I think that the campaign muddled our sense of it, and muddled it intentionally. All I can see in the jobholders' activities is an effort to keep a huge structure of debt intact until the election was over; a sleight-of-hand-man's effort to give the impression of creating something out of nothing. In respect of our economic condition, I think we may have occasion later on to recall Burke's saying, in a letter to Windham, that "our politics want directness and simplicity. A spirit of chicane predominates in all that is done; we proceed more like lawyers than statesmen. All our misfortunes have arisen from this intricacy and ambiguity in our politics."

But I do not wish to make a point of this. Let us assume that the election cleared our sense of our economic condition and put us satisfactorily on the way to an increased material well-being. What I wish to dwell on is the statesman's idea of an election as a kind of mile-post by which a people may reckon its progress, not towards material well-being alone, but towards civilization. A widely diffused material well-being is the soundest basis upon which civilization can rest, but it is not civilization, and there is a source of great danger in the assumption that it is. Business, "prosperity," all the apparatus of a roaring trade, the paraphernalia of physical comfort and convenience, are not civilization, and there is a source of great danger in the assumption

that a people which has them is therefore necessarily a civilized people. From the statesman's point of view, it is the business of organized society to discourage this assumption wherever it exists, and to use an election for the purpose of showing what civilization is, and how far a people has progressed towards it.

I do not know what is actually going on in Russia, but I see no reason why we should not accept the official statement that the idea is to create a wider diffusion of material well-being than has ever been known. This is a noble aim, and my friend Professor Robinson, who knows Russia well and is above all things judicial, told me some time ago that he believed the Russian Government is thoroughly sincere about it. But with all this, one must see a source of danger here. It is possible that in an intense preoccupation with this aim, an intense concentration upon the widest possible diffusion of material well-being, the ideal of civilization may become debased and coarsened, and even the knowledge of what constitutes civilization may disappear.

I would not for a moment suggest that the Russian Government does not see this danger, or that it would disregard it; still less that it would justify a disregard of it on the plea of necessity – a necessity which is quite apparent – for great immediate concentration upon the increase and diffusion of material well-being. Yet it is possible that all this may happen, and an American student of civilization must above all others feel anxious about this possibility, because just that is what has happened here. It is possible that in their intense preoccupation with creating the physical apparatus of civilization, the Russians will sacrifice to it, as we have

sacrificed, everything that would give them control of the future; they may sacrifice culture, insight, intelligence, dignity, delicacy, self-respect – everything that in the long run gains acceptance with the best reason and spirit of mankind.

A people does not progress towards civilization on the line of material well-being alone, but also on the lines of conduct, of intellect and knowledge, of beauty and poetry, of social intercourse and manners. Organized society must take as clear and full account of all these lines of advance as it does of the line of material well-being; for without this co-operation of society, as Burke says, "man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable." Society can not safely, in a word, protect a man's person and his property and facilitate his business, and then leave him to make his way on other lines of aspiration and endeavour as an isolated creature. The statesman perceives with Burke that politics should serve as the expression of organized society's progress on all these lines, and that an election should dispose us to a sense of our condition, not only with respect to material well-being, but with respect to conduct, to intellect, to beauty, and to manners.

As laid down in abstract terms, this seems far-fetched and visionary, because we are so much more familiar with the conventional view and the politician's view of public affairs than with the statesman's view. Let politics promote "prosperity" and protect property, and we expect no more, but are quite content with its leaving the other elements of civilization to the encouragement of private enterprise. In fact, as long as we had prosperity and could enjoy the kind of prestige that wealth commands,

it has never concerned us greatly that as a people we should remain stationary on the other lines of progress towards civilization; and the last thing that would enter our mind is that our remaining stationary might give rise to any danger that a statesman need worry about.

A brief examination, however, will show that the statesman's view is neither far-fetched nor visionary, but on the contrary, highly practical; much more so than either the conventional view or the politicians view. It is surely significant that peoples have never succeeded in making an impression on the world's memory on the strength of their wealth, their trade, or their political prestige. Their title to remembrance never lies in what business they did or in what money they had, but in what manner of spirit they were of. We all know of nations that were prosperous and powerful, but have disappeared without leaving any mark whatever on the world's progress; and of others that were quite disinherited of both wealth and prestige, which have nevertheless left their impress indelibly on the world's civilization, and are likely to be remembered forever. I have often thought it would be interesting to determine what it is by which the United States would live in history if it were destroyed tomorrow – as, for instance, the Israel of the Judges lives, or the Athens of Pericles, peninsular Rome, Elizabeth's England, or the France of Louis XIV.

But what people will think of us a hundred years hence, or five hundred, probably does not affect us much at the moment. As one of our politicians asked pertinently, "What has posterity done for us" that we should care what it thinks of us, or whether it thinks of us at all? Let us, then, turn to something more interesting that

is going on at the present time. As I write these words, England is in a recurrence of her age-long difficulties with the two subject peoples who have shown the most inveterate obduracy against her rule, the Indians and the Irish. I know very few Indians, but those I know tell me that England has given the best government India ever had. They say its intentions are good, and that the administration is generally honest, capable, just, and energetic. They tell me also that trade relations with England are as advantageous as any that India would be likely to get. Yet they are venomously down on the English and ready to give their lives for the sake of sweeping them out of the country; and so too, it seems, are the Irish.

It must have occurred to many of us to wonder what on earth the Indians and the Irish want. Why are they dissatisfied with a state of things that seems measurably satisfactory to Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, even to the Scots and Welsh? No doubt many Englishmen ask themselves the same question. The English are like ourselves in supposing that if they offer good trade terms, a good administration, and straighten out material grievances promptly and liberally, they have done everything necessary to make people friendly and loyal. That an alien people may have a moral grievance against them, a grievance not amenable to this kind of treatment, is something that they can not understand; and that a people should let such a grievance outweigh the advantage of good trade terms and good government, seems to them a sheer insane biting off of one's nose to spite one's face. A few weeks ago, an Associated Press dispatch from London said:

> In deciding to starve to death unless Great Britain revokes certain features of the electoral plan recently outlined for India, Mahatma Gandhi is "speaking in a language the Indian people understand," Londoners best acquainted with India said today.
>
> Lord Irwin, who preceded the Earl of Willingdon as Viceroy of India, told American newspaper men at a luncheon last summer: "If I were to get out in the hallway of the government buildings at New Delhi, squat on the floor and refuse to eat a bite until the Indian civil disobedience movement came to terms, the trouble would be over in a few days. Of course before those few days could elapse my Liberal, Conservative, and Labor colleagues in London would send for me to come home, and have a padded cell waiting for me on my arrival."

An Englishman can not see why, with all his good-will and good intentions and all the advantages he has to offer, the Irish and the Indians persist in regarding him as an uncivilized being, and dislike having him around.

The answer is that each party has made progress towards civilization on lines where the other has made no progress, and each party is prepossessed accordingly. The Irish and Indians see that the English make very little of intellect and knowledge as an element in civilization, very little of beauty, very little of social intercourse and manners; while they, on the contrary, have a strong sense of these. The English see that the Irish and Indians make little of material well-being; while they, on the contrary, make much of it. Burke said that if the Irish were ever to be united with the English and not remain obstinately alien, "their temper must be managed and their good affections cultivated." But this is just what the English have not been able to do, for the reason that I have given; and therefore the civilization of England has always remained unattractive, even hateful, to the

Irish and the Indians, and the representatives of that civilization have remained objectionable.

Ever since the war, we Americans have been puzzled to know where to look for our friends. Between certain European countries and ourselves, of course, there have been some material grievances arising out of our status as a creditor country; the war debts, for example, and our high tariff. But let us ask ourselves whether, if these had not arisen, or if they were all smoothed out tomorrow, a moral grievance would not yet preclude anything more than a formal and diplomatic friendship with these countries. Would the type of civilization which we offer to the world, and which is all we have to offer, be any more attractive and interesting to them than it apparently is now, and would the human product of that type be more acceptable?

The world's friendship, like its judgment, waits on the question, not how rich and powerful we are, but what manner of spirit we are of; and the statesman is aware of this. A French journalist said the other day that "Americans are the only people who have passed directly from barbarism to decadence without knowing civilization." It may be acknowledged, I think, that our present condition looks much like decadence; and our history may quite justify a foreign critic in regarding our previous condition for a century and a half as, in the main, barbarous. The only question is whether our decadence is permanent, or whether it is a temporary state from which we can recover; and there may be two minds about that. But this is not the point; the point is, would cancelling the war debts and lowering the tariff at all tend to allay the moral grievance intimated by this

Frenchman, and would it prepossess the actual sentiment of French people, and make them something more than formally friendly towards us and towards our type of civilization? Most of us, I think, believe so; we naturally would regard the French with the same uncomprehending disposition that the English employ towards the Irish and the Indians. But are we right?

Leaving Europe and coming a little nearer home, we all remember Mr. Hoover's "good-will tour" of South America. Those who keep track of such matters have remarked how little has come of it; how little, indeed, has come of all our organized efforts to prepossess our southern neighbours. Only the other day I read a statement that after all our fuss and publicity about a closer sentimental relation, nothing had come of it, and the feeling towards us was in no wise bettered. Well, one can see how this might be so. The Latin countries are no doubt glad to have good trade terms with us, but something more than that is necessary to unite them with us in a bond of sentimental attachment. No doubt they were glad to welcome Mr. Hoover in his capacity of *commis voyageur*, but this did not at all obscure their view of the society he represented; a society characterized, in their opinion, by a low type of intellect and knowledge, a grotesquely formalized type of conduct, a defective sense of beauty, a defective sense of manners.

Now, we may say, Who cares? Why should we concern ourselves any more about the sentiment of other peoples than about the sentiment of posterity? So long as we are rich and powerful and have great political prestige, who cares how they feel towards us? The trouble is that the mere getting on in the world's family depends on

sentiment; the statesman knows this, knows that the friendship which is bottomed on wealth, power, and prestige alone is extremely brittle. We have been hearing a great deal lately about the world being one, and that no nation can any longer live unto itself, and all that sort of thing. If this be so, then especially does the statesman see that mere prudence requires our society to develop more available points of sympathetic contact than the one which industry and commerce supply. He sees with George Sand that in the make-up of civilization there are "forces of weakness, docility, attractiveness, suavity, which are just as real forces as those of vigour, encroachment, violence, brutality"; and that statesmanship must develop them and keep them on its side.

Thus it turns out that the statesman's idea of an election is much more sincerely practical than either the conventional idea or the politician's idea. It is for the most practical of reasons that an election should dispose us to a better sense of our condition, not only with regard to our progress on the line of material well-being, but also with regard to our progress on the lines of conduct, intellect, beauty, and manners.

III

Late last summer I met an old friend who has all his life been prominent in national politics, though except for one term in the Cabinet, I think he has never held any office. When I saw him, he was sad and discouraged over the unspeakable degradation of our public affairs. He told me he had heard of a good many lifelong Republicans,

men prominent in business, who were so disgusted with the Hoover administration that they were going to vote for Roosevelt. I said that this seemed very little to do, for as long as the campaign was conducted on such a low plane, it mattered little which side won. At best, as John Adams said, "the struggle will end only in a change of impostors." Why not do something that might have a chance of counting?

Statesmanship is often – I think almost always – more effectively exercised when it is kept entirely clear of politics and political methods. When Socrates was criticized for standing aloof from Athenian politics, he replied that by so doing he and his followers showed themselves the best statesmen of their time; and he was right. The politics of Athens was a politics of pure formula, catchwords, and chicane; Cleon and Nicias could wink at Mr. Hoover and Mr. Roosevelt across the centuries, and be perfectly well understood. Socrates saw that the thing really needed was to dispose the people to a better sense of their condition, and that the politicians did not do it. He therefore kept resolutely away from all the inevitable commitments, compromises, concessions, that contact with routine politics involves, and took up the task in his own way; and he did so well with it that finally the politicians had to get rid of him.

It struck me that each of the men my friend was speaking of might carry a possible Socrates within himself. Perhaps, instead of contenting themselves with mere grumbling, or voting for an opposition candidate, they might see their way to unite, and get others to unite with them, irrespective of party, in getting out a thoroughgoing, uncompromising, revolutionary, and non-political

manifesto, which should be a modern counterpart of Socrates's great discourses on what civilization means, what makes a nation really great, what character a republic ought to bear, and what the individual citizen of a republic should be like, what manner of spirit he should be of. Surely the needed thing is not a change of impostors, not votes for this-or-that candidate or formula or catchword, but a better knowledge of ourselves and our society, a realization of what we are actually like, and how our actual society compares with the ideal that has been set up by the best reason and spirit of mankind.

The right kind of manifesto, devised by the right kind of men, now that the election is well over, would be an act of the best statesmanship in the world. By the right kind of men, I mean men of affairs, like those whom Mr. Gerard designated as the "real rulers of America," for they are the only ones whose opinions our public has been trained to respect. All the moralists in the country, all the publicists, scholars, educators, men of letters and culture, could have united in getting out a manifesto on prohibition, word for word with Mr. Rockefeller's, and it would have produced no such effect as his, because Mr. Rockefeller has a great deal of money and is *par excellence* the object of popular regard as "a successful business man." To be effective, therefore, this manifesto must be the work of those whom my friend described as being purely men of affairs, entirely out of politics and public life – men of the general type of Mr. Rockefeller.

It may be said that there are not in the country fifty such men who have the character and courage to put forth anything less inept and disingenuous than, say, the Wickersham Report. This may be so. Again it

may be said that there are not five hundred among our people with intelligence enough to understand what such a manifesto would be driving at, or sensitiveness enough to take it as more than a seven days' wonder. This also may be so; but both these suggestions are beside the mark, for until they are put to proof they are merely matters of opinion. The point is that statesmanship, if it exists, has a way open whereby it may clear its conscience and its sense of public duty. Even though it can not put elections to their proper use, statesmanship can still do something to the same purpose, outside the scope of practical politics. Whether or not statesmanship is to be found among the men eligible for this service, is another matter; it remains to be known. But if it exists, it can put itself to work in a very significant way – and who knows but in a very effective way? – towards meeting the greatest need of the moment, which is *the disposing our people to a better sense of their condition.*

Progress Toward Collectivism

(Published in *The American Mercury*, February 1936. From February 1936 to September 1939, Nock wrote a regular column on current affairs, "The State of the Union," for the *Mercury*.)

In conversation with me not long ago, one of my friends was speculating on what might have happened in 1932 if the government had taken a stand directly opposite to the one it did take. "Suppose, for instance," he said, "that in his inaugural address, Mr. Roosevelt had said: 'The banks are closed, and you are all looking to the government to open them again and get them going. You will look in vain. You think it is the first duty of a government to help business. It is not. The only concern that government has with banking or any other business is to see that it is run honestly, to punish any and every form of fraud, and to enforce the obligations of contract. This government has no concern with the present plight of the banks, except to see that any banker who acts dishonestly goes to jail – and to jail he shall go.' "

My friend thought that a good many people in the business world would have drawn a long breath of relief at the announcement of such a policy. They would cheerfully have said good-bye to their dollars that had been impounded or embezzled, for the sake of hearing that the government proposed thenceforth to keep hands strictly off business, except to see that it was run honestly; or in other words, that as far as business was concerned the government would limit itself strictly to making justice costless, accessible, sure, swift, and impartial. Aside from this it would leave business free to hoe its own row and get itself out of its own messes as best it might.

I did not agree. My belief was, and is, that the business world would have acted like a herd of drug-addicts whose rations had been suddenly cut off, for in its relations with the government that is precisely what the representative business world of America has always been and is now – a herd of addicts. It has always believed that the one governmental function which dwarfs all others to insignificance is to "help business." Let any kind of industry get itself into any kind of clutter, and it is the government's duty to intervene and straighten out the mess. This belief has prevailed from the beginning; it has seeped down from the business world and pervaded the general population so thoroughly that I doubt whether there are five hundred people in the country who have any other view of what government is really for. It seems to me, therefore, as I said, that the abrupt announcement of a change of policy would have merely thrown the people *en masse* into the imbecile hysteria of hopheads who are bereft of their supplies.

This belief being as deeply rooted as it is – the belief that the one end and aim of government is to help business – the history of government in America is a history of ever-multiplying, ever-progressive interventions upon the range of individual action. First in one situation, then in another, first on this pretext, then on that, the government has kept continually stepping in on the individual with some mode of coercive mandate, until we all have come to think that invoking governmental intervention is as much the regular and commonplace thing as turning on water at a tap or throwing an electric-light switch. Professor Ortega y Gasset gives a good description of the American attitude towards the State. The ordinary man, he says, "sees it, admires it, knows that *there it is*.... Furthermore, the mass-man sees in the State an anonymous power, and feeling himself, like it, anonymous, he believes that the State is something of his own. Suppose that in the public life of a country some difficulty, conflict, or problem, presents itself, the mass-man will tend to demand that the State intervene immediately, and undertake a solution directly, with its immense and unassailable resources." This is what America has always done. Moreover, apart from any public difficulty or problem, when the mass-man wants something very much, when he wants to get an advantage over somebody, or wants to swindle somebody, or wants an education, or a job, or hospital treatment, or even a handout, his impulse is to run to the State with a demand for intervention.

The thing to be noticed about this is that State intervention in business is of two kinds, negative and positive. If I forge a check, break a contract, misrepresent my

assets, bilk my shareholders, or sophisticate my product, the State intervenes and punishes me. This is a negative intervention. When the State sets up a business of its own in competition with mine, when it waters down the currency, kills pigs, plows under cotton, labels potatoes; when it goes in for a Planned Economy or when it uses its taxing power to redistribute wealth instead of for revenue – that is, when it takes money out of other people's pockets merely to put it into mine, as in the case of the processing taxes, for example – that is a positive intervention. These two kinds of intervention answer to two entirely different ideas of what government is, and what it is for. Negative intervention answers to the idea expressed in the Declaration of Independence, that government is instituted to secure certain natural rights to the individual, and after that must let him strictly alone. It is exactly the idea attributed to the legendary King Pausole, who had only two laws for his kingdom, the first one being, *Hurt no man*, and the second, *Then do as you please.*

Positive intervention does not answer to this idea of government at all. It answers to the idea that government is a machine for distributing economic advantage, a machine for you to use, if you can get hold of it, for the purpose of helping your own business and hurting somebody else's. Pursuant to this idea of government, the machine is manned by a sort of prætorian guard, a crew of extremely low and approachable persons who are not there for their health, but because they are beset by the demons of need, greed, and vainglory. Then when I want an economic advantage of some kind, I join with others who have the same interest, and thus accumulate

enough influence to induce the machine-crew to start the wheels going and grind out a positive intervention – a subsidy, land-grant, concession, franchise, or whatever it is that I and my group desire.

This latter idea of what government is for is the only one that ever existed in this country. The idea expressed by Mr. Jefferson in the Declaration, expressed in the clearest and most explicit language by Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin, did not last as long in the consciousness of America as a pint of whisky in a lumber camp. When Cornwallis disappeared from public view after the surrender at Yorktown, this idea also disappeared, never to return. Before the new government took its seat in 1789, the industrial interests were fully organized, ready, and waiting with a demand for positive intervention; and from that day to this, the demand for this, that, or the other positive intervention has gone on incessantly. This is what is actually meant by "helping business." None of the groups which dickers with the machine-crew for an intervention to help business really cares two straws about helping business. What they want is an intervention to help *their* business; and since positive State intervention cannot help them without hurting somebody else – for obviously no positive intervention can be good for everyone – it follows that they want that also.

Thus it has come to be accepted on all sides that government exists mainly for just this purpose. The securing of human rights, the cheap, prompt, and effective administration of justice – all this is regarded as secondary. In fact, we now see governments everywhere notoriously disregarding justice and human rights. Napoleon on St.

Helena said that in fifty years all Europe would be either republican or cossack – well, here you have it. They show no concern with justice, but only with law – law which they themselves manufacture, mostly by irresponsible decree, or what in this country is called "executive order," to suit their own purposes. The American government has always been conspicuous for its indifference to justice, its disreputable subservience to expediency, its devotion to a corrupt and corrupting legalism. It started out that way, and with its steady progress in centralization, its steady accumulation of coercive power over more and more of the individual citizen's activities, its steady entrenchment of a larger and larger bureaucracy, it became steadily more indifferent, subservient, and corrupt, until it developed into the moral monstrosity that it now is. One hundred and thirty-five years ago, Mr. Jefferson said that if the American government ever became completely centralized, it would be the most corrupt on earth; and the single instance of the Maine campaign in 1934 is probably enough to show that it is now entitled to that distinction.

The perversion of the idea that government exists to help business is responsible for this. All a government can properly and safely do to help business is what the Declaration says it is supposed to do – maintain individual rights, punish any trespass on those rights, and otherwise let the individual alone. This would be a real help to business, and a great help. But this is not the idea and never has been. The idea, as I have said, is that the government should help some special business to the detriment of others, according as one or another

person or group is able to influence the machine-gang to work the State machine for a positive intervention.

It is easy to see how serious collisions of interest are thus provoked. First, say, the steelmakers want an intervention. They run to the government about it. Then the textile people want one, then the glass makers, then this-and-that type of industrialist follows suit. Then the shipping concerns and the railroads want interventions. They run to the government. Then the farmers want one, organized labor wants one, the ex-soldiers want one, the unemployed want one, the hoboes want one, and when each of these interests thinks it can muster force enough – force of numbers or of money or of political influence – to make an impression on the machine-crew, it runs to the government.

The technique of procedure is always the same. The machine-crew is a purely professional organization; it is interested in helping no business but its own. It does not care to listen to considerations of the general welfare of business or of anything else. Dealing with it is a pure matter of *quid pro quo*. It is interested in votes, in campaign funds, and in patronage. It is governed mainly by fear; therefore it is especially interested in colorable threats of opposition – in other words, blackmail. It is easy to recall how horribly it was harried by the lash of the Anti-Saloon League, and we are now seeing it kept awake nights by dread of the Townsendites, Sinclairites, Olsonites, La Folletteites, share-the-wealthers, and other irreconcilables. Therefore the seekers after State intervention must propose satisfactory terms of brokerage in one or another of the foregoing ways, and if they are able to do so, the intervention is forthcoming.

The employment of this technique brings about a condition that invites unscrupulous exploitation. Consequently, whenever the State makes a positive intervention, it is at once urged to make another one to regulate or supervise this exploitation in behalf of persons or groups which are unfavorably affected. This second intervention is found in turn to be exploitable, interested persons proceed to exploit it, and the State makes another intervention at the request of influential groups who are being squeezed. Then further exploitation, another intervention, then another and so on indefinitely, pyramiding set after set of exploitable complications, until the whole structure falls to pieces at a touch, as our banking structure did three years ago. I was interested to see that the new banking bill proposed last summer by the Senate covered almost four pages of the *Wall Street Journal*! If the State had never made any positive interventions upon the banking business or any other business, a perfectly competent banking law could be set up in ten lines, nonpareil. The action of the State in trying to check exploitation of one positive intervention by making another and another in a series of ever-increasing particularity, is like the action of a horse that has stepped in quicksand – each succeeding step only sinks him deeper.

The State, however, is always glad to take advantage of these collisions of interest, because each positive intervention widens the scope of its own jurisdiction, enhances its prestige, and adds to its accumulation of power. It cuts down the individual's margin of action, and pushes up the State's margin. These gains are all made at the expense of society, so it may be said that, in the social view, the State's positive interventions are a mechanism

for converting social power into State power; the reason being that there is no other source from which State power can be drawn. All the power the State has is what society gives it, or what under one pretext or another it confiscates from society; and all the power thus transferred which is spent on expanding and maintaining the State's structure is just so much out of what society can apply to its own purposes.

This can be illustrated in terms of money. There seems to be an impression in some quarters that the State has money of its own. It has none. All the money it has is what it takes from society, and society gets money by the production of wealth; that is, by applying labor and capital to natural resources. There is no other way to produce wealth than this, and hence there is no source but production from which money can be got. All the money that the State takes by way of taxes, therefore, must come out of production, for there is no other place for it to come from. All it takes, then, leaves society with that much less to go on with.

The same thing is true with regard to the rest of society's resources. We all know that certain virtues and integrities are the root of stability. Wealth has relatively little to do with keeping society's head above water; the character and spirit of the people is what does it. Every positive intervention of the State tends to reduce the margin of existence which the individual is free to regulate for himself; and to the extent to which it does reduce it, it is a levy on character. Independence of mind, self-respect, dignity, self-reliance – such virtues are the real and great resources of society, and every confiscation of them by the State leaves society just so much poorer.

For instance, in 1932, when Mr. Roosevelt announced the doctrine that the State owes every citizen a living, the State, under his direction, took advantage of an unusual contingency to bring about a wholesale conversion of social power into State power. As we all know, it made a prodigious levy on social money-power, but that is relatively a small matter. Society will never get it back – the machine-crew, operating under whatever political label, will see to that – but further levies may for a time be somewhat checked, though probably very little. What America does not realize is that the intervention of 1932 put a levy on the character of the people which is beyond any estimate and beyond any possible hope of recovery. There are millions of people in the country today who not only believe that the State owes them a living, but who are convinced that they will never get a living unless the State gives it to them. They are so despoiled of the moral resources that alone keep society in vigor that one may say they look to the State to validate every breath they draw.

II

In the foregoing I have tried to show a few of the signs and roadmarks on the way to collectivism, and to give an idea of the distance America has already gone along that way, and also to show what the stimulus is that is driving us continually further. Collectivism means the absorption of all social power by the State; it means that the individual lives *for* the State. As an individual, he ceases to exist; he can think of himself, as so many

millions of our people now do, as only a creature of the State. The free, intelligent exercise of those virtues and integrities which are the capital resources of society is replaced by a wholly irrational and canine obedience to the minutiæ of coercive State control.

Collectivism is the orderly and inevitable upshot of the course we have taken from the beginning. The country is committed to collectivism, not by circumstances, not by accident, not by anything but a progressive degeneration in the spirit and character of a whole people under the corrupting influence of a dominant idea – the idea that government exists to help business. I have already several times said publicly – and I have been much blamed for saying it, when I have not been merely ridiculed – not only that I firmly believe America is headed for out-and-out collectivism, but that the momentum we have gained in a century and a half is now so strong that nothing can be done about it, and certainly nothing can be done about its consequences. In saying this I have been guided only by observing the dominance of this one idea throughout our history, by observing the marked degeneration in character and spirit which I speak of, and by perceiving the natural necessity whereby the one must follow upon the other. It strikes me that any thoughtful American may well and prayerfully take notice of where we have come out on the deal by which we got the thing symbolized by the stars and stripes and *E Pluribus Unum* in exchange for the thing symbolized by the rattlesnake flag of the horse-and-buggy days, with its legend, *Don't Tread On Me*.

An acquaintance said to me the other day that he did not believe the country could stand another four years

under Mr. Roosevelt. I said I had no opinion about that; what I was sure of was that no country could stand indefinitely being ruled by the spirit and character of a people who would tolerate Mr. Roosevelt for fifteen minutes, let alone four years. I was of course speaking of the generic Roosevelt; the personal Roosevelt is a mere bit of the *Oberhefe* which specific gravity brings to the top of the Malebolge of politics. He does not count, and his rule does not count. What really counts is the spirit and character of a people willing under any circumstances whatever to accept the genus, whether the individual specimen who offers himself be named Roosevelt, Horthy, Hitler, Mussolini, or Richard Roe.

A republic is adjusted to function at the level of the lowest common denominator of its people. I take it that among many pretty clear indications of where that level stands in America, one is the fact, if it be a fact, that twelve million signatures have been subscribed to petitions for the Townsend Plan. I have only a press report as authority for this, so let us discount it fifty per cent for journalistic enterprise, and say six million. Here then, apparently, is a good share of the population which not only does not want the government to stop making positive interventions upon the individual, but is urging it to multiply them to an extent hitherto unheard of. Then on the other hand, there is what in the popular scale of speech is called the business world. I can not imagine that there are a baker's dozen in that world who would regard a government that really kept its hands off business – which is what some of them pretend to want – as anything but an appalling calamity, worse than the earthquake of Lisbon. We can almost hear the

yells of horror that would go up from every chamber of commerce, bankers' conference, and Rotarian lunch-table, if they were suddenly confronted with a governmental announcement that the policy of positive intervention was henceforth and forever in the discard. Suppose the next President, whoever he may be, should say in his inaugural address: "No more positive interventions of any kind. The Department of Commerce and the Department of Labor will shut up shop tomorrow. No more concern with any form of business except to see that it is run straight, and no more legalism about that, either. Beginning tomorrow, the Department of Justice will cease being a Department of Law, and become a real Department of Justice." Would the business world welcome a statement of policy like that? Hardly. Thus it would appear that the level of the lowest common denominator is in this respect pretty low. In other words, practically no one wants the uniform policy of positive State intervention changed for a uniform policy of purely negative intervention. Each would probably be willing enough to see that policy vacated in the case of all the others; but to see it vacated *for him* is simply something that will not bear thinking about.

Very well, then, the question is, how can America insist upon a policy of taking all the successive steps which lead directly to collectivism, and yet avoid collectivism? I do not see how it can be done. Nor do I see how it is possible to have collectivism and not incur the consequences of collectivism. The vestiges of many civilizations are witness that it has never yet been done, nor is it at all clear how the present civilization can make itself exempt.

Crossing the ocean last year, I struck up an acquaintance with a lawyer from New York. Our talk turned on public affairs, and he presently grew confidential. He said: "I could work five times as hard as I do, and make more than five times the money I do, but why should I? The government would take most of my money away, and the balance would not be enough to pay for the extra work."

One can generalize from this incident, insignificant as it is. The cost of the States positive interventions has to be paid out of production, and thus they tend to retard production, according to the maxim that the power to tax is the power to destroy. The resulting stringencies, inconveniences, and complications bring about further interventions which still further depress production; and these sequences are repeated until production ceases entirely, as it did at Rome in the third century, when there was simply not enough production to pay the State's bills.

