

# THE ST. LOUIS *POST-DISPATCH*

BY SAMUEL W. TAIT, JR.

WHEN Joseph Pulitzer the elder prepared to draw up his will, no oriental potentate, approaching death without an heir apparent, ever faced a more harassing problem. To dispose of the Pulitzer lands and chattels, of course, was easy enough; what perplexed him was which of his three sons should be chosen to carry on in the office of the New York *World*. Whether his choice was Ralph or Herbert has been disputed, but one fact is clearly inferable from the will: that it was not Joseph the younger. As to him, the opinion of his father seems to have been that he should continue with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, a good enough paper, to be sure, but nothing to grow excited about. The *World*, not the *Post-Dispatch*, was the old man's darling, and upon its continued success, so he seems to have thought, depended the family pride and honor.

During the Summer of 1930, one of a long series of rumors was circulated through the office of the *World*, now come upon days of evil. This one was to the effect that Joseph the younger might shortly remove to New York from St. Louis, and attempt to save the *World* from its crushing losses. Beneath this rumor there may or may not have been a basis of fact, but at least one thing was plain from its very existence: a genius had misjudged the ability of his own son. For in the years since Joseph Senior had executed his will, the *Post-Dispatch*, under

the suzerainty of Joseph Junior, had completely realized the Pulitzer ideal of a newspaper which should be absolutely independent of all party and financial interests, should be constantly fighting vigorous and interesting battles, and should at the same time make a lot of money.

What the old man contemplated in the way of a fighting newspaper is preserved in innumerable letters and notes in the hands of his secretaries and editors. I know of no better expression of his ideal than his own words, as quoted by Harold Stanley Pollard, his literary secretary during the last five years of his life, to wit:

A newspaper should be more than a first-rate newspaper, printing every day first-rate news and first-rate editorials. It should have hobbies, undertake reforms, lead crusades and thereby establish a name for individuality and active public service.

The words may be taken as the authentic platform of the *Post-Dispatch*. Its owner might remove to New York and devote all his attention to the *World*, so neglecting the *Post-Dispatch* that sometimes one man had to write its entire editorial page. But it never ceased crusading and preaching reform, and under the editorial direction of products of the old man's own practical and highly efficient school of journalism, it kept on hewing to the Pulitzer line.

One of its earliest crusades was against tax dodging. The paper had sound data,

it gave names and dates, and it won. In 1898 it charged that corruption had characterized the granting of a franchise to a local traction company. Again it won, for finally eight members of the municipal House of Delegates went to the State bastille. But its victory came only after it had, as a side line to the boodle exposure, poured a good deal of acid upon Harry B. Hawes, then president of the St. Louis Police Board.

His friends at once set up the demand for vengeance. It was a day when sin was still admitted to exist in St. Louis, and the names of its more important rendezvous had been heard even by the young hopefuls of West End Sunday-schools. The political, legal and journalistic brethren drank beer nightly at a dollar a quart in Mammy Lou's place, while Negresses danced and sang bawdy ballads. Newspaper men often drifted from one carnal scene to another till there was only time enough left for a shave and a shampoo before going to work. Once, after such a night, an editorial writer, arriving at his desk still somewhat befuddled, found there a demand for editorials on a Russo-Japanese naval battle, the Panama Canal, and the politics of Iowa. He handled all three subjects in one editorial, and had the Russian and Japanese navies fighting a battle in a canal up in Iowa—and the edition carrying it was on the streets before anyone around the office noticed the achievement.

The apologists of Hawes proposed that the police catch some prominent employé of the virtuous *Post-Dispatch* in a house of joy, and parade him through the streets in a patrol wagon, with a sign on each side proclaiming who and what he was and where he had been arrested. But for a reason best known to themselves, the police never did anything of the sort. Per-

haps no prominent employé of the paper ever went to such places, or perhaps Hawes' sense of decency—if, indeed, he ever heard of the proposal of his defenders—would not allow vengeance of this sort, or perhaps he did not care to incur the hatred of an institution that might conceivably be very useful to the career of an aspiring statesman. If the last possibility is the correct explanation, then he was, as I shall presently show, a man of true vision.

