



CELEBRITIES

ROSE MACAULAY

Forum Table Talk

MANY celebrities were present. . . ." So we read, and doubtless we read the truth. There are, indeed, so many celebrities to each corner of this crowded planet that it is difficult to imagine any good-sized gathering without several of them present. They increase daily; there are more in the present century than in any of those that preceded it, more this year than last year, more this week than in the week before. Either more men and women than formerly achieve greatness, or more have greatness thrust upon them. No doubt it is the latter; and the credit is mainly due to the lively, kindly, and delightful press, that so generously stints not to give honor where honor is due. And due it is, surely, for one thing or another, to every human creature. The press creates celebrity, rightly blowing trumpets after mankind as it treads its daily path.

In fact, it is difficult to understand how the celebrities of old succeeded in being so numerous and so celebrated as they were without this means of publicity. On the whole, they did pretty well; but there is no doubt that a great deal of good potential celebrity must have perished in the bud. When our ancestors obtained centuries of runs at cricket, or defeated their foes in single combat, or held up mail coaches, or wrote little poems and tales, or painted little pictures, or made little tunes, their fame was, for the most part, local, scarcely penetrating beyond the next town or village. Only a few emerged by some fluke into the eyes of the larger world. When our ancestresses won love sets in

tennis tournaments, or swam across the seas that divide one country from another — as doubtless they frequently did — the applause that greeted them, though no doubt ardent, was straitly limited in scope.

But to-day it is not so. Any one of us, by performing these simple human actions, or by almost any other means, can attain at once a wide celebrity, can read our exploits blazoned abroad in large black letters, hear them murmured of in street cars and elevators, and mentioned loudly at nine P.M. across the ether. And if this is not celebrity, I do not know what is. Even young children can become celebrated; even dogs and cats, for "Cat's Grief For Dead Mistress" I read in my paper — "Animal Suicide" — and underneath is set the story of this unhappy and suicidal cat, its name and all the harrowing details given in full.



As to human beings, it would be a strange chance indeed if they should avoid fame, to which so many roads lead. They have but to attain the age of ninety-five or so and then utter some comment on the many generations beneath them, or to bear triplets (even one triplet suffices), or to set up house, like Diogenes, in a tub, or, like Simon Stylites, on the top of a pillar, or to depart from their homes for a few days without leaving an address, when they will find themselves celebrated throughout their native land under the title of "Missing Man," "Missing Woman," or, most celebrated of all, "Missing Girl." Of all the short cuts to fame, to be missing — even though not particularly missed — seems one of the least troublesome, and is more elegant and bland than taking a nose dive from the Brooklyn Bridge, or assaulting a policeman, or interrupting divine service in St. Paul's Cathedral. Though perhaps it is easiest of all to speak to an unIntroduced member of the opposite sex in Hyde Park or elsewhere, under the eye of a policeman, who may be trusted, sympathetic officer, to

discern annoyance in the demeanor of the addressed and hotly interfere to champion him or her.

Celebrity attained by these various means does not last forever. It burgeons like a flower of a day, or like the May fly, to make as brief an end; but while it lasts, it is the real thing, and should entitle you to inclusion "among those present." Or, if you prefer it, and do not mind spending rather more time, you can write a book of some kind — your diary, or an imaginary tale, or a little verse — and persuade some publisher to print and circulate it for you (for if you do not get it printed, your celebrity will remain as local as that of your remote ancestors who similarly functioned). This will not secure you such certain celebrity as the more fantastic and dashing actions described above, for fame through the printed word is something of a fluke, and does not come to all who wield the pen. No one has yet ascertained on what it depends, but it is generally agreed that it is not on the merits (if any) of what is written. So you have as good a chance as the next man. In this sphere, as in others, fame is not necessarily favorable; it may be an infamous notoriety. Even so, it should place you "among those present."