I repeat that I can see no better prospect than this as long as the tendency to collectivism goes on unchecked, and as I have shown, there seems to be no discoverable disposition to check it – the prevailing spirit and character of the people, on the contrary, seem all in its favor. Well then, I should say agreement must be made with the conclusion of Professor Ortega y Gasset, that "the result of this tendency will be fatal. Spontaneous social action will be broken up over and over again by State intervention; no new seed will be able to fructify. Society will have to live for the State, men for the governmental machine. And as after all it is only a machine, whose existence and maintenance depend on the vital supports

around it, the State, after sucking out the very marrow of society, will be left bloodless, a skeleton, dead with the rusty death of machinery, more gruesome than the death of a living organism, Such was the lamentable fate of ancient civilization."

Democracy and Delusion

(Published in *The American Mercury*, "The State of the Union," May 1936.)

A commentator on the state of the Union must sooner or later come to the conclusion that the Union would be in a great deal more healthy and promising state if every once in a while we all overhauled our stock of political ideas to see whether or not they would hold water. The human mind is somewhat like the old-fashioned family house that accumulated all sorts of unnoticed odds-and-ends from year to year, with nobody much knowing how most of them happened in; and there they stayed until housecleaning-time came round, when the missus raked them together and looked them over with a fishy eye. Some few of them turned out to be so valuable that the lady cursed herself for having overlooked them so long; I once saw a painting appraised at $20,000 that had been sifted out of a family trash-pile. Some of them, on the other hand, were rubbish; and there was still another class of objects that were worthless as they stood, but

were capable of being easily tinkered into good useful stuff.

Unfortunately we are not so strong on housecleaning our minds as we are on housecleaning our premises. Americans are justly proud of being a clean people, but this pride, like beauty, is only skin-deep. If, when, and as we do occasionally hoe out our consciousness, however, we find that our political ideas can be separated into these three classes. We find some clear salvage, probably not much; and we find some junk; and usually also we find a fairly rich haul of ideas that are essentially sound, but that need reconditioning before they are put to use.

One of these is our idea of democracy. I have been hearing lately from correspondents who have a good deal to say about democracy in America, and it was their observations that set my mind going on this track. Some of them are impressed by the ease with which our so-called democracy slides off into despotism, and they say that democracy has failed, that it will not work, that they are frankly ready to give it up and take chances with some other system. Others, again, are troubled by the unconscionable corruption pervading our political system, and still more by the enormous and widespread corruption that it generates among the people at large. They are equally impressed by the extremely low and venal order of beings whom our so-called democracy attracts into its service; they look at our present national Administration, for example, and say with the late Earl Balfour that democracy runs to mediocrity as water to the gutter. Hence they too have made up their minds that democracy is a failure, and they are lukewarm about it. Some, on the other hand, say that our self-styled

democracy is all right, but that we have to work out an entirely new formulation of it and a new technique of its practice, in order to make it conformable to what they rather vaguely call the conditions of modern life. I have spent some time this week over a sizeable book, just off the press, written by a professor to expound this view, and when he gets through re-formulating democracy, its own mother would not know it.

There is an interesting mixture of truth and error in all these complaints. In themselves they are wholly right, but they are all directed against the wrong thing. It is an error of the first magnitude to say that democracy has failed and will not work. It will work, it is perfectly practicable; and not only will it work, but it is also the best mode of government ever devised – the cheapest, most flexible, easiest managed, most informal, tending to a minimum of corruption, and in general most satisfactory. Those who say democracy is a failure and unworkable merely assume that our mode of government, which for some reason has come to be commonly called democratic, is actually so; whereas it is nothing of the kind, nor has it ever been anything of the kind. Perhaps the reasoning behind this misapprehension is that since our government is not a monarchy it must therefore be a democracy; but this does not follow, for it might be something quite different from either, as in fact it is. Or it may be assumed that because everybody has a vote (except criminals, lunatics, and residents of the District of Columbia – what an interesting collocation that is, by the way!) our country is necessarily a democratic republic; but this also does not follow, for as we all know, the voter's scope of political self-expression is so egre-

giously limited, in respect both of men and issues, that it amounts practically to nothing.

Once this fundamental misapprehension is straightened up, the rest is pretty plain sailing, for in the matter of the complaints I have cited, the line between fact and error at once becomes clear. It is true that our political system is, from the citizen's point of view, a failure; true, that it easily slides off into a peculiarly unscrupulous and vicious form of tyranny; true, that it seminates corruption among a whole people; true, that it fosters a lush growth of bureaucracy and patronage, thereby attracting into its service the very worst set of men that can be found between the two oceans; but these complaints do not lie against democracy, for we are not a democracy. We ignorantly and falsely call our system democratic and our nation a democratic republic, and those who allege these complaints are thereby simply misled into believing that our system and our nation are actually what we call them.

What, then, is a democratic republic? Probably Mr. Jefferson would be an acceptable authority on the subject. In a letter to John Taylor, written in 1816, we find him saying that it means –

> a government by its citizens *in mass, directly and personally*, according to rules established by the majority; and that every other government is more or less republican in proportion as it has in its composition more or less of this ingredient of the *direct* action of its citizens.

He presently goes on, after some observations on the representative system, and on the system of checks and balances, to amplify this statement by saying that –

> the further the departure from *direct and constant control* by the citizens, the less has the government of the ingredient of republicanism; evidently none where the authorities are hereditary, as in France, Venice, etc., or *self-chosen*, as in Holland.

I have italicized certain words in these definitions, partly in order that they may not be overlooked in rapid reading, but mostly in the hope that the reader will pause upon them and study their significance.

Really, now, can anyone seriously pretend that our government answers in any respect whatever to these specifications? I think not. Is it exercised by our citizens in mass, directly and personally, under majority-rule? Hardly. Far from that, it is exercised by a partisan (or, from the point of view of public welfare, a bipartisan) political machine, manned by professional talent exclusively, and kept in working order by patronage and subsidy. We all know it is thus exercised; the fact is so open, so notorious, and of such long standing that one might doubt there being a man, woman, or child of sound mind in the whole country who does not know it. Is our government under direct and constant control by the citizens? The reader may answer that question for himself; in the light of common observation, it is too preposterous to discuss. Are our authorities "self-chosen, as in Holland"? Again, the reader may make up his own mind about that. If he needs assistance in a general way, he can get it by attending one of the forthcoming national conventions and considering their methods of establishing a platform and a candidacy. Or, if he does not care to do that, he may content himself with looking back no further than the newspaper-record of the last Presidential campaign,

and studying the technique of "capturing a convention" as practiced by Mr. Roosevelt through the agency of Mr. Farley. If the present Administration is not a self-chosen authority, there never was one in the world. Technically and legally, it perhaps may not be so described; but actually it is just that, and we all know it is just that.

Democracy has fared no better in other countries that have established a nominally republican regime. The French Republic is no more nearly democratic than ours; its government has about as little of Mr. Jefferson's "ingredient of republicanism" as ours has. The German Republic blew up under pressure, but while it lasted its republicanism was purely nominal. While we lament our own failure with democracy, we have at least the consolation, whatever it amounts to, of perceiving that other self-styled experiments on the grand scale have failed as miserably as ours. Nevertheless, the inference that democracy is impracticable is erroneous; it is perfectly practicable, but like everything else that is practicable, it is only conditionally practicable.

The history of all these experiments can be summed up in a simple illustration. Suppose you have a man seven feet tall and weighing three hundred pounds, with a score of people around him trying their best to get him into a suit of clothes that was made for the average twelve-year-old boy. It does not work. Some of the people say there is something wrong with the clothes. There is a division of opinion among them, some holding that the clothes ought to be strengthened and "re-formulated" in one way or another, and others maintaining that they are no good and will never be any good, and should be thrown away. Meanwhile another school of thought

holds that the clothes are all right, but that there is something wrong with the man; and here again there is a division of opinion on what should be done with him. While all this is going on a child happens in, throws a clear unprejudiced eye on the situation, sees it exactly as it is, and says that the man and the clothes are both quite all right, but they do not match, cannot possibly be made to match, and the people who are learnedly talking and writing to prove that somehow they can be made to match are a set of fools – born fools, probably, for which there is no help.

Early in the eighteenth century, when theories of democracy were first under discussion, Montesquieu said that a democratic republic was practicable only over a small territorial area and a small volume of population. Mr. Jefferson picked up this idea from Montesquieu, and in the early days when the country was operating under the Articles of Confederation, and even for a while afterward, he seems to have counted on "the great American experiment" to bust it. As late as 1795 he wrote a French correspondent as follows:

> I suspect that the doctrine that small states alone are fitted to be republics will be exploded by experience, with some other brilliant fallacies accredited by Montesquieu and other political writers. . . . We have chanced to live in an age which will probably be distinguished in history for experiments in government on a larger scale than has yet taken place.

At this time it was but eight years since the constitutional convention had summarily thrown the Articles of Confederation into the wastebasket, converted the country from a confederacy into a nation, and set up a

coercive centralized national government on the fine old tried and trusted plan. It was but six years since the Judiciary Act carried centralization still further. John Marshall's fateful decisions, which dissipated whatever faint residual atmosphere of democracy still lingered, were on their way. The great and good old man began to see the handwriting on the wall; his term in the State Department left no doubt about it; and in 1816 he wrote to John Taylor, in the letter from which I have already quoted:

> Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population. I doubt if it would be practicable beyond the extent of a New England township.

Precisely so. The subsequent century of fumbling experimentation with self-styled "democratic republics," in this country and elsewhere, has proved one thing and one only. It has proved the rather obvious and commonplace fact that you cannot get a suit of boy-size clothes on a seven-foot man.

The unfortunate thing about this experimentation, moreover, is that it must run its course, and the end of that course is general disaster, which we now see imminent throughout the Western world. In his letter to John Taylor, Mr. Jefferson wrote:

> If, then, the control of the people over the organs of their government be the measure of its republicanism (and I confess I know no other measure) it must be agreed that our governments [*i.e.*, federal, state, municipal, etc.] have much less of republicanism than ought to have been expected; in other words, that the people have less regular control over their agents than their

> rights and their interests require. . . . Much I apprehend that the golden moment is past for reforming these heresies.

We may well reflect on the question, if this was the state of the Democratic Republic one hundred and twenty years ago, how much democracy might a sane person reasonably expect that Republic to assay in the year 1936? The answer is that he would expect it to assay quite what we now find it to assay, under any test that ingenuity can devise; it assays precisely none.

And nothing can be done about it; the caption of Mr. Webster's excellent cartoons fits the situation admirably. If the golden moment for reform had gone by a hundred and twenty years ago (and we now know it had) what is the use of deluding ourselves with the notion that any human effort can bring it back? In any case we must take what comes, and self-deception does not help. Mr. Jefferson's great contemporary, Bishop Butler, laid down a splendid lesson in intellectual honesty when he said: "Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why, then, should we desire to be deceived?" If we must take what comes, we can at least take it standing up, in full knowledge of where we are, and why we are there, instead of demeaning ourselves to pretense and make-believe about the visibility of that which does not exist and cannot possibly exist.

You pays your money and you takes your choice. If you go in for high-pressure nationalism and coercive centralization, you must pay the price of doing without democracy. So far, so good. But doing without democracy also has its price. If you choose to do without democracy,

you must be prepared to stand the gaff of recurrent dislocations and disablements in every relation of corporate life; recurrent collisions of international interest, ever increasing in magnitude and violence; progressive degeneration and decay in the spirit of the people; and, finally, dissolution. You cannot have it both ways. Democracy is the one and only form of government that answers to the nature of man, and therefore it is the only one that man will permanently put up with. Democracy, however, cannot be practiced "beyond the extent of a New England township," and therefore it is ridiculously incompatible with all our present ideas of nationalism and national government – and there you are.

The state of the Union testifies eloquently to the same fact that the disordered state of Europe, of Asia, of the world in general, is attesting at a great rate. It testifies that the policy of trying to do without democracy is the most expensive luxury on earth. Perhaps in time, say ten or fifteen thousand years, if there be any people left over from the devastations wrought by this policy, they will have got this idea through their heads and will give up all thought of nationalism, imperialism, coercive centralization, and will reorganize their political life in terms of small communities over which democracy is actually practicable. But all that is too far off to be worth talking about now. Correspondents ask if anything can be done, if I can suggest any plan or scheme for improving the situation to which the policy of doing without democracy has given rise.

As they presumably understand the question, the answer is – no. The one thing we can do at the present time and for a long time to come is to see straight, think

straight, and as Professor Huxley said, "to have done, once and forever, with lying" – lying about democracy by pretending that it exists where it does not exist, and under circumstances which make its existence absolutely impossible and unthinkable. This is all we can do, but it is a great deal, and for the present at least it is quite enough, if only we do it.

The Amazing Liberal Mind

(Published in *The American Mercury*, "The State of the Union," August 1938.)

In a recent issue of the *New Republic*, Mr. Lewis Mumford, like another Paul Revere, rouses up the sleeping peasantry with a call to arms against the menace of Fascism. It is one of the most exhibitory performances I have ever seen for showing the incredible lengths to which "the Liberal mind" will go when driven into hysterics by the noise of its own firecrackers. It was too much even for the editors of the *New Republic*, for while they loyally printed their colleague's article, they also printed a note dissociating themselves from his proposals, and intimating that he would do better to keep his shirt on.

Mr. Mumford's call is a call to real arms; the title is not fanciful or poetic. It calls us to real shooting-irons, bayonets, tanks, and bombs. His thesis is that there can be no peace with Fascism, so he is for exterminating it at once, before it has the chance to shoot first and destroy us completely. Like Mark Twain's frontier hero,

Scotty Briggs, Mr. Mumford is "a man of peace, and he will have peace if somebody has to be carried out on a shutter." His practical proposals are, first, that our government break off all relations, commercial as well as political, with Germany, Italy, and Japan. Then he would have us all put on our war-paint, reach down the gun, and set forth on a high crusade of self-preservation. He justifies this because, he says, (the italics are his) *Fascism has already declared war.* At the end of his article he rises to a Tyrtæan strain:

> To arms! We must rally to our republican institutions and be prepared to fight for them. Now. *Now!* Tomorrow may mean never; the day after tomorrow may bring on the long brutal reign of Fascism's servile ideal of life and its savage, demented notion of human destiny... To arms! Gather together your strength and prepare for action. Strike first against Fascism, and strike hard. But strike.

This is all very fine and animating, and to keep from being quite carried away by it, I had to remind myself that the lead-up to this stirring peroration seemed a little *ex parte.* I went over the article again, substituting the word *Communism* wherever the word *Fascism* appeared, and I thought Mr. Mumford would have more than doubled the force of his rhetoric if he had bracketed them both together. I could judge only by my own emotional response, and I was quite sure that if he had done this he might really have "got me going." I might still have thought his plan of action was misguided and wrong – in fact, supremely silly – but I would have understood his indignation, and been much more disposed to share it. For while Mr. Mumford is right on every count against

organized Fascism, the same count can be brought with equal force against organized Communism. He says, for example, "Fascism is a codified and co-ordinated barbarism." So it is; but equally so is Communism. "To the extent that Fascism has become self-conscious in both Italy and Germany," he goes on, "it has systematized its delusions, erected its perversities into a standard of values, and set up a series of barbarian alternatives to the ideals of civilization." No doubt of it; but those words describe with equal precision what Communism has done wherever it has become self-conscious. "Every form of dishonesty, torture, and violence is justified by the Fascist if it promotes the advantage of the State." Quite true; and quite as true of the Communist. Every form of these villainies, Mr. Mumford says, "has already been used by the German Nazis and the Italian Fascists and the Japanese militarists." Who in his right mind would deny it? – but every form of these villainies has already also been used quite as freely by the Russian Communists. The evidence is quite as clear and abundant against the one perversion as against the other.

Mr. Mumford mentions Fascism's great rival in rascality but once, where he accuses the Roman Church of an alliance with Fascism, and accuses the American Romish priesthood of spreading "the typical Fascist hoax of making war on popular government by playing up the fictitious threat of Communism." He describes this as "a particularly odious trick in an overwhelmingly unbolshevik country like ours." I am not so sure of what he says about the Church and the priesthood, but I am sure he is right about our country being unbolshevik. Yet is it any more overwhelmingly unbolshevik than it

is unfascist? I have never counted noses on the question, but I would not think so, nor do I believe there is any reputable evidence that it is so. I would even suppose the contrary might be true, since Communism has an official party-status in this country, and I understand that Fascism has not. This may mean little to the point, however, so I do not lay any stress on it.

One might say plausibly that Mr. Mumford's article is a straight piece of sugar-coated propaganda for Communism, from end to end. I have purposely picked my quotations to show how easily this rather grubby little accusation may be made. I do not believe it is anything of the kind. I have known Mr. Mumford for years, and I believe he is incapable of low and shabby indirection. He may be a Communist, for all I know; but if he were, and if he felt he had any propagandizing to do, it is not his way to do it otherwise than fairly and squarely and aboveboard.

No, I quite see how the whole Communist faction might fall on Mr. Mumford's article with yells of joy, for it is as serviceable a piece of larvated propaganda as if it were made to order. Nevertheless I would stake anything it was not made to order, for I cannot see Mr. Mumford as a hole-and-corner propagandist for any cause. I wish I did not have to add that I do see him as something far more dangerous than that; he is a Liberal. I can well imagine his protesting good-humoredly that he would much rather I should make him out a knave than a fool, and I admit it is a hard choice, but there it is, and what can one do? His article interested me immensely, not because I smelled propaganda in it, for I did not and do

not, but because I saw in it the complete and perfect reflection of the Liberal mentality.

A Liberal is dangerous for the same reason Amiel thought women are dangerous. A woman, Amiel says, is "sometimes fugitive, irrational, indeterminable, illogical and contradictory. A great deal of forbearance ought to be shown her, and a good deal of prudence exercised towards her, for she may bring about innumerable evils without knowing it." This may or may not be a true bill against women – I am not entitled to an opinion about that – but I have observed Liberals closely for many years with ever-increasing wonder and amazement, and I am prepared to say that Amiel's sentence fits them like a poultice.

When a Liberal steams up on his emotions, they take complete charge of him. His intelligence goes on a sit-down strike; he cannot think; and therefore he runs to an incorrigibly superficial view of things, even of the thing which has riled him. One looks for this trait in the average of uninformed, unintelligent, and largely sensual human critters; but not in a man like Mr. Mumford, who is so very far above that average. Neither would one look for it in any of the Liberals I have known, for they were all, by and large, as far above that average as Mr. Mumford is; yet it was in every one of them, without a single exception.

The mischief of this in Mr. Mumford's case is typical of the damage which Liberals do without knowing it, as Amiel says. He confirms his readers in the monstrous notion that the villainies of Fascism are something very special and peculiar. He believes they are – or believes he believes they are – and does his eloquent best to make his

readers believe they believe likewise. Nothing of the sort is true; his view of Fascism must be termed incorrigibly superficial. The simple truth is that the State, wherever found, and under whatever form or name, works always with one object in view, which is the progressive confiscation of the individual's rights, liberties, and properties, and his reduction, as far as possible, to the footing of State servitude. Fascism is but the name given to one formula for doing this. Communism is the name given to another formula for doing the same thing; the New Deal, another; the French Popular Front, another; Belgian Socialism, another; and so on.

The national formulas for State exploitation vary only as the national formulas for lamb stew vary; they show superficial differences, but they are all variants of the same essential thing. In Italy, Russia, and Germany, the State works by the method of sheer dragooning meanwhile busily building up a great force of romanticist hooey or "ideology" to help out. In method as well as purpose, Communism and Fascism are merely two sides of the same counterfeit nickel. In Japan, the State has the force of a powerful hereditary hooey already at command, and its method is therefore prescriptive. In this country, the State works chiefly by straight over-the-counter purchase with public money, meanwhile perfecting a most formidable apparatus for dragooning its citizenry into subservience when the time comes for it to do so. Its method is the method of corruption-plus-embracery; and the flagrant obviousness of this is what makes Mr. Mumford's lurid talk of "rallying to our free republican institutions" so exquisitely ludicrous.

No State known to history ever had any other final purpose than the one I have described. The monarchical State did not, nor the republican State, nor the merchant State; nor now do the Communist, Fascist, the self-styled "democratic," the totalitarian, or any other kind of State. Revolutionary shifts from one form of State to another have been no more than the mere shift of crews at work on the same exploiting-machine. Hence, as Thomas Paine said, "the trade of governing has always been monopolized by the most ignorant and the most rascally individuals of mankind"; and the limit of their progressive oppressions and exactions has always been set according to what the traffic would progressively bear. Owing to poverty, or the temper of the people, or to other national conditions, the traffic will bear less sometimes, and sometimes more; but never anywhere does the State aim short of what it will bear.

Emotion blinds the Liberal to this fundamental fact, and hence he is always being taken in by "ideological" clap-trap of one sort or another, whereby his pronouncements on public affairs become like Mr. Mumford's, not only worthless, but actually a misdemeanor of evil example. When two gangs of desirous thugs anywhere in the world start a squabble for control of the exploiting-machine, the one which first raises the cry of "Democracy" or "liberty" causes the Liberal to sizzle with all Mr. Mumford's naive belief that by getting into a great sweat over an empty phrase he is really doing something for Democracy or liberty. After the sorry sight which American Liberals made of themselves twenty years ago, when the Pied Piper of the White House got them on the run to make the world safe for Democracy, one might

think the present crop of Liberals would have learned to control their emotional effervescence and cork it down; yet apparently they are ready as ever to be touched off by whatever preposterous blackguard comes along with the most plausible line of quackery.

Thus they become the most inconsequent of mortals. To save us from the horrors of war and militarism, for instance, Mr. Mumford would plunge us into war and militarism. The egregious Woodrow harvested the whole field of American Liberalism with exactly that proposal; and we now know what it was worth and what came of it. Again, when the Liberal warms up to a cause, he becomes stone-blind to the moral character of any absurdity, swinery, or villainy which promotes that cause. As a casuist and special pleader, he has Gury and Alfonso de Liguori looking like jack-leg lawyers in a chicken-court. If a Fascist, he is red-hot over Communist atrocities, but those of his fellow-Fascists are necessary expedients for the time being, temporary measures required by unusual conditions, and all that sort of thing. If anti-Fascist, he is another Mr. Mumford. If a New Dealer, he condones the disreputable doings of his leaders and associates with an appeal to "necessity, the tyrant's plea." The Liberal's inconsequence makes him a master-hand at countenancing wrong that right may follow; and the fact that it never does follow, and never can follow in such circumstances, is beyond his grasp.

I wish I might convince Mr. Mumford that no alien State policy will ever disturb us unless our own Government puts us in the way of it. We are in no danger whatever from any government except our own, and the danger from that is very great; therefore our own Gov-

ernment is the one to be watched and kept on a short leash. I suggest that Mr. Mumford take his mind entirely off Fascism, Communism, and foreign affairs in general, and devote it exclusively to finding out and carefully considering what our own Government is up to. Never mind what goes on in Japan, Germany, Italy, Russia, Czechoslovakia. Let the heathen rage; the important thing for us is what goes on here, and there is quite enough going on to engage Mr. Mumford's fine abilities profitably – instead of their being engaged as now, unprofitably – for the rest of his life.

Wanted: Honest Radicals

(Published in *The American Mercury*, "The State of the Union," December 1938.)

If I smoked cigars, which I never do, I should probably see a good deal of force in the late Mr. Marshall's idea that the country's greatest need is a good five-cent cigar. Not having the habit, however, I can think of a good many other things that seem more necessary. For instance, since I am a bit on the radical side myself, I naturally think the country could pretty well do with a few good sound old-line radicals. We have plenty of ists and ites of one sort or another who are called Radical by editors, labor-leaders, college presidents, Chamber of Commerce executives, and such-like ignorami, but an old-fashioned radical would not be found dead in their company. Think of our Fascists, Communists, Socialists! – can anyone imagine an old-time dyed-in-the-wool radical herding with Mr. Browder, Mr. Norman Thomas, Mr. Fritz Kuhn, or taking any interest in their antics? I cannot. The radical breed used to be fairly well represented in this

country, though never numerous – it is never numerous anywhere – but of late it seems to have petered out, and I think it was too useful to be lost.

The radical always saw things as they actually were, not as somebody told him they were, or as everybody thought they were. He had a clear eye for bedrock fact, like the child in Hans Christian Andersen's fable of the king's magic garment. Courtiers were praising the garment, crowds milling around and jubilating, all hands saying how marvelous and beautiful it was, when suddenly the little chap piped up and said, "But he has nothing on." That youngster had the makings of a real radical. He threw an eye on the king, saw that he had nothing on, said so, and that was that. What the crowd and courtiers were saying did not count with him at all. He was the embodiment of Plato's doctrine that the first condition of human wisdom is to see things as they are; and that is what the radical always made the first and greatest point of doing. He never took the appearance of things as a measure of their reality, but always cut straight down through them to see what the underlying reality, if any, actually was.

His creeds were fundamental; hence they were simple and brief. He was nothing at all on "ideologies," but was always on the matter-of-fact and practical side. To him, a social program was nothing but a piece of machinery, to be judged like any other machinery, solely by the way it would work. If it would turn the trick, and turn it cheaper and better than some other machine, he was for it; if not, he was for the other one. But all the time he had his eye steadily on the thing the machine was supposed to do, for this was all that interested him.

Hence he was as far as possible from being a doctrinaire, like most of our social and economic prophets of the present day. The doctrinaire gets so much interested in his machine that so long as it keeps running, he pays little or no attention to what it turns out, or whether it turns out anything. His machine is no longer a machine, but a fetish.

Thus it is a quality of mind and character that differentiates a radical. Radicalism does not connote a set of tenets or a program or platform. Except *ad hoc*, there is no such thing as radical principles or a radical platform, nor could there ever very well be, in the ordinary sense, such a thing as a radical party or group. Radicalism might perhaps be best described as a *temper*, a mode of mind and character which applies itself to whatever principle or program may appear before it. One might show this by taking examples from any of the isms now abroad in the world – Socialism, Fascism, Rotarianism, Presbyterianism, anything you like – but since I am a Single-Taxer it might be in better taste to pick my examples from among my own kind.

The fundamentals of Single-Tax doctrine are axiomatic, and are therefore accepted everywhere and by all. Like the axioms of geometry, they are recognized by the common sense of mankind. They are three: first, man is a land-animal; second, man derives his subsistence wholly from land; third, if deprived of access to land, man cannot exist. Those are the three rock-bottom articles of the Single-Taxer's faith, and nobody disputes them. He draws an inference from them, however, which some do not agree with, and others accept with a difference. The inference is that as a matter of right, man should have

free access to the source of his subsistence. On the one hand, our whole historic system of land-tenure is based on a denial of this inference's validity. On the other hand, Communists and Socialists draw the same inference, but believe that man's right to the use of the earth is given by the State and may be revoked by the State; whereas the Single-Taxer believes it is a natural right and not revocable by anybody.

At this point there comes up the difficult question of how to restore this right with a maximum of justice to all concerned. Several ways of dealing with this question have been proposed. The Communists have one scheme, the Socialists have one, Napoleon had another, Brigham Young had another. These schemes are mere pieces of machinery. The radical Single-Taxer has looked them all over and decided that the Single-Tax is the best machine for the purpose. Nevertheless in his view it is only a machine. He has no superstitious reverence for it, and if anybody will show him a better one *for that purpose*, he will scrap it instantly. Nor is he interested in claiming anything for his machine beyond the scope of that one purpose. Doctrinaire Single-Taxers, of whom there are many, like to recommend it as a sort of mechanical man-of-all-work in moralizing politics and regenerating society. I noticed the other day that Isabel Paterson referred to the Single-Tax impatiently as a "panacea," and considering the way the Single-Tax has been too often represented, perhaps she is hardly to be blamed for that; but the radical mind entertains no such claim. It goes off on no tangent towards possible collateral effects, and is not looking for any miracles. Enough is enough. The radical's interest is fixed on the one purpose set

forth in the first words of this paragraph, and he is as objective about subscribing to the Single-Tax as he is about buying a furnace to heat his house. He looks over all the types of equipment on the market, and takes the one he thinks best for that one purpose. If it turns out that the furnace will also bake his bread, wash his dishes, make his bed, and say his prayers for him, that is something else again, and he is not counting on it; all that interests him is that it should warm his house as efficiently and cheaply as possible.

II

That is the way the radical temper applies itself in every situation throughout the whole course of human events, public and private. It never stops on the surface of things, but digs down to their reality, examines their principles and intentions, and keeps close track of the relation of cause and effect between what they are supposed to do and what they actually do. That is the way it approaches the myriad of current schemes for a planned economy, price-fixing and wage-fixing, "social legislation," and such-like. It regards all these simply as so many pieces of machinery, sizes up the people who designed them and put them on the market, considers the claims made for them, and forms judgment accordingly. It does this, moreover, all on its own, irrespective of the way the herd and its bell-wethers are moving, for it knows that 50,000,000 people are quite as likely to be wrong now as they were in Galileo's time – and usually are wrong.

The old-line radical was no joiner, no organizer, no propagandist; he had no interest whatever in putting anything over. All that meant compromise, and compromise is the last thing he would do, under any circumstances. I have lately wondered what the radical Communists, if there are any, think of Mr. Browder's new policy of teaming up with the Rooseveltians and "boring-from-within." The old-fashioned radical would say such tactics were probably all right for those who liked them, but for his part he would see all his fellow Communists frizzling in Tophet before he would subscribe to anything of the kind. Boring-from-within was something that Thoreau, for instance, would not understand at all. Radicals were pretty self-respecting individuals; they did not submit their right of private judgment to any man or any body of men. Party loyalty and party discipline meant no more to them than it did to Mr. Jefferson when he said that if he could not go to Heaven except with a party, he would not go there at all:

> I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. . . . I am neither federalist nor anti-federalist; I am of neither party nor yet a trimmer between parties. . . . I never had an opinion in politics or religion which I was afraid to own. A costive reserve on these subjects might have procured me more esteem from some people, but less from myself.

Think of simon-pure radical stuff like that being put on paper by a President of the United States who served two terms and could have had another for the asking! It

seems almost ludicrous, considering what the Presidency has come to. But that President was Thomas Jefferson – enough said!

