

EDITORIAL

Ah, at evening, to be drinking from the glassy pond, to have—oh, better than all marrow-bones!—the fresh illusion of lapping up the stars!

TAKE the thought from Patou, the forward-looking houn'-dog in Ros-tand's "Chantecler." Let him stand as a symbol of the whole melancholy company of crib-haltered but aspiring men, their hands doomed to go-getting but their hearts leaping into interstellar space. Patou, lifted to his hind legs and outfitted with pantaloons, would have made a capital Rotarian. Condemned by destiny to a kennel in a barnyard, he yet had that soaring, humorless Vision which is the essence of Rotary, and the secret, no doubt, of its firm hold upon otherwise un-poetical men. For even in the paradise of Babbitt, Babbitt is vaguely uneasy and unhappy. He needs something more, he finds, than is to be found in bulging order-books, in innumerable caravans of prospects, and in belching chimneys and laden trains. He needs something more than is to be got out of blowing spitballs and playing golf. So he searches for that something in the realms of the fancy, where the husks of things fall off and their inner sap is revealed. He reads the dithyrambs of Edgar Albert Guest and Dr. Frank Crane. He listens to the exhortations of itinerant rhetoricians, gifted and eloquent men, specialists in what it is all about. He intones "Sweet Adeline," and is not ashamed of the tear that babbles down his nose. Thus Babbitt, too, is tantalized by a Grail: he seeks it up and down the gorgeous corridors of his Statler Hotel, past the cigarstand and the lair of the hat-check gal, and on to the perfumed catacombs of the lovely manicurist and the white-robed chirotonsor. *Non in solo pane vivit homo.* Man cannot live by bread alone. He must

hope also. He must dream. He must yearn.

The fact explains the Rotarian and his humble brother, the Kiwanian; more, it strips them of not a little of their superficial obnoxiousness. They are fools, but they are not quite damned. If their quest is carried on in motley, they at least trail after better men. And so do all their brethern of Service, great and small—the Americanizers, the Law Enforcers, the boosters and boomers, and the endless others after their kind. At first glance, one sees in these visionaries only noisy and preposterous fellows, disturbing the peace of their betters. But a closer examination is more favorable to them. They are tortured, in their odd, clumsy fashion, by the same ringing in the ears that maddened Ludwig van Beethoven. They suffer from the same optical delusions, painful and not due to sin, that set the prophets of antiquity to howling: they look at Coolidge and see a Man. What lures them to their bizarre cavortings—and it is surely not to be sniffed at *per se*—is a dim and disturbing mirage of a world more lovely and serene than the one the Lord God has doomed them to live in. What they lack in common, thus diverging from the prophets, is a rational conception of what it ought to be, and might be.

II

It is somewhat astonishing that 100% Americans should wander so helplessly in this wilderness. For there is a well-paved road across the whole waste, and it issues, at its place of beginning, from the tombs of the Fathers, and their sacred and immemorial dust. Straight as a pistol shot it runs, until at the other end it sweeps up a glittering slope to a shrine upon a high

hill. This shrine may be seen on fair days for many leagues, and presents a magnificent spectacle. Its base is confected of the bones of Revolutionary heroes, and out of them rises an heroic effigy of George Washington, in alabaster. Surrounding this effigy, and on a slightly smaller scale, are graven images of Jefferson, Franklin, Nathan Hale, old Sam Adams, John Hancock and Paul Revere, each with a Bible under his arm and the Stars and Stripes fluttering over his shoulder. A bit to the rear, and without the Bible, is a statue of Thomas Paine. Over the whole structure stretch great bands of the tricolor, in silk, satin and other precious fabrics. Red and white stripes run up and down the legs of Washington, and his waistcoat is spattered with stars. The effect is the grandiose one of a Democratic national convention. At night, in the American manner, spotlights play upon the shrine. Hot dogs are on sale nearby, that pilgrims may not hunger, and there is a free park for Fords, with running water and booths for the sale of spare parts. It is the shrine of Liberty!

