

CUTTEN OF COLGATE

BY DEXTER HOYT TEED

THIS is the story of a college president who stood before crowds and shouted:

"Democracy . . . is the penalizing of giants and the rewarding of pee-wees!"

"If all men were created equal there would never be a winner in a foot-race."

"All jobs worth doing are one-man jobs."

"People not only have a distaste for governing themselves, but they like to have others govern them. Democracy is not the government of the future."

This man is a big man. He is a strong man. According to Mike Murphy, famous trainer, he has "the finest all-around physique that ever laid on a Yale rubbing table." He is a brilliant man, with a Phi Beta Kappa key and a long string of college degrees. He is a man who knows how to get things done; how to build solid masonry; and how to balance budgets. But he is a lonely man. He became so lonely in his later years that he took to collecting spoons, and —

wouldn't you know it? — became the most successful of all spoon collectors. Though he is the most successful president Colgate University has ever had, there probably won't be many sincere expressions of regret when he retires next August 31.

Even the dogs on the Colgate campus will be glad to see him go. Dogs never liked Dr. George Barton Cutten, because Dr. Cutten never liked dogs, especially those unlucky enough to wander into college buildings. The very sight of a wire-haired terrier's utilizing a Colgate fire plug or frolicking on the Colgate grass would cause the bristles to rise on Dr. Cutten's stocky neck. He would snarl, bellow, and go a-charging after the terrier with such ferocity that the dog would run, yelping, for the protection of his master.

It was in the fall of 1922 that Dr. Cutten strode into the Chenango Valley to bring Order to the tangled affairs of the little college at Hamilton, New York. He had been a Baptist preacher and president of

Acadia College in Nova Scotia. Bulging-chested, weighing 220 pounds, he was the descendant of lusty sea captains. He was known as a Strong Man, and since Colgate's affairs had suffered from too gentle a hand on the tiller, the announcement of his selection by James Colby Colgate, patron of the university and president of the board of trustees, was generally approved.

In his first speech to the students Dr. Cutten waved aside formalities and plunged into an address on "The Reconstruction of Democracy." He said, in effect, that the people were too stupid to govern themselves and, therefore, must be governed by their superiors. The speech was his text throughout his twenty-year reign at Colgate. Even if some of the accoutrements of democracy were evident, he has never allowed them to interfere. He has been an absolute ruler, regarding opposition as something to be overridden. His relationship to the faculty has been about the same as that of Hitler to the Reichstag.

Having written a book on the *Psychology of Alcoholism*, Dr. Cutten made it his second duty to warn his students about the evils of drink. He had heard of gay beer parties held on the campus while his predecessor was president, and some of his advisers had told him

about home brew and country speakeasies. He was stern and serious when he started to speak in Memorial Chapel. Eloquent, because he thoroughly believed in his subject, he used many incidents to prove the nefarious effects of alcohol. The students listened intently. But the climax caused a sensation.

"Any man who drinks a glass of beer is for all practical purposes a potential drunkard and should be dropped from the university," he said severely and dramatically — and sat down.

A moment of awkward silence ensued; then boos resounded through the chapel. These boos echoed through Cutten's twenty years at Colgate. One fall he welcomed the freshmen with a speech entitled "Meet a Prohibitionist." He said:

"Prohibition may not be the answer — I admit that. However, even the short trial of Prohibition proved it to be the best method of handling the problem. No piece of legislation ever had a more unfair trial."

As an executive Dr. Cutten was not long in "getting results." For years there had been annual deficits which had been systematically retired by contributions from members of the Colgate family. But Dr. Cutten moved to eliminate the

deficits. Over a period of years he succeeded in raising the tuition from \$90 to \$200 a semester. He cut budgets in every department. Complaints only made his eyes blaze behind his glasses.

He also showed his business acumen in handling the changing faculty. Whenever a well-paid faculty member retired or left, he usually replaced him with a young Ph.D. just out of college. Thus he was able to replace a \$5000-a-year veteran with a \$2000 beginner. The saving went to balance the budget. When instructors became so outstanding that they were sought by other institutions at higher salaries, he seldom met the higher figure. The university lost a number of prominent professors for this reason, and these were duly replaced by young instructors. At one time the average age of the faculty was said to be 33 years.

