

Hiram Johnson At Large Again

SENATOR JOHNSON'S speech on the Colombian treaty was by far the most interesting of all made in the debate on that troubled child of diplomacy, whose fate was as hard and whose triumph finally was as sudden and complete as that of one of the late Oliver Optic's heroes. The Johnson speech was highly interesting at the moment, because it marked his escape from the prison builded of policies and political ambitions which he entered rebelliously on that day last June when Mr. Harding was nominated for President—the escape being emphasized, let it be noted, by the Senator's merciless pummeling soon thereafter of poor David H. Blair, of North Carolina, whom Mr. Harding chose for Commissioner of Internal Revenue, and by divers intimations of a general broadside against the Harding administration. It was more permanently interesting as a stimulus to speculation upon the play within the Republican party in the next two or three years.

Dwell first upon the pleasing human spectacle. It would have done your heart good to have beheld it, whether you always had been for the treaty, or always had been against it, or had about-faced, like Mr. Lodge. Not what Johnson said, but his joy in the saying. Bricks and bars do not a prison make comparable in black agony to that prison of a fervid, earnest-hating mind and tongue, the bricks of which are politics and the bars personal political ambition. And what a prison has been Johnson's since last June; and what a blessed chisel for escape was the Colombian treaty, and with what fierce, bursting elation did he wield that chisel.

Hear him shouting, as he works on and on to freedom: "We have demonstrated that we on this side believe that 'consistency is the vice of fools'"; and "you may sugar-coat this dose as you will"; and "if we have \$25,000,000 to squander in the first act that a Republican administration does"; and "for reasons that before he [Mr. Lodge] never understood or knew during the pendency of the controversy, he would pay this remarkable sum"; and "the position of our leaders was that there was neither equitable nor just nor moral claim upon us; vociferously this opinion was voiced to the world year after year"; and "if it was a blackmail demand for seventeen years, tell me, some of you gentlemen whose views have undergone a remarkable metamorphosis, tell me when the blackmail demand shed its awful outer garment, and became a rosy-hued request."

How he loved it! You see, Senator Johnson

wants to be President of the United States so intensely that it hurts. He cannot be a Democratic President, and he has had one experience with a new party which left a vivid impression on his quite practical mind, so he must be a Republican President. Now, to be a Republican President, one must be a very Republican Republican. Diluted Republicans are not eligible. Example: Roosevelt, in 1916; minor example: Johnson, in 1920. Therefore, having already against his record the sin of his Bull Moose days, the Senator last June must needs be very reliable and "go along."

Yet there was no nourishment for his vaulting ambition to be found within the prison walls of political conformity. Neither Johnson nor any other man of his stamp ever has been or ever will be given the Presidency by political leaders in reward for conformity, be it never so perfect. In his soul is an insatiable thirst for power and mastery. He cannot conceal it; it is evident to the casual acquaintance. And no such man is trusted by political leaders. When they agree to the nomination of such as he, good or bad, it is because agreement is definitely and markedly less dangerous than obstruction. So Johnson, on fire with longing for the Presidency, must break through his prison walls of political conformity, must make his appeal to the popular mind over the heads of the leaders, and necessarily must be in opposition to them, must be a rebel. But how to do it, without dilution of his Republicanism?

For months he sweat bile from every pore in silence. Toward the latter part of the campaign, he found some comfort in making speeches for Warren G. Harding that were one part commendation of Harding and nine parts denunciation of Elihu Root and the other intellectuals of the Republican party who had issued a manifesto to the country, that the way to get into the League of Nations was to vote for Harding. But those little pro-Harding and big anti-Root speeches could not bring Johnson freedom and peace and opportunity. When Congress met in December, he showed the effects of his imprisonment. There was a bit of pallor in his face; maybe a bit in his intellect.

