

EDITORIAL

Not only Babbitt won last November, but also Gantry. We are in for four (and maybe eight) years of high-pressure Christian endeavor, with a consecrated Quaker playing the hose, and sturdy Methodists and Baptists, all of them free from sin, manning the pump. What Quakers are capable of, once their moral libido is loosed, was exemplified charmingly during the reign of the Hon. A. Mitchell Palmer as Attorney-General. What Methodists and Baptists run to is on view throughout the land, and especially in the Bible country, and more especially in the beleaguered State of Virginia, where, having aroused the hookworm carriers to Christian fury, they now plan to seize, not only the State government and all the local governments, but also the University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson in 1819. If Jefferson were alive today, and living in his old diocese, he would be on his way to jail. His principles are in abeyance there, as they are everywhere else in the United States.

Just how far the brethren will attempt to go, once they get their fatter and softer Coolidge into the White House, remains to be seen. The hints they throw out from their camp at Washington are surely dark enough. We are not only to have a new and worse Volstead Act, with teeth six inches long; we are also to have a national movie censorship and a censorship of books, magazines and newspapers. Would the last collide with the Bill of Rights? Then damn the Bill of Rights! Here I venture into no treason: I simply echo the Supreme Court of the United States, though, to be sure, with a certain tightening of phraseology. That great sanhedrin has already disemboweled the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Amendments and set them out to

dry; it will not boggle, I predict, at the First. If it does so, then the brethren will know how to deal with it. They already count audibly, in fact, upon the high mortality among the loftier varieties of jurists, due to hard study and bad air. It was a selling point in the campaign. Al, they alleged, planned to put radicals upon the bench, *i.e.*, judges disposed to take the Bill of Rights literally. The Pope, it appeared, had issued orders to that effect, countersigned by the Beer Trust, the Elders of Zion, and the Bolsheviki. They assured their customers that Dr. Hoover could be trusted to refrain from any such malicious mischief: his judicial nominations, they let it be known delicately, would be satisfactory to the Anti-Saloon League. No doubt they knew what they were talking about, for they had their agents at his G. H. Q., and what they said was also said by the beauteous Mrs. Willebrandt, the official Joan of Arc of the campaign.

Thus the Republic of Jefferson's humane hallucinations gives way to a very real and highly efficient *Polizeistaat*, with laws for every moral purpose and plenty of bashibazouks to enforce them. The Liberals are doomed to more moaning, and the rest of us had better watch out. Bishop Cannon will be far more influential at Washington after March 4 than ever the Hon. Harry Micajah Daugherty was in the days of Harding. The course of legislation will be determined, to a large extent, by his prayers, which are powerful and long. He knows what he wants, and his episcopal blood is steaming. Thus I counsel all bootleggers to arrange their affairs, and all Liberals to get out their red ink. It may be that the boozeart, before a year has gone, will have its Sacco and Vanzetti. We may be headed toward capital punishment for

carrying a bottle of wine to the sick. At the least, we shall see a docile judiciary packing the jails, so that there'll be scarcely room left in them for home-brewing. Some juicy decisions are in the offing. Once the First Amendment has gone the way of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth, there will be little left of the Bill of Rights save the Third, which prohibits quartering soldiers upon citizens in time of peace. Even that may yield up the ghost when the Methodist Terror begins using the army and navy to reinforce the corps of Prohibition agents.

There is nothing in Dr. Hoover's record to indicate any formidable opposition to this programme. If he has any leanings toward Liberalism, in any of its multitudinous forms, he has kept them pretty diligently concealed. As an archpriest of the New Efficiency, he probably inclines very strongly the other way. Moreover, he is said to cherish grudges, and the advocates of the Bill of Rights, during the campaign, surely gave him some to cherish. Upon the embarrassing question of his relations to the Klan, the Anti-Saloon League, the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition and Public Morals, and other such organizations they pushed him cruelly hard, and no doubt there are still scars upon his surface. Yet more, he is an active candidate for reelection in 1932—and is precisely aware how and by whom he was elected in 1928.

II

But the love of liberty, as Nietzsche long ago pointed out, flourishes best, not where liberty is free for the asking, but where men can only hope for it and fight for it. It has never had such splendid partisans in the United States as it had in the darkest days of the Revolution, nor so many of them. The false appearance of it, without the substance, is fatal, disarming its friends and reinforcing the indifference of the indifferent. Something of the sort has been going on in the United States ever since the Civil War, when the Bill of Rights

first tasted the judicial snickersnee. The superficials of liberty have been here, but not always the essentials. Now that even the superficials begin to disappear, it may be that a new struggle for the essentials will begin. Tiring at last of the bald and hollow liberty to make good livings, Americans may demand again the greater liberty to live good lives.

At all events, there is ground for hope in that direction, and hope is all that any chronic Libertarian asks for. He sees the laws growing more and more oppressive, and the advocates of still greater oppressions put into high places, but at the same time, searching eagerly and perhaps a bit romantically, he also sees signs of revolt. The people give their votes to the side of yielding, but their profoundest instincts prompt them to resist. Thus we have Prohibition officially, and no Prohibition actually. Thus we labor under censorshipships, but still manage to obtain access to new ideas. Thus religious intolerance increases, but religion itself seems to lose force. However the scene is viewed, it becomes obvious that a battle is joined. What the ultimate issue of that battle will be the gods do not reveal, but it may quite as well be the restoration of liberty as its complete and final destruction.

