

to stress the point of impropriety, because Secretary Mellon is pursuing only what is still common practice under protectionism. In the course of American history hundreds of representatives of the people have voted large profits into their own pockets by securing excessive duties for the industries in which they held interests. None of them has ever been pilloried for it, any more than Mr. Mellon is now pilloried. Protectionism as we have known it is an East of Suez where public morality does not exist.

The immediate issue is simple. The aluminum schedule has been shown up for what it is, a device by which a prosperous private interest is able to gorge itself to repletion at the expense of the people. How many of the other tariff schedules are of the same character, and operate to the same effect. There can hardly be any doubt that a vast number of our protective duties are much too high for any legitimate protective purpose.

It is high time that the whole theory and practice of protectionism in America was overhauled—overhauled not by the beneficiaries of exaggerated duties, but by men who realize that the interests of the country are not subserved by scarcity and dearth, that it is more important to place aluminum utensils within the reach of the millions of American housewives than to heap up excess profits and swollen incomes for a few great politicians and captains of industry, that a copious flow of trade, both domestic and foreign, enriches the nation and the mass of its people, even if restrictions may occasionally be more profitable to the few.

Such an overhauling is coming, and in a future not too remote. It is already obvious that the party of exaggerated protectionism is far from commanding the allegiance of a majority of the people. If it renews its hold on the Presidency in November it will be by the political accident that the enemies of the tariff are divided. They will not remain divided forever.

Arms and the—Baby

MODERN psychology has taught us to look upon the blusterer as perhaps a timid and unimpressive person, and upon the braggart as one who is deeply distrustful of his own pretensions. It is high time, perhaps, that psychology threw a little light upon the amusing conduct of our naval and military officers, for they show such a persistent refusal to cope with reality that we are almost justified in regarding their professional animus as pathological. The classic case of mental impotence in the military guild is cited by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in *My Diaries*, when, outraged by Blunt's book on Gordon at Khartoum, half a dozen major generals wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette* to urge that Mr. Blunt be deprived of certain political dignities he had never held; but a pretty good sec-

ond to this effort to "depress mental and prolong corporeal war" is the recent attempt to censor Messrs. Stallings's and Anderson's play, *What Price Glory*. Politically, this intrusion of the army and navy into the civil realm is perhaps officious; but psychologically it is such a complete give-away that one is almost tempted to welcome it.

Recall the incident before it joins the snows of yesteryear. An inquiry held by certain officers in the navy and the marine corps disclosed the fact that in *What Price Glory* the soldiers frequently swore, that they sometimes did not respect their superiors, and that they seized the passing delight of a drink or a girl when the passing delight offered itself. Our good army and navy fear that a knowledge of these things would keep boys from enlisting or at any rate make their mothers timid about letting them enlist. The obvious answer to this military prudery is that, after all, cuss words and disrespect and the call of tempting young ladies are not altogether unknown in Gopher Prairie and Zenith; and even the American mother of popular balladry is not quite naive enough to think that single men in barracks turn into plaster saints. As it is, Messrs. Stallings's and Anderson's dialogue is merely emphatic; it has not the delicate and allusive foulness which, quite naturally, characterizes barracks conversation. A veracious transcription of the commonplaces of a gang of railway men or woodchoppers or soldiers would be beyond the resources of even a Restoration dramatist; so the objection to *What Price Glory* on these grounds is such a manifest piece of effrontery that we must set it down as a rationalization.

But there is an even more acute answer to the military censor; and that is, that the authors of *What Price Glory*, although they do not write in the romantic tradition, have contrived to put a good deal of common humanity into the barracks and the firing line; and in many ways their play makes military life far more attractive than the most deceitful recruiting poster. Is it not comic that military men should fail to see that there is more attraction in an army where men are actually disrespectful of their superiors than there is in one so servilely trained that criticism never enters into their minds; and that a drunken bully like Captain Flagg, who at a pinch can behave like a comrade and a gentleman, is worth a dozen sticks cut to length and measure at West Point or Annapolis? How much more attractive war would be if there were more of Captain Flagg's honesty in our preparation for it, and less of the official hypocrisy which treats Defense Day as if it were an autumn festival to celebrate peace and plenty, and advertises poison gases as if they were to be kept in the family medicine chest alongside the soothing syrups! Is it not something to be able to assure the recruit that military life is not always as dull as that of the barracks, that sometimes the unceasing routine breaks down when honest brutal work must be done—that life in the

trenches or on a destroyer in the danger zone sometimes encourages a comradeship between officers and men that is not provided for in the code of the drillmaster?