But Dr. Cutten built new buildings, saw the student body grow and pay more tuition, and balanced Colgate's budget during seventeen of his twenty years as king of Colgate.

II

At 68 today, Dr. Cutten has outdone Bernarr MacFadden as the exponent of the strong body. As a

football player at Yale, he was a Neolithic Age giant; a bruising, fighting center whose terrific charges flattened less husky men. In his reminiscent moods he has often referred to those days when men were men and no tactics were barred. He talks with relish of bloody combats in which every play began with clenched fists ready to slash at an opposing jaw.

He has never worn an overcoat, even in the coldest weather. Colgate men never forget the sight of him striding over the frosty campus, the thermometer registering 20 below, steam clouds of breath billowing from his deep chest, his shoulders back and his thick legs propelling him at a brisk pace. Physically, he has been and remains a Superman.

Dr. Cutten's slogan has been "more athletics, not less," and he has sincerely promoted all kinds of sports and physical education. His twenty-year goal of "athletics for all" was nearly reached last year when it was claimed that 90 per cent of all Colgate students participated in some form of athletics.

Dick Harlow, present Harvard coach, took over football coaching at Colgate the same year that Dr. Cutten became president. They soon became good friends. Before every game Harlow and the presi-

dent would kneel and pray for victory. Then Harlow would go to the dressing room, describe those moments of prayer, and tears would come into the eyes of the warriors. They would rush out onto the field, eager to tear the opponents apart. But on Mondays, if the team happened to lose, the language used by the emotional Harlow was in marked contrast to the humble attitude of prayer, although he used some of the same words.

When Andy Kerr, hard-bitten little Scot, came to Colgate as head coach and immediately began turning out great teams, Dr. Cutten was quick to capitalize on the publicity. He lauded football as the he-man's game. He said it was the typically American game and that it expressed his own dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest philosophy.

Once, however, the president let his hard-boiled attitude lead him into a remark which many Colgate men resented — although some sensed in it the man's awareness of his unpopularity. In the spring of 1925, Harry Roll, one of the best-liked men on the campus, was practicing sprints on the Whitnall Field track when he was struck by lightning. Carried to the home of Professor Harold O. Whitnall across the street, Roll lay motionless. Physicians were called, while Jack

Rourke, track coach, worked frantically to resuscitate Roll. But it was no use. He was dead. Naturally, Dr. Cutten was notified. He strode up just as an undertaker was moving the body. Rourke and Roll's closest pals were standing around with tears in their eyes. Dr. Cutten's first remark was almost an index to his life.

"This is one thing they can't blame me for," he said gruffly.

For ten years after he came to Colgate Dr. Cutten made critical speeches about democracy, the threat of leisure, rugged individualism, and, of course, prohibition, but not until the New Deal became a reality did his wrath reach its height. No one can recall his ever saying anything good about the New Deal.

Of social legislation, he said: "It is begging the unfit to become more unfit and encouraging the fit to stop the struggle and vegetate."

He admitted: "There are not enough big men to go around. The rugged individualist must tread the wine press alone. It is a lonely life but it is comparatively easy for him to keep in step. His journey may lead him to Calvary, but in so doing it leads to immortality in the history of the race." The retired Dean William H. Crawshaw picked him up on that statement.

"There are all kinds of rugged individualists," he replied. "Al Capone is one of the best examples." But Dr. Cutten turned to the Scriptures for further inspiration: "Lord, give us more hard times," he pleaded. "Man has always had to be kicked upstairs." He referred to social parasitism as "that dread disease threatening to destroy the life of the nation," and he said "the attempt is being made to make parasites out of the whole nation."

When Roosevelt was elected the second time, the full fury of his anger flared forth. "In the last election the true artist came forth," he insisted. "This was the man who bribed the people with their own money. Compared with this, the stealing of candy from a baby was a dangerous and arduous adventure, for we were not only bribed with our own money but liked it. The psychologist who opined that the average mentality of the people was nearly up to the twelve-year-level was a poor judge of distance."

Dr. Cutten railed at dictatorship. He feared that Roosevelt wanted to be a dictator. "A dictatorship is not an accomplishment, it is a disease," he said. "The symptoms of it are felonious fingers and personified italics.

"America's freedom is in jeopardy today," he added, "but the threat comes not from abroad but from the arrogant dictatorship of the New Deal. All over the world might has triumphed. Kindness and love have become obsolete words. Peace pleas have attracted as little attention as *Robert's Rules of Order* at Macy's bargain counter."

