

EMINENCE

BY RUTH SUCKOW

MR. AND MRS. WATKINS were going to church on Christmas Eve. Mr. Watkins was proudly carrying Florentine. Her little white legs, dangling, bumped against his coat. Her curls were carefully covered. Mrs. Watkins was carrying, wrapped from the snow, the star and crown of silver paper.

"Be careful of her slippers, daddy!"

"I'm being careful."

Florentine took one bare hand from her muff and stretched it out to the snow flakes. They were like dim soft little stars. They melted with a cool delicious tingle upon her warm skin. The flimmer of misty snow hushed for a moment the high excitement of being on the programme.

"Oh, keep your hands covered, darling!"

The church was brilliant with lighted windows in the snowfall. With preoccupied faces, taking only an instant to smile and half nod to this one and that, Mr. and Mrs. Watkins made their way through the people flocking up the church steps. They were thrillingly aware of the whispers all around them. A man called out jovially, "What's that you've got there, Watkins?" Mr. Watkins said proudly, "That's part of the programme!" Above all the heads was Florentine's small pale face with starry eyes.

They went straight to the Infant Room, where the children who were going to take part on the programme were crowded. Instantly they were surrounded. "Oh, here she is! They've brought her!" Faces of Sunday-school teachers, of older girls, delighted, eager, were all around them. Boys watched, while they pretended not to, with aloof and silent admiration. At the

edge of the group, withdrawn, solemn and watchful, were the other little girls in Florentine's class.

Mr. Watkins set Florentine on her feet. Mrs. Watkins sent him to find seats for them in the audience room. Her face was tensely absorbed as she laid aside Florentine's white wavy furs, drew off her white coat, and undid the scarf. She brushed out the pale-gold curls that were flattened, the little fine surface hairs roughened and glinting, from the pressure. She knelt to place the crown of silver paper, tipped at the center with a star, upon Florentine's head. Florentine was all in white. She wore white slippers and stockings and a little white silk dress with puffed sleeves.

"How darling! How dear! Mrs. Watkins, what is she?"

"The Christmas Fairy," Mrs. Watkins said.

She led Florentine over to the register, murmuring, "Come, darling, you must get warm!" The girls from the older classes circled around her in delight, with coos and cries of ecstasy, reaching out adoring fingers to brush Florentine's floating curls, to fondle her little soft wrists, and touch her silken skirts. "Oh, Mrs. Watkins, can't we look after her?" Florentine Watkins was the prettiest child in the Sunday-school. She stood on the register, a little princess, small, calm and sure of herself, but her face pale and her eyes like dark blue stars. She let one hold her hand and another lay all her curls straight, with one curl over each shoulder. Beneath her little smile, the glory of the occasion, of the moment, of the worship, was shining and singing through her—almost ready to

break into fiery sparkles, as when she dragged her feet across the rug and touched the cat's fur. She was well aware of being the star of the evening. The scarf her mother had anxiously put about her floated and clung to her puffed sleeves and her small chilly arms. The heat from the register billowed out her full silk skirt, that clung like milkweed floss to the fingers of the girls when they pushed it down. All the boys were aware of her, but awed, looking sidelong at her and standing apart.

"Mrs. Watkins, let us take care of her!"

"Will you stay with the girls, darling?"

Florentine consented royally.

"You remember your piece, darling. You remember what to do."

"I remember."

Still on the edge of the group stood the other girls in the class. Lola, Kitty, Amy, Mary Louise. They were in their Winter dresses, black stockings and high shoes. They had walked to the church. Their hair was crimped or braided, and they wore big red hair ribbons. They eyed Florentine.

The noise in the audience room was growing louder. It was almost time for the programme to begin. The teachers were beginning to marshal the classes. "Now, Miss Morrison's class!" That was the one to which Florentine belonged. She stepped into line with a thrill of shining fear and expectation.

Lola, Kitty, Amy and Mary Louise huddled together behind her with giggles and excited whispers. They clung to each other. "What if I should forget!" "I know your part. I'll prompt you." Florentine stood at the head. Now her fear had become a great cold blankness that left her, in the midst of the envy and the worship, all alone. The girls looked at her, but did not cling to her. Her face was white and her eyes dark under her silver star. If she forgot, none of them could help her. She had the principal part. The exercise depended upon her.

