

NOTES FOR A COMIC HISTORY

BY GEORGE SEIBEL

IF IT had not been such a tremendous tragedy, that War for Democracy, it would have been the most uproarious of farces. As hatred is commonly born of ignorance, perhaps the virulence of the hatreds engendered can be accounted for by the depth and density of the ignorance displayed so proudly on every hand. Even the omniscient editorial writers of the United States, in those days, had not yet been educated by the cross-word puzzle and Answer These columns. In the editorial sanctum of one considerable American newspaper, during the first week of August, 1914, Serbia and Siberia were thought to be one and the same! Maybe that, after all, was excusable: both were remote and barbaric regions; therefore, no doubt, contiguous and probably identical. Reference to an atlas might have cleared up the confusion, but even the meticulous consultation of reference books, when it is done in newspaper offices, may prove a snare, as was shown by the report one of the big news agencies made about a naval engagement in the Adriatic. "The Austrian squadron," it said, "withdrew when the *gros* of the French naval forces appeared on the scene." The conscientious telegraph editor added a note in parentheses: "The French naval registers do not mention any such vessel as the *Gros*."

But it was after our own entrance into the holy crusade that ignorance became one of the chief of patriotic virtues. Cato never hated Carthage with so fierce a fervor as those who demanded that Germania must be *delenda*. The process of extermination began with the saloons, Teutonic strongholds since the Gallic War. Over-

night Dutch Henry was transformed into Yankee Henry, and the façade of his emporium was freshly redecorated in red, white, and blue. The Klostergloecklein was turned into the Liberty Bell Inn. Hotels that had flourished under names like Bismarck or Kaiserhof were translated into something unhyphenated, and even the *Speisekarte* was purified of every Hunnish flavor. Sauerkraut, we all know, became liberty cabbage by executive order, and some other treasonable dishes were violently anglicized. I remember scanning a menu, and asking the *garçon*, quondam *Kellner*, "What's good?" "Try those Kingsbury clubs!" "Kingsbury clubs? What are they made of?" He leaned over, and guiltily whispered into my ear: "It's *Koenigsberger Klops*."

Naturally an attack on the culinary supremacy of the Teuton struck his most vulnerable spot. But there was also another art in which Germany had excelled, and so the battle also raged about music. On one occasion the Department of Justice launched an attack on both positions at once. A formidable gentleman called upon a music-teacher, who happened to be a Spaniard without a drop of Prussian blood in his Castilian veins. "Complaint has been lodged against you that you teach your pupils German pieces, and that you eat lunch every day in a German restaurant." The culprit admitted his guilt, and with a solemn warning to discontinue these treasonable practices the formidable gentleman took his departure. As other people ate at the same restaurant, and other piano-teachers still taught Schumann, the ingenious *hidalgo* concluded

that it was his dual transgression, gastric and aural, which had stamped him as a traitor.

Everything German, in those heroic days, was regarded with suspicion and abhorrence. Even German measles brought consternation into many households. One satirical physician told a humiliated mother that her offspring's un-American visitation might be due to her study of Storm's "Immensee" in the days she attended a woman's college. But music was the worst outlaw of all. The little German band was driven into exile, and the police began to censor concert programmes. After Leopold Stokowski had to reduce his symphonic repertory to Tschaikowsky's "Pathétique" and Dvořák's "New World," the more discreet managers took their programmes to the Department of Public Safety for approval. A Chilean pianist was booked for a recital. The lady who was his *impresaria* went to police headquarters with proofs from the printer. "Before I have the programmes printed," she said, "I want to be sure no changes will be required."

The captain of police savagely scrutinized the scrap of paper.

"Who's this here *Batch*?" he demanded grimly. "A Hun?"

"That's Johann Sebastian Bach. He was a German, but he lived two hundred years ago, and had nothing to do with this war."

"Cut him out!" snapped the inexorable guardian of the public safety. "And who's this here *Beet-oven*?"

"That," explained the trembling lady, "is Ludwig van Beethoven. He was born in Germany, but some of his ancestors were Belgian. Besides, he lived over a hundred years ago, and was a great admirer of Napoleon."

"He was a German, wasn't he?" roared the patriot in brass buttons. "Cut him out! And who's this here *Chop-in*?"

"That's Frédéric Chopin," explained the lady. "He was born in Poland, but he lived most of his life in France, in Paris."

