

spective attitudes on all issues to the people during presidential campaigns. The method suggested—and it is worthy of serious consideration—is the purchase by the Government of sufficient space in the two largest papers in each city—one morning and one evening—to give the national committee of each party one column each day in which to present its case. Were this chance afforded all political parties the campaign would probably not be so dull and the outlook so hopeless.

Getting a party started will always be a gigantic undertaking, especially for one depending entirely upon small individual contributions of thousands of scattered working people. The mere task of initial organization of the Farmer-Labor Party has been formidable, and it must be stated in absolute frankness that, regarding the effort in the light of immediate campaign necessities, the poorest kind of a start has been made. Whereas a Republican or Democratic campaign may be said to start two years before election, with a highly-g geared and well-organized machinery that can literally be set in motion by the pressing of a button, a large part of the Farmer-Labor Party task, starting as it did late in July, consisted of finding out just who was for and who against such a movement. With so hectic and inevitably so stormy an evolution, chaos was for a time almost unavoidable. There is not, for instance, even today, a well-recognizable national committee, and many States actually have no national committeemen. There has not been a meeting of even those national committeemen who do exist, since the Chicago convention. There is, however, a sub-committee, on strategy and operation, that has been designated to direct the party's effort in the present campaign. It might appear a bit ridiculous to say that the national committee of a political party has not had a meeting during a political campaign, but when you ask you will discover that the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee have also delegated their authority to small groups who are running things. The Farmer-Labor Party's directing committee is now formulating plans for last-minute action. Needless to say the lack of money and the lack of organization are bound to show in the result in November. For instance, just to get one circular containing the platform of the party and something about its candidates to the 30,000,000 voters of the country—obviously a more essential undertaking than for the established parties, the principles of which are known and which benefit moreover by columns of free newspaper publicity—would cost at least \$1,500,000. And one circular is nothing! This is rather exasperating to a group of men and women endeavoring to find sufficient funds merely to get the party ticket on the ballot in the various States. Indeed the greater part of the money and effort hitherto has been expended for that essential, yet elementary, purpose. For the present the Farmer-Labor Party strength depends upon what it believes to be the soundness of its doctrines, the increasing drift toward them by awakening groups, and the wide-spread disgust with the old parties' avoidance of vital issues to register an emphatic vote of protest, and to consider that vote a deposit in the bank of a new political structure. No one can foretell what the future will bring. Certain it is that there is an intense longing on the part of a majority of Americans, though they may differ among themselves in shades of progressiveness, liberalism, or, if you will, radicalism, for a new middle-of-the-road party, a party based on action, not piffle, on constructive effort rather than on

worn-out shibboleths. The Farmer-Labor Party offers this nucleus, perhaps, to be profoundly altered in the coming years, but at least raising a new beacon in the present bewildering twilight. No one for a moment expects Mr. Christensen to be elected. If he carries a single State it will be a triumph. But no one, be he ever so reactionary or blind to the trend of events, could peer, be it ever so slightly, beneath the surface and not hear the rumbling of the rising tide. Evolutionary, of course, radical, yes—radical as were George Washington and Patrick Henry in their time—and as American.

Self-Determining Haiti

IV. THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

By JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

THE first sight of Port-au-Prince is perhaps most startling to the experienced Latin-American traveler. Caribbean cities are of the Spanish-American type—buildings square and squat, built generally around a court, with residences and business houses scarcely interdistinguishable. Port-au-Prince is rather a city of the French or Italian Riviera. Across the bay of deepest blue the purple mountains of Gonave loom against the Western sky, rivaling the bay's azure depths. Back of the business section, spreading around the bay's great sweep and well into the plain beyond, rise the green hills with their white residences. The residential section spreads over the slopes and into the mountain tiers. High up are the homes of the well-to-do, beautiful villas set in green gardens relieved by the flaming crimson of the poinsettia. Despite the imposing mountains a man-made edifice dominates the scene. From the center of the city the great Gothic cathedral lifts its spires above the tranquil city. Well-paved and clean, the city prolongs the thrill of its first unfolding. Cosmopolitan yet quaint, with an old-world atmosphere yet a charm of its own, one gets throughout the feeling of continental European life. In the hotels and cafes the affairs of the world are heard discussed in several languages. The cuisine and service are not only excellent but inexpensive. At the Café Dereix, cool and scrupulously clean, dinner from *hors d'œuvres* to *glaces*, with wine, of course, recalling the famous antebellum hostelrys of New York and Paris, may be had for six gourdes [\$1.25].

