

dence of the folly of politicians. Mr. Mencken, to be sure, thinks he is superior to superstition because he proposes to use words cynically, whereas the victims of his criticism believe them more or less naïvely. But the superstition does not disappear because Mr. Mencken despises it. If he thinks, as he does, that slogans are the ultimate force in society, his belief is a superstition, and it makes no difference whether he is awestruck by the fact or cynical about it. His science is of the same stuff at bottom as Mr. Bryan's or Billy Sunday's.

And like them he is so determined to have the universe what he would like it to be that he will not stop to find out what it is. For Mr. Mencken has a dream. He would like as an expert in words to recreate the world by words in the image of that dream. What does he see in that dream? He sees himself as the companion of a small masterful minority who rule the world and who, because it is so simple to rule the world, have ample leisure for talk. In that circle Mencken is the gayest spirit of the lot, the literary pope, of course, but with a strong flavor of Rabelais and Voltaire about him. The hard work of the world is left to the subject masses, who are uneducable, and are therefore destined to feed him, clothe him, keep him warm, and print books for him.

I think this is a sincere dream. I think Mencken really cares for fine things of a sort, though simple things untranslated into art are not significant to him. But what I wonder is whether he

ever realizes how little he exemplifies the aristocratic type which he would so much like to be. I am not speaking merely of the fact that he is so often vulgar about vulgarity, and that he frequently makes you think he feels he must make a show because you may not have heard that he recently acquired a reputation. I am speaking rather of the inner commotion which directs his troubled vitality.

For the quality that marks him off from the genuine intellectual aristocrat is the absence of settled assurance within. There is no point in Mencken where you ever reach serenity, no point as which anything justifies itself. Everything has to be fortified by bounce and brag if he is to hold fast to it. The good things have to be kept vital by feverishly thumping the bad ones. Mr. Mencken would not dare to stop contemplating his dislikes for fear of being left contemplating a vacuum.

But there is a rudimentary honesty about him, not a complete honesty because his critical faculties are not searching enough for many of the things of which he speaks *ex cathedra*, but an honesty of feeling. And so I wonder whether in his most honest moments he realizes how much he is the victim of the vices he hates, whether he knows how deeply the modern city's fever has gotten into his blood, and how much like Cinderella with flat feet he seems when he cries for an aristocracy in the pages of the *Smart Set*.

WALTER LIPPMANN.

Boston

V. The Racial Moralities

A JOURNALIST'S investigation of the state of affairs in Boston leads him to a series of conclusions which may be plumped down arbitrarily as follows:

The general moral health of Boston is not noticeably worse than that of other cities. If it seems so it is because of the vociferous fashion in which Boston's transgressions are vociferously blamed upon the Irish by the Yankees. These transgressions should rather be described as stigmata of our whole current civilization.

While weight of numbers gives the Irish complete control of municipal politics and therefore of city government, social and financial power remains in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon grandchildren of the Puritans. Certainly anyone who set out deliberately to weigh advantages must on the whole prefer the position of the latter.

Irish municipal administration has its faults, to be sure; but so has administration by any other race. While the Anglo-Saxon wriggles unhappily when forced to adjust himself to Keltic domination, he is not much more dissatisfied than is the Irishman when the rôles are reversed.

It is quite true that in recent years Boston has seen a marked departure from the older American ideals and traditions—a departure which is the more noticeable because the Hub City was the nursery for this sort of Americanism in the days when the color and shape of white civilization in the United States were being determined. However, it seems to me grossly unfair to attribute this spiritual relaxation (or decay) to the malign influence of any one race in conflict with others. If we have in the United States an insurgence of vulgarity, a pulling down of the old gods and substitution of false idols or none, that is the result of a situation in which immigration is but

one factor—though in combination with our system of economic exploitation plus political democracy, half-education for everybody and dominance by the yellow press, it is an important one.

