

►► The Passing of King Wheat ◀◀

THE hammering publicity that for years has been given to the unsatisfactory phases of agriculture has created a widespread impression that practically all farmers are bumping on the bare rim of bankruptcy. The bad news about farming goes to market, to Washington, and every place else; the good news stays at home. Gloom gets the advertising. Naturally the country in general believes that agriculture is a steadily declining business, and that any one who is not a farmer is fortunate. Some farmers are rich, some are on the ragged edge of poverty. The general average lies between these extremes. The idea that all farmers are broke is as ridiculous as it would be to believe that all bankers are wise.

Agriculture is too sizable a business to be killed off by bad news. Year in and year out the farms of the United States produce about twelve and a half billions in new wealth. The "distressed" farmer is just the "window dressing." The legendary farm custom of putting all the big potatoes at the top of the barrel has been reversed; only the little potatoes have been on public exhibition.

We have about six million farms, of all sorts and kinds, from three acres up. Agriculture, then, consists of some six million farmers, their families, land and possessions. Without exception, these farmers are human beings—blond and dark, tall and short, competent and incompetent, lazy and industrious—the mine run of humanity, differing in no essential respect except occupation from city people. Any six million heads of families in the world do differ vastly amongst themselves. That in itself is enough to brand as silly any inclination to lump them into a single classification. But they do have votes—and they have troubles and problems, like all the rest of the human race. Politicians being in politics, it is natural that a farm problem, involving people with so many million votes, should become a political issue.

Take wheat, for instance. The staff of life is down. In certain areas, well known for producing highly vociferous statesmen, wheat is the major crop. Some of these areas are poorly adapted for anything but wheat, and wheat became a politician and went to Washington. The price of wheat became news, usually bad news. It became a matter of grave political concern, and very properly so, but in consequence its importance in the public mind has been magnified fearfully out of proportion to its actual importance. For all sight was

By WHEELER McMILLEN

The general impression is that the American farming industry has completely collapsed. While many farmers, especially wheat and cotton growers, are in genuine distress, others who have diversified are not yet in the hands of the sheriff. This article deals with some of the little-known facts about our greatest industry, which is undergoing a great revolution but is still going ahead.

lost of the fact that wheat actually constitutes but six per cent of the total average gross yearly income of farmers. *Six per cent!*

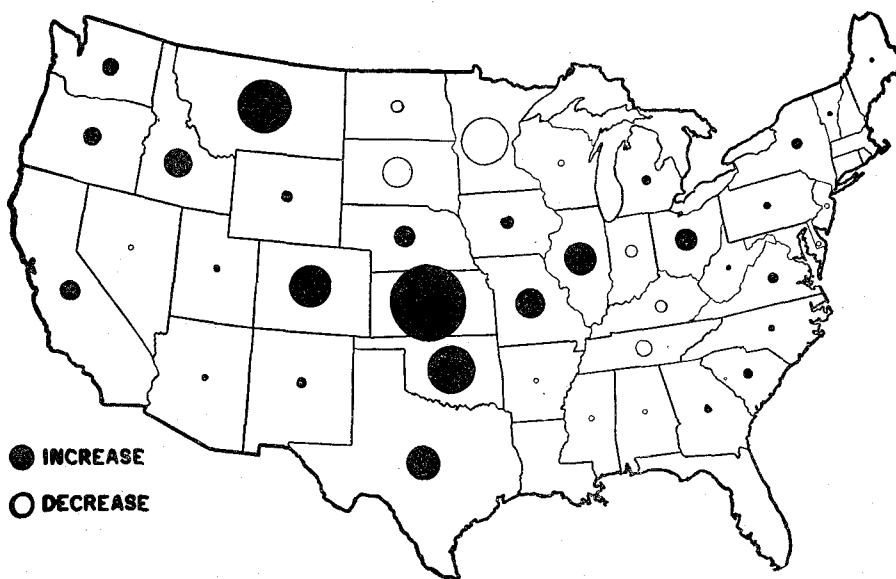
The hen is more important by a half than wheat. Poultry and poultry products account for nine per cent of total agricultural income in the gross, and still more in the net, since they usually afford a decent margin of net profit. And the old cow, never gone into politics very extensively, is more than three times as important as wheat. Dairy products bring more than twenty per cent of agricultural income. Then there are corn and livestock, fruit, truck and garden crops, and scores of other commodities that swell the final total. The diversity of elements that enter into the national agricultural picture may be easily comprehended when one con-

siders that California alone puts into the markets one hundred and eighty different farm crops and products.

