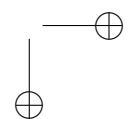
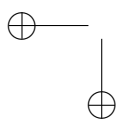
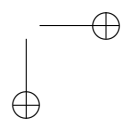
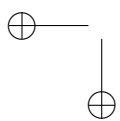
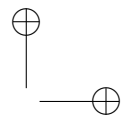
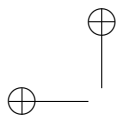
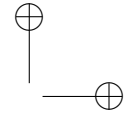
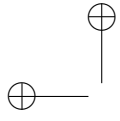


The Book of Journeyman
Essays from the New *Freeman*



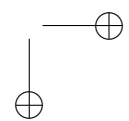
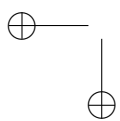


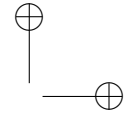
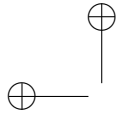


The Book of Journeyman
Essays from the New *Freeman*

Albert Jay Nock

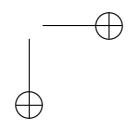
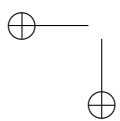
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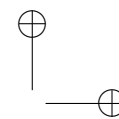
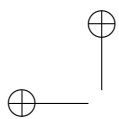




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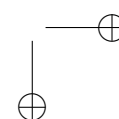
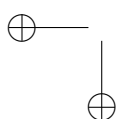
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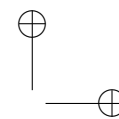
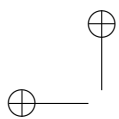




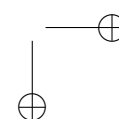
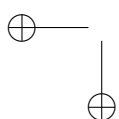
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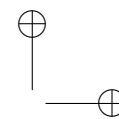
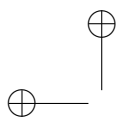
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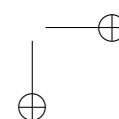
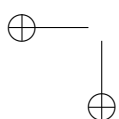


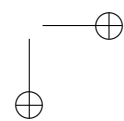
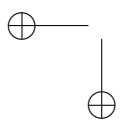
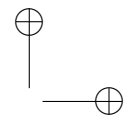
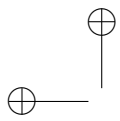
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Criticism's Proper Field

Mr. Mumford's remarks, in the first issue of this paper about the good illustrations in our magazines of the 'seventies and 'eighties, reminds me that there was also some pretty good literature in them. I have often wondered why publishing houses did not salvage it out and republish it in cheap form. Houses like Scribner, Harper, the Century, Appleton, must have dozens of dead titles worth resurrection.

Here might be a good way, without prejudice to Mr. Boni's excellent enterprise, to get the public once more accustomed to paper books, as it used to be accustomed to them in the days of the Seaside Library and the Franklin Square Library, half a century ago. These titles could be reprinted for no more than their cost of manufacture, and booksellers might be induced to handle them as a stimulant to the popular taste for books; which it certainly would be. The great vogue of paper books in France was brought about by George Sand's holding her umbrella over the head of Calmann Lévy until he agreed to produce them. Her argument was that they would make the public "book-conscious," and stimulate sales; and so they did.

But Mr. Mumford's article mainly interested me because it showed so positively the evil results of letting criticism be superseded by journalism. Criticism's business is with the past – especially the immediate past; concern with the present is the function of journalism. No critic, historian, biographer, has any business fumbling at what goes on in his own time, for in the first place he can make no judgment of it that is worth anything;





and second, more important, because he connives at the neglect of many good values that lie in the years behind him, and hence the educative power of these values is lost upon the present – just as Mr. Mumford shows in respect of the values in our twenty years of a “buried renaissance.” Goethe, the greatest of critics, said earnestly, “Don’t read your fellow-strivers, fellow-workers.”

Let the next batch of critics sift the current books, let them appraise “the modern movements” in music, art, literature; let the present batch stick to their writing. Then we shall really get somewhere, with nothing valuable neglected. Meanwhile let journalism keep its present course, and not tread on criticism’s toes, or steal its colors. I greatly wish that Mr. Mumford would gather a few like-minded spirits around him who would limit themselves to producing a sound criticism on this principle; meanwhile writing occasional articles to maintain, expound and illustrate this principle, and hammer it into the heads of our journalism-sodden public. Let them lecture about it in colleges and universities, wherever they can make an opportunity. Let them take as the field of their activity the period, say, from the beginning of Reconstruction to the Closing of the Frontier – in figures, roughly, 1865–1900. This would be, probably, as useful a service as could be rendered our culture at this time, and Mr. Mumford is just the man to dedicate himself to it, and to attract others to it.

A note from a correspondent this morning contains two sentences that should be written in letters of gold and framed in silver, studded with precious stones. “What is truly living in any period is what is capable of remaining alive; and this can be established only in relation to the

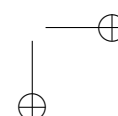
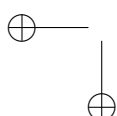




ages that succeed it. . . . Our freedom of choice depends upon our ability to make use of the past, and when we lose this, we become slaves of the immediate, do we not?" Criticism's first job in this country is the humble ground-floor job of differentiating itself from journalism by taking its eyes and mind resolutely off the contemporaneous. The reason for our ludicrous slavery to the immediate is just the loss that my correspondent speaks of – we really have no freedom of choice – and the reason for our loss is that we have had no criticism for a quarter of a century, but only journalism.

“New” and “Modern”?

The ruction raised over the “new humanism” seems to have been precipitated by an odd sort of military alliance between cloisterdom and immaturity. Nevertheless, it is a great satisfaction to see a little general interest in something that does not center in sex or stomach. Our public's ruling preoccupations in the past ten years have not been of a very elevated character, as our literature and drama bear abundant witness. Even theology, the great arena of controversy in times past, could not hold the front page. The discussion of “modernism” a few years ago, was a two-penny affair and died a-bornin'. So one may be glad to see something come up, even if it is not the most sensible thing in the world, by way of reminder that man is not purely a creature of raw sensation, and that gain-grabbing and reproduction-





processes are not his only interest. Perhaps the recent blowup of the stock-market signaled the end of an era.

How tempting to immaturity are the words “new” and “modern,” as a sort of justification or *carte blanche* for things that for the moment take its undisciplined fancy; things that are invariably neither new nor modern, and mostly very stupid. One wonders what idea of history is present in the minds of those who teach it; whether the goal of historical studies is to make one historically-learned or historically-minded. Properly, history shapes the mind into a tool to think with, not to remember with. One would not give a button for all the routine historical learning in the world, by comparison with the appraising power of historical-mindedness. The best thing this power does, moreover – the really inestimable benefit that it confers – is to show when one need not waste one’s effort in trying to appraise at all, but may contentedly let the matter appraise itself into Time’s great rubbish-heap. Thus about ninety-nine per cent of the “new” and “modern” is comfortably disposed of without one’s having to lend one’s energies to the process; and thus, again, one lives longer and is happier.

Stones from Glass Houses

One gets a bit restless under Mr. Henry Ford’s deliverances on public questions. The other day, for instance, he said that the Eighteenth Amendment is recognized “as the greatest force for the comfort and prosperity of the United States.” I submit that Mr. Ford is not in a





position to know this. He represents an industry that in certain essential respects closely parallels the liquor business. His distinction lies in having so cheapened and popularized a dangerous instrument as to put it into the hands of myriads who have neither intelligence nor character enough not to misuse it – exactly the charge formerly levelled at the brewers, distillers and saloonkeepers, and now at the bootleggers. The misuse of automobiles kills outright 60,000 people annually. I doubt that alcohol ever did better. It also dissipates an incalculable amount of time, nervous force, and social security. I doubt again that alcohol can show a better record. I also doubt that alcohol outranks the automobile as an ally of crime and social disorder.

The logical thing, then, would be for Henry to support another amendment prohibiting automobiles. But he would say at once that automobiles are good and useful, and that people can be educated out of misusing them. Quite so; we might also say that in order to learn how to use them, people must have pretty free access to them. Just this is true of alcohol. The French and Italians have as free access to alcohol as we have to peanuts, and never misuse it. Henry should stick to his knitting. He is a fine machinist, but his mind is not adapted to the entertainment of public questions. He is as much out of his depth at this kind of thing as I would be if I undertook to give him points on transmission and gears, or whatever the peculiar arcana of car-construction are called.

Henry's old friend, Mr. Edison, has come forward in praise of Prohibition, and he too gives a fine example of what happens to a man when he undertakes to pass

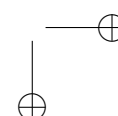
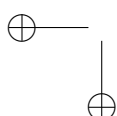




his *métier*. “It is strange to me,” he says, “that some men of great ability and standing do not help to remove the curse of alcohol.” But, bless his soul, that is just what we all want to do. I do not think he would find many unwilling to help. But Prohibition is no more the way to remove the curse of alcohol than it is the way to remove the curse of Henry’s motor-cars. Every right-minded man is with Mr. Edison’s purpose, but most of us have very strong doubts indeed about his method, and we think there are much more effective methods available. By speaking as he does, Mr. Edison really tends to alienate those who most wish to help.

The Tales of Hoffmann

It is pleasant to read an intelligent appreciation of Offenbach’s “Hoffmann,” such as the New York *World’s* reviewer wrote last week, and we must say that Mr. Chotzinoff was a pretty plucky man to write it. “Hoffmann” is in fact a very great opera. There are precious few that can stand up beside it in point of construction, and as Mr. Chotzinoff well says, in his musical approach to the text Offenbach “was as true to its character as any man of genius possibly could be.” The trouble is that any one who has heard it only as given at the Metropolitan or the Opéra-Comique, can not reasonably be expected to believe this, or even to imagine how it might be so. Hence it is improbable that Mr. Chotzinoff’s readers will take stock in what he says.





Only the other day, as it happened, I was looking over the Metropolitan's libretto of "Hoffmann." Half of the spoken dialogue is cut out, taking with it about three-quarters of the play's dramatic force. What is Coppelius, for example, without his spoken lines? I never heard "Hoffmann" in Germany, where it is a great favorite, so I do not know what they do with it there, or what sort of text they follow. The performance I heard at the Opéra-Comique two years ago was a sheer travesty. The only performance I ever heard that was thoroughly intelligent and artistic, and that followed the original text throughout, was at the Monnaie in Brussels. If Mr. Chotzinoff ever finds it worth while to substantiate what he says, he can do so by referring his readers thither.

The influential element in New York audiences have curious hot and cold fits toward composers, compositions and artists. Five years ago they put a taboo on Tchaikowsky and Mendelssohn, for no reason that any one could discern, since both are good enough composers for anybody. I remember how Bruno Walter tore his hair in bewilderment over the complaints he got for putting Tchaikowsky's Fourth on one of his programs, when he was guest-conductor for the New York Symphony. As for conductors, their popularity is good for this day and train only, and they had better cash in on it while they may. Next season I expect to be told that Toscanini is a hollow person who ought to be conducting a trolley-car instead of an orchestra. If it be true that artists maintain a cynical attitude in their dealings with our public, one must yet ask whose fault it is.

The mention of "Hoffmann" reminds me of another peculiarity in this influential element, which is their in-





terest in personalities as compared with their indifference to programs and performances. Probably they would not, after all, care a button for the “Hoffmann” at the Monnaie, or even know the difference, because there are no great names in the cast – so doubtless Mr. Chotzinoff would waste the breath necessary to explain it to them. The only hope of music in this country is in improving this state of affairs, and it is being done. Radio is helping disseminate a sort of general ground-floor education, and both opera and symphonic music have made a good start here and there “on their own,” as a natural, unstimulated growth. There has been a fine development in these ways in the last five years, and the process will soon leave the old order, which mostly made music a thing of fashion, comfortably in the rear.

Lawyers’ Law

The Russians are the best off of almost any people in the world in one respect, which is that their laws are not made for them by lawyers. Hence they have very few laws, and those few are easily intelligible. I was reading the translation of one the other day, and remarked its simplicity and ease. One could not read any clause of it without knowing not only what it meant, but the only thing it could mean. The trade-guild of lawyers that governs this country gets up laws in such shape that only lawyers have time to decipher them, and so numerous that it takes a lot of lawyers to go around. Thus the guild works for its own benefit instead of the public’s,





which is a curious state of things. Russia has a healthy tradition towards lawyers, dating from Peter the Great. On a visit to England, he was dumfounded at seeing so many of them about, and said, “Why, there are only two lawyers in my whole kingdom, and I intend to hang one of them the minute I get back.”

A proportionate mortality among American lawyers – whether brought about in the same way or not – would be a great benefit to the country; and this mortality should include all lawyers – legislators and lawyer-judges. Then the idea of justice might begin to pervade our courts. It is quite an education in Americanism to follow our court-reports a while, and notice how seldom any one goes to a court for justice. I think I never heard of one who sought a court save for gain or revenge; and obviously, justice is the last thing considered under our legal system. Yet the system has its uses, so it will doubtless go on as it is. A lawyer told me the other day that he expected to win a great case, and \$100,000 in fees for himself, on the strength of some precedent or other, dating back to 1786! I don’t begrudge him his fees, but I can not help thinking once more how lucky the Russians are, and what a fine sense of duty to his subjects Peter the Great had.

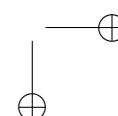
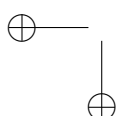
Our Undeserved Great

Reading Mr. Alex Johnston’s brief biography of his brother leaves no doubt whatever that England, like the United States, does not deserve to have any great men.





It is observable, too, that for a number of years both countries have been getting just about the kind of men they do deserve. Sir Harry Johnston – without putting too fine a point upon it – stood pretty well towards the head of the meagre roster of the century’s great men; he was very great in character, courage, determination, ability, resource, achievement. As an Imperialist explorer, he added about 400,000 square miles of profitable African territory to the British Empire. As an administrator “his constant endeavor was to educate not only the governed, but also their governors, in the building up of Negro nations of prosperous peasants where he had found a welter of slavery and internecine war.” As a naturalist, he discovered, appraised and listed the animal, vegetable and mineral resources of this whole district in an orderly and scientific manner. As an artist – he was an excellent draughtsman and painter – he revealed its beauties and strove hard against the bureaucrat and gain-grabber for their preservation. As a diplomat, he gave himself to the disinterested service of the African peoples, standing immovable between them and any form of oppression or exploitation, even British. As a linguist and grammarian, he tabulated in two large volumes all the languages and dialects of the Bantu and semi-Bantu speech-groups – a colossal work of invaluable importance to any Colonial administration that pretended to be intelligent. As an author, he published in all fifty books, including six novels – one of them the best in its *genre*, I think, since “The Way of All Flesh” – and he wrote continually for the *Graphic* (illustrating his own articles) and for the English reviews.





In consideration of these services, his Government permitted him for the most part to finance his enterprises as best he might, and to remain poor as a mouse all his life. He was no “empire-builder” in the Rhodes-Chamberlain sense; having the discovery and administration of immense natural resources to his credit, he never chose to stake a claim for himself to the worth of a five-pound note. His Government jockeyed him out of the public service at the age of forty-seven, kept him out of it thenceforth and out of about half the pension he should have had. He published his work on the Bantu languages without a cent’s worth of aid from the Colonial Office – friends helped him with it to some extent, but it was all done as a private enterprise. Finally, the Government took no official notice of his death two years ago, and sent no representative down over the few miles to Poling to attend his funeral; whereas even the President of Liberia sent an appropriate message and a wreath of flowers!

No, neither England nor America deserves to have any great men. As Kingsley wrote –

*Though the fury, the fool and the swindler
Tomorrow again have their day*

– a man of Sir Harry Johnston’s quality has neither day nor place, and decent peoples debt to Mr. Alex Johnston for demonstrating it is large. One can not help thinking of Thomas Jefferson, the greatest man, all around, that we ever produced. Probably half his writings are inaccessible to the public. Even the Adams-Jefferson correspondence, one of the most notable in the world, had never been published. Crowning disgrace of all, it has remained for a Frenchman, M. Gilbert Chinard, to come over





here, mouse through the Jefferson manuscripts alone and unaided, in such time as his profession allowed him, and publish a few fragments “on his own.” After all this, if he went out in the highways and byways of our much-vaunted generosity towards public-spirited enterprise, asking for help, it is doubtful – more than doubtful – that he could get enough to pay a copyist’s wages for six months. One would like to see it tried; there is nothing like “rapping for a showdown,” speaking in the parlance of the sinful, on the exact status of the Anglo-American world’s great men.

The Joy of Workmanship

A concert by Mr. Barrère’s Little Symphony is one of the precious few musical events in New York that give me any satisfaction. I was swindled shockingly on the first one this season, however. In his prospectus Mr. Barrère had listed the Haydn symphony in G major (No. 81) and the Fêtes of Rameau, but he did not play either of them. All I got was a symphony of Boccherini to sweeten up an egregious mess of unintelligible and largely painful dissonance, dished out under various fanciful titles, as the work of this-or-that contemporary composer. I felt bitter about this, and as the evening wore on and Mr. Barrère gracefully praised one after another of these atrocities, and then let me hear what they were like, I began to regard him as a wily French diplomat, and to hope that his unprincipled and rapacious nation would have the last sou of war-debt squeezed out of them.





Such may be the music of the future, but I am not of the future. I am of the present, and as Mr. Dooley's friend Donohue said on this very question of modern music, "I don't want me hell on earth." But Mr. Barrère overreached himself in his sinister Quai d'Orsay plot to do me out of a whole evening's joy. The last number was a flute solo by the arch-intriguer himself, a mere succession of irrational intervals without a suggestion of music from beginning to end – just the sort of thing a first-class flute-player would limber up on before a concert. Mr. Barrère introduced the piece by saying it was composed six years ago "but it sounds to me as if it had been composed tomorrow." But the workmanship that Mr. Barrère put into its execution was something one could not believe even while listening to it. A flute simply cannot be played as Mr. Barrère plays it; there are no such exquisite gradations in a flute as he gets out of it. The thing is impossible and incredible.

There are few joys as pure and elevating as that which comes from the contemplation of transcendent workmanship. Perhaps it was as well, for once, that there was no music to distract one from Mr. Barrère's workmanship. I have had such an experience one or twice before. Two years ago I heard a one-act curtain-raiser, called "The Young Girl at the Window," given at the Brussels opera. There was only one character on the stage – I honor myself in mentioning her name, Mme. Livine Mertens – a sickly banal plot, no music or orchestration grading above those of a cat-fight, no inevitably sincere dramatic action, but just the opposite; and yet one's joy in Mme. Mertens's consummate workmanship almost raised the thing to the level of acceptability. We all remember, too,





how Mr. Barrère's compatriot, Edmond Clemont, used to delude the unwary into thinking some commonplace little melody was a great song.

Americans seem moderately capable of this joy in the workmanship of musicians and painters, but not of writers. The writer has to "get by," popularly, on the strength of what he says; his readers seem to know nothing of the exhilaration and charm communicated by literary workmanship. I could never make out why this should be so, but there can be no doubt of the fact, I think. Were it otherwise, the Bible would be one of our most-read books as well as one of the most-bought. There is a vast deal of joy to be had out of the workmanship displayed in many books whose content is uninteresting or even stupid; the parallel with Mr. Barrère's flute-playing is quite exact. Of course it is better to have content too – I would much rather hear Mr. Barrère play music that had content. My only point is that the joy in workmanship is a special thing and deserves cultivation as such. There is as much of it to be got out of literature as out of music or painting, and in missing it, as Americans generally seem to do, one misses a great deal.

The mention I made a couple of weeks ago of the joy to be got out of contemplating great workmanship, came to my mind again in seeing Turgenev's play, "A Month in the Country." What the late Walter Weyl used to call "the specific gravity of its content" is certainly negligible; and since that is the standard by which our public judges literature, I was astonished to see so many people in the audience. I think the Theatre Guild must somehow have





succeeded in establishing a sort of vogue or sanction for itself, for the theatre was quite full, and I can not imagine there being that many people in the city who are interested in pure literary workmanship. I left the theatre in humble wonderment at the genius that could do so much with insignificant material, just as I have at times looked at the incredible Flemish brushwork that reproduces a trayful of fish and lobsters, or as I once watched Mexicans down on the Texas border, who took a barrel of Portland cement and some fence-boards and burlap – anything they could get their hands on – and proceeded to make something beautiful out of it.

Grab-bag Education

When a missionary asked Horace Greeley for a subscription to help keep people from going to hell, Horace refused, saying “there aren’t half enough of them going there as it is.” I confess I feel just that way about Secretary Wilbur’s demand that the churches join in a great drive to eliminate illiteracy. It seems that the 1920 census reported nearly five million illiterates in our population, and the Secretary of the Interior is worried about it and wants to get them all taught to read. When I think of the kind of thing they would be likely to read, and how little good it would do them, I am disposed to congratulate them warmly on their present immunity, and to wish there were many more like them.

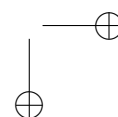
Theoretically, reading is supposed to stimulate and improve thought; and so indeed it does, if pursued with that





purpose to guide it. Otherwise it is nothing but a waste of time. Hence literacy is not an absolute good in itself – far from it. The idea that it is an absolute good is one of the oddest and most indefensible superstitions rampant in our superstition-ridden society. To prove this, one has but to look at what our literates mostly read, and what their reading-habits are. Our periodicals and our lists of best-sellers are monumental testimony that our reading public is adept, as Bishop Butler said, at “passing things through their minds, rather than thinking about them” – and that our writers and publishers meet this aptitude somewhat more than half way. Mr. Wilbur is the victim of sheer superstition, and should be firmly discouraged. One turns from him impatiently to contemplate once more the admirable wisdom of Mr. Weller’s charity-boy at the end of the alphabet, who wondered whether it was worth while going through so much to get so little.