"Um, he's all right," was the verdict. "He can stay in, but nothing doing on them other ginks."

The police had valiant auxiliaries in those music critics, especially in New York, who rushed into print to demonstrate the tediousness of Bach, the blatancy of Wagner, the cacophony of Richard Strauss, and the Flemish inheritance of Beethoven. "*Los von Berlin!*" was the slogan. Native music would triumph over Bayreuth's beery bacchanal! As the only wedding march then considered matrimonially binding was from "*Lohengrin*," sometimes varied by a composition of another Hun named Mendelssohn, the late Reginald de Koven (educated in Vienna!) was commissioned to write an American wedding march. Another great American composer wrote a stirring martial air, "*Over There*," which thrilled me with delightful memories of the "*Prenez Garde!*" ballad in Boieldieu's "*La Dame Blanche*." But then Boieldieu belonged to an Allied nation, and the Christian peoples had pooled their interests! The Germans and their allies were taboo, and even after the armistice patriotic club-women in the Bible Belt boycotted Fritz Kreisler, as if to verify Darwin's observation that cats with blue eyes are deaf.

II

Just as music came under the ban, so literature did not escape. In this field I had a thrilling personal demonstration. About a year before that Good Friday when the Prince of Peace was crucified again, I had arranged to deliver a lecture on "Shakespeare in Germany" before an Academy of Arts and Sciences. The lecture was scheduled for the week of Shakespeare's birthday, 1917, but meanwhile we had plunged into the war. To my amazement and amusement I received a letter from the chief of police of the town that if I attempted to deliver the lecture he would send a cordon of bluecoats to keep me out of the hall. At the same time a patriotic newspaper began

to clamor for my deportation. While I was wondering to what place I might be deported, for I had been born in America, where both my parents and grandparents are buried, I received the crushing intelligence that I should never again be permitted to speak in that hall on any subject. My treasonable designs thus frustrated, and even my sojourn upon this planet rendered problematical, I let Shakespeare remain in Germany. But some day I am going to deliver that lecture, and I earnestly hope we may not be at war with England when the time comes, for I'd hate to call it off again.

Other conspirators were balked in the same efficient fashion. One high-school teacher was threatened with internment because she let her class sing "Die Lorelei." Meantime, editors who did not know ten words of either German or French were writing learned editorials to prove the superiority of the polished and precise French language over the rusty and raucous German guttural. And the German text-books were fincombed for the propaganda of *Kultur*.

One day a wild-eyed man rushed into my office with his tale of woe. He was teacher of German in another high-school, and had been dismissed by the board of education because he had recommended as a text-book, two years before, Wilhelmine von Hillern's "Hoher als die Kirche." "What's the objection to that?" I asked him. He showed me the heinous passage:

Schoen, gross und edel, wie man sich die Hoechsten der Menschheit denkt, ein Kaiser—ein deutscher Kaiser—vom Scheitel bis zur Zehe; zugleich ein Dichter und ein Held in wahren Sinne des Wortes, Anastasius Gruen's letzter Ritter—Maximilian I.

"Why," I said, "the story is laid in the year 1511, as it tells on this very page. Couldn't you explain to the board of education that this Kaiser lived over four hundred years ago?"

!! "I did," he replied, "but they told me that didn't make any difference."

When boards of education were thus carried away by patriotic fury to disregard

chronology and damn the dust of the dead, there was no need to wonder that the august and astute Department of Justice was equally oblivious to time and history. Here is an incident in which again I played a subsidiary rôle. There happens to be in New York City a Thomas Paine National Historical Association, of which Mr. William M. Van der Weyde is the president. Somehow or other I had come to be its corresponding secretary, and my name was printed on its stationery, though I have no recollection of ever signing a letter to justify my title.

One morning there was a rap at the door of the studio in East Fifteenth street where Van der Weyde was in business as a photographer. Mrs. Van der Weyde went to the door, and encountered a Mysterious Stranger.

"Is Mr. George Seibel in?" he asked in suave and solemn tones.

"I didn't know he was in the city," replied the lady.

"You are sure he's not in?"

"Certainly not, but if he's in the city he'll be sure to call up in the course of the day."

"Well, is Mr. Van der Weyde, president of this Thomas Paine Association, in?"

"I'm sorry, but Mr. Van der Weyde is not here either—he's out doing some photographic work."

