

The liberalism which the President once possessed was never entirely understood by his followers, and they now comfort themselves with the assumption that, "the war having changed everything," it is no longer necessary to pay allegiance to his lofty notions, save insofar as such allegiance serves an obvious party purpose.

The strictly pragmatic view of things taken by the convention accounts for the fact that only one man who appeared on the platform made any impression of sincerity. That man, *mirabile dictu*, was W. J. Bryan. Bryan's oratory was suckled in a style as outworn as the others, but he was at least willing to throw away personal advantage, party advantage, to champion a cause which had no merit, even in his own eyes, save that of being right. When a country gets into a frame of mind where it smiles indulgently at such a man, it is in a bad way, and the convention smiled indulgently at Mr. Bryan, though it gave him the usual fervid demonstration—begun in irony and ended in hysteria, as these things often are. The tactics of the convention were simple, every possible evil thing was declared to be the fault of the Republican Congress. Every other evil thing was declared, with adjectives and adverbs, to be non-existent. If it was an evil for which the administration is obviously and directly responsible, it was declared to be (a) non-existent and (b) a great achievement, priceless valuable to the nation. It was in this frame of mind that the convention managed to endorse Mr. Burleson, (though it had to go back to the parcels post to find something creditable in the Department), to make a purely perfunctory declaration for free speech, to ignore domestic currency inflation as a cause of high living costs. After that the platform needed only to endorse Santa Claus and to deny the rumor that babies are not brought by storks, to be complete. The party made a great flourish over the fact that women had been made equal partners in this convention, but if that circumstance had any practical effect for good it was not discernible. One received an impression that the women delegates were of somewhat higher type and better intelligence than their confreres—not, indeed, a notably difficult achievement, but the women were too new at the business to halt the steam roller, even had they desired, and they gave no evidence of so desiring. They divided their votes among the candidates about as the men did, they voted down the really useful and interesting ideas in the minority report of the platform committee, in their own caucuses they split into liberal and conservative camps as did the men.

The National League of Women Voters presented to the convention a mild and harmless pro-

gram of welfare legislation, most of which was adopted, but there is no evidence that the woman vote forced it through. On the whole this convention by its acts confirmed the first impression one received from looking at the massed lump of delegates. It was conducted by essentially genial and kindly men rendered stupid by environment rather than congenital deficiency. They played in mechanical fashion an outworn political game, perhaps dimly realizing that the new day demands new rules, but unable to bring themselves to act in conformity with that conviction, believing—and who knows whether they are not right?—that the American people may be gulled yet once more by the old cries. It is a gloomy spectacle, no wonder that the outstanding figure at the convention was Irvin Cobb, a professional humorist. The public needs cheering at such a time. Possibly a decisive defeat at the polls next November may awaken the Democrats to the enormity of their error at San Francisco, but I doubt it. The party needs a new birth as completely as the Republican party does, and seems no more likely to get one.

BRUCE BLIVEN.

San Francisco, July 5th.

Walls Against Eden

Now Adam, dazzled, ill at ease,
Inspects the copper-colored skies;
Ringed with the roar of strange machineries,
He thinks of Paradise.

Yes, this is better. Here, at least,
Is speed and vigor, not the old
Languor of Eden and the lukewarm beast—
Here life is hot and cold!

Released for action, Adam is
God in these swift complexities;
He laughs and leaps from cliff to precipice,
Lurches through toppling seas.

New grain is always his to thresh,
Through him all energy is hurled;
He rides triumphant on the tides of flesh,
Pride of a gaping world.

Yet Adam, hero of all he sees,
Remains untamed, unreconciled
And, in the midst of swaggering victories,
Turns like a wayward child.

Hungers for all he spurned, and shrinks
From clamor and the applauding cries;
Lost in a storm of dreams, he sinks,
Remembering Paradise.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

On Being a Stockholder

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, that . . . the undersigned, Stockholder in the . . . Company, do hereby appoint James Smith, Henry Taylor, and Robert Robinson, true and lawful attorneys, to vote at the meeting of the stockholders of said Company, to be held at . . . on the . . . day of . . . , 1920.