A drive of two hours around Port-au-Prince, through the newer section of brick and concrete buildings, past the cathedral erected from 1903 to 1912, along the Champ de Mars where the new presidential palace stands, up into the *Peu de Choses* section where the hundreds of beautiful villas and grounds of the well-to-do are situated, permanently dispels any lingering question that the Haitians have been retrograding during the 116 years of their independence.

In the lower city, along the water's edge, around the market and in the Rue Républicaine, is the "local color." The long rows of wooden shanties, the curious little booths around the market, filled with jabbering venders and with scantily clad children, magnificent in body, running in and out, are no less picturesque and no more primitive, no humbler, yet cleaner, than similar quarters in Naples, in Lisbon, in Marseilles, and more justifiable than the great slums of civilization's centers—London and New York,

which are totally without aesthetic redemption. But it is only the modernists in history who are willing to look at the masses as factors in the life and development of the country, and in its history. For Haitian history, like history the world over, has for the last century been that of cultured and educated groups. To know Haitian life one must have the privilege of being received as a guest in the houses of these latter, and they live in beautiful houses. The majority have been educated in France; they are cultured, brilliant conversationally, and thoroughly enjoy their social life. The women dress well. Many are beautiful and all vivacious and chic. Cultivated people from any part of the world would feel at home in the best Haitian society. If our guest were to enter to the Cercle Bellevue, the leading club of Port-au-Prince, he would find the courteous, friendly atmosphere of a men's club; he would hear varying shades of opinion on public questions, and could scarcely fail to be impressed by the thorough knowledge of world affairs possessed by the intelligent Haitian. Nor would his encounters be only with people who have culture and *savoir vivre*; he would meet the Haitian intellectuals—poets, essayists, novelists, historians, critics. Take for example such a writer as Fernand Hibbert. An English authority says of him, "His essays are worthy of the pen of Anatole France or Pierre Loti." And there is Georges Sylvaïne, poet and essayist, conférencier at the Sorbonne, where his address was received with acclaim, author of books crowned by the French Academy, and an Officer of the Légion d'Honneur. Hibbert and Sylvaïne are only two among a dozen or more contemporary Haitian men of letters whose work may be measured by world standards. Two names that stand out preeminently in Haitian literature are Oswald Durand, the national poet, who died a few years ago, and Damocles Vieux. These people, educated, cultured, and intellectual, are not accidental and sporadic offshoots of the Haitian people; they *are* the Haitian people and they are a demonstration of its inherent potentialities.

However, Port-au-Prince is not all of Haiti. Other cities are smaller replicas, and fully as interesting are the people of the country districts. Perhaps the deepest impression on the observant visitor is made by the country women. Magnificent as they file along the country roads by scores and by hundreds on their way to the town markets, with white or colored turbaned heads, gold-looped-ringed ears, they stride along straight and lithe, almost haughtily, carrying themselves like so many Queens of Sheba. The Haitian country people are kind-hearted, hospitable, and polite, seldom stupid but rather, quick-witted and imaginative. Fond of music, with a profound sense of beauty and harmony, they live simply but wholesomely. Their cabins rarely consist of only one room, the humblest having two or three, with a little shed front and back, a front and rear entrance, and plenty of windows. An aesthetic touch is never lacking—a flowering hedge or an arbor with trained vines bearing gorgeous colored blossoms. There is no comparison between the neat plastered-wall, thatched-roof cabin of the Haitian peasant and the traditional log hut of the South or the shanty of the more wretched American suburbs. The most notable feature about the Haitian cabin is its invariable cleanliness. At daylight the country people are up and about, the women begin their sweeping till the earthen or pebble-paved floor of the cabin is clean as can be. Then the yards around the cabin are vigorously attacked. In fact, nowhere in the country districts of Haiti does one find the

filth and squalor which may be seen in any backwoods town in our own South. Cleanliness is a habit and a dirty Haitian is a rare exception. The garments even of the men who work on the wharves, mended and patched until little of the original cloth is visible, give evidence of periodical washing. The writer recalls a remark made by Mr. E. P. Pawley, an American, who conducts one of the largest business enterprises in Haiti. He said that the Haitians were an exceptionally clean people, that statistics showed that Haiti imported more soap per capita than any country in the world, and added, "They use it, too." Three of the largest soap manufactories in the United States maintain headquarters at Port-au-Prince.