## II

The late American crusade for democracy is properly regarded by members of the staff as witnessing the birth of what they are fond of calling the new *Post-Dispatch*. That campaign of international uplift, enforced bond buying and destruction of the Bill of Rights started the news department toward national prominence, and so devitalized the editorial department that it had to be completely reorganized. The crusade made one editor, and confused another so badly that he voluntarily gave way to his political antithesis.

The editor it made was Oliver K. Bovard. A man of remarkably even temper, he yet has the faculty of picking helpers whose enthusiasm for their tasks never seems to falter. Under his rule in the news room, a long line of enterprising reporters have come to maturity at their craft, including Ben H. Reese, now city editor, Carlos Hurd, John T. Rogers, Clair Kenamore, Roy Alexander, and Curtis A. Betts, the last of whom has for some years covered Missouri politics for the paper.

When the Missouri troops went to France, Bovard sent Kenamore along as special correspondent. On the surface, this

innovation seemed to be nothing more than an astute bid for increased circulation. Actually it was the turning point in the paper's history, for it indicated a realization upon Bovard's part that the *Post-Dispatch* should possess a news service at once more distinctive and more personal than any with which either the press associations or the New York *World* could provide it.

From then onward until the establishment of the paper's own Washington bureau, the steps in the development of that news service were almost inevitable. For that bureau Bovard picked the able Charles G. Ross from the Department of Journalism of the University of Missouri, Raymond P. Brandt, who can treat of a subject of governmental technology so that even statistics seem attractive, and Paul Y. Anderson.

The last named deserves almost as much credit as Bovard for the present fame of the paper. If Bovard charted the new course of the *Post-Dispatch*, Anderson has so far done more than anyone else to steer it over that course. A native of the State that produced the anti-evolution trial, he stepped out of the obscurity of East St. Louis correspondent of the paper by gathering authentic data about the race riots at that place in 1917. When the *Post-Dispatch*, in 1923, launched its crusade to get freedom for the political prisoners who had been run into jail by government Cossacks, it was Anderson who performed the field work. When he was through firing, the political prisoners were out of jail, and the first national crusade of the *Post-Dispatch* had become a triumph.

The oil scandals are rightly Anderson's own show. Not only was he the one reporter present when the curtain went up, but to him must also go the credit for

reopening the picaresque drama by causing an investigation of the corrupting activities of the Continental Trading Company. In 1925, when the paper, risking a suit for libel and a citation for contempt, presented evidence to Congress which led the Lower House to vote to impeach Federal Judge English for abusing his powers, Anderson covered the Washington end of the case.

He is the only newspaper man I have ever known who treats his trade as though it were a profession. His working hours are seemingly determined by himself. When he is in St. Louis, his sartorial excellence may give color to the office as early as eleven in the morning, and it may not do so till around three in the afternoon. In belief he is at one with the forward-lookers who now dominate the paper. He rejects the story of Jonah and the whale, but believes in the political virginity of the Senate Progressives. This outfit of political fairies, in fact, seems to be his conception of an enlightened ruling class, and he always wires in a sizzling retort when somebody gets a light punch at any of their absurdities into the editorial page.

In fairness, however, it must be admitted that he is the most useful critic the paper has ever had. Once he even caused a gentleman who was acting as literary editor to prefer work on another local sheet to enduring the Anderson vitriol. The explanation of his unusual freedom in this respect as in others, I suspect, is that no false modesty deceives him as to his usefulness to the paper. The *Post-Dispatch* might perhaps get along without Anderson, but it would not be the paper it is by a long, long way. In almost every one of the achievements which have lifted it out of the gumbo, he has done a large share of the lifting.

## III

The same war which allowed the news department to rise above the ranks brought the editorial page down with a severe case of shellshock. Its editor, George S. Johns, a Princeton man himself, followed the Princeton mountebank in the White House. Throughout the conflict, the editorial page lifted a paean daily to the crusade that was to bring liberty to the world, while liberty was being daily blackjacked around it by agents of the World Liberator.

