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BORAH OF IDAHO

BY RAY T. TUCKER

WILLIAM EDGAR BORAH's first noteworthy appearance on the American scene, as brilliant prosecutor of three Western mining leaders who had found dynamite more effective than collective bargaining, was contemporaneous with the homicidal outbreak of Harry Thaw and the evolution of a type of newspaper which seized upon both men as equally good copy. Borah's forensic feats in that remote Idaho court-room were pictured in great and colorful detail by a swarm of metropolitan reporters, and so his star was high in the firmament when he hung his black wide-awake hat on a Senate office peg on March 4, 1907, combed back his shaggy brown mane, and looked around for new worlds to astound, if not to conquer.

His part in prosecuting Big Bill Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone had made a deep impression upon the Old Guard leaders of the Senate. They rubbed their hands at the accession of this solid and serious Republican from the Mormon State of Idaho, for their ranks were in sore need of recruits in those muck-raking, panicky days of 1907. The Old Guard envisaged Borah as a stalwart reinforcement in the holy work of resisting the new movement for reform, and stifling the awakening class-consciousness of the American working man. He was immediately made chair-

man of the Committee on Labor and Education, an unheard-of trust for a first-termer, for any attempt to translate the rising clamor of the downtrodden into legislative reality would have to have its beginnings in that committee. To certain cynical colleagues who expressed alarm at the bestowal of such a key post on an untried man, Senator Aldrich, the Republican boss, replied with a cloak-room wink: "It's all right. I've looked him up. He's an anti-labor man and a corporation attorney."

But Aldrich, for once, was wrong. He was the first of the long line of Senators to grapple unsuccessfully with the enigma of Borah. For almost immediately the newcomer took to disconcerting, and, in the view of the Old Guard, grossly immoral practises. Far from guarding valiantly the Senate citadel of capitalism, he proceeded, with full steam, to make a wreck of it. Soon his committee was reporting out, and getting passed, the most radical proposals an astonished and horrified Senate had ever been asked to consider on the labor question. There were bills establishing the eight-hour day on government contracts, bills for the creation of a new and highly dubious Department of Labor, and subversive resolutions for the investigation of the twelve-hour day and the seven-day week in the sacrosanct iron and steel in-

dustries. Borah and labor became articulate together, and began to sing the same appalling tune. It was good business for a young Senator trying to get upon the first pages, but in Aldrich's view it was sheer spoils and treason. His protégé was striking mighty blows at everything the Aldrichs held to be sacred. No more disastrous treachery had ever been heard of on Capitol Hill.

From that painful perfidy dates the conviction of all the Republican stalwarts that Borah is an untrustworthy fellow. His doings since then, stretching over a score of years, have only confirmed this judgment. To the Old Guard of to-day, as to that of 1907, he is a puzzle and a plague. As the years have rolled on, indeed, he has puzzled the safe and sane men more and more, for sometimes he has been violently against them and at other times he has been amazingly with them. There are many facets, it appears, to his character. At times he has stood forth as a soaring Liberal; at times he has been more conservative than Mr. Coolidge. The public, long since despairing of understanding him, or reconciling the conflicting manifestations of his personality, now views him, it would seem, as *sui generis*—a courageous but incomprehensible figure, one who voices his convictions unexpectedly and boldly, no matter how adversely they may affect his party standing or his political security.

His enemies call him an obstructionist, a dreamer, a prima donna, and say he prefers the fame which flows from strutting the political peaks in solitary grandeur and obstinacy to solid accomplishments shared with his peers. When his Senate colleagues discuss him among themselves, they use very plain English: he is a faker, a trimmer, a false alarm. His admirers are just as intemperate; to them he is the foremost exponent of practical idealism in American public life today and the perennially prospective messiah of a third party dedicated to righteousness. Meanwhile, Mr. Borah himself appears to know

precisely what he believes, and why. His one and constant boast is that he is an old-fashioned American who patterns his beliefs and conduct after the Constitution and the—to him—obvious purposes of the Founding Fathers. He can justify—to himself at least—every act of his mystifying career by constitutional precedents. Before the heroes who founded this best of all possible governments his abasement is absolute.

