

Why was this? It was simply because of conditions confronting those assigned to report and write the news.

Much of the criticism of labor unions against reporters and newspapers should, if we could put every chip where it belongs, be lodged against those who represent the labor unions and come in contact with the reporters. When a reporter goes to write news about a struggle in which representatives of big corporations and representatives of labor unions are pitted against each other, nine times out of ten the labor-union representatives are to blame when their side gets the worst of it in the news. The average representative of a labor union looks upon a reporter with suspicion and takes pains to let the reporter know it. He does nothing to build up a friendship with the "news hound," and often he assumes an attitude that makes it unpleasant for a reporter to be in his presence. Not so the representative of the corporations. He goes out of his way to make friends with the reporter. He makes the reporter believe he considers him both honest and fair; he cultivates a close friendship and often goes to great lengths to show the reporter that he is ready to perform the offices of a real friend. He confers favors upon the reporter that mean something to him, financially or otherwise. Or he makes the reporter glad to be in his company—makes him feel that they are equals, often makes him feel they are equals above the common herd.

Most reporters, being very human, naturally lean their likes toward those who do the most to make their paths smooth and easy and pleasant—and they, sometimes unconsciously, make their news stories lean toward such persons. The fault does not lie so much with the reporters, or the representatives of the corporations; it seems to me that it lies mostly with the representatives of the labor unions in that they are not smart enough to know how "to work" the reporters. But if, on the other hand, they were keen enough to know how to do this, it is most likely they would not for long remain representatives of the laboring men. They would be grabbed up and put to work representing the corporations.

On the whole, when I compare American journalism with other American institutions, I am not so sure there is anything so *very wrong* with the way it functions among the other mechanical contraptions of our civilization. There are evils connected with it; often they dominate it. But, all in all, I believe American journalism is on a higher plane than many other American institutions.

Certainly I am convinced it is on a higher plane than American politics, and that those who labor as newspaper men have higher ideals and more honor and a greater regard for the truth than those who labor in politics, local, State, or national. I am not sure but that our journalism is more free from the evils of propaganda than American churches. The average newspaper ranks higher in my estimation than the average college or university.

The only way I know to improve American journalism is to improve humanity. When readers will no longer allow their judgment to be warped, the newspapers will quit trying to propagandize them.

It is disheartening to have to admit that the masses show they prefer the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *American Magazine* to such high-class publications as the *American Mercury*, *The Nation*, the *Century*, the *Dial*, and the *New Republic*. It is discouraging to recount that the *Appeal to Reason* has gone out of existence while the

Kansas City *Star* grows fat in all its alleged iniquities. It is a blot on America that Frank Harris has been sent back to Europe improperly honored and unappreciated while Frank Crane becomes more popular and more prominent on every news-stand and bookshelf. There is no glory to the nation in the fact that Editor Harding was placed in the President's chair and Upton Sinclair on the blacklist of newspapers. But the people usually get what they want and what their intelligence entitles them to receive. And they get stung on a lot of things worse than they do on the newspapers they buy.

La Follette

By WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD

(From "The Lynching Bee and Other Poems," 1920)

In the Valley of Decision,
Down the Road of Things-that-are,
You gave to us a vision,
You appointed us a star,
And through Cities of Derision
We followed you from far.

On the Hills beyond To-morrow,
On the Road of Things-to-do,
With that strength of hand we borrow
As we borrow soul from you,
We know not sloth nor sorrow
And will build your vision true.

"The Big Noise"

By BLANCHE GOODMAN

ORIGINALLY, it was the name given him by his political opponents. But oddly, it had been seized upon by his admirers and used as a term of rough endearment, thus confounding his enemies and driving them to seek something less adaptable to the hail-fellow-well-met spirit.

He had been a leading figure in the town for so long, had identified himself with it in so many ways, that it seemed almost as though the place did not exist apart from him. The local newspapers adored him. His voice was heard on the Living Wage, Religious Education in the Public Schools, Pure Food Laws, Our Foreign Policy, Child Labor, and the Evils of the Boss System. Apparently, his motto was: "I care not who makes the laws of this town, so that I make its speeches." And make them he did. It was his boast that he was accessible at all hours to whatever delegation or individual might call upon him for his views. He delighted in referring to himself as "the man with the open house and the open mind." Now and then he hit upon a happy phrase that was repeated with relish by the press, and bandied about by his admirers for days thereafter. An enemy once growlingly commented: "He talks so much that he can't help but say something good *once* in a while."

He had a wife and children. The children had made homes or careers for themselves elsewhere. His wife, a little, tired-looking woman, gave her days over to domestic affairs. Her individuality was swallowed up in the blare of her husband's trumpeting, as the sound of a tuning-fork is eclipsed by the noise of a megaphone.