"You're sure neither Mr. Seibel nor Mr. Van der Weyde is in?" persisted the Mysterious Stranger.

The lady was sure.

"Then," demanded the M. S., "where can I find Mr. Thomas Paine himself?"]✓

By this time Mrs. Van der Weyde had made a shrewd guess as to the quality of her visitor, and she answered:

"I shouldn't like to tell you where to go to find Thomas Paine, but some clergyman might. Paine died in 1809. He's likely to be wherever Washington and Jefferson are. Step in, and I'll tell you more about him."

The agent of the Department of Justice stepped in, and took copious notes about

Thomas Paine. It seems that the association had published a pamphlet entitled "Thomas Paine on War and Monarchy," and some patriotic soul had sent the department a copy of this, and the slaves of V Mr. Palmer at once scented in Paine a dangerous pacifist and virulent pro-German. Who else would write that "war is the faro-table of governments, and nations the dupes of the game"? Who else would write that "the idea of having navies for the protection of commerce is delusive"?

But a greater pacifist than Thomas Paine was put under the taboo. This is the strangest tale of all. It was my daily custom to walk five blocks to a *Stammtisch* where I could discuss battles and sieges amicably with a Frenchman and a Scotchman. One day, walking down the street with one of my friends, we saw there was craning of necks and smiles of amusement among the crowd. A man was walking slowly along the sidewalk. We craned our necks and also smiled with amusement. A paper band was about the man's hat. On one side was painted, "God is love"; on the other side, "Thou shalt not kill." Another poor imbecile with a screw loose, was our thought, and we passed on, ate our luncheon, and forgot all about it.

Three days later a mild-mannered man strayed into my office.

"I have been outrageously treated," he announced in plaintive tones.

"That's nothing," I consoled him. "Lots of people are being outrageously treated nowadays. What did you do?"

"I didn't do anything, but they put me in jail for forty-eight hours, and wouldn't let me communicate with my friends."

"That's too bad," I sympathized. "But you must have done something to give them a pretext. They wouldn't put you into jail without some reason or excuse."

"I didn't do anything," he insisted doggedly. "I just walked down the street." His hands dived into his pockets. "I only had these on my hat."

He brought forth two paper bands, in-

scribed "God is love" and "Thou shalt not kill." Then I recognized the man I had seen on the street at the lunch hour three days before.

"I had these on my hat," he continued plaintively, "and they arrested me, and put me in jail for forty-eight hours, and said I was a spy and a pro-German." ✓✓✓

"Well," said I, looking at the hatbands, "it certainly sounds like it. Those are dangerous doctrines. You might have been crucified. You got off easily. How did they come to let you go?"

"Oh," he declared, "they said I wasn't a spy or pro-German—that I was just crazy!"

"There are so many crazy people about," I told him, "that mistakes are bound to happen."

III

But why should we censure the poor police for such patriotic alertness when a man was put under arrest in Philadelphia for distributing copies of the Declaration of Independence, an anti-British document? Well might Senator Hale of Maine ask the question, "Has it come to this, that the word 'liberty' may no longer be uttered in the halls of Congress save in a whisper?" The word "peace" soon acquired a similarly ominous reputation, and was expunged from the bright lexicon of patriotism. The War Department even advised a religious society not to print a tract containing the Sermon on the Mount, which was defeatist propaganda of the most insidious type! Beside, there was the damning suspicion, fostered by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, son-in-law of the notorious Richard Wagner, in a book which had taken in even Theodore Roosevelt, that Jesus was not a Jew, and therefore presumably a German. The theory seemed to gain etymological support from the name of Galilee, which certainly was not a Jewish province, and must have been populated by the Gauls that overran the Eastern Empire; Galilee and Gallia are related

This is quite the limit

words which can be traced to the same root by any ingenious philologist. To counteract this vilest of all heresies, an erudite patriot by the name of Fischer produced irrefragable proof that Jesus had not been crucified either by the Jews or the Romans, but by heartless German mercenaries in the Roman legions.

All these things, in those days of high patriotic endeavor, were propounded with the utmost gravity and swallowed with the greatest gusto. It was so with every absurdity, however absurd. Aside from the salient and indisputable fact that the Kaiser had started the war, there were innumerable theories as to incidental details.