The effect of environment on racial characteristics both in Europe and the United States, must be kept constantly in mind. The Irishman in Ireland is what he is largely because of centuries of suppression; the Irishman in America has his characteristics determined by the fact that he came late into communities already maturing, where there was not much room for him except at the bottom. This situation has created an Irish-American psychology which, for example, is strong in the feeling of racial solidarity. Irishmen hang together because for a long time they have had to do so. As our civilization has matured, grown richer in material wealth and stratified into classes, the sense of kinship among members of a partially submerged national group has become merged in a general hostility of the Have-nots for the Haves. It is this latter feeling, of course, which accounts for Hylan in New York, Thompson in Chicago, Curley in Boston.

Does all this mean that we are to whitewash the Boston Irish entirely? Not quite; as I observed in a previous article, there is one aspect of Boston's recent history where the charge of moral turpitude is so serious that the case must have extended examination before judgment may be passed for or against the Kelt.

The affair in question is the remarkable development of graft in public office, centering about the offices of the district attorneys in Suffolk county (Boston) and Middlesex county (Cambridge). Of the complex situation which has been exposed and eradicated, only the barest outline need be given here. Nathan H. Tufts, district attorney for Middlesex county, was removed from office by the Massachusetts Supreme Court for mis-, mal- and non-feasance in office in October, 1921. In February, 1922, Joseph C. Pelletier, district attorney for Suffolk county, was removed by a unanimous decision of the five Supreme Court justices who sat in the case. Pelletier is an Irishman, with a nation-wide reputation, and had been Supreme Advocate for the national Roman Catholic society, the Knights of Columbus. While under these charges, he became a candidate for mayor, and though he withdrew from the race ten days before the election, I could find no one in Boston who believed that he was prompted by a feeling of impropriety. He left the contest, it seems clear, in order to aid Mr. Curley, and his action undoubtedly did so.

The charges against Pelletier and Tufts were not dissimilar. In general, the practice most frequently alleged was that of trumping up charges against a wealthy individual and then permitting him to buy immunity from prosecution by the payment of a large sum. Among the persons who were thus blackmailed, some were actually guilty and others only technically so—as in the case of an individual who married before sufficient time had elapsed to make absolute a previous divorce decree. There seems good reason to believe that in some instances traps were set for men who were either placed in a compromising position though innocent, or actually tempted into wrongdoing.

In all these cases the payment of a sufficient sum purchased immunity. A newspaper summary of the Supreme Court decision against Pelletier stated that "evidence was presented against the district attorney in twenty-one charges. In ten of these he was accused of conspiracy to commit blackmail. Improper action in handling cases in his office was alleged in ten others. One specification attributed 'misconduct' in two campaign addresses. None of the charges as originally filed specified that Pelletier had received money in return for his alleged misconduct, but evidence to this effect was presented in five cases. The Attorney-General offered this evidence in connection with a claim that Pelletier had 'participated in the profits of a partnership of crime'. . . . The court found Pelletier guilty in most of the important instances of misconduct, alleged by the Attorney-General." He was found guilty, for example, on the charge that during his campaign for the mayoralty he offered to quash any proceedings against persons who took it on themselves vigorously to resent reports that he intended to resign. He was found guilty in the Emerson Motors case in which that company was said to have paid \$20,500 to stop prosecution in Suffolk county. It was held that he was guilty in the Emery case in which Pelletier, Daniel H. Coakley and William J. Corcoran, former district attorney of Middlesex county, were named as conspirators to extract \$50,000 from Mrs. Jennie S. Chase, her daughter, Mrs. Curtis W. Emery and her son-in-law, Curtis W. Emery. The court held that \$35,000 paid by Benjamin Piscopo, a former hotel proprietor, to avert prosecution, was a payment in pursuit of a criminal conspiracy between Pelletier and Coakley.

It should not be assumed that this remarkable scandal in the administration of public office was exclusively an Irish affair. While it is true that most of the leading participants were of that race, there were Yankees involved as well. The impor-

tant question for us to answer is: Did the Irish population of Boston exhibit moral turpitude in condoning the acts of members of their own race?