I am of much the same frame of mind, also, towards the proposed drive of five hundred small self-styled “liberal-arts” colleges for half a billion dollars additional endowment. Are we not getting a leetle over-colleged, as you might say, in this country? It is a delicate question, and of course one would not like to be dogmatic about it, but it would seem to bear examination. Five hundred liberal-arts colleges, with say, one hundred students per college – presumably a low average – would mean fifty thousand students. What I should like to know is whether there are fifty thousand youngsters in the country who are able to take in a real education in the liberal arts, such as a “liberal-arts college” should be supposed to furnish. I can not say flatly that there are not, but my doubts are those of a Missourian.





One answer is that these colleges do not furnish any such education, and this is exactly true. Following the strange American dogma that all persons are educable, and following the equally fantastic popular estimate placed upon mere numbers, our whole educational system has watered down its requirements to something precious near the moron standard. The American curriculum in “the liberal arts” is a combination of bargain-counter, grab-bag and Christmas-tree. It is not long since the newspapers were quoting President Butler of Columbia as saying he did not think he had a man in his whole institution, student or professor, who could pass the examinations that Columbia College used to set for entering freshmen fifty years ago.

The truth of the matter is that American education in “the liberal arts” is of a disgracefully low Brummagem type, and I see no help for it but to weed out the notoriously incompetent element in our student population – that is to say, a good ninety per cent of what we now have cluttering up our undergraduate colleges and secondary schools. No better scheme for public education was ever devised than Thomas Jefferson’s, which if put in force now would reduce our student population in just about this proportion. Every one knows that our system is wretchedly defective, but no one, apparently, has the courage to say that its fundamental defect is that of trying to educate people whom the Lord created ineducable; and that until this defect is remedied it matters little what is done about other defects, or left undone.





Real-Estaters' Suburbs

I have always lived close to the windward side of poverty, sometimes in pretty squalid surroundings, but I thank the Lord that I never had to live in a real-estater's model suburb. I passed through one the other day, and I must say it was one of the most depressing sights I ever saw. Rows of houses built exactly alike on plots of ground as uncompromising in their uniformity as the squares of a chess-board. The only departure from uniformity was, as you would expect, where it would show most – in the color of the roofs. These were painted in glaring red, blue, purple, green, yellow, but no two adjacent roofs painted the same color.

It struck me then that here was the stock answer to the charge that American life is standardized and mechanized clear out of humanity's reach. "Do you call us standardized?" These houses would say in indignation, "Just look at our roofs! You can see the signs of our sturdy individualism a mile away." One wonders whether the interiors of these houses are all alike. Do the same pieces of golden oak furniture, turned out by the same factory, occupy the same relative positions in the same rooms? Moreover, is the life that expresses itself in these straitly limited ways as straitly regularized? Do all hands follow the same routine, internal and external, think the same thoughts, live, move and have their being, spiritual and physical, on the same terms? It is not improbable. Some budding Ph.D. in the social sciences might take for his thesis, "The Real-Estater as a Spiritual Force," and make quite a good thing of it – good enough to astonish his professors, at least.





Pedantry and Journalism

Reading Mr. Paul Elmer Mores remark about “the light-armed skirmishers of the press, whom, to say the truth, no one takes very seriously,” a friend of mine commented the other day on “the curious jealousy that pedantry always displays towards secular learning” – rather a good phrase. I am the last person in the world to take up arms for our newspapers, and they would be the last to thank me for any gratuitous championship, but really, now, getting right down to data, I know of some of these skirmishers whose work seems to show them about as completely armed as most I know in academic circles. This, however, is not to the point. The point is, why should pedantry assume that newspapers have no place for scholarship, or that the scholarship exhibited in newspapers, if and when, is *ipso-facto* low-grade? I know that Mr. More does not make this assumption directly, but it is a commonplace of pedantry, and Mr. More’s remark rather pointedly suggests it.

One can see why this by-product of professionalism should come out strong in the army and navy, and in many other fields of endeavor, but one does not see why it should appear so markedly in academic life, if one regards the academic life as disinterestedly consecrated to the attainment of sweetness and light. Certainly some of the best scholarship in this country has been displayed outside the Portico. If I had two Chairs of American History to fill today, the two men I would choose to fill them are working newspaper-men. Possibly this professional jealousy may be accounted for by an inferiority-complex – one must lean up heavily against





one's academic status to prove oneself a better man in one's own eyes than the chap who has none. I suspect, though I am not sure, that it is more prevalent here than in other countries; and if so, the fact is probably to be accounted for in that way. Professor Huxley was not above writing for the newspapers, neither was Matthew Arnold, and both of them were supposed to mount pretty heavy guns, for their day. I have seen quite a few of the academic brethren who, I think, might even now profit by perusing Matthew Arnold's letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

The Leisure-Class Type

One gets a great deal of diversion out of observing the quasi-intellectual or pseudo-intellectual interests of the leisure class. I have followed them in a desultory fashion while they did their devotions to Freud, and then afterwards to Coué, with a brief go at Keyserling. Now they seem to have turned largely to astrology and palm-reading. I see that one enterprising concern advertises a series of perfumes got up according to the signs of the zodiac, so that a person may choose the one indicated by her horoscope. Whatever may be said about these ways of beguiling boredom, it is a pleasure to observe that they are relatively innocent. Aside from their devotion to Mr. Veblen's doctrine of "conspicuous waste," the most conspicuous probably being the waste of time, one is rather surprised to see how innocuously most of these people live.





One is surprised, too, to see that the leisure class has succeeded in creating an international type as distinct as the Jew, and that at the other end of the scale, the go-getter has done the same thing. I rode in a railway-compartment with a most imposing specimen of the leisure class last year, and all the way from Rotterdam to Antwerp I tried my best to guess her nationality, without success. She might have been a Rooshan, or French or Turk or Prooshan, or perhaps Eye-tal-i-an. From her intonation I judged she would hardly be American or English, but I was not sure, and beyond that I could make out nothing, though as a rule I am fairly good at spotting nationality. I have had similar experiences with go-getters; once, I remember, I was very badly let in by an Italian, and once by a Belgian. I thought they were Scots.

Lost Literature

The enterprising publisher, Mr. Knopf, appears once more to have taken the lead in a good direction. His idea seems to be that of digging into the strata of our literature here and there, to see what we really have produced that is worth preserving. I predict that he will find a great deal. At present, no one knows what we have or what we have not; and this, as I have already said, is due to the fact that criticism has neglected its proper business and allowed itself to be absorbed into journalism or superseded by journalism. While criticism of an academic type has been busy about vacuous theory and formula,

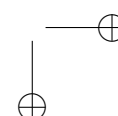
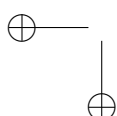




journalism has been indiscriminately and often ignorantly busy with the contemporaneous, and actual American literature has lain in an unsorted mess. The consequence is, I believe, that very few of us know that anything was ever written in this country before 1910.

Two days ago, for instance, I got a letter from a European friend, speaking about a certain piece of our earlier literature, now lying utterly neglected and unknown. My friend says, "I hope I have not lost my sense of literary values, but it certainly seems to me that if anything like this had been produced in France, it would have taken the position of a classic. . . . Is it true that the teachers of American literature are insensitive to literary values in the case of their own native writers?"

This question hits the mark. With all respect for Mr. Knopf, he is not the one to do this kind of pioneering work. That is the business of the universities. If our universities were worth the powder to blow them to the Old Boy, as far as the humanities are concerned – which they are not, or even half of it – Mr. Knopf would find a corpus of American literature up to 1900, ready to his hand, dug out by research, and competently appraised by criticism. Then he could pick from it and publish what he liked. It is just this unorganized or semi-organized co-operation between the French university and the French publisher that makes French criticism fruitful to both, and disseminates the benefits upon the whole literary public. If our universities would do their part, the publishers would do theirs. But the unfortunate fact is that our universities are utterly incompetent in the premises, so there we are!





Decline and Fall?

A trustee of one of the New England colleges told me the other day that baseball had lost its popularity as a college sport, and I heard the same thing on all sides last week. Golf has largely supplanted it. The over-commercialization of baseball seems to have given the student's view of it a slight touch of snobbishness. One of my friends said with a delightful Yiddish intonation that "it ain't no longer got the class what golf got it" – and indeed the social and physical accessories of golf do make it in this sense a classy sport and part of the go-getter's legitimate equipment, which baseball could not be. Still, there is one merit in this change. Golf is no game to watch – one must play it oneself to get anything out of it. The fact of baseball being such a great spectacle made its commercialization easy. There is some commercialization of football and tennis, but it will never go any distance as it has in baseball; and golf, I think, will always remain a player's game. How odd it would be, though, if a generation should grow up which knew not baseball! America would no longer seem like America.

A German Virtue

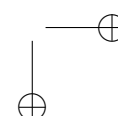
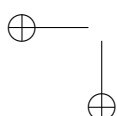
Wilhelm Dibelius's "England," which Harper & Brothers have just published in an admirable translation from the German, is, I believe, the soundest, most thorough, and at the same time most excellently readable study of





English character and genius that has ever been made. It is the first of three books that I should put into the hands of a person who wished to know as much as any alien can ever know about this extraordinary and difficult people. The other two are Justin McCarthy's "History of Our Own Times," and Macmillan's volume containing Matthew Arnold's two essays, "Culture and Anarchy" and "Friendships Garland." They are all he would need.

With all its eminent readableness, Dibelius's book once more stirs my reverence for the incomparable German genius for *durcharbeit*-ing whatever it sets its hand to. It is genius born of a limitless capacity for work, combined with an insatiable intellectual curiosity. In matters of the intellect, the German is the world's greatest go-getter. On shipboard two years ago, I was reading "Friendship's Garland" for perhaps the twentieth time, and laughing over it as one ever must. When we had docked, a studious-looking young German woman approached me stiffly, said she had noticed my interest in a book I was reading – would I tell her what it was? I gave her the title in German, then in English, she repeated it carefully after me, and then marched stiffly away, leaving me with the impression that that title was imperishably salted down. It struck me then that this admirable *démarche* in behalf of knowledge was one that only a German would have made. I can not imagine a Frenchwoman in the whole stretch from Calais to Perpignan, bracing a total stranger for such information in that impersonal way.





Vacation Ground

Germany's old popularity with the summer tourist seems to be coming back thick and threefold. Fifty years ago, a tour in Germany was so much the regular thing that many scarcely knew there was anything else worth doing. The older lovers of Germany have been wondering whether she would make a permanent breach with her former life; whether under the spur of indemnity-payments, banker's control, and the like, and with the image of "American prosperity" before her eyes, she would abandon herself heart and soul to a life of go-getting *et praeterea nihil*. I think they need not worry over-much about that. Such a thing is hardly in the homebred German character. My belief is that when the pressure lightens, we shall find Germany and German civilization much as they always were, and German life the same quiet, easy, kindly, assiduous and altogether delightful thing that we have always so deeply enjoyed sharing. Probably Berlin will never have these attractions, for it never had them, at least on the surface that the tourist sees; but plenty of Germans manage to live without a sight of Berlin, and so may the tourist.

One wonders why no more is made of tourist-traffic on the Mosel. For my part, I think the all-day ride down the Mosel from Trier to Coblenz beats the all-day ride down the Rhine, both for scenic beauty and romantic interest. Sentiment for the Rhine has always been enhanced by the part that the river has played in national politics. It is a lovely river, and everyone ought to see it, but if I could not see both, I should choose the Mosel without a moment's hesitation. My notion of a perfect two-weeks





outing is to ramble over the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, mostly afoot, spend two days in Trier, and then sail down the Mosel. If the weather is good – and your chance of that is no better than it is anywhere in Western Europe, and no worse – I doubt that this can be beaten short of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Reading Ausonius a few days ago, I was struck afresh with the fact that he supplies a guide-book to the Mosel that is still pretty useful. Ausonius was a talented native of Bordeaux, who spent thirty years there as professor in the university, in the first half of the fourth century, occasionally “jerkin a Poin,” as Artemus Ward expresses it, according to the way inspiration happened to be going at the moment. He became tutor to the youthful Gratian, and accompanied him in 368 on the expedition of Valentinian against the Germans. He crossed the Nahe at Bingen and struck across-country westerly until he reached Neumagen, where his first sight of the Mosel so affected him that he bust into poetry on the spot; and his five hundred hexameters on that pleasant subject remain as his best work. They make good reading yet for anybody intending to follow his course down the river. Aside from the information in them, their enthusiasm for the Mosel’s loveliness is agreeably contagious.

The Irrepressible Over-soul

I was interested to read the other day that the president of one of our great western railway systems is about to sail for Russia to supervise a big piece of construction-





work for the Russian Government. Probably he gets fair money for this, but I doubt his making more than he gets in his present position. There seems no reason why he should go, unless it is that he wants to do an interesting piece of work under exceptional and highly interesting conditions. I also read a report of some Americans now at work over there, who say that in spite of some hardships, they find their life thoroughly interesting. One of them said he “wouldn’t have missed the experience for a million dollars.” It makes one wonder whether after all the profit-motive is the one that really makes the world go round, as our big *Machers* in industry and finance used to insist, and as most of them still seem to believe. To hear them talk, one would suppose that if profit were abolished, nobody would have any interest in doing anything.

It brings to mind one of the Soviet Government’s ablest men, now dead, who under the Tsarist régime was a topnotch industrial executive, and whom the Soviets at once put into a position of enormous responsibility. He was a friend of a friend of mine, who ran across him unexpectedly on shipboard one day, and asked him how he liked his new job. He said, “I like it. It’s the kind of a job a man can really make something of, and it is interesting because all I have to do is to produce results, and I am free to do it in my own way. They say to me, ‘Work and produce’; and then nobody bothers me. That’s all I have to think of – no damned stockholders to worry about – no meddling bankers to fuss with. That’s real freedom. I am having the best time I ever had in my life, and doing my best work.” Wouldn’t it be odd if just about the time that Henry and Brother Hoover got us all nicely standardized and mechanized





and robotized and all the rest of it, the Over-soul should suddenly take a notion to come back?

Anyone as sure as I am that the Over-soul always does come back when it gets ready – and never gives any advance notice, either – views the efforts of these puny brethren with great equanimity. I can't get worked up even over the report that Henry is going to put \$100 million into schools of the robotizing type, like the one he has set up at Sudbury, Mass. In fact, I am not sure but that it would turn out to be the smartest thing he has ever done. We have a lot of people who need just that kind of training, and no other; and at present they are cluttering up our regular schools and interfering with the chances of people who have other capacities. Perhaps Henry's \$100 million would set up enough institutions to drain off some of them and relieve a serious and disconcerting pressure. The actual robotizing, as I said, is unlikely to count for much in the long run, and emphasis on it in youth is indeed probably the best way to hasten a healthy reaction against it in maturer years. The discipline of the old-time Sunday-school and the consequences may be held to furnish comforting analogy.

Climatic Changes, and Others

The Captain of the *Berengaria*, who has been for some time noticing a westward movement of the Gulf Stream, says he has never found it so close inshore as on his last voyage. He ran into it only about two hundred miles east of Ambrose Channel light, or nearly at Nantucket Shoals.





If it keeps on, New York will enjoy a semi-tropical climate, and Long Island will be fringed with palms – an odd sight. The thought reminds one how slight and unstable the sufferance is on which man and his proudest work exist. A few degrees of temperature one way or the other, so very few, and life becomes impossible. What would be the effect on our civilization if the North Atlantic Seaboard should take on a semi-tropical climate? One rather winces at the thought of it, but if one thinks it through as far as possible, one confronts some very impressive consequences.

Any one who has a streak of anthropomorphism in him, as most of us have, can sometimes see a deal of humor in what our pious ancestors – not too fatuously or even inexactly, perhaps – used to call “the inscrutable acts of God.” What a thundering joke it would be if after we got New York built to satisfy the last demand of a meretricious civic pride, with skyscrapers everywhere *ungebeuer* big and domineering, God should shift the Gulf Stream just a little, oh, ever so little – no trouble at all – and sweat us out of them! The thought is reminiscent of Mr. Garfield’s tom-fool “heatless Mondays” in the winter when we were all cock-a-hoop over entering the war, and every Sunday night regularly the mercury would fall through the bottom of the thermometer. I remember meeting my friend A.M. on the street, about the third or fourth bitter Monday morning, and his saying, “Well, who is coming out ahead on this, God or Garfield?” It does not take much imagination to picture a divinity indulgently surveying our extraordinary divagations at that time, then sifting down a pinch or two of frosty snow – only a little, just a pinch or two – and saying,





“There, I think that will hold those nincompoops for a while.”

Reading Clemenceau’s book puts a different light on those days. It is probably a good thing – a good thing for the politicians and exploiters, anyway – that people have short memories and that their hindsight is no better than their foresight. We have conveniently forgotten the pawing and adulation that we bestowed on the men of the period whom Time has inexorably showed up for what they were; and after Time, Clemenceau. The old highwayman had his virtues, aside from his ability. He had a robust contempt for intrigue, and hated misplaced and inflated mediocrity as much as he hated the Germans. His opinion of his *entourage*, civil and military, does one’s soul good. What a crew! – and how whole-heartedly we green Americans believed in them and worshipped them, and how pliantly we were ready to lynch anybody who showed signs of having any sort of idea of what they were actually like! Yes, it is as well that there are a few of us who will read Clemenceau’s book with our memories as well as with our eyes.

One may safely say that Clemenceau is the last of his type that will appear in public life, now that the world is overspread with republicanism. He was really an anachronism in his own time and country. A bourgeois republicanism is doggedly vindictive towards superiority, as Aristides discovered; it takes naturally and contentedly to mediocrity. There is a certain justice in this, too, for such a civilization in itself tends more and more towards mediocrity – and beyond – and perhaps mediocrity should represent it. Clemenceau was far from a representative man in his own civilization, as far from it

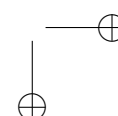
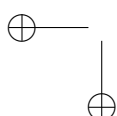




as Frederick of Prussia or Prince von Bismarck would be in a super-industrialized republican *Reich*, or Palmerston in a universal suffrage England. Even after the war, the “Father of Victory” could no more have been elected President of the Republic than I could be crowned king of Siam. Such civilizations, as Mr. Mill acutely observed, find the test of a great mind only in its power of agreement in the opinions of small minds. So we may look for no more of the type of Clemenceau. The future of public life, the world over, as Henry George predicted, will be more and more with the Doumergues, Hoovers, MacDonalDs.

“Plus ça Change —”

The race’s rate of progress in perfectability can be pretty well measured by its capacity for disinterested devotion to the abstract virtues. “If you care for justice, you don’t go into the army,” said Clemenceau; and in a moment he added thoughtfully, “You don’t go anywhere.” I often think of the unfortunate few nowadays to whom Fascist oppression, capitalist oppression, Communist, Socialist, monarchical, republican, ecclesiastical oppression all mean the same thing, all look alike, and all seem equally repellent. There are a few such, and there is no place for them to go; Clemenceau was right, they don’t go anywhere in a world of unscrupulous sectarianism. This is the key to the position of Erasmus and a handful of his conspicuous humanist associates in the Reformation period. One can honor Fascism, Capitalism, Communism,





Vaticanism, Protestantism, for their service to the world, but that is not enough for the sectarian spirit; it will not let you go along with it if you are not prepared also to praise and defend the sectarian vices, crimes, excesses, stupidities.

The humanist today would get about as far with Stalin as with Mussolini, with Bishop Cannon as with Pius XI, and no farther, for anything I can see. The only public figure of the present time who would find him at all acceptable seems to be Gandhi; very likely they could come to an understanding, and do quite a bit of business in common before their co-operation struck a snag. In the Western world, however, the humanist is distinctly out of it. All he can do is to retire within himself and get what diversion he may – which is a great deal – from the contemplation of events as they go on. He is redeemed from cynicism by the reflection that as far as astronomy can foretell, the race has an immense amount of time at its disposal wherein to educate itself, and that it seems destined to a very high and fine development which will probably set in after a few more hard bumps have taught it how to keep going ahead without falling over its own feet – say in another fifty or sixty thousand years.

Our Elderly Young

I read with great joy the other day of a boy who had run away from home. Twenty-five years ago it seemed to me that every boy who amounted to anything had a goodly fling at running away from home. Since then plenty of





girls have taken up with this excellent practice, but the boys seem to have dropped it. Of course I am all for the girls, but I hate to see the spirit of enterprise, of noble endeavor, dying out of the boys – if it is. It may be said that homes are not as hard to put up with as they used to be, but that is nothing. Any kind of home ought to be, for a certain period, utterly intolerable to the right-thinking youth, whether boy or girl; just as any sort of parents ought, for a certain length of time, to be regarded as utterly unsatisfactory and despicable. I am frankly despondent about the future of the country when I see boys or girls showing a senile, gelatinous acquiescence in the established fact; and I seem to see it pretty often. Personally, I do not lose heart over the Red menace or the capitalist menace or the Wet-Dry menace, but I get rather blue over all the muck about parents keeping young with their children, and the general Elk-Rotarian *cameraderie* of interests between ages that should be as far separate as the poles. Speaking as an old man, I have no respect for the spineless little brats who let us get away with it, and seem to cherish none of the resentment wherewith their Creator endowed them as an inalienable right.

