

## EDITORIALS

### *The Case for the Heroes*

In the sad aftermath that always follows a great war there is nothing sadder than the surprise of the returned soldiers when they discover that they are regarded generally as public nuisances, and not too honest.

The veterans of the recent struggle to make the world safe for democracy are now suffering that viper's bite in the United States. The same newspapers which were anointing them, ten or twelve years ago, as heroes comparable to the Cid are denouncing them currently as a rabble of pension-grabbers, without merit and without conscience. One hears that they have already got immense sums out of the Treasury, and that their demand for more has no more equity in it than the demand of a Prohibition agent for his bribe. They are represented to be loafers who propose to live all the rest of their lives at the communal expense. So low-down have they become in the public esteem that even politicians venture to spit into their eyes. Lord Hoover, though naturally a very timorous man, was yet brave enough to do it at Detroit, and many another statesman, it seems likely, will be doing it presently in Washington, and with far superior aim and muzzle-pressure.

In all this there is a great deal less than justice. The fact is that the damage the heroes suffered by being thrust into the war is much under-estimated, and that the amount of compensation they have

got since they came home is equally over-estimated. At no time, so far as I can make out, have they ever asked for a bonus large enough to cover their probable average loss, or even the half of it. Most of them were mulcted of what amounted substantially to two years of their lives, and those years were, in many ways, the richest they will ever see. All were set back seriously in their careers, whether as garage attendants or as philosophers, and a large number were ruined altogether. But now that idealism is adjourned, when they ask for a modest dole to help them over a hard place in a hard time, they are treated as if they were hijackers holding up a Sunday-school ice-cream truck.

There are, I suppose, two classes among the veterans, as there are two classes among the rest of us. The first consists of innocent fellows who still believe that the war they were forced to fight in was an honorable and altruistic enterprise, and that their own part in it, however unwilling, was thus a great service to humanity. The other class is made up of men who have come to the melancholy conclusion that it was all a swindle. But that difference, I venture to maintain, has nothing to do with their claim upon the country. Both groups, whatever their present views, were done out of something that was very valuable to them—more valuable, perhaps, than anything short of life itself—and both deserve to get some compensation for it, whether as heroes and martyrs on the one hand, or as

suckers on the other. If, as some say, they were all heroes, then no reward could be too great for them, whether in cash or in homage. And if, as others say, they were all suckers, then certainly the country ought to have decency enough to restore to them at least a part of what it took from them by false pretenses.

The theory that it is somehow disgraceful for a man to accept pay for serving his country is sheer poppycock. As a matter of fact, no one actually believes in it. If anyone seriously proposed, in time of war, that soldiers be given only their board, lodging and equipment, every rational person would think it an outrage. Every man who braved the wicked Hun in the late crusade was actually paid in cash for the job, just as every Congressman at home was paid in cash for keeping him pumped up with idealism, and every ammunition-worker for providing him with cartridges. The generals behind the lines, of course, got more and the privates in the trenches got less, but every last man got something: the only substantial difference was that the compensation always seemed to run in inverse proportion to the work done. A man who risked his life and limb got barely enough to keep body and soul together, so that he arrived home when it was all over out of pocket as well as out of work, whereas one who remained on this side of the water and devoted himself assiduously to *Geschäft* emerged from the heroic business very well heeled, and not infrequently enormously rich.

Nor did any difference in ability have anything to do with this curious disparity. Some of the most intelligent and able young men of the nation were drafted ruthlessly and shoved into the forefront of the fray, and some of the most stupid and worthless men, both young and old,

were allowed to stay at home, cheer the four-minute men, and wax fat.

These facts have been conveniently forgotten by many folks, but they are not forgotten by the heroes (or, if you please, suckers). These heroes, in many cases, are still suffering from the serious money damage that was inflicted on them, and in all cases they are made unhappy by the feeling that the whole arrangement was and remains grossly unfair. First they were rooked in the name of patriotism, and now they are denounced as grafters for demanding that their loss be made good. What the government says to them, in effect, is that they have already got enough for what they did—that their service was not sufficiently valuable to justify running up a debt to pay anything more for it.

