

# Forsythe

## Oracle in Spats

ONCE upon a time there was a publisher who, let us say, for want of a better name, was called Mr. Crockett. He was a dapper little man who wore spats and had in his time been addicted to pearl-gray gloves. Even now, after years of life in New York, it is plain that Mr. Crockett is a man who struggles bravely against a desire for checked suits.

However, one might delve deepest into Mr. Crockett's soul by looking at his trousers. As a general thing, there is a decorous but deceptive air about these trousers which misleads the uninitiated. What the trousers say, in effect, is: "Here is a man who is fighting and winning, but it is hard. In reality he has never recovered from peg-top pants. As a poor boy, he had outward scorn and inward envy for dudes. What he has always wanted was a tie which went under the name of cravat and a suit made by a sporting tailor. What he craves is a suit so loud and expensive that German bands will stop in awe and become mute upon his arrival. Hence these trousers—in good taste but with a hint of the heterodox in color; well shaped but with an everlasting longing to flare at the knee and become so sharp of crease that they will walk without human propulsion."

The analysis of Mr. Crockett's clothes has much to do with his personality, which is important when discussing a man who originally came out of some Midwestern state like Indiana and is now a publisher known on three continents. It is another interesting thing about Mr. Crockett that although he has received millions of cables, wireless messages, night letters, day press dispatches, straight telegrams, and Easter greetings, he has really never become accustomed to modern science and opens every telegram with the sinking feeling that it may be bad news about Uncle Ben or Aunt Bertha. In short, Mr. Crockett is a smalltown boy.

Although it has been twenty-five years since Mr. Crockett was a reporter, he maintains a private myth to the effect that he lives like a fireman, ready to slide down a pole at any moment to keep the presses running. If Mr. Crockett confined himself to the home grounds, this would be merely annoying, but in recent years he has come to fancy himself as an international authority. The effect upon his foreign correspondents has been malign because it is necessary for them to arrange interviews with whatever prime minister or dictator happens to be in power at the moment. The articles resulting from these visits invariably make an ass out of the correspondent covering that territory, for Mr. Crockett knows nothing whatever of the country he is

visiting, has read nothing more profound than the *World Almanac* for the past forty seasons, and feels that his Native Intelligence is bound to have kings bowing at his feet.

Moreover, there is little chance of halting Mr. Crockett at this late day, because he has the privilege of placing his articles on the first page of all his papers and nobody has the corresponding privilege of adding a line of refutation to them. Also, Mr. Crockett has learned about protocol and even if the correct attire for meeting a prime minister is striped trousers and morning coat, he manages somehow to give the impression that he is dressed for canoeing. In this way he satisfies a craving that has nearly undone him in the years since leaving Indiana.

In 1918, when Mr. Crockett signed the Armistice several days before the Armistice was signed, there were shortsighted observers who felt that his goose was cooked, but they reckoned not at all with Mr. Crockett's resilience and the fact that he had been mixing with the great and even fancying himself as an international force. It has been well established now that no man from Indiana who has once been an international force can ever go back to living in Indianapolis.

Recently Mr. Crockett has been abroad again and what he has to report will be accepted as gospel by many decent citizens who, unfortunately, do not know Mr. Crockett personally. It seems that Mr. Crockett has ceased being a mere authority and has now become a seer. With one week of study he is able to tell what every Italian, German, and Russian is thinking. If this happens to be what Mr. Crockett does not want them to think, this is merely proof that he knows more about them than they do themselves. There seems no doubt that Mr. Crockett is eventually going to take over the universe.

For instance, if Mr. Crockett is accepted as an oracle, it will obviously be necessary for the Soviet Union to close up shop. Mr. Crockett saw through the whole business in Russia at a glance and was not hesitant in reporting his findings. Russia is a failure, Communism is a failure, the army is no good, the navy is no good, the food is no good—and, worst of all, the clothes are drab. One has only to know Mr. Crockett to understand what this means to him. With the best intentions in the world, Mr. Crockett could not support a country where choice tweed suitings of pea-green dots shaded with stripes of yellow and vermilion were not common. It must be evident to the most dunder-headed psychologist that success could not possibly be found in a system where the people were not arrayed like the late O. O. McIntyre. After all, there are

certain marks which proclaim success. At one time it was a brown derby and a diamond stickpin; at another it was high buttoned shoes and padded shoulders; at another it was the double-breasted sack suit with a black Homburg hat. In any era Mr. Crockett was not merely in style but he was striking out upon those haberdashing adventures which were to give him perpetually the air of a great man who just missed being a jockey.

If you think our analysis of Mr. Crockett is far-fetched, you need only recall that Carlyle wrote *Sartor Resartus* to prove that clothes not only make the man but alter the contour of the world. With a gift for prophecy which has never been properly regarded, Carlyle could only have had Mr. Crockett in mind when he penned his immortal words. History will have a curious story to report on what elegance did to a simple mind from Indiana and what effect that had upon the universe. These are difficult times and Mr. Crockett is doing his duty in commenting upon world affairs even if his knowledge of world affairs is marred by the fact that he failed to finish the only book he ever read on the subject. Mr. Crockett simply does not need book learning. He is a man who can see, and after he sees he can transcribe his views to paper in a way to make small domestic animals cry out in agony. Anyone who takes lightly the words of Arthur E. Crockett as they appear at intervals in the Crockett-Rockett press has only himself to blame if he lacks a complete sartorial interpretation of mankind.

