

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

—PILGRIM’S PROGRESS

The Pilgrim

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Collect for Peace

The Pilgrim is going nowhere tonight — except on that universal journey marked by the ticking the clock... Beyond the frosted low the silence of the snow is the land and the time of quiet has come... It is a night made for doing nothing... Surely everyone who lives in these alien years face at times the sharp want of something like these nights of brightness and snow — the need for permanence and peace and the turning of the mind to the record and remembrance of things lasting and eternal... It is only from a high and quiet place that one can put things in their proper order... Day after day we see God striking into history in the judgment of events, but the rustle of His garments as He sweeps through the immensities of time is lost in the dull murmur of routine... Only on nights like these, when the light falls warm on the sacred page, can one forget the welter of strife and steel and the voices of those who see life only in black and red...

In such hours we turn like a prisoner released to the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of the Holy Gospel according to St. John... Everything we need is there — from the eternal answer to all the Kyrie Eleisons of the world “Let not your heart be troubled” to the eternal Hallelujah “I have overcome the world.”... We need nothing beyond that... His candles fill the night and in the smallest room the company of cherubim stand by... Something lost returns and there is new strength for all the unbearable things that men must bear...

And so—as the clock points to the beginning of another day we turn to the greatest prayer ever spoken by lips not inspired—the Collect for Peace at the close of the Order for Vespers—so often read, so seldom heard: “O God, from Whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed: Give unto Thy servants that peace, which the world cannot give; that our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee, we being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in

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rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.”

Peace is there and nowhere else... Two years ago Dorothy Kissling, who seems to know that, wrote for the second Friday in Lent:

Master, receive me in Thy way,
For I am spent who followed mine;
Seal me from every alien sway,
Close to me every door but Thine.

And if Thou wilt, I journey on,
And if Thou wilt not, bid me wait;
It is enough for me to know
Whose hand it is that bars the gate.

It is enough that Thou art here;
No other joy is joy to them
Who wake from sleep and find Thee near,
Whose lips have touched Thy garments' hem.

Words and Music

The year of our Lord 1938 is now well on its way... For two months, then, we have had time to meditate at odd moments on the mordant irony of the closing lines in *The Education of Henry Adams*, one of the most important books ever written in America... It was the year 1918... Mr. Adams was saying farewell for himself and his two friends, King and Hay: “Education has ended for all three, and only beyond some remoter horizon could its values be fixed or renewed. Perhaps some day—say 1938, their centenary—they might be allowed to return together for a holiday, to see the mistakes of their successors; and perhaps then, for the first time since man began his education among the carnivores, they would find a world that sensitive and timid natures could regard without a shudder.” . . . Stay where you are, Mr. Adams—it is a day when “the keepers of the house tremble and strong men bow themselves and those that look out of the windows are darkened, and the mourners go about the streets... “

A wave of the hand to the unknown author of a few lines we have stared at these many days:

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“The greatest heroes that I know
Are those who are afraid to go
But go”...

Passing note... It is time to express some grave doubts over the manner in which the phrase “He is a man of conviction” is almost universally used as the final accolade it is possible to bestow on a man... We have heard it applied to the most hare-brained negativists, the most fearsome obscurantists, the squeakiest wheels on the wagon of. progress... A man stands up and is against everything—and we mumble admiringly “He is a man of conviction.”... It is simply not true that the mere possession of “strong convictions” is cause for cheering... The convictions must be true and right and good before they are worth the slightest attention... The devil is also a person of conviction...

On the Fine Art of Getting Socked

Not long ago when life was young and fair we spent every moment that could be spared from parochial school, Sunday school, and the manifold duties devolving upon the preacher’s kids, on the streets of New York... Years later when we first heard of Darwin’s struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest we brought to it a profound and sympathetic understanding... In fact, our entire existence was world history in miniature... There were pogroms, undeclared wars, snipings, contraband goods, bombings, international insults between the Rosenbaums and the Galottis, and incessant guerrilla warfare... In all these matters the preacher’s kids (it may be said at this late date) were enthusiastic participants... Perhaps the only difference was that they entered a fight a little cleaner behind the ears (especially on Sundays) than the Goldsteins and the Fracchias... When it was all over all racial and national lines had been wiped out in the common problem of torn stockings, bloody noses, and the immediate need for explaining matters to an older generation waiting at home for the preacher’s kids, the Rosenbaums, and the Galottis with the fine impartiality of razor strops...

