

chinery. Thus the image of this state as a stronghold of quaint, old-fashioned thinking is largely the creation of magazines like *Profiles* and *Yankee*, abetted by the publicity writers in the state's department of economic development. Yankee cussedness is good for the tourist trade.

"The popular mind regards this as a woody state," said Dr. Robert Dishman, professor of government at the state university. "That is true. New Hampshire is second only to Maine in the amount of its land that is covered by trees. But it also ranks second—behind Connecticut—in the extent to which its labor force is engaged in industrial production. Between the extremes, New Hampshire represents the American experience fairly well."

Dishman and another member of the faculty recently completed a study of "barometric counties"—those geographical prophets that always vote for the winner. The statistics indicate that New Hampshire is indeed a remarkable barometer of American voting patterns. For sixty-four years, from McKinley through Kennedy, two New Hampshire counties have consistently picked the next President. Astonishingly, there are only five such counties in the entire nation. In their study, which will be read at Brown University in April, the U.N.H. professors demonstrate that these barometric counties cling to the national average on almost every index that political science can devise. This suggests that New Hampshire successfully launched the Eisenhower and Kennedy campaigns not because its primary is first but because its voters do accurately reflect the thinking of the American electorate.

Does this mean that George Gallup can disband his pollsters and move to New Hampshire? Alas, no. A barometer is reliable only as long as it is left to its own devices. Between the excited maneuvering of the candidates and the extensive press coverage, New Hampshire has not had this sort of privacy for quite some time. "We have become self-conscious," Dr. Dishman said, with the sadness of one who foresees the loss of two of his barometric counties, "and a self-conscious man is no longer typical."

VIEWS & REVIEWS



A Southerner's Answer To the Negro Question

C. VANN WOODWARD

IT IS NOW three-quarters of a century since Lewis Harvie Blair of Richmond, Virginia, published his book in defense of Negro equality. An uncompromising attack on racial segregation, discrimination, and injustice of any kind, his book demanded full civil rights for the Negro, equal access to hotels, theatres, and all places of amusement and public accommodations, unrestricted franchise and political rights, as well as integration of churches and public schools. Accompanying these demands was a blistering and iconoclastic attack on the dogmas of white supremacy and Negro inferiority, the plantation legend of slavery, the paternalistic tradition of race relations, the black-domination picture of Reconstruction, and the complacent optimism of the New South school of economists.

Published in 1889, Blair's *Prosperity of the South Dependent on the Elevation of the Negro* attracted little attention and had little influence. It was soon forgotten and has been neglected ever since.*

The quick oblivion is not hard

*A new edition, entitled *A Southern Prophecy*, will be published next month by Little, Brown. This essay is part of Professor Woodward's introduction.

to explain. The book appeared not long before the great racist reaction that overtook the country in the 1890's. In the South the reaction found expression in white-supremacy propaganda, segregation laws, poll taxes, literacy and property tests, white primaries, and other devices for disfranchising the Negroes. It was accompanied by an increase in lynching, riots, and other forms of violence against the minority race. It resulted in driving the Negro from all forums and avenues of political life, in stripping him of many of the civil rights and defenses he had gained through the Reconstruction amendments, and in reducing him to a despised and segregated outcast.

By the end of the century the South had reached a consensus on race policy. Its mind was closed. The debate was frowned down or smashed. Conformity was demanded of all. The ensuing rigidity of regional attitude is reminiscent of that which occurred over the slavery issue in the early 1830's. Under these circumstances a book by a Southerner of authentic lineage and high standing that challenged every dogma of the new consensus from top to bottom was about as welcome and popular as a red-hot abolitionist tract by a com-

parable Southern author in the 1850's.

BUT IN 1889 the great freeze had not yet taken place. Alternatives were still available. Real choices had to be made. Many of those issues about which there was soon to be such stiff conformity and incorrigible rigidity were still open questions. And in Virginia there was rather more hesitancy about closing off the debate and clamping down conformity than there was in other Southern states.

