

maintain the demand for consumers' goods. But in a time like the present, it is clear that the deficiency lies in consumers' demand, not in producers' capacity. Accordingly, as regards a situation like this, it is the plain people who are right and the superior people who are wrong.

With how much nonchalance, and how little clear thinking, they are likely to dispose of such matters is perhaps best illustrated by a judgment that has been delivered by more than one person of high standing in the financial world. We got into the trouble, they say, by

lavish spending; now we must get out of it by strict economy. It is by no means clear that we *did* get into it in that way; but let that pass, and let us consider the matter on the assumption that this assertion is correct. There is a tremendous gap in the logic: if we grant that lavish expenditure got us into the hole, does it follow that strict economy is the way to get us out of it? If our car came crashing down the hill because we didn't use the brakes, does it follow that the way to get up the hill again is to put the brakes on tight? The case is not quite so simple as all that.

### ***Dirge for Civilization***

*Here is a man dying. He has been caged in stone,  
Paying starvation with a beggar's penny  
Too many years. A few more cannot matter.  
He was young once, and being young, a poet —  
Wondered about stars and questioned life and dreamed  
Of something that might be beautiful. Now  
Only his shadow remembers.*

*Better the beast  
That lusts hot-flanked and, velvet-footed, kills;  
Better the savage lazy in the forest  
Who earns no wage and laughs under the sun;  
Better the child naked; the woman whose mouth is red  
And whose breast will not be forgotten.*

*Here is a man dying. It is a long time since  
He has felt rage or pleasure or desire  
Burn in his veins. The flesh has lost its meaning,  
The tongue its taste. Nor does he remember  
When rivers and green hills slipped from his sight  
Into the shadow. The stalk of the red flower,  
Beauty, is broken, and he does not care.*

*Here is a man dying. All day he sits  
In a steel cage with others. He makes money.  
He is methodical, he markets flesh, and buries  
Under corruption in the name of law  
The corpse of love. In his steel cage he sits  
Fat with conformity — complacent, civilized.*

*Better the beast snarling; the sun-dark savage  
Building his jeu-jeu against evil spirits;  
The weeping child afraid of the dark; the woman  
Giving her body to a faithless lover.*

*Time laughs in his sleeve. There is no reason  
Why we should take the matter seriously. But  
Here is a stone cage with ribs of steel,  
— And here is a man dying.*

**—Ruth Lechlitrer**

# History's Greatest Dates

## Results of The Forum's Prize Contest

### Introduction by THE EDITOR

**I**N September, October, and November of last year THE FORUM published three articles in which Hendrik Willem van Loon, Will Durant, and H. G. Wells made their independent lists of the greatest dates in history. Thereupon THE FORUM inaugurated a prize contest to determine the most important events which these celebrated authors omitted or forgot to include in their choices, and offered cash prizes totaling five hundred dollars for the three best papers — the Editor to be the sole judge of the contest.

In due course two thousand and twenty papers were received. All were read and carefully considered, and after much deliberation the final award was made for the three papers which are published in this issue. It is hardly worth pointing out that the attempt to decide such a contest, in which many very excellent lists were submitted, was no easy task; the Editor will quarrel with no one who is disposed to pick flaws in the final summary of the world's important dates which has resulted from it. Some will think that the second-prize paper is better than the first, or that the third is better than the second, and only one thing is certain: a few contestants who failed to win will be convinced that their efforts surpassed all three.

The sixty-six dates, therefore, which are printed on the opposite page are not final and authoritative. They merely represent a compendium of the opinions of six intelligent people working independently of each other. The most conspicuous omission of Messrs. van Loon, Durant, and Wells was their total neglect of the nineteenth century; this the prize winners have corrected by inserting nine events of that period.

Even a casual examination of the complete list will reveal obvious faults of one kind or another, which was naturally to be expected in such a work of composite authorship. For example, seven dates (622, 632, 732, 1095, 1453, 1571, 1683) reveal a preoccupation with Mohammedanism and its threat to European civilization. Important as this undoubtedly was, the perspective of history is distorted by devoting almost one-tenth of the whole list to this single movement.

Again, politics and wars seem to come in for far more than their proper share of glory, with thirty-four dates, or more than half the total. This reflects, one is compelled to believe, the most common defect in all our thinking about history; for, until very recently, the subject has been taught in our schools and colleges solely in terms of dynasties, battles,

political campaigns, and personalities. To review the past in this way is to deprive it of its most significant lessons for the present and future: it makes of history just a pretty pageant of puppet players, and at the same time conceals the secret wires by which the puppets are moved.

On the other hand, the list has equally obvious points of merit. It does justice to the great historic religions. Science and invention receive a fair share of their deserved importance. Such dates as 1620, 1860, and 1867 recognize the large part which pure ideas play in shaping our destinies. And finally, by including 1903, the list does not ignore, as many teachers of history do, the immense influence that economics and business have come to exercise over our lives. In view of the present dominance of business over all our other interests, it is surprising that other happenings of recent economic and financial history were not included. One is almost tempted to add "1928 — The Election of Herbert Hoover" as a final date to mark the complete ascendancy of business over politics; but it is still too early to know the full significance of the event. Shall we say that it indicates the beginning of an era? Or does it foreshadow the failure of an experiment?

## FIRST PRIZE — \$250

### Won by T. P. BROCKWAY

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**1. 264 B.C. — Asoka Begins His Reign as Emperor of India.** It was Asoka's patronage of Buddhism which ultimately made this religion of self-abnegation dominant in the East. The tendency to passivity in the Orient, a cardinal fact in human history, can be ascribed to no single cause; but Buddhism and its Nirvana stereotyped the tendency in India and, later, in China

and Japan. Until Asoka's time, Buddhism was the religion of a relatively obscure sect in northern India. Asoka made it coextensive with his vast domains and invested it with strength for the subsequent conquest of all Asia.

**2. 330 A.D. — Constantine Shifts the Seat of Empire from Rome to Byzantium.** Constantine's attempt to conjugate Europe and Asia was a momentous

failure. It underscored old antagonisms and guaranteed permanent bifurcation. The new capital, Constantinople, went its own way and took Eastern Europe with it. It turned the barbarians westward to populate Europe and to give the Western empire its *coup de grâce*. Expiring, the Western empire found an eager heir in the Roman Catholic Church. The history of the Middle Ages is largely the story of the papacy defending its legacy of imperial prerogatives.

**3. 382 — The Ecclesiastical Council at Rome Adopts the New Testament Canon of Athanasius.** This year may be said to have ended the Holy Ghost's career as author of the Bible; from this moment the Bible began its authoritative rule over the West. The Roman Catholic