But necessity often compels him to resort to curious personal interpretations and a species of revelation to satisfy this passion for following in the Fathers' footsteps. As the social and political order has grown more complex his divinations have had to become more numerous and arduous, and to many it now seems that his divining-rod has been overworked and warped. But to all entreaties that he discard it, or lay it up for repairs, he remains deaf, for he believes that he cannot go wrong if he clings to the Constitution, or to his understanding of it. With the thunderous assertion that "the Fathers understood the science of government as no other single group of men ever understood it," he annihilates his opponents, and he will continue to do so as long as his colleagues in the Senate let pass without challenge his highly dubious citations of precedent, and his clairvoyant glimpses into the minds of Washington, Hamilton and Jefferson.

II

To those who still look upon him as a Liberal it may come as a surprise that in his calendar of saints he places Hamilton above the "masterful" Washington and "wide-ranging" Jefferson. He concedes, of course, the contributions of Washington and Jefferson to the young Republic, but we have his word for it that "in his complete mastery of the problems of that extraordinary era Alexander Hamilton stood alone." With all the Hamiltonian doctrines, to be sure, Mr. Borah does not agree—he agrees with no man, living or dead—

but his general veneration of the West Indian orphan who would have transformed the new Republic into a pseudo-monarchy perhaps illumines some of the paradoxes and idiosyncrasies of his own career.

It is not difficult to discover the bond which attaches him to Hamilton. Hamilton was a stark egoist, brooking neither opposition nor peer; he was an indomitable fighter, though he did not always fight fair; his ambitions were boundless, though never satisfied. For the mediocrity of his associates and the judgments of the common people he had naught but disdain. Withal, he was a lonely, wistful figure, bereft in defeat or victory of the consolations and heart-warmings which are the lot of the public man who races with the crowd. Seen in this light Borah's eulogy of Hamilton assumes the aspect of a jeremiad against the neglect which a careless republic bestows upon its great men—those of the Twentieth as well as those of the Eighteenth Century. Speaking on the lack of a statue to Hamilton in the nation's capital some years ago, Mr. Borah appeared as recorder and seer:

Strange irony in the reward a republic gives her creators! What delays the hour when this government shall do honor to itself by honoring Hamilton? Is it because he never flattered nor turned aside from the clear vision of his intellect to court popular applause; that there is not to be found in all his writings or speeches a line or phrase to indicate he ever sought to arouse the passions, or enlist the prejudices, or win by sinister means the applause of the multitude? Out of the integrity of his intellect and the high purpose of his soul he led them. Is it because by searching the pages of bitter political controversy, and reviving and resuscitating the stale slander of another century, men are led to say that, while manifestly great, he was not divine? We rear monuments to men; not deities. . . . What a dismal place yonder Hall of Fame would be if great men had to be as perfect as the rules and demands of small men would make them!

What Mr. Borah means, obviously, and what he resents, is that the penalty of independence—such as Hamilton's and his own—is no statue. But there are cynics in the Senate who answer that the mere fact of remaining callous to obligations

which other men acknowledge is no guarantee of a man's worth.

But regardless of the nature and results of this exemption from the "rules and demands of small men," Mr. Borah displayed it early. He had barely turned seventeen when he left a crowded household in Southern Illinois, where he was one of ten children, and set out to gain an education. This was an adventurous undertaking in 1882, though it did not seem so to his parents, who were the kind to encourage him. His father, though born in Kentucky, was of German descent, and the name was originally De Borah. The old man was an amateur Presbyterian preacher of power and originality. His mother was Irish, and it is from her, no doubt, that he derives his passionate sympathy for peoples oppressed. One need not look beyond his parentage to discover why Mr. Borah wavers between liberalism and conservatism, or why so many of his crusades for human freedom never get beyond a Senate oration. The hot Irish impulses and the phlegm of the Teuton stir within him conflicts which the world glimpses only as mysteries—as when he voices some novel proposal that gives the Administration conniption fits, and then lets it go at that.

Again, the spirit of persistence and concentration may have burned out, as it often will, in his student days, for he was a tireless scholar, an omnivorous reader. At preparatory school, and at Kansas State University, where he pursued the arts and the law, he was the same unsocial, unsmiling, preoccupied recluse that he is to-day. His only extra-curricular activity was debating, and then, as now, the unpopular side of a question held a terrible fascination for him. From the university he started for Seattle, but his funds gave out, so he got off the train at Boise. For all the industry with which the invading Mormons from Utah were taming Idaho, it was a frontier community when he arrived, and his immediate success at the criminal bar may have helped to delay the civilizing process. His eloquence capti-

vated juries and clients, and eventually he entered the more lucrative practice of corporation law, where Aldrich found him. As secretary to Governor McConnell, whose daughter became Mrs. Borah, the young lawyer turned to politics. By 1901 he was sufficiently well known to present himself to the Legislature as a Republican candidate for the United States Senate. Characteristically enough, this was but five years after he had voted for Bryan on the gold issue. His excuse for this heresy was that it had not been personal; almost all Idaho was for Bryan, and therefore he sinned only out of local patriotism.

