

EDITORIAL

Two books cry aloud for writing in this, our incomparable Republic, the envy and despair of all the world outside. One is a scientific and full-length treatise upon politics—not, of course, the dull “science” taught by misinformed professors, but the brilliant and instructive art practised by hard-boiled politicians. The other is a text-book of controversy—the mother of politics as it is of theology.

The first work I have been calling for for years, but so far to no purpose. All the men whose gifts fit them for writing it seem to be intoxicated by other concerns. Samuel G. Blythe, having amassed a competence by his pen, lolls away the lazy days in California; when he arouses himself at all, it is only to concoct sophistry in favor of Prohibition for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Louis Seibold, now also a cardinal in the Curtis college, spends himself upon political divination. Frank R. Kent, having burst one kidney trying to heave the late John W. Davis, of Piping Rock, W. Va., into the White House, now risks his other in behalf of the Hon. Herbert Hoover, of Downing Street, Calif. Mark Sullivan becomes an historian, and will presently be an LL.D. Norman Hapgood plays Boswell to the Hon. Al Smith, undercover man for the Pope. The rest, concentrated at Washington, gild the still-warm clay of Dr. Coolidge, and prepare to lay him away in a pyramid of porphyry and chalcedony, five hundred feet high.

Thus the treatise I crave seems doomed to go unwritten, though its value to ambitious young men would be very great, and its interest to all connoisseurs of the democratic process would be only less so. It is, indeed, a curious and instructive fact, well exemplifying the American distaste for examining the inside of things, that it

was not done long ago. For the dodges that politicians employ in their trade today are all ancient. Some of them are described at length in Machiavelli’s “The Prince,” first published in 1530 or thereabout, and others go back to the Athens of Pericles and the Four Hundred, if not actually to the Egypt of the Hyksos, the Irish of those remote days. All the rest were well known to Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, to say nothing of Sam Adams. But though we have whole shelves of books upon what the professors aforesaid call political science—the late Dr. Woodrow Wilson, it will be recalled, made his first stir in the world by writing one—and other and even longer shelves upon the history of concrete politicians and concrete campaigns, there is yet no frank and simple text upon the principles which underlie the whole sorry but diverting business.

These principles, I believe, are uniform everywhere, at least in free states. A Harding is put into the White House by precisely the same tricks and subterfuges which turn a village loafer into a constable, with a revolver on one hip and a flagon of seized evidence on the other. A Big Bill Thompson carries Chicago exactly as a Little Bill Thompson carries Gopher Prairie. There are devices that will set Republican hearts to leaping in Vermont—and they are the same that set Democratic hearts to leaping in Mississippi. It is one of the delusions of reformers, to be sure, that this is not so—that the political machine of a La Follette differs not only in degree but also in kind from the machine of a Charlie Murphy—that the votes of the virtuous are rounded up in ways differing from those employed in rounding up the votes of the damned. But no one believes it who has any practical acquaint-

ance with politics. The game is always run according to the same rules, no matter who is playing and no matter what the stakes.

But these rules remain unformulated. The apprentice must learn them by deducing them from the observed practise of the masters, or by trial and error on his own account. They are nowhere set forth in plain English, as the rules of golf, bridge and chiropractic are set forth. No expert has ever sought to disentangle the good ones from the bad ones, for the enlightenment and edification of those who aspire to the political career. Thus the bad ones flourish beside the good ones, and politicians remain inept and clumsy workmen. It is only the occasional genius among them who never makes mistakes—and geniuses are as rare in politics as they are in military strategy or the pants business. What is needed is an organization of the knowledge that they all share, each according to his capacity, and a competent criticism of it. In other words, what is needed is a political Aristotle, a Bacon, a Darwin, an Adam Smith. But the sheriff returns him *non est*.

II

The second of the books that I bawl for—an adequate treatise upon the technique of public controversy—is needed even more sorely, for controversy is the basic art in democratic government, as murder is the basic art in war. The most gifted of practical politicians, adept in all the sinister tricks of Tammany, would be helpless without the aid of rhetoricians—and what is rhetoric but the art of controversy? In the existing books (which run back to the Greeks) it is dealt with in a highly academic and ineffective manner. They discuss the syllogism and they discuss the metaphor, but what have syllogisms to do with making the plain people yell, and what have metaphors to do with rounding up their votes? What is needed is a far more realistic and practical work. It must concern itself, not with logic or poetry, but

with the drawing of blood. It must tell the neophyte how to make the welkin ring. If it follows the case method, its cases must be drawn, not from the set pieces of Demosthenes and Cicero, but from the propaganda of the British Foreign Office, Tex Rickard and the Anti-Saloon League.

That public controversy actually has a technique—that the way in which it is carried on is far more important than its logical or even than its voluptuous content—this much must be obvious to anyone who has observed its great practitioners in action. I hazard the guess that one of its primary rules is to grab and hold the offensive. Who, standing before a mob, ever got anywhere by defending himself? I can think of no one. The mob is always in favor of whoever is giving the show—and the only kind of show it likes is one in which someone gets a dreadful beating. In the end, with the defense routed, it may indulge in a moment of sentimentality, and so call for quarter. But not while the show is going on. Not while there is any kick left in the loser.