The late election helped to clear the ground. It gave the enemies of liberty everything they asked for, and even more. If Dr. Hoover was elected, then so was the Anti-Saloon League elected. Its exultant claim that it shared his triumph and is entitled to its share of his power is well grounded in the facts. He can no more get rid of it now than he can get rid of the Vare Gang, the remnants of the Ohio Gang, the corps of kleagles and goblins, and the boughten blackamoors from the broken South. He must give it, in gratitude and fellowship, the clear chance that it demands, with all the new laws that go therewith, and all the blacklegs needed to "enforce" them. Getting what it wants, it will grasp, I suspect, a series of red-hot poker. If it actually thrusts Prohibition

upon us there will be uproars everywhere, and especially in those areas where its votes came from; if it fails with every weapon in its hands, then Prohibition will start along the *via dolorosa* of mesmerism, Free Silver, a tariff for revenue only, and the Single Tax.

Thus the proponents of the Noble Experiment find themselves brought to book at last, and with a large gallery assembled to see them do their stuff. They have got everything they have been bawling for. Whatever else they want is theirs for the asking. They have a grateful disciple ready for the White House, they have the Senate and House in their pockets, and they know how to handle the courts. Now let them prove it.

III

Liberty, at bottom, is a simple thing, whatever its outward forms. It is common faith in man, common good will, common tolerance and charity, common decency, no less and no more. Translated into political terms, it is the doctrine that the normal citizen of a civilized state is actually normal—that the decency which belongs naturally to *Homo sapiens*, as an animal above the brutes, is really in him. It holds that this normal citizen may be trusted, one day with another, to do the decent thing. It relies upon his natural impulses, and assumes them to be reasonably sound. Finally, it is the doctrine that if these assumptions are false, then nothing can be done about it—that if human beings are actually so bad, then none is good enough to police the rest.

The pious brethren who now prepare to run us take a different line. They have a low opinion of mankind, and believe that even the most elemental decency is obtainable only by force. They hold that every man who has access to alcohol is a potential drunkard, and very likely, on some near tomorrow, to beat his wife and murder his friend. They hold that there is no natural human buttress against evil ideas—that the minute they are presented they are translated into acts—that the girl who reads a naughty book will presently be walking the streets, inviting ruin. They hold that the safe and sound ideas are all known, and may be inculcated by clergymen and policemen—that everything else is dangerous, and ought to be put down.

This antithesis, cast into the form of a drama in the grand manner, is now to be played out before us. I am not sure what the verdict of the gallery will be, but I have some confidence about the votes of the younger spectators, and especially those who are completely literate. They will be quick to detect, I believe, the rationality of liberty; they will see that it is only common decency. They will revolt against the assumptions of its enemies. They will recognize those assumptions as false, hateful and abominable. Undeceived by the pother of the opposition, with its Bibles and its guns, they will go for liberty as the young have gone for it from times immemorable, to the gain and glory of the human race. Find me a young man who swallows the blather of the Anti-Saloon League, and I will show you a young man who is somehow sick.

H. L. M.

ARE WE SOLVING THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM?

BY RAYMOND S. TOMPKINS

THE answer is No, and most Doctors of Traffic, when driven to it, admit it. Nevertheless, the delusion that a solution is easy persists and is fostered in the public mind, and terrific uproars issue from it, growing worse each year. New and more violent remedies are daily conceived and applied, and as old difficulties disappear new and more frightful ones show up, and remedies still more drastic have to be considered. Traffic research bureaux crop up and multiply, encouraging the hope that a cure is in sight, but as will presently be seen, every new outcropping of scientific data pushes the cure farther into the future. Both Harvard University and Dr. Hoover fling their gigantic intellects upon the Traffic Demon, but it yields not, or very little.

Few problems have cost the American public more money. Detroit's traffic congestion, it is estimated, damages it more than \$30,000,000 a year; St. Louis's, \$16,500,000; New York's, \$540,000,000, and so on, not counting a nickel of the huge sums spent to get rid of the problem without making a dent in it. In the face of no other difficulty does the public display more muddle-headedness, obstinacy and disregard for law; yet for none does it shell out more money to get expert advice—which it promptly rejects or pigeon-holes. Compared to the Traffic Problem, the Farm Problem is as clear as crystal and the Prohibition Problem as simple as rolling off a log.

A bibliography of articles on the subject in the technical journals shows more than 2,000 treatises during the past two years, most of them dealing with local troubles

in particular cities and offering sure-fire solutions. At least one periodical owes its entire existence to the problem, and a dozen others devote increasing space to it with every issue. Reports of studies and surveys are in existence in most of the big cities—volumes sometimes so immense that strong men stagger carrying them, and so filled with counts, checks, graphs and percentages as to drive the sanest person mad. Not only is there a traffic problem to be solved; there is also the problem of solving the solutions of the traffic problem.

Trouble began when a higher art became discernible in the business of traffic control, and it commenced slipping out of the hands of the police. The lowly cops had met the problem by arm-waving, whistle-blowing and picturesque cursing, enlivened now and then by an arrest. This obviously was a narrow and unscientific manner of approach, and it will be said that, persisted in, it would have caused troubles no city would have got out of for a thousand years. To take traffic control, at least in its higher manifestations, out of the hands of the cops, was, every deep student of the matter agreed at the time, a step toward the solution of the problem. Nevertheless, it was at this very point that it began swelling up to the proportions it has now attained; and these proportions, gigantic as they are, give scarcely more than a hint of what the future holds.

For with the coming of men of science there came the Traffic Survey, plumbing depths of municipal disorder never imagined by police or populace. It was like turning loose upon a man with a cold in the head a corps of physicians who discover