

Angels to the Rescue

AFTER playing a hard game of chess and losing I often find myself repeating the crucial plays in imagination. And the wonderful thing about these imaginary games is that I am always triumphantly successful. Combinations which seemed impregnable melt away, the attack is neat and decisive. My part of the game is conducted with certainty, yet invariably when I have taken the trouble to set up the pieces in order to try out my victory, it has turned out that I had overlooked an important pawn that destroyed the whole scheme. The oversight has usually proved to be gross, and no one looking at the actual pieces on the board could have made it. But in imagination the error resisted detection. It was as if in the free play of the mind a *deus ex machina* was set upon removing the chief obstacle to victory.

The other night I attended a dinner where competent socialists were to discuss the future of the International. One of the speakers was Mr. Louis Boudin, generally regarded as the ablest Marxian scholar in America. Mr. Boudin has a reputation for hardheadedness, and his writings are full of scorn for those who deal in "ideologies" and pretty hopes. He had before him an audience of men and women who were a bit disheartened by the breakdown of their highest hope—the dream of a worldwide solidarity which would prevent war. They were looking for a renewal of faith that would rest on firm foundations. What did Mr. Boudin do? He denounced the nationalism of European workmen, he asserted that the "economic basis" of internationalism existed, he arraigned the leaders of socialism for disloyalty to the gospel, he called them politicians, and he ended by shouting that the real international must be based on real internationalism.

Judged by the applause, Mr. Boudin met the situation splendidly. Yet his evasion was obvious. The fact was that internationalism had failed in the test; that the leaders of socialism, professing it in their speeches, had failed to make it a reality; that after forty or fifty years of high talk the vision had broken down in less than a week. What everyone wished to know was why this had happened. Mr. Boudin said it was because the socialists weren't true internationalists, but that dictum merely opened up the much more crucial question of why they weren't true internationalists. They weren't, said Mr. Boudin, because they were politicians. The query what made them politicians he left unanswered. That pawn in the game he refused to use in his imaginary triumph, and having overlooked it he was able to say with much eloquence that the new inter-

nationalism must not be led by politicians. Where his analysis faltered he called upon fine sentiment to cover the difficulty, and the rustle of angels' wings could be heard in his peroration.

The President used the same method recently in laying the proposal for a continental army before Congress. The President knew, everyone who had studied the plan knew, that the real question was, can the continental army be recruited? That issue the President touched off by appealing to the patriotism of employers. When that sentiment is used for an appeal, analysis stops. The difficulty of releasing several hundred thousand men for military service is immense. It would require a great readjustment of economic life. But patriotism belongs to the angels, and where a problem is uncomfortable they can conceal it.

Public discussion is full of this amiable form of self-deception. Schemes are put forward every day which require an amount of virtue that exists only at the conclusion of orators' speeches. Difficulties are evaded by calling upon brotherly love, citizenship, patriotism, public spirit, and all the other glowing abstractions which mask an incompleting analysis. Realistic statesmen, men with imaginations that clinch reality, do not rely upon virtuosity in virtue. They do not cover a rocky path with a silk rug. That is why they are so often regarded as hard and cynical and lacking in imagination, whereas their imaginations are too honest for the trick of summoning the angels to win imaginary victories. But their reward is that occasionally they win a real victory.

It is a good sign that men are coming to suspect political writing pitched in too noble a key. We are unlearning our taste for those treatises which are set in spacious halls of white marble inhabited by dignified men in purple togas. These treatises cannot be read with any comfort in a Bronx flat. They make no allowances. They screw us up to a pitch of morality which would produce a fine political system, though the world as we know it would be unrecognizable. Such treatises are now being classed with fairy tales, with all those accounts of human life which shirk its chief difficulties.

Yet the love of them is inexhaustible. Essentially there is no difference between a world where men have eyes in the back of their heads, a world in which all chess games are victories and all employers are patriots and practitioners of the golden rule. They are easy worlds to imagine, and would be easier to live in than ours. We are all everlastingly busy constructing them, and their common quality

is that they assume in the premise the conclusion which is desired. Much pacifism, for example, consists in imagining a world in which the incentive to fight was reduced, and then telling how peace is preserved in such a world. Many a scheme relies for its success upon a state of unselfishness which if it existed would make the scheme unnecessary.

