

THE CHANGED AMERICAN

BY DANIEL F. KELLOGG

A SERIES of articles in one of the magazines that has, perhaps, attracted as much attention as any other that has been printed in the past year was that upon the immigration problem by Professor Ross, of the University of Wisconsin, that appeared in the *Century*. Criticism of Professor Ross's articles was two-sided, and a good share of the public apparently seemed to think that the statements made by the author presented an exaggerated view of existing conditions. But it has to be admitted that a large portion of the public have never had a chance to realize just what these conditions are. The remark was first made five hundred years ago that one-half the world does not know how the other half lives. It is very doubtful if one-half the people in New York City alone are in any measurable degree familiar with the character of life, even the external character of life, of the other half; and the observation possesses greater truth when it is applied to the whole country. Those who are more familiar with the general status of the foreign population of the United States are not of the opinion that Professor Ross painted his picture in too black colors. He told the truth in a strong and vivid way, and did a public service in awakening people to the truth. The first reflection on this subject that occurs to intelligent and patriotic men is, of course, how all these evils of excessive immigration and consequent defective citizenship can be either avoided or cured. One remedial suggestion is that the number of immigrants be limited by law for a time; but the fact that this proposition is strongly approved by the labor-unions gives a hint as to its unwisdom. Any restriction of immigration to amount to anything would establish a monopoly of labor; and the great trouble of our business already is, in normal times, to get labor in sufficient quantity. The movement of people

to this country from Europe really only represents a natural movement from places in the world where population is congested to places where there is still room for life to flourish; and to put obstacles in the way of this natural means of relief would probably, in the long run, be to the disadvantage of everybody. A longer term of life passed in the country before naturalization takes place, increased property and educational qualifications for the suffrage as well as for admission into the United States, and numberless other suggestions of like nature have been put forward, but it is not the purpose of the present article to discuss them. That purpose is, primarily, to take up the second reflection upon this matter with which an intelligent patriotism busies itself. Is this immigration, which has reached such astounding volume in the last few years, changing the character of our people? Is the power of the institutions of the country to assimilate the annual hundreds of thousands of immigrants equal to the task or not? Certainly some doubt as to the efficacy of this power is suggested by the recent state of civil war in Colorado where the insurgents were, almost wholly, newly arrived foreigners and a large number of them believed that John D. Rockefeller was President of the United States.

That the character of the American people has changed much in the last twenty-five years and is changing further is beyond dispute; and whether this change is or is not due in any considerable part to immigration is, naturally, an open question. But ethnologists say that the citizen of the United States is developing physically into a different type of man than has heretofore existed, the result showing very clearly the mingling of different strains of blood on a greater scale and in a more rapid way than has ever been exhibited before in history. Morally, we are, as a people, no longer as religious as we used to be; no longer as honest, and no longer as frugal. We seem also to be much more emotional than formerly, much less governed by conservatism and respect for governmental and social traditions, and much less given to deliberation and reflection. One of the indications of this that stands out is the decadence of the power and authority of the American pulpit. Great or even eminent public orators in our country have almost ceased to exist, although the United States was formerly the home of this specific kind of hortatory appeal.

Declining church membership has latterly been made the subject of numerous specific census investigations, and the figures thereof tell the same story, almost without variation. Certain religious denominations that a century or half a century ago were in an extremely flourishing state seem to be actually dying out, and this is true as regards the whole country and not merely particular sections of it. The standard complaint in our leading religious fellowships is that not enough young men are coming forward each year to take the waiting places in the ministry; but a different state of affairs could hardly be expected when the meager financial compensation offered by many of these places is considered. Will the judgment be considered harsh, even though it is based upon statements made by church-goers and ministers themselves, that the character of the clergy in our country has deteriorated? The Church has, in fact, assumed a materialistic, if not a veritably heartless and dead-and-alive, aspect that is more reminiscent of the English Church in the days of Queen Anne than it is of anything else. Some time ago one of our leading magazines published a long series of articles under the general title "Why People Do Not Go to Church." Poor preaching, disgust with constant appeals for money, the desire of people in the cities to take Sunday as a day of outing, and a score of other similar explanations were given, and no doubt all these were true answers to a greater or less extent; but the one great and real explanation was not given, and this was the general decay of religious belief. The churches have lost their hold on the hearts and minds of people because people—although they may be deeply sunk in error—no longer believe the essential doctrines on which the churches are founded, or at most only hold these doctrines as propositions upon which great doubt has come to be thrown. If the honest observation of the writer is any guide at all to the truth, anything like widespread popular conviction of the truth of the Bible miracles, of the religious doctrines of Heaven and Hell, the salvation of mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus, or even of the future life itself, no longer exists. Belief in God has become vague and indistinct, and it is not at all infrequent to hear professing Christians themselves so define their conceptions on these matters as to make it evident that their position is, perhaps quite unknown to them, a thoroughly

agnostic one. Nor even can active ministers of the Gospel be entirely excluded from this qualification. To all this general inclusion the Roman Catholic Church is decidedly an exception. The tendency is strongly confined to Protestantism.