His instinctive dislike of organized politics was deepened by this first effort to get into office. He was not the organization's favorite—he never has been—and though he led on the first ballot, the bosses knifed him. Unlike the three other contestants, Borah did not smile and shake hands. Before the crowd attending the session had dispersed he delivered an address after the manner of Mark Antony over Caesar, in which he declared that "King Caucus must go." This speech was a treat for the intellectually starved Idahoans, who were then far off the travelled path of itinerant actors and John Robinson's circus, and it made Borah a popular figure among them. Six years later he repeated the same speech at every crossroads, and so wrested the Senatorship from the bosses.

Thus he came to the Senate as a rebel. He came, too, without having served an apprenticeship in less august offices, where-in he might have learned the value and subtlety of the coöperative method. Moreover, he began his career at a time when Idaho was hardly conscious of Statehood, and chiefly concerned with local problems, so he took his seat as his own master, both a help and a handicap. It was during this first term that he achieved whatever reputation he still has as a radical. He championed labor's demands, it appears, not out of active sympathy for labor's abstract ideals or immediate wants, but

because the Constitution guarantees freedom. Though, with Roosevelt, he denounced the old "tooth and claw" system, he differed from Roosevelt on the cure for it, and the latter's idea of government with the Big Stick left him cold. He opposed the creation of that strong and omniscient Federal overseer which was then the reformer's remedy for all human ills. Monopoly, he maintained, could not be regulated; it must be destroyed. Here he was at one with Roosevelt, but it was about the last time he was at one with anybody on any subject.

For the easy-going Mr. Taft Mr. Borah has always exhibited an amused contempt. In his opinion Mr. Taft represents the old order, but with more of sentiment than of logic. The two were at odds all through the Taft Administration, and even more so after 1912. When Mr. Taft became head of the League to Enforce Peace, Mr. Borah grew almost savage in his contention that it would require an army of tremendous proportions—and of many American units—to make the League's decrees effective. But it was not long, characteristically, before he himself appeared with a plan for outlawing war which differed only in name from that proposed by the soft-hearted ex-President. As between enforcing peace and outlawing war, few neutral men could discern much difference in the number of battleships and battalions and boys that would be required. But Mr. Borah, with his gift of divination, apparently saw a difference.

In view of the irreconcilable differences between the two men, it is a ludicrous comment on the American political system, as well as upon the personalities involved, that the Taft backers intimated that they would like Borah as their Vice-Presidential candidate in 1912. Thus, perhaps, they indicated that they had not accepted at its face value the Senator's long fight on the Administration. But Borah could no more have gone on a ticket headed by Taft than on one led by Woodrow Wilson. Yet it might have gained him a more secure

niche in "yonder Hall of Fame" had he acquiesced, for Washington is still unable to fathom his conduct at the ensuing Armageddon. He tramped along with the Roosevelt army to the very fringe of the skirmish line and then suddenly faltered. He handled the Roosevelt contests in the convention, and bitterly denounced the fraudulent manner in which Teddy's supporters were unseated. Yet in the same breath he announced that he could not join the third-party movement, and departed for Idaho to look after his own campaign. His presence there was needed, for both Republicans and Progressives were assailing him. The Progressives shouted the louder, feeling they had been the more betrayed, but the Republicans controlled the Legislature. But Borah somehow won, though, apparently recognizing some inconsistency in his position, he told the Legislature that "when I am no longer privileged to use my own judgment and opinion, I will quit the party, fumigate myself and return to the practice of law." He followed none of these courses; he remained in the party, and was reelected.

III

With the inauguration of President Wilson, still more difficult days were to come. More and more Mr. Borah was called upon to exercise his "judgment and opinion" on questions which subjected his constitutionalism to a severe strain. For individuals as for nations there were then no precedents—save those of human nature gone stark mad.

