

a commission headed by President Charles D. B. King has recently come to the country to see if a more honorable adjustment can not be made. In the last analysis the situation means that Liberia does not desire to fall prey to the devouring English lion, but with bleeding Haiti before her she is forced to wonder what is the real policy of the United States toward small nations and black people.

At the same time, in addition to the political, loom the pressing social and economic problems of the country. Unfortunately Liberia started off with the rather leisurely and false ideals of life that obtained in the old South. Today the Republic has hardly made a beginning in industrial development. Important also is the matter of health; nor have things been made better by the recent food shortage. Disease is prevalent, as it is all along the West Coast. It is quite possible, however, that from one source or another the country will have a hospital very soon.

These are only some of the questions with which one comes face to face in Liberia at the present time. The work in the churches is flourishing. On the other hand there is not sufficient emphasis on popular education. As there are no public schools, almost all that is done for education is under the auspices of the missionary institutions, among which those of the Episcopalians and the Methodists have been most prominent. While the enterprise of the denominational institutions can not be doubted, the question may well be raised if, in so largely relieving the people of the burden of the education of their children, they are not unduly cultivating a spirit of dependence rather than of self-help. At the same time, if we consider all the schools of every sort, and the natives as well as the Americo-Liberians, and if we further suppose that every school could accommodate twice as many students as now attend, even then there would not be school facilities for one child in ten in the Republic.

Mention of the natives calls to mind a great social problem into which all others somehow seem to merge. In a territory not larger than our own state of Pennsylvania a population of American descent numbering strictly not more than 16,000 holds under its central government a native population of more than a score of tribes numbering nearly 2,000,000 souls. The latter range all the way from the Mandingo and the Vai, with a Mohammedan background and a tradition that emphasizes the Koran, to the wild and tattooed Buzi and the cannibalistic Mano. In the early years the American settlers had frequent wars with these people, and it was but natural that in more

recent years some feeling should survive. It is evident, however, that any large system of development or education will bring the native into greater prominence and that against this element the population of American descent will not finally be able to hold its own. The foremost Liberian leaders accordingly are more and more realizing that it is upon the tribesman that the real future of their country depends and that his education and care are accordingly matters of the highest national importance. When the governing class as a whole understands that its own future is wrapped up with that of the native, a new day will have dawned not only for this man but for the Americo-Liberian as well.

BENJAMIN BRAWLEY.

## The Gesture

THEY were ridiculously happy. Smiles trickled about her mouth irresponsibly, irrepressibly, while her voice gurgled and bubbled. The fire was hot and glowing, staining bits of the wall and making ruddy puddles among the silver paraphernalia of tea things. Their faces too, were dyed red and seemed unreal, part of the fantastic delightfulness of this hour. The windows framed bright blue plaques of evening and a vase of poinsettias looked like a wonderful bunch of scarlet octopuses. She luxuriated in every detail of her happiness, taking a disproportionate pleasure in a bunch of lilies of the valley that lay on her lap and seemed to throw a web of fragrance over the room.

It didn't matter what either of them said. Everything was equally important and equally irrelevant. Sometimes she would have a little break of wit and he would applaud as if it were a turn. For a moment they would play the game of not being intimate in order to plunge ecstatically back again. Then:

"I must be back at half past seven," he said.

That sobered her.

"Have you ever thought of the rubato of time," she asked. "That though a clock is a metronome, no two hours are ever the same length?"

"Yes," he said. "The shortest are eternal."

They talked of things so banal that they would have disgraced a debutante at a dinner party and of things of so great a magnitude that it seemed ridiculous to mention them at all. And underneath it all ran the strong, swift current of their intimacy.

"We might never have met," he said. "It was quite, quite an accident."

"Yes," she smiled. "You restored my confidence in turnings."

"In turnings?"

"When I was a child, I thought that round every corner something wonderful was waiting. And then for years the same sort of people seemed to recur like decimals, just a lot of different editions of the same thing. And then I met you."

"And I was prejudiced to the verge of rudeness. I hardly listened to what you said."

"Yes, and after making up your mind to hate me you had to climb back on to the fence and dangle your legs on the other side."

"But be fair. When I did come over to you, I capitulated entirely. I didn't keep one little defence in reserve. Whereas you, who have made a study of giving yourself away, always keep what you want to keep inviolate. You with your warm invulnerability!"

"Ah, how much I keep back from you!" she teased him and suddenly she caught sight of her watch.

Half past seven.

He saw her and asked how late it was. By the time they had got a taxi it was a quarter to eight. She was going in a diametrically opposite direction to his but she couldn't resist taking him part of the way—a very big part of the way—finally she dropped him like a hot potato, it was easier like that, and spurring on her taxi, she rushed to the other side of London.

She was calling for a very dear friend at his office and she was at least three-quarters of an hour late. Would he be hurt or offended, or both? Would she have to spend the whole evening soothing and smoothing his ruffled feelings till she ended, as she always did in those circumstances, by saying more than she had meant to, by fanning flames she wanted to keep low and then making desperate efforts to retrieve her indiscretion?

"I will have a nice evening," she thought as she saw herself see-sawing from one extreme to the other. And then she would have to make up her mind whether or not to lie about what had kept her—she who loathed lying. And if she didn't, she would be inflicting extra pain and opening up interminable vistas of questionings and justifications and extenuations—and—so it seemed to her—vulgarizations.

She drove up to the office and rang the bell. No answer. Could it be that he had lost patience and left? She rang again. So even he had come to the end of his patience with her. She thought she could see a light. Better telephone in case he hadn't heard. She crossed the road in search of a telephone and ran straight into him.

She rushed into a stream of blame and accusation.

"So you couldn't even wait for me?"

"My dear," he said, "this is divine of you. It is like you to have given me this lovely surprise."

Bewildered, she looked at him—surely this was rather crude irony?

"What surprise?"

"Why to have come so gloriously unexpectedly early. You sometimes hurt me and make me angry, but you always make up for it by some little gesture of tenderness, some un hoped for gift."

"What time is it?" she asked, dazed.

"Just half past seven."

"But, then it must have been half past six."

"What must have been half past six?"

"An hour ago," she answered inanely.

But he hardly listened.

"Thank you, my darling," he said, kissing her hand.

She smiled.

"I did have rather a rush," she said.

To her he is a thief. He has stolen an hour and a gesture.

ELIZABETH BIBESCO.

## Loss and Gain

### *A Reinforced Conversation*

THE lights were sparkling about the edges of the particular roof garden known as the Hurricane Deck, and beyond them the terraced buildings of the upper city traced a sky line like that of ancient Babylon. The jazz music ceased and the dancers returned to their tables, where the shaded candles cast red light on white cloths, and turned the glasses of water into—No, there is a subject which more than the weather betrays conversational poverty. Let us talk of the heat. But hold. Our renunciation is in vain. At the edge of the band stand there is a tall energetic figure, and a determined voice rises above the languid clicking and shuffling and humming. A drive is on. "Are you willing to give up without a protest the most sacred inheritance ever given to mankind?" Certainly not. Is it a Liberty Loan or the Red Cross? No, it is the Volstead Act that is in danger. In a moment, we are assured, ladies "who have seen service overseas" (oh, happy ambiguity!) will accost us for contributions to the sacred cause of human rights. Who will refuse the price of a single cocktail to make the world safe for light wines and beer?

The subject is forced upon us and we debate it more eagerly as the collectors draw nearer. We consider the reduction in the liquor bill of the nation—a great sum saved. Who gets it? The argument is spiked by a comparison of dinner checks which skilfully dissimulate the price of sev-