Naturally, this is an extraordinarily difficult problem to solve. One cannot interview three or four hundred thousand people, and the graft cases have not been a public issue of a sort on which judgment could be recorded at the polls (for certainly the election of Curley cannot be thus interpreted). However, I think it is entirely safe to say that the Irish in Boston showed much greater indifference to the dishonesty of their representatives in office than was displayed by the Yankees. For some time it was an open question whether the forces of righteousness would be able to unseat Pelletier at all, so strong was the public sympathy with him. The greater part of the work of cleaning up Boston was done by Anglo-Saxon representatives of the old Yankee tradition; and from first to last their efforts were never a popular cause. Even after Pelletier had been removed from office by the State Supreme Court, a defiant public announcement was made that he would be retained in his position as Supreme Advocate for the Knights of Columbus (though I presume his disbarment must alter this situation). I think it is fair to say that Irish Boston still regards this whole matter as a persecution by a lot of over-punctilious Yankees of one of their race who is, after all, an extremely good fellow. However I must admit I can adduce very little evidence in support of this contention.

But even when we have said so much, we have not necessarily brought a permanent indictment against the Irish as municipal administrators in Boston or anywhere else. Nor is this true merely on the somewhat sophisticated ground that in a democracy any city is entitled to have as bad a government as the majority of its citizens demand. We must not forget that the racial solidarity among the Irish in any American community is largely based on a feeling that their race has been exploited and oppressed for centuries in Ireland; and while they have achieved political mastery in this country it has been accompanied by so little economic dominance that they still have the general attitude of the underdog. In these circumstances racial loyalty to a Pelletier under indictment, to a Curley in jail, to a Hyland made a fool of on the witness stand, is the most natural and explicable thing in the world. If the Irish were not a mere majority but the complete population of Boston, no doubt they would clean house for themselves in a fashion which, while less far-reaching and certainly less didactically moral than the Puritans' would nevertheless be quite effective.

Brought into rough contact with the Yankee standard critically applied to one of themselves, their response is a group loyalty which leaves no room in the proud Irish heart for allegiance to the virtue of civic incorruptibility.

What we see in Boston is therefore no more nor less than what we see everywhere in America. The melting pot conspicuously fails to melt. The increasing economic stratification of the community leaves one race—more or less by accident—at the bottom, yet by mere weight of numbers in control of the political machinery. This political control is of no use in bettering the economic situation but this is a fact which never sinks in, and the result is a constant use of the ballot for negative and ineffective purposes of attempted revenge upon those who are socially and financially superior. The Irish are not to blame; no one is to blame, for the moral values which are seemingly involved are no more than the casual expression of the blind drift of circumstance. Yet while the matter is no one's fault, it must presently become the serious concern of all good Americans; for the increasingly grave breakdown of municipal administration which is the result of this tangle can only be cured, as I have already suggested, by a considerable revision of the technique by which the public will expresses itself in our political democracy.

BRUCE BLIVEN.

Gustatory Evolution

FROM the outside, all radicals look alike to the uninitiated. Actually, however, there are three varieties: hard-shelled orthodox "Reds" with a theology as set as an old fashioned Puritan; mottled, red and white soft-shelled theorists, crawling constantly toward mere liberalism, and last, and most prevalent—the gustatory radicals—that host of pale pink thinkers who have eaten their way from conservatism through years of public dinners.

In the good old days before Senator Lusk and his radical-silencer bills, New York City was as full of gustatories as Petrograd of Bolsheviks today. Any group of propagandists who took the trouble to engage one of those dingy, cavernous dining halls where seventy-five cent table d'hôtes were offered with California grown Italian wine thrown in, and sent out notices that some unknown and unpopular cause would be served up, amid appropriate speaking, could get a crowd. And whatever the subject dined for, the same collection of earnest gustatories came, eager and hungry.

A chrysanthemum-headed, gaunt-eyed youth,