Charles E. Wynes, the most recent and thorough student of race relations in Virginia, finds that "the most distinguishing factor in the complexity of social relations between the races was that of inconsistency. From 1870-1900, there was no generally accepted code of racial mores." During that period of thirty years, according to this scholar, "at no time was it the general demand of the white populace that the Negro be disfranchised and white supremacy made the law of the land." The era of Jim Crow was still to come, and its first formal appearance in Virginia was not until 1900, when a law requiring the separation of the races on railroad cars was adopted. Up until that time, according to Mr. Wynes, "the Negro sat where he pleased and among the white passengers on perhaps a majority of the state's railroads." The same was true of streetcars and, with greater variation and more exceptions, of other public accommodations and places of entertainment. While he often encountered rebuff and even eviction, "occasionally the Negro met no segregation when he entered restaurants, bars, waiting rooms, theatres, and other public places of amusement." Whatever the risks and uncertainties and the crosscurrents of ambivalence and ambiguity, there was still a considerable range of flexibility, tolerance, and uninhibited contact and association in relations between the races in Virginia.

In the political life of the state during this period the Negroes, being a majority of the population in forty of the ninety-nine counties, played a prominent and sometimes crucial part. They held numerous public offices, elective and appointive. There were Negro members of the

General Assembly, the oldest representative legislative body in the New World, in every session from 1869 to 1891. Negroes voted in large numbers, and while they were overwhelmingly Republican, their votes were sought by both of the major parties and with striking success by two important third parties in the period, the Readjusters and the Populists. A split between radicals and moderates in the Republican Party deprived the Negroes of the prominent role they played during Reconstruction in some other Southern states. But they compensated for this in large measure by the part they played in the Readjuster Party, which drove the conservatives from power in 1879 and took control of the state until 1883. Combining with impoverished and discontented white farmers and workers in support of the Readjusters, the Negroes assisted in giving Virginia a foretaste of Populism and the most liberal reform administration the state ever had—before or since.

Returning to power in 1884, the conservatives rushed through a new election law designed to defraud Negro voters and invite ballot-box corruption. The law was effectively used for this purpose, but Negro political strength still remained formidable. In the Presidential election of 1888 the Democratic candidate won by a narrow margin, with 151,979 for Cleveland and 150,449 for Harrison. In the same year the first (and last) Negro, John Mercer Langston, was elected to Congress from Virginia. At the same time the people of the state voted down a proposal to hold a convention to amend the liberal Reconstruction constitution of 1868, a move that would have made possible the curtailment of Negro suffrage.

SUCH was the temper of mind, the balance of forces, and the accommodation of races in Virginia in 1889. It was one of the pivotal moments of history when public commitment and decision were still in suspense, when to all appearances the balance could swing either way. Voices of reaction, racism, and fanaticism were already calling for extreme measures—for disfranchisement, for segregation, for rigid conformity of white supremacy and a closed society.

Their influence was already being felt in the lower South and they were at work in the upper South as well. But in most of the Southern states, and in Virginia particularly, there was still strong resistance to the fanatics. There were even Southerners who denounced the existing compromise of racial accommodation and called for radical advance to a new order of equal rights and racial justice. They were few in number, but there was a willingness to hear them out. The situation was, for the moment, still fluid. There was a disposition to suspend judgment, to consider alternatives, and to ponder the future with an open mind.

The role of the iconoclast was obviously congenial to the Blair temperament. This was evident from the zest with which in his book on the Negro problem he pitched into his attack on cherished and hallowed Southern myths, prejudices, credos, anything that stood in the way of the new social doctrine he preached.