At least 10,000 American scholars were convinced it was all due to the terrible teachings of the atheist Nietzsche, and an editor suspicious of the Pope wrote many furious editorials contending that the war had started because the Emperor Francis Joseph had tried to force the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Roman Catholic church. But a still better *casus belli* was discovered by the conscript who answered on examination that Alsace-Lorraine was a lake lying between Germany and France, and that the war started because the Germans would not permit the French to fish in the lake.

Did any one dare to doubt such tales? That was treason. I recall hanging to a strap in a street-car one morning while a friend told me what had happened to a younger brother of his. The lad, aged about twenty, received a summons to appear at the headquarters of the Secret Service in a down-town office building. Pale and trembling, he reported at this bureau. A severe-looking personage was seated at a desk, busy opening communications, and fifteen minutes passed before the boy received any notice. At last the official looked up.

"Well, young fellow, you got in wrong, didn't you?"

"I don't know anything about it. I got a notice to come here, and here I am, but I don't know what I've done."

"We'll mighty soon tell you what you've done. What's your name?"

Having got the name, the official proceeded to ransack his files.

"Aha, here we have it! You made the public statement that you do not believe everything you read in the papers."

The young man turned paler.

"Maybe I did say something like that," he admitted. "I *don't* believe everything I read in the papers."

"What!" thundered the man at the desk. "You've *got* to believe everything you read in the papers. That's put in there by the government for the information of the people, and the government wouldn't put it in if it wasn't true. You've *got* to believe it!"

"Everything?"

"Certainly! If it wasn't true, the government wouldn't let it go in."

"Well," gulped the young man, "if I've got to believe it, I guess I've got to believe it."

"You bet you've got to believe it," the inquisitor told the scared skeptic. "We'll let you off this time, but don't you make any such wild cracks again. You've *got* to believe it!"

"Tell your brother," I told my friend, "that he doesn't have to believe everything in the paper I run."

The veracity of the current news was indeed frequently in need of the government stamp to make it pass current. One morning the headlines in a city far inland announced that "Prussian Spies Poison Water Reservoir!" Fortunately, Prohibition was not yet in force, so no evil consequences were reported. A few days later I met the head of the municipal water department, whom I knew well, and asked him whether the spies had been caught. "Do you know how that story started?" he said. "There's a firm sells spring water, and their publicity man thought the spy story would boom business. Anyway, we put on a dozen extra guards, and they'll swell our majority on election day."

The spy was everywhere, of course, ply-

The Pope accused of starting the war.

ing his nefarious arts. Now he would be seen putting ground glass into the oatmeal of an orphan asylum; again he would be caught liberating potato-bugs to devastate the war gardens of some patriotic community. How did he get here? The perennial legend of the sea serpent was revised to mark the appearances of the ubiquitous submarines, which visited every point on the Atlantic coast, spoiling business for the Summer resorts. The spies, supermen, swam ashore.

To thwart and foil these monsters, the mob was usually ready to anticipate the police. Any little mistakes of the mob, due to excess of pious zeal, still had a wholesome tendency as showing the true pentecostal fire. Such an incident occurred in a park at a band concert when "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played, and one stolid listener did not arise. A score of sturdy patriots seized the German sympathizer, and ducked him in the near-by lake. It turned out later that he was a loyal British ally, who did not know and could not be expected to know our national anthem.

But the mobs were usually right. The heroic exploit of one Illinois town, for example, has never been duly recognized. Here the embattled Anglo-Saxons stormed a German Catholic cemetery, and threw down every tombstone with a Hunnish inscription. This was short-sighted, for how could the Devil on Judgment Day now find his own? Kissing the flag was the favorite form of ordeal imposed by the mob—whether intended as a test of loyalty or as a punishment of perfidy.

Allusion to his Satanic Majesty brings to mind the wicked witticism of a woman with a serpent's tongue, who was invited to a tea by some friends, and discovered it was Empire Day and that she was celebrating the nativity of Queen Victoria. "I am thrilled," she said, "to pay this honor to the Devil's grandmother!" There was horror on every countenance as the oscillating tongues froze into silence. Before they could thaw into denunciation, the

guest continued, in tones of saccharine malice: "Of course, you understand that my allusion is to the Kaiser, who is the good Queen's grandson!" *Pretty good!*

German family connections and German names proved a great source of mortification to many worthy folk whose souls were 100% American. How could any one with a patronymic like Schwartenmagen or Sauermilch look any *Mayflower* descendant in the face or sing "My Country, 'Tis of Thee"? The courts had plenty of work authorizing the camouflage of Haerings who became Herrons, Schneiders who became Taylors, and Hohensteins who became Houstons. There was a good deal of surreptitious anabaptism besides, as in the case of a dog owned by a friend of mine. This unfortunate animal had been called Kaiser, and of course no self-respecting dog of 1917 would come if called by such a name. My friend hit upon the strategy of pronouncing it as if it were a French word, and so the dog became known as Casey. A similar instance was that of a German club which debated the advisability of changing its name to the Sherman Club to escape the surveillance of the patriotic police.

