

BROUN HEYWOOD

PIECES OF HATE; AND
OTHER ENTHUSIASMS

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http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24180276

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PREFACE

The trouble with prefaces is that they are partial and so we have decided to offer instead an unbiased review of "Pieces of Hate." The publishers have kindly furnished us advance proofs for this purpose.

We wish we could speak with unreserved enthusiasm about this book. It would be pleasant to make out a list of three essential volumes for humanity and suggest the complete works of William Shakespeare, the Bible and "Pieces of Hate," but Mr. Broun's book does not deserve any such ranking. Speaking as a critic of books, we are not at all sure that we care to recommend it. It seems to us that the author is honest, but the value of that quality has been vastly overstressed in present-day reviewing. We are inclined to say "What of it?" There would be nothing particularly persuasive if a man should approach a poker game and say, "Won't you let Broun in; I can assure he's honest." Why should a recommendation which is taken for granted among common gamblers be considered flattering when applied to a

writer?

Anyhow, it does not seem to us that Broun carries honesty to excess. There is every indication that most of the work in "Pieces of Hate" has been done so hurriedly that there has been no opportunity for a recount. If it balances at any given point luck must be with him as well as virtue. All the vices of haste are in this book of stories, critical essays and what not. The author is not content to stalk down an idea and salt it. Whenever he sees what he believes to be a notion he leaves his feet and tries to bring it down with a flying tackle. Occasionally there actually is an exciting and interesting crash of flying bodies coming into contact. But just as often Mr. Broun misses his mark and falls on his face. At other times he gets the object of his dive only to find that it was not a genuine idea after all, but only a straw man, a sort of tackling dummy set up to fool and educate novices.

And Broun does not learn fast. Like most newspaper persons he is an extraordinary mixture of sophistication and naïveté. At one moment he will be found belaboring a novelist or a dramatist for sentimentality and on the next page there will be distinct traces of treacle in his own creative work. Seemingly, what he means when he says that he does not like sentimentality is that he doesn't like the sentimentality of anybody else. He would restrict the quality to the same narrow field as charity.

The various forms introduced into the book are a little confusing. Seemingly there has been no plan as to the sequence of stories, essays, dramatic criticism and the rest. Possibly the

author regards this as versatility, but here is another vastly overrated quality. We once had a close friend who was a magician and after we had watched him take an omelet out of his high hat, and two white rabbits, and a bowl of goldfish, it always made us a little uneasy when he said, "Wait a minute until I put on my hat and I'll walk home with you."

The fear constantly lurked in our mind that he might suddenly remember, in the middle of Times Square, that he had forgotten a trick and be compelled to pause and take a boa-constrictor from under the sweat-band. We suggest to Mr. Broun that he make up his mind as to just what he intends to do and then stick to it to the exclusion of all sidelines.

Perhaps he has promised, but we are prepared to wager nothing on him until we are convinced that he has begun to drive for something. He may be a young man but he is not so young that he can afford to traffic any further with flipness under the impression that it is something just as good as humor. And we wish he wouldn't pun. George H. Doran, the publisher, informs us that he had to plead with Broun to make him leave out a chapter on the ugliness of heirlooms and particularly old sofas. Apparently the piece was written for no other purpose than to carry the title "The Chintz of the Fathers."

We also find Mr. Broun's pose as the professional Harvard man a little bit trying, particularly as expressed in his essay "The Bigger the Year." We suppose he may be expected to outgrow this in time but he has been long enough about it.

HEYWOOD BROUN.

I

THE NOT IMPOSSIBLE SHEIK

Women must be peculiar people, if that. We have just finished "The Sheik," which is described on the jacket as possessing "ALL the intense passion and tender feeling of the most vivid love stories, almost brutal in its revelations."

Naturally, we read it. The author is English and named E. M. Hull. The publishers expand the "E" to Ethel, but we have a theory of our own. At any rate the novelist displays an extraordinary knowledge of feminine psychology. It is profound. It is also a little disturbing because it sounds so silly. After all, whether peculiar or not women are round about us almost everywhere, and we must make the best of them. Accordingly, it terrifies us to learn that if by any chance whatsoever we happen to hit one of them and knock her down she will become devoted to us forever. The man who knows this will think twice before he strikes a woman no matter what the provocation. He will be inclined to count ten before letting a blow go instead of after. Miss Hull's book deserves the widest possible circulation because of its persuasive propaganda for forbearance on the part of men in their dealings with women.

Seemingly, there are no exceptions to the rules about women laid down by Miss Hull. To state her theory concisely, the

quickest way to reach a woman's heart is a right hook to the jaw. To take a specific instance, there was Miss Diana Mayo. She seemed an exception to the rule if ever a woman did. "My God, Diana! Beauty like yours drives a man mad!" said Arbuthnot, the young British lieutenant, in the moonlight at Biskra. More than that, "He whispered ardently, his hands closing over the slim ones lying in her lap." Those were her own.

Still, Diana was no miss to take a hint. With a strength that seemed impossible for their slimness she disengaged her hands from his grasp. "Please stop. I am sorry. We have been good friends, and it has never occurred to me that there could be anything beyond that. I never thought that you might love me. I never thought of you in that way at all. I don't understand it. When God made me he omitted to give me a heart. I have never loved any one in my life."

That was before Miss Diana Mayo went into the desert and met the Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan. The meeting was unconventional. Ahmed sacked the caravan and kidnapped Diana, seizing her off her horse's back at full gallop. "His movement had been so quick she was unprepared and unable to resist. For a moment she was stunned, then her senses came back to her and she struggled wildly, but stifled in the thick folds of the Arab's robes, against which her face was crushed, and held in a grip that seemed to be slowly suffocating her, her struggles were futile. The hard, muscular arm around her hurt her acutely, her ribs seemed to be almost breaking under its weight and strength,

it was nearly impossible to breathe with the close contact of his body."

But Diana did not love him yet. She seems to have been less susceptible than most girls. Even when "her whole body was one agonized ache from the brutal hands" she persisted in not caring for Ahmed Ben Hassan. It almost seemed as if she had taken a dislike to the man. Up to this time she had not learned to make allowances for him. It was much later than this that "She looked at the marks of his fingers on the delicate skin with a twist of the lips, then shut her eyes with a little gasp and hid her bruised arm hastily, her mouth quivering. But she did not blame him; she had brought it on herself; she knew his mood and he did not know his own strength."

Diana's realization that she loved the Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan and had loved him for some time came under sudden and dramatic circumstances. She was running away from him at the time and he was riding after her. Standing up in the stirrups, the Sheik shot the horse from under her and "Diana was flung far forward and landed on some soft sand." But even yet her blindness to the whispering of love persisted. She thought she hated Ahmed, but dawn was about to break in her starved heart. "He caught her wrist and flung her out of the way," yet it was not until he had lifted her up on the saddle in front of him, using his favorite hold – a half nelson and body scissors – that the punishing nature of the familiar grip roused Diana to an understanding of her great good fortune. "Quite suddenly she

knew – knew that she loved him, that she had loved him for a long time, even when she thought that she hated him and when she had fled from him. She knew now why his face had haunted her in the little oasis at midday – that it was love calling to her sub-consciously." And all the time poor, foolish Diana had imagined that it was arnica which she wanted.