The masses of the Haitian people are splendid material for the building of a nation. They are not lazy; on the contrary, they are industrious and thrifty. Some observers mistakenly confound primitive methods with indolence. Anyone who travels Haitian roads is struck by the hundreds and even thousands of women, boys, and girls filing along mile after mile with their farm and garden produce on their heads or loaded on the backs of animals. With modern facilities, they could market their produce much more efficiently and with far less effort. But lacking them they are willing to walk and carry. For a woman to walk five to ten miles with a great load of produce on her head which may barely realize her a dollar is doubtless primitive, and a wasteful expenditure of energy, but it is not a sign of laziness. Haiti's great handicap has been not that her masses are degraded or lazy or immoral. It is that they are ignorant, due not so much to mental limitations as to enforced illiteracy. There is a specific reason for this. Somehow the French language, in the French-American colonial settlements containing a Negro population, divided itself into two branches, French and Creole. This is true of Louisiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and also of Haiti. Creole is an Africanized French and must not be thought of as a mere dialect. The French-speaking person cannot understand Creole, excepting a few words, unless he learns it. Creole is a distinct tongue, a graphic and very expressive language. Many of its constructions follow closely the African idioms. For example, in forming the superlative of greatness, one says in Creole, "He is great among great men," and a merchant woman, following the native idiom, will say, "You do not wish anything beautiful if you do not buy this." The upper Haitian class, approximately 500,000, speak and know French, while the masses, probably more than 2,000,000 speak only Creole. Haitian Creole is grammatically constructed, but has not to any general extent been reduced to writing. Therefore, these masses have no means of receiving or communicating thoughts through the written word. They have no books to read. They cannot read the newspapers. The children of the masses study French for a few years in school, but it never becomes their every-day language. In order to abolish Haitian illiteracy, Creole must be made a printed as well as a spoken language. The failure to undertake this problem is the worst indictment against the Haitian Government.

This matter of language proves a handicap to Haiti in another manner. It isolates her from her sister republics. All of the Latin-American republics except Brazil speak Spanish and enjoy an intercourse with the outside world denied Haiti. Dramatic and musical companies from Spain, from Mexico and from the Argentine annually tour all of the Spanish-speaking republics. Haiti is deprived of all

such instruction and entertainment from the outside world because it is not profitable for French companies to visit the three or four French-speaking islands in the Western Hemisphere.

Much stress has been laid on the bloody history of Haiti and its numerous revolutions. Haitian history has been all too bloody, but so has that of every other country, and the bloodiness of the Haitian revolutions has of late been unduly magnified. A writer might visit our own country and clip from our daily press accounts of murders, robberies on the principal streets of our larger cities, strike violence, race riots, lynchings, and burnings at the stake of human beings, and write a book to prove that life is absolutely unsafe in the United States. The seriousness of the frequent Latin-American revolutions has been greatly over-emphasized. The writer has been in the midst of three of these revolutions and must confess that the treatment given them on our comic opera stage is very little farther removed from the truth than the treatment which is given in the daily newspapers. Not nearly so bloody as reported, their interference with people not in politics is almost negligible. Nor should it be forgotten that in almost every instance the revolution is due to the plotting of foreigners backed up by their Governments. No less an authority than Mr. John H. Allen, vice-president of the National City Bank of New York, writing on Haiti in the May number of *The Americas*, the National City Bank organ, who says, "It is no secret that the revolutions were financed by foreigners and were profitable speculations."