It is a hopeful sign. Mr. Hearst speaks to his readers; Mr. Paul Block advertises his views in other papers; Mr. Frank Gannett uses the radio for his opinions; Mr. Crockett issues his edicts from a point high upon Mt. Ararat. All that is needed now for full freedom of the press is a line at the end of each article by Mr. Crockett, to wit: "Pay no attention; the guy is nuts."

ROBERT FORSYTHE.



"You scoundrel! You rogue! You knave! You varmint! You—you poltroon! You—you New Dealer!!"



## A N E D I T O R I A L A R T I C L E

## Mr. Howard Greases the Axis

Following the tory Gannett and the feudal Hearst, Roy Howard does his bit for a fascist America.

THE saying is that nothing broadens like travel. But the series of articles by Mr. Roy Howard, syndicated through his own Scripps-Howard papers last week, evoke nothing more than a broad vowel sound, like "ah" as in the word "blah." Presumably, Mr. Howard spent five weeks touring the major capitals of Europe chatting with "premiers, foreign ministers, military attaches, economists, journalists, and the ubiquitous man in the street." Breathlessly, he returned to Paris, just in time to hear Mussolini break the Sabbath with demands upon France for Tunisia, the Djibouti railroad, and rights on the Suez Canal. In fact, Howard's cables, datelined from Paris, began to appear the following day. They sound like where Il Duce left off.

As factual reporting, Mr. Howard's "uncensored" cables are full of incoherent and shabby falsehoods. Were he not the president and publisher of his own newspapers, such dispatches would not pass the desk of any self-respecting copy man. But appearing at a moment when Mussolini's demands upon France seemed to take the spotlight from Hitler's designs upon Poland, Mr. Howard's series has the easily recognizable purpose of exonerating fascist aggression of the past while justifying future aggression in advance.

"The weekend has sufficed," Mr. Howard declared last Monday, "to begin the vindication which history seems likely to accord Mr. Chamberlain for the 'Munich blunder.'" But the words Munich blunder are in quotes. They are Howard's quotes, for he does not believe that Munich was a blunder at all. In fact, he insists that "there is much truth in Hitler's charge that Franco-British willingness to scrap the trouble-breeding [Versailles] document came twenty years too late..."

Condoning aggression of the past, therefore, he prepares his readers for the appeasement policy of the future, with the plea that "the status of Danzig, which is overwhelmingly German, is not sound..." that, after all, "the Polish Corridor was not created by God, but by a none-too-omnipotent lot of war-bred politicians."

Having thus yielded both Danzig and the Corridor without firing a single question mark, Mr. Howard maligns the strength of the Soviet military and air force. His two articles abound with the kind of falsification that might have shamed a man who once had the honor of interviewing Joseph Stalin. His comments on the Soviet domestic situation are not much more than reprints from the Hearst press. But it is important to see that his real intention in devoting space to the USSR lies in the effort to minimize the value of an alliance against fascism between the Soviet

Union and the capitalist democracies. With utmost nonchalance, he asserts that "most Russian planes are said to be copies, or slight modifications, of ships now outdated by more modern types of European fighters and bombers." Said to be, by whom? On what evidence?

But the cue for loud guffaws comes when Mr. Howard relates that Polish "reluctance" to stand out against Hitler was due to "suspicion of Soviet unreliability" . . . and finally, that "Russia is an exploded hope . . . washed up as a factor in any immediate alliance against fascism."

Alas for Roy!—only a day or two after his cable from Paris, or wherever else he may have been, the world saw clearly that Polish reluctance arose from suspicion, not of the Soviets, but rather of England. As for the "exploded hope," we must quote Pertinax, who, while no particular friend of the Soviets, cabled the New York Times on April 1 that "the major task of the British government is to win Russia's cooperation, since without it, neither Poland nor Rumania can reasonably be expected to be strong enough . . . to withstand the onslaught of Germany and her allies." Clearly, Russia must be more than an exploded hope. If anyone is washed

up, we suspect that it must be Mr. Howard.

Indeed, why does the president and publisher of a famous newspaper chain preempt the job of his paid correspondents to indulge in balderdash that is rivaled only by the editorial pages of his own paper?

Why does he make an outrageous statement like this, in his sixth article: "The chances of rebirth and revival of Czechoslovakian democracy on a sounder foundation are better today than they would have been had the French and British last September challenged the Berlin-Rome axis . . .?"

Obviously, to grind the ax of the axis powers, which is the same as saying, to plead the cause for American isolation. He gives it all away in a little paragraph, as follows: "American foreign policy that ignores the actualities of the situation may develop consequences as ill-advised as the attempt to make the world safe for democracy."

Get the point? The actualities, Mr. Howard would have us believe, are: (1) that we must knuckle under to the fascist dictators; and (2) that American action to head off fascism must necessarily be as ill-advised as a previous effort to make the world safe for democracy.

All this has been heard before. Mr. Howard's repetition betrays the anxiety that the American people will have none of it. Not even when a lord of the press becomes a pimp for the axis, or, the way people are putting it these days, the Fuhrer's procurer.



HOWARD HEADLINES. This is how the New York "World-Telegram" handled the Howard series. Although more misleading than the articles themselves, the heads do crystallize the sentiments of the articles.