If wheat were abandoned altogether, a sizable dent would be made in American agriculture, and much distress would follow, but the farm industry certainly would not be wrecked, except in the sparse one-crop wheat areas. This one useful cereal, contributing its six per cent to the farm income total, furnishes agriculture with half its trouble and still more of the industry's bad advertising. An ample share of the remainder traces to cotton, a crop grown largely by the most inefficient practices, in a region badly infested with demagogues.

While the politicians and farm organization spokesmen have been energetically housetopping the bad news about agriculture being sick in bed, farmers have been out in the field hard at work. The proceeds of their toil and intelligence have enabled farmers to spend half a billion dollars a year for automobiles. That, incidentally, is the exact amount of the Federal Farm Board's revolving relief fund. Five million farmers have motor cars that have placed nearly every farm within a few minutes of a fair-sized trading center.

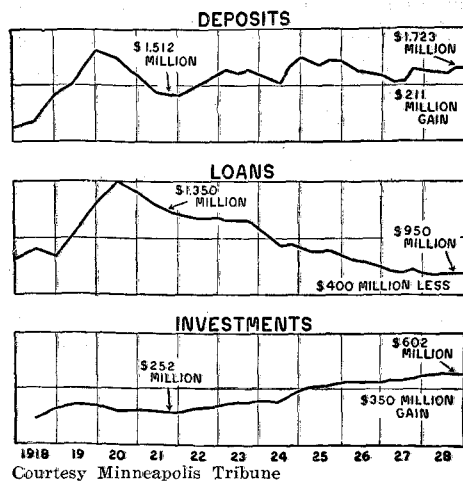
Particular evidence that the so-called depression has not spelled destitution is apparent in the radio figures. The loud speaker was not heard in the land until after the initial farm deflation of ten years ago, and now two million farm homes, a third of the entire number,



Courtesy Minneapolis Tribune

WHY WE HAVE A WHEAT SURPLUS AND A FARM BOARD

The net increase of wheat acreage between 1913 and 1923 was 13,744,000 acres. States marked by black dots increased wheat acreage 17,629,000 acres; states marked with circles decreased acreage 3,885,000, and most of them are still decreasing. By turning from wheat to dairying and diversified farming the four Northwest states—Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Montana—increased their total farm revenues \$661,166,000 or 71 per cent between 1921 and 1929. King Wheat has been dethroned!



LESS WHEAT, STRONGER BANKS

As the Northwestern farmers dropped wheat and diversified, banking conditions improved, as shown in this graph of the Ninth Federal Reserve District for the years 1918-1929. More deposits, fewer and safer loans, and a great gain in investments

have radio sets, all purchased during the decade of farm relief. Like the motor car, the radio is a business asset as well as a pleasure. Daily market broadcasts enable farmers to inform themselves promptly about the state of prices, and are a material aid in improving farm incomes.

More than a sixth of all farm homes have electric lights. About 650,000 are connected with high lines, and over a half million have individual lighting plants. Each year now some 150,000 more farms are lighted, and the galvanic hired man is forthwith put to work furnishing power. A public utility statistician, who was recently estimating the rural power market, was himself amazed to find that the electrification of all the farms would lead to greater consumption of kilowatts than would the electrification of all the steam railroads.

Despite all these expenditures for the machinery of the modern American standard of living, the agricultural balance sheet indicates healthy solvency. A hard-up farm owner always has recourse to mortgaging his land, but the foreclosure man has to nail up his sign before the owner can be put out of business. The possession of a mortgaged homestead has long since ceased to be a disgrace (ask almost any city home owner or look at the bonds issued by almost any industry!). The sheriff will have a long wait before he gets around to all the barn doors, because most of the owners so far have not even put on the plasters. Nearly two-thirds of the total number of farms, and nearly four-fifths of the total value of farms, are wholly free from mortgage indebtedness. The figures in percentages are 64 per cent of all farms, and 78 per cent of total farm value that are totally unencumbered.

There can be a lot of borrowing on the old farm yet. In bleeding Kansas 59 per cent of the farms are mortgage free; and even in poor old mortgage-ridden Iowa, where land speculation rode the whirlwind without directing the storm, 44 per cent of the farms have no mortgages to worry their owners.

