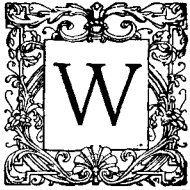


A Word for Hypocrisy

BY FLETA CAMPBELL SPRINGER



HO was it began it—this mania for telling the truth? Are there to be no more liars in the world, no more hypocrites? Nothing is left unadmitted, nothing remains unrevealed. Honest men are everywhere, bewildering Diogenes.

Gone are the dark days of our ignorance when we believed in such superstitions as the wisdom of our parents, the innocence of childhood, the respectability of marriage, and the compensations of love. Gone, too, that quaint era of credulity when we believed that Presidents were the people's choice, that newspapers printed actual happenings, and that great men were truly just and good. For to-day we know the truth about all things. We know that our parents are our inferiors, not through any fault of theirs, but because of the natural evolution of the intellect; marriage is the arch-enemy of the race, the destroyer of self-respect; children are only embryonic divers persons like ourselves, no better and no worse; and love the dulllest A B C of chemistry, Nature's foolish chicanery for the perpetuation of herself.

No man may plead ignorance of these things, and only in the confessionals do the good priests hear now and then some halting tale of faith in the old triune God, of superstitious belief in mankind, or of felicitous hours of love. For there are weak souls to whom all this revelation has brought only confusion and unrest.

It was not without its pain for all of us. The face of Truth is not easy to look upon. From that first terrible night when some fourteen-year-old cynic at the Sunday-school Christmas Tree snatched the false face and the long white beard off Santa Claus, and revealed to our shocked eyes the features

of old Jepson Flint who had never been known to give even an apple away, and who had sent word only the day before that he would foreclose the mortgage on our house that very week—from that night the truth has been disintegrating to our peace of mind. But on that night we learned our lesson, too. For our fourteen-year-old cynic gave us warning when he laughed first at our credulity, but we grew angry, argued, reiterated our faith and our belief, and so he was driven to tear off the mask. Now we spare ourselves that needless last extreme. To-day the laugh suffices; a lifted eyebrow kills our dearest saint.

Have I loved a picture, painted years ago, and do I voice my admiration to an artist of to-day? Silence, and a smile—and my picture is destroyed.

Have I believed in some philosophy, found it workable and good and adding to my happiness? The truth-teller smiles, and if I still persist he has then but to say, "Ah, yes, there *are* mediocre souls who have need of such philosophies." And they have us there, they know. They have touched our greatest fear. For, like Dunsany's Queen, we "have no more little fears; we have ONE—GREAT—FEAR!" The fear of mediocrity. The fear of commonplace. We are so afraid of being ordinary that it keeps us from being extraordinary; so afraid of being ridiculous that we dare not risk sublimity.

Have we applauded the good works of a public man? We shall be assured that we are dupes; that his good works screen personal iniquities; that he seeks aggrandizement at our expense. We do not ask for proofs, for every one, it seems, has known these things except ourselves.

We have only to speak in praise of an author to discover that his books are plagiarisms, or written by his wife. We have only to repeat a piece of news read

in the morning paper to hear, close behind us, a low, sardonic laugh. It is a journalist waiting to tell us that he made the whole thing up. He will go on, if we have time to listen, and tell us then the truth of what really did happen, and what really did happen is always so much more interesting than the story of his imagination that we wonder why he thought it necessary to invent a tale. If we ask him, he assures us that is what the paper pays him for. But these gentlemen of the amazing imaginations may soon turn their talents into other fields, for their employers also have been seized with the mania for truth. Already there are journals which avowedly print nothing else. And they are the most confusing publications in the world. We had become so accustomed to our comfortable formula of three parts politics, two parts imagination, and one part truth that the segregation took place quite automatically in our minds, and we had at least a fair idea of where we stood. But this new journalism finds us at a loss what formula to use; what, out of column after column of verified and unembellished truths, we shall believe. So many conflicting facts seem to be true of the same thing, and no one of them is exalted above another; all authenticated, all admitted, nothing barred. Yet upon one conclusion, and one only, they all seem to agree—that the truth about anything to-day is bad. No man to-day is worthy of our faith.

