

# *The American* MERCURY

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## ARSENALS OF HATRED

BY DUNCAN AIKMAN

THE drug-store of Henry Somers, in a middle-sized city of These States, is of the old-fashioned kind, restfully free from soda-fountain clatter and phonograph demonstrations, smelling mustily of antiseptic balsams and confused tinctures. Several generations of newspaper reporters have patronized it because of its mildly exotic and freshly kept tobaccos. In a general way, we always knew that Old Man Somers "had religion." The shop was shut on Sunday mornings and the proprietor always out of it on prayer-meeting nights. He had a mild local celebrity as the superintendent, going on twenty-five years, of the Sunday-school of the town's most up-and-coming evangelical church. Occasionally, when he was low in mind, he would cheer himself up by trying to save a cub reporter's soul. This, by an ancient ritual, always ended with the unregenerate young man appealing to his audience to say if Somers didn't treat his deaf prescription-clerk better than Yah-weh treated His own children, and therefore wasn't he better than his God? The old man would look a little pleased at the compliment and dismiss the argument by shaking his established anathema at us from the end of a fat forefinger: "That's all right for you to say now, young man. But remember: the Bible's a bloody book! If you don't like it"—here he would grin amiably, for he

liked to swear with holy sanctions—"you can go to hell!"

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

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

## II

Private comedies like this are seldom without public significance. Ten years ago old Somers was just as certainly a Fundamentalist as he is now. His church was Modernist by about the same majority. But nobody cared much. The Fundamentalist *bloc*, which Somers led, felt that if the majority wished to lose salvation by doubting the literal accuracy of Genesis that was its own business—that it would probably be reclaimed by grace anyhow. The Modernists were positive that the minority would eventually be converted by reading Darwin, or Professor Lull, or Vernon Kellogg (which few of the Modernists themselves had done), and so were equally content to let matters drift amicably. It was a *status quo* not devoid of occasional clashes, but fully as satisfactory for practical purposes as the relations of a Republican and a communist in a horse trade.

But the Modernists, in the course of time, got tired of having it conveyed to the children each Sunday morning that their parents had sold out to the Devil and were justly damned, and the Fundamentalists got tired of having the seductions of Satan hissed in their faces from a pulpit they helped pay for by the Serpent disguised as an ordained pastor. Thus ill-feeling gradually rolled up, and the thing came to a head when Somers was asked to announce to the Sunday-school a course of lectures by a visiting authority on "Evolution and Jesus Reconciled." He refused flatly—and this breach of decorum made him the victim of the inevitable explosion. Since then the old *status quo* has been quite as dead as the *entente cordiale* has been since January, 1923.

Now, how did this destruction of a workable and fairly friendly relationship of long standing come about without either party altering its opinions? Obviously, it must have come about through an increase in the emotional intensity with which the old opinions were held. That is to say, it came about because a typical

American small-town church of better than average prestige was and is, like most other American churches today, in the throes of what must be called, for want of a better term, a religious revival. I do not mean a revival in the ordinary sense; I mean simply a sudden increase in religious interest and concern—an augmentation of the passion with which religious ideas are held.

I do not suggest that church membership in America is increasing. It is, perhaps, arguable historically that religious revivals, whether overt or occult, have always driven as many out of formal church membership as they have drawn in. Revivals are best expressed, not in statistics, but by the rise of emotional barometers—by the importance which religion gets in everyday life. The growth and vitality of the Ku Klux Klan, the recent division of a major political party over a religious quarrel, the vigorous determination of moral *blocs* to invent and enforce ever new and more rigorous prohibitions, the political aspects assumed by the campaign against (and to some extent for) evolution, the virtual disappearance of all possibility of friendly religious discussion among business and social acquaintances, the space given by newspapers not only to the spectacular aspects of the Fundamentalist-Modernist dispute but even to the relatively innocent and harmonious deliberations of the great annual conclaves of the evangelical bodies, the feverish joy taken by the unchurched in flaunting the holy faiths,—all these things are the marks of a revival in full swing. Whether out of a disgust with an actual world that has just dragged him through a senseless war and a social re-adjustment beyond his comprehension, or whether through the operation of some obscure cycle of oscillation between his material and his speculative natures, the average American of today is more wrought up about his other worldly welfare than he has been for fully sixty years.