His first target was the brightest and most conspicuous on the contemporary scene—the New South gospel. In 1889 this doctrine had reached a peak of popularity on the eve of the death of its major prophet, Henry W. Grady of Atlanta, the famous orator and editor. Grady left scores of ardent apostles and a host of converts. A message of such cheerful optimism held great attraction for a hope-starved people. Its adherents proclaimed that the cloud of depression and poverty was lifting, that prosperity was rolling in, that great cities like those of the golden East were springing up out of ashes, and manufacturing industries were growing at a magic pace. The great leap forward into the age of industrialization could be accomplished without any painfully protracted period of capital accumulation merely by will power and enough publicity to attract eager Northern and foreign investment capital to abundant natural resources and the cheap labor supply. The era of a depressed, underdeveloped, colonial, raw-material economy was at an end. The states of the late Confederacy, moreover, could march triumphantly into the promised land of industrialization without abandoning many of the values and loyalties and habits of the past. These included white

Lewis Harvie Blair was born in Richmond on June 28, 1834, and died there on November 26, 1916. The Blair name began to figure prominently in colonial times and continued to grow in distinction through the Civil War years.

He enlisted as a private in the Confederate Army in March, 1862. His later description of his military service is revealing: "more than three years wasted in the vain effort to maintain that most monstrous institution, African slavery, the real, tho' States Rights were the ostensible cause of the War."

Lewis more than recouped the

family fortunes and status, for it is doubtful that any of the three preceding generations of American Blairs lived in finer style or occupied higher social positions in the city. Whatever may explain the rebellion of this Richmond aristocrat, it was hardly loss of status. Blair knew he would be accused of outrageous motives but said he would "patiently bear the odium attached to such charges." "I may be presumptuous," he frankly admitted, "but my Southern ancestry, birth, rearing, residence and interest preserve me from the charge of invidiousness." At least no one could call him an outsider.

supremacy, the comfortable assurance that the degraded mass of Negroes knew their place and would keep to it, the inexhaustible patience of the impoverished whites, and a large assortment of sentimental ties to the Lost Cause and the old régime.

Blair struck contemptuously at the "brag, strut, and bluster" of the boosters and the prosperity propaganda of such journals as the *Baltimore Manufacturers' Record*. "Judging by these sheets," he wrote, "one would naturally imagine that the South is a region where poverty is unknown and where everybody is industriously and successfully laying up wealth," that "the South is indeed a happy Arcadia." It was true that New South propaganda had managed to persuade a few Northern journalists and capitalists that it was indeed a "happy Arcadia." But "these gentlemen, having been hurried through hundreds of miles in luxurious palace coaches, have practically been blindfolded as to the condition of the country passed through, and not having their eyes unbandaged until in the middle of furnaces, rolling mills, and all the activities of a manufacturing center, they are dazzled by what they see." The trouble was they had lost sight of "the real South—that is to say, of ninety-five per cent thereof."

Unlike the New South, Lewis Blair's "real South" was a backward land, a land of wretched poverty for "the six millions of Negroes who are in the depths of indigence," as well as the ninety per cent of the whites who had "nothing beyond the commonest necessities of life," if that. His beloved South was a retarded

region of "dilapidated homesteads," of "fenceless plantations," of illiteracy, of chronic underemployment. To prove his contentions and counter those of "devout believers in the New South," he presented comparative statistics on property values, savings, urban growth, manufacturing, and production. Crude as they were as statistics, his figures served to make his point that the South lagged far behind the American procession, that its people were too poor to accumulate savings and industrialize their economy, and that they lived in a quasi-colonial economy of one-crop agriculture producing raw materials and importing manufactures.

AS AN ACTIVE businessman and manufacturer, Blair knew that there were "many causes conspiring to the poverty" of the South, and he listed several, concluding with the degraded status of the Negro. "Each of these causes," he wrote, "would greatly retard the prosperity of the South, or indeed of any country, but all of them combined, destructive as they would necessarily be to prosperity, are not as serious and as fatal as the last named cause, namely: The Degradation of the Negro." It was the most "far-reaching cause of all," for it served "to intensify all the other drawbacks." The slight regard for sanctity of Negro life and civil rights undermined the sanctity of life and civil rights for all. And similarly the miserable standards of housing, health, diet, education, and morals imposed on the degraded race dragged down the standards of the whole population, whites included, in all these vital areas. The only way out for the

South, therefore, was the elevation of the Negro—the immediate elevation of the race.