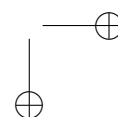
The sons of our big industrialists do not meditate burning their fathers' factories down. Such as I have seen seem to me to have their roots deeper in the established order than their fathers' are, even at the age when they ought to be going to the stake for their belief that the old man is a slave-driver, exploiter, bloodsucker and all-round swine. Are they all *born* conformists these days, and have they turned all the prime joy of youth, all "the days of real sport," over to their sisters? At my time





of life I ought to find the youth of the land all ablaze with fire and brimstone, signing manifestos, starting newspapers, burning the whole Administration in effigy, so that I could pat them on the back and tell them to go slow, that Rome wasn't built in a day, and to keep their shirts on. That is my rightful job. But how can I do it with a crew of little natural-born Hoovers and Hugheses – born to a degree of dulness and acceptance, and self-nurtured in an inaccessibility to ideas, that would make the United States Supreme Court look like a session of the Third International? An old man has a bleak outlook these days.

When by chance some of our youngsters do go through the motions of starting something, they set about it so constitutionally and with so much organization-decorum that they remind me a lot more of Methusaleh than of the flaming youth of the Second Empire. I am thinking of the young men's anti-Prohibition league that I was reading about a while ago. They ought to be planning to get ten thousand of themselves together, make a lot of hooch, and on a stated day peddle it openly on the streets of New York; another day, Boston; another day, Philadelphia; and so on. I say, this is what they should plan to do, and be so hell-bent on carrying it out that moderate old constitutionalists like me would have our hands level full with persuading them to take it easy and see first what could be done by less spectacular means – like mobbing a few dry-drinking Congressmen and boiling them in oil, for instance. Then we old men, though we might shake our heads a little and deplore the growing disregard of law 'n' order, would at least be convinced that the country had a future; which we





doubt at present, unless the rough-neck girls supply it. All the manifestos of the young men's anti-Prohibition league that I have seen are so well-aged and decorous that I might have written them myself.

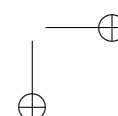
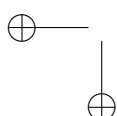
It is an old person's privilege to air his dissatisfaction with the younger generation, and this is mine. I can't worry because the girls drink, swear and smoke, show their nakedness and understand birth-control, for I can't see that it hurts them particularly – maybe it does, but my impression is that youngsters these days who are good for anything get through their petty dissipations about as quickly as they did in my day, and those who are not good for anything might as well go one way as another. All the easier and faster, too, in both cases, when their petty dissipations are run through with in the open. So, rightly or wrongly, I have nothing against the younger generation on these counts, nor would I lose a wink of sleep over one of my daughters if I had as many as Solomon. What worries me is not the younger generation's rebelliousness in petty matters, but their tameness in great matters. I never heard of Mr. Edsel Ford's haranguing the Detroit proletariat in his early youth and inciting them to go out with him and dynamite the River Rouge plant. Mr. Hughes's son has slid smoothly along into the practice of law in Washington – I wonder if he ever went through a period of telling his college Socialist Club in impassioned language that his father was a benighted old bewhiskered Baptist reactionary, an enemy of the people, who ought to be hamstrung, drawn and quartered. If I were the Chief Justice, and he had shown no disposition of the kind, I should have worried about him indeed – likewise I should have kicked the seat out of his trousers, and





kept kicking it out as often as he got a new pair, until he manifested a normal spirit. But that is the way it goes, all over the land.

Clemenceau started his public career by being hived up in Mazas prison at the age of twenty, under the Second Empire. Thus he lived under two republics, a revolution, an empire and the Commune, going strong all the time – a lively life. What this country needs is a lot of young men who are religiously convinced that Lenin is a back number, and who are going out to see what can be done about it. Not young men recruited from the proletariat, but from the established order. Let them give us older heads a good hard jolt, not about the silly little stuff of late parties, hip-flasks and turning their girls upside down – let the Anti-Saloon League and the Vice Society worry about all that – but about something that really counts. In short, let me see a crowd that is its age, not a hundred years older in its acquiescence than we are. My personal belief is that there is not half that much gizzard in the youth of the whole country, nor one-fifth of the intelligence necessary to keep the gizzard informed on how to function properly. The “unexampled prosperity” of the country, with some collateral factors working in the same direction, has brought both down to a 2.75% near-beer level. Put this down as a grouch if you choose, but I have to be shown.





A Challenge to Youth

Just after I finished scorching the younger generation two weeks ago for their apathy toward public affairs, I read about the youth from the University of Wisconsin, whom the Chicago police netted out of a Communist meeting and brought up before the chicken-court. He appears to be of the right sort. He had composed a parody which was read at the meeting, and which seems to have been too much for the police. The first stanza ran thus:

*My country, 'tis of thee;
Land of the cursed three,
Greed, want and caste,
Land where the rich and high
Thy sacred laws defy,
And thousands starving die,
Where gold is king.*

The judge took occasion to denounce the University of Wisconsin in stereotyped phrase as a “hotbed of radicalism,” thereby giving some thousands of our youth just the challenge that I should like to see them pick up – the challenge to an assertion of Constitutional right. Perhaps there is not another Communist or radical in the whole university; that does not matter. Every youngster on the premises should instantly have gone on the war-path for the sound Jeffersonian and republican doctrine that in this country any school of political thought has a Constitutional right to free and full expression, that its adherents have the Constitutional right of free assembly like any other citizens and that if any venal scoundrel or posse of ignorant ruffians invades those rights, the



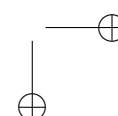
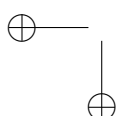


University of Wisconsin is going to be heard from on the drop of the hat.

There never will be even a decent political sense developed in this country until we breed a race of people who are as ready to go to the mat for justice in behalf of what they do not believe in as in behalf of what they do believe in. That is the spirit that utterly terrifies politicians and job-holders and makes them walk a chalk line. Young people, if taken as nature made them, have a pretty good instinctive appreciation of that spirit; and because that is so, the whole effort of our institutions, from the kindergarten up, is bent on breeding it out of them. I know nothing whatever about the administration of the University of Wisconsin; it may be exceptional, and certainly this Chicago judge's disapproval of it is a great recommendation in my view, on the general principle that anything which a judge dislikes and disapproves of is likely to be pretty good. Yet if the student body *en masse* drew the issue as I suggest, and did it in a way to show they knew what they were talking about and meant business, I should like to see what the University authorities would do.

The Nature of Education

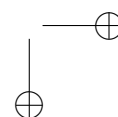
The curious fate of the Hayes-Moon text-book of modern history, which was discussed editorially last week, interests me. I do not know the book, so I can not say how objectionable it might be on other grounds, but the ground alleged in a press-interview with the authority





responsible for suppressing it indicates a strange conception of the use of history in a school curriculum. One count against the book according to this report, was that the description of Calvin as the “political boss” of Geneva was likely to offend the Presbyterians. It does not appear that the description was regarded as inaccurate; indeed, there is the clearest and most abundant evidence that no other description of Calvin’s civil relations with Geneva is admissible. The question therefore arises, whether in the mind of New York’s school-authorities the chief end and aim of teaching history is to please Presbyterians or to inculcate a competent understanding of some very important and significant social phenomena that appeared in Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century, and that quite distinctly colored European history for three hundred years.

But this question runs back to the previous question of the general end and aim of all education. What is it for? I am not now speaking of training, which has instrumental knowledge for its purview, but of education, which is a matter of formative knowledge. When you want chemists, mechanics, engineers, bond-salesmen, lawyers, bankers and so on, you train them; training, in short, is for a vocational purpose. Education contemplates another kind of product; what is it? One of the main elements in it, I should say, is the power of disinterested reflection. One unmistakable mark of an educated man is his ability to take a detached, impersonal and competent view of something that deeply engages his affections, one way or the other – something that he likes very much. The study of history has really no other purpose than to help





put this mark on a man. If one does not study it with this end in view, there is no use in studying it at all.

In studying history, you concern yourself with what the human mind has been busy about, in various relations and in various circumstances, over a certain period of time. The processes of study give discipline, the content of the study gives experience. Hence the student of history can apply to contemporary relations and circumstances, not only a disciplined mind but an experienced mind; he has a power of detachment in his observations and reflections – in a word, a maturity – that is hardly to be got in any other way. This is why Latin and Greek studies are so valuable. They present the longest and most varied continuous record that we have of what the human mind has ever been busy about. Contact with it is a profoundly formative experience, and the processes of the language-study, taken in youth and intelligently directed, are highly disciplinary; the combination of discipline and experience is the best available. Of course, to get the benefit of it, a person must be educable. My own notion is that the decadence of Latin and Greek studies among us is due to their having been indiscriminately applied to ineducable persons; and also to their having been administered so largely by ineducable persons who had acquired the mechanical proficiency represented, say, by the degree of Ph.D., without any clear knowledge of what they were handling, or why.

So if New York's school children are to study history to please Presbyterian prejudices, it strikes me they would be far better off playing hookey, and if I were so situated that I could, I would abet and encourage them in that salutary enterprise. Another count against





the Hayes-Moon book is that it is too favorable to the Roman Church – and since I have not seen it, for all I know it may be. I can only say that there is clear historical evidence that the Papacy now and again did some good things in modern Europe in a very large way, and that if Protestant prejudice is to withstand their being examined, and their beneficent consequences appraised, there is no use studying history. Again, if the economic motive behind Henry VIII's Supremacy Act is to be ignored in deference to the sensibilities of tender-minded energumens in the Episcopal Church, there is no use studying history. Not to mince words, the fact of the matter is that under our educational system, the study of history, like other formative studies, does not even rise to the dignity of being a waste of time. What with the political, economic and theological capital that has to be made out of it, as matters now stand, and as they have ever stood, it is a positive detriment to mind and spirit.

Orchestras and Orchestras

Rome's journalists have been complimenting the New York Philharmonic orchestra which is doing a turn in various European cities under Toscanini; two of them say that this orchestra is the best in the world, and some of them seem surprised that anything so good should hail from the United States. Our orchestras illustrate perfectly the combination of conditions necessary to the maintenance of art. Talent can do nothing without





opportunity, and opportunity is barren without talent. America's money furnishes the opportunity for good orchestral music, and other lands furnish the talent. There are only five native-born Americans in the Philharmonic orchestra, if we are correctly informed, and the chief conductor is an Italian.

Comparisons between the merits of orchestras are dubious, because so much depends upon what one is looking for. Technically, I suppose the old Boston orchestra, after it had been hand-polished by Gericke, animated by Nikisch and turned over to Muck, was the best we ever had. Yet in Muck's day I used to listen to their performances, say they were very good, very marvellous and seldom think about them afterwards; and such too has been my invariable experience with the Philharmonic ever since Mahler's day, and with every other orchestra that I have heard in America, save only one. Hence my point of view on the execution of music must be rather special. A friend once told me that for two hours after he left the Brussels opera, "I couldn't have told you whether I was a red-licker Democrat or a bootleg Prohibitionist." I seem unconsciously to have adopted this as a standard test of the performances I hear. When just *that* effect is produced, I say I have heard a great performance.

The one and only American orchestra that has always filled this bill on the lamentably few occasions that I have had a chance to hear it, is in the city that seems to specialize in bizarre anomalies – Chicago. There is no indistinctness in my recollection of those performances or of my own share in them. Perhaps that is a good way to put it. I have heard other American orchestras as an auditor; I had no choice about it, I was there as

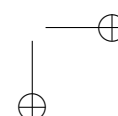
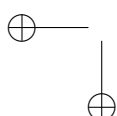




a detached unit, to hear and be impressed. In Chicago, as in Brussels, Naples, Turin, I was always as much a participant as the first violin; if I had slacked off for a single instant the performance would have gone on the rocks. Hence, I have fallen into the way of measuring all American orchestras by Chicago. Of course, as Professor Mason pointed out in these columns some weeks ago, the quality of an audience is very largely the differentiating factor, and I have a consuming curiosity to know how the devil it is that, of all impossible places, Chicago is apparently the only one that can muster that kind of audience. I dare say if I had heard the Philharmonic play in the Augusteo, I should not have known it for the same orchestra that I used to hear in Carnegie Hall.

Spread-heads

One is sorry that there must be so much wider separation between literature and journalism in this country than in many Continental lands. This separation is inevitable because there is so large a public for journalism and so small a public for literature; and therefore one is pleased to see a newspaper occasionally kicking against these pricks, and trying to make itself better than conditions warrant. One New York paper that I sometimes read has lately braced up its reporting to a literary standard much higher than it need be, or probably should be, considering the average of taste and intelligence in the paper's constituency. I sometimes wonder about the actual commercial value of certain disfiguring features –





I mean, whether this value has recently been tested out afresh, to see whether it is really there. For instance, how much are spread-heads worth? The front page of today's *World* carries six two-column spreads, of which the most important seems to be, "Hoover Pictured 'Not Dry at Heart' in Stayton Letter," and "Red 'Plot' in U.S. Bared by Whalen; Agents Dispute It." I wonder if by actual test, these day-to-day spread-heads are worth real money to a paper like the *World*, *Times*, or *Evening Post*; or whether they are kept on as a matter of mere unquestioned custom. It may be taken for granted, I think, that the less civilized a community is, the more flamboyant are the head-lines of its newspapers; and if a test showed that the *World* or *Evening Post* lost no money by appearing in a more dignified dress, it would support a more favorable presumption for New York's civilization than one would now be likely to make.

The Revolt Against Civilization

There are curious reversals of tendency in so many relations of life that one comes to believe the race takes care of itself more by instinct than by management. At this season of the year I notice people going off to live the high-priced simple life in camps and ranches. They pay stacks of money to enjoy a tailor-made imitation of what I used to get for nothing, when I was a boy. There is an odd inconsistency in this practice when one analyzes it. These people destroy the delights of nature in order to get money, and then spend money to enjoy





a made-to-order replica of what they have destroyed. This is laughable enough, but the thing to notice is the persistence of instinct in its revolt against the conditions which man has created for himself to live in most of the time, and which he thinks, or thinks he thinks, are highly civilized.

Instinct and the law of diminishing returns can be pretty well trusted to take care of humanity, so long as people persist in using their intelligence, if, when and as, in such ways as to make asses of themselves. When our whole population took to motoring, I remember, it was freely predicted that we would all lose the use of our legs – and actually, a great many never walked more than from the house to the garage. Now, however, even in villages, there is such a congestion of traffic that folks with errands to do park their cars and walk. It would not surprise me to find that on the average our population walks as much today as it did twenty years ago. Thus, the balance of natural habit gets restored, after a little shift one way or the other, and essentially we do not change much. Superficially a little, perhaps, from year to year, but actually, man appears to remain much the same as he was originally cut out to be.

Reductio ad Absurdum

A whole half-column of alumnae marriage-statistics published by Barnard College suggests to me that “the higher education of women” in this country, *Gott soll hüten*, is still a little on the defensive. One doesn’t notice the like





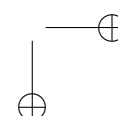
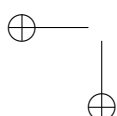
of these statistics being published by undergraduate colleges for men – by Columbia College, for instance, which is Barnard’s brother-institution. In fact, if Columbia College did publish such statistics, everybody would laugh indecorously. Changing the sex-denomination in Barnard’s report will show how absurd the thing would sound. Suppose, for example, Columbia College reported thus:

Fifty-four per cent of the alumni are engaged in paid occupations, and forty-six per cent are married. . . . From 1900, when only nine per cent of the men entered matrimony, the proportion of married alumni to unmarried has risen steadily. . . . The average number of children per marriage has not changed noticeably in the last five years. . . . An increasing number of the married men are retaining their business and professional connections.

– and so on. It does seem rather ridiculous. If one takes a strictly vocational view of education, which is undoubtedly the common view nowadays, probably these statistics on marriage are all right. Yet even at that, it takes two to make a marriage, and if one regards marriage as a vocation, one can hardly see why it should be regarded as so especially a woman’s vocation. How about a little equality?

God of Our Dollars

Goethe remarked sagely that man never knows how anthropomorphic he is. An advertisement lately put out by a booster magazine seems to show that the University





of Chicago's idea of God is reverting to a primitive Hebraism. The advertisement reports a dialogue between the dean of the divinity school and a representative of the magazine:

Could a man make more money if now and then he prayed about his business?

I think so, if he is honest and serious.

Could he get a better job?

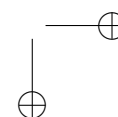
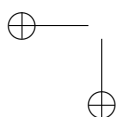
I haven't much doubt of it.

Improve his personality, make people like him, be more popular?

Certainly.

There is the good old tribal god for you, with his ear ever open to his children's prayers for the gratification of their ruling passion. You can deal with such a god as that, presumably on the ancient ten per cent basis – I wonder that the magazine did not think to ask whether the rake-off had gone up any since the Levitical schedule was promulgated. All I can say is that unless the University of Chicago has started a hefty suit for libel, that advertisement simply “lays over” anything I ever saw dished out in the guise of religion.

Meanwhile, in another department of the same university, an investigation has turned up something new about atomic structure, which is reported to construe “effective intelligence behind the phenomena of nature.” It admits the possibility of mind acting on matter, and suggests that the thoughts of men are perhaps the most important thing in the world. It also points to a kind of conditional immortality for human beings. The report says that this professor has the theory in shape

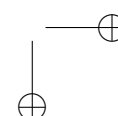
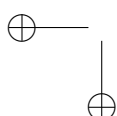




and expects to put it before the scientific world in the course of a month or so. Again this theory goes back to some fairly early speculations on the nature of God and man, and the achievement of immortality. It is a little less incongruous than the one emanating from the theological department, and I shall look with interest for its development.

Senators Will Be Curious

Our institutional and collective hypocrisy is so great that one can not get up a great deal of steam over individual hypocrisies. Mild amusement is about the best one can do over the New York *World's* report from Washington that about half of the collection of smutty books which Senator Smoot assembled for legislative purposes, has disappeared. Mr. Smoot was strong, it will be remembered, for a continuance of the customary censorship. In support of his contention he got together something over forty books as an exhibit. After they had served their purpose, he seems momentarily to have taken his eye off them, and half of them vanished away – vanished from the floor of the Senate, and while the Senate was in session, during which time outsiders are not admitted to the floor. Normally there would be something rather depressing in the thought of a crew of grown-up men imitating the surreptitious performances of idle adolescents, but under the circumstances it is probably about what one might expect.





Brummagem Education

In company with most good hundred-per-centers, I sacrificed last week to the cause of collegiate education. One's duties on these occasions consist of standing around, first on one foot and then on the other, waiting for the next assemblage of black gowns and colored hoods. It is a meditative occupation, more or less like fishing when you don't get any bites. After you have been at it awhile, you begin to wonder why the American college commencement has so many more ceremonies than seem necessary. I remember a college president once telling me that there was more fuss-and-feathers over conferring the baccalaureate degrees in his shop than the University of Oxford made over all the degrees it conferred in the course of a whole year. I like best the way of the foreign university. When the time comes, Oxford says, "Here's your degree and here's your hat; you now have an uninterrupted run to the grave. Out you go, and don't come back." Probably most of the flubdubbery that is squeezed into the American Commencement week is due to the desires of parents. Americans lead a very dull and colorless life as a rule, so when the boy graduates, they like to have the occasion smartened up with a lot of pageantry.

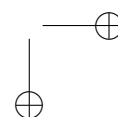
Nobody would begrudge it to them, even though it makes the week pretty tedious for the unattached outsider. As I watched the processions, however, I saw the need for a new sort of academic regalia to set off the go-getting type of college executive. The occasion had brought in several of these as visitors from other institutions, and they looked queer in the regulation gown and hood – they looked just like go-getters. The most





exacting garb a man can wear is evening dress; if he looks like a gentleman in evening dress, you may pretty well wager he is one. Next to evening dress comes the academic gown and hood. They set off a scholar very impressively, but they make a go-getter a diverting spectacle. The rotogravure section of the newspapers at this time of year usually has pictures of Mr. Hoover, Mr. Lamont, Mr. Owen Young, Mr. Morrow, and the like, attending commencement exercises somewhere or other, and wearing doctor's gowns and hoods. When I see them I realize what a humorous people we are. However, no doubt the go-getter is our institutional ideal in academic circles, as he is elsewhere. We still have one university in the United States – only one – where the professors have nothing to do with committees, college politics, or administration. I would give its name if I dared, but it might need money some day, and if this damaging fact were known, it could never get any.

All in all, any contact with American academic life, however casual, is a very depressing business. I often think of Renan's observation, made half a century ago, that "countries which, like the United States, have set up a considerable popular instruction without any serious higher education, will long have to expiate their error by their intellectual mediocrity, the vulgarity of their manners, their superficial spirit, their failure in general intelligence." To us, training and education – instruction and education – mean the same thing, and they are not the same. Almost anybody can be trained; very few can be educated. Training is relatively simple; education is so far from simple that even the educable person must sweat blood to get it. Well, then, we say in our





happy American fashion of dealing with such difficulties, that is easy – we’ll just call training education, and certify the trained man as an educated man. Then, you see, we shall have a whole race of educated people, and everybody will be allowed to pass muster, and be happy and satisfied. Thus our “educational institutions” have become training-schools, and the prospects are that the next batch of us will be even more interesting than the present, if that be possible. The rough thing about this, though, is that once and a while an American turns up who is really educable, and he, poor soul, is monstrously out of luck, for there is no place for him anywhere in our economy.