What is the effect on the temper of

American life? As one investigates the subject by the simple laboratory method of attending churches and observing the influence of theological passion upon the people in them it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the present revival, like most of its predecessors, is making the temper of American life bad. And if it goes on, it will make it worse.

### III

Consider the psychological results of a typical Sunday morning rendezvous with the Holy Spirit. Henry Jones, president of the Jones Superior Hosiery Company, arrays himself in his newest business suit and, gathering a dutiful wife and a bored and reluctant son and daughter of adolescent years into the tonneau of his Cadillac, proceeds to the ten o'clock meeting of the Emmanuel Men's Bible Class. The estimable Jones, his offspring agree in whispers, would be in a pleasanter mood if he had had either a little less sleep or a little more. Jones himself has vaguely dallied with this thought; but as the engine stalls in the morning cool it reminds him that he has had a hard week. Didn't he buy all that cotton to mix with his famous Alsilk weave on Tuesday, only to see the price drop a cent a pound on Wednesday? And just when he was all het up about that, didn't that damned—no, he mustn't swear today, even in his private meditations—didn't that confounded shop committee come in with that damned—no, blasted—overtime demand? And didn't he then blow up—and isn't he now likely to have a strike on his hands? He guesses that maybe he is a pretty rotten sort of a business man, after all. Taking too much time bulling around at that Rotary Club and playing away his time on the golf course. Going to quit it! Stick to business more in the future!

Or no! Something cold and clammy out of his dark Calvinistic inheritance comes up to smite him. Maybe God is punishing him for all those damns, and for drinking

that bootleg hooch over at Bill Harmon's the other night. Or for that bridge game, that game of chance, at half a cent a point. Or for figuring, as he looked at the pictures in that "Outline of Science" book of Ted's, that that Adam and Eve story really must be the bunk. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord! Make bare Thy mighty arm! In terror, he scarcely forms the old voodoo texts into words. But suppose he is really going bankrupt, a broken man? What happened to David's enemies? A shadowy fear clutches him, and he steps on the gas.

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

But God Almighty—no, goodness gracious—what a row! His own daughter calling him a damned old fool—yes, it was all right to quote it—and beating it out of the house on the night train to that cigarette-smoking Aunt Jane of hers, swearing she'd never come back. That's what came of letting women who didn't have to, earn their own living. If it hadn't been for all that bunk, Marjorie wouldn't have had car fare. He'd have had the whip hand. And he'd have used it, too, you bet. . . . Even at that, there must be something the matter with him. If he was the right kind of a father, he wouldn't always be having

these rumpuses. God—no, gosh—it was a rotten world. His breakfast was hurting him right here—right under the steering wheel.

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

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

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

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

The usual timid silence of virile community leaders in conclave.

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

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

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

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

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

of his recognition as a Presbyterian minister should have been left in abeyance, as with any other man whose conduct has put him, practically if not technically, on probation.

"I'm not narrow-minded." Harmon says it so harshly that the class moves nervously as though suspected of accusing him. "I don't believe that the Presbyterian Church should examine too inquisitorially into the layman's interpretation of the creed. But I do believe that our church can only keep on being the servant of God by being eternally vigilant in its requirement that all of its preachers be sound in doctrine."

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

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

"Why should he join the Unitarians?" snaps Jones. "Would he bring them anything better than he has brought us? I decidedly doubt it. I tell you, men who talk like Fosdick does haven't any sincerity. All they have is their egotism. Take his egotism away, and Fosdick wouldn't draw enough of a crowd to fill a country meeting-house. He's smart, I grant you. He knows that by utilizing a Presbyterian pulpit to preach radicalism, he can get the crowds who feed his vanity. But he knows

he wouldn't get such crowds if he stayed where he belonged. That's why I'm for sending him where he belongs now and without any politeness, whether he likes it or not."