Meanwhile, they observe the prudent fellows who staid at home during the war and piled up money, with the government now helping them to keep it by setting up high tariffs, costly to all the rest of us. And they observe, too, the farmers, who devoted the war years to robbing everyone else, and now demand aids from the Treasury, and get them. But the poor conscripts, when they protest against all this as inequitable and ask for places of their own at the same trough, are belabored as something akin to criminals, and get nothing, not even the beer they plead for with such touching eloquence.

Their remedy, obviously, is to pool their political strength, as the farmers and tariff-babies have done, and bring irresistible pressure to bear upon the politicians. Various altruistic leaders, eager for the ensuing jobs, already whoop them up to that end. I suspect that they will be heard from hereafter, and in a most unpleasant manner. We are just beginning to pay for the war.

### *The Impregnable Rock*

Thinking of the theological doctrine called Fundamentalism, one is apt to think at once of the Rev. Aimée Semple McPherson, the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday, and the late Dr. John Roach Straton. It is almost as if, in thinking of physis, one thought of Lydia Pinkham or Dr. Munyon. Such clowns, of course, are high in human interest, and their sincerity need not be impugned, but one must remember always that they do not represent fairly the body of ideas they presume to voice, and that those ideas have much better spokesmen. I point, for example, to the Rev. J. Gresham Machen, D.D., Litt.D., formerly of Princeton and now professor of the New Testament in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. Dr. Machen is surely no mere soap-boxer of God, alarming bucolic sinners for a percentage of the plate. On the contrary, he is a man of great learning and dignity—a former student at European universities, the author of various valuable books, including a Greek grammar, and a member of several societies of savants. Moreover, he is a Democrat and a wet, and may be presumed to have voted for Al in 1928. Nevertheless, this Dr. Machen believes completely in the inspired integrity of Holy Writ, and when it was questioned at Princeton he withdrew indignantly from those hallowed shades, leaving Dr. Paul Elmer More to hold the bag.

I confess frankly, as a life-long fan of theology, that I can find no defect in his defense of his position. Is Christianity actually a revealed religion? If not, then it is nothing; if so, then we must accept the Bible as an inspired statement of its principles. But how can we think of the Bible as inspired and at the same time as fallible? How can we imagine it as part

divine and awful truth and part mere literary confectionery? And how, if we manage so to imagine it, are we to distinguish between the truth and the confectionery? Dr. Machen answers these questions very simply and very convincingly. If Christianity is really true, as he believes, then the Bible is true, and if the Bible is true, then it is true from cover to cover. So answering, he takes his stand upon it, and defies the hosts of Beelzebub to shake him. As I have hinted, I think that, given his faith, his position is completely impregnable. There is absolutely no flaw in the argument with which he supports it. If he is wrong, then the science of logic is a hollow vanity, signifying nothing.

His moral advantage over his Modernist adversaries, like his logical advantage, is immense and obvious. He faces the onslaught of the Higher Criticism without flinching, and yields nothing of his faith to expediency or decorum. Does his searching of Holy Writ compel him to believe that Jesus was descended from David through Joseph, as Matthew says, and yet begotten by the Holy Ghost, as Matthew also says, then he believes it calmly and goes on. Does he encounter witches in Exodus, and more of them in Deuteronomy, and yet more in Chronicles, then he is unperturbed. Is he confronted, in Revelation, with angels, dragons, serpents, and beasts with seven heads and ten horns, then he contemplates them as calmly as an atheist looks at a chimpanzee in a zoo. For he has risen superior to all such trivial details, the bane of less devout and honest men. The greater marvel swallows all the lesser one. If it be a fact, as he holds, that Yahweh has revealed the truth to His lieges on this earth, then he is quite as willing to accept and cherish that truth when it is odd and surprising as

when it is transparent and indubitable. Believing, as he does, in an omnipotent and omniscient God, maker of heaven and earth, he admits freely that that God probably knows more than he himself knows, both of the credible and the incredible, though he is a member of both Phi Beta Kappa and the American Philological Association.