"What!" asks a protesting friend of the farmer. "What about the vast acreages of farm land upon which the insurance companies and the land banks have had to foreclose?"

Well, that's a sad story that doesn't prove much except that the lending agencies took mortgages on a considerable number of tracts that were thought to be farms when wheat was two dollars



Courtesy Minneapolis Tribune

A LEADER IN DETHRONING WHEAT
Frederick E. Murphy, publisher of The Minneapolis Tribune, for the last ten years has led a movement for diversified and better farming methods in the Northwest. In his territory farm revenues increased from \$926,950,000 in 1921 to \$1,588,116,000 in 1929, a gain of 71 per cent

a bushel and cotton twenty cents a pound, but which became marginal lands when prices were halved. Such areas account for the greater share, by far, of the acreages foreclosed. Much of the foreclosed land should never have been plowed. Speculation, excessive capitalization of land and poor farming methods account for another large share. Indeed, poor farmers probably run a close race with poor soil in causing foreclosures.

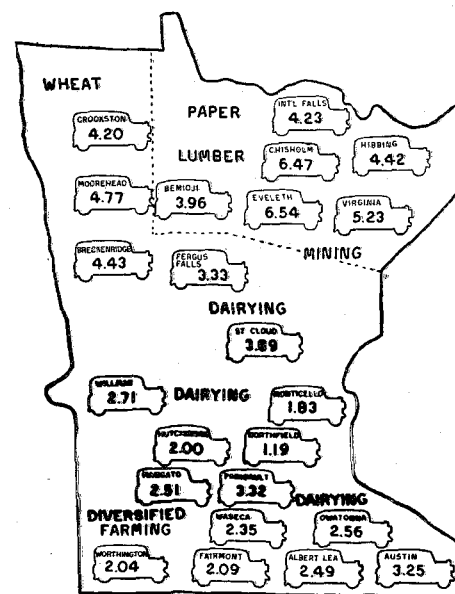
Not only are nearly two-thirds of all farms entirely unmortgaged, but of the plastered third the majority are yielding up payments on interest and principal like clockwork. That area of agricultural America embraced within the boundaries of Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma, the Ninth Federal Land Bank District, may be considered typical mortgage country. It includes good

land and poor, good farmers and indifferent, and quite a bit more than the average proportion of wheat land. John Fields, president of the Federal Loan Bank of Wichita, which holds approximately one-eighth of all the farm mortgages in these four states, says this:

We have 30,800 borrowers, using \$101,000,000 advanced through this bank. On January 31st, only two per cent. of these were more than ninety days delinquent. Well under ten per cent., 2,678 to be exact, were in any way delinquent. Many of these owed only a dollar or so on partial payments that had been made before, while the majority of them doubtless had their checks in the mail or paid within a few days. At the close of 1930 our total delinquencies amounted to only 43 cents for each \$100 of net loans outstanding. Wheat accounts for only a fourth of Kansas farm income. Live-stock provides half of it. We don't do so badly out here. We closed 1930 with only 224 farms acquired through foreclosure, as contrasted with 267 that we owned at the end of 1929.

Except in drouth areas, and these are relatively small in total area, farmers and their families know but little of the heart-breaking troubles of the unemployed. They are learning of it, however, from relatives and friends who were attracted by high wages when industrial prosperity seemed limitless, and who have straggled back home or are writing for help. The result is that farm lands are in demand in the midst of an agricultural depression, and that those who have farm homes will let all else go, if necessary, to hold them.

Marginal lands and marginal farmers, the kind that make a little money when the goose hangs high and barely exist

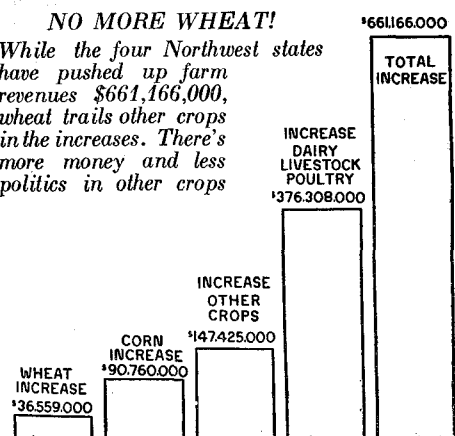


Courtesy Minneapolis Tribune

LESS WHEAT, MORE AUTOMOBILES
Prosperity and diversified farming reflected in automobile registrations in Minnesota. In the wheat belt, one car to every four persons; in dairy and diversified farming region, one car to every two persons

NO MORE WHEAT!