And so we turn, despairing, to the past. The past has proved itself; the past is safe. There at least were men in whom one could believe. We speak the names of Lincoln, Lafayette—A smile begins to dawn; the faint, destroying smile of the devotees of truth. "Lincoln? Lincoln the tyrant? Lincoln the blunderer?" "Lincoln the liberator," we answer, "Lincoln who freed the slaves." "Ah, so he did!" they cry, "as an afterthought, as an excuse for carrying on his war! It made an excellent slogan when he sadly needed one! Liberty! The immemorial slogan of tyrants since the world began!" We are silent, and they remember we have mentioned Lafayette. Is it possible that we do not know the truth about Lafayette! Where, they ask, are our histories? Have we

read nothing but the sentimental bosh written for boy scouts? Lafayette, the cast-off joke of France! O America, thou gullible! . . .

The name of Jeanne d'Arc comes unbidden to our lips; she before whose altar in a hundred churches candles burned unceasingly these last four years. "Jeanne d'Arc!" The smile is reminiscent now. Did we not read the book published last year or the year before, the exposé of the Jeanne d'Arc myth? "Exposé?" we ask. "What exposé?" The smile hints faintly now of tolerance, of regret. The legend of Jeanne d'Arc was—well, what such legends always are. A romantic political figurehead. "But she was burned! She suffered martyrdom!" So it was given out. It had a great effect. As great as if it had been true. The fact is that she was spirited away, and there is a record of her marriage afterward to a peasant named—the book will tell you the name—in an obscure French village, where she lived until she died, a simple old woman, at the age of seventy-five.

Again we do not tempt their proofs. We know they have them, ready to produce. We bow our heads. "Is no one sacred, then, in all the past but Christ?" And here they turn upon us a look of sharp reproach, a look which seems to reprimand us and to say: "This is a serious conversation. Please don't be absurd."

We say no more. The terrible light of truth sheds backward, revealing a barren hollow past. A past as dead as the present. Only the future now remains.

The future! Hope springs up again. The future promises much! We stand on the margin of a new age. The Great War fought through to victory—"Victory?" The ironic repetition echoes in our ears. They are here again, the zealous devotees of truth. Again the faint, destroying smile, the lifted brow. "Victory for what?" they ask. We do not flinch. "For democracy," we say. They have only to repeat the word, and we know they have their proofs. We know all that they would say. We decide upon admission as the better part of argument. "You are right," we say, "the war *has* failed to make the world safe for democracy. But have we not gained,

perhaps, a far greater thing than that—the proof that war can never make the world safe for anything? For if democracy had been made safe by war, then war had vindicated itself, had proved the Prussian ideal right. And forever afterward, when democracy found itself endangered, it would remember the remedy, and plunge the world into slaughter again. . . .”

“And so it will!” they interrupt. “For the governments proceed upon that very assumption—that the war *has* made the world safe. Your argument is right. We shall have wars following upon wars, forever!”

“But what,” we ask, “of the League to Enforce Peace?”

Laughter greets us, long-drawn, loud. And amid the reverberations we hear them repeating the paradoxical combination, “*Enforce and Peace! Enforce Peace! Enforce—Peace!*” And suddenly they stop laughing, and suddenly announce, “The Roman Empire seeks a world again!”

We stand still and think, and presently we see a light. “It is the commune, the sovereign City State, the Soviet, which shall save us in the end?”

They raise a heaven-forbidding hand. “Have we forgotten Florence, Athens, Rome—and all the tragic failures of the City State? Better a world war in each generation, and have done with it, than never-ending petty jealousies, tawdry internecine wars. Marietta goes to war with Zanesville! . . . Ah no, my friend, we must not deceive ourselves. We must face the truth. Commune or World State, it is the same!”

Anarchy, then, we perceive, is the only logic left. Anarchy, that dazzling facet of Truth, that unassailable philosophy, will come into its own at last! If all government has failed, then each man for himself. We put forward this solution; surely here they must agree.