Our civilization is very pawky. As Sam Weller said of the waters of Bath, it has "a wery strong flavour of warm flatirons." Any civilization ruled by fear is bound to taste like that, I suppose, and ours is ruled by a composite of a great number of fears. I have thought that a few real radicals dotted around in it here and there might season up its flat and uninteresting monotony a little. It produces enough discontent, and breeds plenty of dissenting "causes," isms, and perunas of one kind or another, and plenty of people to promote them, God knows; but these only stir up its vapidity without freshening it, like the electric-fans in the evil-smelling air of a subway-car. Perhaps radicals can no longer be produced; it may be more than a coincidence that when our civilization became uninteresting the breed apparently died out. Certainly our institutions cannot produce them; they can produce likely candidates for Methodism, Fascism, Islamism, or any other sect or persuasion, but they have no machinery whatever for producing radicals. Probably not even the greatest radical spirits, the Jeffersons, Emersons, Thoreaus, could now survive the slow desiccation set up by our spiritual atmosphere. I doubt that they could. I daresay therefore that my space in the magazine this month is worse wasted than usual, and I should be more than ever grateful for having a tolerant editor. But I have seen the genuine old-style American radical with my own eyes, as I have seen the great flight of wild pigeons, now also extinct; and as I now look at the Browders, Kuhns,

and Roosevelts of these days, I cannot help remembering what an inspiring sight he was.

What is Democracy?

(Published in *The American Mercury*, "The State of the Union," January 1939.)

I wonder if my readers are as completely fed up with the word "democracy" as I am. A century ago, when "liberty, equality, fraternity" were the big words in France, Prince de Metternich said he got so sick of hearing about "fraternity" while he was in Paris that if he had a brother he would call him cousin. I believe if I had a "democrat" in my family today, I would call him things far worse – things which can't be printed, so disgusted I am with the term.

For the first time in three weeks I picked up a New York newspaper yesterday and there I read that, in a speech the day before, Hitler called himself "the arch-democrat." An editorial on the Monroe Doctrine, in the same paper, spoke about "our interest in joining with the other democracies to preserve the Western hemisphere from any threat of attack." These are mere casual samples of the wretched literary sculch which confronts

one at every tack and turn. There must be as many different kinds of democracy in this country as there are of Baptists, or even more. The communists say they are democrats, but on the other side of the fence the fascists put in the same claim. So do the New Dealers, but so also do the Princes of Privilege and the Economic Royalists. Press-agencies must keep half a hundred assorted ecomiums on democracy in standing type, like Western Union's canned messages for Mother's Day. Paraphrasing what Mark Twain said of a certain German word, every time one of our first-string publicists opens his mouth, a "democracy" falls out; and every time he shuts it, he bites one in two that was trying to get out.

I presume there is nothing to be done about it but to pass up our newspapers and periodicals unread, which I think most sensible people probably do. But for once my readers and I may as well have what fun we can get out of such a forlorn subject, so suppose we examine the word *democracy*, and see just where and how it fits in, or doesn't fit in.

The Century Dictionary says that democracy is "a system of government in which the sovereign power of the State is vested in the people as a whole, and is exercised directly by them or their elected agents." Good enough, I think; that seems to cover it satisfactorily. Then the United States is a democracy; so is England, so is France. Certainly. Therefore our publicists are right by definition when they put out their dreadful blether about "the three great democracies." Of course they are.

But why, by definition, is not Germany a democracy? Why not Russia? Our publicists seem to think not, but how do they make it out? Is not the sovereign power

vested in the people of those countries, as in ours? Do they not hold popular elections and vote, as our people do? Are not Stalin and Co. and Hitler and Co. as competently qualified agents of the Russian and German peoples as Roosevelt and Co. are of the American people? Just where did Hitler slip up the other day when he called himself "the arch-democrat"? Perhaps he was a little immodest, but jobholders can't afford to be shrinking violets exactly; and did not Roosevelt strike much the same pose when he gave it out that he was for "democracy and still more democracy"? Are not the popular majorities for Stalin and Hitler as impressive as Roosevelt's? It seems to me that I recall something of the kind in the press-reports of the last German and Russian elections.

But those elections were phony; all the people voted under duress. Can we be quite sure of that? I cannot. I think some of them, perhaps a good many, voted the affirmative ticket because they preferred it. Not all the voters were dragooned, at any rate, for some voted the other way, and were so recorded; so there seems to have been at least a shadow of an option available in the matter. But never mind; let it pass that the Russian and German elections were shotgun elections, and were therefore no proper test of democracy.

Very well, then, how about ours? For purposes of fair comparison let us take the last Presidential election. Is it not perfectly competent for any Nazi apologist to say that Roosevelt won that election by straight over-the-counter purchase with public money, and that it was therefore no fair index of democracy in America? Nor if he were honest would he make the utterly extravagant claim

that *all* the votes for Roosevelt were either purchased or purchasable; on the contrary, he would say that no doubt a great many of them were cast in all good faith. If a Hitlerian "democratic" press-agent said these things, it is mighty hard to see how anybody could refute him.

Stupid as I may be, I cannot get it through my head that job-holding by economic pressure is any more democratic than job-holding by shotgun-pressure. "It may be," as Dr. Pangloss said, "but if so, it has escaped me." The difference seems to me purely one of method. Therefore, taking elections and electoral procedure as a test – and I know of no other that is applicable – if the United States is a democracy, Germany and Russia are democracies. If Roosevelt is an arch-democrat (and I hardly see how he could cavil at the title) so certainly is Hitler.

Let us move on to the next point, and consider "the need for preserving democracy in the Western hemisphere." Whereabouts, I may ask. In Venezuela? In Mexico? Is it Brother Vargas' special brand of democracy that needs preserving, or Brother Ortiz'? If not these, whose then, for there seems to be a pretty liberal choice? Also, preservation from what? Naturally, from being undermined by the surreptitious infiltration of "undemocratic ideologies" imported mostly from Germany and Italy into certain parts of the lower Americas, and from Russia into other parts. But if you are going to stick to the dictionary's definition of the word, then tell us in what respect these ideologies are "undemocratic" as compared with ours. If, on the other hand, each man furnishes his own definition of democracy, making the word mean whatsoever it suits him to have it mean, the consequence is that it has no meaning that is either

communicable or intelligible, and is something merely pitchforked in because it sounds good.

II

Talk about your "banner with a strange device"! It is hard to find a newspaper or magazine or even a professedly serious book, nowadays, that does not run off into caterwaulings about democracy; viewing with alarm because, in one or another part of the world, democracy is either demolished or is perishing and must be saved; or pointing with pride because here or there it has got a new lease of life and is bound to be triumphant. Kings bow low before the word, and every politician in the world posts the record that he has fit, bled, and died for democracy on every conceivable occasion in the past, and will keep on doing so as long as he can hold his job.

All this is very tiresome; very tiresome indeed. I notice today that ninety-four persons of more or less prominence have memorialized the President to raise the embargo against the Spanish government for the sake of democracy. Their memorial includes all the usual catchphrases; as usual, it lines up the "totalitarian States" against the "democratic peoples and ideals." As usual, it is against measures "which confer increased power and prestige upon the opponents of democracy." As usual, it gets up a prodigious great sweat about the sorry reaction of "a victory of fascism in Spain."

The memorialists may be right in their contentions, or they may be wrong. What interested me was to look over their names and find to my certain knowledge six

distinct and different brands of "democracy" represented among them; every known brand, I think, except one. It would be invidious to mention names, nor is it necessary; but I could not restrain my sinful wonderment at what democracy in Spain would be like if my revered friend Mr. A.'s special brand of that commodity should prevail there! If the brand of my impetuous young acquaintance Mr. B. should prevail in this country, how long would it be before his ninety-three co-signers would be liquidated? What would democracy be like in China and Czechoslovakia if Messrs. C. and D. ran their respective democratic brands and earmarks on those unhappy countries? Such speculations are rather grim, perhaps, but they amused me, and their total effect was to put the effort of the ninety-four signers under a very heavy discount in my mind; I should say probably about eighty-five or ninety per cent.

As a matter of fact, whenever you meet the term democracy, you are safe in assuming that it was put to you in either ignorance or fraud. As used by the ninety-four, for instance, or by the newspaper I cited, it means simply nothing. I cannot recall a single instance in current usage where the term meant anything. In the early days of the Republic, as everyone knows, democracy was a term of abuse, like Jacobinism, Bolshevism, Radicalism, in years following. *Democrat* was a fighting word in Washington's time. Subsequently, when the franchise was extended and the erstwhile "filthy democrats" began to get votes, politicians began to make up to them, and the term began to be respectable; and now that everybody has a vote, it has become a mere conjuring-

term, empty of meaning, and in my poor opinion, an uncommonly disgusting one.

Neither ignorance nor humbug is particularly interesting. If our editors and publicists would give up the specious plea of democracy, I could go a long way with them. As it is, whenever they let the word drop out, especially when they are making comparisons between some other political regime and ours, I instinctively ask "How come?" and proceed to put the questions stated in the first part of this paper. Often, too – in fact, pretty regularly – I am moved to look around for symptoms of some deeper interest which the term may be covering – an interest in trade, in oil, in silver, or something of the kind – and I am bound to say I usually turn up a good strong scent of something much more substantial than the "democratic ideology." In about nine such cases out of ten, on close inspection, "democracy" smells to me pretty much as "patriotism" did to Dr. Johnson.

If the ninety-four memorialists had come out plump and plain, and said to the President, "We don't like the German regime, and are afraid of it; it affronts our sense of decency, honor, integrity, and fair play; we think its methods of government are inhuman and monstrous, and they are so repugnant to us that we don't think you ought to run any chance, however remote, of bringing us into any closer relations with such people" – if they had put their case in terms like these, it would have been a sound one, and I for one would have signed that much of their memorial *ex animo*. If they had added that they thought the German influence in Spain may be the means of ultimately doing us out of a lot of South American trade, I should still respect their view, although I do not

share it. One can have a great deal of sympathy with the general sentiment that our editors and publicists and the ninety-four memorialists express, insofar as they are honest about it and are content to stay on the solid ground of fact and common sense.

But when they set up the poor old tattered scarecrow of "democracy," and try to make us believe not only that it is a real live figure but also that it is peculiarly and preciously our own, they are, as I said, promoting either a piece of profound and lamentable ignorance, or of gross and egregious fraud.

College is No Place to Get an Education

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The word has gone out lately that in one of our great educational institutions the students are dissatisfied with their instructors. In principle there is nothing new about this, for it is an immemorial privilege of students everywhere to carry on a sort of Fabian warfare against the authorities. In this particular instance, however, there are some unusual circumstances which make it interesting. The students are not in a mood of juvenile rebellion; quite the contrary, their mood is one of simple criticism rather than complaint, and quite respectably mature criticism, at that. Nor, as I understand it, are they dissatisfied with the formal instruction they get, or with their official treatment in the lecture-room. They say only that while their instructors may be very well up on their subjects and may be capable of teaching those

subjects effectively enough in the way of technical routine, they are not men of all-round high culture or even of first-rate intelligence, and that when the institution is picking its instructors it ought to do better.

It seems that some time ago this institution, like most of our colleges and universities, became infected with the Elk-Rotarian notion that students should have closer social contact with the master-minds on the faculty, and it made arrangements accordingly. We all remember how this idea swept the country, and the preposterous length to which it was carried. It reached its perfect expression in an instructor who was utterly devoid of natural dignity and capable of any amount of meretricious hobnobbing with his students, both in hours and out of hours; capable, in short, of thoroughly vulgarizing his status. It reached no such length in the institution I refer to. The students there were made to understand, however, that informal association with the great minds on the faculty was an important factor in their education, and that the way to it lay open; so wide open, indeed, that it could hardly be avoided without effort – and now those who accepted this situation are saying in all frankness that the great minds are simply not there, and that association with such minds as are there is pretty much their idea of wasted time.

This raises at once the question, if social contact with first-class men is so important, why do not our institutions scratch up more first-class men to bring into contact with their students? If it be said that they cannot be got, which is clearly true, this only leads to the further question why this should be so. There is no doubt about the fact. Shaw's bitter jest, "Those who can, do; those

who can't, teach," has only this much of truth in it, that while the profession has now more capable routineers than ever before, more trained reporters, more facile expositors, its great men are few indeed. It has plenty of economists as literate as Sumner, for instance, but no one I know of who could come anywhere near filling Sumner's bill as an all-round source of inspiration to young men. It has as good grammarians as Gildersleeve, Warren, Lane, Humphreys, but their total effect upon the juvenile intellect, imagination, and character is not at all the same. It has plenty of men as well up on English literature as Beers, Child, Gummere, but when one has said that, there is nothing more to say. For some reason, men of that quality seem no longer to be attracted into the profession of teaching; and yet, if "social contact with one's instructors" is so valuable, it is such men and no others who give it all the value it has. The attitude of the students at the institution I speak of seems to prove this conclusively. What then has happened which makes it difficult for our institutions any longer to get the type of instructor which admittedly is most desirable for the purpose contemplated?

I think that unofficially they would be glad to get them, but what they can do about it officially is another matter. In the old days before education was organized on trade-unionist lines, Harvard gave professorships to Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Norton, and Henry Adams at a time when they were not much more than promising young men. I doubt that Harvard feels able to take a chance like that now. They were all fairly good in their lines, no better than many of our modern specialists – not nearly so good, in fact – but they were wonderful

men to have around. As a demonstrator of anatomy, Oliver Wendell Holmes did well enough, nothing to brag about; but he was a highly civilized man, and any kind of "contact" with Holmes, whether social or official, was most infectious. Harvard knew that this was so, and therefore kept him on. As I said, I believed that unofficially Harvard would be glad enough to take him on now, or to take on Norton, Longfellow, Lowell, Adams. The trouble is that not one of these men could qualify by present-day trade-union requirements. None of them carried the union-card of a Ph.D., and as for having taken courses in pedagogy, the psychology of adolescence, and all that sort of thing, not one of them would even know what those are. Harvard today might risk getting into trouble with the union by taking on conspicuous scabs like Holmes and Lowell – I don't know – but I think it is highly improbable.

Our institutions are right enough in their idea that "social contact" has educational value. It is a sort of blind, fumbling recognition of the fact that education is largely a matter of simple contagion. Abraham Flexner once put it very well to me that "if you want to catch measles, you must go where measles is; if you do, you'll catch it – no need to do anything more about that, you'll catch it – but if you don't, you'll never catch it." The old and sound type of university was based on this principle; the modern type has departed from it, and is now trying to get the same results by a purely mechanized process, which cannot be done. You can't assemble a group of first-class, well-trained, highly-specialized instructors, all union members in good standing but not a case of measles in the lot, and get results by exposing your students to

them socially or officially or in any way. It is not a matter of mechanics. No ingenious grouping of new-style buildings or devising of new-style "systems" will do the trick. There must be measles somewhere around, or the thing will be a failure – worse than a failure, indeed, for all you will get is a meretricious backslapping, hail-fellow kind of familiarity which encourages a student to address his instructor by his first name and call him a good old scout.

This is what the students in the institution I spoke of seem to perceive, and it is all to their credit that they resent it as senseless and objectionable. I greatly doubt that an old-time student at Harvard would have regarded the privilege of slapping Longfellow's back and calling him Hank as conducive to an education or as likely to stimulate the desire to become a civilized man; and apparently these students hold similar views.

II

One reason, then, why the profession is short of the type of instructor which is most desirable from the serious student's point of view is that our institutions must perforce think twice about employing non-union men; and by that I mean men who are not only scabs in fact, but are thoroughgoing scabs at heart, utterly unwilling ever to submit their ideas, opinions, methods, or liberties to the judgment of a trade-unionist court-martial. Another reason is that such men naturally fight shy of a profession dominated by the trade-unionist spirit. They could not work well or feel at home in a situation where they would

be meeting that spirit's exactions, pretensions, jealousies, slights, and detractions at every tack and turn. They would have the continual sense of frustration and embarrassment which Henry Ford might feel if he were sitting in on the directorate of the CIO. I know four men, still young, highly accomplished, who are everything a student should want. They were university-instructors for a year or two, most successfully as far as their students were concerned, and then gave it up. For curiosity I asked them how they would feel about going back to it again. One said he would beg first, go on Relief, or even starve. Another said that of course if it were a matter of getting bread for his wife and children, he would go in for white slavery, burglary, or anything; but nothing short of that could possibly get him back into institutional life as it is now organized.

A third reason is that our present system throws the burden of education on the instructor, whereas formerly it was on the student. Fully 90 per cent of our whole student-population, above the primary grades, are ineducable; they are mostly capable of some kind of *training*, capable of being made ready for some more or less useful pursuit, but they are wholly incapable of *education* in any proper sense of the word. Nevertheless, there they are, cluttering up our institutions in prodigious numbers; and an instructor, instead of shoveling them out to seek a proper training for some pursuit that is within their competence, is obliged to go through the motions of doing something for them which cannot be done; that is, to educate them. He is supposed to "interest his students," and it is held against him if he does not "present his subject in an interesting way"; which in practice means

that he does the student's work for him. Formerly it was distinctly up to the student to furnish whatever interest was needed, and if he did not furnish enough to keep himself going, he heard about it from the authorities.

Another discouragement which tends to keep first-class men out of teaching is that education is no longer officially regarded as an end in itself. Vocationalism has run to such riotous excess throughout our system that our institutions beyond the eighth grade are virtually training-schools, with education, if any, strictly on the side. Americans and Englishmen have the naive idea that by changing the name of a thing you can change its character. Training will become education if only you keep on calling it education long enough and earnestly enough. Call a training-school a college or university, and it will become one. Train a youth in journalism, poultry-raising, plumbing, commercial art, electrical engineering, the practice of law or dentistry, give him an academic degree, insist that he is an educated man, and he will be an educated man. These debaucheries of vocationalism have been so effective that if a man shows signs of an education, properly so called, Americans instinctively assume, first, that he got it in Europe, and, second, that he is in some way making money out of it.

Our university students have the bleakest prospect of all, so far as education is concerned, because vocationalism has caused our universities to degenerate into *teaching*-institutions, which they should not be – institutions with stated courses leading to advanced degrees employable for vocational purposes. Thus their faculties are not primarily an assemblage of scholars who have no responsibility whatever for students, but an array

of pedagogues whose first business is to put students through a series of stated jumps. I know of but one institution in the country, a new one and fortunately a rich one, which seems to be organized pretty much on the plan of the medieval university. It does no teaching, confers no degrees, and undertakes no responsibility for students. If a young man wishes to go there and hang around for the sake of picking up what he can, they are probably willing he should; they do not encourage him particularly, nor yet do they discourage him. On such terms precisely did young men go into a huddle around Peter Abélard, and stand Bernard of Clairvaux up on the carpet while they proceeded to pitch eager questions into him on one or another point of scholastic philosophy.

Mark Hopkins sitting on one end of a log and a student on the other is still the only sound formula for education; but you have to have a genuine Hopkins and a genuine student. If you have these, it does not much matter what kind of log they sit on. In other words, the organization and mechanical apparatus of education, which we have made so impressive, actually count for very little. As John Erskine has so well said, we found that we could not organize Hopkins or organize the student, so for fifty years we have spent all our energy on organizing the log, with most unsatisfactory results. One inquiry and investigation after another has considered our system, and reported unfavorably. New York State spent half a million dollars on a three years' study of its system by a commission including thirty men of national reputation and seven college presidents; and the report made public on the day I write this shows that while New York's system is as good as any in the country, or even better,

it is for all essential purposes virtually a total failure. It is a failure for the same reason that the American educational system is everywhere a failure; it fails because it is condemned to the fantastically impossible task of making silk purses out of sows' ears. The commission did not report this fact, probably because it is fundamental, insuperable, and unpleasant. All similar investigations have blinked it, no doubt for the same reason; but the naive policy of the ostrich will not alter facts, and this is the primary fact of the situation.

Our system will never work one whit better than it is working now until we fairly and squarely face the fact that *90 per cent of our children are ineducable*, and that the time, energy, and resources spent on trying to educate them are viciously wasted. Not until this fact is faced will we be able to draw a clear, permanent line between education and training. Then, and not until then, will our training-schools become avowedly what they are, not pretending to do anything whatever with education beyond the old-fashioned three Rs. They will give up the absurd affectation of an academic character, and desist from the atrocious blasphemy of conferring academic degrees. Then, too, and not until then, will our colleges and universities become true and proper educational institutions instead of the preposterous hotch-potch which vocationalism and trade-unionism have made of them; and eligible students will seek them out as such. Students will not frequent them for fun, fashion, or football, or be sent there to get them out from underfoot at home, to put off the evil day when they must go to work, to make profitable social contacts, or to be somehow helped to a job; they will go there for the one purpose of ed-

ucating themselves, and the pukka student may pretty well assure himself of finding a pukka Hopkins on the other end of the log when he arrives. Facing the fact of an immense ineducable majority is unpleasant and depressing, but there the fact is, and merely blinking it does not get it out of the way, or lessen its force; nor, which is most important, does it decrease the penalty imposed by Nature upon the refusal to recognize any vital fact and to shape our procedure in accordance with it. Facing this fact makes havoc of our accepted ideas of democracy and of equality; it plumps us squarely against the further fact that those ideas are false and fantastic and should be revised – must be revised, indeed, if we are ever to get on.

So there the matter stands. If the American people prefer to keep to the ideas of democracy and equality which are the foundation of our educational system, one can only point out that so long as they do so, one generation after another will be sacrificed. If, on the other hand, they choose to sacrifice those ideas and replace them by sound ones upon which they can base a sound educational system, they will be doing the best thing possible for the future of their country, no matter how disagreeable and embarrassing the act of sacrifice may be.

The Triumph of the Gadget

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I have lately been puzzling over Dr. Alexis Carrel's observation that "men cannot follow modern civilization along its present course, because they are degenerating." I hardly know what to make of it, and therefore perhaps ought not to write about it, because I cannot put on the air of profound and confident certainty which American readers seem to like their writers to assume in dealing with all public questions. The statement, however, gives rise to a good many thoughts and conjectures which are worth writing about, even if one is not quite certain of them.

It is pretty evident that men cannot follow modern civilization along its present course. That much is clear. They are following it, but only in the sense that a man clinging to the tail of a wild bull may be said to follow. It is running away with them as fast as it can go. Some of them are hanging on and at the same time trying

to see which way the bull is going, and why, and how far, and what is likely to happen on the way. The great majority, on the other hand, seem simply to be hanging on; inert, not trying to see or know or guess at anything – just helplessly hanging on.

It is evident also that the hangers-on cannot hang on much longer, nor can the followers, if any, follow much farther. It therefore looks as if the course of modern civilization will soon be littered up with a huge amorphous mass of general and rather hopeless exhaustion. This is a most disagreeable prospect to face, but there seems no way out of it. On his first point, then, one would say Dr. Carrel is right. Men cannot follow indefinitely, nor can they hang on indefinitely. His second point will stand a little sifting. Are men degenerating? What is the evidence that they are?

Some authorities say they find no evidence that the general run of mankind has degenerated noticeably up to the present time, or that it has noticeably improved. According to all they can find out about man's earlier nature and condition, they think that, by and large, "the average civilized man" is now just about what he was 6000 years ago. He is a little better off in health, probably, his span of life is longer, and his chances of surviving infancy are better but his moral constitution and his intellectual capacity seem to have undergone no significant change.

One reason why it is easy to believe that civilized man is degenerating is that he has, so far, bitterly disappointed the expectations put upon him by philosophers of the Eighteenth Century. Putting it roughly, they thought that all the average civilized man needed was a

better chance, and his moral and intellectual qualities would improve indefinitely. Give him better education, better surroundings, more leisure, full political and social responsibility, and above all give him more independence and freedom of action, and the great natural good in him would immediately flow out.

So far, it has not worked out that way. Perhaps he still has not had chance enough to show what is in him; some social philosophers think so, and are all for his having more; and of course, in spite of appearances, they may be right. Whether so or not, his distinct failure, so far, to make good on the Eighteenth-Century estimate is no argument that he has degenerated. At most, it is presumptive evidence, perhaps taken prematurely, that those expectations were extravagant. It may be that he simply hasn't it in him to amount to more in an intellectual, moral, or spiritual way than he amounted to 6000 years ago. So while undoubtedly men cannot follow the course of modern civilization, it is not quite clear that the reason Dr. Carrel assigns for this is the right one. Perhaps that course is utterly impracticable for any but a superhuman race.

Nevertheless, Dr. Carrel gets support from the fact that certain tribes, even races, degenerated promptly and swiftly on contact with modern civilization of the Western type. They were guinea-pigs; the benefits of that civilization were such as they could not appropriate and use, and the only influences to which they could react were deteriorating. Measles, missionaries, "education," and commercial buccaneering practices ruined the Polynesians, for example. Their selective power was not up to the task of picking out from the jumble of new

influences what was good for them, and resisting the rest.

We may now be seeing the same thing taking place on a larger scale; if so, it would show conclusively that Dr. Carrel is right. Modern civilization presents a stupendous jumble of new influences, and many of them – most of them, by far – are deteriorating, and withal insidious. It presents these not only to the heathen sitting in darkness, but most persuasively to its own people. Now, whatever may be said about the average man's capacities in the past or in the future, ordinary observation shows beyond any chance of doubt that, like the Polynesians, his selective power is preposterously incompetent at the moment to deal with this irruption of depraving influences.

Hence there would be little question *a priori* that Dr. Carrel is right to the extent that men of the Western civilization must be degenerating, and in the absence of some supervening factor, as yet unforeseen, they must continue to do so.

II

Illustrations of the Western man's incompetence in selective power are perhaps best seen in small matters. A novelist once described the destruction of a race by the agency of microbes. Similarly a romancer who had a cynical turn might foreshadow the collapse of Western civilization, and call it *The Triumph of the Gadget.* In all probability the emergence of the gadget has had a vast deal to do with the degenerative process. During the last

fifty years there has been invented almost every conceivable labor-saving device, with the consequence that the average man is in a state of utter manual incompetence. This is well-known and is often commented upon. But what is not so often observed is that these gadgets are not only labor-saving but brain-saving, thought-saving; and it seems an inescapable conclusion that a correlative mental incompetence is being induced.

A certain amount of resistance seems necessary for the proper functioning of mental and moral attributes, as it is for that of physical attributes. In any of these three departments of life, if you can get results without effort, and habitually do so, the capacity for making the effort dwindles. Whatever takes away the opportunity for effort, whatever obviates or reduces the need for making it, is therefore to some degree deleterious. It needs a bit of brains to manage a furnace-fire successfully; an automatic heater needs none; hence many householders today could not manage a furnace-fire to save their lives. It needs some brainwork to add up a column of figures; running an adding-machine needs nothing but attention; consequently there are many book-keepers and bank-clerks now who not only do not add but cannot. As we all have frequently had occasion to observe, shopkeeping now seldom requires any more strenuous mental exercise than is involved in consulting a price-list. Cooking is a great art, requiring a lot of brain-work; running the modern kitchen requires far less.

Animals having organs which, on account of changes in their environment, they no longer use, turn into a species which has only vestigial remnants or rudimentary forms of these organs, sometimes amounting to no more than

mere vague suggestions, like the *os coccygis* in human beings, which vaguely suggests a remote ancestral tail. There is much in "the course of modern civilization" which strongly intimates that this may be happening to the mental and moral powers of Western man. The trouble with arm-chair-and-push-button Utopias like the one so attractively sketched for us by H. G. Wells, is that they carry brain-saving to the point of complete disuse. Even at present, judging by what one sees, hears, and reads, great numbers of Americans seem pretty well to have reached that point already.

Americans are the world's foremost gadget-users, and unquestionably the leisure gained in this way is used chiefly for further brain-saving – a substitution of play-gadgets for work-gadgets; motion-pictures, automobiles, radio-music, as an alternative to adding-machines, price-lists, fireless cookers. One could make out a very reasonable case for the statement that Americans at large have given up using their brains for purposes of thought, and use them only for purposes of attention and contemplation. If this be so, then with the field of gadgetry steadily enlarging and brain-power proportionately dwindling, one might plausibly forecast a generation of American children born without any brains at all, but only with vestigial faculties of attention and contemplation, no more highly differentiated – perhaps even less highly – than those which are common to extremely low forms of animal life.

Dr. Carrel goes on to remark how the aspect of public affairs bears out his thesis of human degeneration; and here it is especially hard to refute him. "In practically every country," he says, "there is a decrease in

the intellectual and moral calibre of those who carry the responsibility of public affairs." Again, a little farther on he observes that "it is chiefly the intellectual and moral deficiencies of the political leaders, and their ignorance, which endanger modern nations." All this is unfortunately true, at least as far as this country is concerned, and it is apparently true elsewhere; and there is also the coincident truth to be considered, that such leaders are precisely what a brain-saving people would be most likely to choose.

Looking at the other major Western Powers also, there seems almost certainly to be something in what this savant says. Degeneration in leadership appears to be simply an index of degeneration in those who choose that leadership. Looking at our own country, however, there can be no shadow of doubt about it. At one time we had the name of being a nation of practical, commonsense people, hard-headed, and above all, resourceful. Whether we ever were quite that or not, there were enough such among us, and they were prominent and influential enough, to give us that reputation. But today apparently we are the easiest of easy marks for any peruna, even the most nauseous, that any persuasive quack sees fit to dose us with. Think of the ruinous dope we have swallowed in the last twenty-five years: British propaganda by the shipload; making the world safe for democracy; the "new economics" under Coolidge; progressivism; prohibition; technocracy; borrowing yourself out of debt, and spending yourself rich; cursing Statism and corporalism abroad, and applauding them at home; social security; saving democracy in Spain and South

America; the new liberalism; Townsendism; and heaven knows what-all beside.

So there it is. I suppose the only actual certainty in the whole matter is that Dr. Carrel is an extremely disagreeable fellow. We don't like to think he is right, but he has so much to say for himself that we can't be quite sure he is wrong. So probably what we shall do is to follow the good sound American procedure in such case made and provided; we shall promptly forget him, and turn on the radio for the latest thing in swing music. Thereby again demonstrating the triumph of the gadget.

