



The Pilgrim

“All the trumpets sounded for him on the other side”

—PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

O. P. Kretzmann

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De Contemptu Mundi

It has become customary for the pseudo-sophisticated to smile indulgently when a cleric or moralist cries his bitter indignation over manifestations of the incredible vulgarity of our age... At times we are inclined to smile with them— but only momentarily... There are occasions (and they are multiplying) when an unusual event lifts the cover of the kettle for a few days and we glimpse a depth of barbarism, a seething inferno, before which human decency and Christian ethic stand aghast... Witness the evidences of hate, greed, lust, ambition, and vulgarity at the trial of Hauptmann for the kidnapping of Lindbergh baby... Or more recently, the trimmings of the trial a woman in Cincinnati who was accused of insinuating herself into lives of doddering old men and increasing their difficulties with judicious doses of arsenic... She was found guilty and one newspaper reports the close of her trial: “The jurors (eleven women and one man) were in no apparent hurry to get home. They exchanged affectionate farewells, some of the ladies putting their arms across John Granda’s stalwart shoulders as cameras clicked. They have formed a club, one of them said—the A.M.H. (Ann Marie Hahn) club. It will meet eve October 11 in the Metropole Hotel. On that date began the trial which will result in Anna’s electrocution in Columbus, Ohio, if the jurors’ verdict diet is carried out.”... We are sure that the meetings of their club will be joyous, happy reunions... Off course, one chair should always be reserved for the ghost of Anna Marie Hahn...

Are we wrong when we confess to a cold, white hate of such manifestations of barbarism?... There are certain things about the worlds which a pilgrim can love—the untouched reflections of divine power and love in Nature—the inevitable byproducts of two thousand years of Christianity as they are evidenced in truth and mercy and justice among men... But it is a part of the Christian way to hate—not men, but the deeds men do... Sin is always barbaric... It becomes most barbaric and ugly and mean when the

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hand of God lies hard upon a dying world...

We are neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the world... The Christian approach is realistic... It is important to remember that the mills of God cannot be hurried. With that single reservation we concur in St. Cyprian's worldview set down at a similar time 1700 years ago:

“The world itself now bears witness to its approaching end by the evidence of its failing powers. There is not so much rain in winter for fertilizing the seeds, nor in summer is there so much warmth for ripening them. The springtime is no longer so mild, nor the autumn so rich in fruit. Less marble is quarried from the exhausted mountains, and the dwindling supplies of gold and silver show that the mines are worked out and the impoverished veins of metal diminish from day to day. The peasant is failing and disappearing from the fields, the sailor at sea, the soldier in the camp, uprightness in the forum, justice in the court, concord in friendships, skill in the arts, discipline in morals. Can anything that is old preserve the same powers that it had in the prime and vigor of its youth? It is inevitable that whatever is tending downwards to decay and approaches its end must decrease in strength, like the setting sun and the waning moon, and the dying tree and the failing stream. This is the sentence passed on the world; this is God's law: that all that has risen should fall and that all that has grown should wax old, and that strong things should become weak and great things should become small, and that when they have been weakened and diminished they should come to an end.”

Concerning Books

In a few years the Western world will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the invention of movable types... Something worth celebrating—with the voice of an occasional mourner heard in the streets... The captains and the kings depart, empires crumble into dust, but the power of books, good and bad, remains... There is a glory in books—the happiness of quiet communion with great souls, the clear, clean joy which can come from hearing across the gulf of years the voices of men and women who would not be stilled in death... A line springs from a page which brings “thoughts that lie too deep for tears” or opens the “arch wherethrough gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades forever and forever.” ... To read in the twentieth century is to leave motion pictures, radios, carburetors, ice cream sodas, beer,

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and machines for the shining experience of walking with the uncounted host of the magnificent dead and the eloquent living... Good books are immortal... It is 1937 in Chicago—but Cooper's Indians are still stalking through the pines of the Mohawk Valley; Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are still whitewashing fences and exploring caves along Old Man River; Hamlet is still rushing insanely about the castle, speaking the sanest English in all literature; the porter in *Macbeth* is still walking across the cold stones at dawn to answer the weird knocking on the door; the hunchback is still climbing madly over the gargoyles of Notre Dame; the cold winds still whistle through the rigging of Conrad's ships... And all these (and many more) are infinitely preferable to psychological studies of the emotional life of the young man with adenoids who killed his grandmother because she ate peas with a knife... So we shall join in the celebration of 500 years of books—with an occasional word of anger or sorrow over the seemingly infinite capacity of men for writing books that are bad...

Books can do many things... Not the least is the ease with which they can bridge the years... We were reminded of that when we saw the story of the advertising Brentano's in New York gave Wilfred Funk's *So You Think It's New*... Mr. Funk's thesis was set down by the Preacher long ago: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is, done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."... Since Mr. Funk had discovered that there were strikes in ancient Rome, Brentano's advertised his book by means of a sandwich man who carried a sign "Chariot Drivers on Strike, Caesar's Imperial Operators, Local CXLVII." The initials of the union name were large, so that the letters "CIO" stood out prominently... Not bad... The Preacher was right...

Still about books... *Publishers' Weekly* regularly brings statistical information concerning the publication of books in America... During the first ten months of 1937, 8997 books were published—about 30 every day... For the corresponding period in 1936 the figure was 8501—an increase of 496 for 1937... It is deeply significant to note that more than fifty per cent of this increase was in the two fields of Religion and

Economics... Religious books jumped from 562 to 659—books on: Sociology and Economics from 4331 to 582—a total increase in these two brackets of 251... *Publishers' Weekly* lists twenty-three classifications—and of these twenty-three only three, Fiction (1697), Juvenile (769) and History

(776)—exceed in number the total of religious books published from January October A.D. 1937... These are the facts... What conclusions are to be drawn?... There should be some... We shall be happy to hear them...