Even after Ben Hassan had succeeded in impressing Diana with his affection, we feared that the story would not end happily. While riding some miles away from their own carefully restricted oasis Diana was captured by another Arab chief named Ibraheim Omair. It seemed to us that he was in his way just as persuasive a wooer as Ben Hassan. We read, "He forced her to her knees, and, with his hand twined brutally in her curls, thrust her head back," and later, "She realized that he was squeezing the life out of her." Worst of all from the point of view of a Ben Hassan partisan (and by this time we too had learned to love him) was the moment in which Omair dashed his hand against Diana's mouth, for the author records that "She caught it in her teeth, biting it to the bone." We feared, then, that Diana's heart was turning to this new and wondrously rowdy Arab. Already it was quite evident that she was not indifferent to him. Fortunately Ahmed came in time to shoot Omair before Diana's Unconscious could flash to her any realization of a new love.

And the book does end happily, even more happily than anybody has a right to expect. Ahmed is badly wounded but only in the head, and recovers without any impairment of his

punching power. The greatest surprise of all is reserved for the last chapter, when Diana and the reader learn that Ben isn't really an Arab at all, but the eldest son of Lord Glencaryll, and of Lady Glencaryll, too, for that matter. It seems Lord Glencaryll drank excessively, although his title was one of the oldest in England. Lady Glencaryll left him on account of his alcoholism and went to the Sahara desert for rest and contrast. A courtly sheik gave her shelter in his oasis. Here her son was born, and when he heard about his father's disgraceful conduct he turned Arab and stayed that way. Of course, if he had intended nothing more than a protest against overindulgence in alcoholic liquors he could have turned American. We suppose such a device would not have seemed altogether plausible. No Englishman could pass for an American. Nor can we say that we are altogether satisfied with the ending even as it stands. For all we know E. M. Hull may decide to take a shot at Uncle Tom's Cabin and add a chapter revealing the fact that Uncle Tom was not actually a colored man but the child of a couple of Caucasians who had happened to get a little sunburned. We are not even sure that E. M. Hull is a woman. Publishers do get fooled about such things. According to our theory, the E stands for Egbert. He is, we think, at least five feet four inches tall and lives in Bloomsbury, in very respectable bachelor diggings. He has never been to the desert or near it, but if "The Sheik" continues to run through new editions he plans to take a jaunt to the East. He thinks it might help his hay fever.

II

JOHN ROACH STRATON

In the course of his Sabbath day talk at Calvary Baptist Church the other day the Rev. Dr. John Roach Straton spoke of "miserable Charlie Chaplin," or words to that effect. This seems to us an expression of the more or less natural antipathy of a man who regards life trivially for a serious artist. It is the venom of the clown confronted by the comedian.

Dr. Straton is, of course, an utter materialist. He is concerned with such temporal and evanescent things as hellfire, and a heaven which he has pictured in one of his sermons as a sort of glorified Coney Island. Moreover, he has created a deity in his own image and has presented the invisible king as merely a somewhat more mannerly John Roach Straton. And while Dr. Straton has been thus engaged in debasing the ideals of mankind, Charlie Chaplin has brought to great masses of people some glint of things which are eternal. He has managed to show us beauty and, better than that, he has contrived to put us at ease in this presence. We belong to a Nation which is timorous of beauty, but Charlie has managed to soothe our fears by proving to us that it may also be merry.

While Straton has been talking about jazz, debauchery, modesty, vengeance and other ugly things, Chaplin has given us

the story of a child. "The Kid" captured a little of that curiously exalted something which belongs to paternity. All spiritual things must have in them a childlike quality. The belief in immortality rests not very much on the hope of going on. Few of us want to do that, but we would like very much to begin again.

Naturally, we are under no delusions as to the innate goodness even of very small children. They are bad a great deal of the time, but before it has been knocked out of them they see no limit to the potentialities of the human will. Theirs is the faith to move mountains, because they do not yet know the fearful left of them. The world is merely a rather big sandpile and much may be done to it with a tin pail and shovel. We would capture such confidence again.

As a matter of fact, a great deal could be done with a pail and shovel. We do not try because we have lost our nerve. Nobody will ever get it back again by listening to Dr. Straton. He seems solely intent upon detailing the limitations and the frailties of man. We think he has outgrown his soul a little. He has sold his birthright for a mess of potterism.

But Charlie Chaplin moves through the world which he pictures on the screen like a mischievous child. He confounds all the gross villains who come against him. His smile is a token and a symbol that man is too merry to die utterly. Fearful things menace us, but they will flee before the audacious one who has the fervor to draw back his foot and let it fly.

Of course, we are not advocating any suppression of Dr.

Straton by censorship. We regard him and his sermons as a bad influence. But after all, the man or woman who strays into Dr. Straton's church knows what to expect. In justice to the clergyman it must be said that he has never made any secret of his methods or his message. There is no deception. Sentimentally, we think it rather shocking that these talks of his should occur on Sunday. There really ought to be one day of the week upon which the citizens of New York turn away from frivolity. And still we do not urge that the Sunday Law be amended to include the performances of John Roach Straton. He is not one whit worse than some of the sensational Sunday magazines.

III

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF OFFSPRING

Fannie Hurst gurgles with joy over the fact that her heroine in "Star Dust" is able to look over the whole tray of babies which is brought to her in the hospital and pick out her own. Miss Hurst attributes Lily's feat to "her mother instinct." A friend of ours, more practically minded than the novelist, suggests that she might have been aided by the fact that hospitals invariably place an identification tag around the neck of each child. For our part we have never been able to understand the fear of some parents about babies getting mixed up in the hospital. What difference does it make so long as you get a good one? Another's may be better than your own and Lily, with a whole tray from which to choose, should not have made an instinctive clutch immediately for her own. It would have been rational for the lady in the story to have looked at them all before coming to any decision.

Of course, to tell the truth, there isn't much choice in the little ones. They need much more than necklaces with names on them to be persons. There really ought to be some system whereby small children after being born could be kept in the shop for a considerable period, like puppies, and not turned over to parents or guardians until in a condition more disciplined than

usual. None of them amounts to much during the first year. We can't see, for the life of us, why your own should be any more interesting or precious to you during this time than the child of anybody else.

After two, of course, they are persons, but a parent must have a good deal of imagination if he can see much of himself in a child. Oh, yes, a nose or the eyes or the color of the hair or something like that, but the world is full of snub noses and brown eyes. To us it never seemed much more than a coincidence. And if it were something more, what of it? How can a man work up any inspiring sentimental gratification over the fact that after he is gone his nose will persist in the world? The hope of immortality through offspring offers no solace to us. The joys of being an ancestor are exaggerated.