The Oxometer

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It must now be verging on six or seven years since my old friend Bill M. told me he was working on a device that he said would be the greatest invention of all time. As he described it, I could see that he was right. There was no shadow of doubt in my mind that if he could make the thing work, it would be the most powerful agent for promoting civilization that the world has ever seen. By comparison, the wheel, the lever, and all the other fundamental aids to civilization put together, would be nothing to it. I was immensely enthusiastic over the idea, and whenever I saw Bill I would ask him how it was coming on, but presently Bill moved, and I was away a good deal, so we more or less lost sight of each other, and I rather thought, since I had seen no word of his invention in the public prints, that probably he had been unable to get it going and had given it up.

Last week, however, Bill telephoned me to come around to his workshop and see a demonstration. It seems that shortly after he first spoke of it to me he had gone so far as to get the machine working perfectly under controlled conditions, and only a few slight simplifications and adjustments were needed to make it foolproof, but these were so troublesome that it had taken him five years to get them fined down exactly right, shipshape and according to Gunter. I remembered that Edison had hit the same snag with talking pictures and lay aground on it a long time. I saw talking pictures perfectly synchronized in his laboratory years before they came out commercially; he had got them to the point where they would work all right when he worked them, but not to the point where anybody could work them. That was the way with Bill's machine. He worked it for me almost all the afternoon, and I never saw anything so indescribably marvelous in my life.

Bill named his machine the "oxometer," accent on the second syllable. How he came to give it that name is rather a long story, but it must be gone through with in order to show what the machine is for, so the reader will not find it uninteresting.

The term *bull* has been long current in the glossary of journalism, and has seeped out to some extent into common slang. Newspaper men have told me that it means slight stuff which its authors know is unsound and do not take seriously, and which is printed only to fill space in a way that is appealing and agreeable to a low order of intelligence and taste. It is not synonymous with *hooey*, for that implies self-deception on the part of the utterer; he believes in what he says, notwithstanding

it may actually be most dreadful nonsense. Thus, as I understand it, the formulas worked out by circle-squarers, flat-earth people and perpetual-motion savants are hooey, not bull. *Tripe*, again, seems to be not quite the same thing as bull, because it carries a distinct implication of something commonplace and hackneyed. A person who in good faith rehashes some old story, or propounds as a novelty or a discovery some simple fact that everyone knows, is emitting tripe. Perhaps the thing most nearly analogous to bull is *buncombe* or *bunk*, though not exactly so, I think, but quite nearly.

I do not know how this use of the term *bull* came about. I once published an inquiry and got a good many replies, none of them satisfactory. One correspondent said he had found a suggestion of it in Homer, but I looked the passage up and thought it very doubtful. I have flirted with the notion that it may have come into the language by way of the Spanish *bulla*, for I suppose that with a little stretching you might render the verb *bullir* in a tropical sense which would give some color to this suggestion. I have a vague and imperfect recollection of a poem called "Maddalena, or the Spanish Duel," which I read in my boyhood, one stanza of which runs somewhat like this: –

Then the Spanish caballero
Bowed with haughty courtesy,
Solemn as a tragic hero,
Introduced himself to me.
'Señor, I am Don Camillo
Guzman Miguel Pedrillo
De Ximenes y Ribera
Y Santalgos y Herrera
Y Quintana y de Rosa

Y de Rivas y Mendosa
Y Zorrilla y –' 'No more, sir!
'T is as good as twenty score, sir,'
Said I to him with a frown.
'Mucha bulla para nada.
No palabras, draw your 'spada.
If you're up for a duello
You will find I'm just your fellow.
Señor, I am Peter Brown.*'*

But problems like this are much more in my old friend Mr. Mencken's province than in mine, so I gladly make him a present of this one. I first ran across the term some twenty years ago, in the phrase *shooting the bull* or its variant *throwing the bull*, which I believe is now more common. I remember that during the war, when the wife of a prominent European statesman came over here to help bamboozle us in behalf of the Allies, I heard an editor tell one of his first-string sob-sisters to "go out and get her to shoot a little bull for us." I remember also as long ago as when Don Marquis ran a column called the "Sundial" in the New York *Sun*, he wrote a poem in first-class Kiplingese, asking what had become of the great horde of Kipling's imitators who had so suddenly sprung up in our literary circles, and as suddenly disappeared. His first stanza ended with the line: –

> *O ye sons of Kip, have ye lost your grip, are ye feared to throw the bull?*

The only other special use of the term that I recall hearing was from some college students at an informal gathering which in my day we would have called a gabfest. They called it a *bull-session.*

II

Coming back now to Bill's oxometer, I am unable to give a technical description of it, because I am utterly ignorant of all matters appertaining to mechanics. Bill undertook to explain it to me, but the more he explained the less I understood and the more my wits were tangled up, until by the time he got through explaining I did not know anything about anything. All I can say is that the machine is a small affair, easily portable, weighing, I should say, some fifteen pounds or so. You work it by plugging in on an ordinary electric circuit and throwing a switch like a lamp-switch, which anyone can do. At the other end of the machine there is a second switch which Bill said he would tell me about later, after dinner, when something was going to happen that would give him a chance to show me something which would really astonish me.

The principle of the oxometer seems in a general way like that of a separator, or perhaps I could better compare it to the principle of an air-conditioning apparatus. I am not sure about this, but at any rate what the machine actually does is to cause bull to disappear instantly from a printed or written page by some process that appears to be like volatilization, leaving all residual sound matter quite unaffected. Bill said he called it an oxometer because it sterilizes the bull, and of course it does sterilize it in the most effective way by getting rid of it completely. Still, there is obviously a certain amount of poetic license in applying that name, but Bill is an artist, and therefore poetic terminology comes natural-like to him and he gets it in whenever he can.

Bill sat me down with a novel by an old acquaintance of ours who for years has made a lordly living by writing fiction for popular magazines. He writes them all on one formula which has never varied; that is, he tells the same story again and again in exactly the same way, merely dressing it up a little differently in each case. Bill told me to read two or three pages just to get the run of the stuff, and then he turned on the oxometer, with the amazing and incredible result that the pages I was reading instantly became blank. I leafed over the rest of the book and found that almost all the printing had disappeared. Here and there some detached sentences were left standing, sometimes most of a paragraph, but these all were bits of straight factual reporting, mostly descriptive. They were an odd sight, standing by themselves, often several blank pages apart, and unrelated to one another or to anything. "That settles it, you see," said Bill. "You and I have often wondered whether he took that muck seriously and really thought he was doing something, or whether it was simon-pure bull, and now we know. The oxometer can't make a mistake – it's bull, and all that talk he hands out about the silliness of preciosity, and how a writer ought to aim at meeting the wholesome democratic taste of the masses, is humbug."

As I said, we kept the oxometer going most of the afternoon, turning it loose on all sorts of literature; travel-books, magazines, newspapers, essays, poems, whatever Bill happened to have around. We got some astonishing results with newspapers. I was especially keen to try out the editorial page of one paper, because for years I had not seen an editorial in it that read like anything

but solid bull. The truth is, I suppose, that I could not imagine literate human beings so stupid as to write such stuff in good faith. Yet to my amazement, although we sampled the page in a number of issues, – Bill went down cellar and salvaged a dozen old ones that had been thrown away, – there was comparatively little bull in any of them. This was a puzzle to me, and still is. Other newspapers, however, made up for this deficiency. Their editorial pages never assayed more than two per cent of sound stuff, and rarely as much as that; the rest was bull.

Bill kept me to dinner with him, and afterwards we talked at length of the wonders we had seen; then presently he said he was ready to give me the real surprise of my life, for having showed me what the oxometer could do with the printed word, he would now show me what it could do with the spoken word, since one of our principal politicians was scheduled for a fireside talk over the radio on some aspects of our national affairs. Bill turned on the radio, the voice came in, we listened to several sentences; then he threw the second switch of the oxometer, the voice went dead, and we heard nothing for eight minutes, when suddenly one stanza of a poem came through – it was quoted – and then silence again. This verse of very good poetry, a quotation from Thomas Jefferson and another that I could not place, but I think it was from Edmund Burke – these were all that came through to us; the rest of the address was intercepted by the oxometer entire, lock, stock and barrel, and we heard nothing.

III

There is no point in dwelling on the glorious promise of a civilized life that Bill's invention offers. The reader may be left to exercise his own imagination upon the enormous and truly revolutionary transformations of human existence that will now take place in consequence of the individual's ability to make himself wholly inaccessible to the insidious advances of the bull-shooter. What will happen to the social institutions, now so many and so afflictive, which depend almost exclusively on bull for their predominance? Think of what will be left of a session of Congress, for instance, when an oxometer is installed in the Capitol! In a hundred-per-cent bull-free society (for with bull become inert, its use will no longer pay and will at once be discontinued) what will politics be like, what will the public forum, the newspaper, the school, the college, be like? What will the exercise of the learned professions be like – the law, literature, theology, medicine? What profound and salutary modifications of family life are inevitable! Can we possibly conceive of commerce, especially retail commerce, being carried on without bull? Imagination almost recoils on itself in contemplating the immensity of the field which the oxometer has opened before it. "I have always believed," said Bill, meditatively (Bill has the artistic temperament, which often gives his talk a pessimistic turn), "I have always believed that God must have some good reason for allowing such a country as this to exist, but I could never make out what it might be until I invented the oxometer. I think perhaps His intention from the beginning was to show what can be done with the most hopeless case, like

the old-time temperance lecturers who kept a horrible example on the stage to encourage the audience. For certainly, if the most bull-sodden, bull-besotted society in the world can transform itself practically overnight into a self-respecting, truth-loving, clear-minded, straight-thinking, square-dealing civilization, there is the surest ground of hope for every branch of the human race, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand, and back again."

Bill has applied for a patent on the oxometer, but he says he did it only to put the Patent Office in a hole. He thinks they would like to refuse him a patent on the grounds of public policy, but will hardly dare go so far as to do that. If they do, he can stir up a tremendous popular commotion against the government and have a lot of fun, because he really cares nothing about the patent; if he gets it he will use it only to control the quality of the product put out by other manufacturers, if any. Bill is well-to-do in a small way, and has no desire to get money out of his invention, but on the contrary, he wishes to make the oxometer as nearly as possible a free property of the human race. Bill says his idea is merely to add the one essential item to Mr. Hoover's glowing forecast of true national grandeur and prosperity. He is all for the chicken in every pot, two cars in every garage, a radio in every parlor, but he wants to round out Mr. Hoover's generous programme and make it perfect by the installation of an oxometer in every home, and also in every schoolhouse, church, college, university, and every other place of public and semi-public resort throughout the country.

The Value to the Clergyman of Training in the Classics

(Published in *The School Review*, June 1906. The author's name in the article is given as: Rev. A. J. Nock, St. Joseph's Church, Detroit.)

The other night, in company with an eminent expert in social problems, I had the privilege of hearing Mr. Post lecture on the witch's work that the railroads are making with our political institutions. As we left the building, the first unmistakable breath of spring in the air brought with it a sudden, disquieting flood of recollections of my home in the Virginia mountains, and there occurred to me at once the pensive and graceful lines from Virgil's *Georgics*: "O for the fields, and the streams of Spercheios, and the hills animated by the romping of the Lacaenian girls, the hills of Taygetus!" The social practitioner, who regards my favorite pursuits with an eye of gentle toleration – thinking them a harmless means of keeping inefficient and sentimental persons from meddling underfoot of

those like himself who are bearing the burden and heat of the day – took my arm and said, "I suppose now, your way out of all these troubles with the railroads would be to put Mr. Harriman and Mr. Pierpont Morgan to reading Virgil's *Georgics*." I had considerable satisfaction in telling him that he was not much more than half wrong.

The reply was not dictated solely by my own prepossessions. The function of the Christian minister is to recommend religion as the principal means of making the will of God prevail in all the relations of human society. He promotes the practice of the discipline of Jesus as the highest mode of spiritual exercise looking toward human perfection. But religion is an inward motion, a distinct form of purely spiritual activity; not an intellectual process, an external behavior, or a series of formal observances. The final truth of religion is poetic truth, not scientific truth; in fact, with sheer scientific truth religion has very little vital concern. The Christian minister, then, has his chief interest in recommending a special mode of spiritual activity, in interpreting a special mode of poetic truth. But his experience bears witness that the general must precede the special. Before one may hope to do much with a special mode of spiritual activity like religion, at least some notion of spiritual activity in general must have made its way. Before one may hope to do much with a special mode of poetic truth like the truth of religion, at least some sense of the validity and worth of poetic truth in general must be set up. Here it may be seen how distinctly progress in religion is related to progress in culture – I do not say progress in education, for the recent changes in educational aims and ideals make of education a very different thing from culture; the

recent revolution in educational processes compels us to differentiate these very sharply from the works and ways of culture. Education, at present, is chiefly a process of acquiring and using instrumental knowledge. Its highest concern is with scientific truth, and its ends are the ends of scientific truth. Culture, on the other hand, is chiefly a process of acquiring and using formative knowledge; and while culture is, of course, concerned with scientific truth, its highest concern is with poetic truth. Culture prizes scientific truth, it respects instrumental knowledge; it seeks to promote these, where necessary, as indispensable and appointed means to a great end; but culture resolutely puts aside every temptation to rest upon these as ends in themselves. Culture looks steadily onward from instrumental knowledge to formative knowledge, from scientific truth to poetic truth. The end of culture is the establishment of right views of life and right demands on life, or in a word, *civilization*, by which we mean the humane life, lived to the highest power by as many persons as possible.

Because material well-being is the indispensable basis of civilization, the more thoughtless among us are apt to use the word civilization only in a very restricted and artificial sense. Our newspapers especially appear to think that the quality of civilization is determined by being very rich, having plenty of physical luxuries, comforts, and conveniences, doing a very great volume of business, maintaining ample facilities for education, and having everyone able to read and write. The civilization of a community, however, is determined by no such things as these, but rather by the power and volume of the humane life existing there – the humane life, having its

roots struck deep in material well-being, indeed, but proceeding as largely and as faithfully as possible under the guidance of poetic truth, and increasingly characterized by profound and disinterested spiritual activity. Thus it is possible for a community to enjoy ample well-being, and yet precisely the right criticism upon its pretensions to be that it is really not half civilized – that not half its people are leading a kind of life that in any reason or conscience can be called humane. Let us imagine, say, a community whose educational institutions deal in nothing but instrumental knowledge and recognize no truth that is not scientific truth; with all its people able to read and write indeed, yet with a very small proportion of what they read worth reading and of what they write worth writing; with its social life heavily overspread with the blight of hardness and hideousness; with those who have had most experience of the beneficence of material well-being displaying no mark of quickened spiritual activity, but rather everywhere the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual dulness, enervation, and vulgarity; to apply the term civilization to anything as alien to the humane life, as remote from the ideal of human perfection, as this, seems to us unnatural and shocking. In such a community, no doubt, all manner of philanthropic and humanitarian enterprise may abound; what we nowadays call social Christianity, practical Christianity, may abound there. We do not underestimate these; their value is great, their rewards are great; but the assumption so regularly made, that these in themselves are sufficient indication of a chaste and vigorous spiritual activity on the part of those who originate and promote them is, in the view of culture,

manifestly unsound. There is much room just now, we believe, for a searching exposition of Article XIII. "Of Good Works Done before Justification." We of the ministry, therefore, must keep insisting that as our concern is purely with the processes and activities of the spirit, only so far forth as these things represent the fruit of the spirit can we give them our interest.

The Christian minister, then, is interested in civilization, in the humane life; because the special form of spiritual activity which he recommends is related to the humane life much as the humane life is related to material well-being. He is interested in the humane life for himself, because he must live this life if he hopes to prepossess others in its favor. And here comes in the ground of our plea that Greek and Latin literature may be restored and popularized. One makes progress in the humane life by the only way that one can make progress in anything – by attending to it, by thinking about it, by having continually before one the most notable models of the humane life. And of these available models, we find so large a proportion furnished to us in the literature of Greece and Rome as to force upon us the conviction that in our efforts to exemplify and promote the humane life we simply cannot do without this literature. The friends of education as it now is keep insisting that citizens should be trained to be useful men of their time, men who do things, men who can develop our natural and commercial resources, carry our material well-being on to a yet higher degree of abundance and security, and play a winning game at politics. For these purposes, they tell us, instrumental knowledge and scientific truth are the only things worth knowing. We content ourselves

with remarking simply, It may be so; but with all this we, at any rate, can do nothing. The worst of such justifications is that, like Mr. Roosevelt's specious and fantastic plea for the strenuous life, they are addressed to a public that needs them least. There is small danger that interest in anything making for material well-being, for the development of our commerce and industrial pursuits, will fail for a long time to come. As for politics, statesmen trained on instrumental knowledge may well be instrumental statesmen, such as ours are; and these, too, appear to be for ever and ever. Our interest is in knowing whether education as it now is will give us citizens who can accomplish anything worth talking about in the practice of the humane life. The friends of education tell us that men trained as they would and do train them will turn out shrewd, resourceful business men, competent investigators, analysts, and reporters in the professions, clever, practical men in public life. Again we reply, It may be so; but will they turn out business men of the type, say, of Mr. Stedman, professional men of the type of Dr. Weir Mitchell (if we may venture to bring forward these gentlemen by name), public men and politicians of the type of Mr. Hay or Governor Long? When these questions are satisfactorily answered, we will cheerfully reconsider what we say in behalf of Greek and Latin literature; but unless and until they are so answered, we must continue to point out as in our view the cardinal defect in education, that it does next to nothing for the humane life, next to nothing for poetic truth, next to nothing for spiritual activity; and its failure in these directions being what it is, that our civilization is retarded and vulgarized to correspond.

For the sake of civilization, therefore, we of the ministry venture our plea in behalf of culture. We beg that some of the stress now laid upon purely instrumental knowledge be relieved. How can we even be understood when, for the sake of the great end of our calling, we praise and recommend culture and all the elements and processes that enter into culture, if the whole bent of secular training is against these, and serves but to confirm the current belief that the only real knowledge is instrumental knowledge, the only real truth is scientific truth, the only real life is a life far short of what life might be and what it ought to be? We ask that Greek and Latin literature be restored. We do not pretend to argue for the disciplinary worth of Greek and Latin studies, their value as a memory-exercise, as furnishing a *corpus vile* for our practice in analysis, or as a basis for the acquisition of modern languages. We argue solely for their moral value; we ask that they be restored, understood, and taught as an indispensable and powerful factor in the work of humanizing society. As these subjects are now taught (if an unprofessional opinion may be offered without offense) their grammatical, philological, and textual interests predominate. Mr. Weir Smyth's excellent anthology, for instance, is probably an example of the very best textbook writing of its kind, and a glance at this – comparing it, if one likes, with the editorial work of Professor Tyrrell, in the same series – shows at once that Mr. Weir Smyth's purposes, admirable as they are, are not our purposes. We would be the very last to disparage Mr. Weir Smyth's labors or to fail in unfeigned praise of the brilliant, accurate, and painstaking scholarship which he brings to bear on all matters that he sees fit to include

within the scope of his work. But *sat patriae Priamoque datum*; again we say it is not likely that instrumental knowledge, even in our dealings with the classics, will ever be neglected. Let us now have these subjects presented to us in such a way as to keep their literary and historical interests consistently foremost. Let the study of Greek and Latin literature be recommended to us as Mr. Arnold, for example, recommends it; let the Greek and Latin authors be introduced to us as Mr. Mackail introduces them; let them be edited for us as Professor Tyrrell edits them; let them be interpreted to us as Professor Jebb or Professor Jowett interprets them. Or, if the current superstition demands that we continue to receive the Greek and Latin authors at the hands of the Germans, or at second-hand from the Germans, we make no objection; we stipulate only that our editorial work be done for us not by the German philologists, textual critics, grammarians, or by American students trained in their schools, but by Germans of the type of Lessing, Herder, and Goethe – men who are themselves docile under the guidance of poetic truth, who are themselves eminent in the understanding and practice of the humane life; men, therefore, who can happily interpret this truth and freely communicate this life to us.

The consideration of Greek and Latin studies in view of the active pastorate usually, we believe, takes shape in the question whether or not it is worth while for a minister to be able to read the New Testament and the Fathers in the original. Into this controversy we have never seen our way to enter; nor have we been able to attach to it the importance that it probably deserves. What interests us in Greek and Latin studies is the unique and prof-

itable part these play in the promotion of the humane life. Nor do we argue with the friends of education as to the possibility of generating and serving the humane life by means of the discipline of science; we affirm simply that the humane life is most largely generated and most efficiently served by keeping before one the models of those in whom the humane life most abounds; and that of these models, the best and largest part is presented to us in the literature of Greece and Rome. The men in undergraduate work with us, back in the times of ignorance before natural science had come fully into its own, knew little of the wonders of the new chemistry. Little enough did they know of such principles of botany, physics, geology, astronomy, zoology, and so on, as one of our children in the high school will now pretend to rattle you off without notice. But they knew their Homer, their Plato, their Sophocles, by heart; they knew what these great spirits asked of life, they knew their views of life. And with that knowledge there also insensibly grew the conviction that their own views and askings had best conform, as Aristotle finely says, "to the determination of the judicious." This was the best, perhaps the only, fruit of their training; they became steadied, less superficial, capricious, and fantastic. Living more and more under the empire of reality, they saw things as they are, and experienced a profound and enthusiastic inward motion toward the humane life, the life for which the idea is once and forever the fact. This life is the material upon which religion may have its finished work. Chateaubriand gives Joubert the highest praise that can be bestowed upon a human character, when, speaking of Joubert's death as defeating his purpose of making

a visit to Rome, he says, "It pleased God, however, to open to M. Joubert a heavenly Rome, better fitted still to his Platonist and Christian soul." It is in behalf of the humane life, therefore, that we of the active pastorate place our present valuation upon the literature of Greece and Rome: for the first step in Christianity is the humanization of life, and the finished product of Christianity is but the humane life irradiated and transfigured by the practice of the discipline of Jesus.

The Decline of Conversation

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The more one thinks of it, the more one finds in Goethe's remark that the test of civilization is conversation. The common method of rating the civilization of peoples by what they have got and what they have done is really a poor one; for some peoples who have got much and done a great deal strike one at once as less civilized than others who have got little and done little. Prussia, for example, was relatively a poor State a century ago, while fifteen years ago it was rich and active; yet one would hardly say that the later Prussia was as civilized a country as the Prussia of Frederick's time. Somewhat the same might be said of Tudor England and modern England. The civilization of a country consists in the quality of life that is lived there, and this quality shows plainest in the things that people choose to talk about when they talk together, and in the way they choose to talk about them.

It can be taken for granted, I suppose, that man has certain fundamental instincts which must find some kind of collective expression in the society in which he lives. The first and fundamental one is the instinct of expansion, the instinct for continuous improvement in material well-being and economic security. Then there is the instinct of intellect and knowledge, the instinct of religion and morals, of beauty and poetry, of social life and manners. Man has always been more or less consciously working towards a state of society which should give collective expression to these instincts. If society does not give expression to them, he is dissatisfied and finds life irksome, because every unused or unanswered instinct becomes a source of uneasiness and keeps on nagging and festering within him until he does something about it. Moreover, human society, to be permanently satisfactory, must not only express all these instincts, but must express them all in due balance, proportion, and harmony. If too much stress be laid on any one, the harmony is interrupted, uneasiness and dissatisfaction arise, and, if the interruption persists, disintegration sets in. The fall of nations, the decay and disappearance of whole civilizations, can be finally interpreted in terms of the satisfaction of these instincts. Looking at the life of existing nations, one can put one's finger on those instincts which are being collectively overdone at the expense of the others. In one nation the instinct of expansion and the instinct of intellect and knowledge are relatively over-developed; in another, the instinct of beauty; in another, the instinct of manners; and so on. The term *symphonic*, which is so often sentimentally applied to the ideal life of society, is really descriptive; for the tendency of mankind from

the beginning has been towards a functional blending and harmony among these instincts, precisely like that among the choirs of an orchestra. It would seem, then, that the quality of life in any society means the degree of development attained by this tendency. The more of these instincts that are satisfied, and the more delicate the harmony of their interplay, the higher and richer is the quality of life in that society; and it is the lower and poorer according as it satisfies fewer of these instincts and permits disharmony in their interplay.

American life has long been fair game for the observer. Journalistic enterprise now beats up the quarry for the foreigner and brings it in range for him from the moment the ship docks, or even before; and of late the native critic has been lending a brisk hand at the sport. So much, in fact, has been written about the way we live, how we occupy ourselves, how we fill up our leisure, the things we do and leave undone, the things we are likely to do and likely to leave undone, that I for one would never ask for another word on such matters from anybody. As a good American, I try to keep up with what is written about us, but it has become rather a dull business and I probably miss some of it now and then, so I cannot say that no observer has ever made a serious study of our conversation. In all I have read, however, very little has been made of the significance of the things we choose to talk about and our ways of talking about them. Yet I am sure that Goethe's method would give a better measure of our civilization than any other, and that it would pay any observer to look into it. For my own part, ever since I stumbled on Goethe's observation – now more than twenty years ago – I have followed that

method in many lands. I have studied conversation more closely than any other social phenomenon, picking up from it all the impressions and inferences I could, and I have always found that I got as good results as did those whose critical apparatus was more elaborate. At least, when I read what these critics say about such people as I know, especially my own, they seem to tell me little with which I was not already acquainted.

II

Speaking as Bishop Pontoppidan did about the owls in Iceland, the most significant thing that I have noticed about conversation in America is that there is so little of it, and as time goes on there seems less and less of it in my hearing. I miss even so much of the free play of ideas as I used to encounter years ago. It would seem that my countrymen no longer have the ideas and imagination they formerly had, or that they care less for them, or that for some reason they are diffident about them and do not like to bring them out. At all events the exercise of ideas and imagination has become unfashionable. When I first remarked this phenomenon I thought it might be an illusion of advancing age, since I have come to years when the past takes on an unnaturally attractive color. But as time went on the fact became unmistakable and I began to take notice accordingly.

As I did so a long-buried anecdote arose to the top of my mind and has remained there ever since. I am reminded of it daily. Years ago Brand Whitlock told me the story of an acquaintance of his – something in

the retail clothing way – junior partner in a firm whose name I no longer remember, so for convenience we will make acknowledgments to Mr. Montague Glass and call it Maisener and Finkman. Mr. Finkman turned up at the store one Monday morning, full of delight at the wonderful time he had had at his partner's house the evening before – excellent company, interesting conversation, a supreme occasion in every respect. After dinner, he said – and such a dinner! – "we go in the parlor and all the evening until midnight we sit and talk it business."

Day after day strengthens the compulsion to accept Mr. Finkman as a type. This might be thought a delicate matter to press, but after all, Mr. Finkman is no creation of one's fancy, but on the contrary he is a solid and respectable reality, a social phenomenon of the first importance, and he accordingly deserves attention both by the positive side of his preferences and addictions and by the negative side of his distastes. I am farthest in the world from believing that anything should be "done about" Mr. Finkman, or that he should be studied with an ulterior view either to his disparagement or his uplift. I am unequivocally for his right to an unlimited exercise of his likes and dislikes, and his right to get as many people to share them as he can. All I suggest is that the influence of his tastes and distastes upon American civilization should be understood. The moment one looks at the chart of this civilization one sees the line set by Mr. Finkman, and this line is so distinct that one cannot but take it as one's principal lead. If one wishes to get a measure of American civilization, one not only must sooner or later take the measure of Mr. Finkman's

predilections, but will save time and trouble by taking it at the outset.

As evidence of the reach of Mr. Finkman's influence on the positive side, I notice that those of my American acquaintance whose interests are not purely commercial show it as much as others. Musicians, writers, painters, and the like seem to be at their best and to entertain themselves best when they "talk it business." In bringing up the other instincts into balance with the instinct of expansion, such persons as these have an advantage, and one would expect to see that advantage reflected in their conversation much more clearly and steadily than it is. Where two or three of them were gathered together, one would look for a considerable play of ideas and imagination, and one would think that the instinct of expansion – since one perforce must give so much attention to it at other times – might gladly be let off on furlough. But I observe that this is seldom the case. For the most part, like Mr. Finkman, these people begin to be surest of themselves, most at ease and interested, at the moment when the instinct of expansion takes charge of conversation and gives it a directly practical turn.

One wonders why this should be so. Why should Mr. Finkman himself, after six days' steady service of the instinct of expansion, be at his best and happiest when he yet "talks it business" on the seventh? It is because he has managed to drive the whole current of his being through the relatively narrow channel set by the instinct of expansion. When he "talks it business," therefore, he gets the exhilarating sense of drive and speed. A millstream might thus think itself of more consequence than a river; probably the Iser feels more importance

and exhilaration in its narrow leaping course than the Mississippi in filling all the streams of its delta. By this excessive simplification of existence Mr. Finkman has established the American formula of success. He makes money, but money is his incidental reward; his real reward is in the continuous exhilaration that he gets out of the processes of making it. My friends whose interests are not exclusively commercial feel the authority of the formula and share in the reward of its obedience. My friend A, for example, writes a good novel. His instincts of intellect, beauty, morals, religion, and manners, let us say, all have a hand in it and are satisfied. He makes enough out of it to pay him for writing it, and so his instinct of expansion is satisfied. But he is satisfied, not exhilarated. When, on the other hand, his publisher sells a hundred thousand copies of another novel, he is at once in the American formula of success. The novel may not have much exercised his sense of intellect, beauty, morals, religion, and manners – it may be, in other words, an indifferent novel – but he is nevertheless quite in Mr. Finkman's formula of success and he is correspondingly exhilarated. He has crowded the whole stream of his being into the channel cut by the instinct of expansion, and his sensations correspond to his achievement.

Thus by his positive action in establishing the American formula of success, Mr. Finkman has cut what the Scots call a "monstrous cantle" out of conversation. Conversation depends upon a copiousness of general ideas and an imagination able to marshal them. When one "talks it business," one's ideas may be powerful, but they are special; one's imagination may be vigorous, but its range is small. Hence proceeds the habit of particularizing –

usually, too, by way of finding the main conversational staple in personalities. This habit carries over, naturally, into whatever excursions Mr. Finkman's mind is occasionally led to make outside the domain of the instinct of expansion; for his disuse of imagination and general ideas outside this sphere disinclines him to them and makes him unhandy with them. Thus it is that conversation in America, besides its extreme attenuation, presents another phenomenon. On its more serious side it is made up almost entirely of particularization and, on its higher side, of personalities.