Boos and Bull

Looking about us for signs of returning sanity we have lately [become much interested in press re-Sports of the formation of Booing Clubs throughout the country... Apparently the idea was born in Little Rock, Arkansas... It seems that the club goes to the movies in a body and sits quietly through the entertainment features of the program... As soon, however, as advertising begins to appear on the screen it boos—singly and en masse, loudly and long... The idea has enormous possibilities—and America has been quick to see them... Perhaps this is what we have missed all our life—a good loud booing club that will go where we go and boo what we want to boo... Charter membership is now open... Applicants ought to be ready to boo people who always “view with alarm”—people who see Communism in every bit of red flannel—people who blow their horns at intersections as soon as the light changes—Ernest Hemingway—people who believe the *Saturday Evening Post* is inspired—people who say the Church is bad because there are some bad people in it—and so forth... Tremendous vistas are opening fore us...

Perhaps there is little connection, but all this reminds us of Albert Jay Nock’s article in the September *Atlantic* “The Oxometer.”... Mr. Nock distinguishes sharply the terms “bull,” “tripe,” “bunk,” and “hooey.”... “Bull” comes either from Homer (which is doubtful) or from the Spanish “bulla.”... Newspaper men hold that “bull” is “slight stuff which its authors know is unsound and do not take seriously, and which is printed only to fill space in a way that is appealing and agreeable to a low order of intelligence and taste.”... Mr. Nock reports that his friend Bill has invented a machine called the oxometer, which will “cause bull to disappear instantly from a printed or written page by some process that appears to be like volatilization, leaving all residual sound matter unaffected.”... When he and Bill applied the machine to a novel by a writer who had become famous for fiction in popular magazines, whole pages immediately turned blank, leaving only a stray sentence or word here and there... When they placed it before the radio and listened to the voice of one of our principal politicians “the voice

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went dead, and we heard nothing for eight minutes, when suddenly one stanza of a poem came through—it was quoted—and then silence again.”... Everything else was intercepted by the oxometer... Mr. Nock remarks that “imagination almost recoils on itself in contemplating the immensity of the field which the oxometer has opened before it.”... What will happen to our newspapers, our forums, our schools and colleges, our learned professions, our world of commerce and business, our family life, when the oxometer finally reaches the market?

Staff's End

Did Sir Francis Bacon write the plays usually attributed to Shakespeare?... The question pops up again and again, largely because all Baconians have become monomaniacs... They pore over the plays with a magnifying glass seeking hidden allusions, cryptograms, and double *entendres*... In his *Amenities of Book-Collecting*, A. Edward Newton presents an example of their mode of procedure: Take a King James version of the *Bible*, turn to the 46th Psalm, count the words from the beginning to the 46th word, and then count the words from the end until you again come to the 46th word and you will learn something...

There is a high delight in hearing old things said in a new way... In his *Kennebec—Cradle of Americans*, a grand, tough, salty book on the Kennebec people in Maine, Robert Tristram Coffin says of his home town; “the pines nearly encircled the town and any day when the wind blew, living in Brunswick was like living in an organ.”...

These are the melancholy days when reports of freshman examinations reach us... E.g.: “He abandoned the world and devoted his life to the anchovies in the desert.”... Or: “Tarzan is a short name for the American flag. Its full name is the Tarzan Stripes.”...

Is there any reason why we should like Chesterton's remark that “it is tragic that radio was invented just at that moment in the history of the world when no one had anything to say”?... Not quite true—but true enough to cause a moment of wonder...

Not so long ago Heywood Broun, writing in the *New Republic*, rolled up his sleeves, spit on his hands, and swung the club on his fellow columnists throughout the land... He paid particular attention to Dorothy Thompson, and we found ourselves in delighted agreement... He noted that after she

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was thrown out of Germany she began to talk—in the press, on the air, on the platform— and she has not stopped since... In fact, her desire to talk anywhere, any time, on any subject has become so evident that Broun says: “Of late I always sit tense and worried in that interval at Episcopalian weddings where the minister pauses and asks if anybody has anything to say, and I look around furtively to see if by any chance Miss Thompson is among the congregation.”

A press release from the Macmillan Company reports that the following adjectives have been used by reviewers in describing *A Cardinal of the Medici* by Mrs. Hicks Beach: “Absorbing, Arresting, Authentic, Appealing, Accurate, Amazing, Beautiful, Brilliant, Captivating, Colorful, Delightful, Delicate, Dramatic, Distinguished, Engaging, Engrossing, Exciting, Enchanting, Endearing, Effective, Fine, Full-bodied, Fresh, Fascinating, Graphic, Good, Glamorous, Harmonious, Important, Impressive, Illuminating, Intimate, Invaluable, a Joy, Kaleidoscopic, Living, Limpid, Lovely, Languorous, Lusty, Moving, Monumental, Masterful, Notable, Outstanding, Opulent, Poignant, Penetrating, Picturesque, Pulsating, Quiet, Rich, Rare, Recommended, Sensitive, Spirited, Stimulating, Skillful, Sympathetic, Stately, Splendid, Turbulent, Thoughtful, Tremendous, Unforgettable, Unusual, Uncommon, Vibrant, Valuable, Vivid, Well Rounded, Wise, Well Documented, Exquisite.”... All of which makes it possible for us to write a one word review of the book: Terrible.

They say that the day of the rugged individualist is done... Perhaps it is better so... We confess, however, to a secret pleasure when evidences appear that he is not quite dead... In that spirit we salute the anonymous lonely soul whose defiant lines we ran across recently:

I eat my peas with honey
I've done it all my life.
It makes the peas taste funny
But keeps them on the knife.