The sonorous radicalism preached by Dr. Wilson in the early days was soon supplanted by the violent illiberalism of a nation engaged in war. Out of the struggle was to emerge a crazy universe of hates and cruelties and distortions. Against this sinister background Borah cut a futile figure. Prejudice, expediency, whim—these seemed to motivate him at an hour when even his best would have been all too scant. His kinship with every other

politician since Adam became quite clear. "While manifestly great, . . . not divine." Unlike Mr. La Follette he did not brave the hysteria, and the strange new policy of vesting all of a Mussolini's power in the President brought no effective protest from him. Ever since then he has been expounding the theory that a republic should be able to wage war without the use of the repressive measures required in a monarchy, but during the actual war years he was one of the Senatorial mob which dashed this way and that as Dr. Wilson wagged his finger.

All this, it may be assumed, was gall and wormwood to him, though he acquiesced, and he was not long in having his revenge. The President opened the way for it with his demand for the ratification of the Versailles Treaty and the adoption of the League Covenant. Here Mr. Borah suddenly found himself on hallowed soil once more, with the earth dripping with ooings from the pens and tongues of the Founding Fathers. There was the hallowed warning against entangling alliances, there was the sacred Monroe Doctrine, and there was Borah, the sounder of alarms. It is a strange irony that from such a theatre he should have emerged with an admittedly diminished reputation and a smaller popular following than he had when the show began. Stranger still it was that the man who so loudly denounced Dr. Wilson's world dream should so soon thereafter become the instrument whereby the United States was plunged into the international maelstrom. For a time, however, he was on top, and it is with this historic struggle that the public still chiefly associates his name. It gained him his reputation as an obstructionist, and he glories in it. Yet he was actually little more than a trooper in the conflict. It was the late Frank B. Brandegee, of Connecticut, who sponsored the idea of that round robin against the League which sounded the tocsin of aroused nationalism, and it was Brandegee who mapped the battle. Borah was a willing recruit, but Brandegee drilled him.

Borah marched in the advance, but Brandegee directed the strategy.

With victory in the League fight in the balance as the Republican National Convention of 1920 approached, Mr. Borah resorted to a dodge he had toyed with so gingerly in 1912. That is, he threatened to organize a third party if the Republicans did not adopt a plank pledging opposition to the League. But apparently his threats, by this time, had lost their terror for the bosses, for the platform gave him no comfort, and neither did the candidate. The platform was evasive on the League, and so was Mr. Harding. As in 1912, Mr. Borah soon took the path of least, or no, resistance, and was presently stumping the country against the League but for Harding. Thus he was in the victorious but motley crew which moved on Washington in March, 1921. But he spoiled the plan of the Ohio gang to make the inaugural the maddest, merriest carnival since Jackson's day. His resolution calling for bald and simple ceremonies was a tough blow to the pierrots and harlequins in the party, but the precedent has been since followed by the unmerry Mr. Coolidge.

This trimming away of the Hon. Ned McLean's gaudy decorations and dousing of the red light came near being Mr. Borah's last great triumph. He saw President Harding choose a Cabinet dominated by internationally-minded men—Mellon, Hughes and Hoover—and he saw Coolidge retain them. The Old Guard and the White House could hardly be blamed if they had come to the conclusion by this time that Mr. Borah's bark was worse than his bite. But there soon came additional evidence that he could and would play the political game in accord with the "rules and demands of small men." Though he had broadcast his intention of voting against Boise Penrose, the Old Guard chieftain, for chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he lined up with the reactionaries when the test came, receiving in return a pledge of organized Republican opposition

to the League. It may have been a good piece of political bargaining, but his support of the man who epitomized everything he himself professed to despise—privilege, machine politics and the public-be-damned philosophy—shattered the lingering faith of many idealists who still looked to him for leadership.

Mr. Borah's ideas on the League prevailed, but that was soon seen to be a hollow victory, largely because of the mental obfuscation which beset him during the Harding Administration. As if that Administration were not involving America in European affairs speedily enough through its advocacy of the World Court, Mr. Borah proposed a more direct route. He demanded that the United States call a conference for the reduction of naval armaments. Mr. Harding frowned upon it, and Henry Cabot Lodge called it "Borah's dream." For six years the resolution had been introduced in the House or Senate in one form or another, but this time, for some occult reason, it took, and the nations were duly invited to Borah's party. But he was left out. He became a mere onlooker, and not a happy one. He was disturbed by what he saw and heard. He saw that the super-government he had once striven to destroy was arising anew on a firmer foundation, for which he had laid the cornerstone. So he voted against the pact born of his resolution, ostensibly because it did not ban submarines. His protests came too late, and the treaty making the United States one of three armed policemen in several spheres of highly probable wars was ratified.