Here and there appears a sign of uncertainty about this state of things. I notice, for instance, that Mrs. Charles P. Taft has just given two million dollars to the University of Cincinnati to promote study of the humanities, by which she understands language, literature, mathematics, history and economics. I take this as indicating a sense that something ought to be done for education, properly so called. It is the first gift for an educational purpose that I have happened to notice – there may have been others – since two chairs of history were established, about four years ago, I think, in memory of the distinguished student of the Inquisition, Henry Charles Lea. Meanwhile I have seen reports in the papers of stupendous amounts being given for “research” in this or that; one enormous gift, I remember, was made lately for study and research in “social relations.” Beyond doubt, education is the Cinderella of the country. I should suppose that the University of Cincinnati would be an unlikely sort of place for her to find a home in,



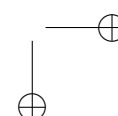
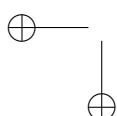


but one can never be sure. One must be glad of the gift, and even happier over the disposition that prompted it, but one would be more hopeful if it had been placed in an institution that could really make a business of that kind of thing without pretending to do anything else. I have nothing against the University of Cincinnati in the premises – Columbia, Yale, Harvard, or any similar institution would seem to be quite as unfavorable soil for planting such an endowment.

That Dreadful Average

Since I wrote about the colleges two weeks ago, another batch of commencement addresses has come up in the news. So many of them contain fundamental complaints of our educational system as to make me suspect that this is the season of repentance. President Hutchins of Chicago ranges himself beside President Butler of Columbia, and hits the nail squarely on the head, which Mr. Butler does not quite do. “The first duty of a college,” says Mr. Hutchins, “is to organize itself so that a student who wishes to become a scholar will not have insuperable obstacles put in his path.” He is reported, though not literally quoted, as having said further that the modern system is set up for the average student, with the result that in any well-organized university there probably is not a single regulation governing the curriculum that a really excellent student should not break.

Precisely so. This comes straight to my point that in no university, college or secondary school in the whole





country, as far as my knowledge goes, is there any place for an educable person; and this is so for no other reason in the world than that “the modern system is set up for the average student” – and the average student is ineducable. I do not say that he can not be trained, for he can, and there should be plenty of institutions equipped and ready for his training. Let all the schools, colleges and universities in the land resolve themselves nominally into the training-schools that they actually are. If they want the average student let them have him and make what they can of him. It is a laudable and necessary work. But let them stop pretending to be educational institutions, since they are notoriously nothing of the kind, and let them also stop pretending that the “average student,” to whose necessities they are geared, is an educable person, since he notoriously is not. Then in the second place, let us have here and there a secondary school, college and university which should be in a proper sense, educational institutions.

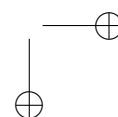
Let us look at the matter as it stands. President Butler’s observations in his commencement address at Columbia were quoted editorially two weeks ago. He said, “That dreadful average which all laws and governments and statistics so dearly love and aim to exalt, is the mortal enemy of excellence.” Mr. Hutchins said in like vein but more forcefully, “If we had time to think about education instead of being forced to provide something that would look like it for the multitudes who suddenly demanded it, we should direct our attention first to the achievement of the individual.” No doubt the State institutions, especially the universities, have done most to debase the idea of education and deprave its practice;





but among private institutions I know of none which have done more in this direction than Columbia University and the University of Chicago. On the occasion of Mr. Hutchins's speech, the University of Chicago conferred learned degrees upon 843 graduates; 200 of them doctor's degrees. Columbia's roster was probably longer; I did not count them. Now, Mr. Hutchins must know as well as I do that there have not been 843 educable students in the University of Chicago since it was founded. What Mr. Butler knows about the status of his student-population is hard to determine, but it would seem that he must at least suspect that his list of academic degrees represents a most gross and culpable exaggeration of school-ability. Yet there the degrees stand, *prima facie* equivalent to those wrested by educable persons from the jealous and step-motherly hand of an educational institution properly so called.

I do not take any stock in Mr. Hutchins's utterances, or in Mr. Butler's, nor shall I until I see something done about them. It is all very well to be under conviction, as our Methodist brethren used to say, but something more is necessary. One must experience a change of heart, and exercise repentance, and hustle around to mend things up as soon and as well as possible. Every school and college executive in the country is confronted with the plain question whether he shall educate the educable or train the "average student." He can not do both; and if he makes up his mind to either, it is competent for him to be frank about it. I have no notion whatever that Mr. Hutchins and Mr. Butler will carry self-examination and candor to that point. What I expect is that a year from now we shall hear some variant of the same complaint

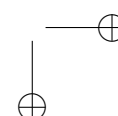
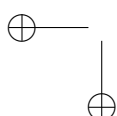




and witness another irruption of Brummagem doctors and bogus bachelors and masters.

Town and Country

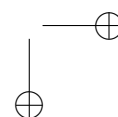
At this season of the year I often think of Mr. Dooley's friend Hogan, who became a commuter, and built a house in the country – a house that Dooley said looked as if it had been cut out with a scroll-saw. Dooley went out with him once for a week-end in the country, “where all th' good things iv life comes fr'm,” as Hogan assured him, but he stuck it out for only one night. Next morning he was up early and took the first train after breakfast, back to the city, “where all th' good things iv life goes to.” I think appreciation of the country in summer is more a matter of circumstance than of temperament. I never saw a country-bred person who did not enjoy country life more in the winter than in the summer. Perhaps one reason is that summer is associated with the memory of a lot of excruciating hard work. Living in the country the year round, on a small place that gives one just enough outdoor work to potter with pleasantly, is another matter. With a literary occupation, for instance, or some similar detached and unorganized job, no doubt one would enjoy all the seasons equally and thoroughly, and find it the best possible mode of existence. The next best for a person so situated, I should say, would be to stick to the country through the late spring, go back to it in the early fall, and spend the intervening time in town.





When I speak of the city, I mean the American city, and I have New York particularly in mind. The European technique of city-living is so satisfactorily developed that one does not need to bother oneself about a schedule of coming and going. City life is easy, as a rule, at all times. New York is a hard place at all times. The city worker in the organized job, from bank-president to day-laborer, escapes it when he can, which is usually in summer, and no matter whither he escapes, the change is good. But the person who carries his job mostly under his hat, and who wants to spend time enough in town to keep off mildew, finds the city more agreeable in the summer months. All his acquaintance has fled, nobody bothers him, nobody knows him, he makes no engagements, has no responsibilities. He has the sense of mild adventure, of gregarious loose-footed independence, that the tourist has in a foreign town. One may see and survey one's kind to the best advantage, for nobody is putting on any airs, and formalities are shaved down, or sweated down, to their lowest terms. I think it might be maintained, too, that such a person as I speak of is by and large more comfortable in the city during the heated term, than in the country.

Mr. Dooley thought so, and his reasons are so cogent that I can refer my reader to them for a defense of this heretical thesis. Of course I do not compare villa-life in the country, for instance, with slum-life in the city. What I mean is to compare general equivalents, established, if you like, by price. The comfort I am now getting, for instance, in the whole upper floor of a house in the country at twenty dollars a month, with other living expenses correspondingly low, is much more than





I would get in the city at an equal price. But it is not as much as I would get at an equivalent price, a price graded by the general difference in prices between here and New York. If one has to choose, in point of actual comfort, between the average summer-resort hotel and a New York hotel, paying not an equivalent price but even an equal price, or pretty near it, I would take the city hotel, world without end.

Besides this, the routine outdoor pleasures of the country seem organized chiefly for young people and for elderly people who are trying to keep young. This is not the case in Europe. One does not get the fun out of swimming, sailing, spooning, golf, and the like, that one used to get eighty-five or ninety years ago, *calidus juvenata* – not by a great deal. In Europe one can get a lot of fun out of resort-pleasures, because there are a good many people engaged in the kind that are appropriate to later life, and one may join in. The country is a good deal cleaner than the city, a little cooler at night, but I am not sure about its being so much quieter, or that rural noises are so much easier to get on with than city noises. There are dogs, crickets and mosquitoes by night, birds and domestic fowl by early dawn. In the city, the steam-riveter does not begin until eight o'clock; in the country the woodpecker keepeth not union hours. He starts drilling into your ridge-pole just a few minutes after the whippoorwill outside your window decides to knock off for the evening. The intervening time is completely filled in by the squinch-owl on the window-sill at the foot of your bed. When rosy-fingered dawn appears, the brown thrasher on the topmost limb begins to practise his whole repertory. It is all very fine and romantic





and poetic and all that sort of thing, but after a week or so you begin to feel that you would swap off most of the poetry for a night's sleep, at a ratio of sixteen to one.

The frogs keep up a running accompaniment to the nocturnal vaudeville, and they do it in a very workmanlike way. June-bugs appear in their season to help out, and are succeeded by miller-moths, which last the summer through. When you affect the outdoor life, you are convoyed by hornets and entertained by thunderstorms, wherein it seems that everything in the country is shattered by lightning except yourself. There is poetic grandeur in this too, no doubt, but you don't notice it while the bombardment is going on – you are down cellar, full length in the coal-bin. Where'er you walk in the country at this season, moreover, you are beset by imminent death from the motorist, who is a congenital assassin, a natural-born murderer, and very probably drunk *pardessus le marché*. No, I am all for the country on principle and in a general way, but I will take my chances with it in the winter, spring and fall, when everybody else except real country people troops into the city. New York is almost bearable in the summer; in winter it is intolerable. The country in winter is the acme of peace, comfort, quiet, well-being; in summer – well, any one may have my share. A day or two at a time, perhaps, but no more than that.

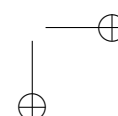
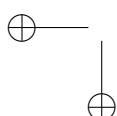
The theme of Philemon and Baucis will probably always be a best-seller, figuratively speaking, in every literature. An old couple from whom I rent, live below-stairs, pottering about with a few flower-beds, caring for a huge flock of magnificent hens which are comically tame and important-looking. The two old people have no interest





now but in each other; long years together have faded the rest of the human family away into a far and vague perspective. They are like the old couple whom Gogol celebrates in his “Old-Fashioned Farmers,” even more like than those that Turgenev writes of in his affecting story called “Old Portraits.” They are becoming rather feeble now, and when one dies the other will soon follow, there being nothing else to do. They have a little white cat, in flesh and spirit the perfect twin of the one I used to watch in Poitiers last summer, which is a great deal spoiled and much bored. It hunts around industriously for something to do, and mostly finding nothing, curls up on my stair-landing and sleeps, typifying the attitude of a newer generation held to its elders by an unsentimental bond of self-interest. The relation of these two old people is such as has long been held up as an ideal for one’s declining years, but is it really so desirable? Perhaps it only illustrates the astonishing adaptability of the human spirit; they may be each a mute inglorious Bonnivard. Who can tell?

One of the most remarkable curiosities of American city life is that it presents nothing for a civilized person to do after eight o’clock at night. Suppose he comes to New York – what is he to do of an evening? He can “go to a show,” hunt up his friends, go to a night club and defy the Volstead Act, or read in the public library. Those things are all very well, but suppose he does not just care for any of them at the moment. Suppose he has only the humble wish to stroll along interesting streets, to look at interesting faces, to sit in a café listening to interesting conversation – perhaps joining in, now





and then – and indulge in an evening of sentiment and reflection, with interesting people around him; not so close around him that he can't get away when he wants to, but close enough to give him an exhibit of their minds and manners. Where in an American city can he indulge that harmless disposition? Where in a European city can he not indulge it? I am told that in the English colonies, city life is as barren of human interest as ours, but I have never been in them; I know from experience that an evening in an English city is a terrible business, unless one takes up with some more or less mechanical means of warding off its boredom. But fully as dull as that – as dull and depressing an experience as I ever had – was getting through a Sunday evening in New York a while ago, when I deliberately put myself in the position of a stranger in the city – a stranger who did not choose to read, carouse or go in for some form of commercial amusement. And think of Washington! Think of a civilized stranger stranded in Washington for an evening, and then think of that same stranger dropped down in any second- or third-class capital on the Continent – in Copenhagen, Brussels, Buda-Pesth, even Luxembourg, which has only 25,000 inhabitants and is the capital of a country no bigger than Rhode Island.

It is in the amelioration of country life that the high development of the mechanics of civilization count for most; consequently country life in America is comparatively easy, and if one can retire from one's acquaintance and live in isolation – if one has occupational resources enough to permit one to do that with no fear of becoming lonely – it is relatively pleasant. It is city life in America which is difficult, uninteresting and objectionable, and

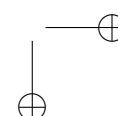
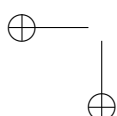




in all but a pecuniary sense, profitless. Country life in Europe, on the other hand, from what I have seen of it, appears to be relatively hard, on account of the lack of mechanical conveniences. It is rather a primitive business, and its petty irritations get on the nerves of a spoiled child of the machine age. But European city life is as interesting and delightful as ours is the opposite. Europe, too, makes up to you its deficiencies in country life by the great number of its small cities, or large towns, each with a strong assertive individuality, and a tradition of individuality running back, probably, to the Middle Ages. There are cities in Italy and in the Netherlands, hardly more than a good long rifle-shot apart, whose civilizations could be no more distinct from one another if they were separated by ten thousand miles, with no communications. Travel from city to city in America, and for all the individuality their civilizations bear, you may as well have stayed at home. Aside from the enjoyment of an incomparable natural scenery, and as far as distinctively human interests are concerned, travel in America is a most unrewarding pursuit. There are some exceptions to this, but they are relatively negligible.

Humanism for Others

The only thing worth noting in the odd controversy over humanism, aside from its oddness, is that the controversialists themselves seem so little touched by the spirit that they invoke. In this they remind me of the touchy absolutism of the Anti-Saloon League, or of the “one

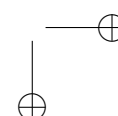
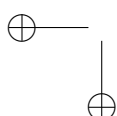




plain argument” which Lord Peter uses to overcome the doubts of his brethren in the “Tale of a Tub.” The spirit of humanism, in short, is a fine thing to recommend to somebody else, but the appropriation of it to oneself is a different matter. Any body of opinion must look for a certain amount of justification in the spirit and temper of those who profess it. One may paraphrase Whichcote’s excellent observation about religion, and say that there is nothing worse done than what is ill done for humanism; that must not be done in defense of humanism which is contrary to humanism.

Study in Paradoxes

One of the excellent consequences – or should one say compensations? I think not – of advancing age, is in the rapid dwindling of one’s sense of responsibility for Burbanking human society into a new and improved form. This exemption comes entirely from within, nor is it the fruit of disappointment and cynicism. It is released largely by observation and experience of how the things that one believes in actually work out. One believes in them as much as ever, and is all on the side of their being lived out. One also has as much faith as ever in the possibilities of the human race. But unforeseen things happen, and they keep happening so often and so decisively, and with such an air of inevitability about them, that before long one becomes aware that the Burbanking business has more to it than one thought. I sometimes remind myself of a friend living in Brussels sixteen years ago,





who rushed into her husband's bedroom one morning at the crack of dawn, saying "Here comes the German army right past the house! Hurry up and put on your dressing-gown." There was no hurry. For two days and three nights that stream of soldiery moved by without cessation. The German army was no circus-procession.

Many matters thus contribute to make our hindsight clearer than our foresight. Viewed by hindsight, some of my most cherished social theories work out in an odd way. For one thing, I am impressed by the ugliness resulting from their operation – freedom and equalitarianism, for instance. I am all for both; yet where liberty and equality most prevail, or are most thought to prevail, the resulting civilization is extremely unlovely. My present habitat in the country is near a seashore resort that thirty years ago rather looked down its nose at Newport's summer society as being an amalgam of the newly-rich. It was somewhat inaccessible; there were transportation-difficulties about getting there, which kept the crowds away. At present, anybody with a motorcar or the price of a middling long bus-ride may go there, and everyone goes. I am glad everyone can. The old life of the place was bottomed on a social theory that I utterly disbelieve in and regard as false and vicious. The new life is bottomed on an equalitarian theory that I believe in and subscribe to with all my heart, yet the old life gave rise to an amenity that was pleasing, beautiful and civilizing, and the new life has nothing of it, but is, on the contrary, tawdry and hideous.

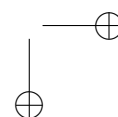
Thus the moment one goes at applying a social principle flatly, certain compensatory reactions seem to be set up. For instance, I am in favor of having everybody





able to read. I believe in the principle of it; I am all for equalitarianism in literacy. Yet when my theory is taken up and measurably put into effect, as it is in this country, just see the result – the quantity-production of a contemptible journalism, a contemptible literature, an unconscionable blatant puffing of both, and a corresponding degradation of literary values, literary tastes, literary habits. Of all the repulsive features of an equalitarian society, its literary feature seems to me the ugliest. I say this advisedly, for of late I have been emulating Bruneseau, and have followed the turbid course of some of the best-selling literature of the day, in books and periodicals, by way of knowing what goes on. My cardinal theory of society as shown by the substance of what I read, has set this course straight towards ignorance and vulgarity, while quantity-production salesmanship in literature – an offshoot of my theory – has succeeded in making ignorance and vulgarity arrogant.

Hence it is that one becomes a little circumspect about the imposition of one's theories, *vi et armis*. I have to recognize, with searchings of heart, that the sense of whatever in human society is enviable, graceful and becoming has been bred by a régime so monstrously unjust and flagitious that it had no right ever to exist on earth. I am not speaking now of inanimate cultural legacies in literature and the other arts, but of the tone of a people's actual social life. I remember being in a European country before the War, and a friend's saying to me, "Well here we are, where according to your social creed and mine everything is absolutely wrong, and yet these are the happiest people on earth." There was no doubt about it, they were. I wonder about the effect on





their happiness if my friend and I could by magic have conjured their infamous régime suddenly out of existence and replaced it by a hundred-per-cent democracy. I know the one phenomenon of American life on which there is agreement by all foreign critics and observers, is that nobody seems to be happy. Mr. Edison lately said he was not acquainted with anybody who was happy. Personally, my social theories reach far beyond anything that is contemplated by American institutions, since I am an individualist, anarchist, single-taxer and free-trader. I think also that the general course of things is in those directions. But whenever I feel inclined to hurry up the course of things, I ask myself how much at home I should feel in a society of my own creating, if I had to create it out of the material at present available.

Probably something more than a workable theory is necessary; very likely you have to have a people that knows how to work it. Otherwise you may get a lot of bad by-products. Logically, one would say that as existence becomes mechanically easier, life should become richer and fuller; instead it becomes emptier and poorer, and the more people there are who have access to increased ease of existence, the emptier and poorer it seems to become. The wider the spread of literacy, one would say, the higher should go the level of general intelligence; but it does not work out that way. I have always been a thoroughgoing feminist, strong for the emancipation of women; but while there has been a social gain “in principle” as the diplomats say, through their emancipation, there have been very grave collateral losses which were practically unpredictable. Probably the only way that society can profitably progress is the way it does

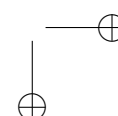
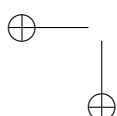




progress, by the long and erratic ins and outs of trial and error; and blind insistence on any theory, even a sound one, is to little purpose. One may best hang one's theory up in plain sight for any one to examine who is so disposed, and let it go at that. Even if I were in Moscow now, I do not think my wife would get me out in my pajamas at five in the morning to see the Bolshevik theory go by. There is a great deal of it, and it will be a long time on the way; and so I should snooze awhile, shave, dress, get my breakfast, and then repair to the front window and regard it attentively.

Study in Manners

Observing the inrush of "summer people" at this former rendezvous of fashion, I notice some odd contrasts. Most of the incomers are youngsters, and I notice with interest how much better-mannered the boys are than the girls. This may not be the general rule throughout the country, but it certainly holds here. When I was attending college commencement-exercises last month, I also remarked how much better-mannered the boys were than in my day. They did not impress me as having half the vigor and discipline of mind, the intelligence, the intellectual curiosity, that I used to see around me at college, and certainly not half the capacity for work, the ability to stand up against the exactions of a hard, uncompromising régime. But they were more than twice as well-mannered, not with the superficial and inculcated manners designed to make them shine as bond-salesmen or in the hierarchy





of Rotary, but the sterling good manners sprung from natural kindness. It seemed to me that civilization has scored a distinct advance in this respect. When I was at college, our manners were pretty formal, not to say crabbed, and by and large we were not a kindly lot.

I notice the same thing among the boys here; also that precisely the same manners and disposition that we used to have seems to have passed over to the girls. I saw a brother and sister, both under twenty, together in a shop the other day; they were a standard sample. He was courteous, kindly, considerate, agreeable, towards the shopkeeper; she was his exact opposite in every point – the sort that should have had her ear knocked off as fast as she grew a new one. Again, in the commencement season last month, I rode two hours with a car-full of girls just released from one of our high-grade eastern colleges, who should have been scrambled together and fried over a slow fire, just as we boys should have been in similar circumstances years ago. But as I said, I do not undertake to generalize from a very limited experience. The young people here may be a representative batch, or they may be something special. I know nothing about them except what I see, which is that the young men seem to be about as agreeable as the young girls are objectionable.