It must again be emphasized that the writer is only putting into words the current social exhibit along this line as he observes it, and is in no way expressing any opinions of his own as to religious concerns. The fact is, as he conceives it, that the scientific thought of the last three-quarters of a century has succeeded in pretty well undermining the old-time religious notions of the rank and file of the people, not only in our own country, but in England. The work of destruction began among the so-called higher intellectual classes—that is, among the real thinkers in the Protestant world. As a rule, these people, or very many of them, lost their faith while still figuring openly as members of churches or supporters of religious organizations. No one who reads to-day the diaries, letters, or records of conversation of eminent men living, say, fifty years since, can fail to perceive what the actual conditions of religious belief then were among this class, no matter what the outward conditions seemed to be. On numerous occasions some one of these personages is found writing or saying to a close friend something in substance like this: “All this rationalism is very well for you and me. We can believe what we want to and keep quiet about it. But it will never do to have the mass of people think as we do. Religion is still a great restraining force in the community, and we ought to hold up its hands for that reason. Think what would happen to the world if the mass of people really did think as we do. Of one thing we may be certain, that the best place for us then would be in our graves.” Rightly or wrongly, it seems to many students of social affairs, both in this country and in the great English-speaking nation across the water, that at just this time the test and trial for the Anglo-Saxon race has arrived. There is a literal world of evidence going to show that the mass of people are exhibiting the results of a lack of moral restraint, due to the sweeping away of their old-time religious convictions. They have become a people without God in the world. “Our neighbor has property. Why not take it from him—under the forms of law, of course, but still so as to convert his prop-

erty to our own use." Social theories are growing up a-plenty justifying just this sort of procedure. That the law itself is inclining to them is perfectly plain. Even the old common law that represents the accumulated fruits of the experience and conservatism of the Anglo-Saxon race is being so molded and construed as to no longer resemble its former self. A striking instance is, at the time of writing this article, the strong movement in Congress for the total exemption of farmers and members of labor unions from the operations of the Anti-Trust Law. Such an enactment is, on its face, grossly unconstitutional, and would strike at the very heart of the long-cherished principle of law and government in this country—that all classes and kinds of people are equal before the law. It would be only the next step to order the execution of individuals by a vote of Congress, as was done by the French Convention, or under an Act of Attainder by the English Parliament three centuries ago. The idea of personal liberty as it existed in this country in, say, 1814, no longer exists; and at least one of the substantial reasons therefor is not only that the country is called upon to struggle with ravenous hordes of people from Central and Southern Europe—an oversea invasion of Goths and Vandals unfamiliar with our forms of thought or of government—but that there is no longer a Day of Judgment for the deeds done in the body looming large and terrible in men's eyes.

The late Charles Eliot Norton wrote to a friend a few years before his death: "I am strongly inclined to write a lecture and to deliver it upon as many occasions as I can find this winter on the subject, 'Do People Any Longer Think.' " Mr. Norton passed, with many persons, for a chronic grumbler and pessimist; but this was only because he saw clearly certain maleficent popular tendencies and was outspoken concerning them. The collection of his letters, printed late last year, was one of the most interesting books of the twelvemonth, and, covering a long life as they did, in the course of which events had a chance to prove or disprove prophetic warnings, they disclosed Mr. Norton as a greater philosopher and keener critic than even his closest friends understood him to be. Over half a century ago Mr. Norton pointed out that with the era of Andrew Jackson began the rule of the mob in the United States. Before that time in politics and every other branch of society there was