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

The excellent 137th Psalm—"By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps on the willows in the midst thereof"—is the lesson prescribed by the Sunday-School Quarterly. The curly-headed pastor wastes no time over its tonal felicities, but dashes them off with a jerky haste that would become a town-council clerk reading an ordinance to license horse doctors. Without slackening speed, he discharges the battery of Quarterly "question suggestions" at the bewildered heads of the "big business men who are Bible fans." . . . When, from its context, would you say this psalm was written? . . . How many times was the temple built? . . . Who built the first temple? . . . How big was it? . . . Were there any hammers or axes used in its construction? . . . Why couldn't David build it? . . . Who built the second temple? . . . Third? . . . Will there ever be another temple built? . . . And so on. The primary and intermediate classes across the hall in the Emmanuel basement have answered exactly the same questions with a certain degree of literal exactness. But the community leaders fumble and hang back so, that in order to get through his seminar in five minutes the pastor has to do most of the answering himself.

Then, their minds rested and contented from this mature and intellectual consideration of the soul's problems, the gentlemen pass upstairs to the church. From a visiting pastor of somber visage and convincing gestures they learn that they have



a Better Covenant with the Almighty, a Better Revelation, a Better Promise, a Better Security, a Better Sacrifice, a Better Resurrection, a Better Future, a Better Paradise, than any other social organization known to history—in short, “the Best Religion that ever was or ever will be.” The final prayer tenderly entreats that “religious wanderers” be brought to taste the “same sweet springs of happiness, temporal and eternal.”

#### IV

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

While the Emmanuel pillars sit in judgment on the luckless Fosdick, the leading “liberal” Methodist congregation sits in judgment upon the new amusement provisions in the Book of Discipline. At first the congregation is pleasantly shocked. The pastor, with the gentle horseplay for which he is locally famous, teases them about the old prohibitions against dancing, card-playing, theatre-going, etc. He all but says you really can do those things now and still be saved. All you need to do is to be able “to take Jesus Christ with you into the dance-hall, into the bridge game, into the pool-room.”

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

Half a dozen blocks down the street, a Fundamentalist but thoroughly sedate congregation is listening to a discourse on the

pleasing folk tale of Dives and Lazarus. “By the light of this parable,” says the rev. pastor, “we see that men do not need to be criminals and human outlaws to miss heaven and enter into a state of misery for all eternity. Dives was a gentleman, by the world’s rating, but he lifted up his eyes in hell. Our light shows the folly of seeking any way of escape from an unhappy state save by the guidance of Moses and the prophets, who direct the whole human race to Jesus Christ.”

In an imposing Presbyterian edifice, the Beatitudes are being ratified with especial emphasis on the coming exaltation of the meek and the poor in spirit. As the faithful group of humble shoe-salesmen and bookkeepers and their wives pass out toward the trolley-cars, they bestow dirty looks upon the parked flock of medium-grade motor cars belonging to their economic superiors. In one of the godlessly liberal congregations, the pastor refutes the charge that a recent peace resolution of his national church body is pacifist. In every war since its foundation, he shouts, his church has been as quick on the trigger as the next one. An enormous Baptist congregation listens to an indignant apology for the church’s failure to allay certain social evils. That isn’t the church’s business, except by the way, roars the official shepherd. Infidels who make these charges have yet to learn that the church’s “sole and central aim is redemptive—to bind man back to God.”

In the Roman Catholic basilica an oratorical monsignor urges the congregation to thank God daily that they escaped the penalties and disgraces of being born Protestants. The Episcopal rector deplores the lack of interest among the elect in the salvation of others. “Whether you are butchers or bankers, you should preach the way to salvation to all men if you would truly follow our Lord.” In a congregation trying to exist half Modernist and half Fundamentalist, the pastor puts faith and the search for reality in their respective places by this admirable jugglery: “Being divine,

Jesus Christ must have known many things that He did not teach. He knew that the earth was round, that the heart was the organ of circulation, not the seat of the affections, that Joshua did not make the sun stand still for the very simple reason that the earth and not the sun was doing the moving, and many other things that His people did not know. Yet He was strangely silent on these matters. He allowed men to continue in ignorance while He gave all emphasis to the vital truths of the Christian faith. The Christian minister may well profit by His example."