True to his "hard doctrine" of realism, Blair denied that he rested his argument on the demands of justice, morality, or religion—however strong those demands might be. His was the argument of self-interest based "simply on economic ground, on the ground of advantage to the whites." The Southern white man must be convinced that the only way out of economic stagnation and poverty lay in the elevation of the Negro—the radical and drastic elevation of the whole race. This could not be left to slow evolution. "Man's life is now too short to wait for the natural process of time." The white man "must hasten nature and take a hand himself." The remedies were of a heroic order, for the Negro "must economically, morally, and socially be born again, and self-respect, hope, and intelligence are the trinity that will work out his elevation, and they are also the rule of three to work out our own material regeneration."

But if the Negro were to remain "a despised and degraded creature, speaking with bated breath and bowing with head uncovered," if he were "to remain forever a 'nigger,' and an object of undisguised contempt, even to the lowest whites," how could he be expected to develop the self-respect, the hope, the ambition that were essential to striving and effort, self-denial and self-discipline? Why should he be expected to become anything but a clown, a drunkard, and a thief? The South was "a veritable land of caste," and so long as the caste system prevailed the Negro was doomed to servility and humiliation.

Back of the caste system was the myth of white supremacy, and for the pretensions of this dogma Blair had nothing but scorn and contempt. Admittedly race prejudice was deeply entrenched among white Americans, but it was "always a weakness," in extreme form "a badge of dishonor," and it must be eradicated. It was nonsense to hold that it was ineradicable, for it had already been abandoned by advanced nations. In England and France and in Latin nations generally the Negro was "under no political or social ban," and in Brazil he was "accorded full social and political equality." In fact, a

Virginian who had served as United States consul in Rio in the 1850's assured Blair that "he had danced with Negroes at parties and official receptions" and that many of them "were much more elegantly cultured than he was himself." Yet in our "land of the free" a man with the slightest trace of Negro blood, even one who had "rendered great services to his country or to humanity" and who had been "honored in England, France, and Germany," could never feel safe from "snubs, insults, or even kicks from the superior whites." Such conduct was unworthy of a great nation.

The Virginian was perfectly aware that his people, especially the patri-cians among them, often prided themselves on acts of kindness and deeds of genuine helpfulness toward individual Negroes and favored families and groups. "But we forget," he wrote, "that our kindness to the Negroes proceeds from the standpoint of condescension, and of assumed caste superiority, and we expect it to be received with humility and from a feeling of acknowledged caste inferiority; and if not so received by the Negroes, they are thought impudent and impertinent, and the foundation of our kindness soon dries up."

The Negro was not deceived by the whites. He knew that "this kindness springs mainly from the same benevolence that prompts consideration for their horses and cattle." He knew it was the reward for quiet and complete submission. On the surface the Negro appeared acquiescent and contented and the South peacefully and quietly adjusted in its relations. But the appearance was deceptive and the adjustment could not continue indefinitely. Shortsighted selfishness and an ancient and modern record of injustice had "raised up an enemy, silent and sullen, at our very doors." The policies of white domination, notwithstanding all paternalistic benevolence and charity and condescension, had produced "in the hearts of six millions of fellow-citizens a vast mass of smoldering enmity and bitterness, only awaiting a favorable opportunity to display itself."

IF PATERNALISTIC benevolence, condescending kindness, the restraints and indulgences of *noblesse oblige*, and all the charities and back-door

integration and half-measures were not the answer, what then was the answer? To Lewis Blair the answer was a complete end to segregation and to all forms of discrimination, favoritism, and exclusion on the ground of race or color. He put it plainly:

The Negro must be allowed free access to all hotels and other places of public entertainment; he must be allowed free admittance to all theatres and other places of public amusement; he must be allowed free entrance to all churches, and in all public and official receptions of president, governor, mayor, &c. He must not be excluded by a hostile caste sentiment. In all these things and in all these places he must, unless we wish to clip his hope and crush his self-respect, be treated precisely like the whites, not better, but no worse.