It is an ill wind that blows no one any fame. Most of the waves of this troublesome world toss someone to celebrity on their crests. War throws up its simple-hearted generals; peace its somewhat less simple politicians; revolution its Cromwells, its Lenins, and its Mussolinis; church crises their archbishops, bishops, Inskips and Joynson-Hickses; taxation its village Hampdens. Let none despair; if our chance does not come in one way, it will in another, and no one need perish without being possessed — if only for a brief period, and for what it is worth — of a name, even should it only visit him in the hour of his sudden demise under the wheels of traffic.

The question arises, what *is* a name? What is fame? To how many people must we be known by name before we are accounted celebrities? And to this there seems no precise answer. There is one glory of the school, another of the village, another of the town, another of one's native land, another of a continent, another of a hemisphere, another of the whole earth (such is the glory of Gene Tunney and his kind), and yet another that extends beyond the earth and embraces heaven and hell (such is the glory of Lucifer and of the saints). Yes, there are all degrees of celebrity, and it can only be by the most persistent and strenuous endeavor

that men and women shall escape one or another of them.

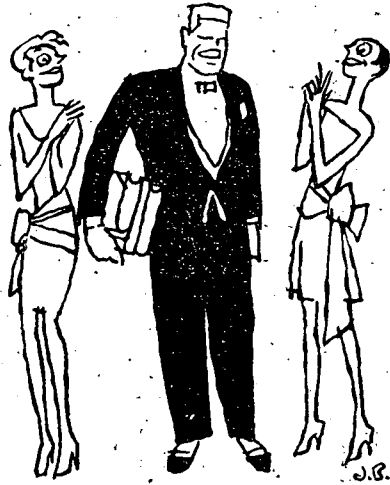
The ideal state of affairs will be when everyone in the world is celebrated, so that the among-those-present list after every gathering will demand a full page of the *Times*. When everybody's somebody, nobody's anybody — as the saying runs. And very nice too. I am all for everybody being somebody and nobody being anybody. It diminishes arrogance, envyings, discontents, and social snobberies, and gives us all a pleasant feeling of moving in that spotlight so dear to stage celebrities. We ought all to be celebrated; it should not be necessary to have recourse even to the simple actions indicated above to attain fame. We should not be compelled to plunge into some sea and make as if we swam across it, to charter an airplane and start to fly to other continents, to publish books, have a ninetieth birthday, play some game, or interrupt cathedral services with our cries, before we become news.

Celebrity should be, too, of a better brand. Common as it is, it is seldom very wide. Many, perhaps most, writers have, for instance, a little of it, but strictly within the small circle of those who read the kind of books they write; and they will find themselves unknown to the majority. The celebrity of actors and cinema stars extends further, but ceases where dramatic tastes and interests end. Sport and crime enjoy a wider and a brighter fame, but even this has its limits, and you will find those who misinterpret such a placard as "Wild Moor Fight," and others to whom the most skilled packer of corpses in trunks is no more than any pork packer in Chicago. All but the best and most royal celebrity is but a poor provincial affair after all. Steps should be taken to improve its quality and its scope, and I feel that the broadcasting authorities of the various nations should get busy and make us better known to one another.

On the other hand, whether being a celebrity is worth while, whether it is a pleasurable experience while it endures and so far as it goes, I cannot say. Possibly by some it is not noticed; others, perhaps, it merely annoys; others, again, toy happily with the sensation. Some there may be who wish that they possessed more of it than they do; others who would fain possess less. Perhaps it partly depends on its cause and nature. For my part, I regard it as rather chic *not* to be a celebrity, to be able to enter omnibuses, trains, restaurants, and theatres without attracting those little attentions which greet — one supposes — the well

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known. It is, surely, more genteel, more worthy of a gentleman or a lady, to be inconspicuous. All this notoriety seems to me a trifle blatant. To go down (as the phrase runs) to history, to become a byword with posterity — is not this a little obvious and crude? Better and more seemly to live in a delicate retirement, fragrant with the refined aroma of anonymity, far from the maddening crowd that bustles in the market place for fame, boxing and sporting and swimming and writing and acting and preaching and disappearing and robbing and slaying and speaking in parliament.