popular deference to the views of those who were recognized as thoughtful and wise men, or at least men possessing superior knowledge in particular fields of social activity. But, starting from the time of Jackson, the results of a social system founded upon manhood suffrage began to be apparent, and the moral tone of the country began to show enfeeblement. The unwillingness of people nowadays to consider public questions from any other point of view than that of immediate self-interest, or to be even willing to spare the time from their business to consider these questions at all, stands nowhere in such a naked light as in the degeneration of our press. The "reading public" in our country, at least in the sense in which it existed up to 1880, has almost disappeared. The public in this respect that does exist contents itself mostly with the newspapers; and the newspapers are to a very large extent no longer meant by those who prepare them to be thoroughly read. For one thing, they have become standardized—that is to say, the tendency has been with them to assume a common form and to adopt an almost absolute sameness of method of treatment of all subjects. But worse than this, they have become commercialized and woefully cheapened. The aim is no longer to produce literature at all, but to produce cheap reading-matter meant to be read, apparently, by cheap people. News matter and editorials are set forth chiefly as the dress and allurements of advertising matter. The newspaper is most successful now that has the most advertising. Despite all that may be said to the contrary and said vehemently, the advertising department now controls the newspapers of our country.

This is by no means a matter of choice with the publishers or proprietors of the newspapers. The situation in which they find themselves involved is in the nature of a predicament. The difficulty is that the price that the public has been willing to pay for good newspapers and magazines in recent years has not at all kept pace with the cost of producing these publications. Hence the newspaper or magazine publisher has been forced to depend less and less for the support of his enterprise upon the people who actually read his paper in the old-time way, and to depend more and more upon the support of people who wish to use the paper as an advertising medium. Newspaper sensationalism, fakery, and imposture have followed as a

matter of course, and is freely tolerated by the public. The remnant of real readers is still able, perhaps, to find newspapers in which these evils are not carried to gross excess; but a more subtle difference is that even in most newspapers column after column of so-called reading-matter appears which, if not intended as indirect advertising matter itself, is printed for the purpose of securing advertising. As such matter tends to increase in quantity and to decrease in quality, the average newspaper is slowly becoming unreadable. The situation has so changed that if William Cullen Bryant, George William Curtis, Henry J. Raymond, John Bigelow, and other famous men formerly in the front rank of journalism—even one who died so lately as Charles A. Dana—were alive and in their prime to-day, they would be miserable failures in the practice of their profession. The number of newspapers in the entire country having anything even moderately resembling a literary “flavor” at the present time may be counted upon the fingers of one hand; and it is doubtful if more than one of these papers is commercially profitable. The truth might as well be frankly recognized and stated that the clientele of this sort of newspapers has vanished. The newspapers referred to are almost as good as they ever were, although they do not have the same money to spend in the employment of brilliant writers as they did in former days. They are clean and wholesome and still published with the idea of the thoughtful and respectable reader kept uppermost; but the thoughtful readers have gone and the newspapers themselves are ghosts of a dead and buried past.

The trend is toward the disappearance of editorials altogether, as well as the departments of literary, financial, musical, and dramatic criticism, and the leader-writer on the newspaper staff is becoming as ancient and deplorable a figure as the old-time actor that is represented in fiction and stage comedy. I am not unmindful of the explanation commonly given for this state of affairs, that people have become tired, and very properly so, of the “heavy stuff” printed in the newspapers of a former generation, and that people who complain of what is euphemistically called the “lighter touch” of to-day are like the old opera-goer who, when young people were describing with rapturous enthusiasm the lovely voice of Jenny Lind—greatest of all

singers—used to say, “Ah! you should have heard Malibran.” There is always an old school which conceives the achievements of a former day to be far superior to anything that the present has to offer. Be this as it may, modern editorial-writing in the United States seems to be set largely upon the models fashioned by the gentleman who used to be called the “peerless Mr. Powers,” who twenty-five years ago wrote the drygoods advertisements printed each morning in the Philadelphia newspapers for Mr. Wanamaker’s store. Mr. Powers’s “style” was that of a chatty, cheery, sometimes half-slangy, and at all times, apparently, candid story about the wares daily offered for sale by his employer, and it was understood that he received greater compensation for his work than any other advertising writer in the country.