These characteristics mark the conversation of children and, therefore, may be held to indicate an extremely immature civilization. The other day a jovial acquaintance who goes out to dinner a good deal told me a story that brings out this point. It seems he had just been hearing bitter complaints from a seasoned hostess who for years has fed various assorted contingents of New York's society at her board. She said that conversation at her dinner-table had about reached the disappearing-point. She had as much trouble about getting her guests into conversation as one has with youngsters at a children's party, and all the conversation she could prod out of them nowadays, aside from personalities, came out in the monotonous minute-gun style of particular declaration and perfunctory assent.

"She's right about that," my friend went on. "Here's a precis of the kind of thing I hear evening after evening. We go in to dinner talking personalities, no matter what subject is up. The theater – we talk about the leading lady's gowns and mannerisms, and her little ways with her first husband. Books – we hash over all the author's

rotten press-agentry, from the make of his pajamas to the way he does his hair. Music – we tell one another what a dear love of a conductor Kaskowhisky is, and how superior in all respects to von Bugghaus, whose back isn't half so limber. Damned quacks actually, you know, both of them! Good Lord! man, can you wonder that this country killed Mahler and put Karl Muck in jail?

"Well, we sit down at the table. Personalities taper off with the end of the soup. Silence. Then some puffy old bullfrog of a banker retrieves his nose out of his soup-cup, stiffens up, coughs behind his napkin, and looks up and down the line. 'Isn't it remarkable how responsibility brings out a man's resources of greatness? Now who would have thought two years ago that Calvin Coolidge would ever develop into a great leader of men?'

"Guests, in unison, acciaccato – 'Uh-huh.'

"Next course. Personalities pick up a little and presently taper off again. Somebody else stiffens up and pulls himself together. 'Isn't it splendid to see the great example that America is setting in the right use of wealth? Just think, for instance, of all the good that Mr. Rockefeller has done with his money.'

"Guests, fastoso – 'Uh-huh.' "

My lively friend may have exaggerated a little – I hope so – but his report is worth an observer's careful notice for purposes of comparison with what one hears oneself. His next remark is worth attention as bringing out still another specific characteristic of immaturity.

"But what goes against my grain," he continued, "is that if you pick up some of this infernal guff and try to pull it away from the particular and personal, and to make real conversation of it, they sit on you as if

you were an enemy of society. Start the banker on a discussion of the idea of leadership – what it means, what the qualifications for leadership are, and how far any president can go to fill the bill – how far any of them has ever gone to fill it – and all he'll do is to grunt, and say, 'I guess you must be some sort of a Red, ain't you?' A bit of repartee like that gets him a curtain call from the rest every time. It's a fine imaginative lot that I train with, believe me! I have sat at dinner tables in Europe with every shade of opinion, I should say, and in one way or another they all came out. That's what the dinner was got up for. How can you have any conversation if all you are expected to do is to agree?"

III

It is a mark of maturity to differentiate easily and naturally between personal or social opposition and intellectual opposition. Everyone has noticed how readily children transfer their dislike of an opinion to the person who holds it, and how quick they are to take umbrage at a person who speaks in an unfamiliar mode or even with an unfamiliar accent. When the infant-minded Pantagruel met with the Limosin who spoke to him in a Latinized macaronic jargon, he listened awhile and then said, "What devilish language is this? – by the Lord, I think thou art some kind of heretic." Mr. Finkman's excessive simplification of life has made anything like the free play of ideas utterly incomprehensible to him. He never deals with ideas, except such limited and practical ones as may help get him something, and he cannot

imagine anyone ever choosing, even on occasion, to do differently. When he "talks it business," the value of ideas, ideals, opinions, sentiments, is purely quantitative; putting any other value on them is a waste of time. Under all circumstances, then, he tends to assume that other people measure the value of their ideas and opinions as he does his, and that they employ them accordingly; and hence, like my friend's banker, when some one tries to lead up into a general intellectual sparring for mere points, he thinks he is a dangerous fellow with an ax to grind.

This puts the greatest imaginable restraint upon conversation, a restraint which betrays itself to the eye of the observer in some rather odd and remarkable ways. I have been much interested, for example, to see that the conversion of conversation into mere declaratory particularization has lately been taken up in a commercial way. One reads advertisements of enterprising people who engage to make you shine in conversation. They propose to do this by loading you up with a prodigious number of facts of all kinds, which you can fire off at will from the machine-gun of your memory. On this theory of conversation, a statistician with Macaulay's memory is the ideal practitioner of social amenities; and so indeed, with Mr. Finkman's sensibilities in view, he would be.

Another odd manifestation of this restraint is the almost violent eagerness with which we turn to substitutes for conversation in our social activities. Mr. Finkman must not be left alone in the dark with his apprehensions a moment longer than necessary. After such a dinner as my debonair friend described, it is at once necessary to "do something" – the theatre, opera, cabaret, dancing,

motoring, or what not – and to keep on doing something as long as the evening lasts. It is astonishing to see the amount of energy devoted to keeping out of conversation; "doing something" has come to be a term of special application. Almost every informal invitation reads, "to dinner, and then we'll do something." It is even more astonishing to see that this fashion is followed by persons whose intelligence and taste are sufficient, one would think, to put them above it. Quite often one finds oneself going through this routine with persons quite capable of conversation, who would really rather converse, but who go through it apparently because it is the thing to go through. When this happens, one marvels at the reach and the authority of Mr. Finkman's predilections – yet there they are.

My friend was right in saying that conversation is managed differently in Europe. I was reminded of this not long ago, when the German airship made its great flight to this country. Everyone remembers the vast amount of public interest in this event, and how the pilot of the airship, Doctor Eckener, was feted and fussed over from one end of the country to the other. Three or four days after the landing, a friend of mine, a German banker, asked me to luncheon at his house. There were four of us – Doctor Eckener, his assistant, our host, and myself. We talked for something over two hours, largely about music, a good deal about the geography and history of the region around Friedrichshafen, and for half an hour, perhaps, about European public affairs. From first to last, not one word was said about the flight of the airship or about the business of aviation or the banking business. The conversation was wholly objective

and impersonal; each one spoke his mind, and none of us felt any pressure towards agreement. I remember that I myself put out some pretty heretical opinions about the structure of music-drama. No one agreed with me, but no one dreamed of transferring to myself the brunt of his objections to my opinion.

This kind of thing gives the impression of maturity, and, as far as my experience goes, it is as common in Europe as it is uncommon here. There has been much comment lately upon the attraction that Europe exerts upon certain American types. I am led to wonder if it be not perchance the attraction of maturity. Children may be delightful, may be interesting, may be ever so full of promise, and one may be as fond of them as possible – and yet when one has them for warp and filling, one must get a bit bored with them now and then, in spite of oneself. I have had little to do with children, so I speak under correction; but I should imagine that one would become bored with their intense simplification of life, their tendency to drive the whole current of life noisily through one channel, their vehement reduction of all values to that of quantity, their inability to take any but a personal view of anything. But just these are the qualities of American civilization as indicated by the test of conversation. They inhere in Mr. Finkman and are disseminated by his influence to the practical exclusion of any other. I can imagine, then, that one might in time come to be tired of them and to wish oneself in surroundings where man is accepted as a creature of "a large discourse, looking before and after," where life is admittedly more complex and its current distributed in more channels – in other words, where maturity prevails.

One is impressed, I think, by the way this difference is repeatedly brought out in ordinary conversation in Europe and America – in the choice of things to talk about and in the way people talk about them. I am impressed by it even in conversation with children, though as I said, due allowance ought to be made for the fact that my experience with children is not large. Yet even so, I do not think it is special or exceptional. I have a friend, for instance, whom I go to see whenever I am in Brussels, and it is the joy of my life to play at sweethearts with his three daughters who range from seven to sixteen. My favourite is the middle one, a weedy and nonchalant charmer of twelve. She does not impress me as greatly gifted; I know several American girls who seem naturally abler. But in conversation with her I detect a power of disinterested reflection, an active sense of beauty, and an active sense of manners, beyond any that I ever detected in American children; and these contribute to a total effect of maturity that is agreeable and striking.

IV

An observer passing through America with his mind deliberately closed to any impressions except those he received from conversation could make as interesting a conjectural reconstruction of our civilization as the palæontologists with an armful of bones make of a dinosaur. He would postulate a civilization which expresses the instinct of expansion to a degree far beyond anything ever seen in the world, but which does not express the instinct of intellect and knowledge, except as regards

instrumental knowledge, and is characterized by an extremely defective sense of beauty, a defective sense of religion and morals, a defective sense of social life and manners. Its institutions reflect faithfully this condition of excess and defect. A very brief conversation with Mr. Finkman would enable one to predicate almost precisely what kind of schooling he considered an adequate preparation for life, what kind of literature he thought good enough for one to read, plays for one to see, architecture to surround oneself with, music to listen to, painting and sculpture to contemplate. It would be plain that Mr. Finkman had succeeded in living an exhilarating life from day to day without the aid of any power but concentration – without reflection, without ideas, without ideals, and without any but the most special emotions – that he thought extremely well of himself for his success, and was disposed to be jealous of the peculiar type of institutional life which had enabled it or conduced to it. The observer, therefore, would postulate a civilization marked by an extraordinary and inquisitional intolerance of the individual and a corresponding insistence upon conformity to pattern. For in general, it is reflection, ideas, ideals, and emotions that set off the individual, and with these Mr. Finkman has had nothing to do; he has got on without them to what he considers success, and hence he sees no need of them, distrusts them, and thinks there must be a screw loose with the individual who shows signs of them.

There is a pretty general consensus among observers that this picture corresponds in most respects with the actual civilization of the United States, and many of them deplore the correspondence. I do not deplore it.

It seems to me important that Mr. Finkman should have room according to his strength, that he should be unchecked and unhampered in directing the development of American civilization to suit himself. I believe it will be a most salutary experiment for the richest and most powerful nation in the world to give a long, fair, resolute try-out to the policy of living by the instinct of expansion alone. If the United States cannot make a success of it, no nation ever can, and none, probably, will ever attempt it again. So when critics denounce our civilization as barbarous, I reply that, if so, a few generations of barbarism are a cheap price for the result. Besides, Mr. Finkman may prove himself right; he may prove that man can live a full and satisfying inner life without intellect, without beauty, without religion and morals, and with but the most rudimentary social life and manners, provided only he has unlimited exercise of the instinct of expansion, and can drive ahead in the expression of it with the whole force of his being. If Mr. Finkman proves this, he will have the laugh on many like myself who at present have the whole course of human history behind our belief that no such thing can be done. But this is a small matter. The important thing is that we should then have a new world peopled by a new order of beings not at all like ourselves, but by no means devoid of interest on that account. So, whether the result be in success or in failure, the great American experiment – for just this is the great American experiment – seems to me wholly worth while.

On the Practice of Smoking in Church

(Published in *Harper's Magazine*, February 1930. In the same issue of the magazine: "The Religion of a Scientist" by Floyd H. Allport.)

During a short stay in the United States last winter I had a couple of queer experiences. The first one occurred when I was stopping over Sunday with an old acquaintance who lives out in the country. Like myself, he is nothing of a drinker. He has a fine taste in wines and liquors and knows a good deal about them in a theoretical way, but it seldom occurs to him to take a drink. Some of his ancestors, however, must have leaned up against the rail once in a while, for when he inherited the property he came into a large cellarful of goods that date back to the Mexican War or farther; and all during his ownership this noble stock has lain under lock and bar, practically undisturbed.

On my second evening there he asked me if I would like a drink with my dinner. I felt an odd lack of enthusiasm about it, but I assented, so we went down cellar together

and rummaged around in the primeval dust and cobwebs, emerging finally with a bottle of such wine as one seldom sees nowadays. In fact, I had never but once in my life come across anything so good, and that was in Europe two years ago, when I had a taste of the same mark and vintage, and I well remembered what my sensations were on that occasion. But those sensations did not recur. The wine was perfect – nothing could be better – but after the first taste I really did not care two straws whether I touched it again or not.

The second experience was when I went to hear a concert in one of our large industrial towns. The concert was given under the auspices of the local women's club, by an ensemble of ancient instruments that I had often heard in Europe with such delight that I was keen to hear it again. The occasion was perfect, as far as anyone could judge – program perfect, performance perfect, and the audience almost portentously quiet, attentive, receptive. Nothing could have been improved upon, and it should have been an occasion to mark with a white stone among one's musical memories. But in spite of all that, I could not warm up to it or really enjoy it. Several times I even caught my attention wandering; it seemed no trouble at all to think about something else while the performance was going on. Something was missing, something, evidently, that takes more than a perfect program, perfect performance, and attentive audience to produce. A friend of mine once went to the Brussels opera to hear the "Tales of Hoffmann," and he said that for the next two hours after Antonia's trio with Doctor Miracle and the Picture, "I couldn't have told you whether I was a red-licker Democrat or a bootleg

Prohibitionist." Just *that*, whatever it is, was absent, and one could no more get worked up to any such degree of absorption over the performance than one could over listening to a man sawing wood.

These incidents seemed worth thinking about. There was manifestly nothing wrong with the wine or the concert. There was nothing wrong with me either, and I had already elsewhere sampled the same wine and the same ensemble and knew just what was what. Hence the insulation, whatever it was, that in both cases had cut in against my getting results seemed due necessarily to circumstances. But what were they, and how did they operate, and what useful practical conclusions, if any, could one get out of analyzing them?

II

Returning to Europe, I went almost immediately down into Touraine. The summer travel season was setting in, and I presently began to notice the vanguard of tourists from the United States on their way around the Châteaux country of the Loire. They made the same agreeable impression on me that American tourists in Europe have invariably made in recent years. In respect of good manners, good nature, and good temper, I stand up uncompromisingly for the maligned and derided body of American tourists, especially by comparison with those of other lands, and more especially considering the appalling discomfort and fatigue that they elect to endure. When I think what my frame of mind would be if for one week I went through what they go through week in and

week out, I feel like starting a subscription for some kind of permanent memorial to their excellent qualities. Very seldom indeed of late years have I seen an objectionable American tourist, or one who did not show himself considerate, kindly, and courteous. This is of course only one person's experience, and one cannot flatly generalize on the strength of it. Besides, I have been very little in Paris, London, and Berlin, where the more objectionable elements in our tourist traffic would perhaps mostly congregate. But my experience has been large enough to make me think it is fairly representative, and as such I stand by it.

One thing, however, which I notice about American visitors in Europe is that they do not seem to be having a really good time. When they approach the best that Europe can do for them their spark plugs seem to get gummed up with the same sort of carbon which shut off my ignition at the concert last winter. Not knowing the first earthly thing about a motor car, I have to take a chance on this figure of speech being technically correct, but the point is clear – some sort of insulation gets in and obstructs the spiritual current so that nothing happens; the engine of the emotions goes dead and will not turn a wheel. I notice too, in such conversation as I have had with our visitors, that they know really almost nothing of what they have seen. They can give names, localities, dates – they are usually good at those – but as for "what about it," upon which the release of imagination and emotion so largely depends, they are not at all good, but quite the contrary. I notice this particularly in the so-called "educational" tours that I see passing through the Touraine. They are intended to attract – and I

suppose do attract – the more intelligent element in our travelling public. I have seen several of these parties and, judging by their general attitude and behavior, and by overhearing their conversation among themselves, they seemed to have almost no knowledge of what they were seeing; and consequently their play of imagination and emotion was very light and superficial.

A pleasant gentleman who chatted with me affably the other evening may serve as a type. We had a long talk. He was from one of our Western states, over here for a nine months' tour with his wife (he had already served out six months of his term), driving his own car and proposing to cover all Western Europe, including Scandinavia and the British Isles. As far as I could discover, his imagination and emotion had made no play whatever upon anything he had seen or heard, nor could I get a word of intelligent appraisal out of him concerning a single item of his itinerary in Italy, Austria, Bavaria, Switzerland, and southern France. He did say that he thought the Swiss Alps were sightlier than the Rockies, but that was all the comment he made, except that the French people struck him as unprogressive. When families stayed rooted in the same spot from generation to generation they clung to back-number business methods, and things got stagnant. Thus it was that by easy stages we came around to two topics upon which he spoke with real knowledge and real enthusiasm. One of them was motor cars. He knew everything there is to know about motor cars. I believe he could build one, probably a good one. The other topic was salesmanship. He had made his fortune out of something he had devised and put on the market rather adventurously, I gathered, but with

great success. I remarked as a curious fact that he said nothing about his product, not even telling me what it was or what it was supposed to do, but only about the problem of marketing it.

Let it not be thought for a moment that there is the slightest hint of disparagement in my use of this gentleman for purposes of illustration. On the contrary, I have every respect for him and intend shortly to place myself side by side with him for exactly the same purposes. What I am driving at is this: In every civilization there is a dominant spirit or idea which gives a definite and distinct tone to the whole social life of that civilization. It determines, almost always positively, and when not positively then negatively by way of reaction, the individual's line of approach to life, establishes his views of life, and prescribes his demands on life. If an individual goes into another civilization and tries for the time being to change his native approach, views, and demands to correspond with those set by the spirit of the alien civilization into which he goes he finds that he cannot possibly do it. That is a matter of a good deal of time and of very special conditions which need not be discussed here. Almost invariably his own native approach to life, his views of life, and his demands on life continue to control him, and must do so. He can suppress them for the moment, as most of us do, if we are wise. If we have a definite errand in an alien civilization, as when an invalid goes to Karlshad for treatment or as when the great financier goes to Paris in behalf of the banking business, we can get our affairs transacted as quickly as possible and then return, meanwhile keeping our native views and demands in abeyance. But when we try to

exercise the views and demands that are established by the spirit of our own civilization we are bound to get unsatisfactory results.

Here, I think, was the trouble with my touring acquaintance from the Golden West, and here, I think, is the reason why most of the visiting Americans I see, even those who patronize the educational tour, do not seem to be getting the full flavor of a good time, but on the contrary, seem to be taking their pleasure in a rather subdued fashion. The dominant spirit of their civilization, which finds its highest expression, perhaps, in the enterprise of Mr. Ford and the social ideals of Mr. Hoover, has determined their line of approach to life, their views of life, and their demands on life, and they are now in a country where a different spirit finds expression in different views and demands, and where consequently the line of approach to life is also different.

For example, in the city of Tours, where I am now writing, all the stores close at noon – as indeed they do in all French towns – and stay closed until two o'clock, and nothing can be done about it. I might tell a shopkeeper that I would pay the whole national debt of France if for one day he would keep his shop open until twelve-fifteen, and he would merely reply that all such matters were the concern of the Government, and that I should see M. Poincaré about it. As for himself, he was engaged to drink coffee and play dominoes in the café that noon with his excellent friend and neighbor, M. Haricot, as they had done every Monday and Thursday noon for thirty-two years, except during the War, when they were comrades at the front. Abridging that game by fifteen

minutes was something that simply could not be thought of, even though the national debt were never paid.

Again, the merchant here is just the opposite of my tourist acquaintance in being less interested in making a sale than in knowing his stock and being sure of what it is good for and not good for. Moreover, he does not seem over-anxious to extend his trade. The "quota" system would be foreign to him. If he does about as much business this year as last or as the year before he is satisfied. He knows he cannot get all the money in the world and, if he has enough, life is too pleasant and interesting to fritter away in worriment over how to get more. One of the largest and finest restaurants in Paris shuts up tight as a drum for a whole month every year at the height of the tourist season, and row after row of small shops closes during August.

The dominant spirit which expresses itself in these ways, and in many others that are analogous, sets the tone of a whole social life here, just as the dominant spirit of American civilization does there. Nobody escapes it or can escape it. In America the spirit which the Germans call *Fordismus* does not set the views of life and the demands on life for certain individuals and classes only: it sets them for everybody. To demonstrate this would be merely to go over again the ground already traversed by Mr. James Truslow Adams in last July's issue of this magazine, in his article called "A Business Man's Civilization." *Fordismus* marks out the approach to life, not only for the Chambers of Commerce and the Rotarians, but for the whole American press, pulpit, forum, school, college, political party, or what you will; it marks it out for every profession as well as every trade.

It is a mistake to think that Mr. Lowell Schmalz and Mr. Babbitt, or Mrs. Schmalz and Delmerine, are in any sense special products of *Fordismus*. Mr. Adams has shown that it just as strictly determines the view of life and demands on life of President Lowell and Professor Carver; and there is not a man, woman, or child in the country but who, willy-nilly, consciously or unconsciously, has his views and demands determined by it. Just so here in France there is no person, young or old, from the least to the greatest, but has his views and demands determined by a different spirit dominant in his civilization. I am not raising any question of superiority; any question whether either spirit is better and more meritorious than the other. All I say is that they are quite different. My whole point is that in consequence when an individual passes from either civilization to the other he is all the time played upon by spiritual ether-waves which powerfully affect his capacity for enjoyment.

III

A prevalent new wrinkle in modern literature, I believe, is to "analyze one's own reactions," so the recurrence of the personal pronoun in this article probably needs no apology. Although as I have said, I am an abstemious person in a general way, doing little with liquor, cards, or any of the vices usually related to them, I "take it out" on tobacco. I might almost say with Mark Twain that I came into the world asking for a light; and since that was a great many years ago, I begin to fear that I am no candidate for the ministrations of the Anti-Cigarette

League. I shall probably smoke on, and smoke out, and then doubtless smoke forever.

But although the force of this inveterate habit is strong, there is one place where it is seriously interfered with by some occult but very powerful influence, and that is in church. I believe I have no superstition whatever about church buildings. Having been raised Christian and Protestant, I certainly should have none about a Mohammedan temple, for instance. Yet if I visited one, and the head muezzin or effendi or whatever he is called, should tell me to make myself at home and smoke all I liked, I know I should decline even though I felt the urge. I have never tried smoking in church, but I can imagine the situation perfectly, and I know I should not enjoy it. Ask me why, and I could give but a vague and unsatisfactory answer. Long habit, plenty of desire, first-class tobacco, free opportunity cordially extended, no vestige of superstition in the way – everything seems all right enough, yet I am sure I should take a puff or two and then give up simply because it did not taste right.

Here was precisely the trouble with me at the concert last winter. I was trying to enjoy smoking in church, and it would not work. That is to say, I was trying to enjoy something towards which the dominant spirit of the civilization around me was either inimical or indifferent. The immediate circumstances, as I have said, were most favorable, but that is nothing: they could not prevail against the pervasiveness of the general spiritual atmosphere that surrounded them. A thunderstorm will sour milk in a refrigerator where the immediate circumstances are as favorable as possible. I recall now, though

I had not thought of it before, that it is long since I have heard any music in New York, where it is said that the music is now the best in the world. If I am in New York with nothing to do of an evening it never occurs to me to drop in on a concert. Not for seven years have I heard opera at the Metropolitan. I know and appreciate its excellences and admit its immeasurable superiority to the Brussels opera, for example, in every respect but one, which is that when you come out of the Metropolitan you are always able to say off-hand whether you are a red-licker Democrat or a bootleg Prohibitionist. This cannot always be done when you leave the Brussels opera, as my friend remarked: and the same is true of opera in other European centers. A musical acquaintance of mine, a well-known artist who tours the United States every year, once said to me that "America is a place where one goes to deliver a finished product"; and I imagine many artists feel that way about it, whether they so express themselves or not. The dominant spirit of *Fordismus* prevents it being anything else than this, as Mr. Adams has so ably shown. Well, in getting a finished product one gets a great deal, probably; but it is what should go with it that one does not get, and that counts most. A great artist once looked at a picture submitted to him for criticism, and said, "Composition right, light right, drawing right, everything absolutely right, no fault to be found with it anywhere, but" – with a great snap of his fingers – "but, dammit, man, it hasn't got *that*!"

Now let us turn the matter around. Suppose I were in the position of my Western countryman whom I met here in Tours, with the line of my approach to life established by *Fordismus*, and interested in motor cars and in the

principles and practice of salesmanship. I should be having a tedious time of it in Europe. That poor brother was putting in nine solid months of trying to smoke in church and get some real exhilaration out of it; and the thing simply cannot be done. There is no æsthetic, romantic, or quasi-religious exaltation over motor cars anywhere in France, as far as I can see; they are bought pretty strictly as a means of getting around, by those who need them for that purpose. Nothing more poetic than that. As for salesmanship, it is but languidly appreciated. There is not much doing with the two principles which Mr. Adams points out as of the essense of *Fordismus*: first, to keep the public's attention continually occupied with *things* – things that can be manufactured and sold at a profit – and, second, to keep continually creating and stimulating new wants for new things. The French seem to need what for us would be surprisingly few manufactured articles to get on with, and they get on very well, apparently, with what they have. Really fine, high-grade, artistic salesmanship, therefore, leads a sort of hole-and-corner existence, and must perforce suffer seriously from repressed emotions. The French, moreover, are indisposed to having their attention engrossed by things; they distribute it around among other interests as well. Indeed, it often seems that they derive their chief pleasure from pursuits and occupations which require no apparatus at all: out of conversation, for instance, and strolling, and commune with grasses and flowers in their season, with birds and dogs and cats. Even such apparatus as they use is inexpensive and durable. Probably M. Haricot and M. Perigard are playing to-day with the same set of dominoes that they began with

thirty-two years ago; and the fringe of patient fishermen which lines both sides of French rivers every Sunday uses tackle that is cheap and good, largely homemade, and that looks as if it had been used before.

So if I were in my Western friend's place I should have the same sensations here, I believe, that I had at my concert in America last winter. Of course, a good stiff sales-resistance is an interesting challenge – but only in a civilization that regards it as interesting. What price glory if there be no one to applaud? Suppose I used up two hours of first-class salesmanship on M. Haricot and finally succeeded in getting him to buy something that he did not really need or want, M. Perigard would have no fellow-feeling for me or admire the achievement as an American would, even an American competitor. He would merely wonder why his old friend did not throw me out of the store.

So, as I consider my Western acquaintance, and the hundreds of his ilk who pass this way from week to week, I would give the coat off my back to know what they are here for. I can understand the lure of a supposititious Continental laxity and naughtiness; but these people are not that sort. They do not come down here bent on drinking the Touraine dry of "the Septembral juice," but on the contrary are abstemious and quiet. Why do they come at all? I have put this question many times and never yet got a competent answer. Above all, why do Mrs. Dodsworth and Mrs. Schmalz and Delmerine come? Having offered my coat, I would throw in a shirt to know that, for after having seen them literally in hordes, after listening to their conversation, sometimes talking with them and taking note of their "reactions," I have been

obliged, like Lord Dundreary, to lay the problem aside as "one of those things that no feller can find out."

The most I am ever told is that there are wonderful things to be seen in Europe, and that one should have curiosity to see them. This is all very true on the face of it, but one must discriminate. I sincerely believe there are few more wonderful things on earth than Henry Ford's factory. But I have neither undergone the discipline nor do I possess the information necessary to appreciate it if I should make a visit there. It would be about four years' steady work for me to prepare myself so that a due sense of that gigantic enterprise would really "soak in." Hence if I went through the factory now, my curiosity (which I admit having) would not be an intelligent and justifiable curiosity, but the mere blank curiosity of barbarism. I should idly clutter up Henry's premises awhile and then return to the civilization of Europe which is not dominated by *Fordismus*, and where what I had learned, if anything, and what exhilarations I had brought myself to feel, if any, would go for nothing. I cannot see but that my Western acquaintance, Mrs. Schmalz, and her little group recruited from around Zenith, Delmerine, and her cronies from school or college are in exactly that situation.

In a word, then, "aren't we all," as Mr. Lonsdale's attractive old hero puts it at the end of the play, "aren't we all" – not damned fools by any means, no, far from that – but aren't we all more or less overworking the fatuous business of smoking in church? I think so. I with my wine and concert, my Western friend snorting around Europe in a motor car for nine months, Mrs. Schmalz and Mrs. Dodsworth trying to extemporize an appropriate

sensibility by aid of some trifles of extemporized information gained from guide-books and tourist-conductors, Delmerine with her expression of spoiled and drooping discontent, semi-blasé, semi-imbecile, and wholly barbarous – "aren't we all?" Again I say, I think so, and really, does it pay? I cannot find that it does.

IV

"*Koosh*!" yelled Abe Potash, as he charged into the cutting-room where a couple of his designers were humming the Brindisi from "Traviata." "Either you would be opera fellers or either you would be designers, but you can't be both – leastways, not in this store." There is a great deal of good sense in that. I should like to make a little frank man-to-man dicker with Dodsworth and my Western acquaintance over the futility of this enterprise of smoking in church. Let us agree to stick by our own, and do our smoking where we can really enjoy it. I want to see *Fordismus* go the limit as a national principle for whatever there is in it, and I know Dodsworth feels the same way about the dominant spirit of European civilization. That being so, I will agree not to smoke in his church any more if he will agree not to smoke in mine. When business calls me to the United States, I shall get it through as soon as I can and meanwhile strictly lay off concerts, fine wines, and the like; and he is to play the same game with us. I saw a remarkably clever cartoon the other day of two American ladies – I think perhaps Mrs. Dodsworth and one of the neighbors, though I am not sure – surveying the architecture of an

old European town; the stouter lady remarking to the other that "it's being exotic like this that we don't do in America." Precisely so; it is not done, should not be done, and trying to do it means an awful fizzle. Also, it's being exotic like America that we don't do in Europe; nor, by the same token, should we; and any confusion about it merely makes a mess.

So I should like to put this proposition to Dodsworth, strictly on the level, and perhaps get him to talk it up with Mr. Schmalz and Mr. Babbitt and a few of the boys, more or less confidentially, next time he is out Zenith way. I hope, too, that he will be particular to tell Mr. Schmalz, please, for God's sake, to head off Mrs. Schmalz and Delmerine from coming over here any more. If Schmalz has to take a run of typhoid in order to keep them at home, he will be a martyr in a truly noble cause, a sacred cause. Nothing against the ladies, of course; they are lovely – lovely – but think, just think what Chicago would be like if Mme. Haricot and Mme. Perigard and Zizi came down on the State of Illinois every year in droves, with all the money in the world to spend, and their own notions of spending it! Why, the Boul' Mich' would be one solid row of filthy little hybrid catchpenny layouts of what a particularly low and sordid type of American thinks French people ought to want; or rather, all aimed at what he thinks is the lowest common denominator of French taste and decency. That is the size of it; and I believe the Chicago people would feel the same way about it as the people of French cities are feeling now. I never liked Paris, in spite of its being the most beautiful city in the world; but when I first knew it, twenty years ago, it was sinful enough, perhaps, but

at least not vulgar. It is now; and I am afraid that Mrs. Schmalz and Delmerine have indirectly and innocently done most to vulgarize it. There has been money in this for a certain order of Parisians, but generally, and all things considered, it has cost more than it comes to; and all French towns except a very few have more or less shared the fate of Paris.