Mr. Borah soon tried again, this time with a proposal for an international conference to solve all the social, political and economic ills of the universe, but again he allowed the Administration to buffalo him. At a hint that overtures for such a conference had actually been made, he hastily withdrew his resolution, but meanwhile Mr. Hughes, then Secretary of State, had hopped a train for New Haven, and there made the reparations

proposals which led to the European pilgrimage of Owen D. Young and Charles G. Dawes. Too late does Mr. Borah seem to have learned to regret these victimizations. The arms agreement and the Dawes plan, as events have shaped themselves, appear to have won us no friends abroad. Yet to Borah the isolationist, more than any one else, is due our "involvement."

IV

The feverish period of 1919-1923 was followed by one of comparative calm. In President Harding's grand crusade to bring the nation back to normalcy Mr. Borah was a factor, but only in a vocal way. Even before the guns of the war had ceased firing, he was demanding economy, and soon he developed a perfect mania for reducing expenditures. He led the fight against the Adjusted Compensation Act, making eloquent pleas for the soldiers but denouncing the bonus. He was one of three Senators to vote against higher pay for the underpaid postal clerks, but he made up for this by voting against the bill to increase the pay of Congressmen. But economy was a passion with Mr. Borah long before Mr. Coolidge gave up his \$35-a-month flat to move to the Willard Hotel. The fact, indeed, may serve as well as anything else to explain a friendship which in all other respects passeth understanding.

From such mundane matters as finances and the tariff the nation was summoned to a consideration of more spectacular problems shortly after Mr. Coolidge entered the White House. Teapot Dome was gushing forth scandal. But during this oleaginous period Mr. Borah seemed fettered by his constitutional chains, and his great accents were not heard as they had been on lesser occasions. He was not precisely silent—tongue-tied would best describe him. But for this strange failure to condemn those responsible for the corruption of the time he more than made up when the tumult died out. If the Republi-

can party did not reform, he then gave warning, the people would rise in revolt and crush it. So thoroughly did the party take this wisdom to heart that Mr. Coolidge wanted Mr. Borah as his running mate in 1924, and asked him, so the story goes, to "accept a place on the ticket." "Which place?" rejoined Mr. Borah. It was a rare spark of humor in a grim man—so rare that it seems a shame Mr. Coolidge did not enjoy it. Mr. La Follette, then preparing for his death-bed bid for the Presidency, knew Mr. Borah too well to make the same request, but there were many romantic Liberals who expected the Idahoan to express his dissatisfaction with both the old parties by going with the insurgents. It was still another example of his talent for fooling folks who don't know him.

Unluckily for his reputation as a swash-buckler willing and eager to walk the plank as a third-party candidate, such demands have always come in years when he was up for reelection back in Idaho, and party fealty was essential to his success. Both in 1912 and in 1924 he had to cling to his post as petty officer aboard the Republican ship of state in order to remain on deck in any capacity. In consequence the piratical craft captained by Roosevelt and La Follette were not for him, no matter how longingly he may have gazed over the side at their black flags. In 1924 he had even more cogent reasons for standing by, for if he had gone with Fighting Bob he would have forfeited all claim to the chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which had become vacant through the death of Senator Lodge.

If his prestige has suffered a great decline in recent years, it is probably due to three causes: his accession to the chairmanship of that committee, Mr. Coolidge's amiable neglect of the highly polite and constitutional antagonism that he exhibits toward the President's policies, and his amazing outbursts on the tender subject of Prohibition. Mr. Borah's academic opposition

to certain of the Coolidge major policies does not worry Mr. Coolidge into making a scene, for Mr. Coolidge, in point of fact, has obtained almost everything he wanted from the committee over which Mr. Borah presides, and in the face of Mr. Borah's opposition. Thus the Idahoan has come to appear to political Washington as an ineffectual individual, a Prometheus bound to a rock, the rock being his chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee.