When the war was over, Johns tried to get back to the Jeffersonian faith of his better days. With the aid of Sterling E. Edmunds, a lawyer and sincere follower of Jefferson, he started a movement to end the trend toward Federal centralization and bureaucracy by repealing the national income tax, and thus cutting off the fodder of the fast multiplying Federal lice. The campaign had sound legal support, and its leading editorial, distributed far and wide in pamphlet form, won much favorable comment. But just as the affair gave promise of becoming momentous, Johns blew it to pieces by opposing the renomination, in 1922, of Senator James A. Reed, the most unrelenting foe of centralization and bureaucracy that the country had seen in a century.

But the crowning error of his career was still ahead of him. In 1926 there appeared as a candidate for the United States Senate the same Harry B. Hawes who, as I have already set out, had once so strangely neglected to revenge himself upon the *Post-Dispatch* for attacking his conduct as president of the Police Board. Now he was to be supported by the paper. The editorial page, however, went much further than merely supporting the candidacy of Hawes. At the same election

the people of Missouri voted on the question of repealing the State dry laws. It was naturally expected by all the thoroughgoing opponents of Prohibition that the *Post-Dispatch*, which had always been wet, would favor repeal, and would gladly help Missouri to join New York in taking the only effective step to show its wetness and its distaste for double jeopardy. On the contrary, the *Post-Dispatch*, to the surprise of everybody, declared against repeal. And by so doing, it declared, in effect, that the election of Hawes was more important than revitalizing Article V of the Bill of Rights.

Just why it did this is even more puzzling today than it was at the time, as the excuses then given for the action have lately been apparently repudiated by the paper in reversing itself and coming out for repeal of the same State dry acts. But at least one thing seems to me to be beyond dispute: only the need which every libertarian felt of compromising daily with his beliefs in wartime can account for Johns' subsequent ability to act as he did toward the repeal proposal. His case is surely not without parallel. A little thought, indeed, will recall many such performances by liberals and libertarians who gulped down the Wilson idealism.

Of all its victims, Johns, I believe, was one of the ablest and finest, and his fate hence one of the most tragic. For many years he was not only an editor of the *Post-Dispatch*; he was, in a very real sense, the *Post-Dispatch* itself. During at least two decades, a mention of the paper suggested neither Pulitzer nor anyone else but Johns. He was its public relations expert and its official toastmaster, but he was likewise its most valiant warrior and its one salient personality. In the editorial page and everywhere else, he showed a fine regard for the dignity of the indi-

vidual and an unfailing decency. But, alas, the casualties of war were not all on the battlefield! When I joined the editorial staff of the *Post-Dispatch*, in the last month of 1926, he was a silvered aristocrat who could not realize that his philosophy of government and individual rights had been destroyed by the very forces he had so enthusiastically aided and abetted. He had been torpedoed without warning.

There was at least one member of the editorial staff who did not approve of the paper's attitude upon the proposal to repeal the State dry laws. A short time before the election of 1926, Pulitzer, as if carelessly experimenting with explosives, had tossed upon the editorial page the person of Clark McAdams. An idealistic fellow, McAdams had been with the paper so long that he felt a sort of family responsibility for its acts, and experienced a feeling of horror whenever it deviated from what he considered the path of virtue. During the strange performance when the dry law repeal was pending poison ran down his chin.

Being a devotee of the new liberalism, McAdams produced some editorials that inevitably found their way into Johns' immense waste basket or under the mass of circular letters and other junk that hid even the titles of the books lining the back of his great desk. But he managed to get enough into the paper to give Pulitzer a taste of what he could do, and this Pulitzer liked so well that eventually McAdams became editor of the page, and Johns retired to the associate editorship.

What the page needed, as McAdams saw, was not reform but revolution—in viewpoint and in method. It should not go on preaching Jeffersonianism while the news columns examined the world through the spectacles of the new liberal-

ism. Nor should the page continue its chaste impersonality while the news columns became more and more the expression of individual correspondents. McAdams' task was to make the paper philosophically and stylistically consistent. He did it.