But where are the pilgrims? One observes the immense parking space and the huge pyramids of hot dogs, and one looks for great hordes of worshippers, fighting their way to the altar-steps. But they are *non est*. Now and then a honeymoon couple wanders in from the rural South or Middle West, to gape at the splendors hand in hand, and now and then a schoolma'm arrives with a flock of her pupils, and lectures them solemnly out of a book. More often, perhaps, a foreign visitor is to be seen, with a *couronne* of tin bay-leaves under his arm. He deposits the *couronne* at the foot of Washington, crosses himself lugubriously, and retires to the nearest hot dog stand. But where are the Americans? Where are the he-men, heirs to the heroes whose gilded skulls here wait the Judgment Day? Where are the Americanizers? Where are the boosters and boomers? Where are the sturdy Coolidge men? The Dawes men? The Mellon men? Where are the Rotarians, Kiwanians, Lions? Where

are the authors of newspaper editorials? The visionaries of Chautauqua? The keepers of the national idealism?

Go search for them, if you don't trust the first report of your eyes! Go search for honest men in Congress! They are simply not present. For among all the visions that now inflame forward-looking and up-and-coming men in this great Republic, there is no sign any more of the one that is older than all the rest, and that is the vision of Liberty. The Fathers saw it, and the devotion they gave to it went far beyond three cheers a week. It survived into Jackson's time, and its glow was renewed in Lincoln's. But now it is no more.

III

The phenomenon is curious, and deserves far more study by eminent psychologists than it has got. I may undertake that study as an amateur in a work reserved for my senility; at the moment I can only point to the fact. Liberty, today, not only lacks its old hot partisans and romantic fanatics in America; it has grown so disreputable that even to mention it becomes a sort of indecorum. I know of but one national organization that so much as alludes to it politely, and that organization, a few months ago, was rewarded with a violent denunciation on the floor of the House of Representatives: only the lone Socialist, once in jail himself for the same offense, made bold to defend it. From the chosen elders of the nation, legislative, executive and judicial, one hears only that speaking for it is an incitement to treason. It is the first duty of the free citizen, it appears, to make a willing sacrifice of the Bill of Rights. He must leap to the business gladly, and with no mental reservations. If he pauses, then he is a Bolshevik.

I venture to argue that this doctrine is evil, and that renouncing it would yield a sweeter usufruct to the American people than all the varieties of Service that now prevail. Of what use is it for Kiwanis to buy wooden legs for one-legged boys if

they must grow up as slaves to the Anti-Saloon League? What is the net gain to a boomed and boosted town if its people, coincidentally, lose their right to trial by jury and their inviolability of domicile? Who gives a damn for the Coolidge idealism if its chief agent and executor, even above the Cabinet, is the Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *i.e.*, a gang of snooty ecclesiastics, committed unanimously to the doctrines that Christ should have been jailed for the business at Cana, that God sent she-bears to "tare" forty-two little children because they had made fun of Elisha's bald head, and that Jonah swallowed the whale? Imagine an immigrant studying the new science of Americanism, and coming to the eighteen Amendments to the Constitution. What will he make of the discovery that only the Eighteenth embodies a categorical imperative—that all the others must yield to it when they conflict with it—that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth are not binding upon the Prohibitionists of the South and that the First, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth are not binding upon Prohibitionists anywhere?

I preach reaction. Back to Bach! I can't find the word Service in the Constitution, but what is there is sounder and nobler than anything ever heard of where Regular Fellows meet to slap backs and blow spitballs—or, at all events, it *was* there before January 16, 1920. The Fathers, too, had a Vision. They were, in their way, forward-lookers; they were even go-getters. What they dreamed of and fought for was a civilization based upon a body of simple, equitable and reasonable laws—a code designed to break the chains of lingering medievalism, and set the individual free. The thing they imagined was a commonwealth of free men, all equal before the law. Some of them had grave doubts about it, but in the end the optimists won over the doubters, and they all made the venture together. I am myself no partisan of their scheme. It seems to me that there

were fundamental defects in it—that some of their primary assumptions were false. But in their intention, at least, there was something exhilarating, and in it there was also something sound. That something was the premiss that the first aim of civilized government is to augment and safeguard the dignity of man—that it is worth nothing to be a citizen of a state which holds the humblest citizen cheaply, and uses him ill.