Yet there were fights in which we had only an academic interest... When the Crotona Avenue gang came across the Tremont Avenue tracks in order to wreak bloody vengeance for insults from the Kossowsky kids we watched with a cool detachment which would have pleased our Sunday school

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teacher... It wasn't our fight—and our only interest was the observation of new and fascinating techniques which might be of value at another time... With an enthusiasm undimmed by the years we still remember the day when the Crotona Avenue gang introduced rotten cantaloupes as a substitute for tomatoes... It was magnificent... Since cantaloupes were much heavier and larger than tomatoes they required closer infighting, but when they were delivered from above, especially from the roof of Mr. Antonio Cateatti's woodshed, they were enormously effective... We still consider it a tribute to our military acumen that we immediately recognized their value... Thereafter the preacher's kids, much to the bewilderment of the older generation, unanimously demanded cantaloupes for breakfast every morning.

But that is not what we had set out to say... Memory is running away with purpose... The point is that nine times out of ten our most tragic defeats came in battles in which we had started out as an innocent bystander... Inevitably and invariably we were drawn in— and inevitably and invariably we immediately got conked on the beeper... Every military strategist will recognize the general truth of this... The casual spectator is not prepared for war... He is always in danger of being attacked by both sides... Hate, like love, has a strange way of veering suddenly... And so, again and again, the satisfying noises of squishing cantaloupes and tearing pants would be supplanted by the battlecry "Let's get the preacher's kid"—and from that moment things began to grow very sad... We shall never get over the stubborn unbelief with which the older generation greeted our excuse: "I wuz just standin' there and they jumped on me."... From those days comes our axiomatic belief that the innocent bystander always gets the dirty end of the stick...

Whenever we have forgotten that axiom, trouble has followed... Readers of *The Cresset* may remember that last month (in the *Editor's Lamp*) we cautiously approached the war between *The Alembic* and the *Music Column*... Honestly, we did no more than look over the fence to see what was going on... We said that we had heard something like "The Ballad of Un-hatched Chickens" and we did not like it... And what happens?... Our music critic turns on us and we get socked on the beeper... In the first place, he avers, it was not "Ballad" but "Ballet" that we heard... In the second place, Moussorgsky's little number by that name is one of the finest examples of

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humorous music. That's that... The noise you hear is the squish of cantaloupes...

And yet—harking back to the philosophy of the streets of New York—now that we're in the fight we may as well stick around... What, after all, is the difference between “Ballad” and “Ballet”?... We thought the unhatched chickens were singing and our music critic tells us that they were dancing... That is precisely the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee... Either way, we submit, they present a problem which would not have occurred to Bach and Beethoven... As for humor in music, well—we shall have something to say about that when we know something about it... Our supply of cantaloupes is not what it used to be...

Staff's End

Every worker with words will sympathize with the novelist who recently wrote his editor concerning his difficulties with the word “psychiatry”: “I can't spell it because I can't find it in the dictionary, and I can't find it because I can't spell it.”... And was it Mr. Dooley who said: “I never made but one mistake in grammar in my life, and as soon as I done it I seen it”?... A letter in the austere *London Times* presents a not uncommon error of males when they are confronted with the mysteries of feminine makeup: “Recently I visited the seaside,” says the writer “and was flattered to find myself the object of attentive curiosity, until I realized that the ladies who met me with arched eyebrows were not surprised or delighted, but merely plucked, and therefore incapable of any other expression.”...

There is no truce in the Pilgrim's war on Dorothy Thompson... Fortunately we have found an unexpected and anonymous ally in Detroit [who forwards a book review by Miss Thompson in which the following sentence occurs: “But Minna, though the daughter of an innkeeper, might have been the child of a Lutheran pastor for all she knew of cooking.”... Again Miss Thompson is talking through her hat—and her talk is as fantastic as her hats... That's bad. Not so long ago Sinclair Lewis called needed attention to Thoreau's attack on Dale Carnegie's vaporings eighty-two years before *How to Win Friends and Influence People* was published... In *Walden* Thoreau wrote: “It is very evident what mean and sneaking lives many of you live... lying, flattering, contracting yourselves into a nutshell of civility or dilating into an atmosphere of thin and vaporous generosity, that you may per-

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suade your neighbor to let you make his shoes or his hat... making yourselves sick that you may lay up something against a sick day.”

Jotting at midnight... There seems to be deadly parallel between a modernistic sermon and Guy Lombardo’s orchestra playing Liszt’s *Liebestraum*...

And seldom have we seen anything better than John Jay Chapman’s brief remark on the New Testament: “You cannot criticize it. It criticizes you.”

