

to live in that city, or once lived there, clinging to their bread and butter, do not show in their work the essence of these aforementioned objects and odors. They reside in a world of their own making and superimposed upon their immediate scene; they are in almost all cases not different

from the New York display of novices, mediocrities, and creators; and they have no more connection with Chicago than writers such as Willa Sibert Cather, Evelyn Scott, and Edna St. Vincent Millay have with Broadway and Greenwich Village.

## Politics

### THE ADVANTAGE OF SENATOR LA FOLLETTE

BY ALEXANDER HARVEY

NOTHING exemplifies more completely the present decay of classical studies in our land than the prevalence of a general mystification on the subject of Senator La Follette. He would have been intelligible instantly to a Greek of the age of Pericles, although he might not have been so influential politically, for he would not have remained the one man in public life at Athens with a capacity to authenticate his tragedy.

Tragedy, in the world of the ancient Greeks, was the supreme fact in life. Tragedy was a privilege. To be the center of a tragedy—the heroic, pathetic figure in it—was the privilege of a favored few. Tragedy, whether in public or in private, overwhelmed noble souls alone. These all paid for their preëminence through the medium of their suffering. This suffering was not occasioned by the misdeeds of the sufferer, unless the sufferer became a figure on the second plane and a mere instrument in the hands of others and thus unable to authenticate his tragedy. Suffering for the sake of others and suffering for the guilt of others comprised the tragedy which alone could be authenticated. Now, a capacity for the authentication of one's tragedy on this lofty ethical plane—whether that tragedy were domestic or political—was to the ancient Greek a sign of the highest genius. It won his homage.

Senator La Follette is such a tragic figure on the political plane in the eyes of

those who give him their votes. Therefore, he is a politician in the grand Greek sense rather than a statesman in the practical American sense. The suffering of La Follette has been occasioned—using terms in their classical Greek sense—by a heroic struggle with monsters. These monsters are dominant on the American economic plane as it is contemplated from the standpoint of Senator La Follette. In the course of his struggles with these monsters, La Follette has won the sympathy of every spectator—using the word sympathy in its æsthetic Greek implications. Those who jeer La Follette are rendered odious by that very circumstance.

The creation of a mood like this in such a place as Wisconsin affords some faint idea of the uniqueness of Senator La Follette's genius, quite apart from the advantage he must in consequence enjoy in the struggle of this year for the presidency. One cannot imagine President Coolidge authenticating any tragedy in our politics even were he temperamentally equipped to make tragedy the mood of his campaign. As for Mr. John W. Davis, he seems a trifle too "graduated," in the eclectic college sense of the term, to comprehend tragedy as a political fact. He is the type that street-railway conductors like to have for a superintendent—that is, "a mighty fine man." The temptation to lament that he is without a touch of reality in the ancient Greek sense is well-nigh irresistible, but we must remember that as an American college man, Mr. Davis was "graduated" with next to no ideas of Greek tragedy whatever and with only the vaguest notion of what an ancient Greek meant by reality.

No one need wonder, accordingly, if Senator La Follette remains inexplicable to people who mean to vote for Mr. Davis or for Mr. Coolidge. Senator La Follette could not be explained in terms of any political idea assimilable by men not steeped intellectually in the atmosphere of Greek tragedy. Not that La Follette must be seen, as the old-fashioned advertisers said, to be appreciated. He must be felt to be appreciated. That is why all the abuse to which he has been subjected remains irrelevant. He is too tragical a victim of his own cause, speaking in the ancient Greek sense, for any excoriation. He is a thoroughly miserable man—expressing the idea still in terms of ancient Greek experience—and it is fairly certain that he communicates his misery to his followers. This is what an Athenian politician would have done.

Hence La Follette is a temperament, a contagious temperament, a sustained mood. He has to be felt, to repeat, like an atmosphere, and because he has the genius to create the atmosphere in which he can be felt, he is susceptible of explanation only in terms of ancient tragedy.

Like all men of but one or two ideas, La Follette conveys, when he talks, a sense of boredom. Yet he masters his propositions. He is indefatigable in research. No head was ever better furnished with more finely fathered facts. The interpretation of those facts may be a matter of dispute. La Follette inevitably chooses the tragical interpretation of them. It is in such interpretations that he manifests the very trait so much admired by the ancient Greeks—the capacity to deliver a message, to spout what the French call a tirade. An ancient Greek message, a modern French tirade and a speech by Senator La Follette when he is most characteristic are one and the same thing. No one has described that thing better than François Sarcy in his elucidation of a tirade of Coquelin's: "The eye, the nose and the voice—the voice especially—are his most powerful means of action. He launches his tirades all in one breath, with full lungs, without troubling

himself too much over the shading of details, in large masses, and he possesses himself only the more strongly of the public." Exactly as the ancient Greeks would have said of La Follette, listening to one of his tirades, that he can authenticate his tragedy, the modern French would remark that he can climb his Calvary, and Londoners that he is a sensibility.