Mind you, we do not mean for a moment to cry down the undeniable pleasure which arises from the privilege of being associated with a child of more than two years of age. For a person in rugged health who is not particularly dressed up and does not want to write a letter or read the newspaper, we can imagine few diversions more enjoyable than to have a child turned loose upon him. His own, if you wish, but only in the sense that it is the one to which he has become accustomed. The sense of paternity has nothing on earth to do with the fun. Only a person extraordinarily satisfied with himself can derive pleasure if this child in his house is a little person who gives him back nothing but a reflection. You want a new story and not the old

one, which wasn't particularly satisfactory in the first place. We want Heywood Broun, 3rd, to start from scratch without having to lug along anything we have left him. As a matter of fact, we like him just as well as if he were no relation at all, because he seems to be a person quite different from what we might have expected. When he says he doesn't want to take a bath we feel abashed and wish we had been a cleaner child, but for the most part we find him leading his own life altogether. When he bends over the Victrola and plays the Siegfried Funeral March over and over again we have no feeling of guilt. We know we can't be blamed for that. He never got it from us.

And again, he is a person utterly strange, and therefore twice as interesting, when we find him standing up to people, us for instance, and saying that he won't do this or that because he doesn't want to. Much sharper than a serpent's tooth is the pleasure of an abject parent who finds himself the father of a stubborn child. If the people from the hospital should suddenly call up to-morrow and say, "We find we've made a mistake. We sent the wrong child to you three years ago, but now we can exchange him and rectify everything," we would say, "No, this one's been around quite a while now and is giving approximate satisfaction, and if you don't mind you can keep the real one."

Plays and novels which picture meetings between fathers and sons parted from birth or before have always seemed singularly unconvincing to us. The old man says "My boy! My boy!" and weeps, and the young man looks him warmly in the eye and says,

"There, there." Not a bit like it is our guess. If we had never seen H, 3rd, and had then met him at the end of twenty years, we wouldn't be particularly interested. Strangers always embarrass us. It would not even shock us much to find that they had sent him to Yale or that he brushed his hair straight back or wore spats. There are to us no ties at all just in being a father. A son is distinctly an acquired taste. It's the practice of parenthood that makes you feel that, after all, there may be something in it. And anybody's child will do for practice.

IV

G. K. C

The ship news man said that Gilbert K. Chesterton was staying at the Commodore and the telephone girl said he wasn't, but we'd trust even a ship news man before a hotel central and so we persisted.

In fact, we almost persuaded her.

"Maybe he's connected with one of the automobile companies that are exhibiting here," she suggested, helpfully. For a moment we wondered if by any chance the hotel authorities had made an error and placed him in the lobby with the ten-ton trucks. It seemed too fantastic.

"He's not with any automobile company," we said severely. "Didn't you ever hear of 'The Man Who Was Thursday'?"

"He may have been here Thursday, but he's not registered now," she answered with some assurance. We didn't seem to be getting on. "It's a book," we shouted. "He wrote it."

"Not in this hotel," said central with an air of finality and rang off before we could try her out on "Man Alive" or "The Ball and the Cross." Still, it turned out eventually that she was right for it was the Biltmore which at last acknowledged Mr. Chesterton somewhat reluctantly after we had spelled out the name.

"Not in his room, but somewhere about the hotel," was the

message.

"You can find him," said the city editor with confidence. "Just take this picture with you. He's sort of fat and he speaks with an English accent."

We had a more helpful description than that in our mind, because we remembered Chesterton's answer when a sweet girl admirer once remarked, "It must be wonderful to walk along the streets when everybody knows who you are."

"Yes," said Chesterton; "and if they don't know they ask."

He wasn't in the bar, but we found him in the smoking room. He was giving somebody an interview without much enthusiasm. It seemed to be the last round. Chesterton was beginning to droop. Every paradox, we feared, had been hammered out of him. He rose a little wearily and started for the elevator. We chased him. At last we had the satisfaction of finding some one we could outrun. He paused, and now we know the look which the Wedding Guest must have given to the Ancient Mariner.

"It's for the New York *Tribune*," we said.

"How about next week?" suggested Mr. Chesterton.

"It's a daily newspaper," we remonstrated. "You know – Grantland Rice and The Conning Tower and When a Feller Needs a Friend."

Something in the title of the Briggs series must have touched him. "To-morrow, perhaps," he answered. Feeling that the mountain was about to come through we stood our ground like another Mahomet. Better than that we rose to one of the few

superb moments in our life. Looking at Mr. Chesterton coldly we said slowly, "It must be now or never." And we used a gesture. The nature of it escapes us, but it was something appropriate. Later we wondered just what reply would have been possible if he had answered, "Never." After the danger had passed we realized that we had been holding up the visitor with an empty gun. It must have been our manner which awed him and he stopped walking and almost turned around.

"The press men have been here since two o'clock," he complained more in sorrow than in anger. "What is it you want to know?"

At that stage of the interview the advantage passed to him. The whole world lay before us. Dimly we could hear the problems of a great and unhappy universe flapping in our ears and urging us with unintelligible, hoarse caws to present their cases for solution. And still we stood there unable to think of a single thing which we wanted to know.

Mostly we had read Chesterton on rum and religion, but there were too many people passing to give the proper atmosphere for any such confidential questions. Moreover, if he should question us in turn we realized that we would be unable to give him any information as to when to boil and when to skim, nor did we feel sufficiently well disposed to let him in on the name of the drug store where you say "I'm a patient of Dr. Brown's" and are forthwith allowed to buy gin.

All the questions we had ever asked anybody in our life passed

rapidly before us. "What do you think of our tall buildings?" "Have you ever thought of playing Hamlet?" "Why are you called the woman with the most beautiful legs in Paris?" We remembered that the last had seemed silly even when we first used it on Mistinguett. On second thought we had told the interpreter to let it drop because the photographers were anxious to begin. There seemed to be even less sense to it now. Indeed none of our familiar inquiries struck us as appropriate.

"What American authors do you read?" we ventured timidly, and added "living ones" hoping to get something about "Main Street" for Wednesday's book column.

"I don't read any," he answered.

That seemed to us a possible handicap in pursuing that line of inquiry.

"I don't read any living English authors, either," Mr. Chesterton added hastily, as if he feared that he had trod upon our patriotism. "Nothing but dead authors and detective stories."

That we had expected. In the march up to the heights of fame there comes a spot close to the summit in which man reads "nothing but detective stories." It is the Antæan touch which distinguishes all Olympians. As you remember, Antæus was the demigod who had to touch the earth every once and so often to preserve his immortality. Probably he did it by reading a good murder story.

"Can you tell me what 'Mary Rose' is all about?" we suggested, still fumbling for a literary theme.

"I haven't seen 'Mary Rose,'" said Mr. Chesterton, although he did go on to tell us that Barrie had done several excellent plays. Probably there was a long pause then while we tried to think up something provocative about the Irish question.