In putting down the girls as unattractive, however, I am quite aware that the term is relative. Nature always has her eye out for the biological interests of the race as a whole, and no doubt has managed one of her customary adjustments in this case. Hence probably these loutish, copper-colored, underbred young women are attractive enough to those whose natural business it





is to be attracted by them, and all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Like the Scotsman who was asked what his thoughts were at the sight of a funeral, I can only say I am awfu' glad it's na me. Old age "hath yet its sorrow and its toil," but it hath also its gladsome exemptions – let the civil young men fiddle along with their dingy Janes. I am all for them. But for everything that has been said lately about the alarming laxity of modern youth, I am not now and never have been able to observe anything that I could not match from the goings-on in my own antediluvian period. I wonder where these alarmists spent their youth. Not where I spent mine, unless they spent it blind and deaf – and I spent mine among what passed for pretty good company at that. I knew the youth of the later Victorian era, and the youth of the gay 'nineties and after, and I am here to state that if the youth of the present day is out to beat their pace, it has to show a cleaner pair of heels than any I have seen yet. My own impression is that "laxity" is a pretty constant quantity from generation unto generation.

"Summer Reading"

As set forth in this column recently, I have been trying to loosen up my mental ankyloses with large doses of popular literature, borrowed from acquaintances who keep an accumulation of it here as "summer reading," for casual guests, I suppose, about whose discrimination in such matters they have doubts. The detective stories and mystery stories bear the clearest evidence of having been





written by formula – a formula displaying curious conventions. Why must the mighty genius always be a rank amateur and non-professional outsider? Why not a regular member of the force? Why, in all but the lowest order of these tales – where the writer has not enough ability to formulate a half-way plausible eccentricity – why must he always be beyond endurance eccentric or affected? I should think it would be a first-rate publication-stunt to let the roughneck police inspector solve a mystery just once, to the confusion of the eccentric dilettante or the superhumanly gifted newspaper-reporter. Why must the regular police always be represented as the height of organized stupidity? They are not actually; some of them are mighty capable men. Let's have a Javert or two among the next batch of marionettes; and by the way, what would the great Javert think of some of the police-methods attributed to the regular force? It is said that he never laughed, but if so it is because he died before the vogue of the mystery-story came in. Why, moreover, does the young lady always – but let us adjourn the inquest. *Hic finis fandi.*

As for books outside this category, I was mostly interested in checking up on their blurbs. There is grim fun in picking up a busted and extinct week's-wonder of last year or later, and noticing what was said about it by reviewers; sometimes by reviewers who had too good a reputation to lose, before they sent it out to walk the streets. Why do publishers print blurbs, and how long will they keep it up? Surely no one is, no one *can* be, taken in by them any longer – and yet – and yet – one remembers how Hazlitt characterized the public, and what Barnum said; and they knew the public better than





I do. One of the books in my assortment was called “Bad Girl.” I read the blurbs, and then I read the book, and how the mischief the reviewers see in it what they say they see, passes my comprehension. It is nothing against the book that it deals with a very low order of people, but everything against it that not one of them ever is, thinks, says or does anything that can conceivably be of the slightest interest to anybody. I would like to take a job for a year at running a book-column or a “literary supplement,” if I could have a free hand. I would give it out that no book would be mentioned in my columns except such as for some definite reason – perhaps a negative reason – were worth reading. Many books would get only a four-line notice, but this would mean only that the reasons for recommending them could be told in four lines, and not at all that the book that required forty lines or four hundred was the better book or the more strongly to be recommended.

The Oxometer

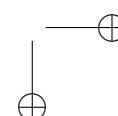
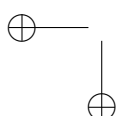
Glancing at Mr. Coolidge’s daily syndicated colyum, I am reminded of what to me is one of the most vivid and pleasing expressions in our vivid American vernacular, viz., “throwing the bull,” or “shooting the bull.” I wonder where it came from and how it originated. Some day I must look it up, for it always charms me, especially since I heard the other day of an invention that my friend Bill M. said he is working on and hopes soon to make commercially practicable. He calls it the oxometer. It is





a device to be installed wherever there is conversation or oratory going on, and the idea is that it automatically separates the bull from the solid substance of the discourse, leaving the latter as a residuum. There is an immense field for this ingenious mechanism. The halls of Congress and our State legislative assemblies alone represent a good potential market. Then there are the public dinners, the meetings of our innumerable societies for the promotion of this-or-that, and the international "conferences." If the naval conference at London had installed an oxometer, the residuum left after all the bull was racked off would have been nil. Bill thinks the radio will be an enormous help to him. He is very sanguine about that. He expects that in a couple of years or so after his invention goes on the market, every purchaser of a radio set will buy an oxometer without any pressure of advertising.

The trouble with Bill's oxometer is that it meets only half of a great public need. It won't work on the printed page, and as everyone knows, the printed page is most in need of this great device. Even counting the radio, there is much more bull disseminated by type than by word of mouth. Bill says he has thought of that. He intends to work out a new type of oxometer that shall combine sight and sound, like the talking pictures. He will patent the complete instrument, and hold it for a while until the market for the simple sound-device shows signs of saturation. Bill is a good business man. Just incidentally, while my mind was occupied with thoughts of this great invention, a newspaper-man happened to mention that the telegraph-English used by newspapers for their cable-dispatches often performs a function like





that of the oxometer. He quoted a line from some Australian politician's speech that had come in over the cable the day before: "Smith outpoints path duty leads heights glory." The word "outpoints" is code-English for "points out." When the elided words are filled in, the sentence reads just like Mr. Coolidge or Mr. Hoover on dress-parade. Leaving them out, however, does seem somehow to clarify the bull.

Dining in the Motor Age

Up here in this district where I am rustivating, I am reminded daily of my old friend D.'s bitter complaints about the degeneration of the art of cooking. D. is a Parisian of the old school, bachelor and banker, who knows what's what, and knows where it is to be had – or where it was to be had. The last time I saw him, he was foaming at the mouth over the way the food at his favorite suburban resorts had run down. He laid it to the motorcar. In the old leisurely days, when people went on their outings behind horses at twelve miles an hour, they were content to wait long enough for a decent hand-tailored dinner to be got ready before pushing on. Now, travelling thrice as fast, they want their meals got ready in one-third the time, or less, and are one-thirtieth as particular about what they eat. Consequently, according to D., the whole suburban table in the neighborhood of Paris has gone to the dogs. Even worse than that, if possible, D. says, the general amenities attendant on the old-time leisurely ways have disappeared also.





The same thing is true of the district where I am. There used to be a great regional cuisine here; its traditions run back a couple of centuries or more. The old-time cooks had a reputation unto the ends of the earth, and they used to concoct an infinity of local dishes which were acknowledged with reverence among all peoples, nations and languages. The traditions are still observed, after a fashion, in private houses, but in all public eating-places they are obsolete. These places now no longer cater to the informed, the experienced and the discriminating, but to people who come along from God knows where in motor-cars, eager to snatch a bite of anything, and push on. For the most part, they would eat raw dog without knowing the difference. I often think of one of the most distinguished *restaurateurs* in New York who retired from business at the very height of his reputation a dozen years ago. He said he had always had gentlemen for his clients, and had always had the kind of cooking and service that were appropriate to gentlemen, and now he found that he could no longer have either.

The matter of service, as well as the motor-car, has raised Cain with the amenities of the table. Leisurely eating has pretty well gone out; the old-timers among us who are still in the habit of helping out the sense of taste with a seasoning of conversation suddenly find that they are blocking traffic and that the hostess is beginning to get nervous. This is because she knows the servants are getting nervous; they want to go out and ramble on the beach with their beaux or their best girls. I am all on their side, not only theoretically but practically – if the only way we can cultivate decent social amenities is at their expense, I don't want to see the amenities come





back. But this is another illustration of the curious fact that I spoke of a few weeks ago, that the social theory which one approves of and believes in always takes shape in ugliness, while a high order of social amenity has always been brought about by the practical denial of amenity to great masses of people. The meals one really enjoys most are those that are extemporized when the servants are all off for the evening. It is interesting to notice the difference in the atmosphere of the table. The sense of leisure prevails, conversation picks up, and all hands feel licensed to have a good time, because they feel that they can have it free from a nervous and disapproving surveillance. They can indulge their social instincts free of all consciousness, as Mr. Dooley said, that they are “cr-rushin’ th’ life out iv th’ prolotoorios.”

Pattern Writing

One wonders whether the production of talking pictures will drag bottom on the fact that while almost any sort of scenario will act – for motion-picture purposes, at least – not every sort will talk. In other words, writing dramatic dialogue is not so easy as putting acted scenes together for the movies, and there are not so many mechanical devices available for helping it out. Probably the industry will develop some appropriate kind of pattern-writing, as the magazines have done with the short story, and as book-publishers have done on as large a scale, almost, with the detective yarn, thus adding one more variant to our extensive stock of escape-literature. There is plenty

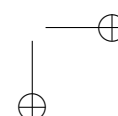
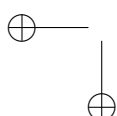




of cleverness and ingenuity available for this, but until it is whipped into shape and a formula established, the industry may have trouble in finding plays enough to satisfy the market.

Earning Immortality

The death of Sir A. Conan Doyle has revived a little fitful newspaper comment on spiritism, but hardly as much or of such a quality as might be expected. I think belief in the persistence of human personality after death is not as general as it used to be. The position of modern science, as far as an ignorant man of letters can understand it, seems not a step in advance of that held by Huxley and Romanes in the last century. When Moleschott and Büchner declared there was nothing in the world but matter and force, Huxley said that there was pretty plainly a third thing, *i.e.*, consciousness, which was neither matter nor force or any conceivable modification of either. Its phenomena occurred, as far as we knew them, invariably in association with matter and force, but if any one said they were inseparable from such association, he must ask him how he knew that; and if any said they were not inseparable from it, he must ask the same question. Romanes also observed that the transition from the physics of the brain to the facts of consciousness is unthinkable; and that being so, obviously nothing can be predicated about the persistence of consciousness, even upon the ground of probability, quite as Huxley said. I am unable





to see that more modern science has carried us beyond this position of pure agnosticism.

Perhaps one reason for the falling-off of belief in a continuance of conscious existence is to be found in the quality of life that most of us lead. There is not much in it with which, in any kind of reason, one can associate the idea of immortality. Selling bonds, for instance, or promoting finance-companies, seems not to assort with the idea of an existence which can not be imagined to take any account of money or credits. Certain other of our present activities might be imagined as going on indefinitely, such as poetry, music, pure mathematics or philosophy. One can easily imagine an immortal Homer or Beethoven; one can not possibly imagine an immortal Henry Ford or John D. Rockefeller. Probably belief can not transcend experience. If we believe that death is the end of us, very likely it is because we have never had any experience of a kind of life that in any sort of common sense we could think was worth being immortal; and we know we have had no such experience. As far as spiritual activity is concerned, most of us who represent this present age are so dead while we live that it seems the most natural thing in the world to assume that we shall stay dead when we die.

I have often wondered whether this idea was not behind the curious interruption that St. Paul makes in his letter to the Corinthian Christians who were disbelievers like ourselves. He gives them all the arguments he can think of, but interrupts himself by throwing in a quotation from the dramatist Menander, which at first sight seems out of place: "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt a right line of morals." Corinth had a civilization somewhat





akin to ours in its ideals; it was highly materialistic, spiritual activity was at a very low level, and appreciation of the things of the spirit was correspondingly weak. St. Paul may have thought, as was no doubt the case, that his converts were unable to believe in a future life, not from any lack of knowledge, but on account of their evil communications – they had never engaged in any kind of activity that was worth being immortal. If they wanted to believe, argument would not help them much; they had better hustle around and get some experience of a different kind of life, and belief would probably follow upon experience, as it usually does. The weakness of spiritism always seemed to me to lie in its neglect of the evidential value of this kind of experience. I know I could witness the most striking spiritist demonstration that I ever heard of, without being moved either to belief or disbelief; but I do not think I could engage long in any purely spiritual activity without being somewhat prepossessed towards belief.

In speculating on such matters, one does not see why life beyond death should not be as much of an achievement as life before death. We all know that life has to be the subject of pretty close management; if we do not adjust ourselves to our physical environment, our physical bodies die pretty promptly; and it is conceivable that a failure to adjust ourselves to our spiritual environment might result similarly. Organized Christianity has always represented immortality as a sort of common heritage; but I never could see why spiritual life should not be conditioned on the same terms as all life, *i.e.*, correspondence with environment. Assuming that man has a distinct spiritual nature, a soul, why should it be





thought unnatural that under appropriate conditions of maladjustment, his soul might die before his body does; or that his soul might die without his knowing it? There seems to be a pretty good analogy of nature behind the idea that spiritual existence, if at all possible, is possible only as something to be achieved by purposeful effort. Perhaps relatively very few human personalities will survive physical death – granting that any do – and the great majority simply disappears. Perhaps this survival awaits him alone who has made it rather strictly his business to discern his spiritual environment and bring himself into adjustment to it; perhaps it is only he who at death, with

*all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.*

Geschäft Within Limits

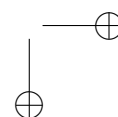
This is a strange set of people that I find myself among, up here in the country; I have never seen their like anywhere in America, and I wish there were more of them. They like to work, and they are prosperous, but they refuse to be dominated by their business. They resent an over-big rush of trade as keenly as the rest of America grabs for it, and cajoles and lies and grovels for it. Not long ago I heard a man say he was not going to handle a certain product any more. “Perfect nuisance,” he said. “I can’t keep a pound of it in my store. I hid in two barrels the first of last week, and it was all gone by Wednesday night.” A friend wanting some furniture





moved, telephoned a local artist in the trucking line, who 'lowed he didn't think he'd care to take the job – “pretty busy just now – better get So-and-so (naming a nominal competitor) – he does that sort of thing first-rate.” I met a man who makes a delicious cold-weather table product, and told him that since summer was getting on, I supposed he was beginning to think about starting up for the season. “No, sir-ee,” he said. “I started early last year just to oblige two or three customers, but it wasn't any time at all before the retailers in X and Y (naming the two neighboring cities) heard of it and came down on me, and I was working full time before I knew it. You bet I'm not going to do that again this year.”

It is a great privilege to sojourn among such people; one gets up an enormous admiration for their independence, self-respect and insight into the real values of life. Also for their tolerance, for like all other really strong and self-respecting people, they are immensely tolerant; the intolerant person may put up as good a bluff at these virtues as Theodore Roosevelt did, but time will always show him to be cotton-backed. Up here your private affairs are your private affairs, and they are not a subject for investigation or criticism. There are people of distinction here. It seems odd to find one of the best physicians in the country – or in the world, for that matter – in this village. He says he could not practise any other way than as he does, and would not take the best city practice in Christendom at any price. He has a turn for chemistry, and once in a while stews up some curious preparations, among them the most satisfactory and pleasant general disinfectant that I ever saw. It is as much as one's life is worth to get hold of this, or any





other of his preparations, because he does nothing with them commercially. Two big drug firms tried at different times to buy them out and exploit them, but did not succeed. "They wanted me to show 'em how to make those things up in hogshead lots," said the doctor. "I told them they wouldn't make up that way and be good for anything. They didn't seem to care whether they were good for anything or not, so long as they could make them up in quantity and get them on the market, so I said I wouldn't waste time talking about it any longer."

French and English

Perhaps the poverty of the French language (or perhaps one might better say its thriftiness, its stringent economy of words) is largely what imparts a distinction to the speech of those who use it. Last summer, for instance, I heard a commonplace person in a very ordinary walk of life speak of a region south of Tours as being "in a privileged position" in respect of climate; and also heard another speak of a young lady as "pretentious." These turns of speech struck me at the time, I remember, as carefully chosen and rather elegant, considering that they lay in the mouths of uneducated persons. In thinking about them, however, it appeared that the language did not afford any other way of saying what these persons wanted to say; at least, if it did, I did not know what it was. Our rich tongue affords a dozen different ways of conveying these ideas, mostly by slang or some sort of shoddy paraphrase; the young lady might be "snooty" or





“high-hat” or “up-stage” or perhaps “ritzy” – I am not quite sure of that one – and the region might “have an uncommon good lie.” French may have equivalents for all these, but I never heard of them, and I doubt their being used much, for it is only in the stranger’s ear and not the native’s, apparently, that the correct expressions sound at all formal – I overheard them by chance, and they were not used for my benefit. One might draw the old inference, I suppose, that with languages as with folks, the poor are more moral and have better manners than the rich. Perhaps the French Academy is so careful of the language, knowing that when the poor goes bad, like Hugo’s *mauvais pauvre*, he goes shocking bad.

I think the main reason why English is making the best bid to become a universal language is that one can get a working knowledge of it with so little effort. There are no inflections worth talking about, no artificial genders, and the order of the sentences is logical. Nothing is easier for a foreigner than to get up a good conversational use of English; he can do it in no time at all, for even our lunatic spelling will not bother him much until he tries to write, because in conversation he is guided by the sound of the words, not their looks. This induces a high hopefulness in the foreigner and delivers him over unto vain imaginations, for right there is where, in the phrase of the poet, he is sucked in. It is only after he has learned to speak English ever so well and easily that he becomes aware that he can never learn it. Only then do its insurmountable difficulties appear, and thenceforward he keeps to an attitude of humility, down under his desk with his head in the waste-basket. He can never learn the language, poor chap, nor yet can we ourselves;





the best of us has the chastening consciousness that he is meddling with something immeasurably beyond his powers. Take two very common words, especially common this summer, “drought” and “drouth”; which is right? The dictionary says that “drought” is poetic, and “drouth” is archaic; so if you are not a purist you take your choice – both the same price. If you are a purist, you dodge the difficulty by using a synonym; all right, look it up in Rogêt, and see what you find! When one gets past the easy conversational stage, one realizes that English is a great language if you don’t weaken. A Frenchman would be ’arf out of his mind if he caught his dictionary playing him a trick like that.

Temperament and Art

Hearing the Philharmonics rendition of the Manzoni “Requiem” at the Lewisohn Stadium the other night, under the direction of Mr. Albert Coates, gave me rather an interesting surprise. It was the first time I had ever happened to hear this work performed in any but the grand manner, and Mr. Coates, who is a first-class conductor of opera, gave it every bit of operatic flavor that the score would bear; so I now understand why the unregenerate sometimes call it the Aïda Requiem. One would not perhaps care to hear it done that way regularly, and I am very glad that my introduction to it in the operatic manner came through such a distinguished and brilliant performance as Mr. Coates’s. It was a pleasing experience, too, to look back from the field at the immense





crowd on the seats; the weird green glow from the distant lights softened and blended the colors of the dresses, making the people look like *arlecchini*. One of the most moving performances of the “Requiem” that I ever heard was, curiously enough, at the Metropolitan, just after the War; Mr. Setti conducted it, and it was one that must have given him peculiar satisfaction. Greatest of all my memories of the “Requiem,” however, is that which goes back to the Augusteo, in Rome, almost twenty years ago, when it was given in the authentic grand style under Eduardo Mascheroni. I think the contralto soloist was Esposito, but I am not quite sure; the others were Russ, Bonci and Nazareno de Angelis. I sometimes wonder whether Fascist Rome can muster another such spirit of sensitive and intelligent reverence as pervaded that audience and communicated itself to the performance.

There were thousands at Mr. Coates’s performance; the Stadium was bung-full, and the audience was self-disciplined to perfection, eager, attentive, absolutely quiet. I noticed one thing; a little thing, but as I thought, significant – I did not see a single person smoking while the performance was going on, though all hands seemed to be smoking beforehand and during the intermission. I got the impression which American audiences of late invariably have given me, of people who are wishfully doing everything that human beings can do to draw upon a reserve of emotional power within themselves which is simply not there to be drawn on; trying their best to live for the moment from an unattainable depth of being. Probably it will take them fifteen or twenty generations to learn that one can not do that sort of thing occasionally and at the moment. One has to live from that depth





of being pretty much all the time; the human spirit is not capable of being so thoroughly departmentalized. “One could not pass,” said von Humboldt, “from Siberia into Senegal without losing consciousness.” Europeans understand this better than we do, and the spirit animating a European audience – at least in such parts of Europe as I am acquainted with – is witness to the difference.

Also, and necessarily, the spirit animating a performance. I saw a curious instance of this last spring at the Metropolitan, when a young American girl played the part of Nicklaus. She sang beautifully, acted perfectly and was very lovely to look at; there was nothing one could possibly find fault with, except that she did not have *in her* – in her inmost being – one single actual point of emotional contact with Nicklaus. She had never in all her life felt as Nicklaus did, she had not a single sensibility in common with him. She remained throughout a being from another world, who would have been perfectly in place at the wheel of a high-powered car, getting her “thrills” out of a pace of seventy-two miles an hour; one perceived that at once. Another American girl played the part of the Venetian courtesan, Giulietta, in the second act of the same opera, and played it beyond criticism in respect of voice, singing, acting, appearance; but she, again, had no emotional correspondence whatever with the character she was playing. She was simply a good, conscientious, capable, hundred-per-cent American girl from Texas, who was going through the motions of something as foreign to her inmost self as anything one could imagine. The Metropolitan has evidently capitulated to the complaint that American singers get no chance, and has not bettered itself artistically by so doing. It would





seem that emotionally the American must long remain the *à peu près* that Stendhal found him, and that is a killer for an operatic career of any distinction beyond that of meritorious industry.