More than this, the sort of warfare which Flagg's company finds itself fighting is a hundred times more heroic and manly than the communal assassination which the Chemical Warfare Division sweetly holds out for the next war. Captain Flagg is an almost extinct monster, for he is the military man whom we meet in Homer and Shakespeare, and he and his kind, with their essential decency and readiness to risk their hides, are morally miles above the elevated Robots who are perfecting the gases and chemical missiles that are to be aimed, not merely at soldiers in the field, but at the entire animal and vegetable life of the "enemy" nation. The real danger of *What Price Glory* is, from a humane point of view, that it gives a brutal glamor to an obsolete system of combat, and so may delude the spectator into thinking that another war will be as relatively inoffensive as that which the play portrays. The officers who would like *What Price Glory* taken off the stage have apparently not enough imagination to see that if the brutishness and hell-let-looseness of Captain Flagg's company were the worst that could be said against warfare, there might still be something said in favor of it!

So far we have been courteously assuming that the objections of the military group to *What Price Glory* had some sort of rational foundation; but their desire to be protected from the faintest breath of criticism—their manifest displeasure at the suggestion that life in the trenches is different from that of the grinder or the Y. M. C. A. hut—points to a condition of "addled subjectivity." The reason for this subjectivity is not far to seek: war is by its technique an infantile occupation. When a little child is confronted by a situation far beyond his powers of thought or action, as when his nurse crosses his will, he frequently says to the person who stands in his way: "I'll kill you." Psychologists have taught us to regard this homicidal wish as a plain desire to simplify the situation: "kill" merely means "eliminate." Is it not pretty clear that warfare is a regression to this infantile wish; for a community that brings conference to an end and wages war confesses its inability to apply a rational method to the solution of its conflict, and it gives way to the easier method—not the elimination of the problem but the attempt to eliminate the persons who seem to cause the problem.

Whatever his initial start in life, we may describe the military man as one whose conduct is professional, "fixed" on an infantile level; he is sheltered from the normal struggles of the civil community; he retains the infant's unbounded will-to-power; he instinctively desires to eliminate anything that stands in the way of his own plans or that balks his own ambitions. The very routine of military life carries out this infantile situation; one need only

mention the parent-child habits of subordination, the complete lack of autonomy on the part of the soldiers, each of whom depends upon orders from "higher up," the perpetual insistence upon security, the effort to make the warriors' desires the criterion of reality.

So for example the army cheerfully tells us that poison gases are harmless therapeutics, since it is desirable that we should think so until they can be used in warfare; so the army and navy always describe themselves as "instruments of defense," no matter what their aggressions; so the various arms of the service are advertised as little more than official travel bureaus for the aid of talented young men. All these subterfuges and evasions and censorships would be funny, if they did not imply that a military organization is incapable of living anywhere but in Cuckooland. Most of us begin life with the same tendencies that characterize the military man; but reality compels us to outgrow them. Unfortunately for the community, warfare is a large confession of our inability to grapple with reality; and our military men we must remind ourselves are the unhappy victims of the calling we have inflicted upon them. They would not be good soldiers if they were not wretchedly adapted to the trials of civilized existence—an existence which does not usually permit us to silence our opponents by force or establish our mental and moral superiority by a show of weapons.

In times of peace, the civilian population tends to develop a certain resistance to infantile habits, discussion becomes free, criticism active, "disrespect" rife, in short, public conduct occasionally reaches mature level. No wonder that military men protest against a play that even brushes against the realities of their vocation. They must forgive us, however, if we refuse to take their conduct at its face value and become properly indignant over it. The poet could sing seriously and heroically of *Arms and the Man*; but it needs a humorist to speak adequately of *Arms and the Baby*. If the braggart has an inferiority complex, it should not surprise us to find that the most masculine of all pursuits reverts to the cradle.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AND COPYRIGHT, 1924, IN THE U. S., BY THE
REPUBLIC PUBLISHING CO., INC., 421 WEST 21ST ST., NEW YORK
HERBERT CROLY, PRES., ROBERT HALLOWELL, TREAS.,
DANIEL MEBANE, CIRCULATION MANAGER

EDITORS

HERBERT CROLY BRUCE BLIVEN ROBERT LITTELL
ALVIN JOHNSON R. M. LOVETT

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

JANE ADDAMS JOHN DEWEY R. H. TAWNEY
DAVID FRIDAY H. N. BRAILSFORD LEO WOLMAN

RATES: SINGLE COPIES, FIFTEEN CENTS; YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION,
FIVE DOLLARS, CANADIAN, FIVE DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS;
FOREIGN, SIX DOLLARS; THREE MONTHS' TRIAL, ONE DOLLAR.