The organ was almost hidden behind

the Christmas tree, dark glistening green, laden with white packages, shredded over with sparkles of tinsel. The opening march sounded out through the branches. It spread through the air heated from the big registers and chilled by the Wintry drafts from the door, spiced with evergreen, thick with the odors of the crowd in their Winter clothing damp from the snow. All the heads turned to watch the Sunday-school march in.

Mr. and Mrs. Watkins sat near the front. Their eyes were set in a glaze of expectation. Mrs. Watkins clasped her hands until the knuckles were strained to white. In all the marching ranks—little boys and little girls, bigger, smaller, fair-haired, black-haired, awkward, pretty—they could see only one child. "There comes Florentine!" She had a little space to herself, as if made by the shining of her silver star and the dainty floating of her silken skirts. That made everyone look at her. Just for one transported instant the little face passed them, pale, unconscious of them, under the silver star. Then they sat back. With shovings, rustlings, scuffings, and orders from teachers, the Sunday-school was seated. She was lost to them among the other children.

II

The exercises began.

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come. . . ."

The music roared through the branches of the Christmas tree and filled the room. When the audience sat down again, the front seats reserved for the Sunday-school quivered with hair ribbons.

All bowed their heads, but they were not listening to the minister's prayer. It was just something that came at this time on the programme. Parents were craning and straining their eyes to see their own children. The children had their eyes on the packages heaped about the tree. They nudged one another to see that big package propped at its foot. "Wonder whose

that is?" The prayer ended, the audience moved and shuffled, and the superintendent stepped forward and announced the first real number of the programme. Now those who were to take part became self-conscious, looked down and twisted their shaking fingers, with their lips silently repeating the opening lines of their pieces.

"A song by the Infant Department."

Pulling back, stopping and wandering, whimpering or looking about with widely innocent eyes, the infants were herded upon the platform. The little ones were pulled to their places in front. Some were too large and awkward among the others. A shock-headed boy, with holes in his stockings that showed white patches of Winter underwear, stood grinning at the end of the line. The little threads of voices followed the voice of the primary teacher, on and off the key. When the song was over none of the infants knew enough to go down. They stood smiling with engaging foolishness at the audience until the teacher began to marshal them off the platform. Some wandered down, others came with quick little steps, while the audience laughed and clapped, the men grinning, but ashamed, at the exhibition of ingenuousness.

Mr. and Mrs. Watkins smiled slightly and clapped perfunctorily. They could not give ready applause until Florentine had had hers.

Exercises, songs and recitations—pieces by children whose mothers would be offended if they were left off the programme. Good or bad, the audience clapped. Here a clear little voice got a momentary sharpness of applause; or a lisp or a stutter drew a ripple of laughter. Mrs. Watkins listened, clasping her hands. Once she was angry. It was when Howard Hopkins "forgot." He stood staring at the audience with a bright, bold, unabashed gaze, and when he could not go on, suddenly grinned and said, "Guess that's all!" and marched nonchalantly down. The roar of laughter and appreciation beat upon Mrs. Watkins' jealous ears. It was not fair. It did not

really belong to the programme. This boy had no right to come in, not even able to speak his piece, and take away some of the applause from Florentine.

In the third row from the front, Miss Morrison's class waited, all crowded together. Their exercise came near the end of the programme. It was the principal one. They were old enough now to know how to do things, but still small enough to be "cute." And then, they had Florentine Watkins. They wiggled and squirmed through the earlier numbers. The other girls whispered together. But Florentine sat still, her eyes brightly fixed, whispering over and over to herself with rapt intentness the first line of her piece. At times she forgot about it, and it fled away from her, and then, after a cold moment when the world shook, it sounded clear and true in her mind. She felt all the eyes upon her silver star. Through the earlier part of the programme, that elated her and made her hold her small golden head high. But now it quivered through her with terror. Her turn was almost here. She was Florentine Watkins. The whole church expected her to do well. The teacher depended upon her. The girls would wait for her. Her mother and father were listening. Her lines started to vanish and her mind made a leap and caught them. The lights and the sparkles on the Christmas tree dazzled together. She could not breathe or live until this was over. She moistened her lips and moved one cold little hand. She was the most miserable one on the programme. If she could be Kitty, with only four lines to speak, that girl in front of her who had already given her recitation—be a child of whom no one expected anything—, Beany Watters, that boy with the holes in his stockings! The shining of the silver star on her forehead was a bright terror. The next . . . her heart began to thump. . . .