A Cruel and Infamous Régime

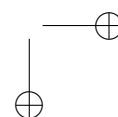
As the anniversary of Sacco's and Vanzetti's dreadful death comes round, I am reminded of the view that intelligent Europeans took of it at the time. I am an unworthy member of one of the most conservative clubs in Europe; every member of it, except myself, is as solidly Tory as Alexander Hamilton and as intelligently conscientious about his Toryism as John Jay. I shall never forget how outraged and dumfounded these men were when they read that the execution had actually taken place; none of them thought it could possibly happen. What would seem odd to an American is that they all believed Sacco and Vanzetti guilty, and were all for their being executed – but not after seven years of shilly-shallying about it. Those seven years were what stuck in their crop; they simply could not understand the barbarism that would keep two men dangling between life and death for seven years, and then execute them. They regarded me with a polite and puzzled curiosity, as if saying to themselves, “This man really looks and acts somewhat like a human being – but what sort of country can it be that he comes from?” One member, a retired general, as reactionary as thirty-six policemen, mustered up courage to ask me some questions about the affair. I





explained the Massachusetts law to him, showing that it was all regular, according to the statutes in such case made and provided, and he finally got it through his head. "You must permit me to sympathize with you," he observed, "in living under a cruel and infamous régime."

The Sacco-Vanzetti memorial meeting at Boston had my best wishes for success, but I did not attend it. Since the judicial murder of those two men, my repugnance to setting foot in that State has become invincible; it is the feeling one has instinctively towards anything monstrous and troglodytic. To the best of my information, the unconscionable law which finally determined the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti is still in force, and I can not escape the conclusion that it is in force by consent of the people of Massachusetts. Also, I hear that Judge Thayer, the Jeffreys of Massachusetts, is still alive and still on the bench; and the same conclusion follows. I am told, moreover, that Mr. Lowell is still president of Harvard, and that there are citizens of Massachusetts who are willing to speak to him and even take him by the hand. So long as these conditions persist, a civilized person must feel some reluctance about entering the State. One has every sympathy with the fine old Rhode Islander, Thomas Robinson Hazard, who in his "Jonnycake Papers" wrote of the Narragansett Indian war as "instigated against the rightful owners of the soil, solely by the cursed godly Puritans of Massachusetts and their hell-hound allies, the Presbyterians of Connecticut; towards whom I feel as all good Rhode Islanders should, or as old Miss Hazard expressed herself when in the





Conanicut prayer-meeting she thanked God that she could hold malice forty years.”

Logic and Licenses

My old friend E. was trained by the Jesuits in his early days, and ever since then his mind has worked by second nature in the sequences of formal logic. In conversation with him one day last week, the subject of bankruptcies and business failures came up, and their enormous cost to society, since finally they all have to be paid for out of production. E. broached an interesting idea. Since apparently we must have more or less governmental regulation of business, and since we seem likely to have more of it than less, as time goes on, why not carry it to its full logical length at once? E. is in favor of not letting anybody go into any kind of business without a license. As things are now, he says, anybody can go into business, regardless of ability, training or responsibility; and society at large has to shoulder the burden of a great many failures and bankruptcies in consequence. He would have a licensing board to go over all candidates with a fine-tooth comb, as is now done with taxi-drivers, and none but those who survived the ordeal could enter the ranks of commerce or industry.

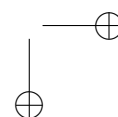
As I said, my old friend is a logician of the hardboiled Jesuit type. There is great reason in his plea that whereas we do not let incompetent doctors, dentists or taxi-drivers ply their trades because of the prospective damage they would do, we ought not to let incompetent persons go





into business and upset things generally by futilities and failures. He illustrated this view by instancing the cataclysm that has overwhelmed the book business. “If the people who have smashed the old-line trade by getting out dollar books can’t make good – if they find they can’t get out dollar books and show a profit – they ought to go to jail for busting the business. If they do make good, then the old-line publishers ought to go to jail for fleecing the public all these years.” In E.’s view, selling under production-cost under any circumstances and even to the extent of a nickel’s worth, is the one capital crime for which there should be neither composition nor lenience. Any practitioner caught at this should lose his license and never be allowed to practise again, either in this world or the next, in *sæcula seculorum*, *Amen*, and from this decision there should be no appeal.

Whatever be the actual worth of the idea, it is a great joy, in these days of slovenly thinking, and mostly of no thinking, to pass an hour with some one whose mental processes go on strictly in *modo et figura*, under the fine old disparaged Continental training, which I fancy the Jesuits still give, but which is unknown elsewhere. One of his theses I should like to hear challenged scholastically by some modern Scotus or William of Ockham. E. says, if you do not pay your income-tax, you are fined or locked up for cheating the Government out of revenue. From this he concludes, “*in tertio primæ*, in *Darii*, or elsewhere,” that if you sell under cost, you are likewise depriving the Government of revenue, and should undergo the same penalty. I wish E. would go out some night with a hammer and some tacks, like another Luther at Wittenberg, and post this thesis on the door of Trinity





or St. Thomas's church. Perhaps some counterpart of Dr. Eck might be found – there are certainly plenty such in those congregations – to take him up on his economic heresies, and the debate would be worth walking miles to attend.

It occurred to me that E.'s licensing-scheme might fall in better with Russia's economic policy than our own; and our talk veering off in this general direction, E. treated me to another logical excursus on the practical identity, from the strictly social point of view, of the Russian system with our own. In Russia, a few hundred men own everything and run everything, business and politics; they are the Government. In America, a few hundred men also own and run everything. They are not the Government, but they own and control the Government, and operate through it. The American system simply has one cog-wheel more than the Russian. The social upshot of both systems is the same; that is to say, in both Russia and America, a few hundred men own and run everything, and have all the rest of us working for them. This is managed in America by mergers, interlocking directorates and similar devices; in Russia, by direct Governmental action. The idea is interesting and well worth thinking about, particularly in view of all the loose talk current about "democracy."

English and Englishmen

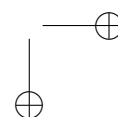
Although the thought of being under obligations to Mr. James W. Gerard is almost insufferably unpleasant, I fear





I must bear with it on account of the immense amount of amusement I got out of his recent stirring up of British public opinion. I remember when during the War a gang of British janizaries were over here coolly taking charge of all of our governmental machinery that they could get their hands on, one of our officials remarked to me that there was nothing more unbearable than the Englishman's naive assumption of a natural right to rule. Similarly there are few things more diverting than his touchiness over the most gentle and discreet suggestion of a tit-for-tat. It is quite all right, for instance, to establish Englishmen in American centers of publicity to see that the policies of the old country, her history, her civilizing and humanitarian achievements, the superiority of her institutions, and all that sort of thing, are fully and properly set forth. But plant an American publicist in a similar situation in England for a similar purpose, and the lion emits a hoarse roar. I wonder how long an American journalist would last with the *Daily Telegraph* or the *Manchester Guardian* in the capacity of two British journalists that I know of who are with papers of corresponding importance here.

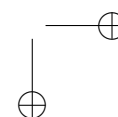
Of course no one thinks of blaming the noble Briton. All this is our own responsibility; it is the price of indulging the morbid American appetite for toads. The noble Briton sees America as it appeared in the late Mr. Page or Mr. Whitelaw Reid, and keeps his eye steadfastly to the main chance, as it is quite in human nature to do, the world over – why not? “Them as ’as, gits,” and as long as America chooses to appear in that guise, so long Britain is entitled to make off with the windfalls accruing from America's rather ignoble preference. But what must





fill other countries with wrathful envy is the remarkably cheap rate at which Britain gets these advantages, and the number of them that are provided her by native organizations at no cost at all. For instance, the other day I was looking over a list of reference-books on the subject of politics, recommended by the Carnegie Corporation for purchase by college libraries. The British Foreign Office could not have compiled a better list, considering the books excluded as well as those included. I thought at the time that perhaps it is after all providential that the hire learning of America does not “take” any oftener or strike in any deeper than it does.

This brings me to consider what seems a curious anomaly. In one of Mr. Hoover’s campaign speeches he congratulated the country on having ten times as many students in institutions of the hire learning as any other nation can boast. He can not have been far wrong; in fact, I should say his statement was moderate. New York City alone has fifteen colleges and universities, with a student-population of 100,000 in round numbers; Columbia having 37,000, New York University 35,000, the City College 15,000, and so on. Yet according to the researches of Mr. Duffus, conducted under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation, Americans do not voluntarily read more than one book apiece – any kind of book – every two months; six books per person per year. They buy approximately two books per year per person; and the public pays for books not more than one-half of one per cent of its collective income. This disparity seems remarkable and worth looking into. Is there something in the American system of education that breeds a distaste for books; if so, what is it? In other countries things





seem to work the other way. In Germany, for instance, where only one-tenth as many go to college and the university as in America, people buy and read many more books, and pay a larger proportion of their income for them. The same is true of Scandinavia, France and the Netherlands.

It used to be a complaint against our colleges that they did not inculcate a love for English literature by “teaching” it. They mended their ways promptly about thirty years ago, and went to teaching it with a vengeance. Like most new converts, they carried their orthodoxy to an excess beyond the Pope’s most ambitious dreams; as my grandfather used to say, they began to serve God as though the devil was in them. Looking at their curricula now, one would say that English and English literature are the subjects most largely and heavily patronized; at first sight one is moved to say they are over-patronized, but when one presently notices that one of our great universities offers a course in cake-icing, and one of our leading woman’s colleges offers courses in baby-tending, one is reconciled, after a fashion. It does not appear, however, that with all these efforts to inculcate a respect for our mother tongue and a love for its literature, much more reading is done, or much better reading, than went on in the times of ignorance, when “courses in English” were no more thought of in our academic circles than courses in Choctaw. In fact, I am prepared to maintain that the general run of reading done throughout the country was of a considerably higher order in those days; and I am prepared to prove it by exhibiting publishers’ lists of the period, a good many of which I have examined





lately, to assure myself that memory is playing no tricks with me, and that I really know my ground.

The delightful autobiography of that very delightful man, the late Brander Matthews, makes a complaint of the kind I have just referred to. Mr. Matthews was a product of Columbia in its pre-university days, when it was Columbia College, an institution of character and quality, the days of Barnard, van Amringe, Henry Drisler and Charles Short. He regretted very much that there was no English taught at Columbia then, and that the delights of English literature were withheld from him. The complaint amused me, for I could not help wishing to ask him, on the evidence of the autobiography itself, how much better off he would be, and in what respect, if he had had all the “courses in English” that the modern college supplies. The book shows that he had been over pretty nearly the whole field of our literature, and to such good purpose that I can not imagine how any formal training in Columbia would have been of any particular service to him. The book also gives evidence that he wrote English just about as a pupil of Drisler in Greek and Short in Latin would be expected to write it. What more does one ask? As far as I can see, Columbia did pretty well by him. A passage in his reminiscences makes me suspect the truth of the matter to be that the authorities of Columbia worked Brander middling hard and made him sweat a good deal more than suited him. It was a little way they had. Probably his mind reverted to this with a touch of envy, when in his later days he saw huge hordes of limp ignorami sliding effortlessly through Columbia on ways carefully greased for their convenience.



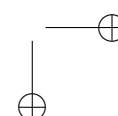
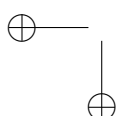


I should think, however, that on the contrary, the sight would have made him bless his lucky stars.

Man's Inhumanity

An unpleasant but inevitable development of modern life is its inhumanity. In this respect one could hardly pick worse times to live in than these. I refer particularly to the light estimate put upon human life, and the morbid interest displayed – one need not go so far as to say pleasure – in the infliction of pain and suffering upon human beings. There are curious anomalies, too, that are observable about this state of mind. Science is very busy, never more so, with the task of increasing longevity, enhancing health and making life comfortable and easy, and there is an enormous amount of practical interest in the work. It is easier to get big money given for such purposes than for any other. Welfare work of almost every kind also commands a lively interest. The official attitude of our society is highly humanitarian, the attitude of the individual toward the individual is likely to be just the opposite.

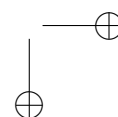
Putting it concretely, we seem to have, for instance, a good many people who are quite capable of giving ten thousand dollars for cancer research or some other scheme for making life longer and happier, and equally capable of great indifference toward the sufferings or death of casual pedestrians whom they carelessly run down with automobiles. Considering our great collective or official interest in humanitarian endeavor, there is some humor





of a macabre type in the fact that we kill thirty-five thousand people a year in motor-car accidents. One would like to see an actuarial estimate of the life-years lost in this way and of the life-years saved by the Life Extension Institute, for example. It is highly doubtful, I think, that the balance would come out on the right side. Our humanitarian organizations would have to have a good many life-years to their credit in order to offset those that are avoidably lost in an annual total of thirty-five thousand deaths beneath our motor-cars. The interesting thing is, however, that no one appears to be at all unpleasantly affected by this indiscriminate slaughter, or disposed to make any fuss about it, or to regard it as in any sense a count against our civilization.

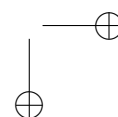
So far as there is any individual, man-to-man interest in human wretchedness, pain and death, one would say it is mostly of a morbid type. One sees this indicated by the popularity of plays like "The Last Mile," and by the extraordinary vogue of mystery-murder fiction. Unless one goes into the actual statistics of publishing, it is hard to realize that the production of stories dealing with murder and violence has reached the status of a special industry, and a large one; and it is even harder to realize that the kind of people who make the market for such literature, and hence presumably get some sort of satisfaction out of it, is by no means the kind one would suppose. One sees the same attitude displayed toward the illegal and outrageous brutalities so regularly indulged in by our civil authorities. I can only judge such incidents by the tone and temper of the country that I live in. One such exhibition of indiscriminate thuggery as the New York police put on whenever the mood strikes





them, would raise a popular insurrection from one end of the country to the other. I say this on the evidence of what I have seen with my own eyes and know of my own knowledge. The American public is tame as a lap-dog under the most flagitious and tyrannous abuses of power, the faintest approach to which, in the country where I make my home, would have a first-class revolution under full headway in fifteen minutes. The American public is interested in these incidents, exactly as it is interested in a corresponding type of motion-pictures; it seizes them as an occasion for the exercise of raw sensation, and nothing more.

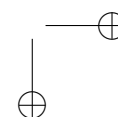
The War is usually blamed for the establishment of the rough logic that unquestionably does underlie this attitude. A people intensively trained to utter moral acquiescence in the immoral satisfaction of a public grudge – trained to regard anything as fair and right, so long as the grudge was satisfied – will rest in the same indifferent acquiescence when the same means are employed to private ends of the same general character. There is something in this, no doubt, but if without a war our society had developed as it has, I doubt that any greater moral sensitiveness would have been bred in it. American life, especially urban life, is an intensive education in the two most ignoble vices of the human spirit, which are fear and hatred. There can be no doubt of this; to prove it, stand ten minutes in view of any urban thoroughfare and look at the faces around you, study them attentively, and see how many you can pick out that betoken dignity, self-respect, intelligence, force of character, calmness and gentleness of spirit. Try it at the corner of Broad and Market, in Times Square, or where you will. Then see





how many express habitual fear, habitual hatred; fear for one's job, fear of traffic, fear of one's boss or one's banker, fear of opinion, fear of the consequence of some kind of "break," of some turn in the stock market or in trade, and above all, deadly fear of ideas; hatred of competitors in business or society, of forestallers, of people who jostle one on the street or tread on one's toes in the subway, of the driver who just misses running one down, of the pedestrian whom one just misses running down. It is a life that besets one by every known form of hatred and fear, by night and day; and the appropriate moral indurations must follow. Last week Mayor Walker bandied fighting epithets with a Communist delegation, and his constituents read about it with no sense of any impropriety in the premises. Why not? Mayor Walker is "a born New Yorker," whose intensive training in fear and hatred has divested him of any semblance of dignity and self-respect, and his constituents are for the same reason like him; they would not know what the words meant if they heard them.

There is only one observation to be made concerning all this, which is that a society chiefly animated by fear and hatred, and exhibiting so pronouncedly the moral indurations which the constant exercise of fear and hatred induce, is simply not a civilized society. It throws back steadily to a troglodytic stage of human development. A people so deeply marked by these indurations is not a civilized people; that is the whole story. There is every evidence that the governing spirit of the Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal types was that of fear and hatred, and that their exercise of these deforming vices left in them very little ground for the rootage of instincts and dispo-





sitions properly called humane. These types are called uncivilized, but it does not lie in the American mouth to call them so, for the spiritual development of American society, under the dominant influence of the same master-passions, is toward a precise reproduction of these types. A society that elects to live by its fears and hatreds may be ever so rich, powerful and pretentious, but it is not civilized. It is no trouble to imagine the Cro-Magnon somehow becoming all three, but it is impossible to imagine him as in consequence approaching any nearer the status of civilized man.

I laid aside my writing at this point, thinking to end these rather unpleasant reflections, and presently leafing over a magazine or two, my eye was caught by the following in the current *New Yorker's* editorial *causerie*:

The weather of the heart should be very high these golden October days. We should get up in the morning feeling gay, with a kind thought for our fellow-man. It turns out, however, that this is very hard. We have no kind thought for five out of six people we pass in the street, and can give the sixth a kind thought or leave him alone. Most of those we pass we actually dislike; the truck-driver whistling at a girl, the fat woman with the weak mind, the showy fellow with the lecherous eye, the young girl with the grim mouth, the hatless shoe-clerk with the insolent stare. A walk may make one very glad that out of the millions of persons in the streets of this town, one has to speak to only a hundred or so, and to love only three or four.

Experto crede Roberto. But what is to be said of this if not what I have said?





One's Own Smoke

A light plague of mosquitoes in the part of New York where I have been living lately, has enabled me to understand the psychology of the imperialist and the Prohibitionist. After being attacked and pestered for two or three nights, I bought a patent net, a first-class device with a framework of flexible steel that folds up out of the way in the daytime, and is stretched out at night to form a canopy. While enjoying the protection of this excellent apparatus, I felt an almost bloodthirsty sense of triumph as I watched mosquitoes roosting on the outside of the net and wishing they could get at me, and then I reflected that after all they were only obeying their nature's fundamental demand in taking their food wherever they could get it; and once or twice I dropped to sleep in a state of sentimental wonderment about the ethics of doing them out of a square meal. But I gave all that up when I read a newspaper-report of some scientificer's discovery that the mosquito's blood-lust is a morbid appetite and that indulgence in it probably shortens its life. I perceived then that I was really doing the mosquito for its own good, like the British in India, and that if it starved it would perish morally and correctly. There is a good deal of comfort in this state of mind. I go to sleep now soothed and sustained by the consciousness that I am a true moralizer and benefactor, as much so as any imperialist who ever took up the white man's burden.

While one would not willingly encourage hardness of heart, one must allow something, I think, for a possible light touch of morbidness in one's sentiment toward human sorrows, both individual and social. It is easy





to get a bit too much worked up over distresses lying in one's purview – distresses, I mean, which with the best will in the world one can not possibly alleviate, and with which perhaps one can not even sympathize intelligently, since one has never experienced the like oneself. For instance, I have never had a headache, never been seasick, but I have seen a great many people laid out with one or the other; and I dare say headache or seasickness is really not so bad as I imagine it must be. Indeed, I am pretty sure it is not, for I have seen the afflicted people recover quite suddenly, and in almost no time at all become as chipper as squirrels; and if the distresses of headache or seasickness are at all up to what my fancy paints them, these victims could never do that. Hence my sympathetic concern with sufferers, when I see them about me, no doubt is tinged with morbidness. Therefore, since there is nothing that I can do to help them, I do not hover around them any to speak of. If I could help them, I would; when I can, I do; but having cleared myself on this point, I move on and forget about them as quickly as I can.

This policy, which seems to be instinctive with the world of mankind, is the only rational one to be adopted with most of the spiritual woes and difficulties with which one comes in contact. The person who indiscriminately tries to take them upon himself very seldom makes a success with them; he usually makes a mess of things all round. The three friends of Job remain the classical example of both the right way and the wrong way with such matters. When Job's troubles fell upon him, his friends came and sat with him seven days and seven nights, "and none spoke a word unto him, for they saw





that his grief was very great.” That was superb. They were promptly on hand, ready day or night in case anything was needed, meanwhile keeping their mouths shut like the fine old Oriental gentlemen they were. But when seven days were over, Job began to tell his troubles; he “opened his mouth and cursed his day,” and this was too much for his friends. They tried to take his troubles on themselves, argued them over, tried to sympathize with him, console him and get him into a better frame of mind; and they made an awful mess of it. They did him no good, and utterly ruined their own equanimity. How much better all round, one would say, if when Job opened his mouth and began to curse his day, they had quietly and decorously tiptoed off about their business, and let him cuss.

