

## 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

that she must extricate herself or be the laughing stock of a people really prepared to adore her. Gene Tunney reads a book or two and wakes to find himself in danger of losing the boxing fans because the sport writers have developed Tunney's literacy to a point where it becomes confused with effeminacy. Ogden Mills, one of the ablest men in politics, goes down to defeat in the midst of an oddly mismanaged publicity campaign. A great manufacturing house with the aid of a famous public relations counsel turns from practical salesmanship to art in twenty four hours by a stroke of genius in manipulating the news. The thing is exciting. It is vastly amusing. It is nationally so important that these pages cannot stress it enough.

Nevertheless, there is a ray of hope in this slough of hoax. Once a newspaper is caught in the act of creating or furthering a great feature story that is spurious, the public will turn overnight, as it has been carefully trained by the news influences to do, and repudiate the news influences themselves. That the public believes what it reads is true only up to a certain point; fashions in what it will receive as news, and what it believes to be mere publicity, shift. It is no longer possible for an actress to plan an abduction of herself and achieve front page headlines. This fashion seems to have been relegated to evangelists. You cannot fool the public all the time.

In the midst of chaos there stands out one figure, so sternly aware of these facts, so essentially true to the best traditions of American journalism and real American character, that the phenomenon is amazing and acclaims him for the great man he is. That is Coolidge. No man ever had a better chance to use the papers to his own advantage. No man ever had a per-

sonality so capable of popular inflation. Yet he sedulously avoids sensational publicity. He sits calmly in the White House and issues his statements via his spokesman. During his entire administration he has granted only two personal interviews. His dignity acclaims his greatness. He is as solid as a rock and as impervious. By those who know him his essential humanity cannot for a moment be doubted. From such sense, from such a rejection of glamour, can spring only an ultimate popularity, an ultimate estimate of greatness which will astound the world.

#### BETTER, NOT BIGGER, COLLEGES

EXCEPT for the fact that intellectuals are generally an indigent lot, Yale University would probably be able to raise all its endowment in the coming campaign from young idealists who appreciate the singular purpose for which the money is sought. Can you imagine a college today seeking to procure \$20,000,000 with no thought of adding more real estate? Can you imagine a college president asking for this sum in order to raise the salaries of professors and instructors? Can you imagine the campaign committee's being audacious enough to accept such a motto as "For a finer, not a bigger, Yale"? It is obviously doubtful what results such an appeal will work upon that part of the public which is able to pay. But verily it is pleasing to know that, in a time when colleges have become notorious for their genuflections to the great god Big, there are yet a few who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Whether it was the war or something else that brought it on, our colleges have been seriously afflicted with megalomania these past few years.