He no longer made one think of a dynamic cherub. He became unwontedly lackadaisical. From his office to the Republican cloakroom, and from the Republican cloakroom to his office, he drifted, seemingly purposeless, seemingly melancholy. Between the entrance to the Senate and the door of the cloakroom he paused occasionally to glance over the Senate and to note the subject of debate, but it was the glance of one who treads some banquet hall deserted. It all was stripped and bare and dead for him. What mattered it

that Senators debated appropriation bills, packer regulation and emergency tariffs? They offered him no escape from the imprisonment of party reliability. Not even when his own especial intimates in the Senate danced to the footlights upon the question of inauguration expense did escape appear. He who had missed could not limit the festivities of the favorite of the gods.

Escape seemed far away—maybe months would intervene. The possibility—the probability as many believed—that lay in Mr. Harding's following the Root idea as to the League had faded. And then the swift whirl of the wheel. From the White House, even before the President had got his new eight-foot bed and had made himself otherwise comfortable, came the call for ratification of the Colombian treaty. Ah, sunlight on the hills, balm of Gilead, and all other metaphors of release and soothed happiness! In the first place, fist-shaking defiance based on solid conviction; in the second place, the company of the old insurgent-progressives; and in the precious and tremendous third place, defense of the memory of Roosevelt, and the corollary of appeal to the emotions of some millions of Rooseveltians. He went to it with the rush of a Niagara. Out in the open before the world as a rebel, but his Republicanism undiluted. Escape! Freedom! Opportunity!

Turn now from sympathetic contemplation of the released prisoner to the political potentialities that loom behind his escape. What may it mean—his foot-looseness in the Senate; his completion of the sentence given him last June in the prison builded of politics and political ambitions? Between the coasts is a natural Republican majority; in that body is a majority accustomed to and looking for a popular leader. It had Roosevelt for years. Upon his death, it split three ways—part to the residuary legatee, Wood; part to Johnson, who claimed to be the true residuary legatee, but was denied by the executors; and part to Hoover. What it gave the three, in popular support, overshadowed all popular sentiment for others. The total of the strength of the three was an overwhelming majority of the natural Republican majority between the coasts. And, today, that force is still looking for a popular leader.

Conceivably, it will find him in the President. But it is improbable. Popular leaders are born, not made, and Mr. Harding has been in this world a long time without firing the popular imagination. Wood has been eliminated and knows it. Opportunity has stood before him for the last time. He is going to the University of Pennsylvania. Hoover is niched in an unspectacular department, and is a part of the public and political Harding. In

the Senate, most of those who escape commonplaceness are reactionary, or old or ill. Borah is neither, but the country never knows when or where he will break loose, and that, plus his hat and his hair, makes him a prima donna. Appreciation of prima donnas is limited. In the House is nothing.

What then? There is Johnson. Basically, essentially, he exactly fits the bottom political mood and disposition of those who constitute the majority of the Republican majority—of those who followed Roosevelt. They are not radicals. There is not a really radical bone in nine-tenths of them. "Progressive" describes them exactly. They want to change some of the details, some of the methods, but they do not want to alter the principle in the slightest degree. They have no new ideas; they have new uses to which to put the old ideas, or new ways in which to make the old ideas work. They want to meet the demands of current public needs, but they want to meet those demands on the retail plan, not the wholesale. They would move by inches. And that is Johnson to a "t." He may be radical in his fingers, never in his heart; radical on the circumference of things, never in the centre. He may espouse a new agency, but he will never propose a new fundamental theory. He could live in Siberia twenty years, and come back home and fit perfectly into the "progressive" Republican scheme of things within twenty-four hours. His objectives and beliefs are precisely those of the great mass of average, prosperous Americans, possessed of a generous, go-ahead, but not too generous, not too go-ahead, attitude toward society's difficulties.

And he makes a temperamental appeal, too. These "progressives" are not cursed with an over-refinement. They like their heroes to eat raw meat in public once in a while. They loved Roosevelt's way of eating his, gulping it in great mouthfuls and striking a pose, face a-grin. Better than any other man in the Republican party, Johnson can do the Roosevelt trick. That is because, like Roosevelt, he really enjoys raw meat, and the subsequent grin is nature's own. And, give him his due, he is a bold and brave man, and honest—requisites also in him who would be the popular leader of the majority of the Republican majority.

