

basket of eatables, a tumbler or goblet for the children to drink from, and keep the children in their seats.

8—Keep your head and arms inside the windows.

9—Never sit in a seat, in warm weather, with a man weighing 244 pounds.

10—Always carry greenbacks instead of individual promises to pay.

11—Ladies who wear hoops should make them small before leaving home.

12—Never let your bandbox, valise, or cloak occupy a seat when there is a rack for them; it looks bad for you to occupy a whole seat when there are passengers standing without seats.

13—Always be polite to everybody while traveling, don't get into a bad humor.

14—Never give information without being asked, then you will not be contradicted.

15—When a lady enters a car and there is no vacant seat, rise and offer her yours, it is true politeness.

16—Never smoke in a car where there are ladies. No gentleman would be guilty of such an act.

* * * * *

JUST here the Drifter's young companion interrupted to offer him a cigarette from a neat leather case.

17—Never use profane language in a railroad car.

19—Never talk politics in the cars;—it is usually disagreeable to some of your fellow travelers.

20—Never sit beside a person who is hard of hearing and has never traveled any; get away, there are too many questions to be answered.

21—Never talk loud while the train is in motion; it may not annoy anyone, but it will injure your lungs.

22—Making love should be done outside of railroad cars. By being too affectionate in the cars people will talk.

THE DRIFTER

Correspondence

Maupassant and Spoon River

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: One of Maupassant's tales seems to anticipate the *Spoon River Anthology*. In the collection *La Main Gauche*, in the story *La Morte* [1890], a young man, crazed by the death of his mistress, passes the night in the cemetery where she is buried. His delirium grows as the darkness falls, and the stone upon which he is seated seems to be shaken. He jumps aside and reads on the cross marking the grave: "Ici repose Jacques Olinant, décédé à l'âge de cinquante et un ans. Il aimait les siens, fut honnête et bon, et mourut dans la paix du Seigneur." But a skeleton rises from the open tomb, effaces the epitaph, and changes the second sentence to read as follows: "Il hâta par ses duretés la mort de son père dont il désirait hériter, il tortura sa femme, tourmenta ses enfants, trompa ses voisins, vola quand il le put et mourut misérable." And as the young lover looks around him he sees that all the graves have opened and that skeletons are engaged in scratching out "les mensonges inscrits par les parents sur la pierre funèbre pour y rétablir la vérité. Et je voyais que tous avaient été les bourreaux de leurs proches, haineux, déshonnetés, hypocrites, menteurs, fourbes, calomnieux, envieux, qu'ils avaient volé, trompé, accompli tous les actes honteux, tous les actes abominables, ces bons pères, ces épouses fidèles, ces fils dévoués, ces jeunes filles chastes, ces commerçants probes, ces hommes et ces femmes irréprochables." And in horror the young man turns to the tomb of his beloved. In place of the simple epitaph he had engraved there "Elle aimait, fut aimée et mourut," he reads: "Etant sortie un jour pour tromper son amant, elle prit froid sous la pluie et mourut."

I am not suggesting *La Morte* as the "source" of *Spoon River*. Very few of the true histories of those villagers recall at all the

stories of Maupassant, so few that one is surprised at not finding more. I have noted nothing closer than Nellie Clark and Madame Baptiste. Masters may owe nothing directly or even indirectly to Maupassant, but the parallel seems close enough to permit a query as to whether *La Morte* may have suggested the fundamental idea of the *Anthology*.

BENJAMIN M. WOODBRIDGE

University of Texas, September 2

Socialism Yesterday and Today

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Why, oh why, do persons as intelligent as Mr. F. Lincoln Hutchins, persist in making statements like, "I abhor the doctrine of the Socialists that calls for governmental regulation of our lives, and that would put all the industries of the country under the control of government agents?" [*The Nation*, October 6, 1920]. Any one who has taken the trouble to discover what *present-day* Socialists advocate, can tell that the foregoing conception of Socialism is as extinct as the dodo, except in the minds of those who are still under the influence of the mid-Victorian fear of the Coming Slavery. The Socialists of today demand that industries be controlled by the workers themselves, through democratically elected shop, district, and national councils or committees. There is nothing to indicate a desire on their part of control by "government agents." Similarly, it is difficult to see how the modern Socialist advocates "government regulation of our lives." On the contrary, everything in Socialist theory indicates an overwhelming desire for complete individual freedom, such as is impossible under the capitalist system.