IV

The valiant deeds performed by the police can never be adequately chronicled without an Iliad of their own. In one park stood a statue of Alexander von Humboldt; his name on the front of the pedestal, and the title of his great work, "Kosmos," chiseled on the back. A patriotic Italian-American merchant of the luscious banana and the nutritious peanut was seized with a berserker frenzy against the Prussians. Armed with a bucket of yellow paint, he daubed Alexander von Humboldt in the hues appropriate for a Prussian. "Look," he exclaimed to the crowd, "the word 'kosmos' means 'universe,' and shows the Prussians want to rule the whole world!" When he had finished smearing the statue with yellow paint, the police came along,

arrested Alexander von Humboldt, and interned him for the remainder of the war.

Unconscious humor put forth fragrant blossoms in many unexpected places. There was the lady preacher and suffragette who announced she was going to do her bit toward winning the war by eating only one egg at breakfast instead of two, as had been her custom. The extra eggs, presumably, could be stored for use as ammunition against the Kaiser's four-minute men. Even greater determination was displayed by that actress, heroine of five or six divorces, who organized a Woman's Defense League, the members of which indulged in regular rifle practice, in order to be able to defend their virtue whenever the lecherous Prussians invaded Ohio!

Miraculous conversions were as common as June-bugs at the end of May. Sometime anarchists heading Liberty Loan drives; preacher pacifists blessing flags and consecrating cannon; humanitarian ladies bidding their sons give their bayonets an extra twist in German vitals—how the sardonic gods must have laughed as they viewed the performance from Olympus or Valhalla!

Then there were the less truculent folks who circulated petitions pledging the signers never again to buy or use anything made in Germany. No cuckoo clocks, no tin soldiers, no vocal dolls, no Dresden china or Solingen cutlery, no Berliner *Pfannkuchen* or Würzburger beer should ever again be permitted to displace wares produced in America under democratic efficiency experts. This programme entailed some discomfiture upon the patriots, when the flags of a parade caught in a rainstorm also ran, and the manufacturer explained that he could not get any good dyes. But such petty annoyances were patiently borne until the war was over—and then everybody stormed the five-and-ten-cent stores, the bargain basements, and other places where newly imported novelties from Nuremberg or Krefeld were on the counters. And thousands of those club women who were so violent in their ab-

horrence of all things Teutonic now have maids from the Rhine and cooks from the Neckar. Their pledges, alas, are become as scraps of paper.

Among the amusing manifestations of the popular vertigo was the Woodrow Wilson cult. Statesmen began to hail him as a great historian, and historians as a great statesman. It was lese majesty not to leap to your feet when his picture was flashed upon the screen in the movies. One artist produced a plaque in which Woodrow's profile was sandwiched between Washington's and Lincoln's. Nearly everyone joined in the orgy of adulation except Theodore Roosevelt. As Teddy was also a statesman and a historian, yearning to be a new Hannibal as well, his attitude was imputed by the Woodrovians to professional jealousy. If it had not been for the worshipers of Wilson, the Rough Rider would have fought Armageddon single-handed. If it had not been for the cohorts of Bwana-Tumbo, Wilson would have been deified. But Teddy's friends would not crook the hinges of the knee before Woodrow, and Owen Wister even wrote the red-hot line: "Truth, if she touched you, would become untrue!" (Truth, in fact, had gone into hiding till the dawn of peace, so it was in no danger of contamination. It was the business of the elders to lie, and of youth to die; of preachers to pray, and of others to pay.)

Conscription brought forth a number of minor comedies to mitigate the major tragedy. Many people were rudely awakened to the realization that the war was their war. Among these was the Italian laborer who was asked why he did not volunteer, and replied: "Me digga de ditch for de B. & O. and getta fiva dollar a day; me digga de trench for Cadorna, getta no pay and de cannon knocka my block off." Among these also was the well-meaning citizen who was notified he had been drafted, and sent in his resignation, informing the War Department that he was very busy.