The day he took charge the whole organization began to click. There was no ideational or other discord with him holding the baton. In the passion to serve the plain people and to advocate forward-looking remedies for all their woes, he has no peer among the liberals in the news department. He lets out a wail for the fate of the country every time there is a new recruit for the higher income tax brackets.

Quite as momentous as this philosophical change was the æsthetic revolution he brought about in the page. The elder Pulitzer, forcing his editorial writers to lean over backwards in what one of his secretaries has called the "scrupulous effort to be impersonal," reduced even their manner of expressing themselves to the impersonality of a deaths column. Johns' style is a case in point. Though he is blessed with an exceptionally charming personality, his style is of the hard, direct, sledge-hammer sort; a tremendously effective style for leading crusades, to be sure, for it possesses great clarity and force; but one from which charm and humor have been resolutely excluded as undignified. To balance his serious leader, Johns expected the other members of the staff to furnish a daily supply of sparkling comment. Yet in his entire career, he found but one man who could write such stuff—to wit, Bart B. Howard, who can do short light editorials that are veritable gems of gusto—and Howard was allowed to waste much of his time in confecting painfully serious leaders.

The day McAdams rose to power the Pulitzer tradition of impersonal writing was given a well deserved burial. The notion that a leader in the *Post-Dispatch* should never crack an occasional smile or display any of the characteristics of the writer was laid away without even flowers. McAdams imported directly into the editorial columns that natural, homely, almost conversational style he had developed in the humorous column he had long conducted in the paper. It is a style that can convey the most serious and idealistic notions without allowing them to become tiresome, and it has given the page a character and tone quite different from that of any other in the country. Today its leaders often charm even those who, like myself, dissent wholly from what they advocate.

The change extended even to the physical appearance of the page, and to its features other than editorials. When McAdams began writing for it, it was as full of boxes as a five-and-ten cent store at Christmas time. Today there is only one, and it is an inconspicuous one, and even it is sometimes omitted. The exchange department was revamped and systematized, and now contains a symposium on an important subject, a single long excerpt from an article in a newspaper or magazine, or an article especially written for it by some recognized authority in his field.

Even the admirable cartoons of D. R. Fitzpatrick seemed to take on new vigor with the ascendancy of McAdams. A perfect newspaper cartoonist, Fitzpatrick can satirize almost anything, and some of his finest cartoons were done as an aid to Johns' campaign against Federal centralization and bureaucracy, a subject which Fitzpatrick, being one of the new liberals, probably regards as bolony. But he be-

lieves that a cartoon, like an editorial, is worthless if it does not express an opinion, and so he naturally found a more congenial atmosphere for self-expression under a liberal editor. Fitzpatrick's work is rightly kept on the editorial page: when McAdams is out hunting, the cartoon is sometimes the best editorial in the paper.

Of the crusades which McAdams has carried on, it seems to me that his brilliant battle for justice for Sacco and Vanzetti, during the first Summer he acted as editor, easily outshines all the others. It failed, of course, but, like all failures in the cause of freedom and justice, it was a noble failure, perhaps more noble than any success the *Post-Dispatch* has ever achieved. If he carried it on with almost no aid from other members of the staff, that was because of his great love for his task and his tremendous vitality. He can get others to do excellent work. I have seen him take a cartoonist and a staff who were temporarily as barren of ideas as so many Congressmen, and whip them into working condition in a few minutes, firing them with his lust for achievement and his vast enthusiasm for ideas, good, bad, and indifferent.

#### IV

Asked whether the present Joseph Pulitzer deserves any credit for the high standing of the paper, any man who has worked on its editorial staff of late years could honestly answer only in the affirmative. Nor would such a man be doing Pulitzer full justice by intimating that the publisher is only an intelligent entrepreneur, with a talent for choosing able superintendents. On the contrary, he takes an active part in the adoption of the paper's policies and is genuinely proud of its achievements.