The grand goblins of the Anti-Saloon League, all of whom seem to have been born with a high talent for controversy, turned this fact to their uses in the early and glorious days of their holy war. Not once did they let the janissaries of the Whiskey Trust take the offensive against them; always they held it themselves, and always they carried it on with tremendous ferocity. In consequence, all the odds began to run in their favor. The Whiskey Trust, thrown upon the defensive, seemed to *Homo boobiens* to be somehow dubious and evil. The very fact that it was defending itself was massive evidence against it. The Anti-Saloon League brethren, taking constant and instantaneous advantage of its distress, pushed the war against it *à outrance*, and presently it was wobbling all over the lot. To say that the mob was against the League at the time it forced the Eighteenth Amendment into the Constitution is absurd. The mob was over-

whelmingly with it, and for the plain reason that it was giving a brutal and gaudy show.

Unluckily, the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment took the offensive away from the League wizards, and put them on the defensive. They were in the uncomfortable position of a newspaper whose candidate for the Presidency has been elected: it is under the dreadful necessity of defending him, especially when he is plainly wrong. The dry boys have been in that hole ever since the passage of the Volstead Act, and the first attempts to enforce it. Its failure was quickly apparent to everyone not insane, and yet they had to defend it. What that defense has brought them to is now visible to the nobility and gentry. Their once all-puissant organization has begun to go to pieces. The flow of money into its coffers is ebbing; there are sounds of quarrelling in the tent of the General Staff. The end is not hard to see. The battle, at the moment, is a sort of stalemate, but if ever the wets become intelligent enough to launch into a vigorous offensive the Anti-Saloon League will blow up. And as its treasury empties, and its weaker gladiators desert, and its heroes are railroaded to jail the mob will yell with delight.

III

Here, perhaps, the Anti-Saloon League has suffered from the mere fortunes of war, which is to say, from acts of God. The fact that it is now in trouble is not due only to faulty technique, but to the lamentable circumstance that even the best technique has its limitations. Perhaps a treatise such as I call for might have warned its generals, and so made them better prepared for the swing of the tide, but certainly it could not have saved them: they were doomed from the moment they won, as professors of controversy often and perhaps usually are. But an adequate text upon the art they adorn might have

at least rescued them from the folly of growing indignant about it. Here, indeed, they show a strange weakness, a curious incompetency. It was hard enough, being on the defensive at last, to stand up before the mob. But to stand up before it bawling is downright impossible.

Indignation, I believe, is the bad booze of controversialists. It can knock them off quicker than any other poison. I venture to guess that the book I propose, if it is ever written, will have a whole chapter on the subject, and maybe more than one. There are innumerable examples from the sad records of the human race. The States' Rights men, in the years before 1860, had all the better of the constitutional argument—until they began to grow angry. After that the winds began to blow against them. Bryan was winning his fight against evolution until he allowed the cunning Darrow to lure him into indignation. Wilson was a hero until he started to bawl against the Senate. Roosevelt was a demigod until he fell into a fury. The mob, which is the final arbiter in such matters, does not like indignant men. They strike it as funny. No doubt they really are. For though there may be ideas in this world worth suffering for and even dying for, it is hard to think of one that is worth getting indignant over. The Sacco-Vanzetti crusaders might have saved their babies if they had clung to the devastating austerity of Professor Felix Frankfurter and avoided the puerile yowling of striking garment-workers.

But I am not here to write a treatise on controversy, but simply to argue that it ought to be written. Let some skillful scoundrel tackle it, and without further delay. The country needs it as badly as it needs a wop in the White House. But let the author (or authors) not corrupt it with moral snuffing. Let them remember that the kind of controversy I speak of has no purpose to establish facts and spread the enlightenment; its sole purpose is to win.

H. L. M.

THE HEROES' UNION

BY O. L. WARR

For God and country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a 100% Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great War; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, State and Nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Thus reads the preamble to the constitution of the American Legion, and thus reads the editorial masthead of the *American Legion Monthly*, née *Weekly*, its official organ.

Majestic, Rooseveltian, and euphonious, the title, American Legion, was first applied to a pre-war and pro-war organization born in *Adventure's* "Camp-Fire" department. The heroic Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Senior, after his appointment to a chairmanship in this organization, sent out his usual clarion-calls, and his never-failing aide, Major-General Leonard Wood, lent eager assistance. But they only brought down upon their heads the wrath of the American League to Limit Armaments, and the suspicions of President Woodrow Wilson and his Cabinet. The entrance of the United States into the *mêlée* caused the quick death of the organization.

But its title was too sonorous to remain long in the discard. Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Junior, eager with the armistice to launch into a political career, was enchanted by the possibilities offered by organizing his fighting fellow countrymen. Fellow Lieutenant Colonels Bennett

Clark, son of Speaker Champ Clark, and Eric Fisher Wood, presently joined him, and, fathered by the three, the second American Legion was born in Paris in 1919, on the day after the ides of March. Simultaneously, there came into existence on this side of the Atlantic the World War Veterans' Association of America. Alarmed at the appearance of competition, young Teddy hastened to call a convention of the latter group for the purpose of consolidation with the Legion. Meekly, most of those responsible for its formation obeyed, and Teddy appointed delegates to a caucus to be held in St. Louis in May.

But dissension arose before the caucus was called to any semblance of order, even before the delegates left their homes. The ex-service men of Texas disregarded Teddy's appointments and selected their own representatives, instructing them "to pack up their duds and come home" if they saw anything that appeared to be wrong. Nor did the course of the caucus run smoothly in the direction that its caller had hoped. Opposition to Teddy as the head of the organization rapidly developed. Reading the signs quickly, and following the example of his immortal father, he determined upon a dramatic refusal. For three hours after the caucus met, he declined steadfastly the chairmanship offered him by his own appointees. When the tumult was about to die and the urging almost ceased, he played his ace of trumps by springing to his feet and shouting: "I'll tell you just why I can't accept this nomination. They say I am a politician and that I formed this organization to make a grandstand play and—"