The decay of journalism is, after all, only typical of that which has overtaken American literature in general. The books of the great poets, philosophers, novelists, and historians of the nineteenth century who lived both in England and in this country are now almost as little read as are those of the men of the eighteenth century. It is a solemn fact, startling as it may seem to many people when it assumes the form of a statement in cold type, that for all practical purposes the works of Tennyson and Longfellow, of Thackeray and Dickens, of Macaulay and Emerson, are as dead as are the authors themselves. The writings of these men, of that great galaxy that thronged the Victorian Age, are still treasured by people of poetic feeling and aspiration, and their literary styles are held up by professors in our colleges as examples for ingenuous youth to follow. But they do not really interest the present generation, and the styles are not followed in the active literature of to-day. Whenever a man is heard saying that he admires or has even read many of the novels of George Eliot or Thackeray, or is at all familiar with the essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson or Macaulay, he is almost certain to be either a professional student of literature or a man in the neighborhood of fifty years old. All this might well lie in the ordinary course of nature and excite no regret if the place of the literary ideals thus supplanted were taken by other and higher ideals. But it must be said of the great mass of books now currently published that a large proportion are not really books at all, and that most of the so-called “best

sellers " of the book trade are no more worthy to be classed as literature than the advertisements printed on the circus billboards. In quality these are, as a rule, below the grade of the dime novels published by the late Mr. Beadle of familiar memory to the boys of two generations ago.

By this time pretty nearly all discerning people understand the tremendous assistance to the work of demagogues that has been given by the tendencies that have been described. The newspapers, or most of them, will print anything, and any quantity of it, that is sensational, and print this to the exclusion of decent, although sober and old-fashioned, material. This has been described as a turkey-trotting age, and the newspapers say in their defense that they cannot be expected to set their pace to any lesser rate of speed than that maintained by the majority of the community. But, oh! the shame of it, the pity of it! It was almost thirty years ago that a young politician, who has since become very prominent in the public eye and whose career has been an undoubted exemplification of the truth of his words, said to me: " You have absolutely no idea of the personal and political following a man can get and of the amount of publicity the newspapers will give to him if he is only willing to be a little spectacular." The trouble in putting the case in this respect is to avoid the use of language that may seem too strong and may not seem to present the same exaggeration with which Professor Ross was unjustly charged. But it certainly seems to be the truth that there is no charlatan so cheap and vulgar that the newspapers will not be willing to exploit him and to persist in exploiting him.

As to our theaters, the character of representations there has been profoundly modified, and for the worse in recent years by the moving-picture shows; and as the case stands at the moment, it is not too much to say that the theater is engaged with the moving-picture show in a struggle for its very life. Mr. Charles Frohman, the eminent theatrical manager, is quoted as saying that, while the old class of dramatic performance proper is not exactly outworn, the play of the near future—that is to say, of at least next winter—must devote itself to " incident " and quick action and leave outside of its contemplation entirely anything pertaining to metaphysical study or poetic or dramatic meaning

of the old-fashioned order. Surely these things were not always so in the United States. Our newspapers were not always panderers. They once were leaders; nor did our magazines find it necessary, in order to sustain their life, to exclude from their columns pretty nearly everything that could be classified as instructive material. It is not expected that the general aspect of our literature should continue of the same dry-as-dust character that prevailed in the early part of the last century. But because traveling in a barren desert is no longer agreeable, it does not by any means follow that living amid incessant earthquakes and whirlwinds is any more delightful. A mean of moderate quiet and rational enjoyment of life can certainly be found. Flippancy, shallowness, and catering to every low emotion need not necessarily take the place of dullness and dryness in literary production; and while it is a cardinal principle of human society that the manners and customs of people do change, there is such a thing, after all, as a degeneration of manners and customs and morals.

This article is not intended to afford material for the affirmative side of debate upon the question, "Resolved, that ancient times were superior to our own"; but it may be as well, perhaps, for the American people to ask themselves, seriously, just who the men and women are that are taking the place, for better or for worse, of the poets, philosophers, and historians who were writing throughout the century that began with 1901, and whether to-day the men and women who are writing for the press are or are not better than their predecessors. Going a little further, let us ask who are the men nowadays, and what is their character, who are the leaders of thought, the sources of national inspiration in our country, and how do they compare with those who have lately gone to their last sleep? Who are those who are stirring the hearts of our young men with romantic enthusiasm and visions of liberty and of the ideal beauty? Who are those who are thinking for us and dreaming for us as of yore, and leading us to commerce with the skies. Or are we to be told that enthusiasm, poetic vision, and commerce with the skies are no longer essential to the enduring life of a great nation, and that it is not true now, as it once was, that the things that are eternal are the things that are unseen.