When it is waging some campaign, his tall figure is often seen speeding through the editorial room, before any of the staff has arrived, in search of some one to read him the day's leader. He sees to it that merit is rewarded with compliments at least, and sometimes with bonuses, as in the case of the men who covered the investigation of Judge English. The general level of wages is itself remarkably high. The day when a newspaper man had to duck up alleys to avoid an I. O. U. for a poker debt of ten dollars is definitely over so far as the *Post-Dispatch* is concerned.

Of course, Pulitzer, like most publishers, sometimes shows his interest in ways that are irritating. Just when the editorial department is displaying all the signs of perfect health, he may make a criticism that will send the department's blood pressure into a nose dive. Why he indulges in such behavior is not far to seek: his father did it, and so it is an element of that holy thing, the Pulitzer tradition. What is really puzzling is why the members of the staff take his criticism so seriously. He seems essentially a gentle person, and not at all the sort to excite trepidation. He may believe that editorial writers should wear curb bits, but he would never wish to use the reins in a way to cause discomfort or pain. If he lacks the force and fire of his father, that fact is a distinct advantage to his employes, for it saves them from the effects of those rages which made working for the elder J. P. such an ordeal.

Perhaps the most enjoyable feature of working for the *Post-Dispatch* is the atmosphere of freedom which exists in its office. The bosses are as tolerant as they are agreeable, and are extremely patient with peccadillos. In that office there is no son-of-a-bitch list and no registry of local sacred cows. The secure social standing

of the present Pulitzer is never noticed. An advertiser who attempted to warp one of the paper's policies today would promptly be told to go to Hell, and he would be so directed whether he were a sniffish member of the St. Louis Country Club or only an obscure Elk.

## V

While it is a leading exponent of the new liberalism, the position of the *Post-Dispatch* as a great national journal has not been built on mooney stuff like government operation of Muscle Shoals—which is to say, giving the Federal bureaucracy another plaything—but upon such conservative policies as getting the release of political prisoners, tracing the bonds of the oil bandits, making possible the impeachment of an unfit Federal judge, opposing such plutocratic thievery as high tariffs, and fighting for plain justice and the Bill of Rights.

Its liberalism is something else again. It is the fancy blend of political romanticism and state socialism now in vogue in the Republic, and preached alike by campus intellectuals in the forward-looking weeklies of the East and Senatorial hacks perched on dunghills in the wheat States. It is a faith chock full of inconsistencies. Advocating a skeptical attitude toward unsound theological and ethical dogmas, the liberal of today has an almost pathological weakness for absorbing and disseminating political and economic error, and for hymning the virtues of proponents of such error. Pleading for freedom of speech and of the press and of assembly, the same liberal never offers a remedy for the political and economic ills of man which does not involve more government, and hence the further enslavement of man by the state.

To call such a faith liberalism is plainly to profane the term. Liberalism, when it was a virile faith, in the middle of the last century, meant liberty not in a few chosen respects but in all. It had no illusions about the state. That liberalism saw government as the immemorial enemy of freedom and all sound progress, as a necessary evil to be kept down at all costs. So argued Bright and Cobden and the rest of the Manchester school. Thus, at an earlier date, Jefferson had believed, as later did his most brilliant disciple, Reed. It was the liberalism, apparently, of Edmunds, and the liberalism which Johns, with the aid of Edmunds, expressed in his fight against centralization and bureaucracy.

What Johns overlooked, when he began this fight, was that the creed no longer had any popular appeal. The plain people had tried liberty and had found that it was not a democratic virtue. The liberal politicians, obliged to offer something different or go to work, resorted to making whoopee in the manner peculiar to democratic politics. That is, they began to stir up the plain people against the man who was materially better off, and who was consequently having a better time, and they set the plain people after him by the ancient devices of yelling for a policeman and creating a bureaucrat.

Liberalism, in other words, became a part of the preposterous nonsense called the Uplift: that gaudy crusade to lift up the great mass of mankind, materially and morally, by using the power of the state to pull down and embarrass the more fortunate and happier members. Between the liberal of today and the Prohibitionist there is an undeniable kinship. Is it not significant that all but three of the Senate Progressives are apologists for the Noble Experiment?