"If you really will excuse me, I must go to my room," he burst out. "The press men have been here ever since two o'clock."

This, of course, is no land in which to stand between a man and his room, where heaven knows what solace may await the distinguished visitor who has been spending two and a half hours with the press men. We stepped aside willingly enough. Still, we must confess a slight disappointment in Gilbert K. Chesterton. He's not as fat as we had heard.

V

ON BEING A GOD

We have found a way to feel very close kin to the high gods. The notion that we too leaned out from the gold bar of heaven came to us suddenly as we sat in the right field bleachers of one of the big theaters which provide a combination bill of vaudeville and motion pictures. The process of deification occurred during the vaudeville portion of the program.

The stage was several miles away. We could see perfectly and hear nothing as it was said. Curious little, insect-like people moved about the stage aimlessly. And yet there was every evidence that they took themselves seriously. You would be surprised if you watched ants conducting a performance and calling for light cues and such things. It would puzzle you to know why one particular ant took care to provide himself with a flood of red and another just as arbitrarily chose green.

Still, these were not ants but potentially men and women. They had names – Kerrigan and Vane, the Kaufman Trio, Miss Minstrel Co. and many others. From where we sat they were insects. It seemed to us that it would be no trouble at all to flip the three strong men and the pony ballet into oblivion with one finger. The little finger would be the most suitable.

And there were times when we wanted to do it. Only, the

feeling that we were too new a god to impose a doom restrained us. No divine patience was in us, but we felt that if we could wait a while it might come. The agitated atoms annoyed us. The audacity of "pony ballet" was almost insufferable. Why, as in Gulliver's land, the biggest of the strong men towered above the smallest of the ballet girls by at least the thickness of a fingernail. And these performing ants were forever working to entertain. They ran on and off the stage without apparent reason and waved their antennæ about furiously. Two of the ants would stand close together as if in conversation, and every now and then one of them would hit the other brutally in the face.

We did not know why and our sympathies went entirely to the one who was struck. It was difficult not to interfere. We rather think that some of the seemingly extraordinary judgments of the high gods between mortals must be explained on the ground of a somewhat similar imperfect knowledge. They too see us, but they cannot hear. Time is required for sound to reach Olympus. When we get into warfare they observe only the carnage and the turmoil. The preliminary explanations arrive several years after the peace treaties have been signed, and then they sound silly and entirely irrelevant.

Accordingly, the high gods are rather loath to interfere in the wars of earth. They are too far removed to understand causes, and even trumpet-like shouts about national honor merely amble up to their ears through long lanes of retarding ether. Indeed, the period of transit is so long that national honor invariably arrives

at Olympus in poor condition. Only when strictly fresh is it in the least inspiring. Little old last century's national honor is quite unpalatable. It is food neither for gods nor men.

It was just as well that we waited before taking blind vengeance on the vaudeville insects, because half an hour or so after the blows were struck by the seemingly aggressive ant the conversation which preceded the violence began to drift back to us. It came to our ears during the turn of the strong men and created a rather uncanny effect. At first we were puzzled because we had never known strong men to exchange any words at all except the traditional "alleyup." Almost immediately we realized that it was merely the tardiness of sound waves which caused the delay of the dialogue in reaching us in our bleacher seat.

Fortunately, in spite of our illusion of omnipotence, the distance from the stage was not truly Olympian. The jokes came in time to be appreciated. It seems that one of the ants, whom we shall immediately christen A, told his friend and companion, B for convenience, that he was taking two ladies to dinner and that he would like to have B in the party, but that he, A, did not have sufficient funds to defray any expense which he might incur. B admitted promptly that he himself had nothing. Accordingly, A suggested a scheme for sociability's sake. He urged B to come, but impressed upon him that when asked as to what he wished to eat or drink he should reply, "I don't care for anything."

In order to guard against a slip-up the friendly ants rehearsed the scene in advance. It ran something like this:

A – August! August!

B – You're a little wrong on your months. This is January.

A (punching him) – You fool! August is the name of the waiter.

The delay which retarded the progress of this joke to our ears impaired its effectiveness a little. The rest was more sprightly.

A – August, bring some chicken en casserole and combination salad for myself and the two ladies. Oh, I've forgotten my friend. What will you have?

B – Bring me some pigs' knuckles.

At this point A hit B for the second time and again called him a fool.

A – Why did you say, "Bring me some pigs' knuckles?"

B – Why did you ask me so pretty?

Thereupon they rehearsed the situation again.

A – Oh, I've forgotten my friend. Won't you have something? You must join us.

B – Sure, bring me a dish of ham and eggs.

Again blows were struck and again A inquired ferociously as to the cause of the slip-up.

A – What made you say, "Bring me a dish of ham and eggs?"

B – Well, why did you go and coax me?

Earlier in the evening we had observed that other blows were struck and there must have been further dialogue to go with them, but we could not wait for it to arrive. We rather hoped that the jokes would follow us home, but they must have become lost on

the way.

Perhaps you don't think there was much sense to this talk anyway.

Maybe the real gods on high Olympus feel the same way about us when our words limp home.

VI

CHIVALRY IS BORN

Every now and then we hear parents commenting on the fearful things which motion pictures may do to the minds of children. They seem to think that a little child is full of sweetness and of light. We had the same notion until we had a chance to listen intently to the prattle of a three-year-old. Now we know that no picture can possibly outdo him in his own fictionized frightfulness.

Of course, we had heard testimony to this effect from Freudians, but we had supposed that all these horrible blood lusts and such like were suppressed. Unfortunately, our own son is without reticence. We have a notion that each individual goes through approximately the same stages of progress as the race. Heywood Broun, 3d, seemed not yet quite as high as the cavemen in his concepts. For the last few months he has been harping continuously, and chiefly during meal times, about cutting off people's noses and gouging out eyes. In his range of speculative depredations he has invariably seemed liberal.

There seemed to us, then, no reason to fear that new notions of horror would come to Heywood Broun, 3d, from any of the pictures being licensed at present in this State. As a matter of fact, he has received from the films his first notions of chivalry.

Of course, we are not at all sure that this is beneficial. We like his sentimentalism a little worse than his sadism.

After seeing "Tol'able David," for instance, we had a long argument. Since our experience with motion pictures is longer than his we often feel reasonably certain that our interpretation of the happenings is correct and we do not hesitate to contradict H. 3d, although he is so positive that sometimes our confidence is shaken. We knew that he was all wrong about "Tol'able David" because it was quite evident that he had become mixed in his mind concerning the hero and the villain. He kept insisting that David was a bad man because he fought. Pacifism has always seemed to us an appealing philosophy, but it came with bad grace from such a swashbuckling disciple of frightfulness as H. 3d.

However, we did not develop that line of reasoning but contended that David had to fight in order to protect himself. Woodie considered this for a while and then answered triumphantly, "David hit a woman."