So he has not received his accustomed editorial fanfares of late; the old flourishes and ruffles have been strangely missing. Senators who have winced under his sharp tongue for years now take a fierce delight in nagging him. The Old Guard, still doing business, has led in this Borah baiting, with Senators Wadsworth of New York and Reed of Pennsylvania snapping the whips. Mr. Borah, however, is a fox of many artifices. While his critics were beating the bushes sheltering the rebel, the irregular, the irreconcilable, the prima donna, the Senate gadfly, the headline seeker, he was calmly heading for safer hiding places. It was not long, indeed, before his pursuers quite lost the scent—and Borah himself sniffed a new one. He discovered, one rainy Sunday, and related it to a startled world from a Presbyterian platform out in the Maryland Free State, that advocates of a modification of the Volstead Act were Nullificationists, and hence wicked and abandoned men. He immediately armed himself with his ancient weapons, the Constitution and historical precedent, and sallied forth to put them down. His armor seemed a bit rusty from long disuse, but with some polishing by Wayne B. Wheeler and Pussyfoot Johnson he soon rode forth a fine figure for the fray.

For an ardent States' rights man and champion of enslaved minorities overseas this new rôle seemed a trifle puzzling, but Mr. Borah, with all his old facility, lifted it above the vulgar and controversial plane by announcing that it was the Constitution, and not Prohibition, which was

in danger. Another piece of news that he gave out was that the wets do not actually want light wines and beer, but plan an onslaught on the Constitution in order to bring back hard liquor. Though his position was comprehensible in its purely legalistic phases, there were few, even among the dries, who accepted his characterization of a referendum as Nullification. To all arguments that the Constitution, as amended during the turmoil of the war period, should now take cognizance of certain inescapable legal and physiological facts he has shown himself insensible, as he is to the contention that his beloved Founding Fathers would have been horrified by the embodiment of a sumptuary statute in the fundamental law. The practicality of his idealism, in fact, appears to have vanished completely from his latest venture, for in the face of the widespread corruption brought in by Prohibition, he maintains that nothing can be done until the Eighteenth Amendment has been formally repealed. Certainly he must know that only 13% of the population can keep the amendment in the Constitution, and thus hold the remaining 87% in perpetual bondage.

Mr. Borah's views on Prohibition will probably not affect the eventual settlement of this problem. The chief harm he will do will be to help defer the day when it can be disposed of without prejudice and without bigotry. Meanwhile, his speeches will fan the flame of fanatic passion, whether he means them to or not, and he himself will depart further and further from the record. For once he has attacked a subject, he has a tendency to neglect the facts, so lured is he by the magic of his own voice. It is a common failing, but in him it amounts to a disease. He is a great believer in oratory. Perhaps no other man in American public life to-day would so sincerely deplore the passing of the spoken word as a political and parliamentary weapon. Fortunately for him, he believes that this will come "only after selfishness and sensuality shall have imbruted or de-

stroyed all the nobler faculties of the mind."

The conventional method of describing a Senate combat in which Mr. Borah takes a hand is to liken it to a bullfight. Borah, as the careless and imaginative pen records it, leans back easily in his seat, seemingly taking no interest in the subject under discussion. A faintly cynical smile occasionally appears on his lips. Finally he climbs to his feet, still smiling and leaning slightly forward. And then, urbanely, effortlessly, he becomes the picador, hurling jibing darts into the hide of the poor Senator who has aroused him. The victim, squirming, eventually flings back with an angry retort. Then Borah becomes the mighty matador. His dimpled chin juts out, the vertical lines in his forehead deepen into a frown, his eyes flash, he tosses his tremendous mane, and his words pour forth torrentially. They become rapier thrusts, seeking straight the heart of his antagonist, who presently falls. Borah then tosses aside his rapier lightly and resumes his seat. His colleagues stare in admiration; the galleries rock with applause.

What the correspondents fail to see is that Borah's rapier is sometimes tipped with poison. He often bests an opponent because the poor fellow is not sufficiently versed in history to controvert some of his most devastating and inaccurate assertions and allusions. A check-up reveals a Borah mistaken in his facts, but unless the error is detected while the combatants are on their feet, he gets the headlines, and his rival gets the ha-ha. During a debate, for example, on the French debt Senator Bruce of Maryland essayed to defend France by citing its generosity to the struggling colonies, while Mr. Borah contended that France had assisted the colonies merely to embarrass England. A sneer was Mr. Borah's retort to the Mary-

land Senator's assertion that France had given Benjamin Franklin 6,000,000 livres for which no repayment was asked. But as the debate continued, the plodding Bruce seemed to have the better of it in his authorities and facts. The great matador was about to be worsted. But no! Out flashed that famous rapier.