Herbert Spencer saw this emerging liberalism, and aptly termed it the New Toryism. In America, William Graham Sumner exposed it in his essays on the Forgotten Man—that is, the decent and self-respecting citizen, who minds his own business and goes his own way, and who is the inevitable victim of government on the loose. But for good or ill, the new liberalism prevailed over the old. Today the only sort on tap in the country is a Marxian brew diluted with political moonshine.

It is this uplifting stuff that is retailed daily from the editorial page of the *Post-Dispatch*. That it is retailed with seductive charm I have already stated. But that it is no drink at all for libertarians was demonstrated by the paper's treatment of the recent contest for the governorship of Pennsylvania between John M. Hemphill and Gifford Pinchot. The facts about Hemphill were obvious—to wit, that he had a spotless record of professional and political integrity, that he had achieved substantial success as a lawyer at the early age of thirty-nine, that he was a thoroughgoing wet and was forcefully saying so even in dry territory. But the *Post-Dispatch* editorial page hailed the blatant Pinchot as a messiah, and never gave Hemphill's good fight a word of praise. Why? Because Pinchot was against the utilities. That was enough to cause the *Post-Dispatch* to throw the wet issue into the office goblin, for the paper has the liberal psychosis regarding utilities. It thus put on an exhibition comparable to that of four years earlier when the proposal to repeal the State dry laws was hanging fire.

Modern liberalism, in brief, is always ready to chuck liberty, if so doing will benefit some fancy scheme of political or economic reformation. The *Post-Dispatch* here only showed its sincere devotion to



the faith. Any legitimate charge that might be laid against the paper, in fact, would only go to show that its liberalism is unimpeachable. Did it commit such an astonishing error as saying that Pinchot was opposed by the Mellon machine, whereas the paper's own news dispatches pointed out that this putrid outfit actually supported and elected him? Then the liberal demands perfection of his idols, and will make them perfect, even if he can clear them of unsavory charges in no higher court than an editorial page. Does the paper seldom offer a remedy for any problem without proposing more laws, more boards and commissions, and more jobholders? Then it is proverbial that the modern liberal has abandoned Jefferson and the theory that that government governs best which governs least, and has gone over to Marx and the theory of the omnipotent state. The liberal has a blissful faith in the capacity of government to abolish the ills of mankind—which is to say, in the capacity of the two political rackets that run the country to abolish those ills. And does the paper insist that until the Eighteenth Amendment is repealed, even if that is a generation away, nothing must be done—as, for instance, repealing the Volstead Act—to alleviate the conditions which Prohibition has created? Then the liberal is an incurable romantic, and hence often allows his enthusiasm to pervert his judgment.

It is this romanticism which is the motif of modern liberalism, and accounts alike for its chief vice and its chief virtue. That vice, as I have already shown, is the liberal's passion for following false messiahs toward equally deceptive salvations, which makes of his career a constant alteration from wild adoration to tragic disillusionment. The liberal is a man who goes on repeating his first sad love affair.

Once the object of adoration is Wilson—until he becomes Woodrow I. Later it is Borah—until he becomes the Bishop Cannon of the Senate. Later still it is Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes—until he is exposed by a reprint of his own decisions. Valiantly trying to lead the plain people toward a magnificent castle on a high plateau, the liberal gains the heights only to find the structure, upon closer view, to be the abandoned creation of some Specialist.

But this same romanticism accounts likewise for the great virtue of the new liberalism—to wit, its intellectual curiosity, its passion for ideas. McAdams, it seems to me, satisfies the liberal ideal in this respect as well as any editor the country has ever seen. A journalist all his life, he is astonishingly free of any taint of that cynicism which seems the hallmark of his trade. And even though he has the passion for answering false alarms, he has also the equipment to cope with a real conflagration when he finds one.