Another effect of conscription was to

counteract the Malthusian propaganda of Mrs. Sanger. A joke became current that was not altogether a joke. "What do you call your new baby?" "Oh, I call him Weather Strip, because he kept his father out of the draft." In other families, however, the draft was considered an undisguised blessing. Two sisters were talking about the enrollment of their husbands. One was regretting that her husband had to have any part in the bloody business. The other sister was a proud patriot, and enthusiastically exclaimed: "I'm glad my Jim is going; I'm so glad I could dance with joy!" At this the colored laundress, who had been listening, chimed in: "Dem's my sentiments 'xactly. You'se a woman aftah my own heart. I'se glad my son Uriah went. Sence de day he was born, I knew he took arter his old man, an' never was no darn good. I'se glad he went. Glory to God!"

Volunteering was greatly stimulated by the Conscription Act, on the theory that the volunteer was more of a hero and also could choose a safe branch of the service. The quality of this volunteer heroism was in some cases peculiar. One patriot got a commission as a major, and immediately rushed to the secretary of his Sunday-school, to demand that his name and rank be emblazoned on the Roll of Honor back of the pulpit. Then he started for the war, in which he unflinchingly superintended the laundries of several training-camps along the Potomac. Ah, but he was a martial figure when he came home between washdays! Pro-Germans crept into sheltering alleys as his uniform paraded boldly down Main Street.

Laundries were needed, as many unclean parasites swarmed into the light of popularity from every obscure corner of society. I remember a kilted Scotchman with an asthmatic bagpipe who gave a more melancholy imitation of the melancholy Harry Lauder. He was touted and toted from school to school; his grimy knees were admired at scores of women's clubs; he was solemnly introduced as a distinguished

successor of Bobbie Burns and Sir Walter Scott. He would tell his audiences the tearful tale of his two brothers—braw young men in the prime of life, now sleeping under the heather because the treacherous Hun had sent a Zeppelin to scatter tuberculosis bacilli over peaceful Scotch villages. When his poor brothers had succumbed to the galloping disease, Sandy swore vengeance, took up his deadly bagpipe and started for America to rally the school-children against the Kaiser. It never occurred to any one to ask him what his valiant brothers were doing in a peaceful Scotch village when they should have been on the Somme or the Meuse, repulsing Attila's hordes. Sandy suddenly disappeared from view, and there were rumors that his fondness for everything Scotch had impaired his usefulness. He had Sir Walter's imagination and Bobbie's parched throat.

V

The country was infested with such *problematische Naturen*. Every insurance office produced its Demosthenes to spout four-minute philippics; while every Paul Pry and Mrs. Grundy joined the terrible *Vehmgericht* which listened in on their neighbors' telephones, smashed Victrola records of "O du lieber Augustin," and did not even hesitate to stone dachshunds. The fertile brain of the hundred percenter was particularly fecund in methods for boosting the Liberty Loans, but the prize in that department should be awarded to the committee which proposed to stamp a bloody hand upon the front door of every house whose inmates were slackers. "A quarter a day keeps the Kaiser away!" shows that even the poets were enlisted in the patriotic jihad.

To exhibit common sense in those days of high altruism was a risky business. Without vanity let me tell of an uncomfortably flattering tribute to my own parts. The newspaper I was connected with had been marked for persecution by

Mr. Burleson's incredible Post Office Department. Convinced that the annoyances were aimed at me, rather than at the paper, I offered to resign, but the board of directors loyally refused to consider my resignation. "No," I was told, "if we let you resign it will look as if you were guilty of something, and matters would not be improved anyway." Accordingly, I decided to go down to Washington, and beard the lion in his den. I may have been lured somewhat by a subconscious thirst, Prohibition having come in, mitigated by rumors that the Department of Justice was regaling its witnesses with champagne cocktails and other persuasive fluids in star chambers at the New Willard.

Descending upon the metropolis of the swivel-chair patriots, I sought out a friend upon the Democratic side of Congress. "You've got to do me a favor," I said. "You've got to go over to Mitch Palmer's Hall of Fame, and find out what they have against me. Whatever it is, I want to know it, so that I can meet the issue squarely. You've got to find out for me."