Our disgust was unbounded. Film life had seared the child after all. Actually, it was not David who hit the woman but the villainous Luke Hatburn, the terrible mountaineer. That error in observation was not the cause of our worry. The thing that bothered us was that here was a young individual, not yet four years of age, who was already beginning to talk in terms of "the weaker vessel" and all the other phrases of a romantic school we believed to be dying. It could not have shocked us more if he had said, "Woman's place is in the home."

"David hit a woman," he piped again, seeming to sense our consternation. "What of it?" we cried, but there was no bullying him out of his point of view. The fault belongs entirely to the motion pictures. H. 3d cannot truthfully say that he has had the slightest hint from us as to any sex inferiority of women. By word and deed we have tried to set him quite the opposite example. We have never allowed him to detect us for an instant in any chivalrous act or piece of partial sex politeness. Toasts such as "The ladies, God bless 'em" are not drunk in our house, nor has Woodie ever heard "Shall we join the ladies," "the fair sex," "the weaker sex," or any other piece of patronizing masculine poppycock. Susan B. Anthony's picture hangs in his bedroom side by side with Abraham Lincoln and the big elephant. He has led a sheltered life and has never been allowed to play with nice children.

But, somehow or other, chivalry and romanticism creep into each life even through barred windows. We have no intention of being too hard upon the motion pictures. Something else would have introduced it. These phases belong in the development of the race. H. 3d must serve his time as gentle knight just as he did his stint in the rôle of sadistic caveman. Presently, we fear, he will get to the crusades and we shall suffer during a period in which he will try to improve our manners. History will then be our only consolation. We shall try to bear up secure in the knowledge that the dark ages are still ahead of him.

We hoped that the motion pictures might be used as an

antidote against the damage which they had done. We took H. 3d to see Nazimova in "A Doll's House." There was a chance, we thought, that he might be moved by the eloquent presentation of the fact that before all else a woman is a human being and just as eligible to be hit as anybody else. We read him the caption embodying Nora's defiance, but at the moment it flashed upon the screen he had crawled under his seat to pick up an old program and the words seemed to have no effect. Indeed when Nora went out into the night, slamming the door behind her, he merely hazarded that she was "going to Mr. Butler's." Mr. Butler happens to be our grocer.

The misapprehension was not the fault of Nazimova. She flung herself out of the house magnificently, but Heywood Broun, 3d, insisted on believing that she had gone around the corner for a dozen eggs.

In discussing the picture later, we found that he had quite missed the point of Mr. Ibsen's play. Of Nora, the human being, he remembered nothing. It was only Nora, the mother, who had impressed him. All he could tell us about the great and stimulating play was that the lady had crawled on the floor with her little boy and her little girl. And yet it seems to us that Ibsen has told his story with singular clarity.

D'Artagnan Woodie likes very much. He is fond of recalling to our mind the fact that D'Artagnan "walked on the roof in his nightshirt." H. 3d is not allowed on the roof nor is he permitted to wander about in his nightshirt.

Perhaps the child's introduction to the films has been somewhat too haphazard. As we remember, the first picture which we saw together was called "Is Life Worth Living?" The worst of it is that circumstances made it necessary for us to leave before the end and so neither of us found out the answer.

VII

RUTH VS. ROTH

We picked up "Who's Who in America" yesterday to get some vital statistics about Babe Ruth, and found to our surprise that he was not in the book. Even as George Herman Ruth there is no mention of him. The nearest name we could find was: "Roth, Filibert, forestry expert; b. Wurttemberg, Germany, April 20, 1858; s. Paul Raphael and Amalie (Volz) R., early edn. in Württemberg – "

There is in our heart not an atom of malice against Prof. Roth (since September, 1903, he has been "prof. forestry, U. Mich."), and yet we question the justice of his admission to a list of national celebrities while Ruth stands without. We know, of course, that Prof. Roth is the author of "Forest Conditions in Wisconsin" and of "The Uses of Wood," but we wonder whether he has been able to describe in words uses of wood more sensational and vital than those which Ruth has shown in deeds. Hereby we challenge the editor of "Who's Who in America" to debate the affirmative side of the question: Resolved, That Prof. Roth's volume called "Timber Physics" has exerted a more profound influence in the life of America than Babe Ruth's 1921 home-run record.

The question is, of course, merely a continuation of the

ancient controversy as to the relative importance of the theorist and the practitioner; should history prefer in honor the man who first developed the hypothesis that the world was round or the other who went out and circumnavigated it? What do we owe to Ben Franklin and what to the lightning? Shall we celebrate Newton or the apple?

Personally, our sympathies go out to the performer rather than the fellow in the study or the laboratory. Many scientists staked their reputations on the fact that the world was round before Magellan set sail in the *Vittoria*. He did not lack written assurances that there was no truth in the old tale of a flat earth with dragons and monsters lurking just beyond the edges.

But suppose, in spite of all this, Magellan had gone on sailing, sailing until his ship did topple over into the void of dragons and big snakes. The professors would have been abashed. Undoubtedly they would have tried to laugh the misfortune off, and they might even have been good enough sports to say, "That's a fine joke on us." But at worst they could lose nothing but their reputations, which can be made over again. Magellan would not live to profit by his experience. Being one of those foreigners, he had no sense of humor, and if the dragons bit him as he fell, it is ten to one he could not even manage to smile.

By this time we have rather traveled away from Roth's "Timber Physics" and Ruth's home-run record, but we hope that you get what we mean. Without knowing the exact nature of "Timber Physics," we assume that the professor discusses

the most efficient manner in which to bring about the greatest possible impact between any wooden substance and a given object. But mind you, he merely discusses it. If the professor chances to be wrong, even if he is wrong three times, nobody in the classroom is likely to poke a sudden finger high in the air and shout, "You're out!"

The professor remains at bat during good behavior. He is not subject to any such sudden vicissitudes as Ruth. Moreover, timber physics is to Mr. Roth a matter of cool and calm deliberation. No adversary seeks to fool him with speed or spitballs. "Hit it out" never rings in his ears. And after all, just what difference does it make if Mr. Roth errs in his timber physics? It merely means that a certain number of students leave Michigan knowing a little less than they should – and nobody expects anything else from students.

On the other hand, a miscalculation by Ruth in the uses of wood affects much more important matters. A strike-out on his part may bring about complete tragedy and the direst misfortune. There have been occasions, and we fear that there will still be occasions, when Ruth's bat will be the only thing which stands between us and the loss of the American League pennant. In times like these who cares about "Forest Conditions in Wisconsin"?

Coming to the final summing up for our side of the question at debate, we shall try to lift the whole affair above any mere Ruth versus Roth issue. It will be our endeavor to show that not

only has Babe Ruth been a profound interest and influence in America, but that on the whole he has been a power for progress. Ruth has helped to make life a little more gallant. He has set before us an example of a man who tries each minute for all or nothing. When he is not knocking home runs he is generally striking out, and isn't there more glory in fanning in an effort to put the ball over the fence than in prolonging a little life by playing safe?