Perhaps Dodsworth and the boys and I can come to an agreement if we stick closer to our knitting, physically as well as spiritually. There is a great deal of internationalist talk just now about the benefits of free intercourse between peoples, and that is quite all right and true enough; but this is just the thing that never happens. For all the intercourse my Western acquaintance had with Italians, Czechs, Slovenes, Austrians, Bavarians, and so on he might as well have stayed at home. So there is nothing in that from our present point of view, except theoretically. But I do not press the wisdom of each sticking closer to his own social order and its particular dominating spirit: I press its agreeableness. After all, life was given us to enjoy, so why should Dodsworth and I keep on with this forlorn experiment of smoking in church, which never works, when we can both smoke jocundly and with fullness of delight under the most favorable circumstances possible by merely staying where we are?

Free Speech and Plain Language

(Published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1936. In the same issue of the magazine: "Jews in Trouble" by Ludwig Lewisohn.)

Recently, under the title, "So Conceived and So Dedicated," Mr. William F. Russell published an excellent paper,* which starts an interesting train of thought. It shows that the author is a true believer in free speech. It ends with an appeal for freedom, which I found most exhilarating; so exhilarating that I at once determined to take it as a text, as I now do. Speaking of the American people's progress in safety and happiness, and of the means to be employed in promoting that progress, Mr. Russell says, "Our only hope is full, free, frank, open discussion from all sides, open propaganda, open influence upon the press, upon public opinion, upon our Congress and legislators, and upon our governors and President. Whoever thinks, let him speak. Whoever would muzzle another, let him stay his hand. Bring on the opposition.

* *The Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1935.

Let it be heard. Then shall we have all the forces in full play."

These are noble and inspiring words; well, just what do they mean? I am not asking what they mean to Mr. Russell. I take it that he is a literal-minded person, like the statesman of the last century who said that the way to resume specie payment is to resume. If I might do so without impropriety, I would ask Mr. Russell's permission to place myself beside him in that category. To such as Mr. Russell and myself, then, free speech means simply free speech, whether the words be conveyed by sound or by writing or by printing. That is that, and that is all there is, and there isn't any more – use no hooks. Moreover, it would appear to us that the plain provisions of the Bill of Rights mean nothing else, nor can be made to mean anything else, save through one of those processes of interpretation whereby, as a contemporary of Bishop Butler said, anything can be made to mean anything – processes, in other words, of sheer and patent shysterism. But I may remind Mr. Russell that the world seems to be rapidly going away from oldfashioned people of our kind, and it is therefore necessary to consider what free speech means to others who are not like us, and especially to those who are in a position more or less to prescribe the courses in which public sentiment concerning such matters shall run.

A little story occurs to me in this connexion, which I shall tell, partly because it is amusing, but also because it tends somewhat to show what I am driving at.

In the interregnum following the fall of the Tsarist régime, Petersburg was full of spellbinders haranguing

the crowds in the public squares, and telling them what they must do to be saved. Some were emissaries of foreign governments. One of my friends was there; he entertained himself all day and every day by wandering around among the crowds with an interpreter, to find out what was going on. In one group that was being addressed in very thick Russian, he found a knot of five or six proletarians, took them aside and questioned them about their odd attitude of docility towards the speaker. "Don't you know that this man is an agent of the German Government?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, he is a dangerous fellow. Why do you listen to him? Why don't you throw him out?"

"Anything the German Government has to say to us, we ought to hear."

This was a stupefying surprise. My friend, being a man of great humour, saw his chance, and went on:

"Is that the way you people generally feel about it?"

"Yes."

"That is your notion of free speech, is it?"

"Yes."

"But you don't seem to know the difference between liberty and license."

"No; what is it?"

"Well, when some perfectly respectable person gets up and says something that everybody agrees to, that is liberty."

They ruminated on this awhile, finally got it down, and then asked, "What is license?"

"Why, license is when some infernal scoundrel, who ought to be hanged anyway, gets up and says something that is true."

The men drew apart and had a long powwow with the interpreter, who finally came forward and said, "These men say there must be some misunderstanding on your part, probably owing to differences in language. They say we are not for liberty at all; we are for license."

I take it that, in the circumstances set forth in Mr. Russell's article, he and I are for license; but the fact remains, I fear, that most of our fellow-citizens are very strong for liberty; very strong indeed.

II

This addiction seems to be the natural fruitage of another addiction which is more or less common to all men, but with us is so inveterate and so ingrained that we might almost take out a process-patent on it; and that is, the addiction to expediency as the supreme law of conduct. Among the many observers who came over from Europe to study us in the early days of our republic, the ablest and most profound was one who for some reason is also most neglected. This was the eminent economist and Saint-Simonian, Michel Chevalier. One never hears of him; yet he is probably worth more to us, especially at the moment, than all the Tocquevilles, Bryces, Chateaubriands and Halls put together. I wish I might prevail on some enterprising editor to arrange with Professor Chinard, who not only knows our history so well but understands it so thoroughly, to write an

essay on Chevalier which should bring him out of a most unmerited obscurity and introduce him to us.

Chevalier, who spent four years among us exactly a century ago, traveling everywhere, has a great deal to say about the blind devotion to expediency which he found prevailing throughout our society. He found, in short, that in any circumstances, in any matter small or great, whenever considerations of expediency collided with principle, law, precept or custom, it was invariably the latter that must give way.

Witnessing these collisions, he would ask such questions as, "Where are your principles of action? What about the doctrine set forth in the Declaration of Independence? What about your belief in the natural rights of man?" – and he would get but the one answer, that the action taken in the premises must be regulated by expediency.

Truly, it would seem that Americans of Chevalier's day were temperamentally more ill-fitted for the undertaking of self-government by written statutes, and under a written constitution, than any people who had passed beyond the patriarchal stage of political development. In this very matter of free speech which we are discussing, it is worth remembering that the ink was barely dry on the Bill of Rights when the Sedition Act was passed; and since then the history of free speech in America has pretty well been a history of efforts to show, as Mr. Dooley said, "that th' Constitution iv th' United States is applicable on'y in such cases as it is applied to on account iv its applicability."

So I believe it is unquestionably the inveterate devotion to expediency that has left Mr. Russell and myself

standing together in this rather forlorn hope for the future of free speech. It is coercion based on expediency that suppresses what we loosely call "Communist propaganda." It is coercion based on expediency that enforces silence about this or that flagitious transaction in public affairs; and so on. As an abstract issue, free speech comes in for a good deal of discussion now and then, for instance during the late war, when coercion based on expediency was widely applied; and the general run of argument pro and con is probably well enough known. There is one line of argument, however, that is not often brought out. It proceeds from the fact that while, as a rule, action based on pure expediency gets the immediate results it aims at, those results always cost a great deal more in the long run than they are worth; and moreover, the most expensive items in the bill are those that were not foreseen and never thought of.

For example, expediency suggested that the evils of the liquor-traffic be suppressed by coercion. It got results, after a fashion, but it got them for us at the price of making corruption and hypocrisy respectable. A heavy price – were they worth it? Again, expediency suggested that the care of our poor be made a government job. It gets results, but at what price? First, the organization of mendicancy and subvention into a permanent political asset. Second, the indoctrination of our whole citizenry with a false and dangerous idea of the State and its functions – that the State is something to be run to in any emergency, trivial or serious, to settle matters out of hand.

This idea encourages, invites, nay, insists upon what Professor Ortega y Gasset rightly calls the gravest dan-

ger that to-day threatens civilization: the absorption of all spontaneous social effort by the State. "When the mass suffers any ill-fortune, or simply feels some strong appetite, its great temptation is that permanent, sure possibility of obtaining everything – without effort, struggle, doubt or risk – merely by touching a button and setting the mighty machine in motion."

There is no trouble about seeing how deeply our people are penetrated with this idea; even the cartoons in our newspapers show it. I saw one not so long ago, a caricature of the Revolutionary reveille, the fine old picture that everybody knows, of the old man, his son and grandson, marching three-abreast, with banner, drum, and fife. The cartoon showed three ill-looking adventurers marching on Washington and their banner bore the word, "Gimme."

This degrading enervation of a whole people is rather a heavy offset to the benefits gained through a policy of expediency. The devotees of expediency, however, never consider the final cost of their policies; they are after the immediate thing, and that only. Their case was never better put than by Mr. George Horace Lorimer, in his observations on the young man who pawned a razor for fifteen cents to get a shave.

I had a desultory talk with one devotee of expediency not long ago, a good friend and a thoroughly excellent man. He was all worked up over the activities of Communists and what he called pink Socialists, especially in the colleges and churches. He said they were corrupting the youth, and he was strong for having them coerced into silence. I could not see it that way. I told him it seemed pretty clear that Mr. Jefferson was right when

he said that the effect of coercion was "to make one half the people fools and the other half hypocrites, and to support roguery and error all over the earth"; look at Germany and Italy! I thought our youth could manage to bear up under a little corrupting – they always have – and if they were corrupted by Communism, they stood a first-rate chance to get over it, whereas if they grew up fools or hypocrites, they would never get over it.

I added that Mr. Jefferson was right when he said that "it is error alone which needs the support of government; truth can stand by itself." One glance at governments anywhere in the world proves that. Well, then, the surest way to make our youth suspect that there may be something in Communism would be for the government to outlaw it.

"That is all very well for Mr. Jefferson," my friend said, "but think of this: Some years ago an anarchist agitator went up and down the land, preaching the doctrine of terrorism. A weak-minded young man heard it, was unbalanced by it,* went forth and shot President McKinley. The State executed him and buried his body in quicklime to show its abhorrence of the deed, but nothing was done about the agitator who provoked it. Is this logical? Lincoln did not think so. When a delegation of liberals complained to him about the Sedition Act, he said, 'Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier-boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of the wily agitator who induces him to desert?' "

*My friend may have been misinformed. This story was current at the time, but no evidence of it was ever brought forward, and it was probably an invention.

This is, of course, a sound argument, provided one accept the premise implied. On the other hand, one might suggest that in shooting simple-minded boys and burying lunatics in quicklime, the State is not taking precisely the right way with them under any circumstances. We avoided this digression, however, and returned to the subject in hand.

"McKinley's death was a shocking thing, truly," I said, "but let us try to strike a balance. Don't you think, when all comes to all, that the life of a President, now and then, maybe, – such things seldom happen, – is a moderate price for keeping you free of a civilization made up half of fools and half of hypocrites? Men have thought so before now, and pretty good men too. On the occasion of Shays's Rebellion, Mr. Jefferson said, 'If the happiness of the mass of the people can be secured at the expense of a little tempest now and then, or even of a little blood, it will be a precious purchase. *Malo libertatem periculosam quam quietam servitutem.*' Again," I added, "you remember that when Sir Robert Peel proposed to organize a police-force for London, Englishmen said openly that half a dozen throats cut annually in the Whitechapel district was a cheap price to pay for keeping such an instrument of potential tyranny out of the hands of the government.

"That sounds rather cold-blooded, but the immense augmentation and strengthening of the police-forces in all countries in the past fifty years go far to show that they were right. Get up in one of our industrial centres to-day and say that two and two make four, and if there is any financial interest concerned in maintaining that two and two make five, the police will bash your head in.

Then what choice have you, save to degenerate either into a fool or into a hypocrite? And who wants to live in a land of fools and hypocrites?

"Mr. Jefferson was right," I continued. (I could not resist winding up with a little flourish.) "Error is the only thing that needs the backing of government, and when you find the government backing anything you are pretty safe in betting that it is an error. Truth is a very proud old girl, and if you or any crew of ignorant black guards in public office think she cares two pins for your patronage, or that you can put her in debt to you, you have another guess coming. She will look at your little efforts with an amused eye, perhaps give you one or two mild Bronx cheers, and then when she gets around to it – in her own good time, no hurry, she is never in a hurry – she will stand you on your head. Rome, Moscow and Berlin papers, please copy."

To be on the popular side at the moment is not especially interesting; the thing is to be on the right side in the long run. As I see it, the best argument for free speech is what the suppression of it does to the character of a people. This is the only thing in the whole contention that interests me, though I have every respect for the Bill of Rights. Mr. Jefferson said that "it is the manners and spirit of a people which preserve a republic in vigour. A degeneracy in these is a canker which soon eats to the heart of its laws and constitution." Nothing promotes this degeneracy more effectively than a check on free speech. We all remember, for example, what the "spirit of a people" was like in 1917, when free speech was suppressed, and when any low-minded scoundrel might make character for himself by spying and eavesdropping.

The Bill of Rights is all very well, so long as it has the manners and spirit of a people behind it; but when these are hopelessly impaired, it is not worth the paper it was written on.

But, as Mr. Jefferson saw clearly, we can not hope to get something for nothing; and here, I think, is probably the real issue between old-fashioned persons like Mr. Russell and myself, and the believer in expediency like my good and honoured friend whom I have just now cited. My friend unquestionably wants the manners and spirit of our people kept up to par, – it would be a base slander to suggest the contrary, – but when it comes to digging up for it, he boggles at the price; in short, he wants to get something for nothing, and this simply can not be done. The whole order of nature is against it.

I believe I may count on Mr. Russell being with me when I say that, if the spirit of a people is worth maintaining, we must be prepared to accept the offenses, inconveniences and injuries incidental to its maintenance. We must take a chance on terrorists, pink Socialists, Communists and what not; a chance on a fracas or two, on a few youths being corrupted, maybe on losing a President once in a long while, and all the rest of it. Possibly those chances are not quite so desperate as the believer in expediency imagines; I think it very likely. I have a letter just now from a French friend, who says that *quand les Américains se mettent a être nerveux, ils dépassent tout commentaire*; and I too have often thought I noticed something of the kind. However, desperate or not, those chances must be taken.

Julius Cæsar went unattended; he said that life was not worth having at the expense of an ignoble solicitude about

it. Considering the outcome, the believer in expediency might say this was quixotic. Yet, on the other hand, it is conceivable that this example was better for the spirit of the Roman people than the spectacle of a *Führer* guarded by squads of secret-service men and plug-uglies. One of the greatest men that England ever produced was Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland; he was killed in the battle of Newbury, at the age of thirty-three. He held the job of Secretary of State for a year, just when things were warming up nicely for the Civil War. He refused to employ spies or to censor correspondence; he would not open a single private letter. Horace Walpole sneers at this, saying that it "evinced debility of mind." Well, no doubt it incurred the chance of considerable inconvenience, even of some injury; but Falkland seemed to think it better to run that chance, rather than turn loose a swarm of sneaking vermin to deprave the spirit of the people.

So the issue is that "you pays your money and you takes your choice." The believer in expediency appreciates the benefits of freedom, but thinks they are likely to come too high. The old-style doctrinaire, like Mr. Russell and myself, is doubtful that they will come so high as all that, but never mind. Let them cost what they may, he is for them. He is for them unreservedly and unconditionally and world without end.

III

Thought on this subject opens the way for a few words about plain language; and here I must party company with Mr. Russell, for nothing in his article warrants the assumption that he would go with me, though he might – his article intimates nothing either way.

I am thinking particularly about the current treatment of public affairs though in general I wish we were in the habit of conveying our meanings in plain explicit terms rather than by indirection and by euphemism, as we so regularly do. My point is that habitual indirection in speech supports and stimulates a habit of indirection in thought; and this habit, if not pretty closely watched, runs off into intellectual dishonesty.

The English language is of course against us. Its vocabulary is so large, it is so rich in synonyms, it lends itself so easily and naturally to paraphrase, that one gets up a great facility with indirection almost without knowing it. Our common speech bristles with mere indirect intimations of what we are driving at; and as for euphemisms, they have so far corrupted our vernacular as to afflict us with a chronic, mawkish and self-conscious sentimentalism which violently resents the plain English name of the realities that these euphemisms intimate. This is bad; the upshot of our willingness to accept a reality, provided we do not hear it named, or provided we ourselves are not obliged to name it, leads us to accept many realities that we ought not to accept. It leads to many and serious moral misjudgments of both facts and persons; in other words, it leads straight into a profound intellectual dishonesty.

The glossary of business has many such euphemisms; for example, when you hear that a concern is being "reorganized," it means that the concern is bankrupt, unable or unwilling to meet its bills; it is busted. "Bankruptcy" has, however, become an unfashionable word; we are squeamish and queasy and nasty-nice about using it or hearing it used. We prefer to fall back on the euphemism of "reorganization."

The glossary of politics is so full of euphemistic words and phrases – as in the nature of things it must be – that one would suppose politicians must sometimes strain their wits to coin them. For example, when Secretary A. tells Congressman B. that unless he votes right on a certain measure there will be no more pork-barrel funds distributed in his district, that is blackmail, – there is no other name for it, – but we prefer to lump off transactions of this sort under the general and euphemistic term "patronage." Sometimes we find a euphemism on a euphemism; for example, what we used to call an indemnity is what our ruder ancestors called booty, plunder, which is precisely what it is. But the word "indemnity" became in turn unfashionable, for some reason, – overwork, perhaps, – and for the last few years we have been saying "reparations." Some literary artist spread himself to give us "unemployment relief," when it became evident that the good and sound word "dole" was a little heavy for our pampered stomachs; and while we all know well enough what "mandated" territory is, and what "mandates" are, we are quite indisposed to saying what they are, or to hearing anyone say what they are.

A person never sees so clearly how absurd these euphemisms are until he translates a few of them from

another language into his own. The French language has a small vocabulary, and its genius is rather against euphemism, – as much against it as English is for it – but it can turn out a few very handsome ones. Embezzlement, for instance, is known as an "indelicacy"; you will read in French newspapers that yesterday's cashier who made off with the contents of the safe "committed an indelicacy." Italian newspapers, reporting a bad accident on the railway, will begin by telling you that the Sunrise Express "disgraced itself" yesterday morning, at such-and-such time and place; casualties, so-and-so many. These sound as ridiculous to us as our pet euphemisms must sound to a Frenchman or an Italian; the reason being that all such sophistications of speech are intrinsically ridiculous. They sound silly because they are silly; and, being silly, they are debilitating.

Bad as euphemism is, however, indirection is worse. I notice that a writer in a recent magazine gives this advice to budding newspaper men:

> Even where opinion is admitted, as on the editorial page, fact is often more desirable than opinion. Thus it is better to scrap an editorial calling the mayor a liar and a crook, and to write another which, by reciting facts without using adjectives and without calling names, makes it obvious that the mayor is a liar and a crook.

In the view of journalism, that is first-class good advice, because we are all so accustomed to indirection that a lapse from it affects us unpleasantly and sets us against the person or organ that indulges in any such lapse; and that will not do for journalism, because it makes people stop their subscriptions.

In the view of intellectual integrity, on the other hand, this advice seems to me about the worst imaginable. In the first place, if the mayor is a liar and a crook, saying so is certainly "reciting facts." It is not "calling names," it is not uttering abuse or vituperation; it is a simple and objective recital of fact, and only a weak and sticky supersensitiveness prevents our seeing it as such. In the second place, indirection is so regularly the vehicle of propaganda that the use of it marks the man with an axe to grind. The advice which I have just cited contemplates a person who is more concerned with producing an effect on people's minds than he is with the simple expression of truth and fact. This may be good journalism, – I am not entitled to an opinion about that, – but I can find nothing to say for it on general grounds.

After the jury in the Beecher-Tilton trial disagreed, and the case against Beecher had lapsed, Charles Anderson Dana said editorially in the New York *Sun*, "Henry Ward Beecher is an adulterer, a perjurer, and a fraud; and his great genius and his Christian pretenses only make his sins the more horrible and revolting." To me that piece of plain language sounds purely objective. On the one hand, it has not the accent of mere vituperation, it is thoroughly dignified; and on the other, it is not the language of a person who is mainly concerned with wangling somebody into believing something. When Mr. Jefferson wrote that one of his associates in Washington's cabinet was "a fool and a blabber," his words, taken in their context, make exactly the same impression of calm, disinterested and objective appraisal as if he had remarked that the man had black hair and brown eyes.

Or again, while we are about it, let us examine the most extreme example of this sort of thing that I have so far found in English literature, which is Kent's opinion of Oswald, in *King Lear*:

> *Kent.* Fellow, I know thee.
> *Osw.* What dost thou know me for?
> *Kent.* A knave; a rascal; an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd, in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pandar, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch.

Now, considering Kent's character and conduct, as shown throughout the play, I doubt very much that those lines should be taken as merely so much indecent blackguarding. I appeal to Mr. Walter Hampden to say whether I am not right in thinking that an actor who ranted through them in the tone and accent of sheer violent diatribe would ruin his part. Frank Warrin cited those lines the other day, when he was telling me how much he would enjoy a revival of *Lear*, with our gifted friend Bill Parke cast for the part of Kent. He said, "Can't you hear Bill's voice growing quieter and quieter, colder and colder, deadlier and deadlier, all the way through that passage?" Angry as Kent is, and plain as his language is, his tone and manner must carry a strong suggestion of objectivity in order to keep fully up to the

dramatist's conception of his rôle. Kent is not abusing Oswald; he is merely, as we say, "telling him."

IV

I repeat that I have no thought of weaving a web of implications to entangle Mr. Russell. I may say, however, how greatly I wish he would go at least some little way with me in the belief that, with the revival of free speech which he so ably urges, there should go a revival of plain language.

When we speak freely, let us speak plainly, for plain speech is wholesome; especially, plain speech about public affairs and public men. Mr. Justice McReynolds gave us a noble specimen of it in his dissenting opinion and his accompanying remarks on the gold-clause decision. Such language has not been heard from the Supreme Bench since the days when John Marshall Harlan used to chew up about half a pound of plug tobacco, just "to get a good ready," and then turn loose on his affirming associates with a dissenting opinion that would burn a hole through a rawhide. Nothing like it, indeed, has been heard from any public man in America, as far as I know, since the death of William Jay Gaynor; and it bucked me up almost to the point of believing that there might be some sort of future for the country, after all.

That is the sort of talk we should be hearing on all sides of any and every public question, and with reference to every public man. I have long since given up reading political editorials and the "interpretations" of political reporters. I detest a flavoured stink; and the stench

of propaganda that has been soaked in the musk and patchouli of indirection is peculiarly odious. If these interpreters set out, say, to deal with some public man of rank and responsibility who is on the other side of the political fence, they usually begin by buttering up his good intentions, fine gifts and excellent character, and then proceed to associate him with some flagrant piece of political rascality; thus by indirection making it appear that he is actually a knave and a dog. Really, one loses patience with this perpetual and exclusive concern with making people believe something, with "putting something over," rather than with plain objective statement. Even the editorial technique of Mr. Pott and Mr. Slurk had at least the merit of eschewing indirection.

It seems to me indeed that the association of plain language with free speech is a natural one; that legality alone is not enough to ensure free speech. Freedom of speech means more than mere freedom under law. It means freedom under a régime of candour and objectivity; freedom under a paramount concern with truth and clearness of statement, rather than a paramount concern with making one's statements acceptable to the whims and sentimentalisms of an enervated people.

This thought tempts me to go on and examine some specific infringements on the relation between freedom of speech and plainness of language; it brings Jeremy Bentham back to mind, with his chapter on what he calls "impostor-terms." But this essay is already too long, and I must end it here. If my reader's patience holds out, I may take the matter up again and carry it on from where I now leave it.

Artemus Ward's America

(Published in *The Atlantic Monhtly*, September 1934. Reprinted in *Free Speech and Plain Language*, 1937.)

In February 1923, France was in very bad shape indeed. She was at the height of the war, the real war, whereof the disturbances of 1914–1918 were only a curtain-raiser – the war which is still going on, apparently unbeknown to our futile "disarmament-conferences." Under these hard circumstances France celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ernest Renan, scholar, philosopher, man of letters. M. Poincaré made a speech, not as a member of the government, but as a member of the French Academy. M. Barthou, the present Foreign Minister, also spoke, not as a politician (I think he was out of office at the moment, though I am not sure), but as representing one of the other constituents of the Institute of France, – if my memory serves me, it was the Academy of Sciences, – and next morning the *Temps* devoted a good four-fifths of its space to a report of the event.

To get an idea of this in American terms, we should have to imagine our country far deeper in the doldrums than it was two years ago, yet taking its mind off its troubles long enough to celebrate, say, the centenary of Ralph Waldo Emerson as a national event; with Mr. Roosevelt representing Harvard University – and really doing it, doing it in the grand style – and ex-Secretary Adams representing the American Historical Society, also in the grand style; and the New York *Times* giving up something like twenty-two pages of its daily issue to the occasion!

America has often been reproached as doing little for its illustrious dead except for those whose memory can be profitably capitalized by politicians. This is as it may be. What has not been sufficiently remarked, I believe, is that in such cases the exigencies of exploitation lead us to glorify these worthies for qualities that they did not conspicuously possess, and to slight the qualities that really made them great. In putting out their memory for public consumption we misbrand it for partisan purposes so flagrantly that if our politicians had to face an equivalent of the Food and Drugs Act there would be close quarters in the penitentiary most of the time.

For example, we do not celebrate Lincoln as a politician, yet his actual title to fame is that he was far and away the greatest politician we ever produced, and doubtless one of the first half-dozen politicians of the world. As a politician he was candid, always ready to say, as he did say, that the way of the politician is "a long step removed from common honesty"; but many American politicians have been equally candid – think of Penrose, Quay, Cameron. He never enriched himself in office, but

very few of our Presidents have done that, and many politicians below the rank of the Presidency never turned a dishonest dollar – think of Hamilton, who made so many rich, yet remained all his life quite poor. Lincoln was nationally-minded, when his mind at last became set that way – well, think of John Adams and his son, John Quincy, who were born nationally-minded. Lincoln was eminently humane, generous, affable, humorous, patient, simple-hearted – but, dear me, so was Tim Sullivan. It is this misdirection of homage, this persistent excess of adulation for the wrong thing, that throws an air of fictitiousness and unreality over our praise of Lincoln and indeed over practically the whole body of Lincolniana.

Then on the other hand we celebrate Thomas Jefferson as the master-politician who built a powerful Minerva-like political party all out of his own head, and therewith saved the country. In April of every year his name is consistently and most blasphemously invoked upon clandestine purposes which he abhorred, and for the most part by men whom he would not have let set foot on his premises. Can one imagine, for instance, Mr. Roosevelt darkening the doors of the man who said in 1800, "What an augmentation of the field for jobbing, speculating, plundering, office-building and office-hunting would be produced by an assumption of all the State powers into the hands of the general government!" and who said in 1821 that "our government is now taking so steady a course as to show by what road it will pass to destruction, to wit: by consolidation first, and then corruption, its necessary consequence"? I can not imagine it.

The fact is, if Mr. Claude Bowers will permit me to say so, that Mr. Jefferson was but an indifferent

politician. His party pretty well formed itself, out of material supplied mostly by the opposition, much as in 1932. The biographer's fable of a kind of political Svengali or Professor Moriarty makes agreeable reading even for those who know better, but it will not wash. To glorify Mr. Jefferson for these qualities is to misread his greatness completely and culpably; and in proportion as they are magnified, the qualities that really made him great are obscured.

But why should a people consider its illustrious dead so closely? Because its attitude toward them is an index of the national spirit; it marks the difference between a nation and an agglomeration. In 1882 Ernest Renan made an address at the Sorbonne on the question, "What is a Nation?" He showed that geography, language, race, religion, military requirements or economic interest does not make a nation. Some combination of them may constitute a source from which one draws one's gains, but, whether severally or in combination, they do not give rise to a national life. A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle evoked by the common possession of a rich legacy of remembrances, and by the will to keep improving this hereditary property for the benefit of those who shall receive it hereafter in their turn. "Man does not improvise himself," said Renan, austerely; a nation, like an individual, is the culmination of an age-long spiritual tendency; and therefore the cult of ancestors is the soundest of all cults, because it is our ancestors who have made us what we are.

This doctrine is manifestly a little out with the temper of our enlightened age; for the moment, at any rate, one would say that improvisation is quite the rule, and

that a spiritual heritage is about the very last thing that our enlightened age could be induced to take stock in. But suppose we grant provisionally that there may be some thing in the idea; then the next question is, Why should a people ever remind itself of any names but the famous ones? Because its spiritual heritage is purely a quality-product, and fame, which is largely the product of accident and circumstance, is no measure of a contribution to it. To recognize and correctly appraise a sound contribution, wherever found, is an index of the national spirit's intensity, and thus the names that are great but not famous are a touchstone. We may put it that a people which has the true measure of its Bacons, Renans, Jeffersons, and feels a sense of spiritual continuity with them, is by way of being a nation; and a people which, over and above this, has the true measure of its Falklands, Jouberts, Thoreaus, and feels a sense of spiritual continuity with them, is by way of being a great nation.

II

These thoughts were brought to my mind last spring by an interesting circumstance connected with the memory of an American who was not famous. He was not famous while he lived, and he is not famous now. Charles Farrar Browne, who wrote under the pen-name of Artemus Ward, was born at Waterford, Maine, on the twenty-sixth of April, 1834. When his centenary came round, I looked through various publications for some mention of him, but found none. Probably the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*

said something about its old reporter and contributor, but there was no copy of that paper handy, so I do not know. Such of our national publications as profess and call themselves literary said nothing; or rather, I should say, those that I examined said nothing – I can not pretend to have seen them all. The London *Times Literary Supplement*, however, in its issue for the week of April 26, gave him the whole of the front page and a column and a half run-over on the second.