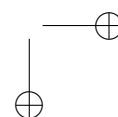
There is an old saying which I think has a lot of good sound Christian doctrine in it, that there are two classes of things one should not worry about; the things one can help, and the things one can't help. If you can help a thing, don't worry about it; help it. If you can't help it, don't worry about it, for you do no good, and only wear yourself down below par. The spiritual distresses of individuals are in the nature of things quite incommunicable to any good purpose. We are not structurally equipped to burn anyone's smoke but our own. I say again that this is no deprecation of sympathy, but only an observation of the very limited range of sympathy's effective operation. One can be all in favor of the weak brother, and still refrain from an exercise of sympathy that obfuscates his sense of responsibility and really tends to keep him weak. I often think of a letter that Golden Rule Jones wrote to somebody who had appealed to his sympathies





and asked for help, saying that whiskey had been the cause of his downfall. Jones replied, "I don't believe that whiskey was the cause of your downfall. I believe it was the whiskey that you drank." Giving one's life for others is the best thing that one can do, but there is more than one way of doing it. Maintaining a rational attitude, free from morbidness, toward other peoples' troubles that are in their nature irremediable by any outside agency and also, strictly speaking, incommunicable – this enables one to do best for oneself and thereby to do best for others; and the man who for the sake of others preserves his own integrity of spirit and personality inviolate, I hold to be the noblest Roman of them all.

One may say the same of one's attitude toward what is called the woes of society, the sorrows of the world. There is a huge deal of nonsense talked about those, to begin with. There is no such thing as the woes of society, and the world has no sorrows. Only individuals have woes and sorrows. When you hear a person speak of being overcome by the sorrows of the world, you may wager he has not got this fact quite straight. Many people, moreover, borrow the world's troubles in the conviction that they are great altruists, when in fact they are only bilious and would be benefitted by some liver-medicine and hard work in the open air. Richard Whately, the logician and Archbishop of Dublin, a great man with all a great man's hatred of nonsense, had a clergyman in his diocese who was always telling him what a tough place the world was, and how hard it was to bear up under the wretchedness of human society. One day Whately was vigorously spading up a bed in his large garden, when out of the tail of his eye he saw this clergyman approaching.

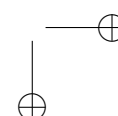
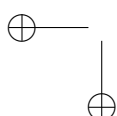




He gave no sign, however, until the parson got within twenty feet, when he suddenly raised the spade and ran at him. The parson thought the archbishop had suddenly gone crazy, and took to his heels with Whately after him hot-foot. Whately chased him around and around the garden until he judged his victim was about played out; then he stopped, threw down the spade, and said, "Now, sir, what have you to say?" The parson had nothing to say. The unaccustomed exercise had got his circulation going briskly and normally, and made the woes of society take on a very different look. Put a few people like Whately on the track of most of our neurasthenics and sentimentalists, and the psychoanalysts would find themselves permanently out of a job.

An Idealess World

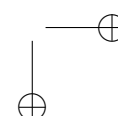
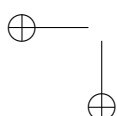
Russia wants visitors now, I am told, and for what seems to me a rather odd reason – they want people from outside to see what they are doing with their program of industrialization and the headway they are making with their economic and social policies. My notion was that they thought the tourist trade would be profitable, but I am told that they are so poorly equipped for it that taking care of tourists at present costs more than they can get out of them. I should like to go to Russia to see the art treasures and some of the new architecture, if they would let me take my time about it, and then go down into the Caucasus to see the country; but all that is a dilettante's dream, and I imagine the Russian





authorities would not be particularly interested just now in encouraging dreamers. The Hermitage was always a superb gallery; one could hardly know Rembrandt, for instance, without having seen it; and with all that has gone into it from private collections since the Revolution, it must be a great sight. I never think of Russia without a touch of envy; it seems to be the only place at present, except India, as nearly as I can make out, where the power of the Idea is generally felt. When one is fed up with living in an idealess world, one feels that it would be worth a pretty good price to experience the touch of that contagion.

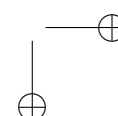
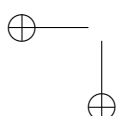
Even supposing the idea did not amount to much, and the popular devotion to it were transitory, it would still be an immense and exhilarating pleasure to be among people capable of an enthusiasm for it. The idea liberated on the world by the French Revolution was in reality no great shakes of an idea, and it certainly came to little enough in a practical way. Yet it penetrated into every nook and corner of Europe, and touched off the spirit of a great many people with a great enthusiasm; and this made life interesting in many quarters of the globe, in Italy, in Prussia, in Switzerland – even in this country the backwash of the idea was felt, and interest in life looked up a little. The idea liberated by early Christianity was soon enough institutionalized into deformity and nullity; even in its original acceptance there was no doubt plenty of fanaticism rampant, plenty of rabid nonsense. But it was an idea, and it was current, and the enthusiasm for it raised life for the time being a little above its commonplace level of unintelligence and dulness. It is almost exactly half a century since the United States has





given evidence of being amenable to the power of the Idea; and that, as the Governor of North Carolina might remark to his colleague of South Carolina, is a long time between desiderata.

The trouble with the “Western civilization” that we are so proud of and boast so much about, is that it makes such limited demands on the human spirit; such limited demands on the qualities that are distinctly and properly humane, the qualities that distinguish the human being from the robot on the one hand and the brute on the other. There seems no reason why our civilization could not have reached its present degree of development and be in all respects exactly as it is, if those qualities had never existed in mankind. None of them is necessary to the furtherance of its ideals and aims. Intellect does not enter into those ideals, but only sagacity; religion and morals do not enter into them; beauty and poetry do not; manners and the social sense do not. To realize this one has only to regard attentively the men who have given our civilization its direction in the past, and those who are now regarded as in a special degree its representatives. Consider the men on Mr. Gerard’s list, for instance, and then imagine Dante, Plato, Virgil or Rabelais – spirits eminent in the practice of the humane life and replete with all the qualities regarded as distinctively human – obliged to spend two hours in the company of any of them! One need not even go so far as this. Imagine Turgot, Mazzini, Mr. Jefferson or Kosciuzko marooned with them for a day on a desert island, with plenty of supplies and all very comfortable, but nothing to do except talk! It gives you a fine idea of how long a stretch twenty-four hours really is.





Ireland and the Great Tradition

The wise and charming Irish humanist, George Russell, better known as *Æ*, is in this country for a lecture tour of some length. Of all men living he is perhaps the most disinterested and sincerest votary of the Great Tradition, and one of its most ingratiating and persuasive representatives. He is an anachronism in the new modern Ireland, the official Ireland of centralization, censorship, industrialism, water-power projects and keen bagmanism. One relates him rather to the Ireland of Mahaffy, Tyrrell, Eugene O'Curry, Lewis Purser and the O'Conor Don, than to the Ireland of Cosgrave and Fitzgerald, or even the Ireland of Parnell and Redmond. Perhaps *Æ*'s visit will set us all to re-reading Edmund Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland." That book is a first-rate starting-point for any one interested in the question why Ireland and the Irish, in spite of their poverty, sufferings and obscurity, have always managed to keep a hold on the whole world's imagination, and to a great extent on its affections. One of Spenser's characters asks how it can be possible that people would become so enamored of the barbarous ways of the Irish as to leave England's "sweet civilization" and live among them. The other character in the dialogue replies that it is indeed inexplicable, but that many actually do that strange thing.

Mr. Cosgrave's Ireland will not exercise that irresistible power of attraction. Here in America, for instance, we have plenty of high-pressure bagmanism, centralization, and so on, and have developed a mentality to correspond; so that Ireland's progress in the same general direction can not interest us particularly, and can teach us noth-





ing. A disinterested observer might remark, too, that meanwhile the Great Tradition – some aspects of which being all that Ireland has to recommend to our interest and profit – rather languishes: Æ’s own experience of being shouldered aside into isolation seems to prove that it does, which is unfortunate for the rest of the world, doubly unfortunate for the Irish: The Great Tradition contemplates a harmonious and balanced development in human society of the instinct of workmanship (the instinct for progressive material well-being, with which industry and trade are concerned), the instinct of intellect and knowledge, the instinct of religion and morals, the instinct of beauty and poetry, the instinct of social life and manners. The Irish are by nature gifted in respect of the second of these, and pre-eminent in respect of the last two and it is perhaps chiefly in those three that the American nature is most incompetent and American society is most deficient.

It is not our industrialism and bagmanism that in themselves make so strongly against the Great Tradition, but the mentality encouraged by their over-development. Putting it concretely, it is not that we pay more wages to produce more goods to increase purchasing power to make more sales to get more money to pay more wages to produce more goods, and so on indefinitely – it is not this that in itself marks our society as uncivilized, but the predominance of a mentality which accepts this process as a complete and reasonable fulfilment of individual human destiny, and believes that happiness is to be found somewhere within its circle; or perhaps more accurately, that the highest human happiness is in the exhilaration produced by the speed and smoothness wherewith so-





ciety proceeds around and around this endless course. No amount of lip-service or patronage of the Great Tradition can offset this mentality. We point with pride to our oppressively expensive institutional patronage of intellect and morals, intellect and knowledge, beauty and poetry, social life and manners, and ask the critic what more assurance he would have of our devotion to the Great Tradition. The critic merely calls attention to the mephitic mental atmosphere surrounding this patronage, and is silent; there is nothing more to say.

The Great Tradition simply will not permit itself to be served in this fashion; something always happens – I do not know what or why – that condemns and cancels this kind of service as soon as it is proffered. “Thy money perish with thee!” cried the Apostle to Simon Magus, who had the notion that a spiritual gift might be purchasable on his own general terms. It seems to be in the order of Nature that such projects should not work out. The president of Columbia University spoke affectingly of the Great Tradition to his entering students the other day, with no hint that they were coming to the world’s unlikeliest place for any regenerative contact with it. Give any American university ten times the money it has, multiply its mechanics to any imaginable extent, and as long as the atmosphere of “the business man’s mentality” envelops it, the Great Tradition will not brood over its portals. Mr. Butler’s youngsters might well have asked themselves, or even asked him, the searching question that Professor Huxley raised with some bitterness about the two great English universities half a century ago – why is it that a third-rate, poverty-stricken Continental university turns out in one year more produce in the





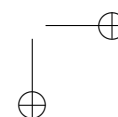
line of the Great Tradition than our vast and wealthy foundations elaborate in ten?

My thoughts on this subject were set going afresh last week. Having an errand at one of our large colleges, I spent a good part of an afternoon of beautiful weather in considering its “plant,” and I never saw anything more attractive and charming. It seemed complete in every detail. I was particularly impressed by one building, the finest copy of the New England Colonial style that I ever saw. There was nothing that I could imagine as lacking for the comfort, convenience and well-being of the student population. Everything was there – everything but education. Crossing the campus, I looked at

our young barbarians, all at play,

and I thought of Bonn, Göttingen, and some of the provincial French and Belgian universities that I had visited, such as Poitiers, Bordeaux, Ghent and Liège, and of the human produce that I had seen emanating from them. There was no reason on the surface of things why the Great Tradition should not have made itself thoroughly at home in the opulence and external beauty of this American college; every external condition seemed made to order to invite its abiding presence; yet one would know instantly that it was not there and could not be there.

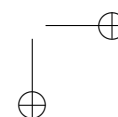
Nothing can be done about this, just as nothing can be done about the liquor problem, the farm problem, problems of public ownership, and the other social problems that afflict us. I say, nothing can be done; that is, nothing except the one thing that will never be acknowledged





as necessary, the self-imposed discipline of a whole people in acquiring a brand-new ethos. We have hopefully been trying to live by mechanics alone, the mechanics of pedagogy, of politics, of industry and commerce; and when we find it can not be done and that we are making a mess of it, instead of experiencing a change of heart, we bend our wits to devise a change in mechanics, and then another change, and then another. If the Great Tradition will not abide in our colleges and universities, we do not look to see whether the reason be not in the miasma of a general mentality, but we tinker with the mechanics of our pedagogy. If a political nostrum fizzles out, we busily invent another, without even a moment's suspicion that the problem it pretends to solve is not mechanical; and so we have a series of such ineptitudes as Prohibition, "disarmament conferences," and "the mere change of imposters," as John Adams so well called it, from Republican to Democrats, to Laborites, to Fascists, or what not.

The Ireland of $\mathcal{Æ}$, for all its disabilities, bore unfailing witness to one truth that we, no more than the hated Sassenach, show any sign of being able to learn. Out of its oppression and poverty, its many improvidences and degradations, there was always heard its clear insistent testimony that a nation's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that it possesseth; that it is the spirit and manners of a people, and not the bewildering multiplicity of its social mechanisms, that determines the quality of its civilization. Perhaps we do not hear that testimony at the moment; it is nothing for the newspapers to report – it never was. But it will take a great many Cosgraves and Fitzgeralds to convince me





that Æ's Ireland is not the true Ireland still, and that its witness to these disregarded and disparaged aspects of the Great Tradition is finally silenced. Its testimony to their augustness, indeed, has never been by word of mouth, but by the example of an instinctive and joyous obedience. "There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard; but their line has gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."

The Gift of Music

Not until last week have I ever got around to hear a note of music by the Spanish modernist de Falla. In my home town, four seasons ago, they were giving his opera "La Vie Brève" a couple of times a month or oftener, and I fully meant to go and hear it, but for some reason never did, and now I suspect that an unconscious working of the self-preserving instinct kept me away from it. I say this by reason of having heard a concerto by him, which made me think that the trite observation on modernist painting was very applicable to modernist music – that pre-modernist music was made to be enjoyed and modernist music is made to be discussed. The concerto has one feature worth mention, however, as likely to interest any one who has lived much in our South. The first movement sounds exactly like a parcel of drunken darkies trying to play a hoe-down. It has rhythm, and any darky, drunk or sober, has a sense of rhythm – even a dead darky would have it – but imagine darkies too drunk to hit the right note more





than one time in ten, and you have an excellent idea of this fantastic score.

The balance of the concerto was marked by no feature of interest, so my mind went wandering in search of occupation, presently settling down to the relation of Hollanders to the violoncello. Certainly all the 'cello-players, with one exception, that I ever knew were Hollanders, and I do not at the moment recall any Hollander I ever knew whom I did not suspect of a weakness for the instrument. Perhaps my old friend Hendrik Willem van Loon is an exception, but I doubt it, because I know he plays the violin, and the presumption is that being a Hollander and able to play a stringed instrument, he would naturally, in his more serious moments, turn to the bull-fiddle. I suspect he plays the violin only as Georges Barrère toots on the piccolo once in a while, just to show he knows how, but reserves his true virtuoso spirit for the flute. Perhaps my experience is only a series of coincidences; but if the bull-fiddle is in any sense, and to any degree, the national instrument of the Netherlands, the choice of it reflects credit on the people who taught Europe the art of music.

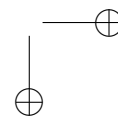
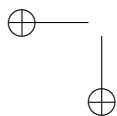
I believe it is not generally known to what extent Europe is indebted to the Netherlands for the gift of music. Its debt for drawing and painting is widely known and universally acknowledged, but not the debt for music. But in the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth there was no music worth mentioning in France except what was established by Netherlanders. Even in Italy, which is commonly thought to be the home of music, the art had high native patronage, but was practised mostly by Netherlanders. The Venetian school of music,





for instance, was established by Adrian Willaert, born at Bruges about 1490; he was succeeded as choir-master of St. Mark's by Cyprian van Roor, a native of Mechelen. Palestrina, who gave a fresh impulse to music in Italy about a century later, was a pupil of a Netherlander. In France, the chapel-master of Charles VII, Louis XI and Charles VIII was the Hainaulter Ockeghem, the Bach of his period, born at Bavay about 1435. Another Hainaulter, Joost des Prez, was official composer for the Pope's chapel under Sixtus IV, then moved to France and took service under Louis XII. Berchem, known as Giacchetto di Mantova, who showed Italy most of what it ever learned about counterpoint, was a pupil of des Prez, born in Flanders. Another pupil of des Prez, and in turn the teacher of Willaert, was Mouton, who lived mostly at the courts of Louis XII and Francis I. In fact, it is hard to find a musician of any prominence in France or Italy at this period who was not either a Netherlander or the pupil of one. Jannequin, the celebrated French contrapuntist, for example, was a pupil of des Prez.

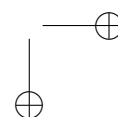
These Renaissance musicians mostly came from the Southern Netherlands; they would be called Belgians today, rather than Hollanders, but they were all Netherlanders. Music is not the only count on which the Netherlanders have a little outstanding international obligation. Another one concerns a group of political and social institutions, commonly thought to be of English origin; and the debtor in this case is your Uncle Samuel. I refer particularly to the institutions which the Puritans are said to have "brought with them from England." One must wonder, I think, at the unction with which England is spoken of as "our mother country" in respect of these





institutions, mostly by Anglophile college professors and writers of text-book history who have bread – or motor-cars – to earn. Four questions would settle the matter; the reader may apply them, if he has the curiosity to do so. First, did anything like those institutions exist in England in the lifetime of the Puritans? Was there any record or tradition of their ever having existed there, up to the time that the Puritans emigrated? Was there any other civilization in which they did exist; and if so, was it one where the Puritans might easily, almost inevitably, have come in contact with them? A very interesting and enlightening study could be made of the institutional parallels between the civilization of the Netherlands and that of the Puritan establishment in America; and such a study would be bound, I think, to throw a great deal of light on the troublesome question why the Puritan civilization in New England did not collapse as promptly as it did in Old England. All the Anglophile historians, as far as I know, who have tried to bite that file have merely wrecked their teeth.

But all nations, especially when they go in for a policy of imperialism, make no bones of smouching credit, whenever they can do so, for institutional excellences that were never theirs, and for illustrious men who did not belong to them, perhaps not even to their race. There is some plausibility in Germany's claim to the Flemish Netherlander van Beethoven, for he was born at Bonn, though in consequence of pure accident, and an unhappy one. Still, the conscientious pre-imperialist Germans who set up his monument at Bonn, spelled his name after the Flemish fashion, and so it remains today. Most Frenchmen will tell you that Grétry and César Franck, both of

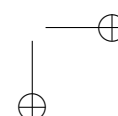
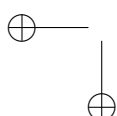




Lidge, are French composers; and Roland de Lattre, the Netherlandish composer born at Mons, is celebrated by all good Italians under the name of Orlando de Lasso. So no doubt our Anglophile professors and historians, more heart-whole in their devotion to “the mother country” than any who are on King George’s tax-list, will go on assuming that Puritan virtues are British virtues, and that the institutional excellences of American Puritanism are also by derivation British. Probably also England, who never bore any grudge against herself and never was behindhand about claiming any credit that was lying around loose, will go on accepting the soft impeachment, and in time perhaps come to believe that it is quite just. Fortunately it is a small matter; the important thing is that the institutions in question are great institutions, and that the music of Beethoven and César Franck is great music. Nationalism is of consequence to scoundrels with axes to grind, and to people oppressed with a sense of personal inferiority, but of very little concern to others.

Politics as Sport

A British woman, Member of Parliament, visiting our shores, told the press a week or two ago that she noticed a great difference between the English and ourselves in respect of interest in politics. The English had a great deal of this commodity, while Americans seemed to have none. This is a stock observation of visiting Englishry, and I think a true one; and because it is true, it loses no force by repetition. As a criticism, however, reflecting





unfavorably on the American habit – and it is usually offered with that implication – it has no force at all. On the contrary, it is a testimony to our instinctive good sense. I am one of those whom the lady by implication disparages, and I glory in my shame; and in so saying, I feel that for probably the only time in my life I am in the position of spokesman for a large number of my fellow-citizens. My first and last Presidential vote was cast many years ago. I forget who the candidates were, but I remember looking them over and weighing the “issues” that they pretended to represent. When I went to the polls, I found that the ballot had a blank space where any name might be written in, so I deliberately voted for Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi. I was well aware that Jeff was dead, but under the circumstances, even a dead candidate seemed highly eligible.

If the lady Member of Parliament was still around last week while the election was on, she no doubt noticed a good deal of interest of a certain type, and if she examined its type, she may have found new light on her subject. American interest in politics is almost purely a sporting interest. A campaign is to most of us an event, like the World’s Series. There is plenty of interest while it is on; but when it is over, it is over till next season; and that is all there is “to it.” Everybody who has the sporting instinct, as a good many of us have, and who warms up to an event, as most of us do, is inclined to participate. Those who, like myself, care little for sports and have a great horror of public occasions, stay home in contented ignorance. I was within two blocks of the great demonstration over Colonel Lindbergh, and never even knew that anything was going on; as I remember, I





was playing Kelly pool and running in luck. My point is that American interest in politics is not expectant. No one, as far as I know, looks for anything of any actual consequence to happen; and with good reason. We all know, all of us, I think, except the serious thinkers of the liberal persuasion, that under our system of government nothing can possibly happen. Therefore, with the exception of these hardy perennials, no one takes the result of a campaign much to heart; and therein, I say again, we Americans display a great deal of residual common sense.

Under the English system, the case is somewhat different; not much, indeed, but enough to justify a little different order of interest. In England, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, an Administration can be turned out overnight without notice. Theoretically, at least, the system is adapted to immediate circumstances, while our system is adapted only to the calendar. Practically, of course, in those countries, as here, the incoming band of freebooters is exactly like the outgoing band; but the system has theoretical possibilities. When, for instance, Mr. Wilson was re-elected because "he kept us out of war," there was no help for it. He was elected for four years, and for four years he had to stay; four of the most discreditable and costly years in our country's history. Mr. Hoover was elected on a series of most unscrupulous false promises, and there he is still. The country gave a hefty verdict of no confidence against him last week, but there he is still and there he will be until 1933. That is a long time for a purely retributive action to take effect, and a very long time to wait while a remedial measure lies in pickle. In other countries, such as those I have





named, a just popular resentment can get quicker action through political processes, and remedial measures can be put more promptly under weigh. This system provides theoretically for “a revolution by due process of law,” and such a revolution is always theoretically possible. Our system seems expressly designed to estop anything of the kind, and make it impossible. It is interesting to notice that of all those nations that have drafted constitutions since the War, not a single one has in any respect taken ours as a model.