WHY do we view these frequently arriving proxies with distaste? Partly, no doubt, because signing them means another detail in a world composed (metaphorically) of "this eternal buttoning and unbuttoning." And the truly virtuous dare not resort to the solution of the wastebasket, for the tiresome forms often come with return stamps which worry the conscience.

But the worry goes deeper than a matter of stamps. Forms with no reality behind them are the bane of honest living; what reality does this stream of proxies connote? . . . The average stockholder, having signed them, knows that in due time he will receive a paper slip, and that on the strength of such slips, he can send out similar slips in recognition of the fact that he has been supplied with food, fuel, and other conveniences. I love my slips; but why I should receive them, I have never discovered. However, I welcome them with gratitude, easily satisfied with consolatory reflections about "abstinence." I put out of my mind the haunting remark of Matthew Arnold, that if we search ourselves about property rights we shall find that we have no "rights," only duties. Yet every now and then, questions bother me. Let me cling to my conventional "rights" with the rest of the world,—but how about the "duties"? . . . I hear the grim voice of Carlyle, remarking that the situation without a duty has never yet been experienced. . . . Being a stockholder is an agreeable, but also a passive occupation. In these days of efficiency, we are much discouraged from passivity. How should one set about being an efficient stockholder?

The most immediate answer would seem to be given by these irritating proxies. For they mean that we have something to do besides receiving checks; they recognize our responsibility for the conduct of the business which yields the profits. Apparently, if I may trust pleas sometimes enclosed for return, if nobody signed, the enterprise would stop: the railroads wouldn't run, the wheels of industry would pause, . . . it might be worse than a strike! . . . Nominally and legally shareholders own a business and control it. But how nominal the theory is!

That is really why I hate to sign proxies. Because I am endorsing action about which I often know nothing at all. And I wonder if this is moral.

Certainly, however, I have no especial desire to

know anything. I should be quite incapable of running, say a jute-factory or an electric-power company. It is most kind of the directors (conveniently self-perpetuating), to take all that trouble off my hands and to send me those nice checks. There is ground for reasonable confidence that they make them as large as they can. I am sure they have my "interests" at heart; they are always telling me so.

Why then should proxies worry us? For the singular pronoun might as well be dropped at this point. Many people are getting worried today, especially people in the churches.

Intermittently, but more and more frequently the churches are instructing us that we must not rest till the intricate net-work of our lives is re-deemed to righteousness. Many decent folk agree with this idea and an obscure distress stirs in them when they realize how little they know concerning the sources of their income.

Edward Carpenter pointed out the difficulty years ago in England's Ideal.

The interest of his money comes to him he knows not whence; it is wrung from the labor of some one—he knows not whom. His capital is in the hands of railroad companies, and his dividends are gained in due season—but how? He dares not inquire. What have companies, what have directors and secretaries, to do with the question whether justice is done the workman? And when did a shareholder ever rise up and contend that dividends ought to be less and wages more?

Yet so long as we draw our dividends automatically, we assume the full responsibilities of knowledge. We become partisans: we endorse certain definite policies.

Those policies are, of course, likely to be the policies of those in possession. They will be on the side of our own advantage; and we therefore find ourselves in a position intolerable to any courteous or chivalric soul. For if there is one thing which we crave now-a-days it is to be sure that we are disinterested in our attitude toward fiercely debated issues. We can not endure the suspicion that we are dominated by a class-psychology. It is an insult if any one suspect us of being so dominated. To confess the suspicion justified would give the case away to the Adversary,—to the economic determinist. We might as well turn Marxian and be done with it.

Perplexity about the morals of dividend-drawing is one phase of the challenge flung to us by the social struggle. Little groups of stockholders gather here and there to discuss it; they shrink from feeling that the waters of wealth which flow their way may be streaked with dirt or blood. The proletariat may view with scorn these scruples of an apologetic bourgeoisie; nevertheless, they exist, they increase.