"The Christmas Fairy"—an exercise by Miss Morrison's class."

Florentine rose at the head of her line, made her way daintily down the aisle and

up the steps, padded with white and bordered with evergreen, and crossed the enormous space of the platform. Her knees were trembling, but a strange spacious coolness was upon her. She would get through her part, and then die.

In shaking silence the little girls took their places about Florentine. Mr. and Mrs. Watkins were staring straight ahead. Mr. Watkins cleared his throat. Mrs. Watkins saw her child through a wavering shimmer of dizziness: little delicate white figure in the flimsy shine of the silken dress, silver star tipping the golden head—was the dress all right? long enough? the crown straight on her head? Mrs. Watkins dug her nails in ecstatic agony into her palms. Then silence. Florentine stepped forward. Her voice came out clear and small, tremulous—like the shaking of a tiny bell—in the rustling hush of the room.

Dear children all, I heard your wishes,
And o'er the world I flew
To bring my happy Christmas message
To all the world and you. . . .

Her mother's eyes were fixed in an agony of watchfulness on that small face. Every word seemed to turn and twist in her own heart.

Florentine was getting through it. Her little bell-like voice rang out the words small and clear and pure. Her knees had stopped trembling. Her coolness was fired with happiness. Why, it was going to be over too soon! In a blaze of elation she wanted to go all through it again. Now the eyes upon her were a bright intoxication. Just for this little moment, she was the Fairy—silver star and white slippers, silken gown and silver crown—herself and beyond herself. . . . It was over. She had spoken the last word. She was standing—she was going down the steps—sliding into her pew. The applause was a roaring sea in her ears. It was not until she was seated, breathing quickly and clasping her warm trembling hands in her silken lap, that she realized in a burning glory that the applause was for her!

Mr. Watkins was smiling broadly, un-

able to hold in his pride. Mrs. Watkins' heart steadied into a happy, elated beat as she drank in the applause. Their child, their child—the best on the whole programme! Moisture stung in her eyes, and warmth flowed over her. Now she could be happy. Now she could be easy. She could smile at the rest of the programme.

III

The children were growing restless. They did not want to hear the superintendent's announcements. They were watching, turning—but the little ones shrieked when they heard a jingle of bells from the entry and a stamping of feet. Santa Claus came running down the aisle. He shouted in an enormous jovial voice, "Well, children, Merry Christmas! Did you think old Santy wouldn't come?"

Clapping, laughter and cat-calls answered him.

"Well, Santy pretty near thought so himself. I'll tell you how it was. One of Santy's reindeer got a stone in its hoof and we had to stop and see the blacksmith down there at Grover. Well sir, and all the presents I was bringing to the good little girls and boys in Mahaska—Santy don't give any presents to bad children, no sir, but you're all good, ain't you? [A little trusting voice piped up, 'Yes, Santy!'] Sure you are! I knew it! Well, all the presents rolled out, and those children in Grover—I guess they hadn't seen any things like those!—they came pretty near getting the whole lot of them."

The little children sat with starry eyes of wonder and expectation. It was Mr. Heggy. The big boys were whispering that it was only Mr. Heggy. And yet, could they be sure? There were the buffalo coat and the fur cap, the white woolly beard and rosy cheeks, the jingle of sleigh-bells from up his sleeve. . . . They watched breathlessly while the first presents were taken from the Christmas tree. "Aw, it ain't either Santy. It's just Mr. Heggy. Because there's another Santy at the Meth-

odists'. They ain't two Santys, is they?" Still the little ones were not convinced. They murmured, "I bet it *could* be Santy, though!"

The big boys in Mr. Pendleton's class were distributing the candy—hard Christmas candy, little colored curley-cues and squares and round white logs with flowers in the center glistening red and sticky white. Every child—visitors and all—got one of the little cardboard packages. Florentine accepted hers. She was glad to sit back for a little while in the obscurity that Santa's speech made for her, but still with the radiance of her great moment warmly upon her.

Santa had come to the packages. He was reading the names in a loud voice as he took them from the tree.

"'Helen Vincent'! Anybody know Helen? Oh, that's Helen, is it? Hold up your hand, Helen, this looks like a pretty nice present. . . . 'Mamie Runkle'! Now I wonder who could have given Mamie a present like that? Must have been someone who liked her pretty well! . . . 'Mrs. Peabody. From her Sunday-school class'! Well, well, I guess those boys know a good teacher when they get one."