In this matter of change of government by revolution, Haiti must not be compared with the United States or with England; it must be compared with other Latin American republics. When it is compared with our next door neighbor, Mexico, it will be found that the Government of Haiti has been more stable and that the country has experienced less bloodshed and anarchy. And it must never be forgotten that throughout not an American or other foreigner has been killed, injured or, as far as can be ascertained, even molested. In Haiti's 116 years of independence, there have been twenty-five presidents and twenty-five different administrations. In Mexico, during its 99 years of independence, there have been forty-seven rulers and eighty-seven administrations. "Graft" has been plentiful, shocking at times, but who in America, where the Tammany machines and the municipal rings are notorious, will dare to point the finger of scorn at Haiti in this connection.

And this is the people whose "inferiority," whose "retrogression," whose "savagery," is advanced as a justification for intervention—for the ruthless slaughter of three thousand of its practically defenseless sons, with the death of a score of our own boys, for the utterly selfish exploitation of the country by American big finance, for the destruction of America's most precious heritage—her traditional fair play, her sense of justice, her aid to the oppressed. "Inferiority" always was the excuse of ruthless imperialism until the Germans invaded Belgium, when it became "military necessity." In the case of Haiti there is not the slightest vestige of any of the traditional justifications, unwarranted as these generally are, and no amount of misrepresentation in an era when propaganda and censorship have had their heyday, no amount of slander, even in a country deeply prejudiced where color is involved, will longer serve to obscure to the conscience of America the eternal shame of its last five years in Haiti. *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum!*

A Note on Comedy

By LOUIS CROCKER

THE pleasure that men take in comedy arises from their feeling of superiority to the persons involved in the comic action. The Athenian who laughed with Aristophanes over the predicament of the hungry gods, the contemporary New Yorker who laughs over a comedian blundering into the wrong bedroom, are stirred by an identical emotion. The difference in the intellectual character of the two inheres in the nature of the stimulus by which the emotion is in each case aroused. In the former the pleasure was conditioned in a high and arduous activity of the mind; in the latter it arises from a momentary and accidental superiority of situation. High and low comedy are dependent in all ages upon the temper of the auditor whose pleasurable emotion of superiority must be awakened. He who has brought a critical attitude of mind to bear upon the institutions and the ways of men will cooperate with the creative activity of a faculty which he himself possesses and has exercised; he to whom all criticism is alien can evidently find no causes for superiority within himself and must be flattered by the sight of physical mishaps and confusions which, for the moment, are not his own. Pure comedy, in brief, and that comedy of physical intrigue which is commonly called farce, cannot from the nature of things differ in the effect they strive to produce. But they must adapt their methods of attaining this common end to the character of the spectator whose emotions they desire to touch.

It follows that pure comedy is rare. Historically we find it flourishing in small, compact, and like-minded groups: the free citizens of Athens, the fashionables of Paris and London who applauded Molière and Congreve. But in all three instances the reign of pure comedy was brief, and in the latter two precarious and artificial at best. With the loss of Athenian freedom, intrigue took the place of social and moral criticism; no later poet dared, as Aristophanes had done in "The Acharnians," to deride warlikeless in the midst of war. In the New Comedy public affairs and moral criticism disappeared from the Attic stage. In Rome there was no audience for pure comedy. Its function was exercised by the satirists alone, precisely as a larger and nobler comic force lives in the satires of Dryden than in the plays of Congreve. Nor should it be forgotten that Molière himself derives from a tradition of farce which reaches, through its Italian origin, to Latin comedy and the New Comedy of Greece, and that the greater number of his own pieces depends for effectiveness on the accidents and complications of intrigue. When he rose above this subject matter and sought the true sources of comic power and appeal in "L'Ecole des Femmes" and "Tartuffe," he aroused among the uncritical a hatred which pursued him beyond the grave.

The modern theater, which must address itself primarily to that bulwark of things as they are, the contented middle classes, is, necessarily, a bleak enough place for the spirit of comedy. These audiences will scarcely experience a pleasurable feeling of superiority at the comic exposure of their favorite delusions. Hence Shaw is not popular on the stage; a strong comic talent, like Henri Lavedan's, begins by directing its arrows at those grosser vices which its audience also abhors and then sinks into melodrama; isolated exceptions, such as the success of Hauptmann's massive