

Aliens Within



“The New Talmud ” (The Newspaper Seller)

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Our Gates

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“The Wayfarer”

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When the Klan Rules

The Giant Begins to Rule Us

By STANLEY FROST

THE really vital strength, the true hope or menace, of the Ku Klux Klan lies in politics. It is there that it can produce the greatest effect, cause the most stunning impact on our lives, exert the deepest influence on the Nation. Its social, economic, and spiritual activities, its terrorism and boycotting and possible violence, are important enough in all conscience and will make or break thousands of lives, but compared to what it may do in politics they are trifles. For through politics the Klan may rule America.

It has already started; it expects to make its rule secure and as complete as it wishes within a single year!

This hope is no wild dream. In sober truth there is a very fair chance that the Klan may succeed. It will surely go far toward it, though just how far no one can even guess till the smoke has blown away after the November elections. But its success will be startling unless there comes one of those miracles which are always possible in politics, and almost never happen. In fact, the chance for a sweeping Klan victory—no matter which party wins—is about as good as the chance for Coolidge to be elected. This does not imply that he is the Klan candidate—it has not yet picked its man—but illustrates how well justified is its hope that it will win in the play of skill and run of luck in our great National game.

The Klan's political power is already large, for, as was pointed out in the first article of this series, it has elected men of its choice to controlling places in six States, has dominated the elections in half a hundred Congressional districts, and has won complete victories in many hundreds of towns, counties, and small cities, to say nothing of throwing the whole political world into spasms. It has already shown power, in short, about three times that of the Non-Partisan League and double that of the Populists in their best days.

But this is only the beginning. At the coming elections the Klan expects—not merely hopes, but confidently expects—to win more than twenty States, most of the local elections inside those States and hundreds outside them.

This is far from impossible. The Klan's present political power was won

THE Klan hopes to have a controlling voice in our National Government. It hopes to have twelve million members by election time. Will these hoped-for twelve millions act upon the "Word" of the Klan?

with far fewer and far less well-disciplined members than answer its roll-calls to-day. Two years ago in the Congressional elections it had less than 200,000 votes. Last fall, when it scored so heavily, it had about 3,000,000. To-day it has some 4,500,000, and by election time it confidently counts on having 12,000,000. This doubtless includes many unhatched chickens, but even if the Klan growth continues at the average rate of the last three months—and the rate has increased steadily during that time—it will have close to nine million! And nine million votes is more than a third of the largest vote ever cast. Cleverly used, it can get almost anything. When we recall the influence that has been exerted by the two million German hyphenates or the three million Jews, the possible power of nine million Klansmen, or even of eight or seven or six or five, begins to be clear.

Out for Victory

THE Klan intends to win. Its leaders believe that a victory will give it freedom from the persecutions and prosecutions which have plagued it so far, give it a chance to consolidate its power and trim off its excrescences and make certain internal reforms they dare not attempt yet, and let it prove to the world the worth of its theories and programme. More, they believe that they will have difficulty in even holding the organization together without a victory, and that it is absolutely necessary if they are to keep on growing. They realize, too, how fast their mushroom growth will crumble under any adversity. For all these reasons they are gambling heavily on this one card.

So they have focused all their efforts

on politics. They do not admit it, but I am convinced that this is the true explanation of several of the present abuses in the Klan: the acceptance of riffraff members, the carelessness about collecting dues and even initiation fees, the tolerance of grafters and self-seeking leaders in minor places. All will help till and at the election, therefore all will be tolerated till then; then the Klan can clean house.

This explains, too, the tremendous pressure behind the kluxing which is absorbing most of the funds of the order, the devotion of the great secret information service to the collection of political "dope," the transfer to Washington of most of the high executives (headquarters remains at Atlanta, but little is done there), and the busy establishment of a Klan-controlled press, and a dozen other lesser symptoms. If the Klan fails to achieve political ambitions, it will not be for want of using every ounce of strength it possesses.

So far as local elections and local governments are concerned, the control which the Klan seeks is practically absolute; there are limitations on its National ambitions which will be explained in the following article. And in these local campaigns the chief difficulty that the Klan has and will have is not so much with its opponents as inside its own ranks.

The most numerous of the various breeds of parasites with which the Klan is afflicted is composed of cheap politicians who see a chance to get jobs or graft they have been unable to reach in ordinary politics, or to hold on to places or profits they are in danger of losing. Blatherskites, crooks, grafters, chronic kickers, chronic candidates, criminals dependent on political pull, has-beens and all the flotsam of political life have grabbed at the Fiery Cross as a hope of salvation. They are so obstreperous that one political observer told me that in his State the whole Klan movement was "an attempt of the political scrap-heap to seize the Government." Along with these, too, there has gone into the Klan a swarm of fanatics and world-savers who are trying to get it to support every known crack-brained and half-baked reform. Witness the "monkey bill" to prevent the teaching of evolution, which was