It must never be forgotten, moreover, that in this country the popular will must always have the Supreme Court to reckon with; therefore while in other countries the elective law-making body is supreme in its function, ours at best amounts to no more than a rubber stamp. We all pretty well know, too, what the actual record of the Supreme Court is on this point. Under all these circumstances, then, why should the visiting lady Member expect American interest in politics to be anything more than what it is? Why expect us to try seriously to tinker with a machine that is expressly built to work in only one way and do only one kind of thing, and try to get it to work another way and do something else, without any fundamental structural change? In any other field than that of politics, such an idea would at once be put down as supremely silly. My impression is that the American’s attitude towards political affairs shows that in this field too he instinctively and by implication puts it down as supremely silly; as why should he not?

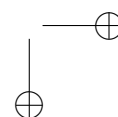
I have no sympathy with our people in their present anxieties and straits, not because they elected Mr. Hoover or Mr. Anybody-else, but because they do not scrap their





anachronistic, antisocial and flagitious system and set up a better one. Mr. Hoover's record was notorious; anyone with ordinary sense would know just what was coming from him. Yet the mere having been let in by him is a small matter, and mere resentment against having been let in is much smaller; because the country got exactly the same kind of thing from the Administrations that preceded his, and it will get exactly the same kind of thing from any that will follow. The Presidency is a job of machine-tending, and the machine one has to tend is one that was designed and constructed for anti-social purposes, and for those only; and no man can reach the Presidency except he qualify primarily as a machine-tender. Those who are saving up their vote with hopefulness for the election, say, of Governor Roosevelt in 1932, may remember these observations and see what happens; meanwhile looking back for "orientation," if they like, to the Administrations of Cleveland and Wilson. From the social point of view only one thing distinguishes between one political party and another; one is in office and wants to stay in, and another is out and wants to get in. This has been for so long obvious on the face of our public life, and the reasons for it quite as obvious, that if any one is any longer taken in by specious pretence to the contrary, he quite deserves what he gets.

But the reason why I say our people deserve no sympathy in their present predicament is that our political system apparently suits them; it suits them so well that they have always violently resented any suggestion of a change in it, and even now go off into an infantile hysteria of Brummagem patriotism over even so little as the suggestion of a frank study of other systems in





comparison with ours. Hence it is not so much a defect in knowledge as a defect in disposition that makes against them. Their disposition is steadfastly against a critical examination of our system; it is against anything but an indiscriminate affirmation that our system is the greatest and grandest ever conceived by the mind of man. One would think that considering what we have come to after the experience of a hundred and fifty years, at least a Constitutional Convention might be called. This would make inevitable some discussion of the fundamentals of our system, and perhaps – perhaps – some little good of a more substantial kind might come of it. But nothing like this is ever spoken of. Such being the case, one can only say once more with Lincoln that for those who like the sort of thing we have, ours is probably about the sort of thing they like – and let it go at that. Only when the failures and weaknesses of our social order become recurrently apparent, as they now are, and the enlistment of sympathy is sought, the only sensible reply is that one has none to spare. It is in the power of the people at least to show a disposition to correct the disabilities under which they suffer; and since they have not done even as much as that, their claim to sympathy is not valid. They are getting exactly what they ask for.

Literature of Escape

What is one to do with three days and nights in the dry-dock, convalescing from a sudden and venomous indisposition? One might read, if only one had the books





and the brains; but the infirmary was short on stuff to read, and I was short on brains. Reading, properly so-called, is an exercise of thought, and my machinery of thought would not run; it was shaky, weak and out of co-ordination. Well, one might pass things through one's mind without thinking about them; one might at least do that – that excellent distinction, by the way, was drawn by Bishop Butler, the great and revered author of the "Analogy." So the "literature of escape" suggested itself at once; the infirmary had no end of it, and mine seemed to be just the circumstances for which it was written. I was struck with the thought that I really represented for the moment that elusive person for whom the publishers are always gunning, the "average American reader." I had every qualification: an enervated mind, debilitated nerves, no power of concentration, and an intense desire to be rid of the burden of my circumstances. In short, like the immense majority of my fellow-citizens, I was a made-to-order candidate for anything in the line of a literature of escape, from the *Saturday Evening Post* up and down.

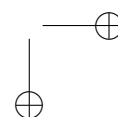
The nurse brought me two sample volumes of crime and mystery; they were done by very competent hands, and provided just the effect they were meant to produce. That is to say, they held my attention to the course of the events they described. Nothing more than that; when I was through with them, I was through; they left no residual impression of any kind, except that I felt the uneasiness of an unrewarded overstrain of attention. I had successfully passed those volumes through my mind without thinking about them or about anything, exercising no intelligence whatever upon the subject-





matter of vision. Hence I was more enervated, really, than I had been before, my attention being tired without the exhilaration of having something to show for its exercise. In this, too, I think, I was sharing the experience of the average reader; for the vast bulk of popular literature is no more rewarding than the books I read, and the attention spent on it must result in the same sense of futile exhaustion. I remembered how often, in leafing over popular books and popular magazines – some magazines, too, that are more pretentious – I have thought of Mr. Dooley’s experience when he was night watchman on the Canal for two weeks, “with nawthin’ to read but th’ delinquent tax list and th’ upper half iv a weather map.”

Presently, however, I got hold of another book, which I should like to mention by name, but in this age of ignorant or unscrupulous book-boosting, one hesitates to do that. I never heard of the author before. His book was a collection of ghost-stories; a modern book, too, published only three years ago, and as far as content goes, quite in the class of escape-literature. Some of the stories had been published in a magazine. Nevertheless the difference between them and the stories I had been reading was just the difference between a handmade article and a factory-made article, a difference primarily in *intention*. The author was clearly a man of fine culture and large experience, and his intention, first and last, was to produce a story of first-class literary quality. If it met a market, well and good; but whether or not, the quality could not be debased. Hence one could not simply pass it through one’s mind; one had to think about it and admire it, and at the end one felt the exhilaration of an abundant reward for one’s attention. Probably





the greatest piece of artistry ever done in this order is Turgenev's "Phantoms"; and these stories set up, in their degree, somewhat the same sense communicated by that story's unapproachable art. The effect of escape-literature in general – tales of mystery, crime or horror – is produced by sheer content; the effect of Poe's tales, or of these I lately read, or of "Phantoms" or "Clara Militch," is not; and the difference is very great.

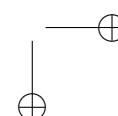
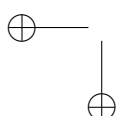
Thus I am led up to something that I have already commented on elsewhere, but which will bear a great deal of comment: a peculiar disability that is laid upon the practice of literature in the United States. Americans judge literature only by its content; they do not judge any other art in that way. A painter may paint the corner of a cow barn and be enthusiastically accepted for his workmanship alone. Our people are by no means exacting about the content of music; it is notoriously hard to find out what the program of a concert is going to be; but they are very fastidious, or think they are, about style and finish in its execution. But a creative writer has to furnish content; if he does this, he may pretty well count on his workmanship going unnoticed. If it be good, it will get him no acceptance, and if bad, no reproof. Content is all that is demanded of him. Our reading public, when it reads at all, brings to bear much the same attitude that I assumed towards my escape-literature, and gets about the same results out of it. This being the case, one is sometimes obliged to wonder whether literacy has as much real value as we have been led to suppose it has.

Indeed, my conviction, bred by a fairly broad observation of popular reading-habits, is that a good deal





of superstition is mixed into our estimate of the advantages of literacy. Reading, for instance, is supposed to encourage thought, and I can not see that it does. I am not at all sure that a literate population thinks either more or better than one which is illiterate. It may do so, of course, but that it actually does so is doubtful. Everything depends upon what one reads, and upon the attitude taken toward one's reading. It may be quite reasonably doubted, in fact, whether a population like ours, technically literate though it is, is able really to read. Most of those who have come under my observation seem incapable of apprehending an idea conveyed in a sentence of simple prose; they read some prepossession of their own into the sentence, and thus their apprehension is not of what the sentence means, but of what they make it mean. Literacy, again, is supposed to lay open great resources of aesthetic delight, but mostly it does not, for the reasons we have been considering. Most of these resources lie in workmanship, in literary artistry; and where there is no apprehension of this, there can naturally be but little aesthetic pleasure. I can easily imagine most American readers going through "Phantoms" and "Clara Militch," and saying they were fair stuff, a little romantic and pretty thin – not much to them – and nothing to make a fuss over. An analogous criticism would say that Jan Steen's peasants were rather rough-looking birds, not worth a real painter's wasting his time on.





Bourgeois and Boorjui

The English language is already so rich that one almost hesitates about being “a friend to a judicious neology,” as Mr. Jefferson avowed himself, and rather inclined to put one’s foot down against the incorporation of any more new words. Yet there is need of a new descriptive term to fit a very powerful and influential class in our society, and the term appropriate to fit it is right at hand, so I should like to see this word taken over into current use. The word has interesting connotations and rather piquant associations; it is a deformation of another word, and the class that it might very well be used to describe is in a sense a deformation of another class. At present we have one word to describe both classes; and the two are so different – different in function and in social value – that we really should mark the difference by the introduction of a new descriptive term.

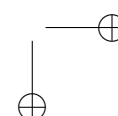
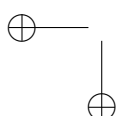
When one hears this civilization of ours called “bourgeois,” when one hears its ideals, spirit, prejudices and conventions lumped under the stock term “bourgeois,” one is a little irritated by the inexactness of the description, and even more irritated, perhaps, by the implied disparagement of what is on the whole a very good, worthy, and extremely useful set of people – not without faults, of course, but also not deserving indictment for faults which not only are not attributable to them but were thoroughly repugnant to them. A majority of our people are town-dwellers; in that primary sense of the town, I admit, our civilization may be called predominantly bourgeois. In the tropical sense, however, which is now the only sense in which English-speaking people





use this borrowed term, it may not be so called. The bourgeois was narrow, hard-headed, rather grasping, authoritarian rather than free-thinking, and dogmatic; in the realm of religion and morals, of beauty and poetry, of social life and manners, his ideals were generally very imperfect and his performances extremely dissatisfying. This is about the worst one can say of him; but one can say as much of others who were not bourgeois. In fact, since the bourgeois were largely recruited from the peasantry, one can not be quite sure whether these were characteristically bourgeois failings or peasant failings. My own belief is that a more plausible case can be made out for the latter thesis.

The bourgeois came to the front in the fifteenth century, under the energetic and statesmanlike hand of Louis XI. The bourgeois's characteristic mark was that of an interest in the production or distribution of commodities; he either made or sold them, usually doing both. His economics were as simple and sound as the peasant's; that is to say, the only values he knew anything about were commodity-values. Like the peasant, again, he had a great horror of paper; paper was something that he did not understand at all, and he drew back in his shell whenever he saw it. Go into the weekly regional grain-market at Tours or Poitiers today, and you will see every transaction carried on by word of mouth, with never a pencil-scratch put down by way of memorandum. Paper was associated in his mind with the idea that one could somehow get rich without handling any goods or doing any work; and he resented this idea as heretical and thoroughly vicious. His word was good, his commodities





were sound, his trade in them was honest; and that was the limit of his ideas about the conduct of business.

Such was the bourgeois; and the policies of Louis XI, which pushed him and his ideas to the fore, made France almost inconceivably prosperous. Under Francis I, however, a new type of business man appeared, whose ideas of business were altogether different. "They come into the country," said a bourgeois orator, addressing the States-General at Orleans, "with nothing but pen and paper in their hands, and in no time at all they are rich." This was the class of speculators, shavers, concessionaires, monopolists, bankers, lawyers; the bourgeois hated them and fought their rising power tooth and nail, but the Valois sovereigns fell in with their extortions, and in a very few years they had the whole kingdom practically in their pockets. The essential difference between this class and the bourgeois was this: the final term in the bourgeois's idea of business was profit from the production and exchange of goods; the final term in the ideas of this class was profit from some form of economic exploitation – *i.e.*, the appropriation of other people's labor-products, or, of course the equivalent of those products, without compensation.

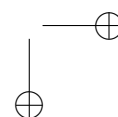
It may therefore be seen how inappropriate it is to designate our civilization as bourgeois, for certainly the master-concern of our civilization is not that of the bourgeois. Our master-concern is with getting out of bourgeois economics as quickly as ever we can, and getting into those of an exploiting class. This exploiting class is, broadly, what our Socialist friends, for some reason best known to themselves, persist in calling the "capitalist" class. It is a most preposterous misnomer, for it is impos-





sible to conceive of any class existing in even the most primitive society that is not a capitalist class. A savage who weaves a net out of withes and uses it to catch fish with is as much a capitalist by definition as Mr. J. P. Morgan; so is a chimney-sweep who owns his own broom. What is needed is another word which shall differentiate this class from the bourgeois, and shall be understood to connote precisely and sharply the difference in economic theory prevailing between the two classes.

We have all heard that when the Russian Revolution broke, and its *clichés* found their way from mouth to mouth, the proletariat had trouble with the word *bourgeois*; the best they could do with it was *boorjui*. I suggest that we make arrangements with Mr. Smoot and Mr. Hawley – without telling them what we want it for – to let us import that word duty-free. It is enough like *bourgeois* to show clearly that the difference is intentional and meant to convey the sense of a fundamental distinction; there is also just enough of the flavor of implied disparagement about it, and not too much. It seems easily susceptible of the precise understanding that I mentioned; it would carry the proper connotations most handily. Describe American society as a bourgeois society, and any intelligent person would know there was something wrong; call it a boorjui society, and ten to one he would know exactly what was meant, without being told. Mr. Gerard's Fifty-Seven Varieties are not bourgeois. Louis XI would cross himself and run like a scared dog if he saw one of them approaching, and he would send back word to Tristan l'Hermite to reach down the trusty halter and do his best for the honor of St. Denis before another sunrise. That is how Mr.

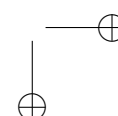
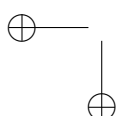




Gerard's best assorted would look to the great patron and promoter of the bourgeois. Well, call them boorjui, and does it not somehow instantly become evident that that is just how they *would* look? I think so. I run over their names in my mind, and this term seems – such is the marvellous power of words – to fit every man-jack of them like a fly-blister.

Sinclair Lewis

And so I see to my great delight that my old friend Sinclair Lewis has walked away with the Nobel prize. I call him Sinkler nowadays, out of deference to his habit of hobnobbing with the British literati, for I am told they pronounce his name that way. Sinkler's victory in the great free-for-all has stirred up a deal of talk in the country's little literary clans, cliques, camps and cubicles; so I understand at least, though I have not heard much of it, being only a hanger-on in literary circles here, and living on their extreme fringes. I suppose the sum and substance of it all is that we can not tell how an American product looks to Swedes, any more than they can tell how a Swedish product looks to us. I hear that Ibañez is no great shakes in Spain. I remember, too, when I was in Russia nearly twenty years ago, a highly cultivated young girl, the daughter of one of the provincial governors, told me that nobody could understand why Pavlova made such a tremendous hit abroad; they had plenty of dancers as good as Pavlova, and some much better; she would show them to me any evening, and I could judge for





myself. Many reputations thus consolidate their makings abroad. "It's an old saying, but a true one," said Abe Potash to his partner, "that there's no profit for a feller in his own country."

This is not the case with Sinkler, of course, for his reputation was made here and he has a great vogue. My notion is that the Swedes accepted him as an interpreter, and that the award is, in its essence, a left-handed compliment to the quality of our civilization. In such parts of Europe as I am acquainted with, the representative American is for one reason or another regarded as an incomprehensible sort of fellow, uninteresting and rather odious. Sinkler represents him as such; he represents him and his whole *entourage* as something that Netherlanders, Italians, Frenchmen, would not find quite congenial. Possibly the Swedes share this view; and so, naturally, when they find an American author who reflects this view, they do not put the same estimate on him that a native critic might. Even if the native critic had an equally unfavorable view of the run-of-mine American and his social and institutional *entourage*, it would not be the same view. He would be in a position to show what the proper reservations were, and how to make them, and how much to allow for them in the sum-total of his estimate. My impression is that Sinkler's books measured up pretty closely to the prevailing *Svensk* estimate of the Yankee and Yankeedom, and that this had a good deal to do with the award.

But I, as a native critic, though a most obscure and unconsidered one, would nevertheless have come pretty near giving Sinkler the award – not quite, but pretty near – and this on grounds that I think very few would suspect.





I speak of this because it falls in so well with what I said last week about the curious limitation put upon the practice of the literary art in America, whereby books are used and judged purely according to their content and with no regard whatever to the literary workmanship that they display. For twelve years now, Sinkler and I have had a frank and joyous understanding. I know he would rather throw over the Nobel prize than read one of my books from cover to cover, and he knows that I have had desperately up-hill work with his. When we meet, alas, so infrequently nowadays it is – *eheu fugaces labuntur anni!* – I tell him that as a literary workman he is most exceeding rotten, and that he ought to be ashamed of himself. He then points with pride to his 'steen-millionth edition of something or other, tells me that I am just an ignorant old man who ought to be chloroformed and mummified, and then we both say how thankful we are that those matters all lie miles below the plane of affection and respect.

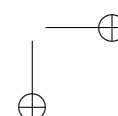
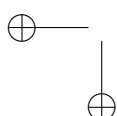
But in the words of the prophet, Sinkler put one over on me lately, just as I knew some day he would. When he was going his strongest, he quietly slipped a real book off the bottom of the deck, a very little book but an exhibit of good high-grade literary art. It is a model of first-class sensitive editorial judgment, accurate character-portrayal with no approach to caricature, judicial temper, effortless and continuous superiority to its subject with never a lapse into snobbism, unkindness or savagery. All the social criticism set forth in Sinkler's other books is there, and it is expressed in the most effective way, by artless and unconscious self-revelation. When you read this book you know what our civilization is like, its good points





and its bad points, you see just where it is heading in and why, and you see all this without having it pointedly and servigerously editorialized for you; it all simply unfolds and tells its own story. I have often wondered whether Sinkler did not write this book mostly for the sake of showing a few of us old-fogy academic critics that he could do it. This small example of excellent literary art is entitled “The Man Who Knew Coolidge.”

This book was relatively little read, and I imagine that about all the reading it ever got was on the strength of Sinkler’s reputation. That brings me to my point, which is this: If Sinkler had had an intelligent public, if he could have written for people who read with a cultivated and sensitive imagination, and who knew good workmanship, his artist’s instinct would have led him to write this sort of book a dozen years ago and let it go at that. It would have rocked the country, and there would have been no demand whatever for the books on which Sinkler’s reputation now rests. Who would have read “Main Street”? Why, I was born and bred on Main Street and know it from end to end and everybody on it, as Sinkler certainly does not. His Main Streeter is no more like a real one than a zebra. He is somewhat like him part of the time, but not twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. No intelligent public would have stood having Main Street rubbed in by Babbitt, Babbitt by Gantry, Gantry by Dodsworth, and so on. All these are summed up in just the right proportions and with exactly the right implications, in the Man Who Knew Coolidge. He tells the whole story of our civilization in a hundred pages, tells it himself, with no idea that he





is telling it, and much more convincingly than the most talented reporter can tell it for him in a dozen volumes.

It all comes back to the quality of one's reading public. The question of how far an artist is justified in shaping his work to suit that quality is perhaps open. Certainly Sinkler could not have captured his public if he had not landed on them as he did; certainly, if I am any judge, in so doing he let every consideration of good art go to pot. Whether such a public is worth capturing or not is another matter; frankly, I would not turn my hand over for it if I were ever so able to do so. But all this is by the way; the thing to be noticed is, as I remarked last week, the peculiar and I think crippling limitation laid upon literary practice in this country – a limitation which no amount of mass-education, book-boosting and progress in literacy has in the least tended to loosen, but quite the contrary. Since I think Sinkler's career conspicuously establishes this contention – especially since I have seen his excellent tribute to good art and seen the sort of recognition it got – I am not so sure but that the Swedes could make out a pretty plausible case in favor of their award.

Our Energetic Forefathers

For several years now I have been trying to get various publishers to start some ambitious youth writing a book about work. The idea first struck me when I was doing some rather close reading in our Colonial history, and was impressed by the amount of actual labor, both of





brawn and brain, that the Founding Fathers seemed to be able to put into a day, and keep putting in, day after day. I doubt that there is anything like it in the country now. Take, for instance, Mr. Jefferson's journal of a three-months tour in France; consider the facilities he had, the kind of accommodations he found, the amount of time and energy that had to be put in on the mere business of living and getting about from place to place, and then reckon up in terms of actual work, the achievements recorded in that journal. Also, figure up the net of work in one of John Adams's days, from the time he got up until he went to bed, or one of John Quincy Adams's, when he was Secretary of State. I remember, too, when I was reading the history of the early English buccaneers, that what struck me most forcibly was the amount of actual labor that they were capable of doing, and did do, without making any fuss about it. No publisher ever bit at my suggestion, however, which I think shows a lack of enterprise.