VIII

THE BIGGER THE YEAR

As soon as we heard that "The Big Year – A College Story" by Meade Minnigerode was about Yale we knew that we just had to read it. Tales of travel and curious native customs have always fascinated us. According to Mr. Minnigerode the men of Yale walk about their campus in big blue sweaters with "Y's" on them, smoking pipes and singing college songs under the windows of one another. The seniors, he informs us, come out on summer afternoons on roller skates.

Of course, we are disposed to believe that Mr. Minnigerode, like all travelers in strange lands, is prone to color things a little more highly than exact accuracy would sanction. We felt this particularly when he began to write about Yale football. There was, for instance, Curly Corliss, the captain of the eleven, who is described as "starting off after a punt to tear back through a broken field, thirty and forty yards at a clip, tackling an opposing back with a deadliness which was final – never hurt, always smiling – a blond head of curly hair (he never wore a headguard) flashing in and out across the field, the hands clapping together, the plaintive voice calling 'All right, all right, give me the ball!' when a game was going badly, and then carrying it alone to touchdown after touchdown."

Although we have seen all of Yale's recent big games we recognized none of that except "the plaintive voice" and even that would have been more familiar if it had been used to say "Moral victory!" We waited to find Mr. Minnigerode explaining that of course he was referring to the annual contest with the Springfield Training School, but he did no such thing and went straight ahead with the pretense that football at Yale is romantic. To be sure, he attempts to justify this attitude by letting us see a good deal of the gridiron doings through the eyes of a bull terrier who could not well be expected to be captious. Champ, named after the Yale chess team, came by accident to the field just as Curly Corliss was off on one of his long runs. Yes, it was a game against the scrubs. "Some one came tearing along and lunged at Curly as he went by, apparently trying to grab him about the legs. Champ cast all caution to the winds. Interfere with Curly, would he? Well, Champ guessed not! Like an arrow from a bow Champ hurled himself through the air and fastened his jaws firmly in the seat of the offender's pants, in a desperate effort to prevent him from further molesting Curly."

Champ was immediately adopted by the team as mascot. It seems to us he deserved more, for this was the first decent piece of interference seen on Yale field in years. The associate mascot was Jimmy, a little newsboy, who also took football at New Haven seriously. His romanticism, like that of Champ, was understandable. Hadn't Curly Corliss once saved his life? We need not tell you that he had. "Jimmy," as Mr. Minnigerode

tells the story, "started to run across the street, without noticing the street-car lumbering around the corner... and then before he knew it Jimmy tripped and fell, and the car was almost on top of him grinding its brakes. Jimmy never knew exactly what happened in the next few seconds, but he heard people shouting, and then something struck him and he was dragged violently away by the seat of the pants. When he could think connectedly again he was sitting on the curb considerably battered – and Curly was sitting beside him, with his trousers torn, nursing a badly cut hand."

We remember there was an incident like that in Cambridge once, only the man who rescued the newsboy was not the football captain but a substitute on the second team. We have forgotten his name. Unlike Corliss of Yale, the Harvard man did not bother to pick up the newsboy. Instead he seized the street car and threw it for a loss.

* * * * *

The first half was over and Princeton led by a score of 10 to 0. Things looked blue for Yale. Neither mascot was on hand. Yale was trying to win with nothing but students. Where was little Jimmy the newsboy? If you must know he was in the hospital, for he had been run over again. The boy could not seem to break himself of the habit. Unfortunately he had picked out the afternoon of the Princeton game when all the Yale players were

much too busy trying to stop Tigers to have any time to interfere with traffic. It was only an automobile this time and Jimmy escaped with a mere gash over one eye. Champ, the bull terrier who caused the mixup, was uninjured. "I'm all right now," Jimmy told the doctor, "honest I am – can I go – I gotta take Champ out to the game – he's the mascot and they can't win without him – please, Mister, let me go – I guess they need us bad out there."

Apparently the crying need of Yale football is not so much a coaching system as a good leash to keep the mascots from getting run over. Champ and Jimmy rushed into the locker room just as the big Blue team was about to trot out for the second half. After that there was nothing to it. Yale won by a score of 12 to 10. "Curly clapped his hands together," writes Mr. Minnigerode in describing the rally, "and kept calling out 'Never mind the signal! Give me the ball' in his plaintive voice" —

This sounds more like Yale football than anything else in the book. However, it sufficed. Curly made two touchdowns and all the Yale men went to Mory's and sang "Curly Corliss, Curly Corliss, he will leave old Harvard scoreless." It is said that a legend is now gaining ground in New Haven that Yale will not defeat Harvard again until it is led by some other captain whose name rhymes with "scoreless." The current captain of the Elis is named Jordan. The only thing that rhymes with is "scored on."

Still, as Professor Billy Phelps has taught his students to say, football isn't everything. Perhaps something of Sparta has gone from Yale, for a few years or forever, but just look at the Yale

poets and novelists all over the place. There is a new kindness at New Haven. Take for instance the testimony of the same "Big Year" when it describes a touching little scene between Curly Corliss, the captain of the Yale football team, and his room mate as they are revealed in the act of retiring for the night:

"Angel!"

"Yeah,' very sleepily.

"They all seem to get over it!"

"Over what?"

"The fellows who have graduated,' Curly explained. 'I guess they all feel pretty poor when they leave, but they get over it right away. It's just like changing into a new suit, I expect.'

"Yeah, I guess so'...

"Well, goo' night, little feller'...

"Goo' night, Teddy."

But we do wish Mr. Minnigerode had been a little more explicit and had told us who tucked them in.

IX

FOR OLD NASSAU

Wadsworth Camp, we find, has done almost as much for Princeton in his novel, "The Guarded Heights," as Meade Minnigerode has accomplished for Yale in "The Big Year."

George Morton might never have gone to any college if it had not been for Sylvia Planter. He was enamored of her from the very beginning when old Planter engaged him to accompany his daughter on rides, but his admiration did not become articulate until she fell off her horse. She seems to have done it extremely well. "He saw her horse refuse," writes Mr. Camp, "straightening his knees and sliding in the marshy ground. He watched Sylvia, with an ease and grace nearly unbelievable, somersault across the hedge and out of sight in the meadow beyond."

It seemed to us that the horse should have received some of the credit for the ease with which Sylvia shot across the hedge, but young Morton was much too intent upon the fate of his goddess to have eyes for anything else. When he found her lying on the ground she was unconscious, and so he told her of his love. That brought her to and she called him "You – you – stable boy." And so George decided to go to college.

His high school preparation had been scant and irregular. He went to Princeton, and after two months' cramming passed all his

examinations. Football attracted him from the first as a means to the advancement which he desired. "With surprised eyes," writes our author, "he saw estates as extravagant as Oakmont, and frequently in better taste. Little by little he picked up the names of the families that owned them. He told himself that some day he would enter those places as a guest, bowed to by such servants as he had been. It was possible, he promised himself bravely, if only he could win a Yale or a Harvard game."