Once more the faint, destroying smile. Do we not know that leaders would arise within a week, groups form, communities set themselves up, the stronger absorb the weak, form protectorates, states, nations? Anarchy is an impossible dream!

“What, then,” we ask, “is the way out?”

“There is none!” they say.

And that is their final truth.

There is no good in flinging up our hands and rushing up- and down-stairs crying out, “*O tempora! O mores!*” It will not save the day, and there is confusion enough as it is. The age moves forward, in spite of us, to its predestined goal. And we at least may stand, like people on a moving escalator, posed in an attitude of pleasant ease, one hand on the rail, preserving our cleverness and our agility against a graceful landing at the top.

Nor shall we be disturbed by all the futile effort going on about, nor by the equal futility of our own calm. For we have reached the ultimate; we believe in nothing, not even in ourselves. We admit the worst. We have done with all hypocrisies.

Yet—was this the end we sought when we gave ourselves to Truth? Where is our happiness? Where is life? Have we driven out love, faith, our heroes, and our gods—to gain nothing but this doctrine of futility? Have we, like Russian novelists, admitted so much that there is nothing left but suicide? Or have we made all the admissions, to find ourselves at the last neither so logical nor so courageous as they? For we still wish to live; we are not willing to die.

Can it be that we have made too many admissions, and that Truth, like any other mistress, is impatient of a slavish love? For if Truth has brought us to this, it would seem that we have need of our old enemy, Hypocrisy. Perhaps, in driving him out, we have driven out a friend. And if, before we flog him too far, we call him back to us, we may discover that he had with him many treasures that we had thought lost. He may restore to us ideals, love, our faith in one another, give us back our gods, revive our heroes, make us believe even in ourselves again.

You will tell me that I am not pleading for hypocrisy at all, but for something else for which I cannot find a name. No use. I am speaking of plain hypocrisy—old-fashioned, human hypocrisy. I mean by it what you mean, and stand by it to the end—the pretense that I am better than I am, and that I believe

you to be better than I know you to be.

If you tell me that you are dishonest, or immoral, and yet I see you going about in respectable company, I shall soon begin to envy you your immorality, your dishonesty. For it is not in us to be content with our own vice. Man always covets his neighbor's sin. That is why we were so dazzled by the Russian novelists. They admitted so many sins. They revealed to us how weak they were, how evil, and futile, and how insane; and then, because they were logical, they ended in suicide—mental, moral, physical—but suicide; and they submitted that as the truth about life. We were envious at once. "To be sure!" we cried. "We also are like that!" But the Russians shook their heads. "Ah no," they said; "seek your own vice. We are very bad indeed, but you are worse than we." "Impossible!" we cried, for they were the super-futiles, with whom we could never hope to compare. What, we asked ourselves, could be worse than the things they told? They ended in insanity. What could be more futile than that? And our interpreters, our challenged truth-tellers arose. We gave them a Pollyanna for their Homo Sapiens! Our Inanity for their Insanity. They were right. We *were* more tragic and more futile than they!

And only our hypocrisies have saved us from suicide.

Of what worth, then, are all our admissions, if they lead only to this? If Truth leads to Hypocrisy, perhaps Hypocrisy shall lead us to Truth.

Do we need to give up making admissions, even to ourselves? Do we need, perhaps, a little of that absurd old hypocritical pride which prompted us to say, "Remember, I'm a Roselle!" to ourselves now and then? There were scoundrelly Roselles, no doubt—but that was never what we meant by "a Roselle." After all, it was a kind of ideal we had built up, out of nothing perhaps but our hypocrisies, for the Roselles to live by—and an ideal, you will admit, is not a bad thing for any man.

It was precisely this our great American general did when he said to his men on the eve of battle last year in France, "Remember, you are Americans!" Did

he mean by that to remember that they were money-grubbers, blow-hards, and all the other things we have so long admitted as true; or did he mean all the best traditions of America—all of our great enduring hypocrisies we have built up about ourselves, that are so much truer and more potent than the sum of all our little individual truths?