But what of the argument that "theatres, hotels, and churches are private property, and that to compel them to receive Negroes on equal terms with whites would be to correct one wrong . . . by committing another"? His answer was that although they may be private property, "they are public as regards their creation and their functions, and they are of the nature of railways, which may be private property, but which are public institutions." They were licensed by "the public, which means not some, but all the people, not whites alone, but whites and blacks." They could "as properly refuse accommodation to all whose noses indicate Semitic origin, all whose names or 'rich brogue' betray Hibernian descent . . . as to refuse similar accommodation to all whose faces are black." To shut the doors of any one of these institutions—whether church or theatre or governor's mansion—"in the faces of any portion of the community is to degrade and to humiliate it."

THERE WAS one right, held Blair, that was "the right preservative of all rights." That was the ballot, and it was "as absolutely essential for freedom as is the atmosphere for life." Yet it was denied to a great number of Negro citizens of the lower South, and had been since the overthrow of Reconstruction. This was done sporadically by intimidation

and fraud rather than consistently by legal disfranchisement, as it was later to be done. The rationalization of Negro disfranchisement was that it was necessary to prevent Negro domination and assure pure government. In Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee at the time Blair was writing, however, the Negroes voted freely and fully. Yet these states showed "greater progress and prosperity" than the other Southern states, "and certainly as much moral and intellectual development." During the administration of the Readjuster Party, Virginia "had so-called Negro rule, but the Commonwealth survived, and, in the opinion of many, was much benefited." Protracted one-party rule in Virginia, as in other Southern states, had produced nepotism, corruption, and numerous treasury defalcations. "The fear of Negro rule in the sense of the alarmists," declared Blair, "is a wild and pernicious chimeras," and those "who go around wearing the frightful scare-face" in the name of good government were "doing an untold amount of evil to the South." They not only alienated their fellow citizens, but they put a powerful lever in the hands of sectional foes. "The South would make a tremendous ado . . . if a Northern oligarchy of half the population were to claim and assume the right to vote for the whole population." If the South itself continued to do the same thing, it invited a second Reconstruction. "Better surrender now with the honors of the war, or rather with the honors of right, than to wait for years and then surrender at discretion," he warned.

IN TACKLING the racial problem in the public schools, Blair knew that he faced one of the most sensitive areas of white prejudice and fear. He had remedies to propose, he admitted, "that will clash with all of our preconceived ideas, that will be distasteful and repugnant to our prejudices, but," he stoutly maintained, "not to reason and justice." Therefore, to say that reforms were "distasteful and repugnant is really to say nothing against them," for the whole history of progress and the rise of Christianity itself were "simply an overcoming of the violent prejudices and repugnancies of the civilized world." Thus fortified by reason

and justice, the intrepid Virginia rationalist set forth his revolutionary proposal:

The remedy proposed is not a bread pill or some soothing syrup, but is a radical and far-reaching one, and is no less than the abandonment of the principle of separate schools, which principle is an efficient and certain mode of dooming to perpetual ignorance both whites and blacks in thinly settled sections.

This was a reform from which even the statesmen of Radical Reconstruction in full possession of power had shied away. And Blair admitted that unless he could convince the whites of the necessity and advantage of the reform, they would "never consent to coeducation [of the races], but will prefer to remain ignorant." He therefore marshaled a wide array of financial, practical, moral, and psychological arguments. Characteristically, he put forward practical reasons of self-interest first, but the real weight of his argument rested upon moral and psychological reasons—some of them quite prophetic and in advance of his time.

THE PRACTICAL and financial arguments were telling. The South was the poorest region of the country with the largest number of children per adult to educate. Its population was not concentrated in towns and cities but widely scattered and dispersed. On top of these enormous burdens was the self-imposed handicap of trying to maintain two separate school systems for the two races, with two corps of teachers and two sets of plant and equipment. The result was a miserably inadequate system, with poor and underpaid teachers, neglected and poorly equipped schools, ill-schooled children, and growing illiteracy. "To fight the battle of education with our present forces and present system of separate schools seems well-nigh hopeless," concluded Blair. To integrate the schools was to relieve the people of part of their burden and improve the schools for both races.