Perhaps this explains why one meets so few Princeton men socially. Some, we have found, are occasionally invited to drop in after dinner. These, we assume, are recruited from the ranks of those Princetonians who have tied Yale or Harvard or at least held the score down.

Like Mr. Minnigerode, Mr. Camp employs symbolism in his story. In the Yale novel we had Corliss evidently standing for Coy. Just which Princeton hero George Morton represents we are not prepared to say. In fact, the only Princeton name which comes to mind at the moment is that of Big Bill Edwards who used to sit in the Customs House and throw them all for a loss. Morton can hardly be intended for Edwards because it seems unlikely that anybody would ever have engaged Big Bill to ride horses; no, not even to break them. A little further on, however, we are introduced to the Princeton coach, a certain Mr. Stringham. Here, to be sure, identification is easy. Stringham, we haven't a doubt, is Roper. We could wish Mr. Camp had been more subtle. He might, for instance, have called him Cordier.

In some respects Morton proved an even better football player than Corliss. He did not score any greater number of touchdowns, but he had more of an air with him. Thus, in the account of the Harvard game it is recorded: "Then, with his interference blocked and tumbling, George yielded to his old habit and slipped off to one side at a hazard. The enemy's secondary defense had been drawing in, there was no one near enough to stop him within those ten yards and he went over for a touchdown and casually kicked the goal."

Eventually, George Morton did get asked to all the better houses, but still Sylvia spurned him. "Go away and don't bother me," was the usual form of her replies to his ardent words of wooing. Naturally he knew that he had her on the run. A man who had taken more than one straight arm squarely in the face during the course of his football career was not to be rebuffed by a slip of a girl.

The war delayed matters for a time, and George went and was good at that too. He was a major before he left Plattsburgh. For a time we feared that he was in danger of becoming a snob, but the great democratizing forces of the conflict carried him into the current. One of the most thrilling chapters in the book tells how he exposed his life under very heavy fire to go forward and rescue an American who turned out to be a Yale man.

There was no stopping George Morton. In the end he wore Sylvia down. Nothing else could be expected from such a man. German machine guns and heavy artillery had failed to stop him

and he had even hit the Harvard line, upon occasion, without losing a yard.

His head was hard and he could not take a hint. In the end Sylvia just had to marry him. Her right hand swing was not good enough. "As in a dream he went to her, and her curved lips moved beneath his, but he pressed them closer so that she couldn't speak; for he felt encircling them in a breathless embrace, as his arms held her, something thrilling and rudimentary that neither of them had experienced before – "

And as we read the further details of the love scene it seemed to us that George Morton had made a most fortunate choice when he decided to go to Princeton. His football experience stood him in good stead in his love-making, for he had been trained with an eleven which tackled around the neck.

X

MR. DEMPSEY'S FIVE-FOOT SHELF

It is hardly fair to expect Jack Dempsey to take literature very seriously. How, for instance, can he afford to pay much attention to George Bernard Shaw who declared just before the fight that Carpentier could not lose and ought to be quoted at odds of fifty to one? From the point of view of Dempsey, then, creative evolution, the superman and all the rest, are the merest moonshine. He might well take the position that since Mr. Shaw was so palpably wrong about the outcome of the fight two days before it happened, it scarcely behoves anybody to pay much attention to his predictions as to the fate of the world and mankind two thousand years hence.

Whatever the reason, Jack Dempsey does not read George Bernard Shaw much. But he has heard of him. When some reporter came to Dempsey a day or so before the fight and told him that Shaw had fixed fifty to one as the proper odds on Carpentier, the champion made no comment. The newspaper gossip, disappointed of his sensation, asked if Dempsey had ever heard of Shaw and the fighter stoutly maintained that he had. The examination went no further but it is fair to assume that Dempsey did know the great British sporting writer. It was not

remarkable that he paid no attention to his prediction. Dempsey would not even be moved much by a prediction from Hughie Fullerton.

In other words literature and life are things divorced in Dempsey's mind. He does read. The first time we ever saw Dempsey he discussed books with not a little interest. He was not at his training quarters when we arrived but his press agent showed us about – a singularly reverential man this press agent. "This," he said, and he seemed to lower his voice, "is the bed where Jack Dempsey sleeps." All the Louises knew better beds and so did Lafayette even when a stranger in a strange land. Washington himself fared better in the midst of war. Nor can it be said that there was anything very compelling about the room in which Dempsey slept. It had air but not much distinction. There were just two pictures on the wall. One represented a heavy surf upon an indeterminate but rather rockbound coast and the other showed a lady asleep with cupids hovering about her bed. Although the thought is erotic the artist had removed all that in the execution.

Much more striking was the fact that upon a chair beside the bed of Dempsey lay a couple of books and a magazine. It was not *The Bookman* but *Photo Play*. The books were "The Czar's Spy" by William Le Queux, "The Spoilers" by Rex Beach, and at least one other Western novel which we have unfortunately forgotten. It was, as we remember it, the Luck of the Lazy Something or Other. The press agent said that Jack read quite a little and

pointed to the reading light which had been strung over his bed. He then went on to show us the clothes closet and the bureau of the champion to prove that he was no slave to fashion. We can testify that only one pair of shoes in the room had gray suede tops. Then we saw the kitchen and were done.

There had been awe in the tones of the conductor from the beginning. "Jack's going to have roast lamb for dinner to-night," he announced in an awful hush. Even as we went out he could not resist lowering his voice a little as he said, "This is the hat rack. This is where the champion puts his hat." We had gone only fifty yards away from the house when a big brown limousine drew up. "That," said the press agent, and this time we feared he was going to die, "is Jack Dempsey himself."

The preparation had been so similar to the first act of "Enter Madame" that we expected temperament and gesture from the star. He put us wholly at ease by being much more frightened than any one in the visiting party. As somebody has said somewhere, "Any mouse can make this elephant squeal." Jack Dempsey is decidedly a timid man and we found later that he was a gentle one. He answered, "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," at first. If we had his back and shoulders we'd have a civil word for no man. By and by he grew a little more at ease and somebody asked him what he read. He was not particularly strong on the names of books and he always forgot the author, which detracts somewhat from this article as a guide for readers. There were almost three hundred books at his disposal, since his training

quarters had once been an aviation camp. These were the books of the fliers. Practically all the popular novelists and short story writers were represented. We remember seeing several titles by Mary Roberts Rinehart, Irvin Cobb, Zane Grey, Rupert Hughes, and Rex Beach. Older books were scarce. The only one we noticed was "A Tale of Two Cities." This Dempsey had not read. Perhaps Jack Kearns advised against it on account of the possible disturbing psychological effects of the chapter with all the counting.

Dempsey said he had devoted most of his time to Western novels. When questioned he admitted that he did not altogether surrender himself to them. "I was a cowboy once for a while," he said. "There's a lot of hokum in those books." But when pressed as to what he really liked his face did light up and he even remembered the name of the book. "There was one book I've been reading," he burst out; "it's a fine book. It's called 'The Czar's Spy.'"