Whenever a man wins his victories by ignoring the chief piece of the opposition we call him a doctrinaire if he is dull, a visionary if he is exalted, a dreamer if he is charming, and a fool if he interferes. His retort is that the realists lack imagination, that they are so interested in earth they cannot look to heaven. As a result, idealists and realists begin to get on each other's nerves. But the real difference is in the capacity for appreciating the immense gap of blue inane which separates earth from heaven, and in the realist's unwillingness to assume that men have angels' wings. If we are to get into heaven, says the realist, we must climb in, and the lower rungs of the ladder must not be beyond the reach of the smallest.

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The Architect

IT is not so much that he is a member of the architectural profession as that he represents to us, in a sense, architecture itself. In his square head and body, in his broad scholarly face, is something architectonic. He does not suggest, it is true, those Gothic churches with which he and his disciples have strewn our land, and which stand uneasily like shamefaced strangers amid our alien corn. His own construction has a more pleasant solidity, a high good-humor of form, a confidence, both polished and bluff, in the eternal rightness of being mediaeval in this modern age. Or perhaps his appearance does suggest what he so emphatically is, the Gothic strained through the New Hampshire temperament. Something a little rocky and uncouth there is about his great cathedrals which grow into monstrous globes, bloating out their chapels one by one.

The democratic indifference to his Gothic does not in the least disturb him. "Beauty," he has repeatedly said, "is a manifestation of the Absolute," and the Absolute would scarcely be itself were it not derided of the people. Our architect has always lived on the high surfaces of thought. He has never asked himself whether the true secret of the Gothic might not be lost, whether mere imitation could ever bring that delicate balance of thrusts and proportion of varied design which suddenly sets the whole organism in a beautiful equilibrium as one enters a perfect interior like St. Ouen or Chartres. He does not care if our American streets jangle and jar us. Give him a Gothic church

on a corner and he is happy. I hate this Teutonic critical spirit, he would say. My churches look like Gothic, anyway, and besides, church-building is the noblest work of man. The function of art is the development of character, and perhaps one cannot develop one's moral sense if one is too subtly æsthetic.

It seems a little hard to connect the building of Chartres with the building of character, but it is easy when your artistic pedigree is by Rheims out of Boston. If you happen to be born in New Hampshire you can transmute almost anything into granite morality. Gothic cathedrals and Puritan correctness can be merged into a satisfying system of defence against democracy, industrialism, vocational training, and inductive science. Art for art's sake, and life for the glory of God merge perfectly. The one crime of education becomes the learning to make a living. And so our architect achieves an invigorating blindness which tilts at all the windmills that are grinding out the corn of the world. Young men are drawn after him in droves, fascinated by his masterly idealism. Europe is ransacked with gusto in order that a flamboyant tower may look down on the tawdry brick of Main street. Thus is the pure spirituality of the great Christian ages preserved in the midst of a blighting materialism. Character and art remain very much in the world, but as little as possible of the world.

The architect is the devoutest of Catholics, though strangely disloyal to the Vicar of God and the successor of St. Peter. He keeps all the festivals of the church, lights candles before the altars of the saints, writes with fervid eloquence of the beauty of ceremonial. Authority in church and state he worships, and wears black on the anniversary of the execution of St. Charles the First. Nothing thrills him like the early mass chanted in the dim light of dawn by a proper priest in a Gothic chasuble of splendid brocade wrought with holy figures and symbols in exquisite needlework, while the tall candles flicker before the reredos set with multitudinous saints and the labors of many artificers. He loves a Bishop who knows beauty and the significance of it, and grasps the full moment of tradition, memory and association. He loves to watch him enter in solemn procession, enveloped in a splendid cope, on his head the mitre of spiritual authority, in his hand the great carved crozier of his pastoral office, before him the professional crucifix with its flanking candles, the sweet incense, the solemn radiance. This is the wine of life, and to what nobler service could one consecrate one's self than to building Gothic chalices for such a wine?

Thus summing up in himself the richness of the great tradition, our architect speaks with full-blooded authority, almost, as I have said, as the