In the second place, separate or segregated schools were morally and psychologically harmful to the children of both races. The damage to the Negro children was most obvious:

Separate schools are a public proclamation to all of African or mixed blood that they are an inferior caste, fundamentally inferior and totally unfit to mingle on terms of equality with the superior caste. That this is not a temporary and ephemeral but a fundamental and caste inferiority is proven by the fact that opposition does not cease when the temporary inferiority ceases, but still operates, however cultured and refined the Negro may be. Hence it follows that separate schools brand the stigma of degradation upon one-half of the population, irrespective of character and culture, and crush their hope and self-respect, without which they can never become useful and valuable citizens.

The feeling of inferiority "thereby taught the blacks cultivates feelings of abasement and of servile fear of all whom they consider superior—sentiments totally destructive of manliness, courage, and self-respect."



If segregated schooling robbed the Negro children of incentive for achievement, it had the same effect on white children, though from an opposite cause. Since it taught them that "superiority consists in a white skin, they will naturally be satisfied with that kind of superiority, and they will not willingly undergo the tedious, painful, and patient ordeal requisite to prepare them for superiority in science, art, literature."

Integrated schools would "emancipate us from this fallacy" and teach both races that "the difference between man and man is not color, but character and conduct." They would dissipate the spirit of "oligarchy, caste, vassalage," and disseminate "correct ideas of personal liberty and equality." They would help remove the brand of degradation from the Negro and the false assumption of superiority from the white and give new incentive for achievement to both.

Those who protested that integration would demoralize the white chil-

dren "overlook the fact that from earliest childhood they have been subjected to intimate Negro association" with playmates and "the unrestrained influences of Negro nurses at the very time the mind and the heart are most susceptible to influence of every kind." If segregation were the salvation of the whites, it came too late. As for the dangers of demoralization, "History, fiction, the drama, everyday life, all abundantly illustrate the demoralizing effects of the higher upon the lower walks of society. . . . and so it is in the South in the intercourse of the two colors. . . . Demoralization, indeed!"

LOOKING to the future, Blair saw three alternatives open to the South. The first was to assure Negroes "the whole one hundred per cent" of their rights, so they would be "as free and as equal citizens as the proudest whites." That, he strongly urged, was the way to "peace, happiness, prosperity for all." The second alternative lay in "completely disarming the blacks and reducing them to a condition of complete subordination and degradation." The third lay in half-measures, compromises, and inadequate concessions. Both of the latter alternatives led to "strife, sorrow, adversity for all."

A full retreat to the past, to a *cor-don sanitaire* and an intellectual barricade against criticism and ideas such as the slave régime maintained, was no longer really open to the South. The outside world was now looking over its shoulder and could not be shut out or put off. "We can no more defend our attitude towards the Negroes," he wrote, "than could the Algerian corsairs defend their attitude to the Christian world." The age of caste and privilege was over, for this was "the age of reason." He did not expect to see the walls of caste come tumbling down overnight. "The battle will be long and obstinate," and there would be "many difficulties, delays, and dangers." Nevertheless he was confident of victory in the end. "We older ones will not see that day," he said, "but our grandchildren will, for the light of coming day already irradiates the eastern sky."

As a final word, Blair addressed an admonition and an appeal to the North. Careful as always to appeal

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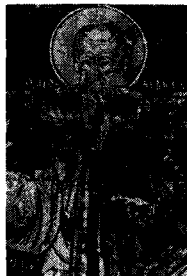
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to the motive of self-interest, he pointed out that "in a common coun-
try one great section cannot languish
without the other sections, even the
wealthy and prosperous manufactur-
ing sections, suffering also." The
North had a vested interest in the
welfare of the South, "and if the
prosperity of the South is dependent
upon the elevation of the Negro your
prosperity is intimately associated
with that of the South," and could
not "escape the penalty of the South
remaining in a stagnant or declining
condition in consequence of the
Negroes remaining in a state of deg-
radation." In Blair's opinion, "the
greatest impediment in the way of
Southerners being willing to elevate
the Negro was the North's own "dere-
liction of duty towards him." This
put into the mouth of Southerners
the *argumentum ad hominem*, "the
argument that you do so yourself." And so every valid criticism of South-
ern injustice was nullified by an
equally valid charge of Northern
hypocrisy.