For no amount of truth will ever conquer the desire for perfectibility in man, nor drive the hope of it out of his heart. That is why Truth can never kill all our heroes nor banish all our gods. That is why you may prove Lincoln anything you please, there is a Lincoln who will be enshrined forever in the hearts of men, more true than any Lincoln your truths can tell us of. And that is why, in spite of all your smiles, and your petty truths about Lafayette, our eyes filled with tears and our hearts thrilled to the words "Lafayette, we have come!" when the commander of our armies laid our wreath upon his tomb. That is why Christ, crucified, proved an imposter, proved never to have existed at all, still goes marching triumphantly on—the great realistic figure of history.

And even if Truth had succeeded in killing our heroes and our gods, the truth-tellers themselves would soon exalt new heroes, raise up other gods.

For look you—a sign of the times—the backsliders are among us; the old hypocrisies crop up. Already there are houses where I do not dare to speak against the Mechanistic God, or question the perfection of Trotzky and Lenin! And these are, strangely enough, the houses of that gay, roistering band, radicals, soap-boxers, malcontents, who, so early in the chill morning of Truth that we were still fast asleep, with a tremendous din and shout overturned our comfortable beds, and left us standing exposed and shivering in the cold. How well we remember it—how we cried out, "Where shall we go?" and they answered, "We don't care where you go, but you sha'n't lie there any longer!" "But we've nothing on!" we wailed. "Put something on, then, and find somewhere to go!" they shouted back, as they vanished round the corner. And when we had rubbed our eyes, and tried to cover one bare foot with the other

long enough, we snatched a blanket round us and followed the crowd, heard clamoring far down the street. "Here we are," we said; "what do you want with us?" They laughed. "We only wanted to get you up! If you don't like it, you may go back." But somehow the blood had begun to circulate, and we had lost the desire to go back—and we found ourselves presently overturning other people's beds. And so began the day. They were the first of the truth-tellers, that irresponsible, ruthless band. But the day draws on to afternoon, and they were awake before the dawn, and it is the penalty of first-risers that they must go first to bed. It is strange to find them believing in heroes at this late hour; strange to hear them speak praise of any man. Perhaps they are overtired; or perhaps they have learned wisdom, and have well earned their rest. Perhaps they have discovered that "for the art of living together" truth is not so much needed as faith.

Let us see how the wisdom applies; how it works itself out in the least matters as well as the great. We have seen a single bitter truth destroy a friendship when a word of kindly hypocrisy could have kept the faith of years. Truth has parted lovers, come between man and wife, destroyed the faith of a mother in her son.

And we have all of us memories of hours when the tide of family life has risen so high, when the undercurrents of strife and disillusionment were so strong beneath and turbulent, that suddenly, at an unforeseen moment, a word at the dinner-table perhaps, the tension broke, and the whole thing must out. And once begun, accusation follows upon accusation, rankling fact upon fact. "Thank God!" we cry, "at last we tell the truth!" Chaos has been let in, and we exhaust ourselves. Then, one by one, shamefaced, we slip away, each to our separate rooms, to give ourselves up to weariness and regret. We have said nothing that was not true; we have admitted every fact. Yet we are farther away from understanding than we were yesterday.

It is something very like this that the whole world has done to-day. We have stood it as long as we could, the war has

spoken the word, and now the truth must out. There has been no other way; so let us make our admissions and be quit of them. Let us admit that all these things we are saying about one another are true. We, the nations, have sought only selfish ends. It has been a war for conquest, for aggrandizement, for commercial supremacy. And there was not a man in the armies who did not know it well.

Why, then, did they go into battle with their hypocritical battle-cry? "For Liberty! For Humanity! For the Freedom of Mankind!" Why did the French not advance crying: "For our Lost Territory! For the Saar Valley! For an old Hatred, and Revenge?" Why did the English not go in shouting: "For the Crushing of our Rival! For our Commercial Supremacy?" And the Italians crying: "For Expansion of our Borders! For the Secret Treaty Promises?" And we, America, where was our slogan: "For our own Aggrandizement! For the Mastery of the World?" And the enemy, the Germans—why did they not hurl themselves upon us, screaming, "For the Devil and Ourselves?" Why did they advance by millions with "*Gott Mit Uns!*" on the buckles of their belts? Can it be that God *was* with them, for the working of *His* plan?