One might suspect, of course, that the *Times*'s essayist was hard up at the moment for something to write about. What with an article promised, press-day coming on, and one thing or another turning up to distract one's thoughts, this sometimes happens. Yet the essay did not read as if that were the case, but quite otherwise. Then, too, essayists have always to reckon with editors, and editors are notoriously close-fisted with their space, and inhospitable towards topics of doubtful interest. Moreover, the roster of British literary worthies is extremely long, and an essayist who is out to see what he can do with a respectable but obscure literary figure need not cross the ocean to find one. All in all, we may take it, I think, that Artemus Ward was not lugged in by the ears as a filler, but that the *Times* regarded his centenary as valid front-page matter. This raises the question why the *Times* should so regard it. The essayist says frankly that "to most English people Artemus Ward is now only a name; yet the name persists." Well, but why does it persist? Did Ward actually contribute anything to the spiritual heritage of English-speaking people that would justify the *Times* in reviving his memory? If so, what was it?

Certainly nothing in his public career; it was too short. He died in his thirty-third year, on the sixth of March, 1867. He had a first-rate reputation as a professional humorist, and as a lecturer in this field he did exceedingly well. He seems to have been successful with any kind of audience; he delighted Western silver-miners, Mormon elders and their flock, as well as the miscellaneous audiences of New York and London, where the high lights of politics, letters and society forgathered with the humbler hearers of his discourse. He edited *Vanity Fair* for a short time, in succession to Charles Godfrey Leland, but he could not brace his paper against the stress of the Civil War, and it died on his hands. One doubts, though, that he would have done much better under easier circumstances; his gifts did not lie that way.

Thus there is nothing in his career as editor and lecturer that helps us to reappraise him in terms of our own time. His personality was by all accounts most prepossessing and charming, but it is gone, and the other adventitious aids to his popularity have only an antiquarian interest for us, if any. All he has of present value – assuming that he has anything – is contained in the slim bulk of his writings; and here too the topics that he treated, and the names that appear on his pages, seem all but mythical. He wrote little and irregularly, almost scrappily, never at any length. His best work is in the odds-and-ends that he published in the *Plain Dealer* and *Vanity Fair* in the guise of letters from an itinerant showman; and in the three or four contributions that he made to *Punch*. As the writings of a professional humorist, I think one must say that they are largely dissatisfying. The *Times*'s essayist loyally makes the best of them,

but can not quite commit himself to the conventional apparatus of eccentric spelling, extravaganza and frontier dialect that served the popular notion of American humour seventy years ago; nor yet can we.

No doubt there is excellent humour in Ward's writings. For instance, with the current ethics of our stage in mind, one may see great humour in his account of a disagreement with a former partner whose name was Billson, over a matter of policy.

> Billson and me orjanized a strollin dramatic company, & we played The Drunkard, or the Falling Saved, with a real Drunkard. The play didn't take particlarly, and says Billson to me, Let's give 'em some immoral dramy. We had a large troop onto our hands, consistin of eight tragedians and a bass drum, but I says, No, Billson; and then says I, Billson, you hain't got a well-balanced mind. Says he, Yes, I have, old hoss-fly (he was a low cuss) – yes, I have. I have a mind, says he, that balances in any direction that the public rekires. That's wot I call a well-balanced mind.

Again, remembering our purely conventional acceptance of the death-scene on the stage, – Mimi, Violetta, Tristan, Valentine, – this incident in Billson's earlier career is delightfully amusing:

> The miser'ble man once played Hamlet. There was n't any orchestry, and wishin to expire to slow moosic, he died playin onto a claironett himself, interspersed with hart-rendin groans.

But if all Ward's humour were as good as this (and by no means all of it is; his work is very uneven) we should still be obliged to say that one must look elsewhere for a really significant contribution to our spiritual heritage.

Where, then, are we to look? If his quality as a humorist is not conspicuous, if there are others who, to say the least, perfectly stand comparison with him in this field, – as certainly there are, – did he have another quality that does conspicuously set him off against them? Is he a victim of the misbranding process which I described at length a moment ago, so that in citing him as a humorist, as we invariably do, we are citing him for the wrong thing? I think it is highly probable.

III

I suggest that Ward was the first really great critic of American society, and that in this capacity he remains to-day, as he said of his Grate Show, "ekalled by few & exceld by none." In fact, the only one who seems to me to stand with him is another victim of popular misbranding in our own time, Mr. Dooley. In our appreciation of both these men it is interesting to see how far our instinct outruns our intelligence; we think they affect us by the power of their humour, when nine times out of ten what actually affects us is the power of their criticism – and here, no doubt, we have the reason why their names persist. For instance, there is no great humour in Ward's oft-quoted observation on the fanatical extravagances of Abolitionism; what really interests us is its exact correspondence with history's verdict upon them. Nevertheless the predisposition bred by misbranding leads us to think we are interested in the humour which is not there, rather than in the criticism which is there. I quote the remark afresh to show how this is so:

> Feller Sitterzens, the Afrikan may be Our Brother. Sevral hily respectyble gentlemen and sum talented females tell us so, & fur argyment's sake I mite be injooced to grant it, tho I don't beleeve it myself. But the Afrikan is n't sevral of our brothers & all our fust wife's relashuns. He is n't our grandfather and our grategrandfather and our Aunt in the country. Scacely. & yit numeris persons would have us think so.

There is no trouble now about making a sound critical estimate of the public questions that led up to the Civil War, or of the men whom those issues brought into prominence. Making one in 1862 was another matter. Every political *démarche* has a pretext as well as a cause; and for one reason or another things are usually managed so that the lambent warmth of patriotism shall play around the pretext only – one could write a very telling treatise on the function of the pretext in practical politics. The ability to disengage the pretext, to appraise it for what it is, and to keep a clear and steady view of the cause, is a mark of the true critic; and the ability to do this amid a riot of the worst passions and the meanest prejudices is a mark of the great critic.

Ward had this ability. He was a Unionist, a friend of the Administration, yet his greatest praise of Lincoln was for remaining "unscared and unmoved by Secesh in front of you and Abbolish at the back of you, each one of which is a little wuss than the other, if possible." He had no illusions whatever about the actual place of slavery in the category of war-issues. On tour in Alabama with his Grate Show at the outbreak of the war:

> I saw a nigger sittin on a fence a-playin on a banjo. "My Afrikan Brother," sed I, coting from a Tract I onct red, "you belong to a

> very interesting race. Your masters is going to war excloosively on your account."
>
> "Yes, boss," he replied, "an' I wish 'em honorable graves," and he went on playin the banjo, larfin all over and openin his mouth wide enuff to drive in an oldfashioned 2-wheeled chaise.

A public movement launched under a pretext of liberation always breeds a monstrously inflated notion of the qualities of the people or class whom it is proposed to liberate. The more highly vocal and voluble element in American society idealized the Negro in Ward's day as elaborately as in our day it idealized the indigent Poles, the oppressed Armenians, the suffering Belgians, and now idealizes the proletariat. The old showman stopped at Richmond after the surrender, and a Negro bellboy showed him to his quarters:

> I accompanied the Afrikan to my lodgins. "My brother," I sed, "air you aware that you 've been 'mancipated? Do you realize how glorus it is to be free? Tell me, my dear brother, does it not seem like some dreams, or do you realize the great fact in all its livin and holy magnitood?"
>
> He sed he would take some gin.

Ward knew well the kind of men that circumstances were bringing to the fore, in both high places and low. He seems aware that great national disturbances leave a society with its *Oberhefe* and its *Unterhefe* precipitated, as in German beer – its scum at the top and its dregs at the bottom. The essential levity of certain characters who are prominent in our *Oberhefe* to-day must, I think, remind the judicious of the old showman's advice to Lincoln concerning his Secretary of War:

> Tell E. Stanton that his boldness, honesty and vigger merits all prase, but to keep his undergarmints on. E. Stanton has appeerently only one weakness, which it is he can't allus keep his undergarmints from flyin up over his hed.

At the outset of Mr. Roosevelt's Administration, also, certain features of the New Deal must have brought to mind Ward's admirable suggestion for the make-up of a Brain Trust:

> "How 'bout my Cabinit, Mister Ward?" sed Abe.
>
> "Fill it up with Showmen, sir! Showmen is devoid of politics. They hain't got any principles. They know how to cater for the public. They know what the public wants, North and South. Showmen, sir, is honest men. If you doubt their literary ability, look at their posters and see small bills. If you want a Cabinit as is a Cabinit, fill it up with showmen, but don't call on me. The moral wax figger perfeshun must n't be permitted to go down while there's a drop of blood in these vains."

In the muck of the *Unterhefe*, as well, Ward's eye easily made out the unsavoury figure of the profiteer. His *Romance of William Barker*, the Young Patriot, is a brief but pungent summary of the doctrine of "business as usual." He also knew the patrioteer, whom war lets loose upon the community as a sneaking spy and inquisitor-at-large. Boarding a train in Alabama:

> I hadn't more'n fairly squatted afore a dark-lookin man with a swinister expression onto his countenance entered the cars, and lookin very sharp at me, he axed what was my principles.
>
> "Secesh," I ansered. "I'm a Dissoluter. I'm in favor of Jeff Davis, Bowregard, Pickens, Capt. Kidd, Bloobeard, Munro Edards, the devil, Mrs. Cunningham, and all the rest of 'em."
>
> "You're in favor of the war?"

"Certingly. By all means. I'm in favor of this war and also of the next war. I've been in favor of the next war for over sixteen years."

"War to the knive?" sed the man.

"Blud, Eargo, blud!" sed I, tho them words isn't origgernal with me.

Ward measured the depth of routine patriotism in North and South alike with unfailing accuracy. He wrote several pieces showing the progress of the war-fever among his neighbours in Baldwinsville, Indiana, and they reflect faithfully all the ignorant ferocity, the puerilities of petty self-interest, the abject hypocrisies, that were rampant in every twopenny town in the United States seventeen years ago, and in similar circumstances will be rampant again. These pieces are so closely articulated that I can not quote from them; they must be read in their entirety. One may say as little as one likes for their humour, but their criticism is sound and searching. The showman was gentler with the South, as became a visitor; yet where can better criticism be found than this, in his letter from Richmond after General Lee's surrender?

There is raly a great deal of Union sentiment in this city. I can see it on every hand.

I met a man today – I am not at liberty to tell his name, but he is a old and inflooential citizen of Richmond, and sez he, "Why, we've bin fightin agin the Old Flag! Lor bless me, how sing'lar!" He then borrered five dollars of me and bust into a flood of tears.

IV

It is closeness of correspondence with the verdict of history, or with what Aristotle calls "the determination of the judicious," that establishes the validity of criticism. Ward's pages give a remarkably complete appraisal of what our publicists call "the American psychology," whereby one may see clearly what it looks like, and what the civilization ensuing upon it looks like, when viewed *sub specie æternitatis*. There are very few aspects of our collective life which he does not illuminate and exhibit as they really are, rather than as distorted by the myopia of prepossession or the delirium of vanity. Like a good artist, he does this by indirection. The great literary artist is one who powerfully impresses a reader with an attitude of mind, a mood, a temper, a state of being, without describing it. If he describes it – if, that is, he anywhere injects himself into the process – the effect is lost. This is the literary art so manifest in the Gospel narrative; and it is this that makes Turgeniev supreme among modern artists.

Ward once said of writers like himself (and I venture to emphasize his very remarkable words) that "the truth has found more aid from them than from all the grave polemists and solid writers that have ever spoken or written. . . . They have helped the truth along *without encumbering it with themselves*." If, indeed, we approach Ward as a critic, leaving aside all thought of his humour, we may see how ably he has helped along the truth about our civilization; and how, too, he has helped it along in

the way that good things are as a rule most effectively helped along – by indirection.

As Ward saw America, its god was Good Business; its monotheism was impregnable. Of man's five fundamental social instincts only one, the instinct of expansion, had free play, and its range was limitless. The instincts of intellect and knowledge, of religion and morals, of beauty and poetry, of social life and manners, were disallowed and perverted. The old showman is himself a most orthodox monotheist; when all comes to all, he worships only the god of Good Business and him only does he serve. At Oberlin College he called on Professor Peck "for the purpuss of skewerin Kolonial Hall to exhibit fly wax works and beests of Pray into."

> Sez Perfesser Peck, "Mister Ward, I don't know 'bout this bizness. What air your sentiments?"
>
> Sez I, "I hain't got any."
>
> "Good God!" cried the Perfesser. "Did I understan you to say you have no sentiments?"
>
> "Nary a sentiment," sez I.
>
> "Mister Ward, don't your blud bile at the thawt that three million and a half of your cullud brethren air a clankin their chains in the South?"
>
> Sez I, "Not a bile. Let 'em clank... The pint is, can I have your Hall by payin a fair price? You air full of sentiments. That's your lay, while I'm a exhibiter of startlin curiosities. What d'ye say?"

Ward understood the conventional defense-mechanisms and subterfuges that must be employed pretty regularly to lend plausibility to one's adventures in the service of the one true god. Prince de Metternich says that when

he visited Paris in the days of Louis-Philippe he grew so sick of the word *fraternité* that if he had a brother he would call him cousin. For nearly twenty years the word "moral" has been so debased in the promotion of political mountebankery and scoundrelism that the sound of it affects a decent person with the utmost repugnance. Ever since 1917, when I have caught a statesman or a publicist using that word in even the most innocent connexion, it has instantly brought to my mind the letter that Ward wrote to a newspaper editor for puffs of his Grate Show.

> My show at present consists of three moral Bares, a Kanjraroo... besides several miscellanyus moral wax statoots of celebrated piruts & murderers... I shall have my hanbills dun at your office. Depend upon it... Also git up a tremenjus excitement in yr. paper 'bowt my onparaleld Show. We must fetch the public sumhow. We must wurk on their feelins. *Cum the moral on 'em strong.*

In all this we may see how well Ward anticipates "the determination of the judicious," how precisely his criticism agrees with the verdict of history. Likewise when one surveys the general order of civilization that he exhibits, one sees the same close correspondence. A society that gives play only to the instinct of expansion must inevitably be characterized by a low type of intellect, a grotesque type of religion, a factitious type of morals, an imperfect type of beauty, an imperfect type of social life and manners. In a word, it is uncivilized; well, just such is the society that Ward depicts. Baldwinsville's intellectual pabulum is provided by the local *Bugle-horn of Liberty*, edited by Mr. Slinkers; Ward gives us specimens of Mr. Slinker's editorial style and substance, and they af-

ford a competent measure of his readers. Baldwinsville's religious aspirations are satisfied with what Burke calls "the dissidence of Dissent, and the protestantism of the Protestant religions," as interpreted by Parson Batkins. Its resources of sentiment and poetry are measured by the showman's courtship of Betsy Jane Peasley, and their subsequent domestic life. Its ideal of social life and manners is displayed in the merrymaking over the birth of the showman's twins. In all, Baldwinsville is perhaps not devoid of interest, yet clearly the student of civilized man would find little there to serve his purpose; and, while its citizens are doubtless not devoid of certain virtues, he would find them intolerable company.

Ward copper-rivets his criticism by his complete identification of the showman with this profoundly imperfect society. The showman carries the atmosphere of Baldwinsville with him wherever he goes; its views of life and its demands on life are his; they are sufficient to delight and satisfy him. As a guest of the Shakers, he applies to their peculiar practices the standards of a religion as grotesque and imperfect as their own, and does it with an utterly naïve unconsciousness that any other standards might be applicable. Among the Mormons and the Free Lovers he applies the standards of Baldwinsville's factitious morality in the same naïve fashion. He confronts the Woman's Rights Association with Baldwinsville's most straitest doctrine of domesticity. In the realm of æsthetics he responds cordially to the sex-attraction of Piccolomini and Patti, but wonders why Patti does not sing in English since she does so well in Italian. The male members of the troupe do not interest him, and he

pronounces the immemorial judgment of Baldwinsville on the futility of their occupation.

> As fur Brignoly, Ferri and Junky, they air dowtless grate, but I think sich able-boddied men would look better tillin the sile than dressin theirselves up in black close & white kid gluvs & shoutin in a furrin tung. Mister Junky is a noble-lookin old man & orter lead armies on to Battel instid of shoutin in a furrin tung.

But while wisdom, shrewdness, and penetration may make a great critic, they are not enough to make a critic of the very first order. They make a Swift or a Juvenal; they do not make a Cervantes or a Rabelais. Lucidity of mind is not enough for that; it must be balanced by largeness of temper, by an easy, urbane, unruffled superiority to the subject of its criticism. Swift was a great and sound critic, but of this temper he had all too little; his writings bristle with the *sæva indignatio* which induces in the reader a frame of mind quite alien to that which criticism of the first order brings out. Ward's contemporary, Mark Twain, – he was a year younger than Ward, – was a great critic, but the *sæva indignatio*, when not actually present in his writings, is never far off; one is conscious of it as of a thunderstorm yet distant but likely to break at any time. Ward had the true critical temper; it pervades his criticism and makes it wholly acceptable. Its influence dissolves rancour; by its aid one surveys the hardness and hideousness of Baldwinsville in a truly Socratic spirit, with no resentment, and with no evangelical desire to expostulate with the citizens of Baldwinsville upon their waste of life. To see how thoroughly pervasive Ward's critical temper is, let us

notice how the old showman writes his wife from "the Athens of America."

> Dear Betsy: I write you this from Boston, "the Modern Atkins," as it is denomyunated, altho I skurcely know what those air.

How insignificant the remark seems; yet, when we let it sink in, how well it manages to colour one's whole cast of thought, and to induce precisely the right frame of mind in which to approach the gentle, rather agreeable, but somewhat self-contained provincialism which characterized the Boston of 1860. Probably this is as interesting an exhibit as one could find of the medium in which criticism of the first order works. The inscription on Ward's tomb says that "his name will live as a sweet and unfading recollection"; and his name may indeed remind us that a critical equipment of the first order must include sweetness no less than light.

V

And so we come back to our text; we come back to our reason why a people should keep alive the memory of its great men, the obscure as well as the famous; and above all, why it should carefully and clearly discern the qualities that made them great. If I were asked whether France is a nation, I would not waste time over the consolidating genius of Louis XI. I would point to the celebration of the memory of Ernest Renan, and invite my questioner to consider closely the spirit that animated the speeches of M. Poincaré and M. Barthou. I would say

that a nation exists where there is a sense of participation in a common spiritual heritage, and a will to improve that heritage for the benefit of those to whom it shall be in turn passed on. Where this sense and will do not exist, no nation exists. There may be an agglomeration of whatever sort, held together by adventitious ties of whatever sort, but this is not a nation.

Our histories tell us that the Civil War finally and forever established the United States as a nation, rather than a an association of sovereign states. One hesitates a little about accepting this statement. The Civil War forged out a political entity, but a political entity is not a nation; far from it – think of the old Austrian Empire. We are an economic agglomeration of importance, doing business over an enormous free-trade area; but, as Renan said, "a customs-union is not a fatherland," and there is even better authority for suspecting that a people's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that it possesseth. The question whether the United States is actually a nation has interest, and I leave it with my readers, since I can not pretend that my own opinion in the matter is particularly valuable. I merely suggest that in the nature of things a people's regard for its spiritual ancestry would seem to be a fair measure of its right to call itself a nation, and also a fair index of its national life.

Isaiah's Job

(Published in *Harper's Magazine*, June 1936. Reprinted in *Free Speech and Plain Language*, 1937.)

One evening last autumn, I sat long hours with a European acquaintance while he expounded a political-economic doctrine which seemed sound as a nut and in which I could find no defect. At the end, he said with great earnestness: "I have a mission to the masses. I feel that I am called to get the ear of the people. I shall devote the rest of my life to spreading my doctrine far and wide among the population. What do you think?"

An embarrassing question in any case, and doubly so under the circumstances, because my acquaintance is a very learned man, one of the three or four really first-class minds that Europe produced in his generation; and naturally I, as one of the unlearned, was inclined to regard his lightest word with reverence amounting to awe. Still, I reflected, even the greatest mind can not possibly know everything, and I was pretty sure he had not had my opportunities for observing the masses of mankind,

and that therefore I probably knew them better than he did. So I mustered courage to say that he had no such mission and would do well to get the idea out of his head at once; he would find that the masses would not care two pins for his doctrine, and still less for himself, since in such circumstances the popular favourite is generally some Barabbas. I even went so far as to say (he is a Jew) that his idea seemed to show that he was not very well up on his own native literature. He smiled at my jest, and asked what I meant by it; and I referred him to the story of the prophet Isaiah.

It occurred to me then that this story is much worth recalling just now when so many wise men and soothsayers appear to be burdened with a message to the masses. Dr. Townsend has a message, Father Coughlin has one, Mr. Upton Sinclair, Mr. Lippmann, Mr. Chase and the planned economy brethren, Mr. Tugwell and the New Dealers, Mr. Smith and Liberty Leaguers – the list is endless. I can not remember a time when so many energumens were so variously proclaiming the Word to the multitude and telling them what they must do to be saved. This being so, it occurred to me, as I say, that the story of Isaiah might have something in it to steady and compose the human spirit until this tyranny of windiness is overpast. I shall paraphrase the story in our common speech, since it has to be pieced out from various sources; and inasmuch as respectable scholars have thought fit to put out a whole new version of the Bible in the American vernacular, I shall take shelter behind them, if need be, against the charge of dealing irreverently with the Sacred Scriptures.

The prophet's career began at the end of King Uzziah's reign, say about 740 BC. This reign was uncommonly long, almost half a century, and apparently prosperous. It was one of those prosperous reigns, however – like the reign of Marcus Aurelius at Rome, or the administration of Eubulus at Athens, or of Mr. Coolidge at Washington – where at the end the prosperity suddenly peters out and things go by the board with a resounding crash.

In the year of Uzziah's death, the Lord commissioned the prophet to go out and warn the people of the wrath to come. "Tell them what a worthless lot they are." He said, "Tell them what is wrong, and why and what is going to happen unless they have a change of heart and straighten up. Don't mince matters. Make it clear that they are positively down to their last chance. Give it to them good and strong and keep on giving it to them. I suppose perhaps I ought to tell you," He added, "that it won't do any good. The official class and their intelligentsia will turn up their noses at you and the masses will not even listen. They will all keep on in their own ways until they carry everything down to destruction, and you will probably be lucky if you get out with your life."

Isaiah had been very willing to take on the job – in fact, he had asked for it – but the prospect put a new face on the situation. It raised the obvious question: Why, if all that were so – if the enterprise were to be a failure from the start – was there any sense in starting it? "Ah," the Lord said, "you do not get the point. There is a Remnant there that you know nothing about. They are obscure, unorganized, inarticulate, each one rubbing along as best he can. They need to be encouraged and braced up because when everything has gone completely

to the dogs, they are the ones who will come back and build up a new society; and meanwhile, your preaching will reassure them and keep them hanging on. Your job is to take care of the Remnant, so be off now and set about it."

II

Apparently, then, if the Lord's word is good for anything – I do not offer any opinion about that, – the only element in Judean society that was particularly worth bothering about was the Remnant. Isaiah seems finally to have got it through his head that this was the case; that nothing was to be expected from the masses, but that if anything substantial were ever to be done in Judea, the Remnant would have to do it. This is a very striking and suggestive idea; but before going on to explore it, we need to be quite clear about our terms. What do we mean by the masses, and what by the Remnant?

As the word masses is commonly used, it suggests agglomerations of poor and underprivileged people, labouring people, proletarians, and it means nothing like that; it means simply the majority. The mass-man is one who has neither the force of intellect to apprehend the principles issuing in what we know as the humane life, nor the force of character to adhere to those principles steadily and strictly as laws of conduct; and because such people make up the great and overwhelming majority of mankind, they are called collectively the masses. The line of differentiation between the masses and the Remnant is set invariably by quality, not by circumstance.

The Remnant are those who by force of intellect are able to apprehend these principles, and by force of character are able, at least measurably, to cleave to them. The masses are those who are unable to do either.

The picture which Isaiah presents of the Judean masses is most unfavorable. In his view, the mass-man – be he high or be he lowly, rich or poor, prince or pauper – gets off very badly. He appears as not only weak-minded and weak-willed, but as by consequence knavish, arrogant, grasping, dissipated, unprincipled, unscrupulous. The mass-woman also gets off badly, as sharing all the mass-man's untoward qualities, and contributing a few of her own in the way of vanity and laziness, extravagance and foible. The list of luxury-products that she patronized is interesting; it calls to mind the women's page of a Sunday newspaper in 1928, or the display set forth in one of our professedly "smart" periodicals. In another place, Isaiah even recalls the affectations that we used to know by the name "flapper gait" and the "debutante slouch." It may be fair to discount Isaiah's vivacity a little for prophetic fervour; after all, since his real job was not to convert the masses but to brace and reassure the Remnant, he probably felt that he might lay it on indiscriminately and as thick as he liked – in fact, that he was expected to do so. But even so, the Judean mass-man must have been a most objectionable individual, and the mass-woman utterly odious.

If the modern spirit, whatever that may be, is disinclined towards taking the Lord's word at its face value (as I hear is the case), we may observe that Isaiah's testimony to the character of the masses has strong collateral support from respectable Gentile authority. Plato lived

into the administration of Eubulus, when Athens was at the peak of its jazz-and-paper era, and he speaks of the Athenian masses with all Isaiah's fervency, even comparing them to a herd of ravenous wild beasts. Curiously, too, he applies Isaiah's own word *remnant* to the worthier portion of Athenian society; "there is but a very small *remnant*," he says, of those who possess a saving force of intellect and force of character – too small, preciously as to Judea, to be of any avail against the ignorant and vicious preponderance of the masses.

But Isaiah was a preacher and Plato a philosopher; and we tend to regard preachers and philosophers rather as passive observers of the drama of life than as active participants. Hence in a matter of this kind their judgment might be suspected of being a little uncompromising, a little acrid, or as the French say, *saugrenu*. We may therefore bring forward another witness who was preeminently a man of affairs, and whose judgment can not lie under this suspicion. Marcus Aurelius was ruler of the greatest of empires, and in that capacity he not only had the Roman mass-man under observation, but he had him on his hands twenty-four hours a day for eighteen years. What he did not know about him was not worth knowing and what he thought of him is abundantly attested on almost every page of the little book of jottings which he scribbled offhand from day to day, and which he meant for no eye but his own ever to see.

This view of the masses is the one that we find prevailing at large among the ancient authorities whose writings have come down to us. In the eighteenth century, however, certain European philosophers spread the notion that the mass-man, in his natural state, is not at all the

kind of person that earlier authorities made him out to be, but on the contrary, that he is a worthy object of interest. His untowardness is the effect of environment, an effect for which "society" is somehow responsible. If only his environment permitted him to live according to his lights, he would undoubtedly show himself to be quite a fellow; and the best way to secure a more favourable environment for him would be to let him arrange it for himself. The French Revolution acted powerfully as a springboard for this idea, projecting its influence in all directions throughout Europe.

On this side of the ocean a whole new continent stood ready for a large-scale experiment with this theory. It afforded every conceivable resource whereby the masses might develop a civilization made in their own likeness and after their own image. There was no force of tradition to disturb them in their preponderance, or to check them in a thoroughgoing disparagement of the Remnant. Immense natural wealth, unquestioned predominance, virtual isolation, freedom from external interference and the fear of it, and, finally, a century and a half of time – such are the advantages which the mass-man has had in bringing forth a civilization which should set the earlier preachers and philosophers at naught in their belief that nothing substantial can be expected from the masses, but only from the Remnant.

His success is unimpressive. On the evidence so far presented one must say, I think, that the mass-man's conception of what life has to offer, and his choice of what to ask from life, seem now to be pretty well what they were in the times of Isaiah and Plato; and so too seem the catastrophic social conflicts and convulsions in

which his views of life and his demands on life involve him. I do not wish to dwell on this, however, but merely to observe that the monstrously inflated importance of the masses has apparently put all thought of a possible mission to the Remnant out of the modern prophet's head. This is obviously quite as it should be, provided that the earlier preachers and philosophers were actually wrong, and that all final hope of the human race is actually centred in the masses. If, on the other hand, it should turn out that the Lord and Isaiah and Plato and Marcus Aurelius were right in their estimate of the relative social value of the masses and the Remnant, the case is somewhat different. Moreover, since with everything in their favour the masses have so far given such an extremely discouraging account of themselves, it would seem that the question at issue between these two bodies of opinion might most profitably be reopened.

III

But without following up this suggestion, I wish only, as I said, to remark the fact that as things now stand Isaiah's job seems rather to go begging. Everyone with a message nowadays is, like my venerable European friend, eager to take it to the masses. His first, last and only thought is of mass-acceptance and mass-approval. His great care is to put his doctrine in such shape as will capture the masses' attention and interest. This attitude towards the masses is so exclusive, so devout, that one is reminded of the troglodytic monster described by Plato, and the assiduous crowd at the entrance to its cave,

trying obsequiously to placate it and win its favour, trying to interpret its inarticulate noises, trying to find out what it wants, and eagerly offering it all sorts of things that they think might strike its fancy.

The main trouble with all this is its reaction upon the mission itself. It necessitates an opportunist sophistication of one's doctrine, which profoundly alters its character and reduces it to a mere placebo. If, say, you are a preacher, you wish to attract as large a congregation as you can, which means an appeal to the masses; and this, in turn, means adapting the terms of your message to the order of intellect and character that the masses exhibit. If you are an educator, say with a college on your hands, you wish to get as many students as possible, and you whittle down your requirements accordingly. If a writer, you aim at getting many readers; if a publisher, many purchasers; if a philosopher, many disciples; if a reformer, many converts; if a musician, many auditors; and so on. But as we see on all sides, in the realization of these several desires, the prophetic message is so heavily adulterated with trivialities, in every instance, that its effect on the masses is merely to harden them in their sins. Meanwhile, the Remnant, aware of this adulteration and of the desires that prompt it, turn their backs on the prophet and will have nothing to do with him or his message.

Isaiah, on the other hand, worked under no such disabilities. He preached to the masses only in the sense that he preached publicly. Anyone who liked might listen; anyone who liked might pass by. He knew that the Remnant would listen; and knowing also that nothing was to be expected of the masses under any circumstances, he

made no specific appeal to them, did not accommodate his message to their measure in any way, and did not care two straws whether they heeded it or not. As a modern publisher might put it, he was not worrying about circulation or about advertising. Hence, with all such obsessions quite out of the way, he was in a position to do his level best, without fear or favour, and answerable only to his august Boss.

