

to pay for themselves. But it takes time for superior efficiency to develop. Therefore there may be good reason for proceeding slowly. There is no reason for not proceeding at all.

The Railroad Labor Board had an opportunity for public service. It could have accepted the living wage in principle. It could have defined the content of the idea more precisely than the reformers have done. It could have offered a sober account of the grounds for making haste slowly toward the desired end. Instead it made a spectacle of itself, blowing off its bile like a superannuated clubman. There remains no doubt that the Board in its present constitution has cumbered the earth too long.

## Emigrés at Home

**W**E have America very much on our minds just now; there was never a time when people who think and talk at all, thought and talked so much about this country they live in. If the mere fact of this growing self-consciousness is interesting, the contrast among the several thinkers and talkers is even more so. They may roughly be divided into three groups: Those who find America God's fairest spot of human residence; those who hate it at the bottom of their hearts but still live in it; and those who, neither quite hating nor loving it, can entertain at once something of both feelings, who feel their roots going down into it: those whom it irritates, fascinates and warms, those who like to rediscover it, who enjoy watching American things happen and American people behave, as things and people will, comically, tragically, casually, differently.

The first noisy group, though far more than the other two its voice determines what we shall do from day to day, is intellectually sterile, and, since we like to believe that brains will win in the end, we can pass it over in the silence decently accorded to potential losers. The third group, which might be called neutral in its reaction to America, is chaotic, individual, and very variously articulate. There is so much to be said about it that for the present we had better say nothing.

The group we propose to talk about marches under the banner of "intellectual revolt," or rather disgust, and recruits a growing army of sensitive, intelligent people all out of key with a repulsive civilization. Most liberals have marched with it at least some miles; many are veterans. Unlike the other two, this group has brains, leaders, a destination. These people hate, they know what

they hate, they say so with uncommon energy and ability. They hate—and we have marched with them—an America in which the high spots seem to be: mediocrity and bunk in politics, meanness and arrogance in business, safety first at church, prudery at home; they hate this country where art is vulgar and advertising both, where important demands are unsatisfied and unimportant ones created; where one man's thoughts are as his neighbor's and both waste their time exchanging them; where minorities must endure minimum wages, physically and morally; where there is big talk in public and small talk in private; a land covered from east to west by a great wash of dollars and of sentiment.

Is this America? Yes—the part we see and hear oftenest. No—for there is a lot more which we don't often see or hear. Such is not the whole truth, not by a long shot. The whole truth is obscure, vague, underground; it must be obstinately tunnelled after. But these intellectual rebels are not trying to snare the truth, they are trying to expose and annihilate what irritates and oppresses them. Like all people at war with something, they find fighting easier if they can give the enemy a single name, and see on his shoulders a single head to be chopped off. Instead of cursing and attacking political rottenness, business hypocrisy, social mediocrity, mental optimism, each separately, our rebels who begin with cursing American politics, American business, American society, the American mind, end by cursing America itself. It is easier to focus hatred on a family name than to divide it among all the members of that family. Mr. Mencken, who as much as anyone leads these rebels, does not try to disentangle American vices from American virtues, preferring such statements as "America is a commonwealth of third-rate men." Under the lashings of Mr. Mencken and his followers, America has grown from the name of a certain part of the map into a personified demon. And, of course, if one is constructing a demon afterwards to slay him, one makes him one hundred percent evil. In the same way we personified "Germany" during the war. This was easy: Germany was a long way off. And aren't many of our intellectual rebels a long way off from America?

"If they don't on the whole enjoy America, why do they go on living here?" They don't live here. Only people who have mentally left their own country can continue to see it so simply. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Mencken both see America rather simply. So do the host of followers, for whom Babbitt—that valiant, that useful, that ugly and

formidable book—is their Bible, and H. L. Mencken their prophet. Lead us, they cry, out of this wilderness which is America, and which you have forever damaged in our eyes. Lead them—where to? Aren't they perhaps going into another private wilderness of their own, so remote that America leers at them, a single bodied, personal ogre, over the rim of its horizon? Aren't they intellectual emigrés, who shout, Curse you, step-mother, as they look out at her from their place of exile, across the foaming, isolating sea of their disgust? Their exile, with its furious protest, is useful to those of us who have stayed behind and still see America as a queer, lovable, tormenting mixture of things good and bad, and we thank these exiles for making American life more interesting and perhaps better in the long run. But we feel sorry for them. They have torn up their roots, and have cut themselves off from that diversity which makes life, even American life, fascinating. Theirs will be a sterile path toward the end, and they will at the last find barrenness even in the solidarity of exile.

## The Enforcement of Prohibition

THE New Republic continues to receive letters from persons who resent or regret its position in regard to the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment. Most of these letters are written in the curious persuasion that the New Republic is seeking to discourage, or to give aid and comfort to those who would discourage, obedience to law. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is true the New Republic holds that the Eighteenth Amendment rests upon an entirely novel and unforeseen conception of the Constitution, and that to enforce it through the federal government will mean a radical change in the methods and functions of national administration. Such a change we hold to be undesirable, even if it were possible. To charge the federal government with the duty of enforcement in present circumstances means a diffusion of graft and corruption throughout its members, a weakening of its powers, and an increasing public contempt for it and its representatives which we hold equally undesirable. Interpretation of the amendment to exclude minor intoxicants is nothing short of nullification by law. The third possibility is suggested by the language of the amendment itself. It declares that its enforcement shall rest with the federal government and the states concurrently. Now whatever this may mean it certainly indicates that the states are ex-

pected to bear a responsibility for the enforcement of the amendment quite different from that which they bear in other cases where no reference is made to them. It is not a forced interpretation of concurrently to assume that it means that the states are to take the initiative within their own borders, the federal government concurring in their measures and restricting its own initiative to fields which are especially its own, such as foreign and interstate commerce. Within these fields it will have enough to do to test to the uttermost its capacity for honest and efficient administration; while the states with full responsibility are likely to secure more complete enforcement within the limits established by their own public opinion.

Most of our correspondents insist that the ease with which liquor is obtainable in New York is no test of the operation of the Volstead law throughout the country. We grant this gladly. The degree to which the Volstead Act is now enforced must necessarily be a matter of opinion. No figures are available to show the extent of law-breaking. There are certain facts, however, which are accessible, and from which conclusions may be drawn. For example, the amount of spirits withdrawn from bond in 1921 on payment of tax was 9,597,116 gallons. It is nothing to the purpose to compare this amount with that of previous years. Everyone knows that the consumption of bonded whiskey has greatly diminished since the passage of the Volstead Act. But does anyone believe that this amount, or anything like it, was restricted to medical or sacramental uses? The export of spirits from the United Kingdom in 1913 amounted to £4,188,000. In 1920 it was £8,644,000. It is true the price of spirits in Great Britain has doubled, and it is true that Scotch whiskey is exported to other countries than the United States. Probably impoverished Europe takes most of it. Yet it is significant that the imports of spirits from the United Kingdom into Canada increased from £730,000 in 1913 to £2,492,000 in 1920. Similarly the export trade of France in wine rose from 275,600,000 francs in 1913 to 531,200,000 francs in 1920, which was our first year of prohibition by congressional action. We say again that there is nothing conclusive about such figures, but taken in connection with the extraordinary activity along the Canadian border, in the Bahamas and Miquelon, they may give some occasion for thought on the part of those who will have it that all is well in Zion. There are two classes of people who, however eminent and virtuous in many respects, are of no value whatever to their country in the present difficulty. One is