While the four Northwest states have pushed up farm revenues \$661,166,000, wheat trails other crops in the increases. There's more money and less politics in other crops



Courtesy Minneapolis Tribune

at other times, are continually prominent in the making of farm problems. Usually yielding a scanty living from excessive effort, the marginal farm, after all, is a home and a guarantee of most of the necessities of existence. A period of low prices and a succession of natural calamities plus last year's drouth was necessary to create so extraordinary a spectacle as farmers actually hungry. Comparable to the recurring joblessness of city workers, the situation in Arkansas was an occasion for national amazement. Even that occurred in a section where poor farm methods prevail and one-crop farming is the general habit. No one went hungry in even the driest counties where sound farm practices are followed.

An eminent business statistician, Dr. Daniel Starch, has lately issued the results of his comprehensive study of the income of the American family. Taking the buying power of the family dollar in a city of 25,000 as 100 cents, he shows that in a great city like New York the costs of rent and living shrink the family dollar to 79 cents, while the dollar of the family down on the farm stretches to 119 cents in purchasing power. In dollars the New York City family income is \$3,306 and the farm family income is \$2,016, or 39 per cent lower. Figured in terms of 79-cent dollars in New York, and 119-cent dollars on the farm, the difference in buying power is only eight per cent. Dr. Starch thus helps to account for the mystery of how all the automobiles, radios, electrical installations, to say nothing of the silk stockings and new furniture, find their way down the rural routes. But there is more to the answer.

"You can't deny," insist the professional gloom dispensers, "that the prices of farm products have been 'way down. We can't have a prosperous agriculture without high prices."

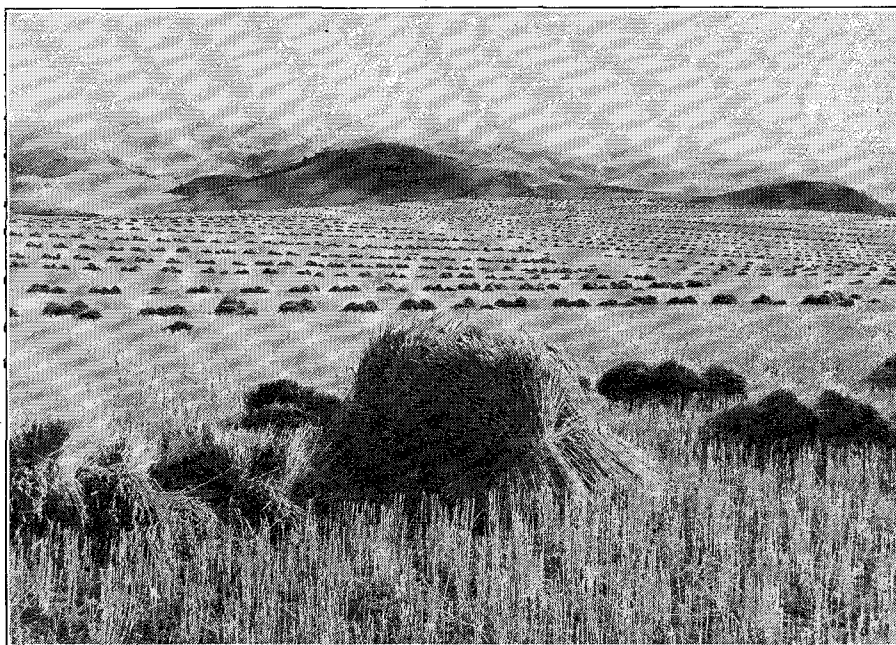
The answer is that we can, and do, have prosperous farmers without high prices. Prices, as any business man knows, are only one factor in net earn-

ings. Costs are highly important, and so is volume. You subtract the cost from the price and multiply by the volume and there's your income.