If a prophet were not too particular about making money out of his mission or getting a dubious sort of notoriety out of it, the foregoing considerations would lead one to say that serving the Remnant looks like a good job. An assignment that you can really put your back into, and do your best without thinking about results, is a real job; whereas serving the masses is at best only half a job, considering the inexorable conditions that the masses impose upon their servants. They ask you to give them what they want, they insist upon it, and will take nothing else; and following their whims, their irrational changes of fancy, their hot and cold fits, is a tedious business, to say nothing of the fact that what they want at any time makes very little call on one's resources of prophesy. The Remnant, on the other hand, want only the best you have, whatever that may be. Give them that, and they are satisfied; you have nothing more to worry about. The prophet of the American masses must aim consciously at the lowest common denominator of intellect, taste and character among 120,000,000 people; and this is a distressing task. The prophet of the Remnant, on the contrary, is in the enviable position of Papa Haydn in the household of Prince Esterhazy. All Haydn had to do was keep forking out the very best music he

knew how to produce, knowing it would be understood and appreciated by those for whom he produced it, and caring not a button what anyone else thought of it; and that makes a good job.

In a sense, nevertheless, as I have said, it is not a rewarding job. If you can touch the fancy of the masses, and have the sagacity to keep always one jump ahead of their vagaries and vacillations, you can get good returns in money from serving the masses, and good returns also in a mouth-to-ear type of notoriety:

> Digito monstrari et dicier, Hic est!

We all know innumerable politicians, journalists, dramatists, novelists and the like, who have done extremely well by themselves in these ways. Taking care of the Remnant, on the contrary, holds little promise of any such rewards. A prophet of the Remnant will not grow purse-proud on the financial returns from his work, nor is it likely that he will get any great renown out of it. Isaiah's case was exceptional to this second rule, and there are others, but not many.

It may be thought, then, that while taking care of the Remnant is no doubt a good job, it is not an especially interesting job because it is as a rule so poorly paid. I have my doubts about this. There are other compensations to be got out of a job besides money and notoriety, and some of them seem substantial enough to be attractive. Many jobs which do not pay well are yet profoundly interesting, as, for instance, the job of research student in the sciences is said to be; and the job of looking after the Remnant seems to me, as I have

surveyed it for many years from my seat in the grandstand, to be as interesting as any that can be found in the world.

IV

What chiefly makes it so, I think, is that in any given society the Remnant are always so largely an unknown quantity. You do not know, and will never know, more than two things about them. You can be sure of those – dead sure, as our phrase is – but you will never be able to make even a respectable guess at anything else. You do not know, and will never know, who the Remnant are, nor what they are doing or will do. Two things you do know, and no more: First, that they exist; second, that they will find you. Except for these two certainties, working for the Remnant means working in impenetrable darkness; and this, I should say, is just the condition calculated most effectively to pique the interest of any prophet who is properly gifted with the imagination, insight and intellectual curiosity necessary to a successful pursuit of his trade.

The fascination and the despair of the historian, as he looks back upon Isaiah's Jewry, upon Plato's Athens, or upon Rome of the Antonines, is the hope of discovering and laying bare the "substratum of right-thinking and well-doing" which he knows must have existed somewhere in those societies because no kind of collective life can possibly go on without it. He finds tantalizing intimations of it here and there in many places, as in the Greek Anthology, in the scrapbook of Aulus Gellius, in the po-

ems of Ausonius, and in the brief and touching tribute, Bene merenti, bestowed upon the unknown occupants of Roman tombs. But these are vague and fragmentary; they lead him nowhere in his search for some kind of measure on this substratum, but merely testify to what he already knew *a priori* – that the substratum did somewhere exist. Where it was, how substantial it was, what its power of self-assertion and resistance was – of all this they tell him nothing.

Similarly, when the historian of two thousand years hence, or two hundred years, looks over the available testimony to the quality of our civilization and tries to get any kind of clear, competent evidence concerning the substratum of right-thinking and well-doing which he knows must have been here, he will have a devil of a time finding it. When he has assembled all he can and has made even a minimum allowance for speciousness, vagueness, and confusion of motive, he will sadly acknowledge that his net result is simply nothing. A Remnant were here, building a substratum like coral insects; so much he knows, but he will find nothing to put him on the track of who and where and how many they were and what their work was like.

Concerning all this, too, the prophet of the present knows precisely as much and as little as the historian of the future; and that, I repeat, is what makes his job seem to me so profoundly interesting. One of the most suggestive episodes recounted in the Bible is that of a prophet's attempt – the only attempt of the kind on the record, I believe – to count up the Remnant. Elijah had fled from persecution into the desert, where the Lord presently overhauled him and asked what he was doing

so far away from his job. He said that he was running away, not because he was a coward, but because all the Remnant had been killed off except himself. He had got away only by the skin of his teeth, and, he being now all the Remnant there was, if he were killed the True Faith would go flat. The Lord replied that he need not worry about that, for even without him the True Faith could probably manage to squeeze along somehow if it had to; "and as for your figures on the Remnant," He said, "I don't mind telling you that there are seven thousand of them back there in Israel whom it seems you have not heard of, but you may take My word for it that there they are."

At that time, probably the population of Israel could not run to much more than a million or so; and a Remnant of seven thousand out of a million is a highly encouraging percentage for any prophet. With seven thousand of the boys on his side, there was no great reason for Elijah to feel lonesome; and incidentally, that would be something for the modern prophet of the Remnant to think of when he has a touch of the blues. But the main point is that if Elijah the Prophet could not make a closer guess on the number of the Remnant than he made when he missed it by seven thousand, anyone else who tackled the problem would only waste his time.

The other certainty which the prophet of the Remnant may always have is that the Remnant will find him. He may rely on that with absolute assurance. They will find him without his doing anything about it; in fact, if he tries to do anything about it, he is pretty sure to put them off. He does not need to advertise for them nor resort to any schemes of publicity to get

their attention. If he is a preacher or a public speaker, for example, he may be quite indifferent to going on show at receptions, getting his picture printed in the newspapers, or furnishing autobiographical material for publication on the side of "human interest." If a writer, he need not make a point of attending any pink teas, autographing books at wholesale, nor entering into any specious freemasonry with reviewers. All this and much more of the same order lies in the regular and necessary routine laid down for the prophet of the masses; it is, and must be, part of the great general technique of getting the mass-man's ear – or as our vigorous and excellent publicist, Mr. H. L. Mencken, puts it, the technique of boob-bumping. The prophet of the Remnant is not bound to this technique. He may be quite sure that the Remnant will make their own way to him without any adventitious aids; and not only so, but if they find him employing any such aids, as I said, it is ten to one that they will smell a rat in them and will sheer off.

The certainty that the Remnant will find him, however, leaves the prophet as much in the dark as ever, as helpless as ever in the matter of putting any estimate of any kind upon the Remnant; for, as appears in the case of Elijah, he remains ignorant of who they are that have found him or where they are or how many. They did not write in and tell him about it, after the manner of those who admire the vedettes of Hollywood, nor yet do they seek him out and attach themselves to his person. They are not that kind. They take his message much as drivers take the directions on a roadside signboard – that is, with very little thought about the signboard, beyond being gratefully glad that it happened to be there, but with every thought about the directions.

This impersonal attitude of the Remnant wonderfully enhances the interest of the imaginative prophet's job. Once in a while, just about often enough to keep his intellectual curiosity in good working order, he will quite accidentally come upon some distinct reflection of his own message in an unsuspected quarter. This enables him to entertain himself in his leisure moments with agreeable speculations about the course his message may have taken in reaching that particular quarter, and about what came of it after it got there. Most interesting of all are those instances, if one could only run them down (but one may always speculate about them), where the recipient himself no longer knows where nor when nor from whom he got the message – or even where, as sometimes happens, he has forgotten that he got it anywhere and imagines that it is all a self-sprung idea of his own.

Such instances as these are probably not infrequent, for, without presuming to enroll ourselves among the Remnant, we can all no doubt remember having found ourselves suddenly under the influence of an idea, the source of which we cannot possibly identify. "It came to us afterward," as we say; that is, we are aware of it only after it has shot up full-grown in our minds, leaving us quite ignorant of how and when and by what agency it was planted there and left to germinate. It seems highly probable that the prophet's message often takes some such course with the Remnant.

If, for example, you are a writer or a speaker or a preacher, you put forth an idea which lodges in the Unbewußtsein of a casual member of the Remnant and sticks fast there. For some time it is inert; then it

begins to fret and fester until presently it invades the man's conscious mind and, as one might say, corrupts it. Meanwhile, he has quite forgotten how he came by the idea in the first instance, and even perhaps thinks he has invented it; and in those circumstances, the most interesting thing of all is that you never know what the pressure of that idea will make him do.

For these reasons it appears to me that Isaiah's job is not only good but also extremely interesting; and especially so at the present time when nobody is doing it. If I were young and had the notion of embarking in the prophetical line, I would certainly take up this branch of the business; and therefore I have no hesitation about recommending it as a career for anyone in that position. It offers an open field, with no competition; our civilization so completely neglects and disallows the Remnant that anyone going in with an eye single to their service might pretty well count on getting all the trade there is.

Even assuming that there is some social salvage to be screened out of the masses, even assuming that the testimony of history to their social value is a little too sweeping, that it depresses hopelessness a little too far, one must yet perceive, I think, that the masses have prophets enough and to spare. Even admitting that in the teeth of history that hope of the human race may not be quite exclusively centred in the Remnant, one must perceive that they have social value enough to entitle them to some measure of prophetic encouragement and consolation, and that our civilization allows them none whatever. Every prophetic voice is addressed to the masses, and to them alone; the voice of the pulpit, the

voice of education, the voice of politics, of literature, drama, journalism – all these are directed towards the masses exclusively, and they marshal the masses in the way that they are going.

One might suggest, therefore, that aspiring prophetical talent may well turn to another field. Sat patriae Priamoque datum – whatever obligation of the kind may be due the masses is already monstrously overpaid. So long as the masses are taking up the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun, their images, and following the star of their god Buncombe, they will have no lack of prophets to point the way that leadeth to the More Abundant Life; and hence a few of those who feel the prophetic afflatus might do better to apply themselves to serving the Remnant. It is a good job, an interesting job, much more interesting than serving the masses; and moreover it is the only job in our whole civilization, as far as I know, that offers a virgin field.

Pantagruelism

(Speech delivered before the Faculty of Medicine at Johns Hopkins, October 28, 1932, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the publication of Rabelais's *Pantagruel*.)

When you kindly asked me here, I was a little afraid to come, because I felt that an audience like this would more or less expect me to get at Rabelais by his professional side, and I am not able to do that. I know nothing about the practice of medicine today, let alone how it was practiced four hundred years ago. I have always been pretty healthy, or I might know more, but I am contented. Probably you have noticed how contented ignorant people are. I am not sure that Aristotle is right in that fine sentence of his about all mankind naturally desiring knowledge. Most of them would rather get along without knowing anything, if they could, because knowing things is hard work. I often wish I knew less than I do about a great many things, like politics, for instance, or history. When you know a great deal about something, you have hard work to keep your knowledge

from going sour – that is, unless you are a Pantagruelist, and if you are a professor of politics, like me, nothing but Pantagruelism will ever save you. Your learning goes so sour that before you know it the Board of Health comes sniffing around, asking the neighbours whether they have been noticing anything lately. Maybe something of that sort is true of medicine, too, but as I said, I do not know about that. Pantagruelism is a natural sort of preservative, like refrigeration; it keeps the temperature right. Some people put too much bad antiseptic stuff into their learning – too much embalming-fluid.

There seems to be no doubt that Rabelais's professional standing was high. According to all testimony, he must have been one of the most eminent and successful practitioners in Europe. For two years he was at the head of the great hospital at Lyon, perhaps the foremost in France, and I think also the oldest in continuous service. It is about a thousand years old. It was moved once, from one quarter of town to another, and it has been dusted up and renovated every now and then, but it still stands where Rabelais found it. Some fragments of structure which belong to his day are said to exist, but I could not identify them. The whole affair looked pretty old to me, but I imagine it is probably all right. I should not care to be a patient there, but I should not care to be a patient anywhere.

Rabelais did some good things at that hospital. In two years he ran the death-rate down three per cent. It is not easy to see how he did that. One might suppose that the death-rate would be pretty constant, no matter what diseases the patients had. Rabelais had an average of about two hundred patients, sleeping two in a bed,

sometimes three, in air that was warmed only by an open fire, and with no ventilation worth speaking of. It must have been a little stuffy in there sometimes. Rabelais examined all his patients once a day, prescribed medicines and operations, and superintended a staff of thirty-two people. He managed everything. His salary was about forty dollars a year, which was high. His successor got only thirty. I believe he had his board thrown in. The hospital was rich, but the trustees capitalized its prestige. They thought a physician ought to work for nothing, for the honour of it. Probably you never heard of any trustees like that, so I thought I would mention it.

The thing he did that interests me most was to beat that hospital out of five dollars. He did it in his second year there, nobody knows how, nobody can imagine how. I think that is more extraordinary than reducing the death-rate. Any man who could beat a French hospital corporation out of five dollars need not worry about the death-rate. He could raise the dead. The French auditor of the hospital was frightfully depressed about that five dollars. He left a marginal note on the account, saying that it seemed to be all wrong, but there it was, and for some reason apparently nothing could be done about it. The incident makes me think of Panurge and the moneychangers, in the sixteenth chapter of the Second Book, where Rabelais says that whenever Panurge "changed a teston, car decu, or any other piece of money, the changer had been more subtle than a fox if Panurge had not at every time made five or six sols vanish away visibly, openly, and manifestly, without making any hurt or lesion, whereof the changer should have felt nothing but the wind."

Rabelais held a more important position, even, than this one at Lyon. For twenty years he was personal physician to two of the ablest and most prominent men in the kingdom, Cardinal Jean du Bellay and his brother Guillaume. Both of them were always ailing, always worn down by heavy labours and responsibilities in the public service. They were in pretty constant need of the best medical skill, and could command it; and Rabelais was their chosen physician and confidential friend.

Then, too, there is his record at the University of Montpellier, which you historians of medicine know better than I do, and know how remarkable it was, so I need not go into it. The University of Montpellier always made a great specialty of medicine. It was like the Johns Hopkins in that. Except for a few years when Toulouse was ahead of it, I believe the Faculty of Medicine there was said to be the best in France. It is interesting to go in and look at the pictures of the sixteenth-century professors. Rabelais is there, and Rondellet, who some think was the original of the physician Rondibilis, in the Third Book. I am none too sure of that, but it does not matter. That sort of question never matters. Rondibilis is the same, no matter who his original was, or whether he had any. What of it? Think of scholars like F. A. Wolf and Lachmann tying themselves up for years over the question whether Homer was one man or eighteen. What difference does it make? You don't read Homer for any such notions as that. You read him to keep going, to keep your head above water, and you read Rabelais for the same reason.

Scurron, Rabelais's preceptor at Montpellier, has his picture there, and so has Saporta, whom Rabelais men-

tions as a fellow-actor in the comedy of The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife. They had college dramatics in those days, too. Anatole France rewrote this comedy from the synopsis of it that Rabelais gives, and Mr. Granville Barker put it on the stage for us. I wish we could see it oftener, instead of so many plays that are only slices out of our own life, and usually out of the dullest and meanest part of our own life, at that. . . .

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Rabelais makes some running comments on physicians and their ways that interest a layman. Some physicians are fussy. They want to regulate everybody and lay down the law about what is good for everybody, and especially about what is not good for anybody. They begrudge you any interesting food and anything interesting to drink. Then pretty soon another batch of little rule-of-thumb doctors comes along and tells us the first batch was all wrong, and that we ought to do something different. They were just like that in Rabelais's day, too. A friend of mine has been calling my attention to some dietary rules laid down in that period – why, according to those rules, you would say it was not safe to eat anything. This sort of thing even got under Gargantua's skin, you remember. He told Friar John that it was all wrong to drink before breakfast; the physicians said so. "Oh, rot your physicians!" said Friar John, "A hundred devils leap into my body if there be not more old drunkards than old physicians." Friar John went by what philosophers used to call "the common sense of mankind." He believed that the same thing will not work for everybody, and

that seems to have been Rabelais's idea too. Rabelais mentions two or three diets in the course of his story, and they seem very reasonable and sensible. He thought that Nature had some resources of her own, and he was willing to let her have something to say about such matters. The little whimsical doctors of his time would not let Nature have any chance at all, if they could help it. They laid out the course that they thought she ought to follow, and then expected her to follow it. Sometimes she did not do that, and then the patient was out of luck.

Of course, you may lay down some general rules. Rabelais knew that. For instance, he says it was sound practice for Gargantua to eat a light lunch and a big dinner, and that the Arabian physicians, who advised a big meal in the middle of the day, were all wrong. There is sense in that. It is a good general rule. But then, you have to remember that one man's light lunch is another man's square meal. Also, something depends on what you have for breakfast, and when you get it, and what you have been doing during the morning. If you have ever been around a French restaurant at lunch time, you have probably noticed Frenchmen getting away with a pretty hefty square, and it is a great sight to see the way they dig into it. As Panurge said, it is as good as a balsam for sore eyes to see them gulch and raven it. Well, if you had a French breakfast that morning, it is a fair bet that you would be doing the same thing. A French breakfast disappears while you are looking at it. Then again, Gargantua was a huge giant, and his light lunch would founder an ordinary stomach. It would be worse than an old-style American Sunday dinner. When he was a baby, it took the milk of 17,913 cows to feed him.

No ordinary baby could do anything with that much milk. So, you see, you have to allow for exceptions to your general rule, after all, probably quite a lot of them.

By the way, did you ever hear that our term Blue Monday came out of those Sunday dinners? The mayor of one of our Mid-Western cities told me that. He said he never had such a frightful time with reformers and the moral element in his town as he did on Monday morning. They ate their heads off every Sunday noon, and when they came to on Monday morning, they were full of bile and fermentation and all sorts of meanness, and that made them want to persecute their neighbours, so they would run around first thing to the mayor's office to get him to close up something that people liked, or stop something that they wanted to do. Every Monday morning he knew he was in for it. It was Blue Monday for him every week.

I have often wondered how much of this sort of thing is behind our great reform movements. One of them, you know, was started by a bilious French lawyer. He was a fearful fellow. Most people have no idea of the harm he did. He was a contemporary of Rabelais, and they were probably acquainted. He was down on Rabelais, and did as much as anybody to give him a bad name. That was because Rabelais would not join in on his reform. That is always the way with these bilious reformers. You have to reform things their way, or they say you are a scoundrel and do not believe in any reform at all. That is the way the Socialists and Communists feel nowadays, when we do not swallow their ideals whole, and yet maybe we want things reformed as much as they do. Rabelais wanted to see the Church reformed. He was hand in glove

with Erasmus on that. But he was a Pantagruelist, so he knew that Calvin's way and Luther's way would not really reform anything, but would only make a botch of it. Well, we see now that it all turned out just as he knew it would. Swapping the authority of a bishop for the authority of a book was not even a theoretical reform, and all it did practically was to set up a lot of little Peterkins all over Christendom, each one sure he was the only one who knew what the book meant, and down on all the others, fighting and squabbling with them and saying all sorts of hateful things about them. Rabelais knew that was sure to happen, and knew that kind of reform was just no reform at all. So he would not go in with Calvin, and Calvin, being a good bilious reformer, abused him like a pickpocket. Calvin was an enormously able man, but his liver was out of commission. It is a strange thought, isn't it, that if somebody had fed Calvin eight or nine grains of calomel at night every week or so, and about a quarter of a pound of Rochelle salts in the morning, the whole tone of Protestant theology might have been different. It almost makes mechanists of us.

Rabelais had much the same sort of notion about reform in medicine. His position on that has puzzled a great many people. That is because they look at him in a little, sectarian, rule-of-thumb way. He was for going back to Galen and Hippocrates, cleaning off the glosses on their texts, and finding out what they really said. Well, then, some say that shows he was a hide-bound old Tory in medicine. On the other hand, he made dissections and lectured from them, which was a great innovation. He went in for experiments. He laughed at some ideas of Democritus and Theophrastus, and in the

seventh chapter of the Third Book you find him poking fun at Galen himself.

Well, then, others say, he was a great radical, and he has even been put forward as the father of experimentation in medicine. All that is nonsense. To the Pantagruelist, labels like radical and Tory mean just nothing at all. You go back to the classics of a subject for the practical purpose of saving yourself a lot of work. You get an accumulation of observation, method, technique, that subsequent experience has confirmed, and you can take it at second-hand and don't have to work it all out afresh for yourself. Maybe you can improve on it, here and there, and that is all right, but if you don't know the classics of your subject, you often find that you have been wasting a lot of time over something that somebody went all through, clear back in the Middle Ages. What is there radical or Tory about that? It is just good sense.

I think Americans are peculiarly impatient about the classics of any subject. In my own line, I know, I next to never meet anybody who seems to have read anything that was written before about 1890. That is one reason why we get done in so often by other people, especially in business and finance. You take a good thing wherever you find it – that was Rabelais's idea.

If somebody worked it out satisfactorily for you forty years ago, or four hundred, or four thousand, why, you are just that much ahead. You have that much more chance to work out something else, some improvement maybe, or something new. Knowing the classics matures and seasons the mind as nothing else will, but aside from that, in a practical way, it is a great labour-saver.

When I was at Ems a couple of years ago, one of their experimenters had just discovered that the Ems salts helped out a little in cases of pyorrhea. That was known four hundred years ago. It is mentioned in a report on the springs, written in the sixteenth century. Then it was forgotten, and discovered again only the other day.

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But I must stop this sort of thing, and speak about Pantagruelism. I hear you have a good many Pantagruelists here in Baltimore, and that does not surprise me, because there used to be such a marvelous lot of germ-carriers in this university. If you caught Pantagruelism from Gildersleeve or Minton Warren or William Osler, there was no help for you. You had it for life. There was a big quarantine against Baltimore on account of those people. That was the most expensive quarantine ever established in the world. It cost the American people all their culture, all their intelligence, all their essential integrities, their insight, their dignity, their self-respect, their command of the future, to keep Pantagruelism from spreading.

We did it, though. The country is practically free of Pantagruelism now. There is less of it here than in any other country I know. Hardly anyone ever heard of it. Probably you know how the great exponent of Pantagruelism is regarded. Why, only the other day when I was talking to a few people informally about Rabelais, a man came up to me afterward and said he was sorry his wife was not there. He had left her at home because he thought she might have to hear some

improper language. That was his idea of Rabelais, and he was a professor in one of our colleges, too. Just think of a miserable little coot like that. When you look the situation over and see the general part that this country is playing in the world's affairs, and see what sort of thing she has to play it with, you begin to think that quarantine cost too much.

Pantagruelism is not a cult or a creed or a frame of mind, but a quality of spirit. In one place Rabelais says it is "a certain jollity of mind, pickled in the scorn of fortune," and this is one of its aspects: an easy, objective, genial, but unyielding superiority to everything external, to every conceivable circumstance of one's life. It is a quality like that of the ether, which the physicists of my day used to say was imponderable, impalpable, harder than steel, yet so pervasive that it permeates everything, underlies everything. This is the quality that Rabelais communicates in every line. Read the Prologue to the Second Book, for instance – better read it aloud to yourself – well, there you have it, you can't miss it, and if it does not communicate itself to your own spirit, you may as well give up the idea that you were cut out for a Pantagruelist.

And at what a time in the world's life was that Prologue written. It was a period more nearly like ours than any other in history. The difficulties and temptations that the human spirit faced were like ours. It was a period of unexampled expansion, like ours; of discovery and invention, like ours; of revolution in industry and commerce; of the inflation of avarice into a mania; of ruinous political centralization; of dominant bourgeois ideals – not the ideals of the working bourgeois, but those

of the new bourgeois of bankers, speculators, shavers, lawyers, job-holders; and it was a period of great general complacency toward corruption. This is one thing that makes Rabelais particularly a man of our own time. The quality of spirit that he exhibits was brought out under circumstances almost exactly like ours, and contact with it helps us to meet our own circumstances in the way that he met his.

Pantagruelism means keeping the integrity of one's own personality absolutely intact. Rabelais says that Pantagruel "never vexed nor disquieted himself with the least pretence of dislike to anything, because he knew that he must have most grossly abandoned the divine mansion of reason if he had permitted his mind to be never so little grieved, afflicted, or altered on any occasion whatsoever. For all the goods that the heaven covereth and that the earth containeth, in all their dimensions of height, depth, breadth, and length, are not of so much worth as that we should for them disturb or disorder our affections, trouble or perplex our senses or spirits."

You see, the Pantagruelist never admits that there is anything in the world that is bigger than he is. Not business, not profession, not position. The case of the American businessman is much discussed now, as you know. What has the typical American businessman come to? He thought his business was bigger than he was, and he went into slavery to it and let it own him, and he was proud to do that, he thought that meant progress, thought it meant civilization, and he thought because his business was so great that he must be a great man; and he kept letting us know he thought so. He was like the misguided girl who had lived with so many gentlemen

that she thought she was a lady. Well, then, a pinch comes, and now we are all saying the businessman is only a stuffed shirt, that there is nothing inside his shirt but wind and fungus. We see that the big men of business have had to have a tariff wall around them, or get rebates from the railways on their freight, or get some other kind of special privilege, and that they were not great men at all, for almost anybody with the same privilege could have done as well.

Then think of the people in politics, the jobholders and jobhunters. There are a lot of them around just now, telling us what ought to be done and what they are going to do if they are elected. The trouble with them is that they think the job is bigger than they are, and so they destroy the integrity of their personality in order to get it or to hold it. Why, by the time a man has connived and lied and shuffled his miserable-way up to the point where he can be an acceptable candidate, there isn't enough of him left to be a good jobholder, even if he wants to. The Athenians blamed Socrates, you know, because he wouldn't have anything to do with politics; he would not vote or go into any campaigns or endorse any candidates – he let it all alone. He was a great Pantagruelist, one of the greatest, so he told the Athenians that what they were blaming him for was the very reason why he and his followers were the best politicians in Athens. That closed them out. He was such a good Pantagruelist that finally the boys had to get together and poison him.

Pantagruelism is utterly unselfconscious; it works like a kind of secondary instinct. Have you ever noticed how Rabelais's wonderful art comes out in the relations between Pantagruel and Panurge? Pantagruel liked Pa-

nurge, was interested in him, amused by him, tolerant of all his ingenious deviltry, but never once compromised his own character. On the other hand, he was never priggish, never patronizing or moralistic with Panurge, not even in their discussion on borrowing and lending. His superiority was always unselfconscious, effortless. I think the delicate consistency that Rabelais shows on this point is perhaps his greatest literary achievement; and the climax of it is that Panurge, who was never loyal to anything or anybody, was always loyal to Pantagruel.

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But Pantagruelism is not easy. In the Prologue to the Third Book we come on another characteristic which is the crowning glory of Pantagruelism. Rabelais has been talking about the blunders of an honest-minded Egyptian ruler, and some other matters of the kind, how well-intended things are sometimes misapprehended, and so on, and then he says that by virtue of Pantagruelism we are always ready to "bear with anything that floweth from a good, free, and loyal heart." Maybe that is easier for you then it is for me. I don't mind saying frankly and very sadly that my Pantagruelism breaks down oftener on that than on anything. On this point Pantagruelism is like Christianity. I have often thought that I might have made a pretty consistent Christian if it had not been for just that one thing that the blessed Apostle said about suffering fools gladly. How easily the great Pantagruelists seem to do that! But it only seems easy; it really is very hard to do. How easily, how exquisitely Rabelais did it! I wish I might have him in New York so

he could hear some of my friends talk about the great transformations that are going to take place when Mr. Roosevelt is elected or Mr. Hoover is reelected. I always walk out on them, but Rabelais would not. He would play with them a while, and probably get some results, for they are really first-rate people, but all that sort of thing seems beyond me.

The quarantine I spoke of a moment ago appears to be pretty well lifted. We are not quarantining against much of anything, these days. Now, in conclusion, may I ask if it ever occurred to you to think what a thundering joke on the country it would be if this university should quietly, without saying anything about it, go back to its old contraband business of disseminating Pantagruelism? For that was its business. You got good chemistry with Remsen, and mathematics with Sylvester, and semitics with Paul Haupt, and a degree at the end of it, and all that sort of thing, but mark my words, before time gets through with you it will show that the real distinction of this university was that it exposed you to Pantagruelism day and night. Let us dream about it for a moment. Suppose we say you sold your campus and your plant – they may be an asset to you, but they look to me like a liability; suppose you threw out all your undergradaute students – and this time I am very sure they are a liability; suppose you went back to the little brick houses where Huxley found you, and suppose you got together a dozen or so good sound Pantagruelists from somewhere and shut them up there with your graduate students, your bachelors and masters. What a colossal joke it would be! The country has virtually ruined itself in the effort to stamp out Pantagruelism. All its institutional voices have

been raised in behalf of ignoble, mean, squalid ideals, and telling us that those mean progress, those mean civilization, those mean hundred-per-cent Americanism. Now that the country has got itself in such distraction from following this doctrine that none of the accepted prophets have a sensible word to say, I repeat, what a joke it would be if the old original sinner should go back and begin corrupting the youth again.

Then suppose you should use a little selective pressure on your student body. You know, some people – excellent people, admirable people – are immune to Pantagruelism. You had some of them here in the old days, like President Wilson and Mr. Newton Baker. They were fine folks, good as gold, most of them, but no good at all for your purposes. Well, suppose when these immune people come around, you tell them after a while that they would probably do better up at Harvard, or maybe Yale. Yes, Yale is the place for them. There is an Institute of Human Relations up there, and these immune people are usually strong on human relations. Did you ever notice that? When Mr. Wilson and Mr. Baker got going on human relations, there was no stopping them. So you might off-load your immune people on Yale, and they could go to the Institute. They would probably find a director there – I mean, a Dean – and plenty of card-indexes and stenographers, and one thing or another like that that are just what you need to study human relations with; and meanwhile you could be getting on with Pantagruelism.