BUT THAT is not the end of the story
of Lewis Blair as a prophet of
race relations. Nor is it the full mea-
sure of its irony. Unfortunately, he
lived on through the era of reaction-
ary racism and Jim Crowism. More
unfortunate still, there exists unim-
peachable evidence that the prophet
himself was swept up in the storm
of reaction he failed to predict and
could not foresee. As late as 1898 he
was still reaffirming his equalitarian
heresies and lamenting the fact that
the South seemed more determined
than ever to keep the Negro down
and that the North was more and
more indifferent to his plight. Blair's
great change came sometime after
that, between 1898 and his death in
1916. Exactly when and exactly why
are unknown. But in his private pa-
pers (still in private hands) Mr. Wynes
has recently found a manuscript of
270 pages, untitled, unsigned, and
undated, but unmistakably identified
by the handwriting as Blair's own. It
is a complete and unqualified recan-
tation of his equalitarian and liberal
position of 1889 with regard to the
Negro. More than that, it is a total
reversal of his earlier stand. It will
be recalled that in his book he had
indicated three alternatives of racial
policy open to the South. The first,

his own, was "the whole one hundred
per cent" of rights and equality; the
second, "complete subordination and
degradation"; the third, half-meas-
ures, compromises, and limited con-
cessions. The two latter he had
prophesied led to "strife, sorrow, ad-
versity for all." In the undated hand-
written manuscript, belatedly reject-
ing the first, he now chose not the
third but the second alternative; he
declared that "the only logical posi-
tion for the Negro is absolute subor-
dination to the whites." Blair's new
logic called for repeal of the Four-
teenth and Fifteenth Amendments as
well as the complete disfranchisement
and total segregation of the Negro.
He should be treated kindly but al-
ways as an inferior creature—perma-
nently and inherently inferior to
whites.

The charitable impulse would be
to attribute the change to senility, but
the fact is that Blair maintained a
lively and intelligent sympathy with
Wilsonian progressivism up to the
end of his days. His new racial views
were quite reconcilable with the pro-
gressivism of that day, of course, but
neither was the result of senility.
Another possibility is that his second
marriage in 1898, at the age of sixty-
four, to a woman half his age who
did not share his racial views may
have influenced him. But to those
who are familiar with this obscure
era of Southern history, Blair's com-
plete reversal will not seem so strange
or unprecedented. Other examples
will come to mind. The most prom-
inent were the Southern Populists,
who swung from an advanced brand
of racial justice (though more limited
than Blair's) to an extreme brand of
racial injustice—with Tom Watson
of Georgia as the classic instance.
Blair only proved it could happen in
Virginia too, on the other side of
the railroad tracks and in one of the
finer mansions.

It is hard to say now which is the
greater biographical enigma, the
ringing affirmation of faith in 1889
or the silent recantation of old age.
But across the dark years of reaction,
years of "strife, sorrow, adversity"
that he himself predicted would fol-
low the course he later took, the bold-
ly prophetic pronouncement of '89
stands forth as clear, as relevant, and
as challenging as it was when it was
published seventy-five years ago.

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THE REPORTER

660 Madison Avenue, New York 21, New York

Arthur Miller's Pilgrimage

TOM F. DRIVER

A GOOD SIGN of health in the theatre has been the public response to the sale of subscription tickets by the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center. In a record advance sale, 46,500 such tickets (each good for three plays) were bought, seventy-five per cent of them by the very people Broadway cannot usually count on: inhabitants of the City of New York. There appears to be, even in jaded New York, an appetite for theatre if it promises to provide, at a reasonable price, intellectual stimulation and professional expertise. Another factor that also probably counted for much is that the idea of a repertory theatre suggests a dedication of its founders to the public. There is a great difference between offering up plays to the public and offering the public up to plays. In many minds, "commercial theatre" has come to be synonymous with making the audience a sacrificial victim. The Lincoln Center Theatre went out of its way to make the public think it believed in them—for one thing, it by-passed the ticket brokers. The strategy has paid off.