The boys rushed about, waving the packages, sending them down the aisles from hand to hand. Children were gnawing at the hard candy, with loud snaps, as if teeth were breaking. Papers were strewn untidily over the church. The Christmas tree was shining but disheveled. Santa was just calling the names now. The big box at the foot of the tree had not yet been given out. It had been saved for the last. The children were still pointing to it, and hoping and whispering about it.

Santa lifted it. A hush in the buzzing and talking and rustling followed. The package was big enough to catch the last jaded attention of the audience. He looked it all over for a name. The room became still. Respectful, wondering, eager glances were turned toward the box. Santa took his time.

"Well, this is quite a little bundle! Glad

Santy didn't have to carry this very far. Guess this must go to Santy himself—must be a token of appreciation. . . . No, sir! I'm mistaken there. This seems to belong to a little girl. I'd oughta brought my specs along from the North Pole to read this. Let's see if I can make it out. . . . 'Florentine Watkins'! Well, well! A big box for a little girl! Here, boys! The little girl with the silver star on her head."

The sound of wonder, envy, disappointment, and excited laughter swelled. Mr. and Mrs. Watkins sat suffused with happy pride. Florentine's face was pale as she held out her arms to take the package. "Open it, open it!" She heard the whispers all around her. The girls pressed close. Someone had to help her untie the string. . . . The string was loose, the white paper off—tissue paper, crackling and soft, and wadded into it, an enormous doll! . . . There was a long sigh from the children crowding to see. The doll lay revealed—closed, waxy-lidded eyes and golden-brown lashes upon pink bisque cheeks, golden curls matted upon its cold bisque forehead, dress of pink satin, pink stockings, gold buckles on its tiny shoes. . . . "Oh, look!" A moan came from the girls. They crowded about to touch the hair and the satin gown. "Florentine, will you let me see? Is she jointed all over? Can I just *touch* her?" Heads through the audience craned to see, people half rose, the room was a buzz.

Florentine sat holding the big box. She was mute with a surfeit of bliss. Nothing else could happen after this.

IV

In the loud hubbub of leaving, people were all crowded and talking at the door. Children came running on padding little feet up the sloping aisles, and bumped joyously into parents. "Oh, here you are, are you?" A father put his arm around a little shoulder, squeezed a flaxen head against him and held it there while he went on talking, and the other persons smiled. "See all the things I got, papa!"

"Well, well!" He didn't really see them. "Santy Claus was pretty good to you!" Mothers had gone down to the front rows to find their own infants. They sat down in convenient pews and tried to drag small, stiff, black overshoes over little feet limp in their laps. The white sheeting on the platform was marked all over with footprints, the evergreen trimmings were pulled out from their tacks. The Christmas tree stood sparkling but denuded. From it spread the odors of pine needles, hot wax, popcorn and paper.

Mrs. Watkins had taken Florentine at once into the Infant Room to find her wraps. Mr. Watkins waited in the audience room near the register. He talked in a manly way with Mr. Hollister—also waiting—about the effect this snow would have upon the ground; but his ears were straining with shamed eagerness for the words that were occasionally spoken to him: "I should think you'd be pretty proud of that little girl tonight, Mr. Watkins!"

In the Infant Room, where tired mothers were finding wraps in the piled mountain shaking and toppling on an old discarded pew—"How can we *ever* find our own things in this jam!"—Mrs. Watkins took down Florentine's white wraps from their special hook. "Are you tired, darling?" she mourned. Even when she was drawing on the little coat, and her back was turned to the room, she was tinglingly aware of the notice of the others and the glory shed upon her by her child. She pretended to think only of the hurry of getting home. As soon as she turned toward the room, she expected the congratulations to break out. With careful, proud, reluctant hands she lifted off the silver crown and star.

A woman came searching through the Infant Room with a big-eyed little child clinging to her hand. "Oh, here she is!" She encouraged the child, "Ask her! I think she will!"; and then she said to Mrs. Watkins, "Here's a little girl, Mrs. Watkins, who thinks she can't go home until she's seen Florentine Watkins' big doll!"

"Why, of course!" Mrs. Watkins said with radiant graciousness. "It's in the other room. Mr. Watkins has it. You come in with us, Lucy. Florentine will show it to you."

"I want to see that, too! Mamma, I want to see it, too! I want to see the big doll."

