

## CORRESPONDENCE

## The New Humanity and the Near East

**S**IR: There is urgent opportunity for a practical display of international brotherhood in saving the lives of a few perishing little nations in the Near East and re-establishing them in the homes from which they have been helplessly driven. This work will take money, time, intelligence and self-sacrifice. The American Committee for Relief in the Near East (formerly Armenian-Syrian Relief) has the task in hand, and, being privately financed for running expenses, it is able to devote every dollar of public money, and the interest on every dollar, to the work of relief and reconstruction.

England has done much, and is still raising funds for the purpose, but it is to America, least injured of all combatant countries and most neutrals by the war, that these destitute millions—Armenians, Greeks and Persians—principally turn.

A large expedition is shortly to leave for Turkey to relieve those workers already on the field and to extend their work in Armenia. This expedition will consist of trained nurses, doctors, agriculturists, mechanics, sanitary engineers, teachers and other experts. They will take with them not only food and clothing for immediate relief, and large stores of medical supplies to fight the terrible ravages of disease and epidemic following on starvation, exposure and unnatural food, but also motor-lorries, ploughs, tools and other implements for the reestablishing of normal life in the districts devastated by massacre and deportation. This expedition, and the one that has already reached Persia and is making large plans for work there, need the support of the American public in their effort of humanity and reform.

The last state of the whole Near East will be better than the first if these bands of relief workers are able to pursue their reconstructive ideals to full realization.

It is not often given to men actually to save life. It is given to all of us today. Five dollars will save a life in the Near East. Sixty dollars will keep a destitute child for a year. Thirty million dollars will save every life, and help the rescued to recommence normal living.

While our brains and hearts are full of high thoughts and high resolve, dare we refuse this simple duty?

CHARLES V. VICKREY.

Secretary American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief.

1 Madison Avenue, New York City.

## The Outlook for Protection

**S**IR: The article in your issue of December 7th on the outlook for Protection is interesting and timely. There are some considerations, not mentioned by you, bearing on the probable success of the inevitable struggle for a high protective tariff in the near future which seem to me important. I do not see how any political party would dare go before the country on a programme calling for high duties on imported food products. The present high cost of living, not limited strictly by the war period, and especially the enormous amount of discussion this condition has occasioned, would doom such a programme to almost inevitable defeat.

On the other hand, the Republican party has always depended largely for its support upon the farmer, and the Republican party, of course, is the party of protection. The fact that the farmers, especially of the great Central West, have stood by the Republican party through thick and thin (possibly excepting the last Cleveland campaign) has enabled that party to retain its power during nearly the entire period since Lincoln's first election. Now how will these farmers view a party programme which proposes a high protective tariff on about everything which they buy and free trade on everything which they sell? I am aware, of course, that *practically* this is what they have for years been voting for through their support of the Republican party; that for years they have paid high protective duties on most of their purchases, while they have sold their beef, their pork and their wheat at a price fixed in the open market of the world. But this condition was to some extent camouflaged through nominal duties on the farmers' product duly expounded by skillful politicians. There were also other, and in some cases vital, political considerations strongly assisting to maintain the solidarity of the Republican party. These considerations are now ancient history. The party of protectionism is confronted with the clear issue—to propose to the farmer that now, when almost for the first time a protective tariff on his product is something more than a name, when it would mean a substantial increase in the price for which he could sell, he abandon his claim to such protection and at the same time submit to the imposition of high duties on the things which he buys; or else it must propose to the great consuming public that it submit to a higher cost of living by reason of the imposition of high duties on food products. I am waiting with much curiosity to see how the Republican leaders will meet this problem. No one can doubt their political shrewdness, but can they dodge this issue? Possibly until they have won one national election. Not longer.

ERNEST HITCHCOCK.

Pittsford, Vermont.

## A Medical Memorial

**S**IR: The bequest of the late Joseph R. De Lamar of probably \$10,000,000 to three universities for medical research suggests the idea of a very fitting memorial to the American soldiers who died not of wounds but of disease in this country and Europe. Everyone realizes that they gave their lives to save the world, but not all realize how many of these lives might have been saved by a more advanced medical and sanitary science than we yet have come to possess.

A government university for medical research and preventive medicine, endowed with \$100,000,000, would be the most suitable tribute possible to this group of the nation's dead. Rich men who have lost sons have commemorated them by endowing universities; why should not the nation do the same in honor of its noble youths on a much more splendid and effective scale? The nation has been niggardly toward science in the past and the people have suffered heavily. The war has shown how richly science rewards all expenditure for its development.

MORRISON I. SWIFT.

Boston, Massachusetts.