"Perhaps," suggested Ruth Hale of the visiting party, "a grand duke would say there was a lot of hokum in that."

Dempsey was not to be deterred by any such higher criticism. Never having been a grand duke, he did not worry about the accuracy of the story. It was in a field far apart from life. That we gathered was his idea of the proper field for fiction. In life Dempsey is a stern realist. It is only in reading that he is romantic. A more impressionable man would have been disturbed by the air of secrecy which surrounded the camp of Carpentier. That

never worried Dempsey. He prepared himself and never thought up contingencies. He did not even like to talk fight. None of us drew him out much about boxing. Somebody told him that Jim Corbett had reported that when he first met Carpentier he had been vastly tempted to make a feint at the Frenchman to see whether or not he would fall into a proper attitude of defense.

"Yes," giggled Dempsey, "and it would have been funny if Carp had busted him one on the chin." This seemed to him an extraordinary humorous conceit and he kept chuckling over it every now and then. While he was in this good humor somebody sounded him out as to what he would do if he lost; or rather the comment was made that an old time fighter, once a champion, was now coming back to the ring and had declared that he was as good as he ever was.

"Why shouldn't he?" said Dempsey just a little sharply. "Nobody wants to see a man that says he isn't as good as he used to be."

"Would you say that?" he was asked.

"Well," said Dempsey, and this time he reflected a little, "it would all depend on how I was fixed. If I needed the money I would. I'd use all the old alibis."

We liked that frankness and we liked Dempsey again when somebody wanted to know how he could possibly say anything in the ring during the fight to "get the goat of Carpentier." "We ain't nearly well enough acquainted for that," said Dempsey and we gathered that he was of the opinion that you must know a man

pretty well before you can insult him. The champion is not a man to whom one would look for telling rejoinders, though he has needed them often enough in the last year and a half. Criticism has hurt him, for he is not insensitive. He is merely inarticulate. This must have been the reason which prompted some sporting writers to feel that he would come into the ring whipped and down from the fact that he had been able to make no reply to all the charges brought against him. It did not work out that way. Dempsey did have a means of expression and he used it. There is no logic in force and yet a man can exclaim "Is that so!" with his fists. Dempsey said it. If we may be allowed to stretch a point it might even be hazarded that the champion's motto is "Say it with cauliflowers."

As the Freudians have it, fighting is his "escape." Decidedly, he is a man with an inferiority complex. But for his boxing skill he would need literature badly. As it is, he does not need to read about hair-breadth escapes. He has them, such as in the second round of the fight on Boyle's Thirty Acres.

In summing up, we can only add that as yet literature has had no large effect upon the life of Jack Dempsey.

XI

SPORT FOR ART'S SAKE

For years we had been hearing about moral victories and at last we saw one. This is not intended as an excuse for the fact that we said before the fight that Carpentier would beat Dempsey. We erred with Bernard Shaw. The surprising revelation which came to us on this July afternoon was that a thing may be done well enough to make victory entirely secondary. We have all heard, of course, of sport for sport's sake but Georges Carpentier established a still more glamorous ideal. Sport for art's sake was what he showed us in the big wooden saucer over on Boyle's dirty acres.

It was the finest tragic performance in the lives of ninety thousand persons. We hope that Professor George Pierce Baker sent his class in dramatic composition. We will be disappointed if Eugene O'Neill, the white hope of the American drama, was not there. Here for once was a laboratory demonstration of life. None of the crowds in Greece who went to somewhat more beautiful stadiums in search of Euripides ever saw the spirit of tragedy more truly presented. And we will wager that Euripides was not able to lift his crowd up upon its hind legs into a concerted shout of "Medea! Medea! Medea!" as Carpentier moved the fight fans over in Jersey City in the second round. In fact it is our contention

that the fight between Dempsey and Carpentier was the most inspiring spectacle which America has seen in a generation.

Personally we would go further back than that. We would not accept a ticket for David and Goliath as a substitute. We remember that in that instance the little man won, but it was a spectacle less fine in artistry from the fact that it was less true to life. The tradition that Jack goes up the beanstalk and kills his giant, and that Little Red Ridinghood has the better of the wolf, and many other stories are limited in their inspirational quality by the fact that they are not true. They are stories that man has invented to console himself on winter's evenings for the fact that he is small and the universe is large. Carpentier showed us something far more thrilling. All of us who watched him know now that man cannot beat down fate, no matter how much his will may flame, but he can rock it back upon its heels when he puts all his heart and his shoulders into a blow.

That is what happened in the second round. Carpentier landed his straight right upon Dempsey's jaw and the champion, who was edging in toward him, shot back and then swayed forward. Dempsey's hands dropped to his side. He was an open target. Carpentier swung a terrific right hand uppercut and missed. Dempsey fell into a clinch and held on until his head cleared. He kept close to Carpentier during the rest of the fight and wore him down with body blows during the infighting. We know of course that when the first prehistoric creature crawled out of the ooze up to the beaches (see "The Outline of History" by H. G. Wells,

some place in the first volume, just a couple of pages after that picture of the big lizard) it was already settled that Carpentier was going to miss that uppercut. And naturally it was inevitable that he should have the worst of it at infighting. Fate gets us all in the clinches, but Eugene O'Neill and all our young writers of tragedy make a great mistake if they think that the poignancy of the fate of man lies in the fact that he is weak, pitiful and helpless. The tragedy of life is not that man loses but that he almost wins. Or, if you are intent on pointing out that his downfall is inevitable, that at least he completes the gesture of being on the eve of victory.

For just eleven seconds on the afternoon of July 2 we felt that we were at the threshold of a miracle. There was such flash and power in the right hand thrust of Carpentier's that we believed Dempsey would go down, and that fate would go with him and all the plans laid out in the days of the oozy friends of Mr. Wells. No sooner were the men in the ring together than it seemed just as certain that Dempsey would win as that the sun would come up on the morning of July 3. By and by we were not so sure about the sun. It might be down, we thought, and also out. It was included in the scope of Carpentier's punch, we feared. No, we did not exactly fear it. We respect the regularity of the universe by which we live, but we do not love it. If the blow had been as devastating as we first believed, we should have counted the world well lost.

Great circumstances produce great actors. History is largely concerned with arranging good entrances for people; and later exits not always quite so good. Carpentier played his part

perfectly down to the last side. People who saw him just as he came before the crowd reported that he was pitifully nervous, drawn, haggard. It was the traditional and becoming nervousness of the actor just before a great performance. It was gone the instant Carpentier came in sight of his ninety thousand. His head was back and his eyes and his smile flamed as he crawled through the ropes. And he gave some curious flick to his bathrobe as he turned to meet the applause. Until that very moment we had been for Dempsey, but suddenly we found ourself up on our feet making silly noises. We shouted "Carpentier! Carpentier! Carpentier!" and forgot even to be ashamed of our pronunciation. He held his hands up over his head and turned until the whole arena, including the five-dollar seats, had come within the scope of his smile.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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