She formed no outside ties. First there were the children to look after. Then as they grew up, there was the Big Noise's career. It was Cocteau who said: "There is a house, a lamp, a plate of soup, a fire, wine, and pipes at the back of every important work of art." Cocteau might have added, "and guest rooms." Meals were constantly in either a state of preparation or consumption, and beds were kept in readiness for expected—and unexpected—visitors. The Big Noise paid tribute now and then to his wife's indefatigable labors, referring to her with elephantine jocularity as "my boss," and lauding her domestic abilities in flowery phrases. It made good copy. Sometimes when a camera was pointed at him as he stood on the lawn talking with a group of his constituents, he would hold up a forbidding hand and shout: "Wait a minute and I'll fetch mother!"

No one ever dreamed of asking her opinion on the living wage or woman's suffrage. And yet people who knew her before her marriage recalled her as a gay, vivacious girl, a girl not without a certain forcefulness of her own.

And now the Big Noise lay dead.

Through one of those fantastic tricks the gods sometimes devise for their playthings he had met his end. A reunion of war veterans was being held, and he, along with the governor and one or two other notables, rode in uniform at the head of the parade. He had paused a moment, a commanding figure upon the curvetting bay he bestrode, to adjust some part of the saddle. He did not notice a megaphone attached to the telegraph pole beside which he had reined in his horse. There was a sudden lull in the band music. As he bent forward, a raucous yell came through the horn! "What's the matter with the Big Noise? *He's all right!*" The horse gave a leap forward. Over went its rider to the paved street, striking his head upon the curbstone. Death was instantaneous.

The news would have to be broken gradually to his wife, they said. She was visiting a daughter in a nearby town. There was a new grandchild (it was only at such times that she left home) and this made things doubly hard. They wired her that he had been suddenly taken ill.

Some friends went down the road, half way, to meet her and prepare her as gently as possible. She made no outcry. She merely sat and looked at them with a slightly dazed air as if she did not understand them. They whispered pityingly behind her back to one another: "The shock has stupefied her, poor thing!"

And so she came home—to a home strangely, unaccustomedly still.

The porches, the hallway, and all the rooms on the lower floor were filled with people. But they sat awestricken, dumb, drawing back and bowing their heads respectfully as the widow of their dead leader passed up the stairway and into the room where he lay.

"She wishes to be alone with him," they whispered, and a few close friends, fearing the inevitable outburst of grief, waited upon the stairs with anxious faces.

She closed the door firmly behind her and walked to the bedside. They had swathed the back of his head in some dark stuff, so that the injury was in no way visible. His face unmarred by the fall, his body full and firm, he lay there, with lips slightly parted. One could almost have sworn that he breathed lightly.

She stood beside him, her face a mask. Time passed

and still she stood. Any moment, perhaps, he might rise, and looking at her firmly, his brow creasing, his dominant index-finger flung out in familiar gesture, he might call out in that orotund bass of his: "Americans! Shall we relinquish the ideals for which our forefathers . . . ?"

The midrib of a feather protruded from the pillow beneath his head. She drew it forth cautiously, glancing about like a frightened bird, and placed it upon his lips. It lay there quiet, its fronds unstirred . . .

A great roaring seemed suddenly to have ceased.

Timidly she looked about.

And slowly, gradually, as when the east is tinged with dawn, a strange, new smile crept into her face. For, out of that silence, scarcely discernible at first, then more and more insistent, came a soft, rustling chorus of little voices through her mind . . . a sound for so long swallowed up in that greater, all-engulfing one . . . the sound of her own thoughts. . . .

When they came into the room with obtrusive kindness to lead her away, they found her standing motionless beside the bed. "You must take some food," they told her. "You must keep up your strength."

Unprotesting, she permitted them to lead her out of the room, casting no look backward at the bed and the burden it held. Calmly she greeted the friends downstairs, then seated herself in a rocker, conversing with this one and that.

They waited in vain for that sudden, wild outburst. . . .

They said finally that the shock of grief had turned her mind. . . .

In the Driftway

HUNDREDS of thousands of soldiers are afoot in China, yet there is little real fighting. The Chinese, alone among the great peoples of the world, have never permitted themselves to be swept away by the current tides of war. Physical courage is not to them the supreme form of valor. They have not, like the Western peoples, a vast body of tradition which sets the martial above all other virtues, nor do they see any reason to kill people who differ from themselves. The peculiar flavor of Chinese poetry is in part due to this maturity of mind. "The glorious accident that an English scholar of Chinese in our own generation [Arthur Waley] is also an artist," as the *Manchester Guardian* puts it, has made it possible for us to catch something of the essence of this Chinese genius which has been closed to previous Western generations.

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JUDGED by our Western standards Po Chui's famous Old Man with the Broken Arm was a detestable coward. But for eleven hundred years this story of the old man with hair white as the new snow, who was glad that in his youth he had broken his arm with a stone rather than go to war, has been told and retold in China:

One limb destroyed—whole body safe!

But even now on winter nights when the wind and rain blow
From evening on till day's dawn I cannot sleep for pain.

Not sleeping for pain

Is a small thing to bear,

Compared with the joy of being alive when all the rest are
dead.

In what other country could a poet choose such a hero?