Now all the crowd who had been pawing over the wraps and staying away from Mrs. Watkins and Florentine out of respect, diffidence and envy, came flocking around them.

"These children want to see the doll, daddy!"

"Want to see the doll?"

Mr. Watkins opened the box. The little children gave great sighs. Mothers had to clutch little reaching hands and warn, "Oh, mustn't touch!" while Mrs. Watkins smiled graciously, but alertly. Mr. Watkins set the box upright, and the bright blue eyes of the doll flew open between its golden-brown lashes. Lola Hollister cried with an anguish of longing, "Oh, mamma, look! The doll's got *real* little gold buckles on its shoes!" Mrs. Hollister said in a slight, withdrawn voice, "Yes, I see!", and gave a painful little smirk. She compared this doll with the doll Lola was going to get in the morning. Her heart was rent with a painful anguish of jealousy for her child. Mr. Hollister tried to be admiring, but it shamed him, shamed his adequacy as a father, when he too compared this doll with Lola's doll, which he had bought. Some of the crowding faces were artlessly adoring. Others had a look of reserve which Mrs. Watkins' alert eyes caught. At last all the wondering childish eyes were satiated with the vision. Hands of mothers drew little figures gently back and voices murmured: "Well, are you satisfied? Have you seen the big doll?"

Long-drawn sighs answered them.

But there was something that made Florentine wonder. Mary Louise did not come to look at the doll. "I saw it before!" she said snippily to Lola, and ran off. The

doll was too much. The Watkinses, on the very peak of glory in showing it off, did not know. Even some of the admiring ones went away from the church saying: they shouldn't have bought the doll; they shouldn't have put it on the Christmas tree; it was too expensive for a little girl; the Watkinses made them tired trotting out that child; next year they hoped some other child would get a chance.

The chief families of the church, with the minister and his wife, stood talking at the door. Mr. Watkins had set Florentine in a pew, and she stood leaning against him while he kept his arm around her. As people passed him, going to the door, they stopped. "My, but you must be proud of her tonight!" Florentine touched his cheek with a little princess air. The great doll was asleep in its closed box. The room glittered in tinsel and evergreen, and her presents were heaped on the pew beside her.

Freddy Parkins, being dragged out by a father who wanted to get home, called back eagerly, "G'night, Flor'ntine!"

"Goodnight!" she answered with starry graciousness.

Old ladies moving slowly to the door, stopping to pat her little woolly sleeve with thin fingers, murmured, "Wasn't she dear? Just *like* a little fairy!" Florentine accepted the homage with sweet, childish royalty. But in her mind, under all the glory, was a tremulous, shining wonder that craved to be reassured.

Mrs. Watkins was flushed. She drank down the praise that burned her like a fiery wine. "She was simply perfect, Mrs. Watkins!" "I know you're proud tonight!" But the first perfect bliss of the applause that followed Florentine's exercise was marred. Florentine had won, and yet there were people who went away unconvinced, who seemed to have other, strange values. Already the atmosphere of universal praise had slackened. She was jealous of the laughter that still followed any mention of Howard Hopkins. "Wasn't that kid funny? Say, he was great!" Could

there be people who had enjoyed him more than Florentine? She hated the minister's wife, who kept repeating, with effervescing tactfulness, "They were *all* good!"

V

It was time to close up the church. The people who were talking over the programme, the expenses, the success of the evening, began to look about for their children; and the Watkinses were beginning to realize that they had heard all the praise they were likely to hear for this evening. Lola and Mary Louise and Kitty were playing a game, chasing each other through the pews and down the aisles. "Come! It's time to go home! Remember, tomorrow is Christmas!" They came scampering up to the register, flushed, with disordered hair, panting and giggling together. "What are you little girls up to?" someone asked tolerantly. Kitty pinched Lola, and they laughed; but when they looked at Florentine, their eyes grew sober and aloof, considering.

"You go get your wraps on, young lady!"

Kitty ran off. She turned to call back to Mary Louise, "Don't you forget about tomorrow!" Mary Louise answered, "I won't! Don't *you* forget, Lola!" "I won't." They were going to see each other's presents. Lola gave a timid look at Florentine, but did not ask her to come. Florentine's big doll was so wonderful—finer than anything they would get. Florentine, in her white dress and slippers, noticed by everyone, was no longer one of them.

