

dentially. It must not be forgotten that Samuel Pepys wrote for his own amazement, and it is not unlikely that some of the best stuff of our times will never be published or even offered for publication.

WE RESOLVE HENCEFORTH

WITH at least one of our New Year's resolutions we feel that measure of contentment which seems (though we know this to be the tricky way of illusions) to argue for its ultimate goodness. And when we confess that it concerns the matter of lending books we fully expect to strike as many responsive chords as though we had mentioned life, love, the devil, or any of the other universally significant features of the contemporary scene. While granting that others have touched upon the subject here and there, we deny that it is banal, passé, or anything but urgent.

Observation has convinced us that people make the wrong resolutions about lending books. They are too prone, regarding their well beloved shelves with jealous eye, to promise themselves that they will not — so help them — lend a single one of their volumes to anyone during the year. This resolution is never kept. It is a mere ideal, the dream of a moment, a fantasy born but to expire at the approach of the first caller. The springs of ordinary kindness, the desire to please, and the fear to offend even those who do not really appreciate good books are too deeply implanted in the heart of the most resolute resolver.

Others decide to lend more and more books, to lend them graciously, cheerfully, even to force them upon friends and acquaintances. They realize within the week that this gesture is

only a reaction against a strong desire to padlock their libraries and as the faint ghost of a sublimation is hardly robust enough to endure. They come to their senses before they have dispersed the treasures of their shelves beyond recall and commonly engage in some form of humanitarianism less painful to their kind. If they may be said to have failed, their failure is not ignoble. The race simply has not evolved far enough to make this resolution practicable among lovers of books.

Assuming that it is not sinful in the owner of a library to wish to retain possession of as many as possible of the books he has chosen from all the world to live with, and considering that New Year's resolutions having to do with ways and means may be had for the making, what is one to do? We have found it quite impossible in the past to legislate against the borrowing of our books. People rush to the shelves, listen to our running lecture about the evils of borrowing, agree with us, and depart with armloads of our favorites, casting back gay and grateful glances and no doubt discussing among themselves our quaint notion that books should stay in their places in that world of paint and varnish and glass that we have made for them.

We are not cranky on the subject. But it would be idle to deny that there have been one or two painful incidents in the library. It is time, if not for heroic deeds, at least for courageous thought. Mark Twain once told a neighbor that he could borrow any book, provided he did not take it out of the library. Later Mark Twain sought a lawn mower from his neighbor and was told that he could borrow it, provided it remained in the neighbor's yard. Nevertheless, our rule this year is the one formulated by Mark Twain.

CONFESSION'S THE THING

WHAT, pray, has brought upon the children of America the plague of confession? Is it a visitation of the divine wrath? Any articulate person with a typewriter can break into print today by admitting that he has been an abominable hypocrite and led a futile existence in his chosen profession. We thrive on the blood of advertised martyrs and breathe the air of anonymity. The person looking for pin money from his writing is caught between the upper millstone of the high prices magazines are willing to pay for confessions and the nether demand of the public to know his secrets.

There is no sign that the public is growing surfeited. The magazine which has built up the largest circulation in the world (every minute someone somewhere buys a copy of "True Story") has achieved its distinction by printing the narratives of boys and girls who sinned but were ultimately saved by the thought of mother, home, and heaven. But the practice is not confined to the group which specializes in marital difficulties and sex lure. Another magazine, perhaps the most contemptuous of the quality group, which has grown enormously within the past two years, has used abundantly of seditious utterances from the very Kiwanians, preachers, and pedagogues whom it poohpoohs most loudly. The more intelligent weeklies have had their quota and some of them have established confessional departments. There is in fact scarcely a foible or profession which has not been confessed to Father Public.

The magazines, of course, are not to be blamed. Running a magazine compels an editor to be alert to what the readers gobble up most readily. The successful editor knows rather than

improves the public taste. So we may pompously fall back on the platitude that readers get what they want. And it appears that what they want most is to know the weaknesses of those who write.

All this is a part of our desire for disillusionment and sophistication. Like a suspicious husband or wife, we must have the Truth, whether we really want to know it or not. But some day we shall know even as we are known and we shall be bored to satiety by the sex life of Mamie at the lace counter or the story of President De Vere's failure to live up to his educational ideals. In that blessed day it will be as hard to sell a confession as it is now to sell an article on pacifism.

THE JAWS OF PUBLICITY

WITHIN the past five years American journalism has turned a complete somersault. Nursed on war propaganda and excitement, the public's appetite for sensation needed feeding. It has been fed completely, richly, indigestibly, by the daily pictorials, and the more conservative papers to keep their heads above water cannot fail to take tone from their scarlet sisters. So acute has the public aptitude for news hysterics become, that a reputation can be made overnight, whereas it used to take a month or so. Not even in the old days of muckraking and yellow journalism was a piece of news so carefully nourished, so consistently inflated. A man like Mr. Browning becomes the idol of the newspapers. A clever woman like Queen Marie becomes a victim of American publicity methods and finds herself in a welter of misunderstandings before her native shrewdness shows her