Brooklyn, October 6

ALEXANDER FICHANDLER

Are We Marching or Marking Time?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Headed by the motto, "The Spirit of 1776," a letter has gone out broadcast from the Chicago headquarters of the National Young Men's Republican League declaring the League's purpose to educate Young America "to respect and cooperate with the constructive business thought of the nation, as distinguished from the socialistic thought of the agitator," and appealing for financial support "in our work for Republicanism and against bolshevism."

One must be very young, indeed, in years and in politics, to indorse the proposition of these embryonic statesmen—that the constructive economic thought of the country is embodied in the philosophy of smug standpatism, while the belated suggestion that this is a campaign against bolshevism will scarcely appeal to any intelligence, however undeveloped, outside the Department of Justice, and that is safely beyond the reach of Republican reasoning. The wildest stretch of the imagination fails to establish any connection between the marching revolutionary spirit of '76 and the static reactionary time-markers of 1920.

Rock Island, Illinois, September 10

E. W.

Education by Celluloid

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Within the week I have seen two moving picture films. One was called "The Riders of the Dawn," the other "The Flame of Hell Gate." The acting in the first was clever, in the second, abominable, crude, and ludicrous. The effects of each, the ideas suggested to the mind of the spectator, were vicious in the extreme. In the first, a lynching-bee was applauded by the crowded house. A raid upon a labor-camp supposedly I. W. W. was cheered. The I. W. W.'s were chased out of town with bull-whips, much to the enjoyment of the spectators. For misrepresentation of the I. W. W. it would be hard to beat "The Riders of the Dawn."

In the second film, outlawry was idolized. Extra-legal methods of securing justice, of getting revenge, were applauded. Government was held up to contempt. Due process of law was ridiculed as entirely inadequate and undependable in both films. Violence of the mob was pictured as the only means of punishing I. W. W.'s in the first film and of punishing a cattle-thief in the second. Thus do the movies teach Americanism!

Perhaps Freud would explain it in terms of the sadistic impulse. In the movies, people have a means of obtaining vicarious satisfaction for their suppressed desires. But the suggestions in such films do harm that is beyond the possibility of calculation. There was a boy in our neighborhood who, having stolen a revolver and jewelry, set fire to several buildings. At each place he left a sign "The Black Mask." It is easy to see where he got the suggestion.

Berkeley, California, August 20

ALLEN OAK

Catching Up With George Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In these days of buzzing of the Department of Justice, and of general reluctance to lay aside the philosophy, hatreds and superstitions of war, it is of interest to come across the following statement of George Washington, in a letter of acknowledgment to a committee of Congress, which had informed him of his extended military powers. Washington's letter was dated Trenton, Jan. 1, 1777.

" . . . Instead of thinking myself freed from all civil obligations by this mark of . . . confidence, I shall constantly bear in mind that, as the sword was the last resort for the preservation of our liberties, so it ought to be the first thing laid aside when those liberties are firmly established."

Also, those who feast at the table of your trenchant journal, may be comforted by some assurance that it is not in the present generation only that the world has been going to the dogs. It had started dogwards at least as far back as December 30, 1778, when Washington wrote to Colonel Benjamin Harrison (Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates), what might have been an editorial in *The Nation*, had that been then existent:

" . . . If I were to be called upon to draw a picture of the times and of men from what I have seen, heard, and in part know, I should in one word say, that idleness, dissipation, and extravagance seem to have laid fast hold of most of them; that speculation, speculation, and an insatiable thirst for riches, seem to have got the better of every other consideration, and almost of every order of men; that party disputes and personal quarrels are the great business of the day; whilst the momentous concerns of an empire, a great and accumulating debt, ruined finances, depreciated money, and want of credit (which in its consequences is want of everything), are but secondary considerations, and postponed from day to day, from week to week, as if our affairs wore the most promising aspect. . . ."

Dorset, Vermont, September 28

VIOLA I. PARADISE

The Rights of Conscience

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: A few days ago, on glancing through the 1920 World Almanac, I came across the tabulated list of the qualifications for voting in the various States. The last column enumerates those who cannot vote. I glanced down that column, and my attention was suddenly arrested by the word "atheist." I found that it had to do with requisites for voting in the sovereign State of North Carolina. I looked again, and yes there it was. Atheists are denied the vote in North Carolina.