There are those who say that our people are suffering

from over-education; from being brought up better than their condition in life warrants. Education is greatly to be desired, of course; but the charge is made that an education that brings ideals, standards of living, and general personal desires that can only with great difficulty be secured is an education that makes for national trouble rather than the reverse. Of one thing there is no doubt, and that is that the standard of living has greatly advanced in the country, and that it is each year more difficult for the mass of people to find the wherewithal to live up to this standard. In the old days when the country was very much more of an agricultural nation than it is now, a maxim was that pretty nearly everything desired by those who lived upon farms should be taken out of the farm itself, that is to say, should be either made upon the farm or furnished by the farm in one way or another. The records that have come down to us from these times show that it was an event in a farmer's life to actually purchase anything with money. No one wishes that the conditions of those hard and terrible years should be brought back again, or supposes that they can be brought back; still, these were the years of economy and plain living and high thinking, when the foundations of present fortunes and of the greatness of the nation itself were laid. Is there now any such economy, any such careful taking thought whether or not money should be parted with for something that could not be made or produced at home, or for any purpose whatever?

It is a trite saying that the luxuries of one generation become the necessities of the next; but where in the history of mankind has there been such an appalling attestation of the truth of this principle as in our own country in the last twenty-five years? In our great cities successful business men are no longer willing to have their offices located in buildings that are merely richly furnished and exceedingly comfortable. They ask for and erect palaces for office buildings; and the homes, the dress, and general expenditure of wealthy people are on the same advanced scale. Nor is this lavish spending of money confined to the cities alone. In our country villages, where poverty is, perhaps, more generally dispersed than it was in the boyhood of men now in middle life, there are thousands of people who ten years ago did not think they were able to keep a horse, who are now, without any increase in

individual wealth, owners of automobiles. It is the truth to say, as respects the amazing increase of the use of this form of transportation, that the American people have proved themselves powerless to resist the temptation to spend money that they could not afford to spend in the ownership of gasoline-machines designed for pleasure travel. The most important aspect of this entire matter is not that relating to specific facts to which reference has been made as it is to the general and underlying consideration that, whereas in all past times in the United States living has been very cheap, it is now very dear, and that for good or evil the country must reckon with the fact. Whether caused by increased immigration or increase in the birth-rate, the population of the country has increased in the last decade alone over twenty per cent.; and in the same period there has been an increase of only one per cent. in the quantity of domestic means of subsistence. In plain words, the problem which was outlined so many years ago by Macaulay and other interested observers of our new society, and as one that would surely confront us sooner or later, at last does confront us and in grim and unmistakable form. How is our nation to stand a struggle for existence so fierce that that which went on in former years was a mere pastime? How will property rights fare in the course of this struggle, and how have they fared already? What will be the fate of poetry and science, law and order, of every right and privilege and solace which we hold most dear, under the increasing difficulty of securing the means of living in the comfort and luxury to which we have been accustomed in later years—all this struggle coupled, moreover, if not with a general disbelief in the existence of a future state of reward and punishment, at least with a general conviction that knowledge as to a future life is and always will be unobtainable? To what extent has the bitterness of this struggle during the last twenty years alone already changed the American?

DANIEL F. KELLOGG.

THE PASSING OF THE GENTLEWOMAN

BY HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

IN the present phases of the eternal adjustment between the sexes there are many strange signs, portents, and tendencies. These have been given scant attention by the heated and dishevelled Amazons who carry on the siege against intrenched masculinity. Nor has masculinity itself pondered much upon the possible social results of this sex rebellion. The phenomena take place in the background of the battle, after the skirted legions have passed, and the structures, fired by Woman the Anarch, lie in ruins. They are phenomena that affect womankind in the mass—slowly and almost imperceptibly—in a manner resembling the gradual advance of a new season upon the sex, at present a sober autumnal season in which colors fade and harsh, bleak outlines are revealed. While woman has been conquering new territory, much of it desert land, she has also been losing great tracts of an old and magnificent realm in which her sovereignty had never been disputed. This was the realm of Ladydom—the immemorial empire of the gentlewoman. Every drawing-room was a province of this empire, every hostess an absolute queen in her own social microcosm. To-day both the power and the position of the lady are threatened. The ancient prerogatives are being annulled and deliberately discarded. Much that was false is crumbling into ruin, but also much that was fine.

The modern woman has realized that this queen, this stately arbiter of fashion, decorum, and social form, was little less than a prisoner. She was one who retained her prestige only so long as she exercised a cold and close restraint upon her natural self, subordinated her individuality, and lived in a sacrosanct seclusion with blinds drawn upon most of the unruly turbulence and unpleasant truths of life. She was