Look at him! In complete harmony, essential things considered, with the majority of his party. And one of them, endowed with the enterprise and daring of the natural leader. Then look at the balance of the material for popular leadership in the Republican party.

JOHN W. OWENS.

POEMS BY WALTER DE LA MARE

The Corner Stone

Sterile these stones
By time in ruin laid,
Yet many a creeping thing
Its haven has made
In these least crannies, where falls
Dark's dew, and noon-tide shade.

The claw of the tender bird
Finds lodgement here;
Dye-winged butterflies poise;
Emmet and beetle steer
Their busy course; the bee
Drones, laden, near.

Their myriad-mirrored eyes
Great day reflect.
By their exquisite farings
Is this granite specked;
Is trodd'n to infinite dust;
By gnawing lichens decked . . .

Toward what eventual dream
Sleeps its cold on;
When unto ultimate dark
These lives are gone,
And even of man not a shadow remain
Of all he has done?

Karma

When thou art little as I, mother,
And I as old as thou,
I'll feed thee on syllabub, honeycomb,
And sweet milk from my cow.
I'll make thee a swan's-down bed, mother;
Watch over thee then, will I.
And when in a far-away dream you start,
My tongue shall sing, 'Lullaby!'
It's many, Oh, many an age, mother,
We have known us. But quickly now,
Thou shalt be happy, grown again young,
And I as old as thou.

Summer Dawn

One after other break the birds
From motionless bush and tree
Into a strange and drowsy praise
The flush of dawn to see.

Black ashen rooks, on ragged wing,
And heads with sidelong eye,
Sweep through the silvery heights of daybreak,
Silent o'er the sky.

The restless robin—like a brook
Tinkling in frozen snow—
Shakes his clear, sudden, piercing bells,
Flits elf-like to and fro.

Cock to cock yells, the enormous earth
Lies like a dream outspread
Under the canopied blue of space
Stretched infinite overhead.

Light on the wool-fleeced lambs pours in;
Meek-faced, they snuff the air;

The glint-horned oxen sit at gaze—
The East burns Orient-fair.

Wreath up the melting mists of night
From meadows greenly gray,
Their every blade of grass ablaze
With dewdrops drenched with day.

The Truth of Things

"You might have told me the truth of things—
The truth of things, my dear . . .
How softly the wind, as in pity, breathes
In these willows hoary and sere,
It must be pleasant to dream where the dead their mole-
mounds rear.

"You might have told me the facts of life—
The facts of life, my dear . . .
How blazingly looked that stranger's wife
With love. Why did he leer,
And writhe from her grasping hand as if from a tainted
shape on a bier?

"You might have told me what's never told—
Never told, my dear . . .
Those queer little gleams that were darkly rolled
From mother's eyes ere the day drew near
When they took her away for ever and aye. Are mine
as strangely clear?"

The Spectre

In cloudy quiet of the day,
While thrush and robin perched mute on spray
A spectre by the window sat
Brooding thereat.

He marked the greenness of the spring
Daffodil blowing, bird a-wing—
Yet dark the house the years have made
Within that Shade.

Silent the rooms wherein no foot falls;
Dumb the dimmed portraits on the walls;
Reverberating, shakes the air
A river there.

Coursing in flood, its infinite roars
From pit to pit its water pours;
And he, with countenance unmoved
Hears cry:—"Beloved,

O, ere the day be utterly spent,
Return, return from banishment.
The night thick-gathers. Weep a prayer
For the true and fair!"

Who?

1ST STRANGER: Who walks on the hill?

2ND STRANGER: I cannot see for the mist.

3RD STRANGER: Running water I hear,
Keeping lugubrious tryst
With its cresses and grasses and weeds,
In the white obscure light from the sky,

2ND STRANGER: Who walks with us on the hills?

WILD BIRD: Ay! . . . Aye! . . . Aie! . . .