And shall we owe to these hypocrisies the saving of the world? See how, at the Peace Table, we are held to them; how we are bound, not by facts, but by our spoken word. See how all our little ugly truths together quail before this strange inspired Hypocrisy! . . .

Long ago the Crystal of Truth was tossed to earth by the gods. But when it fell we were not looking heavenward, being engaged with other matters of our own. And the Crystal fell among us, burst, shattered into fragments, millions of them, myriads, of all shapes and sizes, and some were bedded deep under the earth. And we, seizing upon these shining fragments, and seeing ourselves reflected therein, have cried out, each in our turn, "Lo, I have found Truth!" And not one of us has ever seen that Shining Crystal as a whole—except in dreams, which cause us now and then to cry out strangely in our sleep.

Success and Artie Cherry

BY ZONA GALE



ARTIE CHERRY'S home," they told one another. "Artie Cherry! Seen him?" He appeared on the village main street early that evening, and from the bank corner to the drug corner held a reception.

"Land! Artie Cherry," they said, "with his hat turned back like he had corn to sell."

No such hat had been shown in the village—fine straw, black-banded, its brim lightly lifted. He wore gray clothes, a color avoided by the village because "it spots." He wore a white waistcoat which the village called a boiled vest. And as for his soft shirt, silk—"I declare, don't it look like a lady's?"

So intimate is the secret knowledge of villages that the thought of every one now flew to Mis' Cherry, the widow, who sold the Household Brand of everything—cleaning-powder, cold cream, glue. Hers was a difficult way and lonely, though from the time that her son Artie went off to the city he had sent her little presents—a gilt clock, a pink fan, beads, a pickle-dish, all kept in the parlor and exhibited. How she would flush and sparkle over them, the small, gray widow, with asthma and one high shoulder, and stumpy hands which now trembled a bit. What would she be saying when, for the first time in fifteen years, Artie had come home?

"Mis' Cherry she'll be near beside of herself," the village said.

And because the secret knowledge of villages runs even deeper, the thought of many turned to Lulu Merrit, clerking "in at Ball's," the druggist. There had been "something" between Lulu and Artie; a few knew that Lulu had "mit-tened" him—the word still survives—because he refused a job in his cousin Hazleton's factory at the county-seat and went adventuring off to the city

instead. But Lulu had never looked at a man since, and if Artie Cherry had married, no one had ever heard of it from his mother.

"And, anyway," said every one, "he *couldn't* be married—not and dress like that."

Artie Cherry strolled up the main street that night, executing the sensation which he had so long projected, and glorying. Only he who has lived for fifteen years in a hall bedroom and dined at lunch-counters, only he who has spent his life upon the footstool of occasion, only he who, in short, has been the principal unknown figure in a great city of great persons and has returned to be abruptly the center of a little world, can know how Artie Cherry gloried.

Wooden Kiefer, grocer's assistant, brown, long, and curved, strode from a store and pumped at Artie's arm.

"Swipes!" cried Wooden. "Howrye? Good thing! What's your trade?"

For this Artie had been waiting. Others were listening. He answered, negligently:

"Me? Oh, I'm still with the Duckbury plant. Grand old concern—yeah, the bicycle folks."

There was a pause, which Artie may be said to have fostered.

"Makin'—makin' bicycles, are you?" asked Wooden.

"Oh, well," said Artie, "yes—you might say so. I'm in charge of the works."

"Good enough!" exploded Wooden. "Lord! Your age, too, boy! Good enough!"

"In charge of the Duckbury works." The word flew before him. There was no need for any to ask: "What's your business?" "In some commercial proposition, are you?" They all knew swiftly—Artie Cherry had charge of the Duckbury bicycle concern. Well!

Wooden followed Artie admiringly; and Artie, with a lordly air of the casual,