It struck me as very strange. I had come to believe that it was an axiom that in this free land each could believe according to the dictates of his conscience, whether it be the belief in an Almighty God or the denial of the existence of such a being, as long as such belief did not disturb the welfare of society. The

Almanac was in error, thought I. Why, the unabridged exercise of one's conscience in matters religious was the bulwark of the Bill of Rights in the United States Constitution, in fact, formed the very basis for the founding of this great land. Surely no State could deprive a citizen of such fundamental right.

I turned to another page of the Almanac, and there read through the United States Constitution. Yes, religious liberty is guaranteed to us all, and furthermore it is provided that no State shall deprive a citizen of his rights as guaranteed to him by the United States Constitution, among which rights is the right of believing according to the dictates of conscience. Further on I also saw the provision that no religious test shall ever be required for holding any office under the United States. Surely no State could ever get around all these defenses.

In the Library of Congress I obtained the latest official copy of the North Carolina constitution.

I glanced quickly down the page. Ah, there it was. Art. 1, Sec. 26.

"All men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and no human authority should in any case whatever control or interfere with the rights of conscience."

The second half of that section certainly seemed reassuring. If no human authority can interfere with the rights of conscience then it would seem that one could believe that there is no God and yet be entirely within the law. Yet who knows the intricacies of legal phraseology? What about the first half of the article? I must search on further. At last I have it.

"Art. 6. Suffrage and Eligibility to Office." I read the section enumerating the requisites for voting, and hallelujah, there is not a word about religion. The vile Almanac. Casting calumny on the fair name of a great State! But something made me read on, and holy Jehosaphat, what do my eyes behold.

"Art. 6, Section 8. The following classes of persons are disqualified for office. (1) All those who shall deny the existence of Almighty God."

I hastened for the open air.

Is Article 1, Section 26 annulled by Article 6, Section 8, or is it vice versa, or is it neither, or are they both treasonable and, if so, should not A. Mitchell Palmer get busy? If a man cannot hold office unless he believes in God, is it not depriving him of the free exercise of his conscience?

Let us be duly thankful that the Almanac was somewhat in error. It is not the voter who must believe the religion laid down for him, but rather the seeker for office. And perhaps those who seek office in North Carolina will not be over scrupulous in such a little thing as the belief in a God, and will take the requisite oath with due piety.

Washington, D. C., September 24

HERMAN BERMAN

The Community Church

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The decadence of the pulpit is often remarked upon in the public press. There is in New York City a pulpit that stands out from the multitude—as progressive—from which the truth is told as fearlessly as it is found in *The Nation*. I am confident that thousands of your readers would be glad to hear John Haynes Holmes or Dr. John Herman Randall if they once found the place where they preach. It is in the Lyric Theatre, Forty-second Street, near Seventh Avenue, every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. These men discuss the issues of today, and their message is always constructive and inspiring. Here is no catering to vested interests and rich pewholders. The Community Church for which they speak has no creed but brotherhood. It is like old Plymouth Church was when the great Beecher was hurling his thunders at Slavery. Here Protestant, Catholic, and Jew meet on common ground, and worship God by rousing their own enthusiasm to work for mankind.

New York City, September 18

CHARLES H. COCHRANE

Thus My Dreams

(From the Spanish of Roberto Lievano of Bogotá, Colombia)

By THOMAS WALSH

A nightingale with silver flourish told
Of thine approach, high in the lemon-tree,
And lo! before me rises dreamily
Thy form upon the lily paths of old.
How thy hands tremble as with light! How cold
The starry glisten of thine eyes on me!
How lightly stir thy breasts (in them I see
Twin doves that whisper love where branches fold).

The breeze is sifting through the grove; it shakes
The sacramental lemon-trees in flakes
Of snow upon thy breast and silken hair;
Dawn rises, veiling thee in mist that seems
To take its whiteness from thee; thus my dreams
Behold thee, flowerlike in thy bridal wear.

Books

Wisdom and Irony

The Three Taverns. By Edwin Arlington Robinson. The Macmillan Company.