The Vanishing Voter

THE problems of democracy are multifarious, and as E. L. Godkin pointed out more than a quarter of a century ago, some of the most significant and baffling are those that were unforeseen either by its early advocates or opponents. "The growth of democracy," he wrote, "has dissipated a good many fears about the 'mob'; but on the other hand it has failed to realize a good many expectations about its conduct of government." Of these unrealized expectations, perhaps the most disquieting has been the strong and increasing tendency of voters to absent themselves from the polls on election day.

Until a very recent time the chief battles of democracy in the United States centred about the extension of the suffrage. Although the Declaration of Independence—the first American political platform—asserted sonorously that "all men are created equal," at the very time the right to vote was a class privilege, confined by law to white male adult taxpayers or property owners, with the further restriction, in some states, of belief in certain simple theological tenets. The arrangement was, of course, highly satisfactory to everyone concerned—except the excluded classes; and unfortunately for the security of the established order, these latter were numerous, noisy and persistent.

The sequel appeared in a progressive enlargement of the suffrage almost generation by generation. During the Jacksonian era white manhood suffrage was established. In 1870 all negro men were given the "right" to vote by a federal constitutional amendment. In 1887 the process was begun of granting the ballot to Indians. The final chapter was written in 1920 with the enfranchisement of women by a federal amendment. Accordingly, by the last named date, the franchise had been bestowed upon every group in our population which had made any pretensions to the right. The nation had caught up with the Declaration of Independence.

Now became apparent the extraordinary development to which reference has already been made. As if exhausted by the long weary up-hill march, the wayfarers gazed indifferently at the resplendent scene before their eyes, and promptly allowed their attention to become absorbed in other things. The franchise, so desirable when beyond reach, had become

Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's shore,
All ashes to the taste.

That which had been sought as a political right was devoid of interest as a civic obligation, or even as a civic opportunity.

Though much comment has been excited by the large stay-at-home vote in the national election of

1920, the phenomenon is not new, nor can its full gravity be understood against the background of a single campaign. An examination of its workings over a long period may disclose certain unexpected perils in the path of popular government as well as certain clues as to the road to safety. Many persons now living can remember the birth of the Republican party, and inasmuch as this event marked the beginning of the historic rivalry between our two major parties, the series of presidential elections from 1856 to 1920 becomes significant for a study of the voting trend. Whatever conclusions may be reached, it must always be remembered that this inquiry pertains only to the attitude of the sovereign voter toward an office which is not only the highest honor within his gift but also the most powerful civil position in the world. His attitude toward state, local and primary elections is another and, one may surmise, an even more depressing story.

A superficial glance at the election statistics seems quite reassuring. Thus, the number of votes increased from about four millions in 1856 to over eight millions in 1876, and from about fourteen millions in 1896 to nearly twenty-seven millions in 1920. Such figures, however, are misleading, for they leave out of account the general increase in population and, what is more important, the even more rapid expansion in the numbers of those entitled to vote. The significant factor in measuring the interest of voters in an election is the ratio of those who actually vote to the whole number of those legally qualified to vote. The mode of arriving at this percentage is of interest only to the specialist in political science, who is referred to the brief description in the note at the close of this article. For others, suffice it to say that the calculations are quite complicated and that, while unavoidably subject to error, should nevertheless give a substantially correct picture of the actual situation.

The results of this inquiry are indicated by the course of the continuous line on the accompanying chart. For the more curious, the detailed figures have been placed in a separate table. From these findings four significant conclusions may fairly be drawn.

In the first place, it is possible to form an intelligent opinion as to what proportion of the eligible voters should be expected to participate in an election. The greatest show of voting strength occurred in the election of 1876 when nearly 86 percent of those entitled to vote cast their ballots. This contest, however, was an exceptional one, and it is therefore more to the point that, in the campaigns from 1856 to 1896 inclusive, the proportion of active voters in eight out of the eleven elections ex-