## After the Play

THE plot of *The Betrothal* cuts both ways like a pair of scissors, neatly severing the bit of cotton string that serves it for a supporting thesis. The gigantic iron figure of Destiny that rises through the floor in the first act declaring itself immutably, invincibly, indissolubly bent on directing the action of the play and everything else, including Tytyl's choice of a bride, dwindles in stature from scene to scene, dragging further and further behind events, to end in final ignominy as a babe in arms, still chanting his inevitable, invulnerable, indissoluble Gloria. In opposition to the moving blade of this solitary satiric mask the story of Tytyl's adventures, affirming the doctrine of heredity, cuts sharply back—and the meaning of the whole elaborate enunciation, or the layman's reason, he knows not which, is snipped solemnly somewhere in between. A mere landlubber in philosophy might affirm there is about as much difference between a schooner and a sloop as between destiny and heredity. It doesn't matter which you take; if the hull is sound you can go as far toward determinism in one as in the other. It is borne in upon the dispassionate observer that this man Maeterlinck must be more stupid than he has been supposed, or that he sails far, strange waters, where the ordinary measurements of time and space are discounted, and the knowing winds blow you according to the cut of your sails or the modernity of your vocabulary. . . . Though this new god has a self-filling fountain pen, and brushes his teeth with the latest advertised nature's own preservative, though his nails are professionally manicured, and he has had a shave, and wears in place of the olden peplum a suit of Scotch tweeds—who would not recognize these lineaments, at once suave and stern? Call him Heredity if you like, call Circumstance or Destiny; he went by plain Fate in Athens circa 600 B. C.

An experienced playwright, like an experienced cook, can make an appetizing and enjoyable concoction out of almost anything that comes to hand. There are so many tricks of the trade that save time and energy that the whole process resolves itself for the tired dramatist into a combination of flavors. It isn't always that he doesn't appreciate the value of flour. He may have come inopportunely to the bottom of his bin while there was still an excellent assortment of extracts on the pantry shelves. Then it is whip high the scrapings with fluffy pageantry and scenes that call for fairy ball-rooms and the milky-way, pour in several bottles of vanilla—there is no use saving it now; and the cake must taste of something. To our sorrow we know that there is sometimes a hogshhead of excellent white sugar left over in the corner, providing a depth of sticky frosting sufficient to drown the ordinary audience, already sleepy with the pungent poison of saccharine. In *The Blue Bird* a spider-web plot tangles and holds in some fashion desperately together huge frail glowing fragments of an imaginary universe; in *The Betrothal* the light integuments have parted, and dangle helplessly from wind-drifted scenes. The settings are beautiful. There is a fairy-like atmosphere that dazzles and intoxicates. But the dialogue seems a flimsy excuse for all this costly magnificence.

There is but one scene with a breath of dramatic possibility. When at the culmination of the action Tytyl, accompanied by the seven maidens who love him, in his dream approaches the hall of his ancestors to ask their decision as to whom he should marry, we find ourselves face to face with as many of them as can crowd on the stage. The felon in gyves, the palmer, the overdressed bourgeois, the land-

lord, the murderer, the drunkard, the squire, a background throng of motley garments and fashions, and at last the great savage, father of the race, appear to sit in judgment on the trembling virgins. The lonely descendent of the assembly is shocked and humiliated at the concrete presentiment of the race from which he sprang. So doubtless should we all be. There could be no more salutary lesson in the appraisal of humanity than such a congregation for each of us. The Westerner who boasted of seven generations of bastards in his strain was modest to a degree. The savage father of the race is obvious as a symbol, impossible as a reality. Prying back through the centuries we find our ancestry multiplying by geometrical progression into appalling billions before we pass five hundred years. It is more or less true that the bulk of the human race is inter-related, and one set of forefathers and almost any savage original would do for all of us. It is on this rock that the unstable pseudo-science of the theme goes definitely to pieces. We are told there is only one satisfactory mate for a man or woman. Suppose you never meet this individual? In such case do we not share so many attributes and desires, so many hopes and despairs, that the doctrine of hereditary affinities, applied logically, loses its definiteness, and emerges as the very general attraction of man for woman, woman for man? No amount of brilliance in scenery or treatment could save so mouldy a theoretical carcass as this from early interment. Maeterlinck may not take it seriously, but he maintains a very sedate manner throughout the discussion.

With the premise of so sustained an allegory it might have been prophesied that the action would collide occasionally with the unintentionally grotesque and burlesque. The Veiled Figure, which might have been pathetic under its disguise of half-remembrance in the dim background, makes itself painfully ludicrous in the light of day. Maeterlinck suspected that it would, and tried to carry the matter off by a puzzled, humorously insouciant attitude on the part of Tytyl, but with a very doubtful success. The blemish is more regrettable because the acting of Sylvia Field as Joy, emerged from her weedy pall and trembling under the wakening of love for Tytyl, is charming and convincing. And, for that matter, there is plenty of good acting throughout. Reginald Sheffield, at once naively boyish and manly, is a pleasant Tytyl. The miser is quite hideously overdone, but we must blame that on the author. The fairy, however, is heavy in her own right.

The play is a confection decidedly too sweet for adults, and with a center of hot brandy and maraschino that takes it out of the class of fairy tales for children. Alice in Wonderland has no more innocuous moral than that of *The Blue Bird*, that happiness remains at home. But *The Betrothal* is obscurely and inadequately Freudian. As sex education it is decidedly more unhealthy than an open exposition of the whole subject. It is allopathic medicine in a homeopathic bottle. It is sentimentalized strong drink.

The singing huckster who passes daily under the windows of our suburb seems to my fallible sense to be calling "Archimedes! Archimedes!" Yet an innate business acumen drives me to the conclusion that it must be some other syllables, more alluringly contemporaneous. Perhaps he is calling "Ripe Tomatoes." A fixation on the name of the over-enthusiastic ancient renders me dumb to the essential message. In a similar fashion *The Betrothal* may mean one thing to Maeterlinck and the majority of his audience, another to me. A fault of misinterpretation may be ascribed to my ears, or his enunciation, or the leaping echoes that build overtones upon his theme.

M. A.