"Mr. President," appealed Borah, "I object to the Senator putting incorrect history into my speech!"

The galleries shook with applause and Senators chuckled at the discomfiture of the pedestrian Mr. Bruce. It was another Borah triumph. But meanwhile it is a fact that France *did* advance the 6,000,000 livres as a gift.

In much the same way, Mr. Borah has gained certain strategic victories in his demand for a more liberal policy toward Russia. As precedent, he cites the Washington Administration's recognition of a France as bloody and disorganized as Russia is supposed to be today. Washington's Cabinet faced the same problem, he declares, and *unanimously* decided to accord recognition. The Senator apparently forgets, or slurs over the fact, that his hero, Alexander Hamilton, proposed to so hedge around recognition that it would have been a meaningless gesture. Nor does he point out that it was Jefferson's honest mind which prevailed over the views of Hamilton and his clique in the Cabinet.

These seem trifling things, and they are, as politics go. They are done almost daily by Mr. Borah's more obscure fellows. But in the great Idaho seer they seem somehow incongruous and discreditable. His many failures, though sometimes more magnificent than his lesser colleagues' successes, loom large because of the high expectations he arouses. If he has come to be regarded throughout the country as the foremost trimmer in American public life today he has only himself to blame.

FIVE PORTRAITS ON GALVANIZED IRON

BY BENJAMIN DE CASSERES

James Branch Cabell

THE Watteau of ironists. The Bœcklin of romancers. The Debussy of prose. One day an Intellectual Faun found Cinderella, the Little Girl That Was Always Pushed in the Corner, moping near the American Outhouses of Realism. He took her by the hand and walked straight up to the Wall of Excluded Facts and disappeared with her Beyond Life into the Magic Country of Poictesme, where he became Jurgen and she the Lady Ettarre. It was a strange land, full of witches and demons, virginal kobolds and scatalogic monks, blasé Lohengrins and Doll Tearsheets in royal doo-dads, swineherd kings and Knights of the Holy Lingam, queens sitting-for-company and Norns weaving patterns of Life and Death. And the Censors peered through the Wall of Excluded Facts and saw they could do nothing in the matter and also wished they were Intellectual Fauns and could find a Cinderella. But so it was, and thus it remains to this day.

Cabell hardly seems to write above a whisper. The footfall of his sentences hardly resounds at all in the corridors of my skull. He weaves with closed eyes. He talks with a closed mouth. He is like a man who seems to create while listening. He has never learned his art. It is the mood of his genius—cold, serene, aloof. His emotions are purely cerebral. I often think of him as the Spinoza of word-magic.

Manuel the Redeemer may turn out to be Cabell the Redeemer in disguise. The minds of literary America must be turned toward the heavens—the heavens of Imag-

ination and Irony. Even Sinclair Lewis believes photography is satire, while Dreiser believes that reporting is creating. America cannot live by Pulitzer and *Dial* prizes alone. Sherwood Anderson and Carl Sandburg have got Kleig eyes from observing the obvious too closely. The whole band of American realists is infected with movie psychology—recognition, the booby fear of the unfamiliar, “tell us what we know something about.” “To hell with that!” Cabell has said as he picked up his Cinderella and made off for Poictesme, as hereinbefore mentioned.

In this sense he may be the redeemer—the redeemer from seriousness, “humanitarianism” and stupefying sincerity. Cabell’s tongue is always in his cheek. Madame Maya, alias Make-Believe, is the gorgeous wench who rules things mundane. Play in with her, not against her, advises Cabell. All redeemers are romantic liars. Whether they are called Buddha, Shakespeare, Christ, Mark Twain, Mrs. Eddy, Victor Hugo, Krishnamurti, Balzac, Mahomet, Lord Dunsany or James Branch Cabell, they all come to purge the world of facts, to cover up with gorgeous counterpanes the filthy mattresses of reality.

Catch them while they’re young! This has always been the slogan of Mother Church. Sound psychology. So I would get right to work on the geographies in our schools and substitute on the maps where the United States and England appear, for instance, maps of Dunsanyland, Alice’s Wonderland and Cabell’s Poictesme. If Emmanuel Swedenborg could blue-print Heaven—all but naming the theatres and speak-easies in its principal cities—why