Of security, he said: "There is only one basis of security for either the individual or the nation, and that is independence, self-reliance and determination to win on the part of the people." And of communism: "As an iridescent dream communism ranks high, but as a working society it has never reached Class B." He defined a communist as "a socialist without a sense of humor," and said that "communism is a fig leaf for dictatorship."

The one speech that attracted most attention concerned philanthropists and physicians.

"Modern medicine and modern philanthropy coupled with unlimited sympathy turned back the clock and set the race on the return journey," he said bluntly. "Philanthropists and doctors are doing everything in their power to preserve the unfit."

After this statement, the *Chris-*

tian Science Monitor called him a pagan and a devotee of German Kultur, but he was widely applauded in many publications.

In his efforts to "build Colgate," Dr. Cutten was handicapped by his stern Puritan outlook. Whenever he was in a group of successful businessmen who might contribute millions to his school, the question of a cocktail would invariably come up. When it did he snorted a "No!" which hardly contributed to good fellowship.

The most celebrated instance of this kind happened in a New York hotel when Dorothy Thompson, who had been invited to speak at a Colgate banquet, was asked if she would like a Martini. She was sitting with several trustees and their wives and Dr. Cutten. "No," Miss Thompson answered, and while Dr. Cutten was beaming approval, she added: "Make mine a double bourbon." Dr. Cutten glared at her. She hasn't spoken at a Colgate banquet since.

III

After his children grew up and moved away, Dr. Cutten and his wife were much alone in his large, rambling home on College Hill. Had he possessed any tendency to weakness or softness, he might have

been popular, for he was never lacking in humor and his wit was keen, though sharp. He liked a good story, even the type that begins "once there was a traveling salesman."

His loneliness was undoubtedly the reason why he developed the hobby of collecting silver spoons and other silver pieces. He became an authority and now can look at a piece and tell whether it was fashioned by Nicholas Roosevelt in 1739 or by Bartholomew Leroux in 1710. For years he has haunted obscure pawn shops and jewelry stores, searching for silver.

Once, notified that an obscure jeweler in Utica, New York, had some rare old pieces, he went to the man's shop. In the meantime, a friend in Hamilton, knowing he was to visit the store, decided to play a prank. He called the jeweler and told him that if a man named Cutten came in the shop there was only one way to treat him. "Offer him a big drink at once," he told the jeweler. When Dr. Cutten entered and introduced himself, the jeweler rushed to the back room and returned with a tumbler half full of whiskey. The president's face flushed, and he pushed it away. But he didn't march out of the store. Instead, he remained to punish the jeweler. He later told

friends that he drove the hardest bargains of his life, and bought ancient spoons for a fraction of what they were worth as antiques.

His relations with the people of Hamilton have been largely casual, though with the Baptists at the prim, New England-type church, he has been more human and friendly. Some of the Baptists have learned to like him in spite of his bluntness. His religion is of the old-time variety. There is little place in it for the weak, for, even if he pitied the less fortunate, which has never been proved, his mania for rugged individualism has made it impossible for him to express such a belief. He apparently has, however, a deep appreciation for religion, as one of his more pointed comments will indicate:

"Religion goes beyond science and philosophy, but it includes and does not contradict them."

As the years have passed there are some who believe that the lusty president has softened to some degree. This group is not large, though, for there are no signs of senility even if he is approaching seventy. It is true, however, that he has lost some of his battles, and the zest for conflict may not be as keen.

Behind him, when he leaves, will be a changed university, undoubt-

edly stronger than ever. In his twenty years he has restored Order, doubled the assets, built six new buildings, and greatly increased the university land holdings. In addition, he has installed "The Colgate Plan" for giving students more personal instruction and more freedom in selecting their courses of study. Educators agree that this is one of the most progressive steps taken in overhauling our college system. Certainly, Dr. Cutten has proved that the iron hand pays material dividends.