It must be plain that the Modernists are in a much weaker position. The instant they admit that any part of the Bible may be rejected, if it be only the most trifling fly-speck in the Pauline Epistles, they admit that any other part may be rejected. Thus the divine authority of the whole disappears, and there is no more evidence that Christianity is a revealed religion than there is that Mohammedanism is. It is idle for such iconoclasts to say that one man—usually the speaker—is better able to judge in such matters than other men, for they have to admit in the same breath that no man's judgment, however learned he may be, is infallible, and that no man's judgment, however mean he may be, is negligible. They thus reduce theology to the humble level of a debate over probabilities. Such a debate it has become, in fact, in the hands of the more advanced Modernists. No two of them agree in all details, nor can they conceivably agree so long as one man, by God's inscrutable will, differs from all other men. The Catholics get rid of the difficulty by setting up an infallible Pope, and consenting formally to accept his verdicts, but the Protestants simply chase their own tails. By depriving revelation of all force and authority, they rob

their so-called religion of every dignity. It becomes, in their hands, a mere romantic imposture, unsatisfying to the pious and unconvincing to the judicious.

I have noted that Dr. Machen is a wet. This is somewhat remarkable in a Presbyterian, but certainly it is not illogical in a Fundamentalist. He is a wet, I take it, simply because the Yahweh of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New are both wet—because the whole Bible, in fact, is wet. He not only refuses to expunge from the text anything that is plainly there; he also refuses to insert anything that is not there. What I marvel at is that such sincere and unyielding Christians as he is do not start legal proceeding against the usurpers who now disgrace the name. By what right does a Methodist bishop, in the face of John II, 1-11, Matthew XI, 19 and Timothy V, 23, hold himself out as a follower of Jesus, and even as an oracle on Jesus's ideas and desires? Surely there is libel here, and if I were the believer that Dr. Machen is I think I'd say that there is also blasphemy. I suggest formally that he and his orthodox friends get together, and petition some competent court to restrain the nearest Methodist congregation from calling itself Christian. I offer myself as a witness for the plaintiffs, and promise to come well heeled with evidence. At worst, such a suit would expose the fraudulence of the Methodist claim and redound greatly to the glory and prosperity of the true faith; at best, some judge more intelligent and less scary than the general might actually grant the injunction.

H. L. M.

# A HEX ON THE HOUSE

BY JOEL SAYRE

SURE, I can remember the Poet and Peasant when the jernt was a goldmine and on good nights they used to have four bartenders woikin'. Now they got one man behind the bar, and they're usin' wax dummies for customers. They's a hex on the house, sure enough. I even seen it put there.

It was the night of the Paulino-Schmelting fight a couple years ago. I rode a bus down to Times square from the Stadium, and the only place to set was beside Eddie Braddock. Now, you know and I know and we all know that Eddie Braddock is always pesting, and it's a guy's own fault for havin' anything to do with him. But I laid money on Paulino, and I was kinda punch-drunk myself that night. Anyways, when Eddie says how about a shot at the Poet and Peasant, I, like a sap, says okay.

When we got there they wasn't no customers in the jernt: just the two owners and the day bartender and the night bartender and the little bow-legged guy that looks after the free-lunch. They was all standin' at the end of the bar near the door. Every customer used to carry his own key in them days, and I let Eddie in and shut the door.

Both the owners is built like Hack Wilsson, the Cubs' center-fielder. Hymie Fradkin is something like the late Kid Dropper in the face, and he could look through the keyhole in a doll-house with both of them green eyes at oncet. I ain't no flyweight, myself, but one time when I tried on his

coat and buttoned it up to settle a bet, I felt shipwrecked.

He named the jernt the Poet and Peasant because "The Poet and Peasant" overature is his favorite number. He told me oncet he's got all the different phornograph records of it in existence out to his place: singin', orchester, pipe organ, marimba band, musical saws—the whole woiks. Every day he goes through all the raddio programmes in the papers to see if it's gonna be on the air: and if it is, he'd rather do six months in the louse-house than not catch it.

Gus Cherkas, the other owner, is dark in the face and he's got a little black fuzz left on the top of his knob, and he's got a long scar down his left cheek. I don't know how he got it. They tell me that when he was a waiter at Jack's in the old days he was anchor man on the flyin' wedge, and maybe that's how he come to get it, shovin' Harry Thaw or them Yale football players around. I dunno. Anyways, Gus is a pleasant enough mug, always gaggin' and clownin'. He's a Roumanian or some kinda guinzo.

Well, as I say, they was all standin' together at the end of the bar. Emil Kurtz, the night man, is behind the bar; Jack Quinn, the day man, has just finished his trick and he's got his hat and coat on; so has the little bow-legged free-lunch guy. Emil is stout and red in the face and one of the best bartenders I ever seen. The last time I hear tell of him was at Belle Liv-