Smart men out on the real farms have been steadily shaving down costs. They have built up soil fertility until less effort brings more bushels. They expand the output of each worker, through utilizing the new knowledge and new methods that have flooded agriculture since the War. Large numbers of farmers admittedly have not caught up with the procession. A farm operator whose methods were thoroughly up-to-date ten years ago is sadly behind times now if he hasn't changed. Many of the cost-cutting machines and methods in use on the farms of 1931 were not even in existence a decade ago. The progressive adoption of new methods, permitting production costs lower and individual output higher than were ever dreamed of, accounts for the satisfactory incomes enjoyed by thousands of farmers in the face of declining prices. Muscle has been replaced on the farms by power until it has been estimated that the average farm has at its service the equiva-

surplus is defined as "that portion of a commodity in excess of the quantity that can be sold at a profit to the average producer." If the average producer's costs are reduced enough he will make a profit and there will be no surplus. Surplus can be eliminated either by lowering the quantity or the costs. The countless farmers whose costs are already below the line get along, but there will always be some farmers who won't get along, just as there will always be ditch diggers and wheelbarrow shovers. The land may always have more than its proportion of such, since no place affords so easy a way of living to the incompetent. Their presence will dull the rosy hues of farm statistics, but agriculture will, as usual, keep on doing business at the old stand.

The truth about the farm situation, then, covers a lot of territory. To say that agriculture is solvent is true. To say that some farmers are hard up, some are getting along fairly well, and that many are making very good money, is true. To say that the professional complainers have grossly misled the public into believing that nothing is right with



Ewing Galloway

NOT THE GOLD MINE IT WAS IN WAR YEARS

Thousands of acres of virgin soil in Montana turned to wheat growing during the high price period of the war and post-war years, but the Northwestern states are now reducing their wheat acreage and turning to dairying and diversified farming. By diversification, Montana has increased farm revenues nearly \$90,000,000 or about 81 per cent for the period of the last seven years

lent of at least 190 manual laborers.

Agricultural pessimism has been promoted by failure to understand that what is called surplus production does not necessarily prevent profits. The Farm Board has diligently canvassed the crossroads to persuade farmers to curtail acreage to prevent surpluses, to all intents ignoring the fact that surpluses can also be prevented by the more practicable plan of reducing costs. A

agriculture is also unquestionably true.

An outstanding truth is that agriculture is undergoing a period of violent readjustment. There are laggards who follow the methods of years ago, but a new generation of farmers, alert to modern conditions, graduates of modern schools, steadily comes on the land. Four and a quarter million farm boys and girls have taken the work of the 4-H

(Continued on Page 191)

⇒ Drinking Mothers ⇐

By EUDORA R. RICHARDSON

SINCE Noah planted a vineyard and drank of the wine and was drunken, the drinking father has been an integral part of the social order. The children of men have been about equally divided between the descendants of Ham, who saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without, and the descendants of Shem and Japheth, who took a garment and laid it upon their shoulders and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father, keeping their faces turned from the distressing spectacle. The drinking mother, moreover, but for a few sporadic exceptions which history has been unkind enough to disclose, appears to have an advent strangely coincident with the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead.

In the halcyon days when a double standard gave men the right to vices not shared by wives, when gentlemen smoked and drank in the drawing room while women talked—harmlessly, we hope—in the sedate parlor, ladies seldom partook of the cup that inebriates. As long as the working man could stop in the saloon for the bracer that helped him endure the ordeals of domesticity and wives attended to Martha's cumbering cares, women had little chance to cultivate the masculine method of heightening joy and lessening sorrow. Now, however, that the saloon has been transferred to the home, drinking has become a feminine accomplishment.

In fairness to the temperance leaders, it should be admitted that prohibition is only one of the contributing factors responsible for the existence of the highly respectable woman who drinks. The machine age, opening the doors of the home for the importation of products and the exportation of women; equal suffrage;

the War; and the widened horizon, which tends to minimize the importance of community opinion, are all to blame, but not so profoundly as woman's recent realization that her essential make-up does not differ from her husband's and that other joys surpass those to be derived from immolation.

The Victorian woman delighted in martyrdom; the modern woman tends toward hedonism. Our mothers and grandmothers were not given to emotional indulgence of any kind. They loved in pale passivity. Whatever sex impulses they may have inherited from incontinent fathers, they willingly converted into repression complexes. It was a virtue to endure a husband's passion; it was immodest to respond to it. Through gentle acquiescence they believed that they not only held the love of their husbands, but amassed stars that would later adorn heavenly crowns. Having accepted the pedestal and its niche, they managed to acquire some of the attributes belonging to white marble. Verily, the Victorian lady took as much pleasure in her virtues as her husband took in his vices. The wife of the drinking father by her simulated fortitude entrenched herself in the affections of husband and children and created the sustaining legend of holiness, which was adequate compensation for all she missed.