## V

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

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

But instead, he seeks the consolations of the church. They are unquestionably consoling. But instead of discharging his peevishness, based on a justifiable self-distrust, in a realistic attempt to eliminate

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

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

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

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

This is the core of the consolation that religion offers. Whatever one may read into the ethics and philosophy of the New Testament, the Christian church allures its average communicant by catching him in his moods of doubt and saying: "Here's something you can't possibly guess wrong about, because there isn't a single realistic test in the world that will prove it isn't so"; by catching him in a depth of self-distrust and saying: "Here, brother, are a lot of lewd and uncovenanted persons you can disapprove of a whole lot more than you disapprove of yourself." The church wants power and popularity, and so, like Mr. Hearst or the late Harding, it gives the public what it wants. That happens to be a license to the ego to inflate itself in pride. The ego takes the appetizing dish, and, as we have seen, naively bloats—and gloats.

Now, when multitudes of egos, as in the world today, find this inflation difficult in the face of actual experience, they accept the church's bait with exceptional avidity. Hence we have religious revivals in periods of social uncertainty, just as individuals "get religion" when in sorrow or in jail. Hence, all revivals, overt or occult, past and present, have been distinguished by

espionage and persecution, by boycotts, slander-spreading and back-biting, by mob violence and withering hatred.

## VI

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

But a religious revival sweeps all this away. By fleeing from reality into the bumptious vanities of doctrinaire opinion, the churches muddy and make more perplexing reality itself. Considering, indeed, the frivolity and viciousness of the anti-social acts and attitudes which they inspire, I believe as good a case could be made out for legally prohibiting church services on Sunday during a revival wave as for closing moving-pictures on Sunday during a crime wave. Carefully prepared statistics, it is highly probable, would show that the Christian religion, as preached by zealots in their hours of authority, has inspired as many killings as have all the exploits of famous train robbers. Certainly, far more than the movies, the church licenses dull and third-rate people to indulge their delusions of grandeur without pity and without remorse.

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



# NOTES OF AN AMATEUR FATHER

BY CHESTER T. CROWELL

NEARLY all the fathers I had met in books possessed an amazing assurance of their fitness for the responsibilities of fatherhood. Some even went so far as to yearn for a son, or sons, before marriage. Since my reading had covered about the usual range, I assume it will not be necessary to cite the volumes; the reader can scarcely have failed to encounter the same fathers.

Around me, however, were perplexed young men of about my own age who admitted quite frankly that their ideas on the subject—if they had any—were chaotic. They not only admitted that they were amateurs, but rather insisted upon their amateur standing, and wished to claim all the handicaps and immunities they might be entitled to under the circumstances. That was my own position precisely. I was a father. I was also twenty-three. Never since then have the years weighed upon me so heavily. And classical literature brought me no light because, as I have said, I had nothing in common with the types of fathers therein presented.

So I turned to what was then current literature and made a most remarkable discovery: people no longer became parents! Young men and women were frequently shipwrecked and cast up by the waves upon desert—or at least deserted—lands, and there they were married according to various improvised rituals—all extremely poetic, with coconut trees for bridesmaids and storks for witnesses. But they invariably proved sterile, or the storks were lazy, I do not know which. The eternal triangle, in fiction, was just then a little more eternal than usual. Incredible things happened;

murders were numerous; divorces not uncommon; but babies simply were not. Once in a great while I discovered a husband in fiction who was sad because no little fairy had come to brighten his home, but that was about as near the cradle as authors seemed to be venturing at the time. Wives never yearned for these little fairies.

So I turned to serious books on the subject of children—and discovered that all of them were written for mothers. This statement may not be absolutely true as to the books, but it is true as to my discovery. Thus my problem was still unsettled and it would not down. I was a father and I had to do something about it. Fortunately, during all this time, my wife was taking excellent care of the baby, and apparently had no difficulty in learning what to do; the baby's health was perfect. That, I meditated, was all right for the present, but what of the future? At twenty-three one simply has to borrow trouble.

Then I made a new discovery about fathers—the ones in books, I mean. Nearly all of them had very definite plans for their children; made sacrifices; inflicted tyranny, and in the end did more harm than good. There was, for example, old man Dombey of "Dombey and Son." I found myself confronted by a whole rogues' gallery of such fathers—men who had tried to make cobblers, wool-combers, merchants and tailors out of their gifted sons. About that time I met an old man who bewailed his fate because—so he said—he had sacrificed his all for three sons, hoping to be rewarded in some manner he did not explain—and there he was, unrewarded and miserable. But I was young enough to see two sides to the