"Come back tomorrow afternoon," said my friend the Congressman, "and I'll have all the dope for you."

I came back next day, and he looked dubiously amused—a bit sheepish, it seemed to me.

"Out with it," I said. "What high crimes and misdemeanors have I been guilty of?"

"I don't know whether I ought to tell you or not," he replied.

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Worse," he said. "You don't need to worry. They told me over at the Department that they have nothing against you,

but that you're a very clever man and for that reason very dangerous!"

"Wouldn't they put that in writing?" I asked. "That's a testimonial worth having!"

So I went back home, and tried to look stupidly innocuous during the remainder of the war. But I'm afraid I could not altogether live down my past reputation. One day during a Liberty Loan drive, I was going home in an open street-car, one of the Summer cars. At a street-crossing the car stopped. At the opposite corner a Liberty Loan orator was haranguing the sidewalk crowd from the seat of an open automobile. I looked and listened while the car stopped. Then he turned around in his pulpit, and I recognized him—a well-known lawyer, politician, and legislator. He recognized me, too, and as he caught my eye he winked brazenly. Then he turned round again, and told the patriotic multitude that their dollars were needed, that they must give till it hurt, to make the world safe for democracy.

I had to think of the Roman haruspices who couldn't pass one another in the streets without smiling. I had to think of Mark Twain's arraignment of the war-makers: how the statesmen "invent cheap lies" and inaugurate a course of "grotesque self-deception." And today, when I pass some of our hideous war memorials, such as a shell inscribed with names and pointing heavenward like a huge phallic symbol, I have to think that the most appropriate war monument would be Liberty winking. For it would have been the most uproarious of farces, that War to Abolish War, if it had not been the most tremendous of tragedies!

PRINCES OF THE PRESS

BY RAYMOND S. TOMPKINS

OF ALL journalists, the American journalist is believed to be the most clever at the general all-round work of his trade; of all American journalists, the leader in ability and position is popularly thought to be the Washington correspondent; and of all the Washington correspondents the men who form the Inner Circle, the members of the Noble Inside Guard, are those who belong to the Gridiron Club.

Aside from managing editors, European correspondents and a few gaudy special writers, such as Arthur Brisbane, Dr. Frank Crane and Bugs Baer, the Washington Bureau men are the Big Men in American journalism. Frequently, it is true, their journalistic duties are so simple that they could be performed efficiently by a twenty-year-old cub reporter. Quite often there is little to do but collect the "black sheets" or carbon copies of stories that other correspondents have written, change a few *ands* and *buts* for purposes of disguise, and put new "by-lines" over them. Any school-boy reasonably skilled at snitching information from a seat-mate's examination paper would be ashamed to take pay for work like this. But the Washington correspondent has other duties, too, and some of them are far more complex. At times indeed, his job takes on the serious complications that used to attend the functioning of a high-powered wine salesman. He has Cabinet officers to call upon, and Senators and Congressmen to take lunch with, and occasionally there is a President with whom it is his great good fortune to exchange smart cracks. Sometimes he is even invited to take a trip on the *Mayflower*. So

the Washington correspondent cannot be a mere twenty-year-old cub reporter, given only strong legs, prodigious industry and great ambition. His delicate and important office must be filled by a person obviously of some body, substance, maturity and success in the profession, and he must not be a sloppy eater.

In this clan of great ones you will find, if you look for them, a smaller group of unmistakable Big Horns. They are usually verging upon or have reached middle age, carry walking sticks, sometimes sport long-tailed morning coats during working hours, and almost always wear in the button-holes of their coat lapels, where lesser men wear Elks' horns, Shriners' scimitars or Rotary steering-wheels, a curious little gold device like a miniature gridiron or broiling utensil. The wearer of this mysterious badge becomes so accustomed to having people tap it with their fingers and ask foolish questions about it that he is always ready with a reply, and, indeed is not a little hurt if you fail to notice it.

"That?" he will say, when the inquiry comes. "Oh, that! That's the badge of the Gridiron Club."

The inquirer, if he is more than ordinarily impressionable, will cover his face with his hands and step six paces backward, or he may prostrate himself, banging his forehead on the ground three times. Neither genuflexion will shock nor even surprise the wearer of the badge of the Gridiron Club. It will be no more than he expected.

For of all American legends, the legend of the Gridiron Club is among the most grandiose and romantic. To the average