More elegant in females, more dignified in males, is a refined and aloof nonentity. This form of distinction, as celebrity casts its nets ever wider and wider, becomes increasingly distinguished. When nearly everybody is somebody, then the nobodies will have their day, and will move, esteemed and disdainful, sublimely anonymous, among the vulgar herd of somebodies.

“Who,” it will be asked in the words of the hymn, “are these like stars appearing in our midst?”

“These are they,” it will be answered, “who have disdained to set foot in the temple of fame, who have preferred to go their quiet ways about the earth, unchronicled and unsung. When they die, none but their friends and relatives are the wiser. When they leave their homes for a time, no one mentions it. When they lie seriously ill, it is not proclaimed over the air. When they write books, they place them quietly in their waste paper baskets for the laying of fires. When they have painted a picture, they admire it for awhile, then wipe it out so as to leave the canvas free for another. When they write letters to newspapers, they do not post them. When they turn ninety-five, they hold their peace. When they swim or fly, they do not inform the press. When they play games, they do it so indifferently that no one invites them to enlarge their sphere. They do not get run over in streets, neither do they run over others. They are not peers, the sons or daughters of peers, or typists; and consequently their engagements are not

idylls nor their marriages romances. When they commit crimes, they are not detected. They do not stand for parliament. And if they preach sermons, they preach about some episode of which they have read in the history of the Jews, or about Trinity Sunday, and are so dull that no one listens. They discover no new scientific fact, for they are too stupid; neither do they endeavor to hold communion with spirits, for they are not stupid enough. They are modest mediocrities, and go about their business in a genteel and sober privacy."

To be of them will ere long confer a cachet hard to come by, and not to be mentioned "among those present" will be esteemed as elegant a mark of consequence as it now is never to have had anything in print.

"Do you write?"

"Not a word."

"How chic of you!" This is what we say to-day. To-morrow it will be: "Is your name known to any beyond your acquaintances?"

"Not a person."

"How elegant and distinguished of you!"

So that even nonentity will become a kind of celebrity, and everybody will be somebody after all.



MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The Views of a Liberal Churchman

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

MY ideas about divorce are emphatic. They are not determined by anything the New Testament says, or does not say, on the subject. As a matter of fact, the New Testament evidence is woefully weak and conflicting. Furthermore, if the New Testament as such has any importance in the working out of this problem, why should we not heed St. Paul's injunction against marriage as well as Jesus's alleged injunction against divorce? The New Testament, as an inspired document, is supposed to be of a single piece and thus equally authoritative throughout. How, then, can we pick and choose our maxims of conduct or rules of social procedure? For myself, I would as little think of accepting the word of Jesus, or Paul, or any other New Testament teacher, as final upon this question of marriage and divorce, as I would think of accepting their word about demons, or the social status of women, or the institution of chattel slavery. The Nazarene and his contemporaries were men of their time; their opinions reflect the thought of their age and place, which in many cases was ignorant, superstitious, and thus hopelessly antiquated in the twentieth century.

In the same way, my ideas about divorce are not dictated by any tradition of the church, or any ruling of its ecclesiastical hierarchies. What the church says and does may or may not be of interest. In neither case is it final; and thus it is to be regarded by enlightened men with no more necessary respect than attaches to the policies of other ancient and time-weary institutions. The church, by its very nature, is unprogressive; it is out of date in a hundred and one particulars. I see no reason for accepting the church's teachings on divorce to-day, as I saw no reason for accepting its teachings on war in 1914. The church may be, and very likely is, wrong on any question of present-day importance and interest. Nothing can be rightly decided save by the free judgment of men in the light of the best knowledge, experience, and idealism of our time.

My ideas upon divorce have sprung primarily from my own experience through nearly twenty-five years of public ministry.