The destruction of the pedestal—it matters not by what means the vandalism was accomplished—brought the feet of women in contact with solid earth. If they were no longer to be worshiped, it would be just as well to get a bit of genuine enjoyment out of life. We explored man's realm and found it interesting.

We entered business with more or less satisfactory degrees of success; we moved about unchaperoned; we voted; we acknowledged sex and were pleased; we vocalized our repressions and saw them vanish; we found cigarettes pleasant to the taste and soothing to the nerves. In other words, Pygmalion lost his Galatea and got a fallible and companionable human being in her place.

Deplore it if you will,

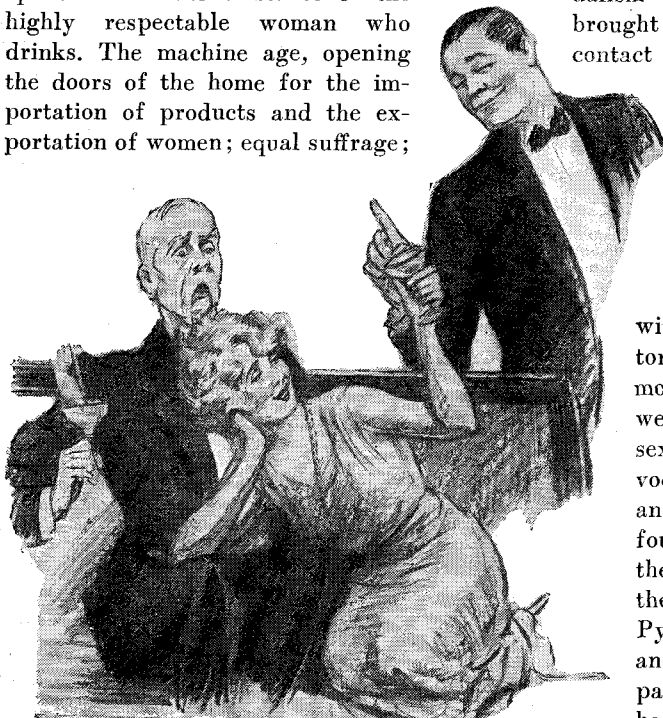
the fact remains, nevertheless, that the number of men who drink is scarcely in excess of the number of women. The exigencies of the situation not only have given reformers new fields to harrow, but have caused society quickly to readjust standards. Women are no longer judged by the old measuring stick scaled to mark off superficial conduct. They may still be good wives and mothers even though they imbibe too freely at neighborhood gatherings. The modern woman who is adjudged worth while must have positive assets and not merely a vacuum caused by the absence of social vices.

Men have found, moreover, that love for their wives does not have its basis in that nebulous thing formerly known as respect. The husband who must look after his erring wife at a party discovers old streams of tenderness which have been dammed by woman's increasing independence of him at other times. The male still yearns to protect his own. Now that the hazards of the Paleolithic and Neolithic ages have gone forever, now that the tourney and the duel no longer exist, it is fortunate for the fine egotism of the male that women still need to be protected, if only from the wares of the bootlegger. Fortunately, a man can drink more than a woman. Under the mellowing influence of several cocktails the sense of superiority, of which modernity has almost completely divested him, returns as he hovers about his wife, seeing that her drinks are mild and that her glass is not too frequently refilled. Again he is the protecting male, glorying in his own strength and in the frailty of beautiful woman. If you are under the misapprehension that chivalry died with the Crusades, listen some evening to the average husband's defense of his semi-intoxicated wife.

"It takes so little to make Jane's head spin," he will say. "Besides, this stuff we're getting these days is so unreliable that an inexperienced drinker doesn't know how to gauge her capacity."

Then, if Jane's feet, as well as her head, grow unsteady, he becomes wholly paternal, takes her home, puts her to bed, and probably applies wet cloths to her forehead during the rest of the night. Though he may indulge the next morning in a bit of fatherly advice, administered more or less sternly, he instantly resents any criticism that may come from some one else.

While prohibition has undoubtedly augmented the amount of drinking among the middle and upper classes, it seems to have decreased the number



"It takes so little to make Jane's head spin"