MR. ROBINSON has never learned the arts by which some verse men can lighten three or four serious poems with trifling pieces until they will float a volume. Every volume he publishes is packed; and every poem, as such things go in the world, is perfect. After his two longer poems "Merlin" and "Lancelot," he now returns to collecting certain brief pieces written in the intervals of the last few years. Separate enough in themselves, they yet stand with respect to each other in a sort of pattern, like the monoliths of a Druid circle. Like those monoliths, too, these poems seem to be more than mortised in the underlying granite; they seem to grow out of it in the mere course of nature. And like the Druid stones they wear each an air of ominous, enormous mystery, themselves substantial enough to the casual eye and yet hung about with dim memories and unargumentative though powerful significance. What holds them in the pattern is that tone of mingled wisdom and irony, that color of dignity touched with colloquial flexibility, that clear, hard, tender blank verse and those unforgettable eight-line stanzas and dramatic sonnets which go to make up one of the most scrupulous and valuable of living poets.

Five of the larger poems in "The Three Taverns" are episodes based upon history: Rahel telling Varnhagen of the adventures of her heart before her marriage to him; Hamilton and Burr in 1795 at the not quite conscious parting of their ways; Paul at the Three Taverns, to which the brethren of Rome came out to meet him, greeting them with his doctrine; John Brown, on the eve of his execution, defending the revolution he had attempted; Lazarus, back from the tomb, shaken by his return and able to say no more than that he forgives the Master for bringing him to life again. These characters, as so often with the characters in whom Mr. Robinson interests himself, appear at some moment of transition from an old order which they have outlived to a new one about which they are uncertain but which they face with a courage born of humility—humility toward the ungovernable flood of destiny on which they ride.

If the world
Were not a world of aches and innovations,
Attainment would have no more joy of it,
says Paul.

When our eyes

Have wisdom, we see more than we remember;
And the old world of our captivities
May then become a smitten glimpse of ruin,
Like one where vanished hewers have had their day
Of wrath on Lebanon.

* * * * *

But think you not the world is ashes yet,
And you have all the fire. The world is here
Today, and it may not be gone tomorrow;
For there are millions, and there may be more,
To make in turn a various estimation
Of its old ills and ashes, and the traps
Of its apparent wrath.

Again and again these poems, and others in the volume, recur to the pains of change, now tragically, now with a caustic lightness:

Longer ago than cave-men had their changes
Our fathers may have slain a son or two,
Discouraging a further dialectic
Regarding what was new;
And after their unstudied admonition
Occasional contrition
For their old-fashioned ways
May have reduced their doubts, and in addition
Softened their final days.

Neither conservative nor revolutionary can take excessive comfort from a poet who unites the fullest courage of innovation with the unhurried wisdom which the most exciting movement of the current day cannot excite out of an aloof and profound reflectiveness.

It is not, of course, by being topical that Mr. Robinson achieves his immense pertinence to the moment. He speaks only by indirection of actual events, but almost every line bears acutely on the times. The False Gods is a magnificent epigraph on the evanescence of trivial ideals. Demos, a pair of sonnets, says nearly all that can be said on the high ground which Mr. Robinson takes, as a friend of democracy, between its fanatics and its foes. In *The Old King's New Jester*, with the stern seriousness of a poet and the whimsical grace of a man of the world, he unforgettably advises all those who out of discontent with the new wrongs of the world turn back to approbation and acceptance of the old wrongs. It is these same persons whom Mr. Robinson symbolizes in *The Wandering Jew*, a quiet comment upon that strange folk-figure as if he had been met in New York and heard reviling the world for its pitiful emptiness.

For now the gloom that hid the man
Became a daylight on his wrath,
And one wherein my fancy viewed
New lions ramping in his path.
The old were dead and had no fangs,
Wherefore he loved them—seeing not
They were the same that in their time
Had eaten everything they caught.

* * * * *

Where, then, was there a place for him
That on this other side of death
Saw nothing good, as he had seen
No good come out of Nazareth?

* * * * *

Whether he still defies or not
The failure of an angry task
That relegates him out of time
To chaos, I can only ask.
But as I knew him, so he was;
And somewhere among men today
Those old, unyielding eyes may flash,
And finch—and look the other way.