This is what we have lost, and not all the whooping and yelling of new messiahs can cover the fact. The government becomes the common enemy of all well-disposed and decent men. It commandeers and wastes their money, it assaults and insults them with outrageous and extravagant laws, and it turns loose upon them a horde of professional blackguards, bent only upon destroying their liberties. The individual, facing this pestilence of tyranny and corruption, finds himself quite helpless. If he goes to the agents of the government itself with his protest, he gets only stupid reviling. If he turns to his fellow victims for support, he is lucky to escape jail. Worse, he is lucky to escape lynching. For the thing has gone so far that the great majority of dull and unimaginative men have begun to take it as a matter of course—almost as the order of nature. The Bill of Rights becomes a mere series of romantic dithyrambs, without solid substance or meaning—say, like the Sermon on the Mount. The school-books of the next generation will omit it. The few fanatics who remember it will keep it on the top shelf, along with the Family Doctor Book, the scientific works of Dr. Marie Scopes, and "Only a Boy."

Against all this I protest, feebly and too late. The land swarms with Men of Vision, all pining for Service. What I propose is that they forget their brummagem Grails for one week, and concentrate their pep upon a chase that really leads uphill. Let us have a Bill of Rights Week. Let us have a Common Decency Week.

H. L. M.

ARKANSAS

BY CLAY FULKS

Woods and Templed Hills

WHAT the third President really wanted when he acquired for his country the vast Louisiana Territory, if he knew his business as well as I think he did, was Arkansas. With one stroke of the pen he and the Little Corporal made mere microbes of all succeeding realtors, for Arkansas alone was worth many times the money paid for the whole domain. Her 53,000 square miles embrace a greater extent of navigable rivers and a greater variety of natural resources than perhaps any other State in the Union can boast. Her fifty-odd varieties of oak, her many other hardwoods, and her yellow pines, to say nothing of the incalculable wealth lying in her lush alluvial soil, were worth enough to pay the price of the whole Territory over and over again. Arkansas could have paid the price in marble, in coal, in petroleum, in aluminum ore, or in diamonds and pearls. Her wasted water-power could buy it today, with interest to date. She could even pay it in the proverbial chips and whetstones, for the products of her novaculite quarries are known wherever edged-tools are used. Thus every good Arkansan knows that, when he bought the Louisiana Territory, Jefferson had his eye on Arkansas.

She has the highest mountains between the Rockies and the Appalachians—mountains having all the beauty without either the grandeur or the waste places of the mountains of Colorado. The steepest slopes of Arkansas might be terraced, and festooned with fruitful orchards and vineyards. She has rich river plains without

the torrid, muggy climate and the miasmatic ooze and slime of alligator land. In her wildwoods her scenery, at times, is magnificent in its loveliness. Many a time in youth and since have I strolled along the mossy banks of her crystal streams, beneath towering cliffs of gray granite, by golden sand bars fringed with weeping willows, and by meadows carpeted with flowers, listening to the murmur of the sparkling water and the music of the humming birds hidden among the sweet-scented honeysuckles. Along the Cadron and Cove creeks and the upper waters of the Washita, White, Caddo, and Little Red rivers are scenes that are certainly as beautiful as any this earth affords. Arkansas still has a wealth of such scenes. Their attraction for me is constant and strong.

But now, slowly, one by one, they are being rudely violated as the State struggles to put on the rattling harness of "progress."

II

The Arkansaw Traveler

Tradition, legend, tune, and song preserve the ridiculous caricature of the early native encountered by the Arkansaw Traveler. Their famous dialogue is recorded anew in Cox's recently published "Folk Songs of the South."

The care-free barbarian sat, grasshopper-like, in the open doorway of his half-roofed cabin chirping on his old fiddle when the Traveler hallooed.

"Hello yerself! If you wanta go to hell, go by yerself," returned the native as he continued sawing on the battered violin.