What ails him and his helpers, I suspect, is that they do not really like beer. I suggest that they cultivate a taste for the divine stuff forthwith, and thus attain to a more comfortable view of the world and of their opponents. Beer inevitably tends to make a man optimistic, and hence somewhat asinine, but it would never, never allow him to see an evil conspiracy against mankind in the siring of a new millionaire by a bull market and in the demand of a railroad or electric light works that it be treated with as much decency as a butcher shop or a bakery. I suggest that the paper intrust the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment to General Atterbury and other libertarian capitalists, who will rid us of the curse if anybody can, and start a crusade to get the Busch family out of the unemployed class.

Two weeks after that great reform is realized, and Michelob is again on tap, even the wage slaves in the *Post-Dispatch* editorial department will, I confidently predict, be cured of their socialist demonology.

## VI

The future of the paper? It is safe to prophesy that its future, under the Bovard-McAdams regimen, will be at least as fine as its present. It will continue to lead crusades and preach reforms, and in so doing it will sometimes follow false prophets and make obeisance before false gods. But in every such case, the result will be because it was genuinely mistaken or deceived, and no man of sound sense

and honesty will ever question its integrity. It will continue to tell the truth about corruption and injustice, and will consequently be a positive force for real progress in city, State and nation. It will keep on thundering for the Bill of Rights when the priceless guarantees are threatened by executive, legislator or judge. Finally, it will maintain its charming manner and its civilized tone.

On the whole, the old man, if he could see the *Post-Dispatch* today, ought to like it. It is as independent and as vigorous as any paper he ever published, and far more charming and civilized than most. Indeed, after looking it over, he might even wish to add a ghostly codicil to that will, in which he would make a fairer appraisal of one of his boys.

## EDITORIALS

### *The Impending Combat*

That Dr. Hoover is eager to be renominated and reelected next year is plain to everyone, and there seems to be no doubt that he is willing to run again, if it turns out to be good policy, with the Anti-Saloon League collar around his neck. No one in Washington, of course, knows what he really thinks about Prohibition, if in fact he thinks at all; he has himself whispered sepulchral to the newspaper boys that, despite the message he sent to Congress with the Wickersham report, he still has what he calls an open mind. One may guess that this cerebral openness, even if it doesn't go far enough in one direction to take in the manifest facts, certainly goes far enough in the other to take in any useful block of votes. That the Anti-Saloon League brethren, notwithstanding all their misfortunes of late, will have such a block to offer in 1932 is very probable. They are in a wrecked and wretched state in all of the big cities, and, at least in the anti-nomian East, they are beginning to see whole States slip away from them, but they still have a pretty firm hold upon the remoter peasants, and so they may retain, at all events for one more round, a balance of power. If so, Dr. Hoover will be ready to knuckle to them next year as he did in 1928. He has been sneered at by other politicians as an amateur, but at the delicate art of keeping his principles in a liquid condition he is surely as adept as any of them.

It would be pleasant, in this situation, to see the Democrats confront him with a

frank and uncompromising wet, for the campaign would then take on the character of a pursuit, and it is always amusing to see a mountebank being chased. True enough, the hon. gentleman might win anyhow, even after being driven from hollow stump to rat hole, for the Fathers in their wisdom so fashioned the Electoral College that there is a heavy loading in favor of the less populous and civilized States. But even so, the popular vote would show something, and my guess is that it would show an enormous wet majority. Thus Dr. Hoover would resume his witless and disingenuous labors with the country plainly against him, and his ensuing contortions would be even more amusing than those he now performs.

The impediment to this sweet consummation lies in the fact that the Democrats have to think of the Anti-Saloon League themselves, and will probably do so to such effect that they will go into action almost as badly hobbled as the Great Engineer. It is commonly assumed that they made a clear-cut fight against it in 1928, but that is by no means true. Al, of course, was wet enough and to spare, but his running mate, the Hon. Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, was anything but unsatisfactory to the Methodist hierarchy, and the platform might have come straight out of their Book of Discipline. One of the chief charges that the Hoovercrats of the South levelled at Al, indeed, was that he was a traitor to that platform, and I have no doubt that the charge cost him many a vote that might have survived even his sinister dalliance with the Pope. Fully a