The liability of a repertory theatre, from the point of view of audience enjoyment, is that it may come to seem overly serious. It may lose that quality of irreverence, that sense of audacity and impropriety, which flavors all theatre at its very best.

I post this as a warning for the Lincoln Center Theatre because an air of self-regard hangs over its first production, taking the edge off an experience that might have been superb. This is mainly the result of the company's choice of an autobiographical play by Arthur Miller. This new work, his first for the stage in eight years, has to do with people who did and did not co-operate as witnesses for the House Un-American Activities Committee, reminding us that this issue brought Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan to a parting of the ways in 1952 and that the present occasion reunites them.

Another part has to do with Miller's marriage to Marilyn Monroe. Here there are oblique references to certain people associated with the Actors' Studio, and once again Kazan comes to seem part of the subject of the play as well as its director. Add to this the fact that the play's central character, a self-projection of the playwright, spends much of his time in direct address to the audience, with whom he seems especially eager to establish or to re-establish communication, and it will be seen that *After the Fall* is a play during which we never seem to be very far removed from ourselves. Deliverance comes in the performance of an unknown actress named Barbara Loden. I don't know whether it was luck, shrewdness, or inspiration that led Elia Kazan to cast her in the feminine lead. At any rate, in watching her the audience can lose itself quite easily in the excitement of discovery.

The play, as I have suggested, lacks "aesthetic distance." This critical term is out of fashion, but it describes something important in all good drama, whether the construction be Aristotelian, Brechtian, or what have you. The subjective origins and subjective appeal of a play should be focused in an objectivity of substance and form. It is such objectivity that I find to be, if not altogether lacking, at least deficient in *After the Fall*.

IN FORM, the work is a soliloquy with illustrations. A lawyer named Quentin tells the story of his life, trying in the process to make psychological and moral sense out of what has happened to him. Arthur Miller once said that the first title he used for the play that became *Death of a Salesman* was *The Inside of His Head*. He seems now to have returned to that image, for he tells us that the action of *After the Fall* "takes place in the mind, thought, and memory of Quentin, a contemporary man." In and out of Quentin's mind, thought, and mem-

ory (three heavy words for one ordinary brain) float the *dramatis personae* of his past: mother, father, brother, left-wing associates, two wives, and three other women. He has got burnt flirting with Communism, failed in two marriages, lost his job, and wandered to Europe, where a visit to the site of a Nazi extermination camp in the company of a woman (Salome Jens) who came out of it alive reveals to him only his own moral impotence. He is afraid of the future. At the end of the play, he begins to overcome that fear as he discovers the moral truth about himself and all men, namely that "we are born after the Fall." None of us is innocent, and we can love only to the extent that we recognize ourselves as "dangerous" to one another.

The vocabulary in which Quentin's discoveries are enunciated fans out in many directions. Much of it is religious, even Christian, but none, I am afraid, carries that freshness of tone which is the mark of authentic personal discovery. Instead, we hear of familiar themes in familiar words: innocence and guilt, finding and losing identity, loneliness and community, hope and despair, belief and unbelief, saving others and being saved, crucifixion and resurrection. Watching the play, one does not doubt that Arthur Miller is, in Dr. Earl Loomis's phrase, a "self in pilgrimage," and this gives the play sufficient human interest to sustain it over many weak passages. But what bothers one is that the pilgrimage seems to have yielded the writer no insights and no utterance truly his own.

Feeling the loss of authenticity in their relationship, Quentin says to his first wife, "Why can't we speak in words that go below the issue?" The line is one of the play's best, and what it asks is exactly what we ask of Miller when the play is done. In fact, we have asked it after each of his plays. Miller always gets our ear by promising to go below the prose surface into the poetic depth, but the plunge is never quite made.

LIKE most people, Miller is a better observer of other persons than of himself. Unlike most people, he has the writer's gift of getting those observations down. And as with many