The point might be illustrated by a comparison of his dominant mood with that of President Coolidge. This statesman is capable of what to an ancient Greek must have seemed intimacy. By intimacy—a trait demanded of anyone who hoped to succeed politically—an ancient Greek did not imply familiarity. He meant a capacity to disclose one's soul, to make oneself intelligible, understood. President Coolidge has contrived to do this. He is reticent, indeed, disposed to hold back; quiet, undramatic. Such traits may not really be those of the man at all, yet they seem so completely his and they are founded upon a character seemingly so genuine that one has of President Coolidge a definite sense of knowing all about him, even if one has never seen him. This is what the ancient Greeks understood by intimacy. It seems as if anybody could be intimate in this sense but it is not so.

Because this kind of intimacy is so hard to attain and so little understood, many an experienced statesman has suffered himself to be ruined by the writers of character sketches. Seasoned politicians know that character sketches are dangerous, especially if they be written by those who know them well. The man who knows us well is the last to be trusted with a character sketch, even if that character sketch is to be edited by a competent journalist. Odd as it may seem to the inexperienced, the best character sketches are written after the subject is dead by persons who never saw him. No character sketch of Cæsar written by those who knew him could have been better than that of Froude, and nobody ever portrayed Madame Roland as vividly as Lamartine, who never

saw her. For that matter, nobody ever wrote a character sketch of the late Woodrow Wilson that did not intensify the mystery of the man to all who did not know him. The explanation is that the late Woodrow Wilson lacked intimacy in the ancient Greek sense of the term, although he may have been sufficiently intimate in the modern American sense when he was in company he liked.

It may be urged that the intimacy with the American people established by President Coolidge in the classical sense will triumph over the tragedy of Senator La Follette, however authenticated, and over

the unreality of Mr. Davis, seeing that this unreality is only ancient Greek and that Mr. Davis does exist. The contention ignores the ancient Greek theory that a genius capable of authenticating his tragedy established himself by that circumstance as dominant in his sphere. If the ancient Greeks were right—that is, if Senator La Follette should get an unusually large vote—it must become apparent that there is no such gulf as has been assumed between the ancient and the modern mind. There will ensue a revival of classical studies among those who mean to succeed in American politics.

## Sociology

### BIRTH CONTROL: AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM

BY MORRIS FISHBEIN

IN his presidential address before the American Medical Association last June, Dr. William Allen Pusey devoted himself to the subject of the limitation of population, and brought to the support of an argument for birth control most of the familiar facts about the impossibility of supporting the population of the future on the land of the present. "If no effort is made at birth control," said Doctor Pusey, "nature will take charge of the situation by eliminating those less able to resist." Continuing his argument, he cited the contention of the economists that those people inherit the earth who multiply most rapidly, and that fecundity increases inversely according to the individual's position in the social scale. It seemed to him, as it has seemed to others, that this means the downfall of modern Christian civilization, with the triumph of the misery and degradation of Asia. "I particularly desire," he concluded, "that the mistaken impression should not go out that I mean to say that medicine now has any satisfactory program for birth control. It has not."

In the tomes of the ardent economists,

biologists, sociologists and philosophers who favor birth control the eager reader will also search fruitlessly for any practical program, or, indeed, for any practical method. His disappointment will not, moreover, depend entirely on the fact that our government, either wisely or unwisely, has made unlawful the dissemination of such knowledge as is available. The fact is that none of the students of the problem, not even the physicians, have ever perfected any method of birth control that is physiologically, psychologically and biologically sound in both principle and practice. Not, of course, that devices for the prevention of conception do not exist; it is well known that they do, and that they are easily available to almost any purchaser in any drug-store in America. The difficulty lies primarily in the imperfection of the devices themselves, and in the peculiar psychology of that lower stratum of society which the birth-control enthusiasts insist must be brought to the light, lest its descendants inherit the earth.

Every practical psychologist knows that such folk are not at all interested in the welfare of the United States as it may be one hundred years from now. The desire to plan for posterity—and that posterity not of the next succeeding generation, but of four generations ahead—connotes a high