Florentine stood silent and cool. She could not make a move toward the other girls, but she looked after them with a strange loneliness; and all at once it seemed to her that they had been having the most fun in the world playing together. She was suddenly very tired. Her eyes blinked under the dazzle of the lights. She no longer cared what people said to her. The programme was over. She had her doll. What more was there? Christmas would be nothing after this evening.

Mrs. Watkins said commiseratingly, "Hurry up, daddy. She's tired."

Mr. Watkins picked Florentine up in his arms again. As they went outside the warm church into the snow, her disheveled little head drooped upon his shoulder. Mrs. Watkins was carrying the doll, and she was saying with anxious caution, "I was so afraid some of those children would do something to this doll! Daddy and mother had to send away off for it. It isn't to play with every day—just on special occasions. And Florentine, you must never let any of the girls handle it, no matter if they do ask you. You can't trust other children with it. Remember how Kitty ruined your little piano! This doll is much too expensive for that."

Florentine did not answer. All down the silent street—it had stopped snowing now, the ground where the corner light shone was covered with a soft, white, diamondy

fluff—she snuggled down against her father's shoulder. To be carried by her father, and give way to the strong shelter of his arms, was all she wanted now. When they came up onto their own porch, stamping the snow from their rubbers, he set her down. They were going into the house, proud, happy and satisfied; but by the hall light they saw her sleepy face under the bright dishevelment of hair, drunk with the glories of the evening, forlorn now and bewildered, able to bear no more. Her eyes were almost closed. It was as if they had never realized until now how small she was.

Her father said heartily, "Well, the big night's over!"

But her mother cried, in an anguish of adoring pity: "She must go to bed this minute! She'll be all tired out if she doesn't. We mustn't forget that tomorrow will be here."

EDITORIAL

THE decay of the Coolidge superstition leaves most of the principal newspapers of the United States looking very sick. Since the very moment of the martyr Harding's dispatch by the Jesuits they have pumped up his absurd little successor in a lavish and voluptuous manner. Their proprietors, and, in many cases, their managing editors and chief editorial writers, have sailed down the Potomac on the *Mayflower*, listening to him snore; their news columns have been filled with imbecilities in favor of him, and their editorial pages have glittered with his praises. With what net result? With the net result that even the Babbitts of the land have begun to see that he is a hollow and preposterous fellow, without anything in his head properly describable as ideas, and with notions of dignity and honor indistinguishable from those of a country book agent. He has squirmed and he has backed water; he has played cheap and dirty politics; he has favored charlatans and used the immense influence of his office against honest men. There has been no more trivial and trashy President in American history, nor one surrounded by worse frauds. Now, at last, the country begins to take his true measure, and the politicians of his own party, seeing the handwriting on the wall, prepare to throw him overboard—if he is not too slippery for them!—next year. The newspapers, I believe, have had little if anything to do with that change, save unwittingly. With precious few exceptions, they have continued to anoint and flatter him, even when the news they had to print made the truth about him plain to the dullest. He has had, from the first, a superb press—docile, humorless, slimy and knavish. It has, in dealing with him, disgraced itself beyond pardon or remedy.

Coming at last—and how gingerly!—to a more realistic attitude towards him, it only reveals the depths of its degradation heretofore.

The Liberal weeklies and other such organs of dissent, noting this degradation, have ascribed it, characteristically, to the influence of the vague monster called Wall Street. The proprietors of the principal newspapers, it appears, got their orders from Wall Street to convert poor Cal into a Great Statesman, and these orders were transmitted to their menials. So the avalanche of goose-grease began, with the lesser sheets following with their squirts of rose-water and vaseline. A simple theory, and hence extremely plausible to Liberals, but as an ancient of journalism I presume to doubt it. The orders of Wall Street, I believe, actually reach very few newspaper offices in the United States, and the few are not important ones. Nor are newspaper proprietors, as a class, actively interested in finance. Nor are they the habitual associates of financiers. Far more often their interests lie in the direction of political roguery and preferment, and nine times out of ten, I believe, they get a large part of their knowledge of that science from their own men. In other words, the average newspaper proprietor is such an ass that he believes political reporters, and especially his own political reporters. They have, he fancies, wide and confidential sources of information: their wisdom is a function of their prestige as his agents. What they tell him is, in the long run, what he believes, with certain inconsiderable corrections by professionals trying to work him. If only because they have confidential access to him day in and day out, they are able to introduce their own notions into his head. He may have their