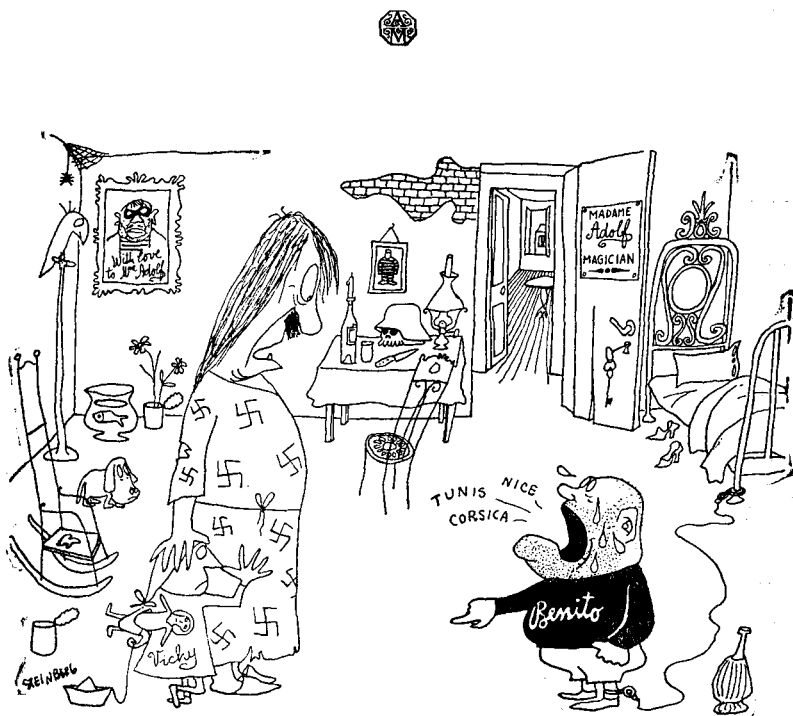
When he has gone there will be one evidence of humanness about him which will be remembered. Every day, in winter or summer, he has visited the little cemetery on College Hill which adjoins the first green of the golf course. Nothing stops him if he is in Hamilton. Pouring rain doesn't matter. He goes to the cemetery, drops to one knee and prays at the grave of his daughter, Margarita Joy, who died several years ago.

In his farewell speech, he will probably give his students advice such as this: "It doesn't matter what you study, so long as you hate it." Then, if he stays in character, he will observe that "a college president has no friends" and that "good men are usually discovered and announced to the

world by their enemies." For these are his expressed beliefs.

The late Dr. Walter Cramp, '00, once president of the alumni corporation, showed that he understood Dr. Cutten. One night, while sipping a drink in Colgate Inn, he remarked: "I wonder what Doc Cutten is doing at this moment?" This gave him an idea, and he went promptly to the Cutten

home to see for himself. When he returned, he said: "I found the president all alone in that big house. He was in a room on the second floor looking over some of his old spoons. As I saw the expression on his face with all its implications of terrible craving for human companionship, I felt sorry for the old boy for the first time in my life."



"Shut up, you brat, I have troubles enough without you!"

HE SWUNG AND HE MISSED

A Story

BY NELSON ALGREN

IT WAS Miss Donahue of Public School 24 who finally urged Rocco, in his fifteenth year, out of eighth grade and into the world. She had watched him fighting, at recess times, from his sixth year on. The kindergarten had had no recesses or it would have been from his fifth year. She had nurtured him personally through four trying semesters and so it was with something like enthusiasm that she wrote in his autograph book, the afternoon of graduation day, "Trusting that Rocco will make good."

Ultimately, Rocco did. In his own way. He stepped from the schoolroom into the ring back of the Happy Hour Bar in a catch-weight bout with an eight-dollar purse, winner take all. Rocco took it.

Uncle Mike Adler, local promoter, called the boy Young Rocco after that one and the name stuck. He fought through the middle-weights and into the light-heavies,

while his purses increased to as much as sixty dollars and expenses. In his nineteenth year he stopped growing, his purses stopped growing, and he married a girl called Lili.

He didn't win every one after that, somehow, and by the time he was twenty-two, he was losing as often as he won. He fought on. It was all he could do. He never took a dive; he never had a set-up or soft touch. He stayed away from whiskey; he never gambled; he went to bed early before every bout and he loved his wife. He fought in a hundred corners of the city, under a half-dozen managers, and he fought every man he was asked to, at any hour. He substituted, for better men, on as little as two hours' notice. He never ran out on a fight and he was never put down for a ten-count. He took beatings from the best in the business. But he never stayed down for ten.

He fought a comer from the